

THE WORLD'S PREMIER TABLETOP GAMING MAGAZINE

# WARGAMES illustrated®



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**V FOR VICTORY**  
First playthrough of the rules



**HAIL CAESAR EPIC BATTLES**  
Creating a Punic Wars diorama



**BUILDING BAG END**  
A Hobbiton home in a hill

THEME: VIETNAM - FROM THE SKIES ABOVE TO THE TUNNELS BELOW



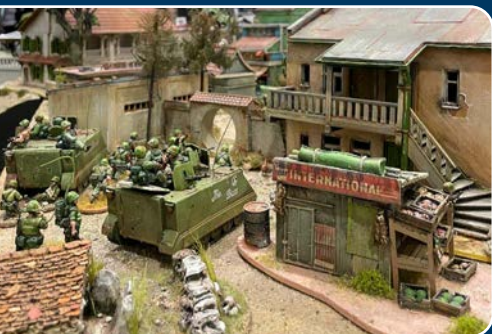
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## WARGAMES illustrated

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### FROM THE EDITOR

For this month's Vietnam War theme we intentionally sidestep a history lesson on the conflict and instead focus on several different hobby projects and wargaming ideas. From the skies above, to below ground, our five theme articles take in transport vehicles, Saigon '68, Tunnel Rats, collecting 'Nam models, and the disaster that was the Battle of Ap Bac 1963.

Elsewhere in *Wi440*, we give two new rulesets a run through: World War Two skirmish game *V for Victory* and *Never Mind the Billhooks* supplement *Fantasia*. We also see what our master modelmaker, Matt Parkes, came up with when we handed him three Epic Battles Hail Caesar figure frames and a dead elephant. I share my Italian travelog, telling the tale of my trip to Gradara with the Perry twins, and there's all of our regular reviews and previews too.

Happy reading and rolling.

Dan Faulconbridge  
Editor

Cover artwork by Marco Capparoni.

*Below: American Marines clash with the Viet Gong, while Hueys buzz overhead, in a scene from our Vehicles of Vietnam article. Models by Gringo 40s (painted by Artmaster Studios) and Crucible Crush.*



### CREDITS

Produced in the UK.

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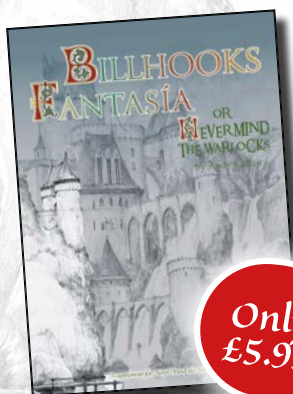
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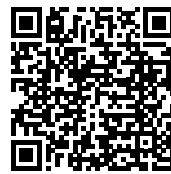
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# OBSERVATION POST

New and forthcoming wargames stuff you need to know about

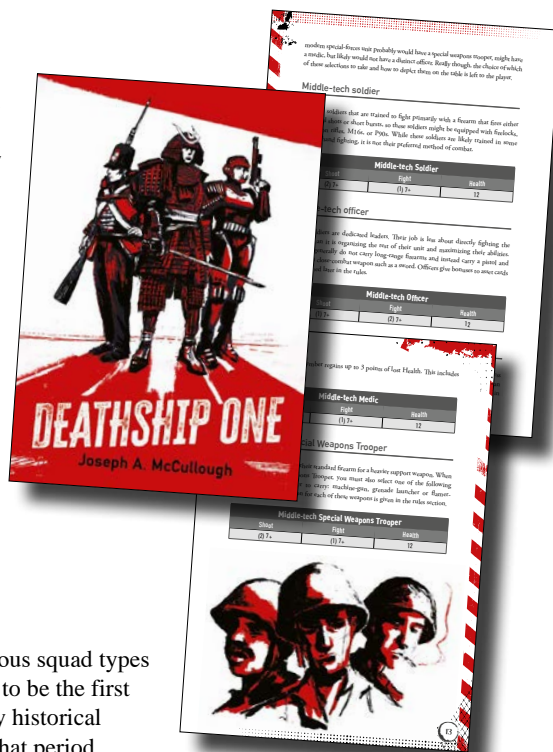
RULES, SUPPLEMENTS, FIGURES, TERRAIN, HOBBY GEAR, AND MORE

## JOSEPH A. MCCULLOUGH - DEATHSHIP ONE

*Deathship One* is a game that was originally published in *Blaster* volume 4 (a game anthology 'fanzine' created by Joe and other notable game designers) and, in this new PDF/print and play version, the game is spruced up with new art and some extra content.

It's another adventure into solo and cooperative gaming from Joe, this time set in a mysterious alien deathtrap made up of kill rooms. The idea is simple, and the background is minimal - a group of combatants, plucked from a historical period of your choosing, finds itself in this deadly alien ship and must battle to freedom. In their desperate escape attempt your figures must conquer five lethal (randomly generated) rooms that bring all manner of doom and horror with them, thanks to the alien menaces and other area-specific details that lurk within.

The game design, sparse background, and stylistic art give a pulpy and dangerous feel to the game, mixing classic sci-fi horror tropes to present players with a deadly sandbox of survival gaming.



## DETAILS

- SCALE: 28mm
- PERIOD: Any
- PRICE: \$12.50 (PDF) to \$22.50 (printed hardcover)
- FORMAT: Digital PDF or print on demand 60-page softcover or hardcover book
- AVAILABLE FROM: [drivethrurpg.com](http://drivethrurpg.com)

## SQUAD UP!

The inclusion of various squad types is, we suspect, going to be the first point of appeal to any historical gamers. No matter what period you play, you can snag figures from it and involve them in *Deathship One*. The game emphasises minimal miniature and terrain requirements, making it accessible to those with limited resources or time but the simplicity does not mean there's no depth. You have plenty of options in how to assemble your squads before they navigate the deadly rooms.

Low-tech squads can include anything up to, and including, the Medieval period, so this is your chance to see how Romans or Vikings might fare against alien technology! These squads are ten strong groups of at least three shooters and three fighters, along with a maximum of one leader, healer, and seer. They tend to focus more on melee combat and can get their numbers whittled down quite quickly.

Middle-tech squads are smaller - just six figures - with a focus on shooting. If you fancy taking the Old Guard for a spin in a very different environment, or some WWII commandos on a different infiltration mission, there's soldier, officer, medic, and specialist roles to build out your squad.

Finally, the four figure, high-tech, futuristic soldiers come with power armour and boosted stats, able to pump out a lot of damage and take plenty too.

Once picked, your squad draws three asset cards from a choice of 15. These provide various aids, improvements, rerolls, tactical advantages, and more, bringing a mix of luck and strategic planning in how best to use them in the *Deathship*.

<b>Hand of Fate</b> You may play this card any time you roll one or more dice. You may re-roll any one die.	<b>Hand of Fate</b> You may play this card whenever an alien is knocked down in a fight. Treat the result as killed instead.	<b>Quick Reload/Clearance</b> If you have a special weapon that either runs out of ammo or jams, you may play this card instead of having a figure spend an action to reload or clear the jam.
<b>Sprint</b> You may play this card whenever you move a soldier. Move that figure an extra 3".	<b>Head Shot</b> You may play this card whenever a soldier takes damage from a shooting attack. Treat the result as killed instead.	<b>Cleave</b> You may play this card whenever an alien is knocked down in a fight. Treat the result as killed instead.
<b>Miraculous Dodge</b> You may play this card whenever a soldier takes damage from a shooting attack. The soldier manages to dodge the shot and takes 0 damage.	<b>Parry</b> You may play this card whenever a soldier takes damage from an alien in a fight. Reduce the amount of damage by 3.	<b>Lure</b> You may play this card whenever an alien is within line of sight of more than one soldier. You may decide which soldier the alien moves towards.



## GAMEPLAY MECHANICS

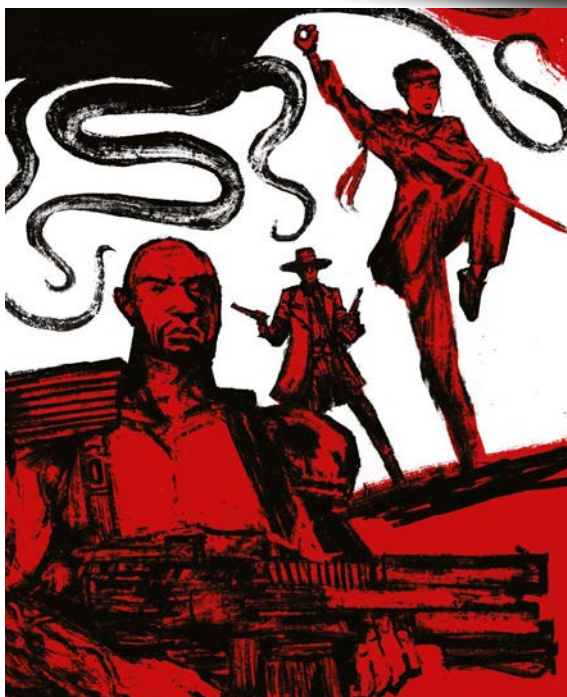
The rules are extremely streamlined, and the game is structured around the room challenges; each of the seven possibilities present different threats in the form of traps, monsters, and automated weapons.

Each room is presented with board and enemy setup instructions, its special details, and its random events (most often more alien attacks). Asset tokens can be recovered during play too, which will grant new asset cards to add to your squad as it progresses.

Combat is simple, with D10 rolls made and successful hits (above a number on your profile) determining what happens to the alien. Evens will kill, odds will knock it down. Your whole squad gets to act before the aliens, which weighs things in their favour somewhat, but early losses really make a difference in the later rooms, so the right mix of caution and aggression is needed as you push on to the exit.



Above: STL files and printed figures of the aliens are available, sculpted by Bobby Jackson. Shown here are (left to right) the Slathek, Drekyl, Caphid, and Rieger. They are available from [bobbyjackson.net](http://bobbyjackson.net). North Star are also producing the same aliens in metal, available from [northstarfigures.com](http://northstarfigures.com).



## OVERALL

Challenging gameplay is baked into the core design of the game and, even though the enemy AI behaviours are relatively simple, you'll still probably die quite a lot! This could be a double-edged sword: immensely satisfying for those who enjoy tough, strategic gameplay, but frustrating to players who prefer a more forgiving play experience.

*Deathship One* will certainly be a great pick-up game for club and pub play. The minimal requirements and option for players to bring their favourite (or available) historical figures into the dangers of alien combat is bound to appeal, at least for a couple of tries!



## ARK ROYAL MINIATURES BY WARFARE MINIATURES - WORLD WAR ONE 1/4800<sup>TH</sup> SCALE SHIPS

If you're going to go small, at least go big on going small! That's what Warfare Miniatures have done with the substantial release of their Ark Royal 1/4800 scale World War One naval range.

With an initial glut of over 60 packs, Warfare Miniatures are providing gamers with the entire WWI Grand Fleet and High Seas Fleet. The Royal Navy in Home Waters, Colonial Service, and the Mediterranean are also covered.



Above: *Minotaur and Devonshire.*



Above: *Derfflinger, Seydlitz, and Pillau.*

While 1/4800 scale naval gamers have been well served with WWI models by Navwar for many years, there has certainly been a space in the market for a new producer on the block; one able to design and cast superior quality tiny vessels with the scope required to make WWI gaming interesting. Warfare Miniatures have done just that, and more.



Below: *Blucher, vdTann, Moltke, and Wiesbaden.*

### DETAILS

- SCALE: 1/4800<sup>th</sup>
- PERIOD: World War One
- PRICE: From £10 for a pack of five battleships up to £225 for a fleet.
- MATERIAL: Metal
- AVAILABLE FROM: [leagueofaugsborg.com](http://leagueofaugsborg.com)

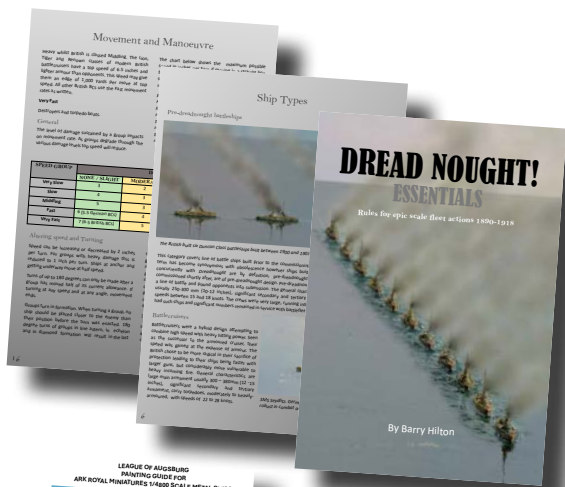


Below: *Gorgon and Marshal Ney.*



As well as the vessels, there is also a set of PDF rules and a free Painting Guide to support of the range. *Dread Nought! Essentials* is a ruleset for playing large fleet actions using 1/2400 to 1/6000 scale ships. In its full colour 56-pages, the reader will find rules that focus on tactical decision making. The particulars of speed, gun calibres, and armour thicknesses are managed by grouping ships into common types, which move and fight together. The combined strength of divisions, or groups of ships, makes for easy management of a large fleet on a home table and offers games lasting about two hours which produce clear results. The rules are based on *Rolling Thunder!* (fleet actions 1630 - 1720), which come from the same publisher.

*The Painting Guide for Ark Ryal Miniatures 1/4800 Scale Metal Ships* does exactly what it says in the title - provides a very clear, very easy to follow guide to getting your models 'ship shape' and ready for tabletop action. It's available via the *Dread Nought!* Facebook group and on request by email.



**A TRIUMVIRATE OF TITLES**  
 Ark Royal Miniatures are produced by Warfare Miniatures, and sold via the League of Augsburg website, all of which are managed by UK wargaming polymath Barry Hilton. Oh, and the rules are published by WorldTwister Publications - that's Barry 'quadrophenia' Hilton as well.



"What's next?" we hear you cry - Japanese, US, Turkish, Austro Hungarian, Russian, Italian, and French fleets for WWI are all on the way. After that, and moving forward in history, the Royal Navy and Kriegsmarine for the period 1939-1941 is already designed and will be released soon. That will be followed by all the other fleets and RN/KM through to 1945. The designer is on turbo, apparently!



## UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Clean, crisp sculpts, and good casting means you won't be disappointed with the quality of the models in the Ark Royal range. They are small in size but big in stature.

*Right: British Battlecruisers and Light Cruisers, photographed on an average size human hand.*





## SARISSA PRECISION - WORLD WAR EUROPE 15MM

15mm is a scale that is extremely well suited to mixing the practicalities of gaming with the dramatic sweep of a terrain heavy board. The only real downside is that at the dinkier scale it can be tough to imbue your terrain builds with the same detail as a 28mm offering. Thank goodness, then, for Sarissa's comprehensive and growing World War Europe 15mm range! These varied buildings are perfect for WWII action but also versatile enough to use in a variety of other conflicts.



### TOWNHOUSES

Some of the range's standout structures are the assorted European residences, such as the great looking Townhouses. Each comes with variations in design features, from different styled entrances and archways to flat or standard roofs (seen above). These will be perfect for so many of the Second World War's battles in Europe that it would take more than this article's word count to list them all! Each comes on a compact footprint of around 12cm square, so you can easily place them together to make villages and towns.

Not all buildings escape war unscathed and, should you be willing to pay a little more (the destroyed version of the Flat Roof Townhouse costs £2.50 more) you'll get a version that can be split up into multiple ruined sections and shows battle damage (seen below). See Hobby Corner on the following page for more on James' time building this kit!



### NON-CIVILIAN STRUCTURES

It's not all about residential buildings. The range is packed with other options to add more areas of interest and objectives to your tabletop. If you want to fight it out in the European lowlands, how about the Canal Bridge (seen below)? This dual cantilever kit comes on just one sheet of MDF and you'll be able to quickly construct it and have fun with its counterbalanced tilt action. There are Dutch styled houses that will be a good match for this set too.



The Border Checkpoint set (seen right) will be useful for all kinds of gaming. The main checkpoint barrier and buildings are perfect for hit and run or breakthrough games, perhaps with asymmetric forces, while the 45 Dragons' Teeth included will force any vehicles on the tabletop into tactical considerations as they try to traverse them. Instead of making a huge load of separate Teeth (which could have proved rather frustrating to build) there's a block of 25, two blocks of four, two of two, and eight singles.

While it may not be particularly fancy, the Chain Home system, built by the RAF during the war, was an essential early warning system and worthy of a 15mm representation. The Low-frequency radar was scattered around the coast of Britain with sheds to hold the equipment (seen below).



These are great additions to Sarissa's already fantastic range of options and will enable players to add more character to their terrain collection without driving themselves mad micro-detailing their own builds. The smaller scale means that some detail pieces need to be treated with care, so as not to snap them, and because the sets are as complex as their 28mm equivalents they'll take a while to construct, but those minor quibbles are countered by the fantastic quality once they're built.



## DETAILS

- SCALE: 15mm
- PERIOD: World War Two
- PRICE: £15 to £17.50 for the Townhouses and £10 for other kits
- MATERIAL: MDF
- AVAILABLE FROM: [sarissa-precision.com](http://sarissa-precision.com)



# HOBBY CORNER



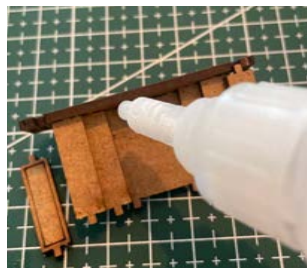
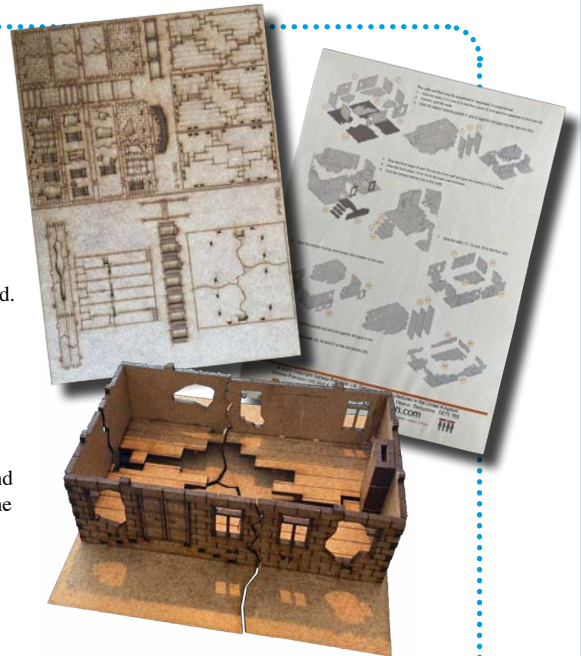
## RUINOUS CONSTRUCTION

James built the Ruined Flat Roof Townhouse and recorded his process. Here, he talks about what went well, what was troublesome, and suggests some ideas you could bring to your build.

**James:** I've built my fair share of Sarissa kits by now, from a cities-worth of buildings to the complexities of their Ship of the Line. If you've done the same, you'll find everything about these 15mm kits extremely familiar. The pieces for this set all come on two MDF sheets and good (if not perfect - the part numbers presented aren't shown on the actual MDF sheets) instructions are included.

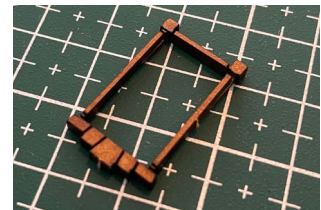
Getting started, despite the lack of part numbers, it's quite simple to match shapes together and you'll quickly have the ground floor on the way. Because things split into quarters it makes the build a little more forgiving, as you can tinker with each section separately.

At this scale areas like the front steps are quite fiddly. I found that dry-fitting them, then teasing along the joint part underneath with thick superglue was enough to fix things together while still having enough time to wiggle them into place (see below).



The finer parts of the kit, such as windows (right), are prone to coming apart as you remove them from the MDF unless you're very careful. I suggest trimming around with a sharp scalpel blade where you feel any resistance. If you do happen to split the pieces anywhere you can easily fix them back together when you glue them in place.

The instructions don't cover every single window frame and nor do they suggest fixing the door frames included onto the model. I decided to use these spare parts while adding to the damaged look, by breaking parts off and sticking them in place at canted angles.



After building the second floor and roof, in much the same way as the ground floor, I put all the parts together to admire my handiwork... then I split them up to spread the various building parts over a wider space. The nice thing about these ruins is you can quickly fill up quite a large area of tabletop. In all it took about an hour to build but there was some trial and error, as it was the first kit of this type and scale I've made. I suspect more builds would get finished far quicker and over a day of determined construction I'd have a veritable city of ruined European buildings.

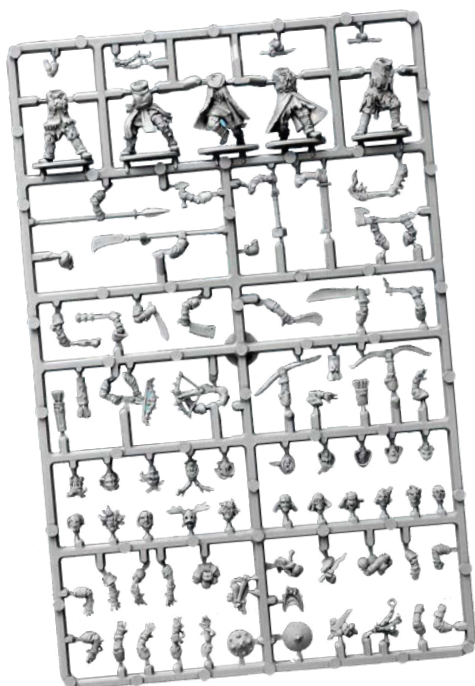




## NORTH STAR - FROSTGRAVE CULTISTS II

The North Star plastic production juggernaut rolls on and this time it's pumping out new Frostgrave Cultists. Anyone familiar with the numbering of North Star box sets will know the score by now; set two flips the gender of the figures to cover female figures, and that's the case here.

A broad selection of parts are packed into each box: 21 heads, just about every set of arms and weapons you can imagine, and plentiful extras feature on each frame. Along with those options there are five body and leg parts. Each set allows you to build 20 figures, with four frames in each box, and you'll be pleased to hear that bases are included too.



### UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

#### UNDEAD AND LOVING IT

Cultists originally appeared in 2015's *Thaw of the Lich Lord* but there's a lot of versatility to the models here. Some of the heads have an undead look, allowing all kinds of shambling reanimated corpses to be constructed, and Cultists are perfectly transferable to any Warbands with a penchant for evil.

*Right: A cultist with an undead twist.*



These are ragged looking ladies, bedecked in heavy clothing with plenty of tears and tatters. As soon as you put heads onto the torsos you begin to define some wonderfully characterful and often rather maniacal characters. Faces look frenzied and wild and are often wrapped in bandages, adorned with trophies, or in the shadows of a hood. They all have their own flavour of danger and menace. That's greatly enhanced by the armoury of weapons here. There are bows and evil looking crossbows, a vast selection of improvised blunt and bladed weapons, traditional melee options, and more. Most are pockmarked with rust and wear or have gnarled wood, making them look less regimented and a little wilder.

We've found that North Star's sister line for *Stargrave* has sometimes struggled with natural poses due to the size and heft of some of its weapons; thankfully that is not a problem with the Cultists II set. Poses look dynamic and 'right' even when figures are given two-handed axes and spears or crossbows.



*Above: A combination of the latest Stargrave Scavengers and Frostgrave Cultists II.*

As well as some shields there are a ton of extra pouches, stashed knives (often with evil curved and wobbly blades that look like they will cause some damage) and hanging chains and trophies. These add a final dynamic extra to bring life and movement to your builds.

This set is a kitbasher's dream as the parts will match up with other sets in the range for maximum variety. Players of Joe McCullough's sci-fi game, *Stargrave*, will be chuffed to hear that the parts also fit that range's plastic sets nicely, making for even more build options and some creative mash ups.



### DETAILS

- SCALE: 28mm
- PERIOD: Fantasy
- PRICE: £22
- MATERIAL: Hard plastic
- AVAILABLE FROM: [northstarfigures.com](http://northstarfigures.com)



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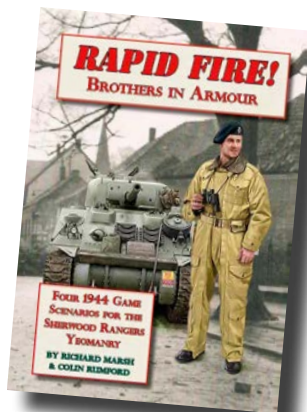


# RELEASE RADAR

Dom Sore presents the new goings on in the world of wargaming in his monthly column.

## FULL PAPER DOM

My first book is World War Two related; a scenario booklet entitled *Rapid Fire! Brothers in Armour*, published by Valiant Miniatures ([rapid-fire-uk.com](http://rapid-fire-uk.com)). There are four scenarios in the booklet, dealing with the action from D-Day to November 1944 that the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry took part in. Each of the scenarios follows the same format, with a brief history of the action, description of the objectives of the game, deployment rules, special rules, map, and full orders of battle. The beauty of these scenarios, if you're not a *Rapid Fire!* player, is their easy adaptation to other rulesets. The orders of battle have very clear pictures, along with numbers of figures, so you can use them as they are in games of *V for Victory* or *Bolt Action*. You could use the stands to represent a figure, halving the number you need too. I am looking forward to trying some of the options here in the various WWII games I play.



I seem to be inundated with the printed word at the moment, making the first part of this month's Release Radar akin to a book review. As well as the book-based goodies I have picked out here make sure you flip to page 48 for my play-through review of *V for Victory* too.



The next book on my list couldn't be more different - *Warpaint! Volume 2: Plains Indian War Shirts and Warrior Society Regalia* is written by Mike Blake and published by Partizan Press ([caliverbooks.com](http://caliverbooks.com)). It follows on from Mike's earlier work on shields and is a comprehensive offering from a man who certainly doesn't do things by halves. It starts with a description of what a war shirt is and how it became what it was. This section has a lot of colour plates, showing what is being described in excellent detail. Following this is a description of the various warrior societies and regalia. There are some fascinating entries in here, split by Native American tribe, which are worth the price of the book on their own. I don't even game in this period, other than *Dead Man's Hand*, but found it a fascinating and inspiring read.

Finishing off this book section is *A Savage and Romantic War - A Wargamers Guide to the First Carlist War, Spain 1833-1840* by Helion Wargames ([helion.co.uk](http://helion.co.uk)). This 138-page book's intent is to provide the wargamer with everything they need to play that war. As with Helion's other detailed 'Guides' it does what it says on the cover. You get a short history of the war, followed by two chapters detailing the opposing sides in some detail, and a chapter on what equipment was used. Following this comes the bit we all want, the description and orders of battle for 13 of the war's clashes. These each come with good maps, so you can better visualise and recreate the battlefield as you get gaming. What you do not get is detailed scenario instructions; this is very much a collection of all the information you need to get your scenario started. Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day; give him a wargamer book and he'll be hungry but able to comfortably create the major confrontations of the First Carlist War, as the old proverb goes! The final chapter takes a more in-depth look at the campaign that led to the Battle of Oriamendi and gives you food (but not fish!) for thought on what to include if you want to give it a go yourself. If you ever fancied the First Carlist War as an option, then you would do well to start with this book, and if you haven't considered it maybe the photos of Perry Miniatures will inspire you.





**TO THE TABLETOP!**

Onto the more 'standard' Release Radar fare now, starting with new Bavarian Chevaulegers from Piano Wargames ([pianowargames.de](http://pianowargames.de)). Piano Wargames is the solo project of a young and talented digital sculptor from Bavaria, Lucas Luber, who focuses on 28mm Napoleonic and here he's made six cracking mounted figures. There are two sets, one with three troopers and one consisting of an officer, bugler, and aid. All six are in the process of moving into combat, with weapons ready and the bugler announcing the charge. You can order the figures as STL files, to print yourself, but if you don't have access to a printer then you can get them as physical product, cast in white metal. That's a bit different to the norm; most companies that offer STLs will also sell 3D prints, in less hardy, digitally printed resin. Metal, for me, greatly ups the appeal. I really like the horses on these; they look the part, and I certainly wouldn't want to be in front of them when they are charging.

It's not just Bavarians either; Piano Wargames recently made over 40 metal sets of figures available on their webstore, which were initially created for their 'Alps Aflame' Kickstarter. Covering the Tyrolean Rebellion of 1809, there are some marvellous Tyrolean rebels and Austrians, including a beautiful set of six rebellion personalities, mounted Austrian command, and a splendid miniature of Napoleon on horseback.



*Above: Chevaulegers and Command.*



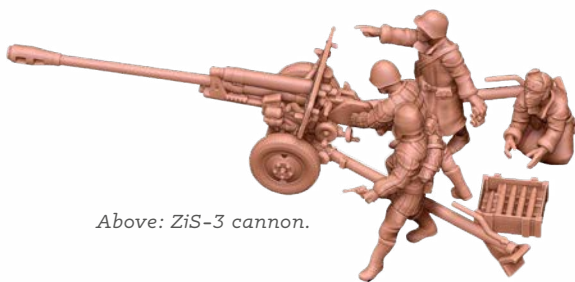
*Above: Aide-de-Camp, German Officer, and Hungarian Officer.*



*Above: Napoleon.*



*Above (left to right): Peter Mayr, Josef Speckbacher, Andreas Hofer, Joachim Haspinger, Martin Teimer von Wildau, and Johann von Kolb.*



*Above: ZiS-3 cannon.*



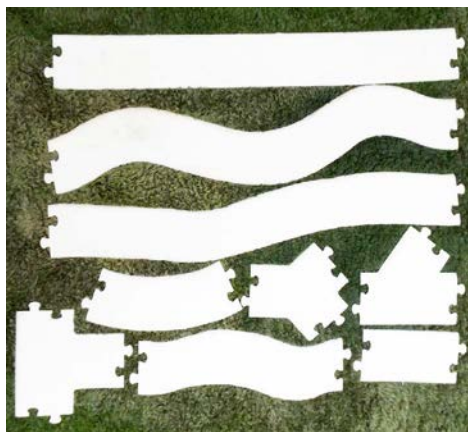
*Above: Fiat SPA transport truck.*

Eskice Miniatures ([eskiminiature.fr](http://eskiminiature.fr)) produce STL files for 3D printing and every month they release a 'Tribes' offering on MyMiniFactory. This is a subscription service where you get a pack of files, covering various historical options. June's offering (the latest as the print deadline approaches for *Wi*) features ZiS-3 cannons, British Paratroopers, and a Fiat SPA transport truck for WWII, mounted Medieval Breton sergeants, an Interwar Cruiser MKI tank, modern soldiers from Eastern Europe, and a T90 tank.



*Above: Modern soldiers from Eastern Europe.*

Getting more specific, they have released a set of streetlamps and columns (seen right) that I find really appealing. These are very French in their look, from a time of gaslights rather than electric, although these days such architectural details still exist around France. We are often guilty of not adding all the details that make a street a street and these will help with that. I can certainly see them adding some pizzaz to my WWII battles and it will be fun to come up with names for the street signs.



There was a peep at 1st Corps' ([1stcorps.co.uk](http://1stcorps.co.uk)) new flexible road system in last issue's Partizan report but, in case you missed it, here's another look at these interlocking road pieces (left). They will move as a whole once attached to each other, providing more stability on the table. There are six junctions, two straight sections, two curves, and four 'straight' sections that have gentle bends. These wiggly pieces will make your road look much more natural than arrow straight lines that are common on the wargames table.

#### AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT



There are a number of painting stations on the market but the new one from Krydrufi ([krydrufi.com](http://krydrufi.com)) caught my eye this month (seen left). That's partly because it looks like a lunchbox, rather than a painting aid, but I also like that it's modular. There are a number of options, from a simple wet palette to the 'ultra', which combines water bucket with wet palette, air tight paint storage, and some nifty looking paintbrush holders. The paint storage module has several small compartments that allow you to mix your paint while keeping everything separate. This could be a very handy bit of kit for those of us that need to pack away, rather than having a permanent painting set up.

That gets painting out the way; how about some rules to play with the things you have painted? If those figures happen to be dinosaurs (and if not, why not?), then *Clone-a-saurus: the Miniatures Game* ([cloneasaurustmg.com](http://cloneasaurustmg.com)) might be for you. If you've ever wanted to play out a certain famous dinosaur franchise, then this is the ruleset for you. It has a very RPG feel to it (there is an RPG in the works) while being a tabletop game. You can choose to control dinosaurs as they attempt to take command of their own destiny, or maybe you prefer to be the BioGen people, trying to delve into the genetic secrets of the prehistoric beasts. There are free downloads of the tokens, items, and rosters for the game along with printable playing mats and 3D STLs of dinosaurs and humans for free. It is an interesting concept that will allow you to use your child's dinosaurs that are gathering dust for something fun.



I will finish with something entirely different, with some molds from Dice Bites ([get.dicebites.com](http://get.dicebites.com)). This isn't the kind of fungus type mold favoured by goblins, nor for producing figures or terrain. These are dice shaped molds for making cakes, sweets, candles, bath bombs, and all manner of things edible or smelly. If you've ever wanted to destroy the dice that make a bad roll for you, now you can, by making some dice shaped sweets and eating them.

I am now off for a diabetes check and a dental appointment after chowing down on all those sweet dice. Until next time, fare thee well, and happy gaming!



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# QUICK FIRE!

Short, quick-read posts from *Wi* readers about their hobby projects, notes, news, and observations.

## JONESING FOR A JOSEONING - RIGHTEOUS BOWS AND CAVALRY

By Owen Chow

My current project involves the Imjin War, the Japanese Invasions of Korea (1592 - 1598). For those not familiar with Early Modern Asian warfare (a common topic in everyday conversation!) it was the only major international conflict involving the samurai and focuses on three distinct factions of Korea, Japan, and China. The Western world is familiar with samurai, but there is not the same recognition for the forces of Korea and China, which I can only attribute to them not featuring in anime. Luckily, with much research, I can provide a rundown of this unexplored army.

The Joseon Dynasty army underwent a significant evolution during the Imjin War, but my exploration here focuses on Mid-Joseon forces. The Mid-Joseon army was concentrated in the north (to fight steppe nomads) with fewer postings in the south (to deter Japanese pirates) and this shaped their composition and tactics. The standard battleline was sword-and-shield men in the front, then handgunners, then spearmen, then glaive wielders, and then archers. Professional soldiers (cavalry and infantry) would be deployed on the flanks.

When making an army, before the painting is started, the first thing to consider is the look of the miniatures. It is dreadfully inconvenient but many miniatures on the market, from Perry Miniatures to the Smol Miniatures STLs, do not reflect the historical appearance of Mid-Joseon soldiers. While brigandine depictions are usually accurate (except for fish-scale brigandine), most troops would wear paper armour or chainmail, with kettle helmets more common than the rounded cone-like ones. Brigandine was uncommon and plate with mail and lamellar was even rarer. Most models on the market wear the late Joseon Jeon-bok vest; instead, they should wear Hyeop-su, a long-sleeved coat, usually of dark colours, that stretches to the ankles. Green Stuff can extend clothing to the ankles, chainmail holes may be poked, and lamellar squares can be carved, but I recognise that this will be a huge deterrent to the casual hobbyist.

If you're still with me, we must now consider colour. Mid-Joseon armies did not have a uniform code, or uniform armours. Soldiers wore what they could afford. With clashing colours and armours, how do we get visual consistency across an army? My way was to use a common red tone as a spot colour in helmet plumes, headbands, and belts. I also tried to make chests and heads close to black, with paper armour, chainmail, and lamellar being darker and helmets stained dark with age or through black panels.

By splattering mud on legs, I reflected the desperation of the invasion but also linked the infantry together with a brown colour. Uniquely, Koreans wore white in everyday clothing, which Chinese and Japanese people abstained from, so white was my secondary colour as another link.







## MORE **QUICK FIRE!** PLEASE!

Send us your Quick Fire! pieces and get a FREE magazine or Giants in Miniature figure.

Please get in touch with a photo or two and less than 500 words of text about anything similar to what you have seen in this column; so that's painting or modelling projects, rules, wargaming notes, and observations.

Send your emails to: [wi@wargamesillustrated.net](mailto:wi@wargamesillustrated.net)

Use the subject title 'Quick Fire!'

The Joseon army has many fun elements, such as the world's first handgun (Se-Chong-tong), baby arrows (Pyeon-jeon), a general obsession with archery, and modelling opportunities for Righteous Army militias.

For a Joseon Korean video guide, check out my Youtube channel at: [youtube.com/@ClisPaintingBench](https://youtube.com/@ClisPaintingBench)





# 'TUNNEL RATS'



Lisa Smedman goes underground and braves the harrowing conditions of VC tunnels to kick off our Vietnam War theme.

It's an image guaranteed to instill claustrophobia. A 'tunnel rat', stripped to the waist and sweating, crawls through a pitch-black tunnel barely wider than his shoulders, flashlight in one hand, pistol in the other. He's a skinny kid in his late teens or early 20s, maybe a couple of inches over five feet tall. He might be down there alone, or he might be leading a two-man team, sent into the tunnels to flush out any Viet Cong hidden below.

He has no idea what lies around the next bend of the tunnel. It could be an enemy soldier with an AK-47, ready to shoot him at point-blank range. It could be a booby trap: a trip wire attached to the pin of a grenade, or a pit in the floor with sharpened punji sticks (bamboo stakes) that will impale his hand or leg if he doesn't spot it in time. Or it might be a deadly pit viper that slithered into the tunnel. That snake was known as the 'two step' because after it bit you, that's how many steps you could take before you died.

Not that taking steps was possible, down in 'the black echo'. The ceilings were only about three to four feet high, so low that tunnel rats had to crouch or crawl. The tunnels were too small to turn

around in if one was carrying an M-16 rifle, although the tunnel rats never used that weapon; the noise from one fired underground would literally be deafening. Their armament was far lighter.

Adding to the horror were the narrow trap doors that led down to the lower levels of a tunnel system. Viet Cong often lurked beyond them, armed with sharpened bamboo poles. As the first tunnel rat came through the trap door, they would spear him through the neck or torso, leaving him stuck there, impaled and unable to retreat.

As grim and deadly as it could be to venture into the VC tunnels, the actions of the tunnel rats provide us with an opportunity to bring entirely different tactical challenges to the tabletop. Where to begin?

## GAMING THE TUNNELS

While there are several Vietnam War skirmish games on the market, none focus specifically on the 'tunnel exploitation and denial teams' formed by the US and Australia in 1966. That was the year Operation Crimp kicked off, a major effort



Above: The tunnel system diorama shown in this article - "As above, so below" - is an impressive piece made by Rubicon Models, to showcase their 1/56th Vietnam War range.



to clear the Cu Chi tunnels northwest of Saigon - miles of tunnels where the Viet Cong lived, stored weapons and ammunition, operated on their wounded, and planned their next attacks.

I've recently been playing *Weird Wars: Tour of Darkness*, a Vietnam War setting for the *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition (SWADE)* rules by Pinnacle Entertainment Group. *SWADE* is first and foremost a roleplaying game, but its combat system is robust enough for a great tabletop miniatures experience. And while the *Tour of Darkness* setting focuses on supernatural monsters, it's easy to leave these out and do a more realistic scenario.

A game focused on exploring Viet Cong tunnels will be asymmetrical. The American (or Australian) player will need just one or two miniatures to represent their tunnel rats, plus a squad that remains above ground at the tunnel entrance. The Viet Cong player will need perhaps a dozen miniatures, which will be encountered a handful at a time.

#### Armed for underground attack

The VC should be painted to have the traditional 'uniform' of black silk pajamas, sandals, and a checkered scarf around the neck. They should be armed with AK-47s, Mosin-Nagant rifles, or 'Chicom' pistols - slang for Chinese



communist Type 54 pistols. These pistols were highly prized as souvenirs; a tunnel rat might collect one or might be expected to bring one back for his commander.

The tunnel rats should be carrying a flashlight - the L-shaped MX-991/U was the most common. (The 'U' stands for 'underwater'; the flashlight was waterproof.) A knife was also a must, for probing for booby traps. They should also carry a handgun.

Many tunnel rats carried a standard-issue .45-calibre Colt M1911 pistol, but the noise from it was very loud in the enclosed tunnels, and the bright muzzle flash could ruin night vision. Others were armed with the less lethal but quieter Hi-Standard .22-calibre Model HD semi-automatic target pistol, which had a 10-round magazine. Some men traded for revolvers that had been issued to aviators (Smith & Wesson Model 10s, or Colt Police Positive Specials), which fired .38-calibre special rounds. Others purchased their own personal weapons.

## 28MM SPELUNKERS

Your miniatures should be crouching or crawling to be truly fitting, and Gringo 40s makes 28mm miniatures that are perfect for an underground scenario. In addition to a wide range of US Army and Marine Corps figures, they offer three tunnel rats. One is crawling prone, with a flashlight and M1911 pistol. The second is the same soldier in a crouching pose. The third is bare-chested and crawling on his hands and knees. He's pointing a silenced .38-calibre revolver equipped with an aiming light, and has a miner's light on his cap. A wire leads from the radio on his belt to a microphone near his lips.

Gringo 40s also produce a nice range of Viet Cong miniatures, many of them crouching, and some of the figures from their *Sappers in the Wire!* set could be used if you want them to have ditched some of their uniform. The wider VC range includes several female figures. Nearly 1.5 million women served in the North Vietnamese military during the war, many of them in combat roles.

Full Metal Miniatures offers a few Vietnamese civilians, some of them crouching next to baskets of food and a cooking fire. They also make Vietnamese casualties. Civilians were sometimes encountered in the tunnels, particularly at Cu Chi; entire families, including women, children, and the elderly, would shelter below due to US bombing raids. A scenario could include a few of these miniatures. These might appear, at first glance, to be enemy, but then turn out to be civilians, or the other way around - civilian-looking but loyal to the VC.

Some tunnel complexes even included a small cinema where films were shown, and where civilian actors performed to raise the morale of troops who sometimes had to go for weeks without seeing daylight. Full Metal Miniatures offers a Vietnam-era film crew. While these figures aren't meant to be North Vietnamese, they could easily stand in for civilians shooting a patriotic film in the tunnels.



Right: Figures from Gringo 40s *Sappers in the Wire!* set, along with one of their female Viet Cong fighters.



Smith & Wesson produced a 'tunnel-exploration revolver' - a .38-caliber revolver with a silencer and aiming-light attached to the top of the weapon - but the silencer proved too long for the revolver to be pulled rapidly from a holster, and a miner's lamp was more effective at lighting the way, rendering the aiming light redundant. The army also issued a Quiet Special Purpose Revolver (QSPR) tunnel gun by Smith & Wesson. It fired a .40-caliber shotgun shell filled with steel pellets, and was as quiet as a .22 revolver. Its range was only about 30 feet, but that was plenty underground. The weapon was small enough that a tunnel rat could reach around a corner and fire. The pellets didn't always kill, but they could incapacitate. Only a small number of these weapons were available, however, and the QSPR was withdrawn after six months, due to performance issues. A few tunnel rats carried short-barrelled shotguns into the tunnels; although these were lethal, they were also deafening.

Explosive grenades were never used, due to potentially lethal blast overpressure in a confined space, but CS or smoke grenades might be employed, if the tunnel rats had gas masks.

#### Fog of war

Any scenario involving tunnel rats should place a heavy emphasis on exploration and fog of war. While miniature wargames are typically played on full battlefields that offer both sides perfect layout information, a tunnel-based scenario should reveal just the immediate surroundings: only as much as a flashlight beam would illuminate.

For my tunnel system, I used a series of printed paper tiles, marked with a one-inch grid. I needed seven types of tiles to represent the tunnels themselves: a straight section, a right-angle turn, a three-way intersection, four-way intersection, and a Y-junction. I also printed a small room and a large room (giving them various numbers of exits).

I modified the tiles from *Children of the Bush*, a scenario for the *SWADE* system, available as a free download at [peginc.com/product-category/tour-of-darkness](http://peginc.com/product-category/tour-of-darkness).

For the above-ground terrain where the rest of the platoon waited, I printed jungle tiles from *Blood of the Innocent*, another *SWADE* scenario, available at [drivethrurpg.com](http://drivethrurpg.com).

I played as the Viet Cong, and revealed the map tiles one at a time, populating them as I went with miniatures and objectives (counters representing weapons caches, maps and documents, and captured American GIs).

#### Supporting team

While the tunnel rats explore below, members of the team who remain above ground establish a perimeter, and keep watch for Viet Cong who are flushed from the tunnels. The American (or Australian) player should decide how many of the squad remain near the spot where the tunnels were entered, how many fan out through the surrounding village or jungle, and to what distance.

As encounters happen below, the Viet Cong player can decide whether any VC (or civilians) exit to the surface, and whether they surprise those above. In the *Savage Worlds* system I used, this

involved an opposed Stealth vs. Notice roll; soldiers who failed to spot the VC couldn't act in the first round of combat.

In some cases, there might be intel on the location of a trap door. Some tunnel rats took radios and a compass below, and could relay a trap door's approximate location to those above. Needing to talk on a radio reduced the chance that the tunnel rats would surprise the enemy, however, and estimates of how far they'd travelled below ground were only approximate.

Soldiers above can spend their time actively searching for trap doors. These were well hidden, so a penalty should be imposed to any spotting rolls, but, if the tunnel complex contains a kitchen, they might spot smoke rising from the ground, making detection easier. If the soldiers above find an exit, they can toss in a grenade or CS gas, although, if the tunnel rats are close by, they could be caught in friendly fire.

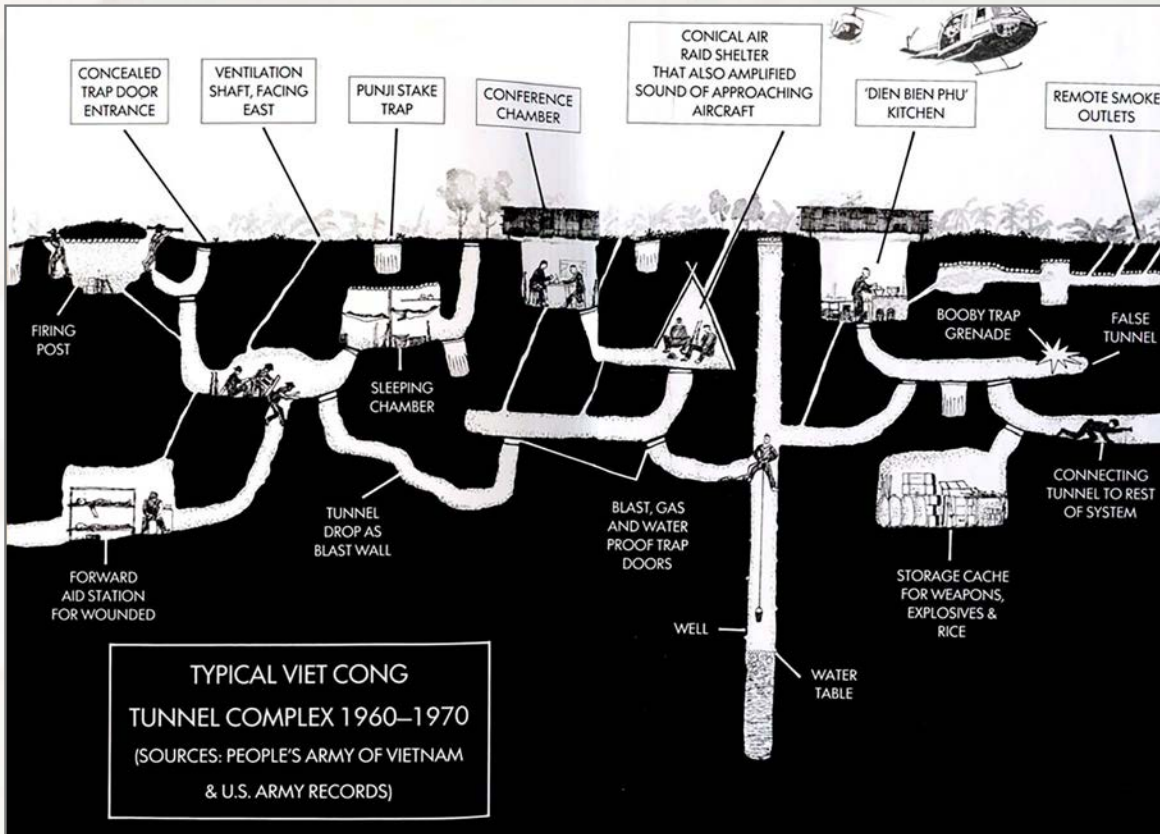
#### Mapping the tunnels

In the *SWADE* system, there are heroes and less-capable 'extras'. Since I was running the game as a Games Master, I let the tunnel rats be the heroes and the Viet Cong the extras, and limited the VC to one or two minis in a tunnel section, or up to six in a room. I didn't want the game to be too lethal! I came up with a system for randomizing whether encounters took place, weighting the odds so that most of the tunnels were empty.

Prior to the game, the Viet Cong player should sketch out the tunnel complex on graph paper or using an online mapping program like *Dungeon Scrawl* ([dungeonscrawl.com](http://dungeonscrawl.com)). The







Left: A diagram of a basic Viet Cong tunnel system. U.S. Army.

complex should be D4 levels deep, with two or three trap doors connecting each set of levels, including additional trap doors leading up to the surface.

Each level should have D6+3 rooms, none larger than about 15 or 20 feet across. Tunnels should be three feet wide and bend every ten to 30 feet. There should be D3+2 booby traps in total,

mostly on the first level - either a tripwire grenade or a punji stake pit, which the tunnel rats set off or fall into if they don't spot them in time.

I also randomized whether booby traps were present, and, if so, which kind.

Rooms can be randomized using this table:

SMALL ROOM		
2D10 Roll	Function	Notes
2	Signals Room	D3 soldiers and a possible officer, along with documents, maps, and radio.
3	Operating Room	1-2 doctors and D6 wounded.
4	Medical Aid Station	1 medic and D3 wounded.
5-6	Food & Water Storage	Sacks of rice and earthenware jars of water.
7-8	Cache	Roll 1D10 to determine cache contents: 1-6 = small arms and ammunition. 7-8 = light or medium machine gun and ammunition belts. 9 = mortars and shells. 10 = disassembled artillery piece and shells (Level 1 only).
9-11	Sleeping Quarters	D6 soldiers (possibly civilians), along with hammocks, mats, and personal effects.
12-14	Workshop	D3 soldiers Roll 1D10 to determine type of workshop: 1 = flags and clothing (sewing machines). 2 = propaganda pamphlets (printing press). 3-6 = mines and booby traps. 7-10 = weapon repair.
15-16	Kitchen (Level 1 only)	D3 soldiers (possibly civilians)
17-18	Bomb Shelter	D6 soldiers (possibly civilians)
19	Headquarters	One officer and D3 soldiers, along with documents and maps.
20	Theatre	D3 civilians = theatre troupe (may be a performance in session, or a film being screened), plus audience of D6 soldiers.

Civilians: roll D10, 1 = civilians present (instead of soldiers).

Possible Officer: roll D10, 1-2 = officer present, replace one soldier with an officer.

Wounded can't fight, doctors fight on a D10 roll of 1, and medics fight as soldiers.



## UNEARTHED TUNNEL TROVES

In one rare instance, tunnel rats discovered an American M-48 tank that had been buried and turned into a command center with battery-powered lights and a working radio. Other unusual finds included crates of heroin, a box of American bras and bikinis, and gold bars.

Among the more important finds were lists of Vietnamese double agents working inside US bases, and plans to ambush and kill Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara during his 1966 visit to Saigon.

### Random events

In the game I ran, each stretch of tunnel was empty, unless a random roll (a 1 on a D6) caused a lone VC to appear suddenly around a bend in a tunnel. The American player then had a tough choice: scuttle forward and attack silently with a knife, or shoot, possibly alerting VC elsewhere on that level.

I also included the possibility of civilians sheltering below, which is reflected in the table on the previous page. A tunnel rat might waste time trying to ascertain whether these are civilians - and, if they are VC, that hesitation could prove fatal. To make spotting less penalizing, on a D6 roll of 1-3, the figures are obviously civilians; they include elderly and children.

Possible random events include a patrol of VC returning to the complex and surprising those above ground, a poisonous snake slithering along a tunnel, or the discovery of an American or Australian prisoner being held captive below. In the *Savage Worlds* system, which uses a card deck for initiative, these were triggered by Jokers.

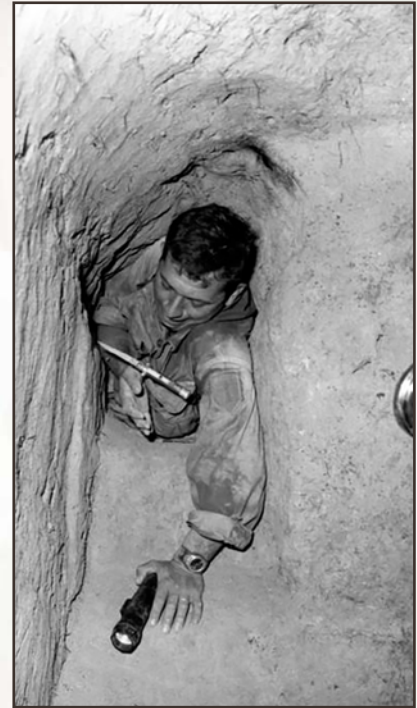
*Right: Units assembled tunnel-exploration kits themselves, and no two were alike. There was a scramble to collect the necessary equipment when a tunnel system was discovered, and they often had to make do with whatever was available. There were some widely used items, especially handguns. The most readily available and commonly used were the Colt .45-cal. M1911A1 pistol (1), and the Hi-Standard .22-cal. Model HD pistol (2). Above it is the HDM model's fixed silencer (3). The Ruger .22-cal. Mk I pistol (4) was less commonly used than the Hi-Standard. The S&W .38-cal. Special Model 10 tunnel-exploration revolver (5) is shown with a removable silencer and aiming light. Unmodified Model 10s (commonly carried by aviators) were also used. The .40-cal. smoothbore Quiet Special Purpose Revolver (QSPR) was based on the S&W Model 29 (6). The cartridge fired 15 pellets. Only a few of these revolvers were available, and they were used from April 1969 to 1971. The lightweight and compact XM29 protective mask (7) protected the wearer from tear gas only, and was introduced in 1968. The bulkier M17 protective mask saw much use (8), even after the XM29 was introduced. The TA-1/PT sound-powered field telephone (9) was sometimes taken into tunnels to relay information on route-planning and discoveries. It would be connected to another on the surface via WD-1 wire dispensed from a 1/2-mile-long MX-306A/G spool (known as a "donut reel") (10). The lensatic compass (11) was used to determine the tunnel's changes in direction. The MX-991/U right-angle flashlight (12) was the most commonly used, as it could be shone around angles without danger to the tunnel rat. Use was also made of the MX-290/GV six-volt lantern (13). From *Tunnel Rat in Vietnam*. Brian Delf. © Osprey Publishing [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)*

### Objectives

While the primary objective for the tunnel rats was to explore the tunnel system and kill any enemy they encountered, they might also have additional objectives. They were expected to recover enemy documents, and to blow up caches of equipment (which would necessitate a return to the surface to collect the necessary C4 explosive). The officer in charge of the team might demand a body count, or might covet souvenirs. He might also insist on the tunnel rats capturing prisoners, although the VC rarely surrendered; in the dark of the tunnels, it was kill or be killed.

### TUNNEL RATS

The average tunnel rat was small and wiry, typically no taller than 5'5", as larger men wouldn't fit in the tunnels, which were made to accommodate the average-sized Vietnamese soldier.



*Above: A tunnel rat squirms through a VC tunnel hospital found in War Zone C during Operation Junction City, 1967.*

The slogan of the tunnel rats was *Gratum Anus Rodentum*, pseudo-Latin that translates roughly as 'Not Worth a Rat's Ass' or 'Couldn't Give a Rat's Ass'. Exploring a VC tunnel system was known as 'running the hole'.





When a patrolling platoon discovered a tunnel entrance, the platoon leader called for a volunteer to explore below. Most soldiers hated the idea, but a few - typically the smallest guys in the platoon - started to specialize in the exceptionally nerve-wracking job of navigating a mazelike tunnel system, and confronting the enemy face to face in a dark, confined space.

Eventually, tunnel rat teams were formed, typically two to six men. They would be brought by helicopter to the tunnel location, and most of the team would remain above ground near the entrance, guarding the area around it. These men passed down equipment, hauled up whatever the tunnel rats found below, and then prepared demolition charges to blow the tunnel complex up after it had been explored.

### Undressed underground elites

Tunnel rats stripped off all unnecessary equipment before venturing below. Helmets were too clunky to wear below ground, and even the brim of a boonie hat might obscure vision. They trained in hand-to-hand combat, detecting and defusing booby traps, and how to change a flashlight bulb or battery in pitch darkness. Some tunnel rats were expected to haul a radio along with them as they explored, reporting their findings to those above through wire that was spooled out as they crawled along. They learned the trick of taping the button, so the radio was always sending, so as not to have a voice from those above give them away. Others communicated by clicking the radio button instead of talking, to maintain stealth.

Tunnel rats were trained to move slowly and probe the ground ahead of them with a knife or long metal probing rod, to detect camouflaged pits in the floor,



false walls, or trap doors hidden with dirt. In case the lead man failed to spot a trip-wire grenade in time, the second man would remain five yards back, so he (in theory) wouldn't be caught in the blast.

### A deadly dive

Some tunnels were flooded with water, through which a tunnel rat had to swim. These water locks were intended to prevent CS gas and explosions from reaching the main part of the complex. They could sometimes be a dead end, luring a tunnel rat to swim blindly until he ran out of air and drowned. If a tunnel rat was injured or wounded underground, the second tunnel rat had to pull him out - a laborious process, especially if negotiating trap doors was involved. Ropes and grappling hooks helped with this task.

According to the US Department of Defense, a total of 700 soldiers served as tunnel rats during the war. Of that total, 36 were killed, and 200 were wounded. Some men couldn't overcome the claustrophobia they experienced being underground in such tight spaces, and many suffered from PTSD long after the war.

Even exiting a tunnel could be dangerous. If the tunnel rat emerged from a different exit, he might startle American soldiers patrolling above and get shot by mistake, due to them thinking he was the enemy. Tunnel rats whistled American songs when returning to the surface, to alert those above.

The main objectives of exploring a tunnel were to determine if it was occupied by the enemy, and to recover weapons, munitions and documents. Capturing any Viet Cong was unlikely; the enemy knew the tunnel system and its exits, so could keep one step ahead of the tunnel rats.

Once a tunnel was cleared, explosives would be used to collapse it, rendering it unusable.

### THE TUNNELS

The entrance to an underground complex would always be well hidden. It might be in the jungle, camouflaged by brush, or under a hinged tree stump. If in a village, it might be inside a 'hooch', hidden under a sleeping mat, basket, or wood pile. Some entrances were hidden under manure piles or inside latrines. Others might be hidden in a cemetery or religious shrine. Perhaps the best concealed were tunnels whose entrances were submerged in a riverbank, necessitating an underwater swim.

A tunnel complex might be discovered due to the smell of cooking, or the sound of voices rising from hidden air vents, or because of trampled grass and vegetation near its entrance. The Americans also used trained dogs to sniff out tunnels.

When an entrance to a tunnel was discovered, a CS (tear gas) or frag grenade might be tossed into it to clear the entrance. Another tactic for flushing out the enemy involved pumping in tear gas using a Mity Mite blower (originally designed for spreading pesticides on farms) and then pumping in air to clear the tunnel of gas before the tunnel rats entered. CS was intended to be non-lethal, but because it displaced oxygen in the tunnels, Viet Cong sheltering below could asphyxiate. If CS lingered, the tunnel rats might have to explore wearing gas masks, which restricted their vision, making them less likely to spot the enemy or booby traps.



Above: Sgt. Ronald H. Payne entering a tunnel with a flashlight and M1911 pistol to search for Viet Cong.





Above: Only one tunnel entrance had to be found initially. This would be carefully uncovered and checked for booby traps. Sometimes a satchel charge would simply be detonated at the entrance to blast away camouflage, blow open any covering material, detonate booby traps, and kill any waiting ambusher. Once exposed, frag and CS grenades might be thrown in, just to make sure. The entrance would then be sealed with a poncho, an M106 Mity Mite blower hose inserted, M1A1 white smoke pots were used, and the tunnel flooded with the oxygen-displacing smoke. Besides flushing out the VC, the smoke seeped out of other entrances, air vents, and firing ports. Infantrymen would be placed throughout the area to report any smoke seepage. Additional troops were sent to cover each entrance discovered, in order to guard against a breakout. Tear gas flooding through tunnels could force the desperate VC to emerge into withering fire. An M1A1 smoke pot weighed 12lbs, and burned grayish-white smoke for five to eight minutes after a ten-second delay. Colored-smoke grenades, with less-dense smoke, were used in the same manner. Before a tunnel rat entered the tunnel, the Mity Mite was used to flush out the VC with smoke and tear gas. Besides M183 satchel charges containing 16 1.1lb M112 C4 blocks, entire 46lb cases of C4, with 30 M112 charges, were dragged into tunnels, placed at key points, linked by detonating cord, and detonated, in order to collapse them. Troops cleared the area for this event. Besides the obvious danger of collapsing tunnels, hidden ammunition stores could be sympathetically detonated, with impressive results. From *Tunnel Rat in Vietnam* by Brian Delf. © Osprey Publishing [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)



The tunnels were very narrow, only about two and a half feet wide. They twisted and turned, never running for more than 30 feet before bending. After one or two turns, a tunnel rat would be in complete darkness. Rooms were typically no more than 15 to 20 feet wide, and were illuminated by candles or oil lamps. The largest had ceilings that were eight feet high, but most were lower.

Air quality was poor underground. The tunnels had air vents, but these were few and far between. Most complexes were only a couple of levels deep, although the most extensive went down four levels. The trap doors leading down to these levels might be booby trapped, wired with explosives designed to detonate when the door was lifted.



## Home sweet mole home

The Viet Cong lived in the tunnels for months or years at a stretch, emerging briefly to fight before disappearing underground again. General William Westmoreland, in command of US forces in Vietnam, called the Viet Cong 'human moles'.

Sleeping quarters held hammocks or sleeping mats. Kitchens could be found on the upper levels, with vents to carry away cooking smoke carefully spaced out on the surface. The tunnels were a place to cache weapons, ammunition and equipment, or to manufacture mines and booby traps, including improvised grenades made from Coca Cola cans. There were weapon-repair facilities, medical-aid stations, and even operating rooms, illuminated with lights running on foot-powered generators. Surgeons worked wearing miner's helmets while working on patients.

Some rooms contained workshops with printing presses that cranked out propaganda, or with sewing machines for making flags. Storage areas held food - typically, sacks of rice - and large earthenware pots filled with drinking water. There were latrines, and even morgues underground. Sometimes, bodies would be temporarily buried in the walls, until they could be relocated.

The tunnel rats were most interested, of course, in locating a headquarters or signals room, which would yield valuable maps and coded documents. These had to be dragged back to the surface. When caches of arms or ammunition were found, they were blown up with explosives. Tunnel rats hauled in C4 explosives and spools of det cord, then triggered the blast when safely above ground again.

There's a whole world of underground options for your Vietnam War gaming as long as you can face the claustrophobic conditions of the tunnels!

## GO DEEPER UNDERGROUND

The 2008 film *1968: Tunnel Rats* is a good starting point for ideas for scenarios. The movie is impossible to watch without a feeling of intense claustrophobia and features many brutal scenes of booby traps and close-quarters combat.

The documentary *The Cu Chi Tunnels* is told from the perspective of the Viet Cong, and gives a great sense of what life underground was like. It's available on YouTube: [youtube.com/watch?v=19ejFuEyHyk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19ejFuEyHyk)

One of the best reference books on the subject is *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, by Tom Mangold and John Penycate. Osprey Publishing's *Tunnel Rat in Vietnam* by Gordon L. Rottman is another good reference, with lots of color illustrations of equipment. Osprey's *Viet Cong and NVA Tunnels and Fortifications of the Vietnam War* offers detailed information on the construction of the tunnels.



Above: VC woman captured in a tunnel in the Iron Triangle Spring, 1967.



Above: Unless indicated, all Models' seen in this article are from Rubicon Models plastic 1/56th Vietnam War range.



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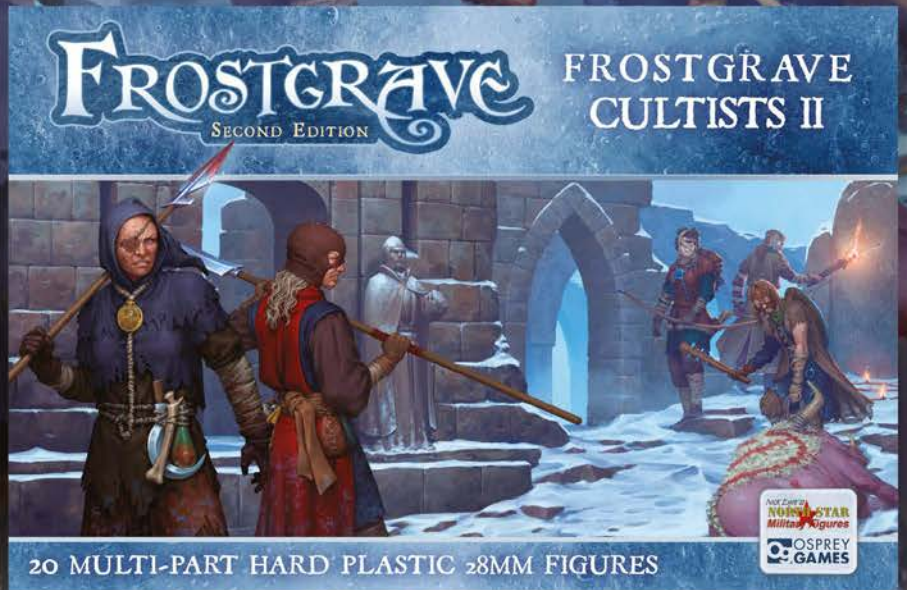


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# BUILDING AN EPIC DIORAMA

**Matt Parkes shares valuable insight and tips on the building of his huge Punic Wars diorama, which he made with a few of Warlord Games' Hail Caesar Epic Battles freebie frames from Wi439.**

Creating a detailed diorama for wargaming isn't just about assembling miniatures, painting them, and sticking them onto a base; it's about crafting a narrative, considering compositional elements, and ensuring every detail serves the story.

In this article, we delve into the processes behind this truly Epic diorama, made by seasoned hobbyist Matt Parkes. His scene, showcasing the wonderful new Hail Caesar Epic Battles plastics, captures the intensity of a historical battle (it is loosely based on the box art from Warlord's Hannibal set) while still presenting clear storytelling beats. How did he do it?

## FIND YOUR FOCUS

The diorama's compositional core is a dramatic scene involving a felled elephant, which can be seen on Marco Capparoni's Hannibal artwork (seen right). All the models used in the diorama come from frames given away with the July issue of *Wargames Illustrated*, except the fallen elephant, which is an Epic Battles pre-release exclusive miniature.

This centrepiece anchors the narrative visually, drawing the eye to the middle of the long oblong slab on which the diorama is mounted (actually two plinths, fixed together!). It sets the mood for the unfolding drama; while the other figures are still alive and marching to meet each other, the fact a huge elephant has been taken down hints at the carnage to come!







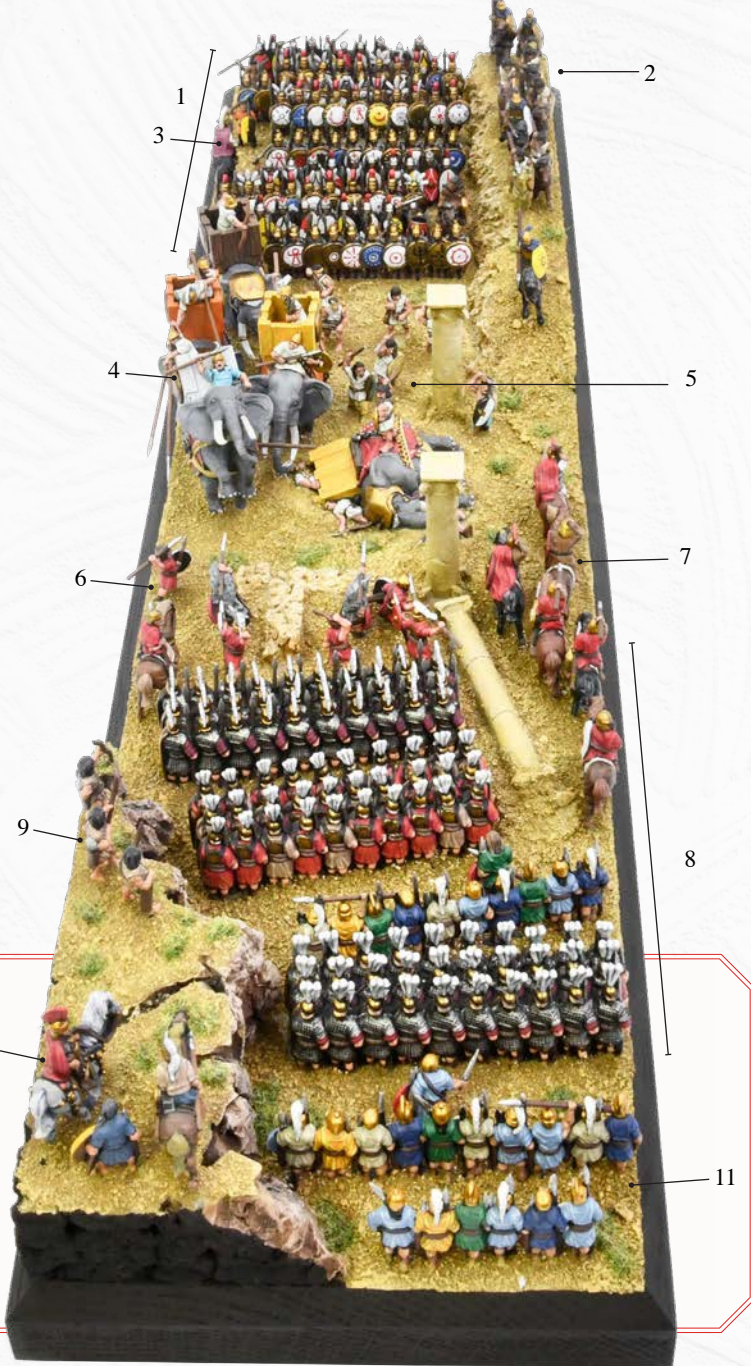
Above: The Carthaginians have a leader among their ranks, whereas the Roman troops do not.

### YIN AND YANG

To avoid visual monotony, Matt presented the forces in a yin-and-yang way. Subtle differences and opposite positioning are introduced throughout the diorama, enhancing this flow through the placement of the figures, the colours used, and more.

The forces each have a sweep in their placement, taking them towards the central elephant, and Matt took care to alternate placement of particular figures. On the Roman side, the generals are all standing away from the troops, while their enemy have their leaders marching among them, in the thick of the action. This attention to detail amplifies the contrast, and ensures that there is always something new to notice in the scene.

### CARTHAGINIANS



- 1 Libyan Heavy Infantry, Iberian Scutarii, and Italian Allies
- 2 Numidian and Spanish Cavalry
- 3 Carthaginian General
- 4 Carthaginian War Elephants
- 5 Carthaginian Allied Skirmishers
- 6 Roman Velites
- 7 Roman Light and Equites Cavalry
- 8 Roman Hastati
- 9 Numidian Archers
- 10 Roman General
- 11 Celtiberian Allies

### ROMANS





## LABORIOUS LAYOUT

In a scene as involved and complex as this one, Matt needed to give a lot of consideration to the layout. The cliffs and ruins, which also echo the yin-and-yang composition, are positioned to funnel the figures, and tighten things up. They create leading lines that the troops follow. Even though a viewer may not be aware they are seeing this compositional technique, they will appreciate the intention subconsciously. Guiding the viewer's eye through simple terrain placement like this adds to the cohesiveness of the scene.

The narrow composition of the diorama serves a specific purpose, like the Hot Gate in the graphic novel and movie *300*, creating a bottleneck crunch point. This makes for more tension and focus. The ruins and cliffs act as natural frames within the diorama, enhancing the sense of depth, and directing viewer attention to key areas. Painting the plinth and outer cliff edges in black makes for a more salient frame.

In creating a narrow piece of what could be a much greater, broader battle, Matt has done what we often encourage players to do when fighting large battles: take a chunk of the action and play that out, considering what might happen at the edges, but focusing on the events in one key area.

The diorama's constricted composition and framing are deliberate choices. The columns, ruins, troop formations, and higher ground offer unique framing for every viewing angle. This approach is visually dynamic, and emphasises the action.



*Above: Matt dived into his bits-box to find these columns, which he suspects are old lead Foundry offerings.*





## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The diorama is fairly flat, with the Epic scale enhancing even the most subtle height differences. Where there are rises and cliffs, Matt made extensive use of cork, whose rock-like appearance belies its easily-refined and -textured surface.

The placement of figures was finalised pre-painting, but nothing was fixed in place. It would have been a nightmare to paint the figures on this hefty base, especially to Matt's exacting standards, so each rank was pinned and painted separately. As he progressed, Matt could gradually glue the figures in place, working from one side to the other, getting boosts of inspiration from seeing the progress any time the repetitiveness threatened to bring him down.



Superglue fixes the sand and other elements in place around the figures, applied after the units were fully painted. This ensures a stable and realistic base that blends the ground into the figures neatly, with no need for filling. It did require a full two bottles of superglue, though!

To vary the height of the troops, Matt added a thin piece of cork under a rank or two, so that they'd rise above the other soldiers. As with the standard placement, superglued sand filled in any gaps.



*Left: The grains of regular sand are a bit too large when modelling with Epic figures, so Matt ground down his sand before application.*

### SAVING TIME WITH SUPERGLUE

Matt used an extra-long tip on his superglue bottle, affording him precision when adding it between the tight ranks. With that done, he scattered sand over the surface then quickly hit it with a spray of drying accelerator. This reduces the risk that the superglue will give off powdery fumes as it dries, which would 'fog' the paint job on the figures.

If you use this same technique, you may find that you need to apply a few layers of sand to get the texture looking just right, but it saves a lot of time and refinement you'd otherwise spend filling in and bulking up gaps.







### THE PAINTING PROCESS

The figures were painted separately, a rank at a time, before being assembled and placed into the diorama. This was even the case on the three-deep Roman Triarii infantry. Their central row would have been far harder to paint if Matt had glued them together, so he left them split apart until he'd detailed the mid-rank's heads and edges.

Colour plays a crucial role in differentiating the factions. The Romans are predominantly red with white, and shields have been kept plain on purpose. Their enemy are in opposed colours with yellows and blues.

Matt's a great believer in the power of a good colour scheme - it can add depth and clarity to a scene - and here the colour placement helps distinguish between the opposing forces and enhances the visuals.

*Right: It's important that you keep the painting clean and simple at this scale. Matt would usually apply washes on larger-scale figures, but skipped them here, to avoid toning down the finish.*



*Above: Almost all the shield designs here have slight variations, enhancing the contrast between these individualistic warriors and their uniform Roman opposition.*



*Above (both pictures): Individual commanders stand out through slightly varied paint schemes, and their positions on higher ground.*



## MATT'S BIG DIORAMA TRICKS

### Frame within a frame

Use natural elements, such as the ruins and cliffs here, to create frames within the diorama, guiding the viewer's eye to key areas.

### Colour contrast

Employ complementary colours for different factions to maintain visual interest and clarity.

### Pin and paint

Pin and paint figures separately, then glue them onto the diorama. Once done, consider making modifications to colours and adding shadows to the groundwork to give the models a better sense of placement.

### Superglue is your friend!

Use superglue with an accelerator to set elements in place quickly, and texture the ground all at once.

### Break down tasks

Divide the project into smaller, manageable tasks to help you maintain focus, and stay sane. Intersperse the repetitive work with 'rewards' that focus on the more fun parts of the project.

### Don't get too close with the hairdryer

Hairdryers can be a great way of speeding up drying time, but get too close with the nozzle at your peril!



*Left: The plastic pikes warped in the heat of the hairdryer.*



*Left: They were replaced with 'heat resistant' metal spears.*

## TAKING ON A LARGE PROJECT

Keeping your focus and maintaining quality on a project of this magnitude are both extremely hard to do. Matt suggests breaking things down into manageable parts, and rewarding yourself with a 'treat' after plodding through a repetitive process. Once Matt started to feel burned out from applying the same systematic painting to one kind of troops, he'd spice things up by painting some horses, or adding freehand details onto shields.

Matt is also keen to point out that big projects often feature a moment at which regret might creep in. The 'I could have made that better,' factor becomes all too apparent, and you've got to call it a day at some point. Yes, you could have done some bits better, but you've actually done them, which is more than most hobbyists manage! Learn from the experience, know when to stop, and appreciate the work overall, rather than getting caught up in endless revisions and the minutiae... Although Matt, if pressed, would probably admit that this is still something he struggles to do!



If you are inspired, why not try and build your own Epic scene with last issue's free frames? We'd love to see your work if you do. Send some photos and text to our Quick Fire section, and you could be featured in a future issue [See page 20 - Ed].









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# SAIGON '68



For our Vietnam theme, James examines Loughton Strike Force's magnificent Tet Offensive board, after interviewing its creator, Martin Stanbridge, at this year's Salute wargaming show.

*Left: The game in all its glory.*

## LOUGHTON STRIKE FORCE

Loughton Strike Force is a long-established miniature wargaming club on the London and Essex border. Its members play a wide selection of historical tabletop and board games, and, if you've been to Salute over the last few years, you'll have already been wowed by the very best of what they do; amazing games such as this one, and their previous Mordheim and Stalingrad displays have impressed attendees and judges alike.

New players are always welcome at the club, regardless of their experience level, and can arrive from 7pm on Wednesday evenings to take part.

Head to the club's website - [loughtonstrikeforce.co.uk](http://loughtonstrikeforce.co.uk) - for more information about their general activities and what's planned for their next big Sunday game, which they put on every quarter.





The Vietnam War is one of the historical and wargaming periods that I find most intriguing, so this Saigon '68 game, from Salute 51, was my highlight of the show. It's a detail-rich board that, were it not for my other job requirements on the day, could have easily held my attention for hours on end.

Loughton Strike Force's Martin Stanbridge put a ton of attention into detailing each facet of the build's landscape, structures, scatter, and figures, resulting in a gaming table that exudes the atmosphere and bustle of cinematic Saigon wherever you look. "I've been adding to it over time but worked out most of it in about four months," Martin told me. "I'm a teacher, so when the Summer holidays came last year, I spent those weeks building it up."

Clearly time well-spent; the board is built to the very highest display level, but played host to a lively game while Salute ran. The buildings and roads don't represent an exact replica of an area, or a specific moment in battle, but by layering recognisable and well-researched features, Martin's created the impression of the city at the end of January 1968.

### THE TET OFFENSIVE

That date is, of course, a rather notable one: signifying the start of *Tết Nguyên Đán* - the Vietnamese celebration of the arrival of spring - as well as the opening of the Tet Offensive. With many ARVN personnel on leave for the holiday, the Viet Cong and People's Army of Vietnam chose it as the perfect time to make a huge and impressively coordinated push. They launched an unprecedented number of surprise assaults across South Vietnam, with Saigon, the South's capital, the focus of multiple assaults.

The North's intent was to make a notable show of force against military and civilian strongpoints, to cause instability in the region and bring about a mass rebellion. In reality, after the early shock of the attacks, the VC and PAVN were decimated by the US and ARVN response and the South Vietnamese never rose to join the fight.

The ultimate success of the Tet Offensive came through its impact on the rest of the world's perception of the war. The shock of the Tet Offensive (a supposedly-broken enemy launching a major attack) made the media take serious note. What the journalists, photographers, and camera operators presented, to a horrified public, were truly brutal reprisals. These scenes of barbarity made for a major turning point in the war, with further US involvement completely untenable in the eyes of its people.

That bigger-picture narrative wasn't too important at Salute 51, though! Loughton Strike Force's game focused on the moment-to-moment action in a small area, which had been sparked when VC attackers on a rooftop injured an MP below them (seen above right).



*Above and right: Gringo 40s' 'Heroic MP Dragging Wounded Buddy Out of the Line of Fire' figure is the focus of the action here. The need to rescue this wounded Military Policeman was the inciting incident that Martin came up with for the growing scale of the engagement on his tabletop.*



*Above: US reinforcements arrive, some riding in M133 APCs...*



*Left: ... and start to work their way through the awkward choke points of the city.*



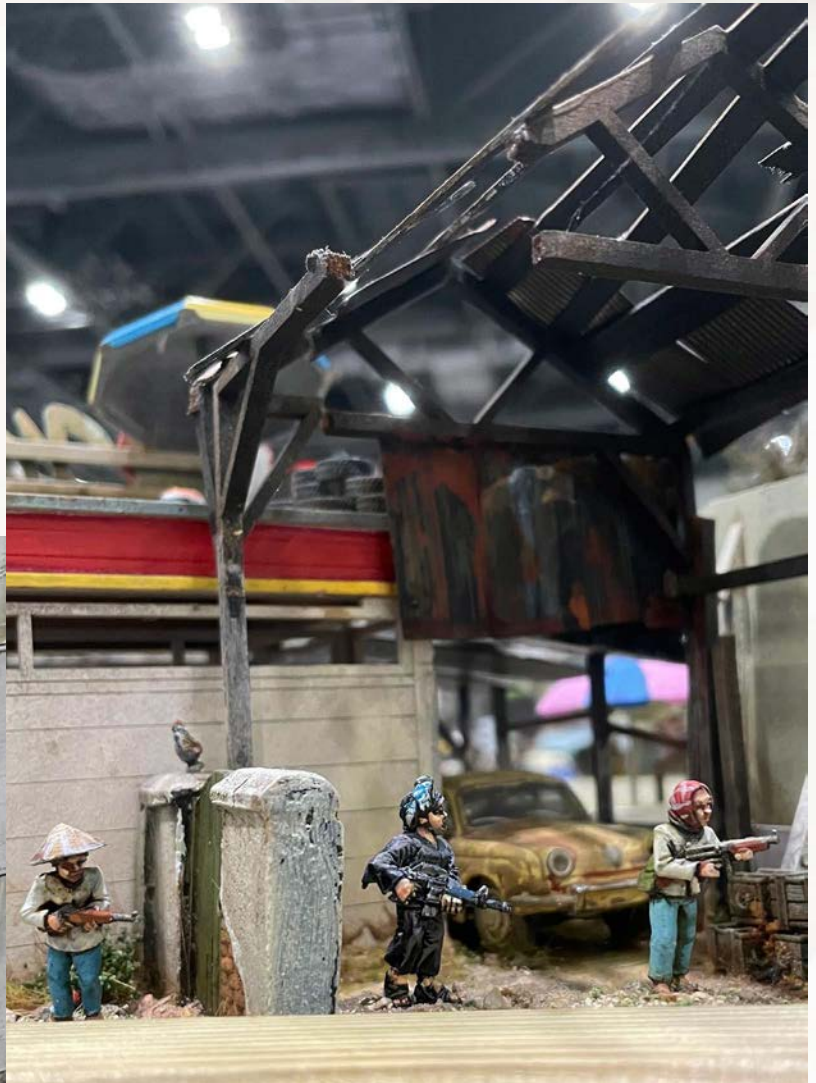
## THE VANISHING VIET CONG

The game was played with rules designed specifically for this board, and they had some neat features. “It’s very much a hybrid ruleset,” Martin told me. “I wanted the VC to be able to appear and disappear, but not make it too easy for them to do that, to keep some friction in the game. It makes it difficult for the Americans, who are eventually going to win - they have to win! - but they’re going to find themselves in some nasty situations.

“There are extra cards for the VC to use. These allow things like additional shooting, troops to deploy quickly or fall back, and gaining extra movement. These cards can be played at any time, so the Americans might want to shoot at you; you can play a card to trump what they’re doing and move your figures out of their line of sight.”



Above: Infiltrating VC emerge from a friendly safehouse in the city and take up a firing position on the balcony, unseen by the people below.



These custom rules made for a game wherein the VC would appear, as if from nowhere, ready to do damage, before vanishing back into the shadows, keeping the US troops on their toes.

While there are some areas that show the consequences of the raging battle (see below), in much of the city life goes on as normal. Martin, who is no stranger to making ruined buildings (such as the meticulously-researched wrecks on the Stalingrad board he made for Salute 49), told me: “The damage mostly came from the Americans in Tet, destroying the buildings and driving out the VC. I haven’t really gone into that, as this is more of a skirmish game.”



Above: Some of the cards used by the VC in the game.





## BUILDING SAIGON

There's no denying the importance of the figures on the tabletop, but the star of the show (and winning the Salute 51 award for Best Scenery) was Martin's representation of Saigon. He used a mixture of 3D-printed, MDF, and scratch-built structures to create a beautifully detailed and varied display, with buildings ranging from multi-storey blocks (covered in advertising) to far more ramshackle areas.

"I like doing the research for games, and here I wanted to get the feel for Saigon, so the advertising is all from the period. Painting the buildings is a completely different mindset to the figures, too," Martin explained, while I examined some of the structures. "When you're looking at figures, you're looking for detail, but when you're looking at buildings, you're looking for texture. There's a lot of bigger brushes used and techniques like drybrushing and washing to add interest."



Above and right: The main street is a masterpiece in miniature with the various advertising boards and signs styled to match those found in Martin's research.



Above: While the style of the vending machine here is a little anachronistic, there's no denying how impressive the painting detail is! The cocks and duck making the area their own are just some of the many birds and animals included on the board.



Above: Building walls have layers of texture, with plaster peeling in areas to reveal brickwork underneath.





Above: This 3D-printed bus has seen better days, and is just one of an assortment of vehicles (many in better condition) that are placed around the tabletop. Note Martin's capable weathering, with broken windows, scratched paint, and rusty drips.



Above: Another small structure, peppered with different animals and other food, stands before a more impressive building.



Above: Standard MDF kits, when used, have been given extra realism through Martin's application of signs and decals. The pumps have additional detail and he's even placed an umbrella on the roof, for locals to relax under while getting a raised vantage point across the area and nearby river.



Above: Various small shacks across the board are individually based so they can be used in games once the main display is packed away at the club.

### THE US MARINE CORPS RETALIATE

"The figures are Gringos, Empress, Full Metal Miniatures, and some Assault Group, as well." Martin listed the manufacturers as he pointed my attention to some of the scenes he'd created. "Civilians are carrying on pretty much as usual, despite the action around them. The vehicles of the city are diecast and plastic model kits."

Much of the US response in the game moved in across the bridge, while the people of Saigon did their best to get out of the way. There was support on and above the river, coming from the Brown Water Navy and various helicopters... even if it was just visual! "I added the river scene specifically for Salute," Martin told me of the other half of the table, "but it serves as eye candy rather than as a gaming area!"







Above: Showing an impressive level of unpreparedness, the Marines on the Tango boat are relaxing despite the attack that is happening, with one man using his gun emplacement as a tub!

Right: A Hughes OH-6A takes in the battle below. These 'Loaches' (short for light observation helicopters) only arrived in Vietnam in December 1967, just before the Tet Offensive.

### FANTASTIC FOLIAGE

While there are some great trees made with traditional methods on the board, Martin also made use of 3D-printed ones, which give more variation on the board, and enhance the Vietnam feeling.



### LIFE IN THE CITY

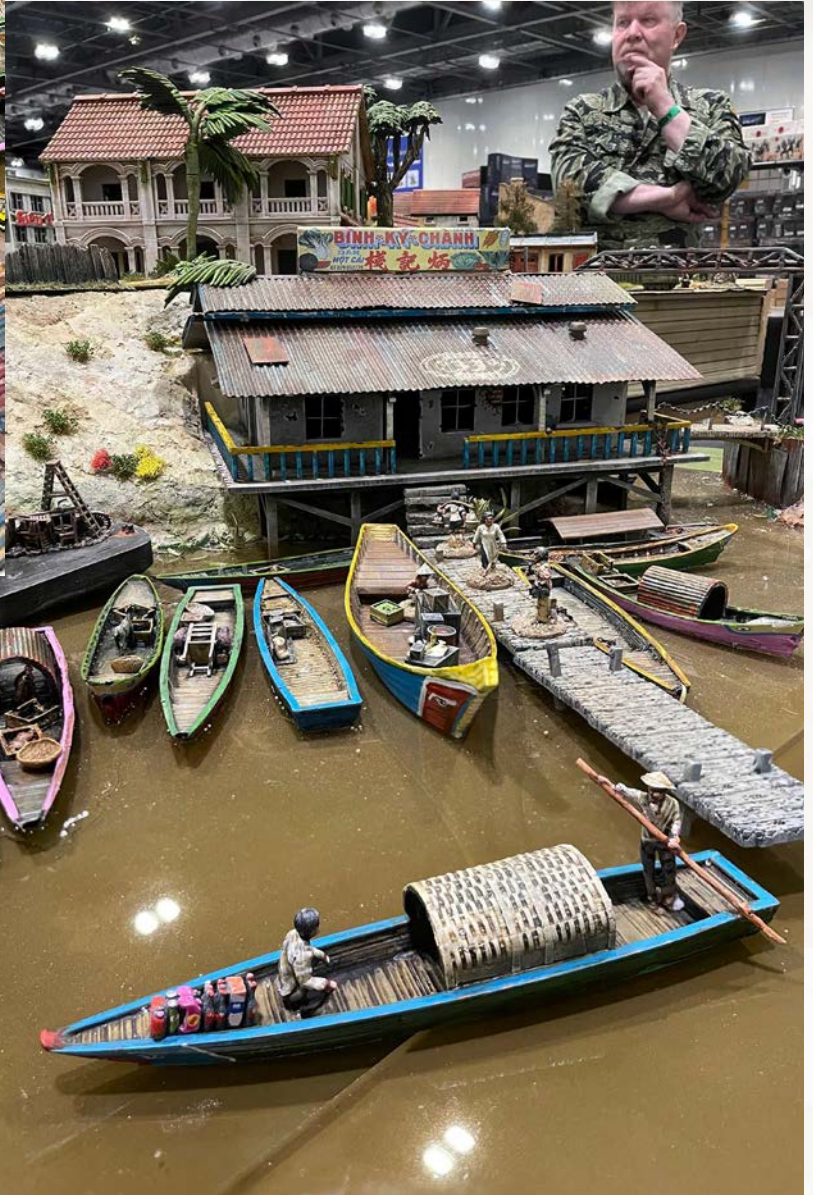
Scenes of civilian life across the board made for even more viewing pleasure. These four are but a sampling of what was tucked into every nook and cranny of the Saigon streets.







Above and below: You can see Martin's attention to detail on the various river boats and roofs here, with a rainbow of colours making the scene more interesting and more realistic.



Above: Martin, in the camo, stands behind his creation.



### RIVERINE EYE CANDY

The river section of the table gives a different view of life in Vietnam, and the clash of style between the basic Vietnamese craft and the US's Brown Water Navy vessels makes for an interesting visual juxtaposition.

In the river, Empress Miniatures' *Apocalypse Now*-style PBR is bobbing alongside a larger Armored Troop Carrier, which has a helicopter landing pad, topped off with a Huey. That's a lot of effort on Martin's part for elements that were made for display at Salute!

**Saigon '68 was the epitome of a showcase game, and represented incredible effort from Martin and his fellow clubmates at Loughton Strike Force. We can't wait to see what they come up with for Salute 52!**





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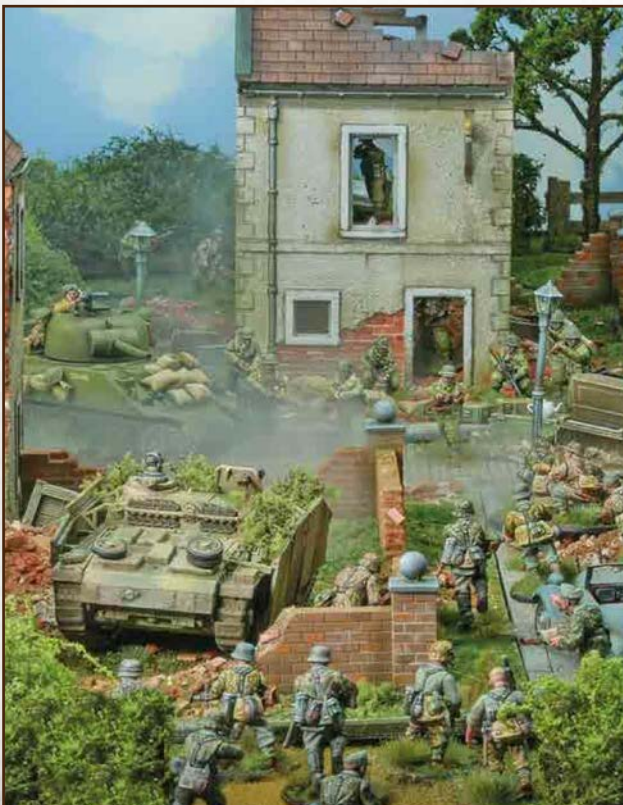
# V FOR VICTORY

Since his first look in the last issue of *Wi*, Dom Sore's managed to get Studio Tomahawk's new WWII game onto the tabletop for a few sessions. Here he gives his expert opinion.

## THE BASICS

*V for Victory* is a 124-page hardback that's well presented but (watch out!) slightly taller than most other rulebooks, so careful when you cram it back onto the bookcase. It will be a familiar size for anyone who has played *SAGA*, also from Studio Tomahawk, and, talking of *SAGA*, you can reuse your rulers from that game in *V for Victory* (more on that later).

The actual rules take up the initial 63 pages of the book and the remainder is filled with Orders of Battle and scenarios. I would have liked to have seen the rules split from the other parts here, a bit like Studio Tomahawk has done with *SAGA*, but everything's well organised and easy to find.



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The game's name seems set to cause much discussion, at least in its early days, as it is intended to be pronounced 'Five for Victory', although us Anglo speaking people will automatically assume 'Vee' instead. The name incorporates one of the main game mechanics, the threshold of success: any roll of a five or more on a dice is a success. Now you know why it has that odd pronunciation you can crack on and get playing!

There are a set of cards, that are crucial for playing the game, along with a set of tokens and rulers. The cards are standard playing card style whereas the tokens and rulers are heavy cardstock; again, *SAGA* players will be familiar with this. The rulers come in Very Short (VS), Short (S), Medium (M), and Long (L) and determine all ranges used in the game.

## HOW IT'S PLAYED

A 4' by 4' table is suggested but you can go bigger if you wish, or smaller to get up close quickly. You will need a combination of different dice - D6s, D8s, and D12s - to play the game too. The kind of dice used are determined by weapon type and modifiers.

A tape measure helped us out with the longer distances, and this is a game that makes hefty use of tokens, so you'll want to have those well organised to keep play speedy.

Buildings, trees, hedges, and scatter terrain will see you well, as you'd expect in WWII gaming, and you'll of course need troops. The maximum will be around 40 but more often you will have around 25. The army chosen, and the options taken, will affect how much you shift to the higher or lower number count.

## FORCES

At the rear of the book, you will find Orders of Battle for Germany, Great Britain, Soviet Union, USA, and Resistance Fighters and Partisans. Each one has the same format; there are initial forces that you have plus optional upgrades that are bought using Support stars. The number of Support stars are determined by the scenario and will vary from game to game.



You won't always get the same amount of stars to use as your opponent which makes for interesting variation in the strength of the sides taking part.

Each OOB has one or two squads to start with, plus a vehicle where appropriate (mechanised infantry, primarily). There's access to Fire Support (the kind of weapons assigned to platoons: mortars, anti-tank teams, snipers, artillery, and anti-tank guns) as well as Divisional Support (the big toys; think Sherman, Tiger, Churchill). All Divisional Support units are vehicles which does somewhat limit the options but, for the size of combat that *V for Victory* is replicating, they work.



Above: Above: Action from our game. We found the game benefited from a large amount of terrain to give troops cover and block line of sight.

Each OOB has special rules attached that give you two bonuses: a Platoon Special Rule (applied at certain stages, or at all times) and a National Special Rule that applies once per turn. The British Commandos are the exception who have two Platoon Special Rules to change things up.

Altogether there are 14 OOBs only four of those are for the Axis. That does mean that at the time of release there are limited options for one half of each battle; exacerbating that issue is the fact that, due to the nations included, someone will always be the Germans, unless you fancy some blue-on-blue action. You could use the Partisans against the Soviets as an end of war scenario I suppose. Hopefully, there is more variety ahead in future expansions.

## GERMANS TAKE NOTE

Page 73 has an important special rule for German players and their LMGs, tucked away in what looks like a flashy section introduction; we missed this in our playtesting, and it would have made a difference. This is something that really should have been put in the Armoury section too, as this is where new players will look first.

SPECIAL RULE

### MG42

The German MG42 was often considered superior to many other machine guns because of its high rate of fire, its reliability, and its versatility on the battlefield. German LMGs have a Firepower of **2d8+2d6** instead of 4d6.

## SCENARIOS

The book finishes with eleven scenarios; the first three are to introduce you to the game, starting with basic infantry and leading up to the introduction of vehicles and heavy weapons. These are symmetrical scenarios designed to let you concentrate on learning rather than wondering how to win against the odds. These training scenarios are followed by six further scenarios, including asymmetrical scenarios, where one side will get more Support stars than the other.

There is one excellent scenario with the very standard gaming goal of capturing objectives. The fact that you can move the objectives you control at the end of a turn, to help keep them under control, adds the spice. This leads to a lot of back and forth on the battlefield and discourages rooting troops in place, which could cause player disengagement.

The final scenario is a four-player affair, called an XL scenario, and takes place on a much larger playing area. It has some interesting setup mechanics and play elements that will add an extra level of intrigue to your game, with a card and initiative controlled hidden deployment involved.

Some of the scenario special rules are in the rulebook before the Orders of Battle and I feel that these should have been at the start of the scenario section, to avoid flipping all over the



*V for Victory* is available in the UK from North Star. See their advert on page 95.





Above: The activation card next to this team shows that they can issue a tactical and engage order this turn but they will not be able to move. The high initiative value of 6 should help them to lay down some fire early.

book, but I must commend the layout of each scenario. The presentation is clear with vital game information displayed around the edges of more granular rules. Once you get the hang of play after a couple of scenarios, you'll be able to get the gist of how a battle will play with just a quick scan of the page.

## MECHANICS

Cards are used to give your troops orders - movement, engage, or tactical - and each player has their own deck of eight cards, which contains seven activation cards and one special ability card. The activation cards are played one at a time and contain a number that determines initiative (higher goes first). You then issue your orders to a unit, a squad, or a commander. A card played on a unit only affects that unit, if played on a squad it can affect any unit in the squad within the L distance template of each other, and a commander can issue orders to any unit within L of him. This gives you a few options when playing your cards and adds to the tactical thinking required.

Each unit has two actions per-turn, and these are denoted by counters. The book suggests you place a green counter once a unit has had one order and turn it over to the red side when they have used both. We found it easier to start on green, move to red after one order, and remove it once both actions have been taken.



Left: In our preferred way of presenting actions available the green shows these two are yet to do anything, while the red represents that they have taken one action.

Movement and ranges are measured using the pre-sized rulers and the whole system is easy to understand and remember very quickly. When it comes to range of weapons, for example, you need to spot your enemy first. This basic distance is 3xL (the Long ruler) and will be moved up or down ranges according to negative modifiers (like cover and team size) and positive modifiers (such as if the target has fired). If the target is within the final range, you can shoot, and this is where the dice come in.

You start with a pool of dice then apply the various shooting modifiers: boosts and burns. Rather than adjusting your dice rolls they change the type of dice you get to roll. For instance, if you start with 2D6s but you are an Elite unit, one of the D6s is improved to be a D8 meaning that your chance of a success has gone from 33% to 50% (a 5+ is a success). It can go the other way; 3D6s that get two burns will drop down into one sole D6 of hope. This is a nice mechanic that takes a little getting used to, but the boosts and burns are minimal, and we found it was second nature after our first game. Shooting against vehicles works in much the same way, except damage is determined by a single dice that improves or degrades depending on how many successful hits there are.

**2. BOOSTING AND BURNING**

The second rule concerns improving or impairing one or more dice before rolling them.

**Before rolling a die, it can be boosted ▲ or burned ▼.**

A boosted die moves up one die type in the chain of dice, as illustrated below:

Example: Captain Miller can boost his d8. That means he rolls a d12 instead.

A burned die moves down one die type in the chain of dice, as illustrated below:

Example: A burned d12 becomes a d8.

**IMPORTANT**

Quite logically, a boost and a burn cancel each other out. For example, if a player gets two boosts ▲▲ and a burn ▼, they actually just get a single boost ▲. So make sure you calculate your net boosts or burns before changing your dice.



Above: This card shows three different orders - move (top), engage (middle), and tactical (bottom) - and the number 1 with each shows you can issue each order once. The number in the top right is its initiative value, 2.

Assault is very similar too, except that both sides partake. Victory here is determined by who causes the most hits, however you can still lose the fight overall as you must save those hits. We had a situation where victory was gained but all the hits on the victor went through while the loser saved all theirs. This left them in a decent position at the end, even after losing. Assault is a dangerous but useful tool, so be careful how you utilise it.

All these ranged and assault attacks cause stress to your troops which makes them less effective. When that happens,

you'll need to use more of your tactical orders as the game goes on, to keep the troops moving, or at least keep them in play altogether. Four levels of morale seems like an initially complicated number to negotiate but the



colour coding helps this a lot as you shift from green, through yellow and orange, and finally red. Once your troops hit red you are in very real danger of losing them. And if you lose more than half the figures in your force you have lost.



### BONUS CARDS

Different scenarios can award the players bonus cards. These can be played freely during the game to impact goings on at key moments. Smart use of these bonus cards can dramatically impact the pivotal plays that you make and change the tide of battle.

Right: These Ammo! cards add dice to a fire action. One provides 2D6, the other a D12.



Left: The Doc! card allows the dice shown to be rolled and, if successful, a casualty will be cancelled.

Right: These three cards add orders to cards or increase their value if they already have them.



Right: These Take Cover! cards add dice to the defence pool.



Left: The Spotted! card grants a column bonus to an attempt to spot a unit.



### FIVE FOR EFFORT OR FLAWLESS VICTORY?

*V for Victory* works well, though it was a little admin heavy for some of my friend's tastes, with all the tokens on the table. If you're not keen on that then this game might not be for you. The activation system, with its different levels of potential (depending on who is activated with which card), will ensure you have a lot of options without totally overwhelming you, and this is part of the game that we all thought worked well. The dice boosting and burning mechanic is intuitive and lets the other factors of the battle and environment affect the game without the need for loads of tables of modifiers. It makes a lot of sense and feels different without just trying to be different for different's sake.

The main flaw with *V for Victory* right now is the limited options for forces, but that will hopefully change over time with expansions. There is nothing to stop you coming up with your own OOBs, to allow you to field the Italian, Romanian, or Finnish army of your dreams [Aren't they your main three armies for *Bolt Action*, Dom? - Ed] but the one-to-four split between Axis and Allies means that right now, if you don't have Germans to play as the opposing force, someone will need to get them.

It is great (and wise) that the game allows you to take the existing forces you might have for *Bolt Action* or *Chain of Command*, with no real modification required, and use them in a new way.

### THE PRECURSORS

*V for Victory* has some obvious Studio Tomahawk links, such as the rulers that exactly match those in their earlier period sister game *SAGA*, to the card activation that comes from *Muskets & Tomahawks*. The pin mechanic featured is like *Bolt Action*, but with more nuance, to model the decreasing effectiveness of a unit. The Orders of Battle work very similarly to how a *Chain of Command* platoon functions, with a few more choices and less randomness.

What works in one of those games will not necessarily work in *V for Victory*, so you'll need to get used to this game's nuances as you play. Overall, we felt that troops perform closer to how your *Bolt Action* army does generally.

This is an interesting and enjoyable addition to the somewhat crowded World War Two market. If you have become a little jaded with your other games then my gaming group's engagement with *V for Victory* certainly suggests it's worth giving it a try.





# THE WARGAME THAT GOES WRONG



**Pete Brown considers the Battle of Ap Bac, and how to play wargames full of mishaps.**

There is an old military adage that states that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. I am sure many wargamers will agree, when they realise that plans made in comfort at home or whispered to your co-players at your club before the game starts, quickly go awry when you find that your opposition will not fall into your neatly-laid trap.

But if our plans during equally-balanced games can go wrong so easily, what about in a game where the mishaps, disasters, and miscommunications are already baked into the scenario? How would you play out a battle where one side has such bad luck that they cannot possibly win? I have chosen the Battle of Ap Bac from the Vietnam War to illustrate what such a scenario might look like, but I am sure that you can find examples in any of your favourite historical periods.

## SCENARIO OUTLINE

The Battle of Ap Bac was fought on 2 January 1963 in the Dinh Turong province of South Vietnam. American intelligence had identified the presence of a Viet Cong radio transmitter, along with about 120 VC fighters, in the village of Ap Tan Thoi. The basic plan was to attack the village from three sides, in a sort of triangle, using two provincial South Vietnamese Civil Guard battalions and a battalion of the 11th ARVN infantry regiment. They would

be supported by helicopters, armoured personnel carriers, and artillery. Unbeknown to the American and ARVN commanders, the VC were well dug into the village, and were prepared to make a stand.

So far, so straightforward, and, as wargames scenarios go, this looks to be a standard Vietnam game, albeit before the US introduced active combat units into the conflict. Instead, well-armed ARVN troops, led by American advisors, assault a dug-in Viet Cong force. If you swapped out the ARVN element, and replaced it with American Marines or infantry, then this would be the template for Vietnam scenarios played out on most tabletops. What could possibly go wrong?



*Above: The Viet Cong - shooting from the bushes. Figures by Gringo 40s.*

*Above: Action from The Old Guard Wargames Club's game at The Other Partizan 2022.*



## THE US/ARVN PLAYER BRIEFING

You are to attack the village of Ap Tan Thoi, and destroy the VC radio transmitter whose operation has been detected there. The plan is to land an ARVN battalion of regular infantry to the north of the village by helicopter. At the same time, two Civil Guard battalions will attack the village: one from the south, and one from the east.

You also have a squadron of M113 armoured troop carriers that can be called up to support your attacks, as well as artillery and air support.

Please be mindful that artillery support cannot fire while air support is on board. If required, 300 ARVN troops of the 8th Airborne Battalion are on standby at a nearby airfield, ready to reinforce your attack.

You are to find and destroy the radio transmitter, all Viet Cong troops in the village, and any stores they might possess.

Below:

- 1 - ARVN soldiers take shelter behind paddy dykes.
- 2 - A UH-1 Gunship downed in the paddy fields.
- 3 - Two CH-21s shot down and helpless in the fields.
- 4 - The nearby village of Tan Thoi on fire following artillery and napalm attacks.
- 5 - Vann observed the battle from his L-19 spotter plane.
- 6 - The M113s surge forward.
- 7 - The VC bombard the M113 APCs with grenades.
- 8 - The VC wait for a further opportunity to strike back from their defences in Ap Bac.



### THE SET-UP

Prepare the wargame as shown on the map to the right. The game should have an Umpire, who shows the VC player the Umpire's map, which identifies where the VC forces are dug in.

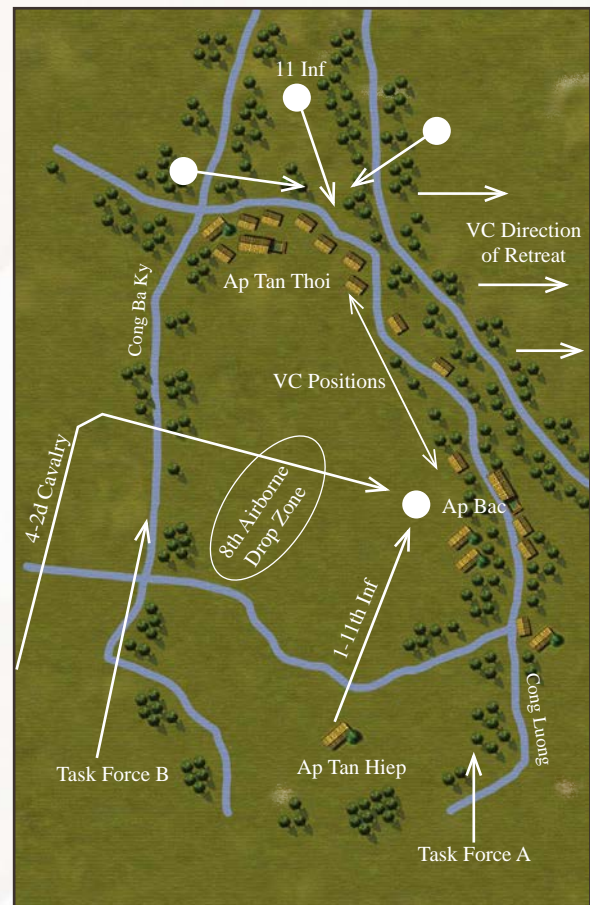
Meanwhile, the unsuspecting US/ARVN player should be given a briefing from the Umpire. Let the players ask questions about the terrain, points of entry for their forces, and so on, exactly as they would for any normal game.

### FIRST CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

Historically, the first problem in this battle concerned transport. Thirty helicopters were needed to transport an entire battalion of ARVN troops, but only ten were available, meaning that only one company could be airlifted into the combat zone at a time. When the first company of ARVN were dropped close to the village, they were ordered to remain in place until the other companies could be airlifted in.

Meanwhile, the two Civil Guard battalions had moved into position under their own steam, with one Guard Battalion (named Task Force A during the battle) arriving first. Unbeknownst to the South Vietnamese, the VC were using radio equipment in the village to monitor their frequencies. Thus, the VC were fully aware of the ARVN units' locations, and when they might attack.

When Task Force A came within 30 metres of the south side of the village, the VC opened fire, killing the commander of the lead company, and wounding the overall commander. The Civil Defence troops took cover in a drainage ditch and called in artillery support. The artillery was ineffective, as the Civil Defence forward observers, who were under heavy fire, refused to stand up to adjust the fall of shot, most of which landed behind the village. The Commander of the second Civil Defence battalion (Task Force B) lost his bottle, and refused to move forward.





Despite only three companies of the regular ARVN forces having landed by helicopter at this point, they now moved up to attack the north of the village in support of the attack by Task Force A. When they came within 20 metres of the village, they, too, came under heavy fire, peppered by the guns in well-concealed VC positions, pinning them down.

**COMMENT:** From a wargaming point of view, this is a common outcome for an attack on a well-dug-in enemy. The US/ARVN player will usually fail the odd activation roll, resulting in a poorly coordinated attack, with, say, the second Civil Defence Task Force simply not activating at all.

Instead of rolling for activation, the Umpire should simply tell the US/ARVN player that the first Civil Defence unit comes on in turn one and that the others failed to activate. You could then have the regular ARVN units arrive on turn three, whilst still assuring the US/ARVN player that the 2nd battalion of Civil Defence troops are on the way (spoiler alert- they are not!). Give the Civil Defence forces terrible comms factors to ensure that any artillery they call for either does not arrive, or is ineffective.

The US/ARVN player is in a tricky position, but will be reassured that they still have reinforcements to bring on, as well as air and artillery support upon which to call when required.

#### CALLING UP REINFORCEMENTS

The American advisor at the battle, John Paul Vann, was circling above the battlefield in a L-19 Reconnaissance plane. He advised the South Vietnamese Commander, Bul Dinh Dam, to land the remaining companies of the ARVN battalion on the west side of the village, rather than reinforce the ARVN attack from the north. By doing so, he hoped to stretch the VC defence force.

Unfortunately, the American pilots of the transport helicopters did not listen to Vann's instructions and began to drop the ARVN reinforcements only 200 metres from the north side of the village. They immediately came under heavy fire, losing three of the ten CH-21 helicopters used in the drop, along with a Huey helicopter, which had landed to pick up the American pilots from the damaged transports. The ARVN infantry was pinned down almost immediately.



Above: 15mm models by Battlefront, from their extensive 'Nam 1965 - 1972 range.

The only good news was that the American pilots were better able to coordinate air support from their position on the ground, and soon some AD-6 Skyraiders dropped conventional bombs and napalm on the village. This did nothing to stop the fire from the VC positions, however.

Vann contacted the commander of the ARVN armoured cavalry regiment, Captain Ly Tong Ba, and ordered him to move up to rescue the downed helicopters and the trapped ARVN infantry. Ba did not like taking orders from Americans, and was tardy in making his approach, blaming the muddy paddy fields for his slow progress.

Eventually, at about 1330hrs, the M113s approached the landing site, but did so in single file, rather than in formation. This allowed the VC to focus all their fire on the lead vehicle, where the weapon crews were exposed from the waist up. In total, 14 crew members of the M113s were wounded or killed, including one driver, who was hit when he put his head out of the hatch. This led to a loss of cohesion and morale, which was not helped when the M113 equipped with a flame thrower failed to fire, as the crew had mixed the wrong amount of gel and gasoline. Demoralised, the M113s withdrew at about 1430hrs.

**COMMENT:** The US/ARVN player should be told that the remaining ARVN regulars are ready for deployment, and the Umpire should ask where they should be dropped. This will be a genuine choice, as the player will have to decide whether to open a new front or reinforce one of the already-failing attacks.

No matter what side of the village the player chooses, the helicopters should land the troops too close to the village, as was the historical case. The Umpire should place downed helicopters, and start the newly landed units with casualties in a pinned copt position.

The one bit of good news for the US/ARVN player is that they are able to call in one effective air strike on the VC, which the Umpire should play out using their chosen rules.

The US/ARVN player will no doubt call for the M113s, if they have not already done so. The Umpire should pretend to make activation rolls before telling the US/ARVN player that the M113s are on their way, but are making slow progress through the



Above: The ARVN surge forward. Figures by Gringo 40s.



paddy fields. The Umpire should simulate the slow movement of the M113s, so that it frustrates the US/ARVN player, but is not so slow that the M113s do not get into combat. Once on board, give the M113s poor morale and fighting stats, reflecting the historical problems the unit had. Don't tell the US/ARVN player the bad news about the flame thrower until they fire it!

### REINFORCING FAILURE

At this point, Task Force B had still not made it to the battlefield. On the south side, Task Force A were pinned down, as were the three companies of ARVN infantry attacking the north side. To the west, the remaining infantry 'reinforcements,' along with the M113 supports, were pulling back.

In a final effort to defeat the VC, Vann contacted the ARVN commanders and requested that the ARVN Airborne troops be dropped to the east of the village. He assumed that the VC would begin to withdraw along this route, as there were currently no ARVN forces on that approach. The Airborne troops could then ambush the VC as they retreated. Unfortunately, the ARVN high command refused, and instead wanted to drop the paras on the west side, to shore up the retreating M113s and badly-shot-up infantry.

Later in the afternoon, roughly 300 ARVN troops of the 8th Airborne Battalion were deployed over the battlefield. As they approached, their planes came under fire from the village, and the pilots changed course to avoid the fire. Disastrously, the jump masters did not account for the change, causing the paratroopers to jump on a landing zone right in front of the entrenched VC positions on the western flank. The VC were able to shoot the paratroopers in the air as they descended, or when they landed in the open rice paddies. Showing typical airborne spirit, the surviving paratroopers gathered as best they could, and launched an attack on the entrenched VC, which ultimately failed.



Above: Napalm deployed against against the Viet Cong. From The Old Guard Wargames Club's game at The Other Partizan 2022.

**COMMENT:** The Umpire should ask the US/ARVN player if they wish to call for the airborne troops. There should be the genuine option not to do so, as this action could exacerbate existing failure. If the player accepts, the Umpire should establish on which side of the village they would like the paras to be dropped, stating that the ARVN command would prefer them to be dropped on the side where the attack is going most wrong.

The player may choose to agree with the ARVN command, or choose their own side on which to drop the parachute force. Whatever side they choose, the paras will be dropped too close to the village, and will immediately come under fire. Use whatever system the chosen rules provide for dropping paratroops, or default to dropping small bits of paper from height onto the board and placing miniatures where they fall. Whatever system you use, the paras should be in a sticky position, scattered and under fire, having taken casualties in the drop.

### THE END OF THE BATTLE

Firing continued until sundown, after which the VC commander withdrew his troops using the eastern approach, as Vann had predicted. The ARVN troops were able to move into the deserted village the following morning when, in a final act of indignity, ARVN artillery belatedly fired on the village, killing and wounding 14 ARVN soldiers.

In total, the ARVN forces suffered 83 dead and over 100 wounded. John Paul Vann attributed the defeat to ARVN intransigence, stating: "It was a miserable damn performance, just like it always is. These people won't listen. They make the same mistake over and over again in the same way."

The VC suffered 18 dead and 39 wounded, despite being heavily outnumbered and up against armour, artillery, and air support. This was their first victory in a pitched battle against South Vietnamese forces, and it provided a huge morale boost.



Above: Gringo 40s ARVN move forward.



Above: Vietnamese stamp celebrating the shooting down of US helicopters at the Battle of Ap Bac.



Above: M113 by Battlefront Miniatures.



## WHY PLAY DISASTER GAMES?

Anyone reading this article may well be asking themselves why they would want to Umpire, or play in, a game where the odds are so badly stacked against one side?

It is true that a game such as this is not strictly 'fair,' in the sense that the opportunities to win for both sides are not as balanced as if players picked equally-weighted forces from points-based army lists, and set them up on neutrally-matched terrain. Equally, this is not a 'last stand' type game, such as Custer's Battle of the Little Bighorn. Custer's fight can be played in a fun way, with both sides acknowledging that the US Cavalry are doomed, so achieving anything better than what happened historically is a win.

In a disaster game, one player goes into the game blindsided, thinking they have a chance of winning, when, in fact, all the odds are stacked against them. Indeed, it must be played like this, because, if the Umpire were to warn the player about what was going to happen, it would greatly affect the outcome, and spoil all the 'surprises' that are about to unfold. Why would we be so nasty?

Well, first, because this often happens in warfare, especially in modern periods such as Vietnam. A game like Ap Bac tests how the player responds to a fast-moving, dynamic situation in which they are faced with numerous things going wrong, and in quick succession. Should they make small moves, or take direct action to stabilise the situation? Do they send more troops into a failing situation, or cut their losses, stand off, and make the best of a bad job? How do they respond to an increasingly desperate situation on the board? Do they rise to it, or storm off in a huff? Being placed under pressure can be fun, especially if you manage to win despite the odds!



Above: Downed Huey from Hobby Boss.

## UMPIRING A DISASTER GAME

Having umpired games like this before, I have found that most players really enjoy them, but they must pick their teams carefully. Players who have a good sense of humour, are keen to take on a challenge, and are likely to take misfortune on the chin, make the best US/ARVN players in this scenario. If you have competitive players in your group, have them take on the role of the VC. Competitive players like to feel in control, and, when faced with everything going wrong, no matter what they do, they quickly lose their sense of humour! Thus, playing the VC suits them well, as they are in a comfort zone, very likely having a win ahead. Assigning players to suit each role will ensure everyone enjoys the game.

You need to be strong and have a thick skin as an Umpire in a disaster game. Players will feel frustration - "I specifically said the paras were not to drop there! Why would they do that? That doesn't make any sense!" - and may well

direct that frustration at you. Keep an air of calm. Remind the players that this is only a game, one designed to test them. Remember, these things did happen, so you have history on your side!

Finally, play fair. As an Umpire, once you recognise that one player is set to have a bad day, it is tempting to heap misfortune upon them to ensure that they ultimately lose. Bear in mind that so many setbacks are already baked into the scenario that you can afford to let luck intervene. Play out the firefights, airstrikes, morale, and command tests, as detailed in your chosen ruleset, and let the dice roll how they may. If the pinned-down unit rolls double 6s, recovers morale, and can pull back, let them; such small victories could sometimes happen in the face of disaster. If the VC player cannot hit a barn door with a cricket bat, so be it. And if the US/ARVN player rolls nothing but crits and pulls their feet from the fire, there is nothing left to do but congratulate them over a pint after the game. After all, Lady Luck can smile on you in even the most disastrous of situations.



Above: Salvage operation: a US Army UH-1 Iroquois helicopter retrieves another, downed during the battle of Ap Bac, January 1963.



Above: In a scene reminiscent of Ap Bac, US paratroopers fire towards a treeline occupied by Viet Cong, east of Bien Hoa, May 1965.



# STARGRAVE

AWARD-WINNING SCI-FI WARGAMES IN THE RAVAGED GALAXY



## DEAD OR ALIVE

It's hard to live with a price on your head, especially when bounty hunters can be found on every planet. Most are amateurs, but some are deadly professionals. A few aren't even motivated by the reward, but by vengeance, redemption, or the pure thrill of the hunt. No matter what drives them, once a new bounty is posted, the hounds take up the chase and, more often than not, it all ends in violence...

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# “IN A HOLE IN THE GROUND THERE LIVED A HOBBIT.”

## BUILDING MIDDLE-EARTH: BAG END



In his second article about his Tolkien-inspired constructions, Mark Clayton shifts his attention to an iconic hobbit hole!

In my previous article, I confessed my obsession with the world of Tolkien. For me, Middle-earth is almost a real place, largely because Tolkien's stories are backed by deep history, language, and culture. As I'm a passionate wargamer, it's only natural that I'd be drawn to tabletop battles in Middle-earth. It provides all the interest and fun of the Middle Ages, but with the added excitement of mythological (but not too wacky) creatures like trolls, mumakil, and ents. Collecting the models and playing games using the *LotR Strategy Battle Game* or *Dragon Rampant* rules is a particular passion of mine, which has led me to build scenery that enhances the look and enjoyment of each scenario I play.

Having built the castle of Helm's Deep, described in my last article, I decided to attempt a model of Bag End, the home of Bilbo and Frodo in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. While this is a lovely and idyllic model to make, it's also practical for gaming, as the Scouring of The Shire is a key final conflict in the War of the Ring. I have 30-odd hobbit figures, together with lots of ruffians, so my aim was to build a section of Hobbiton, with Bag End and several other hobbit holes to set games around.

### THE GENERAL SHAPE

Constructing the hill, into which Bilbo's home is set, was not too difficult, but it was vital that I kept the different levels in mind. The front of the model has a road level, raised entrance, and higher hill behind. I began by PVA gluing layers of 50mm insulation polystyrene together. When it was dry, I carved the hill into shape with a serrated knife. Developing this gradually, refining the detailed undulations in stages, is advised. Start with broader cuts, and you won't risk chopping off parts you need!

*Right: The hill had to be steeper at the back to fit the base board. I always round the corners of terrain bases, as I think they look better, and they're less easily caught on clothing.*





The front door and steps section was created separately, made from Celotex insulation foam, which carves more easily, so it's better for finer detail. After cutting it to shape and rendering the details, I glued it to the other, larger part of the model. I then covered the entire hill in PVA glue, and sprinkled it liberally with kiln-dry (paving) sand, which I left to dry hard. Repeating this process two more times created a concrete-like surface, giving the model texture and durability.

Right: The front door, around which the model was planned, was from Ziterdes. The wicker fencing is by Renedra, as is the gate, with a triangular section of card glued to the top. The steps to the front door were carved into a piece of Celotex insulating foam. The flower tufts create the garden every hobbit hole would have, while the bench is made from a wooden drink stirrer and wire legs.



### PAINT MATCHING

I downloaded stills from the movies and photographs of the site in New Zealand to select the colours for the paint job, which was mostly done with Army Painter and Tamiya paints.



Left: The most committed Lord of the Rings fans can book a tour of the Hobbiton set in New Zealand!

### THE FRONT WALL

The main challenge was the front wall, with its round doors and windows. Fortunately, a lot of people seem to be making hobbit holes, and several companies produce 3D-printed or resin-cast front doors. I got mine from Ziterdes (before it was taken over) but there are other options out there. Round windows are also purchasable, though I made mine from coins, covered in filler, with the detail scored into the surface as it dried. This scoring technique is versatile, and I applied it to two lines of filler to show the cobbled effect of the road, too.



Above: The stone retaining wall is made with filler, with the detail scored into it as it dries. The grassy lane was made with two lines of filler, scored as it dried to create the cobbles.



## THE TREE AND OTHER NATURAL DETAILS

The most expensive component in the model was the elm tree, which is a beauty from Busch. This is an iconic part of Bag End, and worth a little extra investment. Various companies provide flower-like tufts with which to reflect the hobbits' love of things that grow. The wicker fencing is from Renedra.



*Above: The tree is by Busch; an absolute work of art, and well worth the £12 price tag.*

*Left: The grassy texture, made with three layers of PVA and kiln-dry sand, ensures the integrity of the structure. It also makes it heavier, but gives a realistic, textured surface that was easy to paint, and very durable.*

The model measures 620mm square, and the hill is about 240mm high. The elm tree adds another 150mm. It makes for a great centre or background piece for games set in The Shire, and I have other hobbit holes in production. I have purchased some 3D-printed doors, and am constructing the hills and mounds around them. I intend to have a village of six or seven holes in a few months, but, as is fitting, Bag End will remain the focus.

## GAMING IN HOBBITON

The hobbits never had a formal army, but a militia was on hand to keep order and guard the frontiers of their beloved land. Wargames in this area aren't too common, but The Scouring of The Shire is the obvious scenario, with Sharkey (the fallen wizard Saruman) threatening the peace of Hobbiton. Wild wolves (wargs) once invaded, which is a chance for a different kind of battle, and it could be the setting for many unusual campaign games.

I also enjoy the model as a display piece, and it has a prominent place in the Middle-earth room, which I am lucky enough to have at home.



*Above: Like the Celtic war dogs, Farmer Maggot's hounds had a fearsome reputation.*

*Right: Sharkey's ruffians engage the hobbits and their hounds. I like the Strategy Battle Game system because weaker participants can still win the fight.*







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# THE VEHICLES OF VIETNAM - PART ONE

## TRANSPORTING THE TROOPS



**James takes this issue's Vietnam War theme as an opportunity to bring transports and support vehicles into tabletop action, focusing on ground and air assault.**

The Vietnam War, perhaps due to a deluge of media and movie coverage focused on individual soldiers, tends to be viewed and gamed as intense skirmish encounters between infantry and guerrilla forces. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but Vietnam was equally a war of machines, where the vehicles became as vital as the infantrymen. Formidable tanks trundled over the muddy ground, choppers soared through the humid skies, and boats cut through the famed brown waterways. Vehicles played a crucial role, shaping the strategies and outcomes of this brutal war, and wars ahead.

In this multi-part series, I travel through the Vietnam War timeline, picking out some of the vehicles that defined the era's combat. The agile choppers that could deliver troops and supplies with pinpoint precision get a lot of the historical, media, and Hollywood headlines (I won't be ignoring them here, of course), but there are the less-glamorous armoured transports to consider, as well as the boats that patrolled the water.

These vehicles, along with the men who operated them, were the backbone of the conflict for the US and ARVN (The Army of the Republic of Vietnam). They supported troops who would otherwise have been horribly isolated, and could offer sanctuary or escape during

battles that seemed otherwise helpless, against a foe who could emerge from (and vanish into) the surrounding terrain like vengeful ghosts.

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were not without their own vehicular options. Some were simpler, of course, but, as the war continued, they incorporated Soviet- and Chinese-supplied vehicles to significant effect. I'll look at these in part two, next month, wherein I'll also consider the H'ồ Chí Minh Trail - the lifeline from North Vietnam to South Vietnam, through Laos and Cambodia - which kept the Viet Cong and the People's Army of Vietnam supported and supplied.



*Above: Full Metal Miniatures cyclists, from the collection of Dave Docherty, can be used as a less advanced but still effective VC method of transport and supply.*

*Above: Vehicles and troops from the extensive Battlefront/Flames of War - Nam 1965 - 1972 range of 15mm figures.*



Understanding the impact of vehicles through the years offers a more comprehensive view of the Vietnam War, illustrating the complexity and technological interplay that defined the conflict. This article picks out notable engagements wherein particular transport and support vehicles proved decisive, focusing primarily on the M113, which I think is a rather unsung hero of the War. I'll attempt to offer insights into the strategic and tactical contributions these vehicles can bring to the tabletop and suggest some miniatures to use. Follow up articles will do the same for more varied vehicles, with boats, more exotic and bombastic heavy armour, and the simple workhorse options used by the VC.

I hope these vehicular insights will inspire you to further research, and bring more machinery to your Vietnam War gaming!

## NOTABLE TRANSPORTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

### EARLY WAR - THE 'ADVISORY' PHASE (1961-1965)

In the early stages of the War, the US's role was intended to be advisory, providing support and training to the ARVN, but the situation quickly escalated, long before Operation Rolling Thunder took the war to its next level of intensity in March 1965.

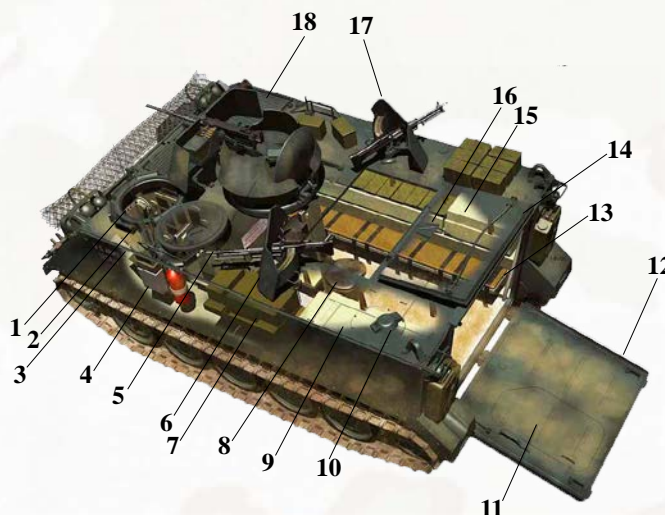
Troops in the early '60s were increasingly engaged by the Viet Cong's potent hit-and-run tactics. These ambushes challenged conventional military strategies. The need for enhanced mobility and protection of the ground troops was evident; the US response evolved accordingly, from an advisory role to increasingly active participation.

Robust and versatile vehicles, to support ground operations and counter the Viet Cong's guerilla tactics, were essential. The M113 APC emerged as a critical asset.

### M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier

The M113 was a ubiquitous ground transport for the US and their ARVN allies. Its versatility and amphibious capability made it invaluable when it came to humping troops and supplies through the dense jungles and marshy terrain of Vietnam. The standard M113 was upgraded to an armoured cavalry assault vehicle (ACAV) through the addition of two M60 7.62mm machine guns and weapon shields.

The M113 could carry a squad of infantry, provide them with protection from small arms fire, and lay down decent fire in return, but it was vulnerable to anti-tank weaponry.



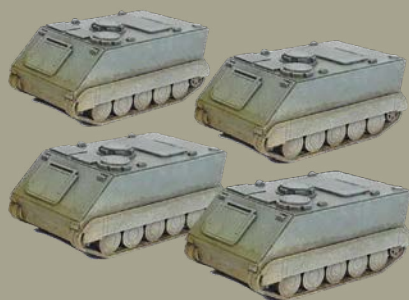
Above: M113 ACAV - 1) Driver's warning light panel, 2) Steering levers, 3) Driver's instrument panel, 4) Periscope storage, 5) Commander's cupola and M2 .50-caliber machine gun, 6) M60 7.62mm machine gun, 7) Radio, 8) Passenger jump seat, 9) Fuel Tank, 10) Fuel filler cap, 11) Ramp door, 12) Ramp, 13) Passenger bench seat, 14) Passenger compartment hatch, 15) Battery compartment, 16) Mount base for M60 7.62mm machine gun, 17) M60 7.62mm machine gun, 18) Engine air intake. From M113 APC 1960-75, by Henry Morshead. © Osprey Publishing [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)

## TAKING THE M113 TO THE TABLETOP

Rubicon produce probably the nicest 28mm M113 kit, and their plastic set has parts to build the standard version, the ACAV, and the Aussie variant. At the time of writing, Rubicon's site lists the set as out-of-stock, though you can find it elsewhere online (eBay and other hobby shops) for a slightly increased price.

Rubicon also make the M577 Command Post Carrier, which can act as a mobile tactical operations centre.

If you're buying your M113s on a budget, consider Sarissa's MDF version, which is less than a tenner for one, or £30 for four. They are more basic than the Rubicon kit, of course, but they look pretty good when painted up.



Above: Sarissa's M113s.

Right: The M113 Platoon from Flames of War.



Above: Rubicon's ACAV plastic kit.



Above: If you want to apply excessive detail to your transports check out Osprey's Modelling the M113 Series by Graeme Davidson.





A notable early engagement that involved the M113 was 1963's Battle of Ap Bac. Against heavy resistance and challenging conditions, the vehicles transported troops and delivered fire support during what can only be described as a total FUBAR of a battle for the US and ARVN. Ap Bac is covered in full by Pete Brown elsewhere in this issue [see page 52 - Ed], and, with that in mind (rather than retread the same ground), I'm going to accelerate a little further into the War.

### The Battle of Long Tan

This clash, on 18 August 1966, comes about a year-and-a-half after the initiation of Rolling Thunder. By this time, around 400,000 US troops were involved in the Vietnam War - things had gotten serious! - but, for this battle, you'll want to bring the Aussie variant of the M113 into action; Long Tan was one of the largest battles fought by Australians in the War, so why not embrace the actions of these all too often ignored Antipodean combatants on the tabletop?

Amidst the dense rubber plantations of Phuoc Tuy Province, D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment,

encountered a large force of Viet Cong. The Australians were in a perilous situation, surrounded and outnumbered, and the terrain - dense foliage - hindered their ability to pinpoint the enemy's positions accurately.

The M113s played a pivotal role in the battle, providing mobility and fire support, enabling Australian troops to manoeuvre through the challenging terrain and deliver suppressing fire against entrenched Viet Cong positions. The M113s facilitated communication and coordination under the fierce combat conditions, and, as the battle intensified, they evacuated the wounded, and resupplied frontline positions. Their armour protected the troops from enemy small-arms fire and shrapnel, too, which was vital, with the Australians holding ground against repeated assaults.

After hours of fierce fighting, D Company repelled the Viet Cong forces, and the battle resulted in significant casualties for the VC, underscoring the effectiveness of combined arms tactics (air support was also essential in this battle), and the extra resilience that armoured vehicles brought to the Australian troops who were under fire.

## WARGAMING THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

This scenario, set during the Battle of Long Tan, focuses on the critical role of the M113 APCs, and the unique challenges faced by Australian forces. You can apply the broad suggestions here to your wargame of choice; details have been left intentionally flexible for maximum versatility across miniature scales and rulesets.

### TERRAIN

Set the battlefield amidst a dense rubber plantation, with plentiful trees creating limited visibility and blocked lines of sight. Clearings should be scattered across the board, spaced relatively evenly, representing the gaps between the rubber trees where engagements occurred.

Play down the long length of the table, and mark six strategic points on the Australian side of the table with markers. These are VC target objectives that can be destroyed, which the Australians must try to defend.

### FORCES

I've suggested forces for a fairly big game here, but you can cut down the numbers, depending on the scale at which you choose to play, and the number of miniatures that you have available.

#### AUSTRALIAN FORCES (D COMPANY, 6RAR)

##### Infantry Platoons

- 1 x Command Section (1 Officer, 1 Radio Operator, 1 Medic)
- 2 x Infantry Platoons, each consisting of:
  - 1 x Platoon Command Section (1 Platoon Leader, 1 Radio Operator, 1 Medic)
  - 3 x Infantry Sections (1 Section Leader, 1 Machine Gunner with M60, 1 Assistant Gunner, 7 Riflemen with L1A1 SLRs)

##### Support elements

- 4 x M113 APCs (with .50-cal MGs)
- 2 x Forward Artillery Observers (linked to 105mm Howitzer battery off-board)
- 1 x Mortar Team (81mm mortar)
- 2 x Heavy Machine Gun Teams (M2 .50-cal)



## VIET CONG INSURGENTS

### Main assault force

- 4 x Infantry Platoons, each consisting of:
  - 1 x Platoon Command Section (1 Platoon Leader, 1 Radio Operator, 1 Medic)
  - 3 x Infantry Squads (1 Squad Leader, 1 RPG Operator, 7 Riflemen, 3 Sharpshooters)

### Support elements

- 2 x Mortar Teams (81mm mortars)
- 2 x Heavy Machine Gun Teams (DShK)
- 2 x Sniper Teams (2 Snipers)

## OBJECTIVE

### Australians

Defend your position and withstand Viet Cong assaults until reinforcements arrive/the enemy withdraws. Additional glory can be gained by keeping the six objectives safe.

### Viet Cong

Overrun the Australian defences, inflict maximum casualties, and destroy as many of the six strategic points within the plantation as possible.

## ENDING THE BATTLE

The game should end after a random number of turns. Roll a D6 at the end of each turn and add the turn number. If the total is greater than 12, the game ends; the Australians have finally been reinforced and can see off the VC.

Award victory points based on each side's losses, and give the VC additional points for each objective they destroyed and for each M113 they managed to take out.



Above: An Australian M113A1 with the olive drab paint that replaced the khaki colour of the first armoured vehicles deployed to South Vietnam.

## SPECIAL RULES

### M113A1s

#### Mobility

The M113s can effectively move through heavy terrain, and will generally ignore the movement penalties that would stop other vehicles from powering through dense foliage. Any time they choose to move through heavy terrain, roll 3D6. The M113 can move the distance rolled, up to their maximum move distance. If they roll a triple, they still take their move, but, at the end of it, they will stall, and must spend the next turn getting their vehicle started again. They are a sitting duck for that subsequent turn, unable to move.

#### Armour

The Australians recognised the need to add protection to the M113's machine gun, as the crew commander was vulnerable when using the weapon. From August 1965, M113A1s were fitted with armoured front plates and angled wings built in South Vietnam-based Army workshops.

If shot at from the front, the gunner should get a save bonus.

#### Firepower

Although the Aussies upgraded the turrets of many M113s to use the Model 74C, this happened after the Battle of Long Tan. The vehicles in this battle are armed with .50-cal MGs, which should get a bonus to hit, due to their stabilising mounts.

#### Command post

Designate one M113 as a mobile command post, enhancing communication and coordination. All Australian units within 6" (or a logical range for your scale) of the mobile command post receive a bonus to morale/leadership checks.

The mobile command post may elect to sacrifice any actions in a turn, to focus on communicating orders to the other vehicles and troops. Should they choose to do so, they must remain stationary and cannot fire. They will, however, pass their morale/leadership boosting effect to every other M113 in the Australian force.

### AUSTRALIAN TROOPS

#### Skill and training

These Australian troops haven't yet been fully ground down by the hardship of fighting in Vietnam. To represent their marksmanship skills and tactical proficiency, they should receive a bonus to hit on all shooting rolls.

#### Leadership

To reflect the leadership and resilience of Australian leaders and NCOs, Australian units can reroll failed morale checks if within 6" (or a logical range for your scale) of a Command Section or mobile command post.

#### Take cover

Any troops within 3" (or a logical range for your scale) of an M113 can use it for protection when things get hot. If your rules feature any kind of pinning, pins can be discarded from troops as they are applied, but at risk to your transport. Roll a D6 for each discarded pin, and add +1 for each consecutive discard. A 6+ will result in the vehicle taking damage.

#### Combined arms

Artillery support can be called in by the Forward Artillery Observer, who must be able to see the target and roll a 4+ to successfully bring the off-board artillery to bear.

### VIET CONG

#### Use of terrain

The Viet Cong can deploy up to half of their force as hidden units in ambush, within 6" of clearings, if they can all fit in the hard cover.

Their troops gain an extra cover bonus when in the dense foliage of the plantation.

#### Taking out the objectives

Any VC troops that get within 6" (or a logical range for your scale) of an objective token can attempt to destroy it. If there are no Australian troops within the same distance of the objective, the VC destroy the objective at the end of their turn. If there are Australian troops within the same distance of the objective, the VC destroy the objective at the end of their turn on a 4+.



## AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR

In the early 1960s, the Australian government, led by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, viewed the rise of communism in Asia as a direct threat to regional stability. There was a fear that if one country in a region fell to communism, neighbouring countries would follow, and Australia saw participation in Vietnam as a way to prevent this, and to support a powerful ally in the United States.

From humble beginnings - a team of 30 military advisers who assisted South Vietnamese forces in 1962 - their participation grew. In May 1965, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment was deployed in Vietnam.

Australia's military were primarily involved in operations in Phuoc Tuy Province, with infantry battalions, Special Air Service squadrons, artillery units, and more seeing action.

Australia's participation in the Vietnam War caused political and social controversy at home, especially as the war dragged on and casualties mounted, but their military commitment continued until 1972.



Above: Members of 5 Platoon, B Company, 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR).

### ESCALATION - AIR MOBILITY (1965-1968)

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964 was used to initiate a profound shift in US military strategy and operations. This period marked a surge in ground troops, but was also a pivotal moment in the application of the air power and new technologies that would define the conflict.

The dense jungles and rugged terrain of Vietnam presented formidable challenges for traditional ground operations, and large-scale air mobility was made a cornerstone of US strategy. Helicopters, particularly the Huey, became the linchpin, facilitating rapid troop movements, reconnaissance missions, medical evacuations, and close air support. This revolutionised battlefield tactics, bringing a swift response to enemy movements, and brought about operational flexibility that was previously unimaginable.



Above: Gringo40s Marines and VC clash while Hueys from Crucible Crush offer air support.

### Bell UH-1 Iroquois 'Huey'

Onto the icon! The Huey was the workhorse of US military operations during this period, used primarily for troop transport, medical evacuation, and close air support. It revolutionised modern warfare with its speed, versatility, and adaptability to various mission roles.

While the Huey's ability to rapidly insert and extract troops made it an essential addition to the US war effort, its loud noise and vulnerability to enemy fire made it a high-risk target. Pilots got incredibly adept at getting in and out in a flash!

### The Battle of Ia Drang

This November 1965 clash showcased the Huey's capabilities, as they enabled rapid deployment of troops directly into combat zones in a way that would otherwise have been impossible. As well as getting the troops in, the choppers helped with critical resupply missions, and evacuated wounded soldiers, ensuring that US forces could sustain operations in remote and hostile environments.

The Ia Drang Valley became a proving ground for air mobility, demonstrating that helicopters could fundamentally change the dynamics of modern warfare.



Above: Hog fire support helps to hold back the Vietnamese assault waves. Models by Battlefront Miniatures.



## TAKE FLIGHT WITH THE HUEY IN YOUR WARGAMES

The handy thing about model (and other air assault vehicles) is that scale can be a little more flexible. Mixing a larger scale tracked vehicle into your force is going to look a little odd, but sticking a larger or smaller chopper on a flying stand, so it sits above the tabletop, will hide a lot of sins!

Many 'Nam games at shows are peppered with diecast figures, and the Corgi Aviation Archive is worth a Google if you're willing to pay somewhat inflated auction prices. You'll find fully painted and detailed Hueys that will look magnificent soaring above your battles.

If you're fixed on getting a wargaming kit, then Rubicon Models' impressive UH-1 Huey set is currently top of the pile for detail. It comes with parts to build a UH-1D troop transport or a UH-1C gunship with full interior detailing, clear windows, medevac stretchers, and all sorts of weapons: M60D, M213 MMG, M134 minigun, M129 grenade launcher, M134 minigun, XM157 missile pods, and M60C MMG. The only real downside (beyond this Rubicon kit also being out of stock as I write this article) is that it's an extremely complex build. I currently have three sets waiting under my hobby desk: despite being an experienced kit maker, I'm somewhat paralysed by the intimidation factor of these demanding models.



Above: A 1/48 Corgi Huey Cobra above Old Guard Wargame Club's Vietnam game at 2022's Other Partizan.

A much easier build is Battlefront's 15mm Huey set (to build the whole kit requires around the same number of parts needed to build the crew of the Rubicon model!), and if you're fixed on 28mm, but want to keep things simple, there are 3D prints to consider. Butlers' Printed Models' Huey is somewhat basic but at just six parts it's very easy to construct. The only risk here is that the printed resin tends to be brittle, so your choppers could shatter if they ever tumble from their flying stands.

Going down to 1:285 scale Magister Militum's AC57 UH 1B Huey Slick pack offers two rather nice transports for less than £10.



Above: A diorama showing Rubicon's Huey and their plastic USMC figures.

Right: Magister Militum's AC57 UH 1B Huey Slick.



### AIR SUPPORT SCENARIOS IN THE IA DRANG VALLEY

One of the first major battles between the United States Army and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), the combat in the Ia Drang Valley, gave a preview of the protracted and bloody struggle that was to come, and the significant impact helicopter warfare would have on future military tactics. Central to this was the role played by the Hueys. In our wargames there's plentiful opportunities to bring them to your tabletop clashes.

The conflict began when the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, led by Lt. Col. Harold Moore, was airlifted into Landing Zone (LZ) X-Ray, deep within the Valley. This deployment showcased the mobile versatility of the Huey as the initial insertion faced fierce resistance. Moore's men were (as was a recurring theme in the conflict) heavily outnumbered, with an estimated 2,000 NVA troops putting up a stern defence.

Hueys were pivotal, ferrying troops in and out of the combat zone and extracting wounded soldiers from the battlefield while under fire. They also delivered essential supplies, such as ammunition and water, and conducted aerial reconnaissance.

All these tasks provide gaming opportunities and will challenge the US commanders to make informed strategic decisions amidst the chaos, using the mobility of their Hueys (and the support they could bring) to make assaults from nowhere.







Above: More Flames of War 'Nam action, with Battlefront Miniatures troops and copters.

## SCENARIO ONE - SECURE LZ X-RAY AND ESTABLISH A DEFENSIVE PERIMETER

### GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

#### Helicopter deployment

The NVA should vastly outnumber the initially deployed US troops, but each turn a Huey or Hueys can insert troops into the clearing. Add risk to each deployment by giving the NVA ground troops the option to target the Hueys as they hover to drop troops, with a basic shooting action having the chance of damaging the slick or the troops it is depositing. Any NVA units taking this option to fire on the LZ will sacrifice their ability to activate in the subsequent turn.

#### Defensive perimeter

Troops on the ground must quickly establish a defensive perimeter. Reward US troops with bonus victory points for setting up machine gun positions and digging in in any other ways your rules allow. You could mark key points on the table that they must occupy before the game. This will require coordination with the landing Hueys, for resupply and medevac (if the US doesn't medevac downed figures, they could lose victory points).

#### NVA reinforcements

Escalate the danger each turn by allowing NVA reinforcements to arrive in random positions, reflecting their ability to appear from the landscape they know far better than the US.

#### Victory conditions

Determine how long the game will last before play and, once the allocated turns are over, add up how many VPs each side has accumulated for inflicting casualties. Give the US a bonus for occupying positions on the defensive perimeter and deduct VPs if they have failed to evac any injured men (except those taken out on the final turn). The NVA should get bonus VPs if they take out any Hueys.

## SCENARIO TWO - MEDEVAC UNDER FIRE

At LZ Albany, a US battalion encountered a devastating ambush, resulting in significant American losses. Hueys played a critical role in extracting the wounded and bringing reinforcements. You can build a full scenario around this troublesome rescue.

### GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

#### Locating the wounded

D6 injured men are placed in the NVA-controlled jungle, protected by their buddies at scattered US positions (mark these across the board). It is the US player's job to get the wounded to one of three designated evac points (also mark these) or call down a Huey on their position.

#### Signal flares

Rather than head to an evac point the US player can set off a distress signal flare at their location, allowing a Huey to land there. The downside of this is it makes them more obvious to the attacking NVA. Any shots at troops under a signal flare should get a to hit bonus. In addition, the NVA could be provided with bonus moves to close in on the obvious target.

#### Medevac hueys

The US player activates first each turn, followed by the NVA player. The US player controls two Hueys. A single Huey can make one trip per turn (but not in turn one); move it to a medevac point or signal flare, then land. On the subsequent turn the other Huey can make a trip to another medevac point or signal flare, then land.

A landed Huey can be loaded with as many wounded men as are within 6" (or a logical range for your scale) at the end of the US turn. If the Huey is still intact at the end of the NVA turn it can choose to evacuate. It will take the injured men to safety and can return in two turns.

#### Victory conditions

The US player will win by successfully evacuating a set number of wounded soldiers within a given timeframe. The NVA player's victory will be assured by preventing the evacuation or destroying a critical number of Hueys.



### SCENARIO THREE - SEARCH AND DESTROY

Combat at Ia Drang highlighted the transformative impact of air mobility; the Huey pilots began what would be an ongoing learning experience under fire, probing at the enemy on bold search and destroy missions. You can play these out, targeting the NVA infrastructure.

#### GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

##### The hidden NVA

Split a rectangular board into 12 sections. A platoon of Hueys, with infantry support, should head out over this dense jungle, to locate and destroy hidden supply caches, and the NVA patrols guarding them. The NVA player should mark four caches, four troops of defenders, and two anti-air sections in secret.

##### Aerial reconnaissance

Each turn, a Huey can scout one section of the map it is in, with a chance of detecting NVA positions, defenders, or anti-air, by rolling a 4+ on a D6. The most effective way to quickly scout is to split up the choppers, but in doing so, the Hueys will leave themselves vulnerable. A lone Huey should have a drastically reduced save. A pair of Hueys should have a slightly reduced save.

##### Insertion and extraction

Once a cache is located, the US player must insert troops via their Hueys to secure and destroy it. Hueys can also be used to extract troops if they come under heavy fire.

##### Victory conditions

The US player will achieve victory by destroying a specified number of supply caches within a set number of turns. The NVA's job is simple - stop this from happening!



Above: Choppers soar over Dave Docherty's incredibly impressive Vietnam gaming setup!

That's it for part one! This is just the tip of the iceberg and I have a lot more history and gaming ideas to come. Next issue will take the action to the H'ôChí Minh Trail and the muddy waterways that cut through the dense, difficult terrain of Vietnam.



Above: Empress Miniatures' Apocalypse now styled PBR, which I painted when it was first released, supports isolated troops as their radio operator calls for air support from the high ground. More next issue!



# MASSACRE AT DWARVEN TOWER PASS

## BILLHOOKS FANTASÍA BATTLE REPORT



Following the recent release of *Fantasia* for *Never Mind the Warlocks* - the fantasy supplement for medieval small battle game *Never Mind the Billhooks* - we invited the author of both publications, Andy Callan, to whisk us off to another world and take us through a game of *Fantasia*, filling us in on some of the new rules along the way.

This was a small, 100-points-a-side action, designed to showcase the new *Fantasia* supplement. It showed the Dice Goddess at her most capricious, Magic at its most unpredictable, and Monsters at their most deadly. It all played out in a couple of hours, including pauses for photography and lunch. Good deservedly triumphed, with the entire Evil army either wiped out or routed. Still, there's plenty more where they came from... Mwah hah ha!

### THE RAIDING FORCE OF THADDEUS, THE MALEVOLENT

1 Goblin Mounted Scouts	8 Wizard	
2 Undead Horde (Skeleton warriors)	9 Leader	
3 Orc Mobs (spearmen)	10 Commander in Chief (and Arch-Villain)	
4 Orc Archer Company	11 Messenger/ADC	
5 Orc Warrior Company	12 Imprisoned Princess	
6 War Elephant - Level 2 Monster		
7 Human Warrior Company (ex-bodyguards)		<b>100 Pts</b>

### THE RESCUE POSSE OF KING DRAKE III

13 Human Cavalry Squadron
14 Human Skirmisher Band Scouts (Light Infantry)
15 Elf Knights (Elite)
16 Human Skirmisher Band Skulkers (Light Infantry)
17 Elf Archer Company (Elite)
18 Human Archer Company
19 Human Warrior Company
20 Ogre - Level 1 Monster
21 Wizard
22 Hero
23 Commander in Chief (and Legendary Hero) and Messenger/ADC

**101 Pts**



A The Blue Wizard's Tower  
 B The Green Wizard's Tower  
 C Token-holding goblets



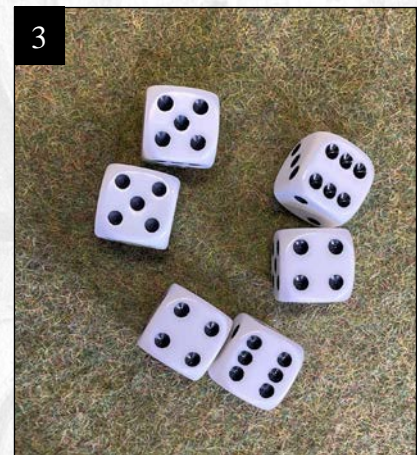
# TURN ONE



1. Andy (Evil, on the left) and Steve Wood (Good, on the right) ponder their usual cagey opening manoeuvres.

2. Human Cavalry and Evil Wolf Riders clash, making a dreadful mess of the Green Wizard's herb garden.

3. Six out of six saves for the good guys. This sets the pattern for the rest of the game!



4. An irresistible force for Good: Elvish Knights bring 16 dice in Melee, plus four automatic hits from an attached Hero. Crikey!

5. A bird's-eye view of the Blue Wizard tower and the surrounding area.





## TURN TWO

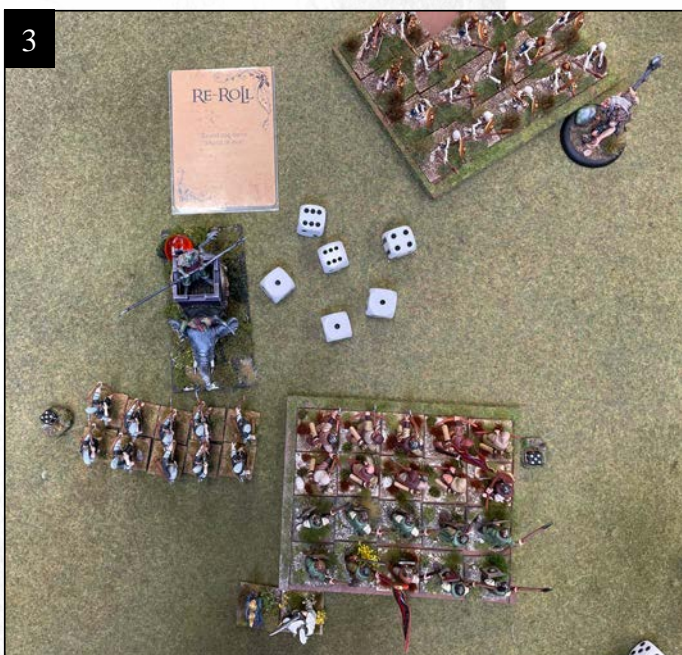


1. Steve's Elvish Knights crash into the Orc Horde, daunting them immediately.

2. Orace the Ogre is attacked by the Skellies, but, since he is a Monster, he is not subject to the usual Dread Test vs Undead - no fear! He saves all the hits he takes, which is a good job, as level 1 Monsters only have one life.

3. Andy's War Elephant (with Orc crew) powers forward, but ends up just short of Steve's Elf Archers who, having not previously been activated, get to shoot at it at the end of the turn. Three 1s for saves should have meant a dead elephant, but Andy played the Reroll card. Phew!

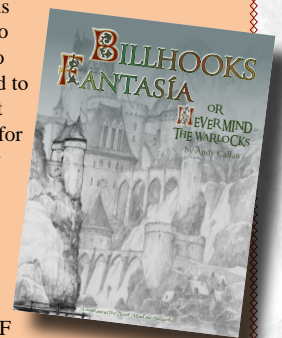
4. The Evil ADC Goblin Wolf Rider reaches the Green Wizard's tower, seeking assistance in his master's fight.



### BILLHOOKS GOES FANTASY!

*Fantasia* is a supplement for fans of *Never Mind the Billhooks* who might wish to take the game into the realm of fantasy. It is not tied to any particular fantasy world, but can be used as a generic ruleset for any battles involving men, other typical fantasy races, monsters, and wizards.

A copy of *Never Mind the Billhooks Deluxe* - or of the Core/Albion rules (available to purchase as a Billhooks Lite PDF from [nevermindthebillhooks.com](http://nevermindthebillhooks.com)) - is required to play this supplement.





## THE SCENARIO

Thaddeus the Malevolent has bribed the bodyguards of good King Drake III to take the regent's daughter Princess Mandarina hostage, and carry her away to Thaddeus' evil domain. Mandarina's father swiftly raises a small but formidable force, and gives chase.

King Drake's men, and elf allies, track Thaddeus' force for several days, finally confronting them in Dwarven Tower Pass.

The mysterious pass is home to two estranged dwarven brothers, known as the Green and the Blue Wizards. The whole area is alive with magical activity; walls and other seemingly-grounded features of the landscape shift and move randomly about the battlefield.

Both wizards have recently mislaid magical items while wandering in the pass, and, when called on by representatives from either army, will offer a reward for finding the missing spell books and/or Palantiri. In addition, the Green Wizard will lend his pet Giant (a level 3 Monster), whilst the Blue Wizard will offer his caller a cauldron of bats (the Giant is scared of bats, and won't go within 12" of them), to the first person to call on them.

Both armies have an ADC/messenger in their ranks. A fleet-footed elf aids King Drake, while a goblin mounted on a ferocious wolf is in Thaddeus the Malevolent's service. These two ADCs can be used to call on the wizards.

The scene is set for an enchanting encounter, with mischievous wizards set to either obstruct or aid King Drake's attempt to rescue his daughter.



## TURN THREE



1. The Elvish Knights destroy the Orc Horde, and surge forward in pursuit, cutting down the last of the fugitives (and taking two Disarray counters in the process).
2. The Ogre and the Undead continue their fight and despite there only being three skellies left, a Horde will always fight on to their (err...) 'death'.
3. Andy's Messenger is gifted a cauldron of bats by the Green Wizard and told "The Giant next door is scared of them". He is also offered a reward if he can find some missing spell books or a "Palan- somethingorother", and bring them back to the tower.





4. Evil wizard Swarfega successfully deploys a Wall of Flame (level 2 Spell) to stop the enemy rushing to the rescue of the princess.
5. The Elvish Archers riddle the elephant with arrows again, killing it before it ever gets into Melee.
6. Over on his left flank, Andy's Wolf Riders use their sneaky 'hit-and-run' tactic (move, free shot with half numbers, then move again) getting a rare (single) kill against Steve's Human Cavalry.



## TURN FOUR

A lot happened here, starting with an object lesson in how not to cast a spell (don't roll low!) by Steve's Wizard Bayaz (back to remedial classes at Hogwarts for him!).

1. Andy's Orcs, with their right secured by the Wall of Flame, advance confidently to shoot at the Elvish Knights, killing one, and reducing them to half strength, which will mean a Morale Test at the end of the turn.

To the left of this shot, Steve's ADC (a fleet-footed elf) knocks on the door of the Blue Wizard's tower, and is offered the use of the 'guard-dog' Giant for the rest of the battle. From his vantage point, the Blue Wizard could no doubt already see which way the battle was going!



2. The Evil Messenger moves to recover the missing spell books. This inadvertently turns out to be a bad, even fatal, move. He takes with him the bats, which could have scared off the Giant, but, now out of range of the Giant, the Wolf Rider can't affect the battle.

**THE FIGURES**

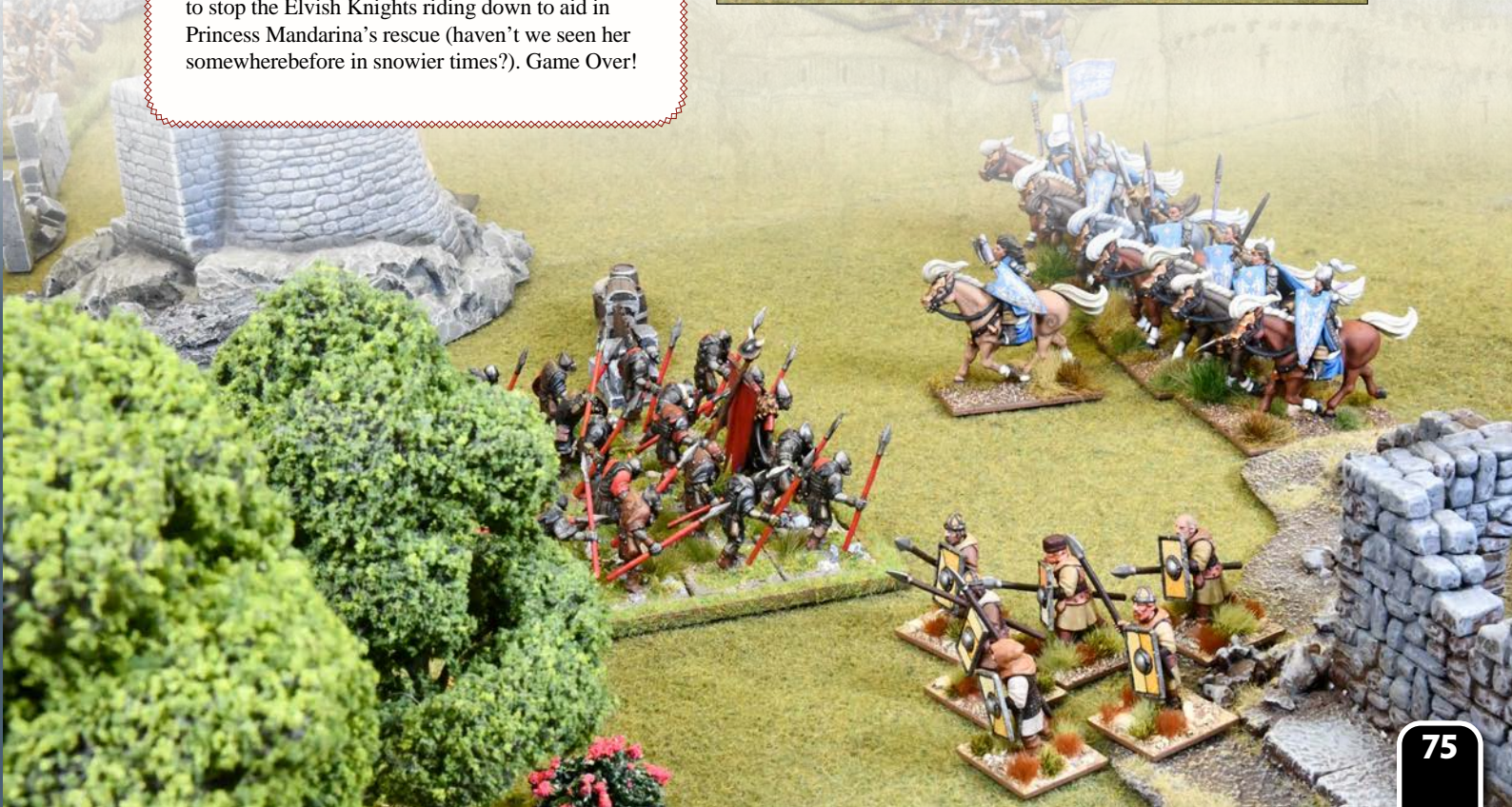
The models seen in photographs throughout this article mostly come from the Oathmark Range by North Star Military Figures. They are ideally suited to games of *Fantasia* (and pretty much any other fantasy setting). Thanks also go to North Star for hosting our event.





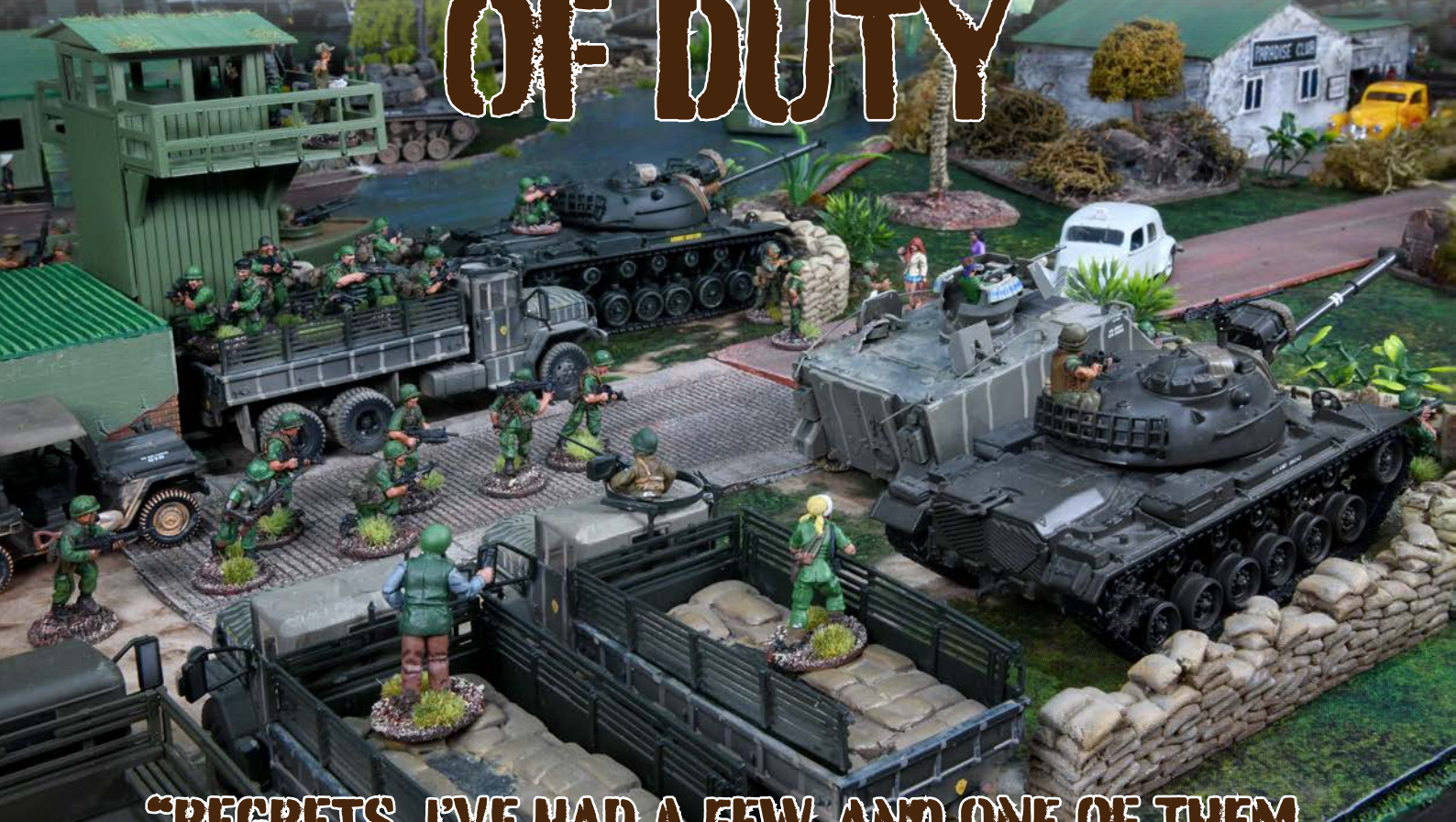
3. The very next card drawn is 'Good Monsters', so Steve sends his newly-acquired Giant and the heroic (and unscathed) 'Orace the Ogre (Man of the Match) in a joint attack on Andy's orc block. This provokes a Dread Test (caused by the first attack by Monsters in the game), which the wretched orcs fail badly, and promptly rout. A failed Dread Test means that any friendly unit within 12" is affected in the same way, so the renegade troops guarding the princess's carriage also legged it!

4. The next (and final) card to be drawn is a Bonus, and as the dice-off is tied, this means the Wall of Flame spell fizzles out, so there is now nothing to stop the Elvish Knights riding down to aid in Princess Mandarina's rescue (haven't we seen her somewhere before in snowier times?). Game Over!





# ANOTHER TOUR OF DUTY



## “REGRETS, I’VE HAD A FEW, AND ONE OF THEM, SELLING MY NAM COLLECTION”

**Ron Ringrose rebuilds his Vietnam War collection and we show off his fine models in action!**

If only Ron Ringrose had listened to the wise words of Frank Sinatra before he sold off his collection of Vietnam models in 2018/19. But (“then again”) at least he enjoyed collecting it all again in 2023!

Collecting is often portrayed as a rather shameful side of our hobby, resulting in the famous ‘lead mountain of doom’, but it can be fun and rewarding. And so it proved for Ron, when he began re-collecting for Vietnam. We asked Ron to tell us about his re-collection and we accompany his words with some tasty eye-candy of one of the best 28mm Nam tables around.

“My interest in Vietnam gaming was originally sparked by the release of Corgi’s *Unsung Heroes* diecast Vietnam series, between 2000 and 2003. I soon gathered a large collection of these 1:43 to 1:50 scale vehicles and went about collecting 28mm figures that would fit well with them in my wargames. But, to make way for other ranges and periods that caught my eye, I sold most of my Nam stuff off a few years ago. I then

got the regrets! Those Corgi vehicles are great models; so much better than the resin alternative out there, so, armed with a determination to make the *Unsung Heroes* the centrepiece of my Nam collection again, I went online to see what I could find for sale on various auction sites.



*Above: H13 Bell US Army Medical Service Corps Helicopter, from Corgi’s Korean War, Forgotten Heroes series - bringing some M\*A\*S\*H vibes to the table.*





Above: Huey Cobra and Hog helicopters, both from the *Unsung Heroes* range, parked up but preparing for action on Ron's table.

Right: This model comes from the *Corgi Classics* range. It's a US Army Diamond T Wrecker recovery vehicle, which actually saw use during the Second World War, but clearly this one was resurrected for use in Southeast Asia!



“Fast forward about six weeks and I had pretty much re-acquired all the models in the *Unsung Heroes* series, plus a couple from the parallel *Forgotten Heroes*, Korean War, range. Some I picked up for bargain prices, others I had to pay top dollar for. They came from sellers all over the world. Next up I started looking for buildings - because again, I had sold off all my originals of those!

I got in touch with Dave Bodley at Grand Manner. He doesn't stock his Vietnam range anymore, but I asked him to have a look around and see what he could find. Luckily, he managed to dig out all the buildings I had before, plus a couple more. I then went on to get all the resin pieces he supplied painted up.

“3D printing has really come on since the first time I was collecting, so via searching for 3D prints online I was able to get hold of better airport and base buildings than those I had first time around. The boats and watch towers are 3D prints as well.

“My replacement figures all come from Gringo 40s. It's a superb range, for US and VC troops, and everything in-between.

### PALM MADE

The palm trees seen in the photos are hand-made by Ron. You can find out how he did it by going to [wargamesillustrated.net](http://wargamesillustrated.net) and searching for 'palm trees'.







Above: Along with the Bell copter, this photo also features a Solido Diecast International Red Cross Packard Ambulance, which was released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of France. It fits neatly with Ron's French themed hospital.



Left: A 1:50 scale M48A3 Patton Main Battle Tank. Landing at Da Nang on March, 1965, the M48A3 was the first American tank to enter the War. A derivative of the M48, which had entered production back in April 1952, the A3 was designed to bring older versions up to the standard of the newer M60. The model features a hull-mounted machine gun, a turret-mounted .50-caliber machine gun, and a huge 90mm main gun with laser rangefinder.



Above: In 1975, whilst returning from a business trip to Australia, Ron stopped off in Bangkok, on the Chao Phraya waterway. He came across a group of American soldiers enjoying some R&R after the end of the Vietnam War, Ron was invited to join the GIs enjoy a few beers, and suffer the subsequent hangover. As a tribute to that encounter, Ron included this bar scene on his tabletop. The less said about exactly what went on at the Paradise Club the better!





Above: The airport watchtowers are 3D prints and some of the few survivors from Ron's initial Nam collection. In front of the tower is a 1:50th scale M35 A1 'Deuce-and-a-Half' 2.5 tonne Truck. A vehicle that saw service with the US army for over half a century, from 1940 into the 1990s.



Right: Ron does most of his own figure painting, but he would like to thank Darren Ward and Spencer Bass for help with his Nam collection.

Below: Ron's Nam table features a long winding river, which is patrolled by several 3D printed US gun boats, including this one from Hoplite Miniatures, via eBay..





# NAM BOLT ACTION GAMING

Ron and his buddies (The Essex Gamesters) have had great fun gaming with the new collection on his 12' table. John Horwood (far left in photo) has written some simple additions/variants to *Bolt Action* which are the rules of choice used in the game - seen below.

## UNIT MORAL AND CHECKS

Special Forces	10
Regulars	9
Inexperienced- VC	8

## OBSERVATION TABLE

		SPOTTED ON	OBS MODIFIERS	
<b>TARGET IN:</b>	Open	Spotted	Target running	+2
	Soft Cover	4 or less	Target walking	+1
	Hard Cover	3		
	Bunkers, In buildings	2	Target firing	+1

**Ambush - FIRE 1st**

**Max spot distance in jungle - Medium range**

**HELICOPTERS (20 points of Damage)**

**Movement:** 16. Can only be in the air for eight turns. You can hover.

One turn to refuel and re-arm. Two turns to repair 5 damage points. Five damage points repaired for each subsequent turn on the ground.

**Weaponry:** Huey-6 rockets, single side gunner (MMG). Apache-10 rockets, nose gun (HMG)

**Rockets:** First rocket hits on 5+. Second rocket hits on 4+. Subsequent rockets hit on 3+.

Use HED2 for damage and +6 pen v armour.

Small arms inflicts 1 point of damage.

When 5 points of damage are lost, or if hit by an RPG, roll on the table below.

## HELICOPTER DAMAGE CHART

### ROLL D10

1-2	Glancing blow	2 damage points.
3-4	Blades hit	Half speed, 4 damage points.
5-6	Fuselage and weapons hit	No weapons, 6 damage points.
7-8	Critical damage	Land immediately.
9-10	Direct hit	Blown up.

If damage points get to zero the helicopter crashes. If carrying troops roll for survivors (*BA* rules).

## BOATS (20 points of Damage)

**Movement:** 8.

Two turns to repair 5 damage points. Five damage points repaired for each subsequent turn on the ground.

## BOAT DAMAGE CHART

### ROLE D6

1-2	Minimal damage	3 damage points.
3-4	Rudder damage	Make for land immediately. 5 damage points.
5-6	Engine damaged	Drift 4 with current. Needs to be towed back to base. 8 damage points.

If damage points get to zero the boat sinks/blows up. If carrying troops roll for survivors (*BA* rules).

Small arms inflicts 1 damage point.

When 5 damage points are lost roll on the table above. Treat as soft skin if hit by a weapon with a PEN.



Above: Ron (right) and his gaming buddies about to begin some Nam Bolt Action gaming.





Above: This impressive resin Twin Gun Position with Towers, is another piece by Grand Manner. Officially no longer in stock, Grand Manner owner Dave managed to find one deep in his dungeon for Ron.

Below left: Another view of the Paradise Club. Featuring Ron's recollections of his time in Bangkok (Kurt Cobain and Angus Young may not have actually performed on stage!).



Above: A US tank convoy led by two M48A3 Pattons snakes through a Vietnamese village. The buildings are by Grand Manner, but are, alas, no longer available.



# PAPYRUS, PULP, AND THE OATH OF OSIRIS



**Glenn Clarke tries out Osprey's *Pulp!* gaming system and shows off his Egyptian explorers' bold adventure.**

I have been a dyed in the wool historical wargamer since I first read Donald Featherstone's *Wargames* back in 1967. Since then, I have played games in assorted scales and across many different periods, but it was only when Osprey announced their plans to publish a new set of rules entitled *Pulp!* that I got interested in this rather different world of tabletop possibilities.

'Pulp' refers to fiction which has little depth or meaning and relates, essentially, to stories of derring-do and adventure, usually set in the 1920s and 1930s. I pre-ordered a copy of the rules by Marco Arnaudo and, once I had read them through, I set about building a scenario befitting the pulp genre.

## **PICKING THE SCENARIO**

In the past, I had developed a colonial game centered upon an archaeological dig in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The game was set in the tumultuous period of the close of the 19th Century when borders were finally settled. It seemed to me that the 28mm ancient Egyptian terrain that I had built for that game would make an ideal setting for a pulp game too, so I dutifully got down to the task of building a story around it and working out a scenario.







Early morning work on the dig before the sun comes up.

The central theme of *Pulp! Skirmish Adventure Wargaming*, to give the ruleset its full title, is adventure and fun. It is a very open and flexible ruleset that essentially provides (pardon the pun) a sandbox for you to develop adventures in. It certainly doesn't require a clear historical setting, however, as with many great pulp tales (or modern pulp reimaginings such as *Indiana Jones*) having some adjacent history wouldn't hurt one bit!

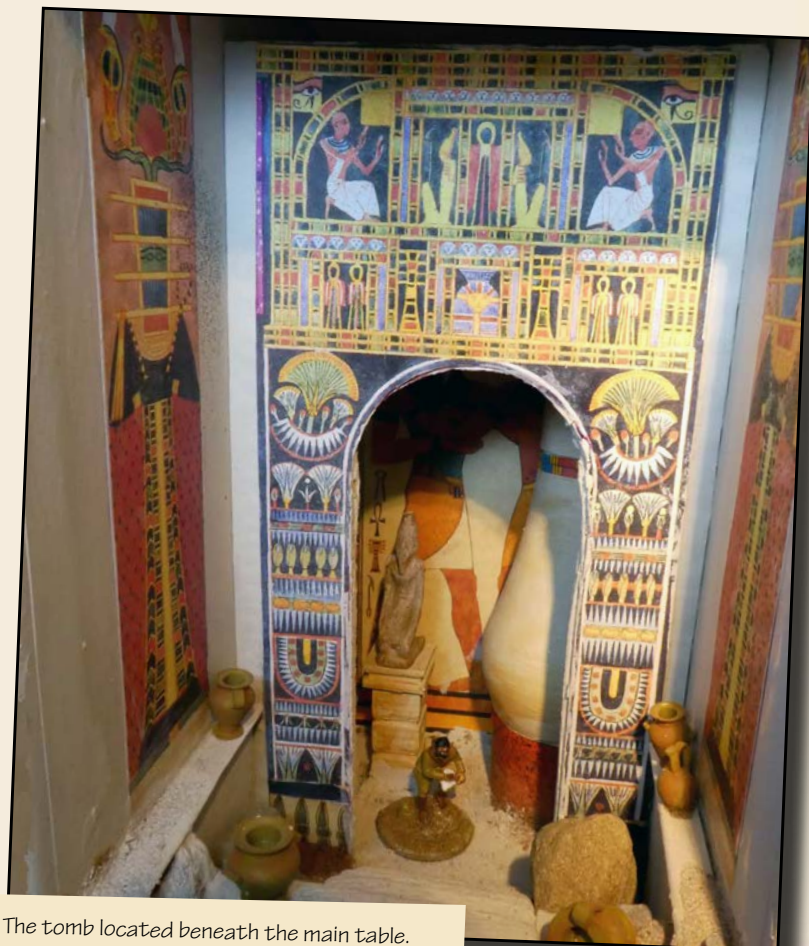
I decided that my game would take place in the 1920s, just after Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 sparked a new bout of 'Egyptomania', the likes of which hadn't been seen since the height of the Victorian era.

#### DEVELOPING THE TERRAIN

Having decided upon the setting for my scenario, I followed the recommendations in the ruleset closely, as I ventured into this new area of gaming. Some things remain the same whatever you play - you'll always want to consider terrain. *Pulp!* suggests a playing area of 3' x 3' and I set my terrain in a slightly larger area to give me plenty of space around the edges for the rulebook, dice, notes, and tokens required.

Buildings and other features were the next things I had to address. The pylon, or temple entrance, in the form of two joined and truncated towers, was built from scratch. The tomb itself was also built from scratch and goes beneath the surface of the table! This is a lot of fun to do and can also be applied to bunkers, mines, dungeons, and a host of other locations.

The various small statues and vases came from Iron Gate Scenery, and Ainsty Castings and Actualsize Miniatures have useful items if you want to play games set in Egypt (be they pulp or historical). The Lotus flower topped pillars and the larger statues were from a supplier on eBay. The tents forming the archaeologists' campsite are from Perry Miniatures, with a scattering of roughly made packing crates. Palm trees are standard purchases, whilst the reindeer moss and large chunks of cork (used to represent rocky outcrops) are from a local garden centre.



The tomb located beneath the main table.



## CRANKING UP THE CHARACTER

One of the key elements of *Pulp!* is the characterization of individual figures participating in the game and this was the most novel factor for me to give thought to. The rules advise that roleplaying elements, or characterization, should be excluded until you're more experienced at playing the game, and I decided to follow this advice for my initial game.

For those wishing to delve into this aspect of *Pulp!*, special qualities and abilities need to be decided for each character that define their attitude in battle. Specific weapons also need to be allocated to individual figures, and if (like me) you aren't keen on tokens and cards littering the gaming table, you'll need to jot all this down pre-game on a roster sheet. The roster serves a dual purpose; it records the necessary details, and it defines what you should represent on your figures. When creating such a level of backstory and character, it would be a crime of pulp gangster novel proportions to not have easily identifiable accurate models on the table. This is not as onerous as it might sound to players more used to building lines of matching soldiers for grander battles, as the numbers of figures concerned are quite small in *Pulp!* games.

Identification can be accomplished through picking very distinctive figures, doing a few weapon or head swaps, or (if you just want to get busy playing) by adding numbers or colored dots to the figures' bases.

It occurred to me, when I took the photographs that are shown here, that the look of the game would have been enhanced immensely if individual figures were produced in different poses. I will certainly look at this in the future and it might be a good reason to use multi-part plastics where the same parts can be built in varied stances. I will also look at including casualty figures, rather than simply tipping models over or removing them from the table. This is part of the joy of a character-driven game with minimal miniature requirements.



**"My friend rushed into the temple, and never came out."**

The character can never select the Run Action, and its base Activation value is increased by 1.

© Pulp Miniatures

### CHARACTER PROGRESSION

If you win a scenario in a campaign, you can select one of the Improvements below to apply starting from the next scenario. A Unit can gain multiple Improvements over time, but each Improvement can be gained only once by a Unit.

- A Hero / Villain or Elite Unit gains an Extra SP.
- A Hero / Villain or single-Model Elite Unit can move up to 4" when performing Defensive Stance.
- A Hero / Villain or single-Model Elite Unit can move up to 4" when performing Retention Fire.
- A Green Unit is promoted to Seasoned, or a Seasoned Unit to Veteran. Adjust Activation, Skill, and Special Points accordingly.
- A Model with a Trauma or Phobia loses that Trauma or Phobia.
- A Model with a Life Experience Profile can add an extra Benefit to the list of available Benefits.
- A Model with a Consuming Obsession adds one Benefit to the list of available Benefits. This second Benefit can only be used once per game.
- A Two-Model Elite Unit can be turned into a Trainer / Trained Animal Unit without spending an SP (see below).

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## FINDING FIGURES

With the basic scenario and terrain questions settled, I obtained figures from a variety of sources. I broke with tradition and my own, long-held preferences, by allowing women onto the scene in the form of four female archaeologists! They came from North Star's Pulp range, along with four armed male archaeologists. A couple of other figures were converted from Perry Miniatures' Boer War civilians, whilst a photographer and his assistant came from Dept Battalion.

The cultists are taken from two sources: some are from the Perry's boxed set of Sudanese natives and others are Zanzibari Arab Slavers from Wargames Foundry.

The flatbed Ford Model T truck is from Empress Miniatures and the other vehicle is taken from Lledo's Days Gone range of diecast models. The Lledo vehicle is perhaps slightly under scale but is still perfectly serviceable.



Figures and vehicles from assorted ranges bring character to the setting.

This may sound like a rather complicated and involved collection of models, but the rules make clear suggestions relating to unit sizes; following these produced units of a dozen figures in each opposing force and this is perfectly manageable. The basic force that is recommended comprises:

- One or two single-figure units, classed as Heroes.
- One or two two-figure units classed as Elite or Veteran characters.
- Two three-figure units classed simply as seasoned characters.

Following the lower numbers that are suggested would give a slightly smaller force of just nine figures, but I opted for the high end to fit in the various characters. Other types of units are also available and, as you gain familiarity with the rules, you can opt to have Superhumans, Villains, or simply extra-'green' figures.



Cultists advance through the pylon and do their best to stay out of sight.

## HOW THE GAME PLAYED OUT

The morning sun hadn't arrived fully when my archaeologists began their work early, avoiding the fierce sunlight and heat that would come in a couple of hours and bake the desert sand. Whilst it was still cool and dimly lit outdoors, the dig was illuminated with lamps, and the team began their routine.

Unbeknownst to the archeologists, their seemingly mundane routine had angered a local group of cultists, who still considered the site to be sacred. Swearing an oath to the God Osiris, who symbolized death, resurrection, and the cycle of Nile floods which brought life to Egypt's fertile heart, they banded together (on one edge of the play area) and approached through the pylon (or temple entrance). They carefully skirted the archaeologists' camp, to avoid alerting anyone who might be there and, as they made their way across the plain, to the dig itself.



### DO KEEP IN TOUCH!

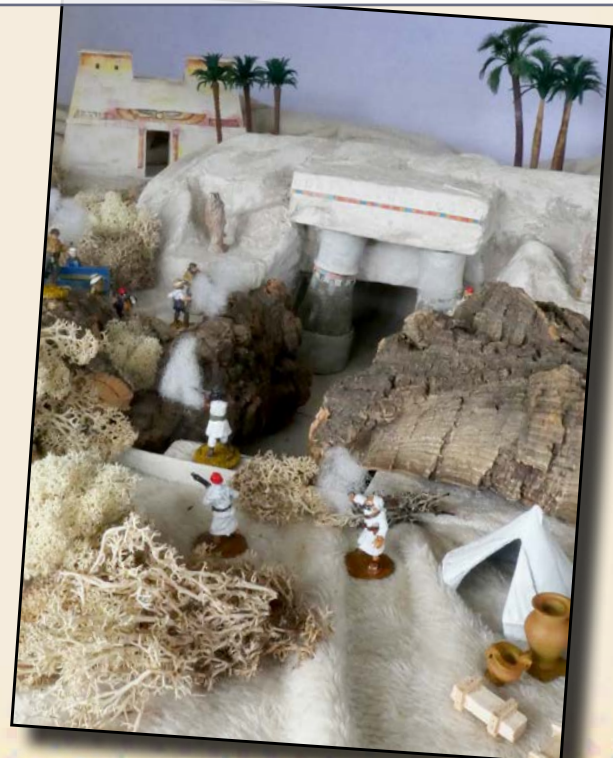
The rules have quite detailed requirements for whether a model in a multi-figure unit is In Touch (IT) or Out of Touch (OOT). Figures need to be IT (within 3" of another in the unit) if they are to be activated with ease and brought into play, while figures deemed to be OOT necessitate the player taking a separate activation test with a negative modifier before they can take any action.

Detailed examples of the various possible situations are given, along with diagrams, but there is a proviso for novice players (which I was grateful for) to ignore this feature. This simple approach is the one that I opted for.

I used a simple system to decide whether the defenders became aware of the cultists' approach. At the start of each of the cultists' moves they rolled a single D6; a score of 3 or less resulted in the defenders being alerted to their presence whilst 4+ allowed them to proceed unobserved. Their first move was made in complete secrecy but, at the start of their second move, they were spotted, and the defenders rapidly deployed from the dig, collected their weapons, and took up positions for the ensuing firefight.

The game required a clear means of resolution and the sample scenarios in the rulebook included myriad possibilities. Examples of different outcomes might include withdrawing to a specified edge of the playing area, leaving the area with a collection of artefacts, leaving in good order (ready to fight another day), and the ever present classic of one force getting utterly obliterated by the other, however unlikely that might seem.

As things turned out, the very simple casualty mechanism outlined in the rules worked very well. Each time that a figure was hit the fact was recorded, and the casualty's defensive strength was reduced, with a second hit automatically resulting in a kill and the casualty being removed from the game.





As my game progressed, the cultists suffered a long run of poor dice throws while the defending archaeologists fared much better, with my gallant ladies doing particularly well. Initial hits were rapidly inflicted upon the attackers and, although they continued to fight, they became far less effective in their weakened state. The defenders took fewer hits and by the third or fourth round of melee they began to inflict a series of second hits upon the cultists.

The once bold cultists began to falter as their figures were put out of action and they eventually vacated the table; which left the archaeologists free to continue their investigations and safely remove the artefacts that they had discovered.

Having ignored the provisions relating to figures being In Touch/Out of Touch and avoiding some of the complexity characterization and roleplay could bring, I found the game progressed quickly. Indeed, the rules do suggest that a standard game can be concluded in two hours.

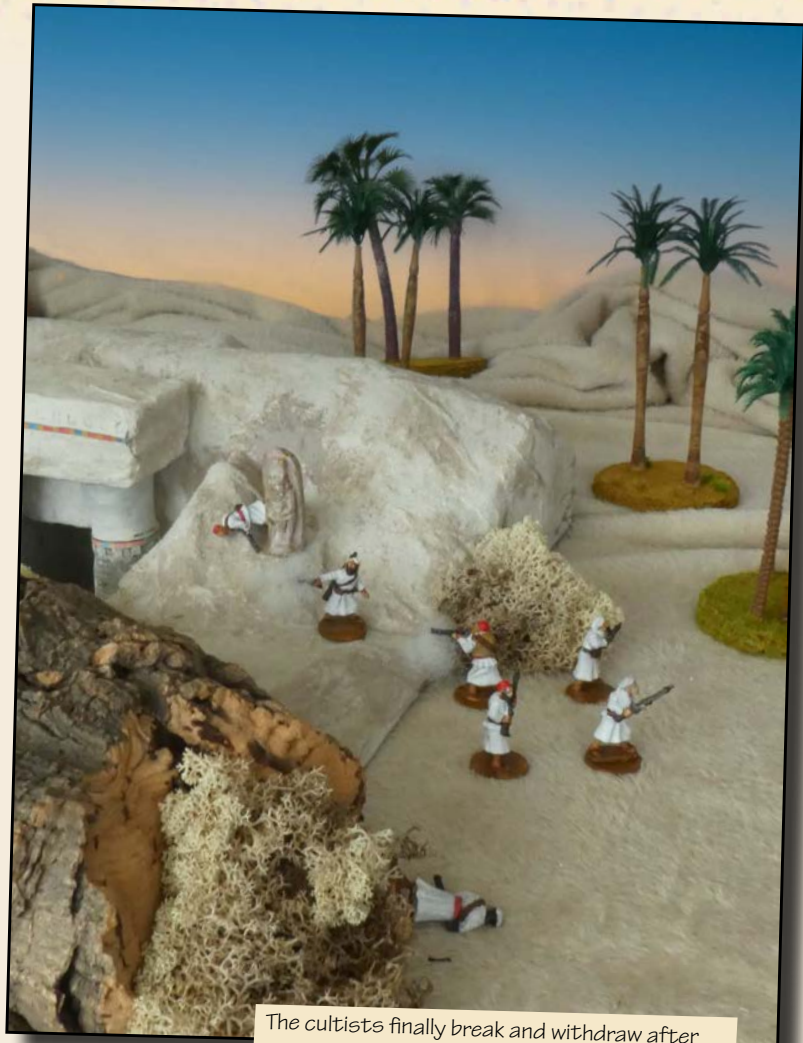
Fortunately, my game did not involve movement into the underground area of the archaeological site, since the rules do not cover underground vaults, crypts and the like. However, there is a section relating to plateau effects, which deals with different heights, and I could have adapted this if I needed to.

Vehicles are not featured in the rules either, but I am sure that you could develop appropriate provisions if needed. The vehicles in my own game did not enter the action and were included more for visual impact, but now, with the tomb pillaged, there's potential for games based around ambushes as they drive off.

## CONCLUSIONS

For my first venture into *Pulp!* I have to say that the game was enjoyable and triggered ideas for future development. Some elements of the rules might seem complicated to players less familiar with small figure count skirmish battles, but they include features not found elsewhere; animals (including velociraptors!), monsters, and a variety of unusual weapons for example. If you want death rays and tractor beams, then you're well covered!

Because of their depth, the rules are an excellent catalyst for generating new gaming ideas. If I stayed with my Egyptian setting, and went even deeper into the world of *Pulp!*, then a scenario



The cultists finally break and withdraw after various figures are taken out of action.



Skill	Melee	Protection	Training Range	Charge	Run	Walk
4	Blow, 4 IP	Thick hide, 4	N/A	10	12	4

A single Unmated Hit from a T-Rex will KO its target.

Skill	Melee	Protection	Training Range	Charge	Run	Walk
4	Claws, Bite, 4 IP	Natural, 6	8	6	8	6

Skill	Melee	Protection	Training Range	Charge	Run	Walk
4	Claws, Bite, 2 IP	Thick hide, 5	N/A	8	10	6

### ANIMAL MODIFICATIONS

During set up, a player can spend 1 SP of an Elite Unit including a Trained Animal one of the modifications below. The modifications may also be given to Animals to add interest to a scenario.

Upgrade	Effect
Armor	Lower the Protection value of the Animal by 1.
Jetpack	Allow the Animal to fly following the same rules for birds of prey as in the rules.
Leads head	Add 1 IP to the IP of the Animal.
Enhanced intelligence	Double the Training Range of a Trained Animal.
Mounted Firearm	The Animal can perform a Ranged Attack as its Action for the turn more up to 2" before or after performing the attack. The weapon and 2 IP.
Electric Skin	After seeing the opponent's Save Roll in a Melee, the owner of a modification can force the opponent to reroll their Roll. The save modification can only be performed once per game, during the Activation of a Unit in which Trained are within Training Range, swap the position of Pause and Train are within Training Range, swap the position of Pause and Train are within Training Range, swap the position of Pause and Train are within Training Range. Can only be performed if the Trainer selects DS, RF, or Pat Back. Can only be performed if the Trainer selects DS, RF, or Pat Back. If applicable, the DS or RF token follows the Trainer in the turn.
Humanimalistic Metempsychosis	

start activating normally when an active enemy moves within 4" of them, or the owning player decides to move them, or to perform RF with them.

- There's a special way to move from A to B that costs 1 SP but is shorter than the normal way. For example, a party is fighting in a castle in Bavaria to free a kidnapped scientist. When entering the library, a hero can spend an SP to identify the revolving bookshelf and use its secret passage to reach the next room. Spending an SP to perform extraordinary actions like this one should be optional, not mandatory. There should always be a normal way to go from A to B in addition to the special way.
- And don't forget that you can (or should!) have Pilots in scenarios taking place deep in the jungle or in the middle of the desert!

## CAMPAIGNS

Each scenario in *Pulp!* can be played independently, as a single story, or linked to other scenarios in a campaign to create an overarching narrative.

If you play a scenario as a one-shot, well, that's all you have to worry about.

If you are linking scenarios to create a campaign, the winning team in a scenario will gain one of the Improvements indicated in the Character Progression section, to be used in all remaining scenarios. If you are worried about balance, allow both teams to acquire an Improvement, representing experience they both acquired.

You will also need to decide if the campaign is going to be Tight, Loose, or Extended.

In a Tight campaign, one or both teams lose from the previous scenario. Each scenario begins only with the equipment and Models they have from the previous scenario. Each scenario begins with the characters exactly in the same condition as they were at the end of the previous scenario.

An example of a Tight campaign would be a group of explorers going down a subterranean temple divided into different levels, each level representing a single game. In the storyworld of the game, only a minute or two passes between scenarios.

© Pulp Miniatures





could be developed for the cultists bringing ancient doom up from the crypts, as the rules have a section for Zombies! Maybe a mummified monster would rise to take out those pillaging the tomb? Appropriate figures, in the form of priests and mummies, are readily available from Wargames Foundry.

Stripping out some of the more complex rules and the roleplaying element gives great flexibility and ease. The game could be played very quickly as a demonstration or participation game, and it can be adapted to take account of players' abilities or time constraints.

If you feel ready to include all the different elements, you'll experience a deep roleplaying/skirmish hybrid game that you could become completely immersed in the granular details of.

It made an agreeable change to not have to worry about tunics having the right number of buttons, and not feel concerned about the absolute accuracy of the historical context. Overall, the game was fun, which is what really matters!





# THE GRADARA PROJECT



From left to right: Maria Chara Torcolacci, Michael Perry, Alan Perry, Gianluca Raccagni, Filippo Gasperi, James Sharpe, and Federico Mammarella.

**Editor Dan and the Perry brothers packed their bags (and sculpting tools), and jetted off to see an award-winning wargaming and cultural collaboration.**

The town of Gradara in North Eastern Italy has picture book Italian charm, with winding cobbled streets that ascend to a large medieval castle. Perched on a hillside above the town, the castle looks out towards the seaside resort of Rimini and the Adriatic coast.

In early June of this year, sculpting supremos the Perry twins and I were invited to Gradara by Dr Gianluca Raccagni of UK-based History and Games Lab (H&GL) to take part in Gradara Wargames - an event organised to celebrate the unveiling of a massive 'diorama' of the town, made in the UK by James Sharp of Oshiro Models.

On the first morning of the event, I caught up with the Mayor of Gradara (and event instigator) Filippo Gasperi (FG), and Gianluca Raccagni (GR) of History and Games Lab (H&GL), to ask them all about the Gradara model project.

**Wargames Illustrated:** Where did the idea for the project come from?

**Filippo Gasperi:** Two or three years ago, I had the idea of making a historical model of Gradara for display, showing what the castle and town would have looked like in the 15th Century. I got in touch with some game designer friends of mine from the nearby town of Ravenna, who put me in touch with Gianluca, a former Ravenna resident now working

Alan D'Amico and the Perry brothers.



Cutting the ribbon.



Walking the walls of the real Gradara.

Dan, Alan, and Michael would like to thank Gianluca, Filippo, and Federico Mammarella for their hospitality in Gradara, and Joeli and Elisa for their delightful company.



in the UK at the University of Edinburgh. During our initial discussions, Gianluca suggested making it a 'playable' model, which was an extension of our simpler idea of a display piece.

**Gianluca Raccagni:** As a wargamer, and big fan of all things terrain and scenery, I immediately saw the potential for the model to be interactive. When I was younger and went to visit museums, it was always disappointing that I wasn't able to get close to or touch the impressive models on display; they were behind glass, or very fragile. In this case, I could see no reason why the two things couldn't be combined: a great-looking and informative display model that was also interactive and playable.

**Wi:** Did you know what Gianluca was suggesting? Had you even heard of wargaming?!

**FG:** Oh yes, I played miniature wargames when I was younger, and Gradara (where I grew up) actually hosted the first Italian gaming event back in 1991: Gradara Ludens. It is a gaming convention that we still host in the town every September, so I have a connection with gaming going back over 30 years.

**GR:** I was also inspired by Gradara Ludens when younger, and very impressed and engaged by the connection between civic government and using games to interact with history and heritage. It's ultimately what led me to become a Senior Lecturer in medieval history, as well as a gamer.

**Wi:** The model itself was made by James Sharp of Oshiro Terrain - was he someone you had worked with before?

**GR:** Yes. One of my students at the University of Edinburgh wrote a supplement for Osprey's *The Men who Would be Kings*, and he had worked with James at Oshiro regarding scenery for a demo game. James also produced a model for my own *Lion Rampant* supplement *The Crusader States*. Although James hadn't produced anything on this scale before, after we discussed it, he was very keen to work on the project.

**FG:** Prof. Daniele Sacco and Maria Chara Torcolacci from the University of Urbino then began communicating with James, and sharing information about the history of the town. It was a learning process because there is very little information on what the town would have looked like in the medieval period. One of our only clues comes from a painting housed in the castle - a woman holding (what looks like) a model of the town.

**GR:** From the start, it was important to combine that historical information with playability.

**Wi:** Although we have spent the weekend at the Gradara 'unveiling' event, the model has been seen at a few other locations before today, right?

**FG:** Yes, we went over to the UK to collect the model, and it was a happy coincidence that Salute at ExCel was on at that same time. We displayed the model there, and we were very proud to receive the award for Best Presented Game. Since arriving in Italy, the model has been displayed in San Marino and at Modena Play - the biggest games festival in Italy.

Finally, the model settled in Gradara, and we wanted an event to celebrate its unveiling - something that would be of interest to gamers from across the country, as well as locals from and visitors to Gradara.

**GR:** To that end, we invited James Sharp of Oshiro over, giving him the opportunity to explore the real Gradara for the first time, rather than just the miniature version! James Holloway and I came to represent the H&GL and run some *Dragon Rampant* games using the board. Sam Grassman of

Unveiling the impressive model.



Masterstroke Games was also here, running games of *Force of Virtue*. They created a special scenario for their Renaissance skirmish wargame

based on the 1446 Siege of Garadara. We

also had the Associazione Fiorentina Battaglie in Scala (AFBIS) gaming group from Florence to run a couple of games, and an Italian *Mordheim* group, who held a mini tournament on the Sunday.

Sculpting demos were also presented across the weekend by local digital designer Alan D'Amico, and the Perry brothers - who flew over for the event, and helped us cut the ribbon, officially opening the room where the model is currently housed.

**FG:** Eventually, it will be moved to its permanent home in the castle.

**GR:** The model is still a work in progress, and will be for some time. While we want gamers to come and use the table for whatever games and scenarios they wish, we also want to populate the streets of the Gradara model with a static display of figures, individuals and vignettes.

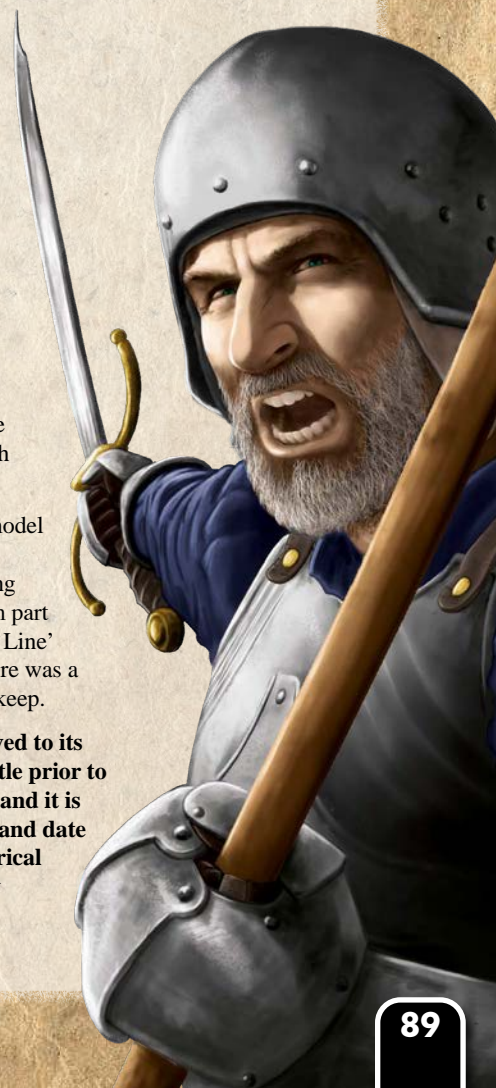
**FG:** Yes, we have already commissioned Alan D'Amico to design some figures based on the citizens of Gradara for us. As this collection grows, the streets of the model will become populated with 28mm Gradarans!

We also have plans to make the model multi-period. Although Gradara didn't see any violent action during the Second World War, it did form part of the German Defensive 'Gothic Line' that ran through the town, and there was a German gun battery in the castle keep.

**The Gradara model will be moved to its permanent home within the castle prior to Gradara Ludens in September, and it is already possible to book a time and date slot to play any wargame (historical and fantasy) using the board by contacting Gianluca at: [gianluca.raccagni@ed.ac.uk](mailto:gianluca.raccagni@ed.ac.uk)**



15th Century painting showing a nun holding a model of Gradara.





## GRADARA LUDENS



Every September, Gradara becomes the 'city of play' as it hosts a weekend festival of gaming. Miniature wargames, board games, card games, roleplaying games, and more are hosted within the old town. One of the main attractions at this year's event will be the Gradara model, which will once again serve as the battleground for wargames set during the medieval siege, and - no doubt - for several fantasy spin-offs.

## NOT THE ONLY ALAN



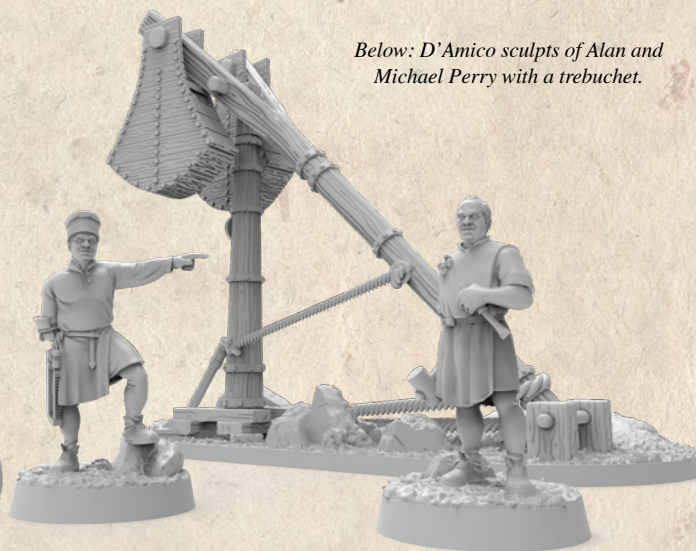
Alan Perry wasn't the only talented Alan at the event; local 3D design whiz Alan D'Amico was also on hand to talk about his work. Alan's stylus was a whirl all weekend as he showed attendees his approach to figure design and illustration work, which included a recent commission to create figures to populate the Gradara model (when not in wargaming use) with miniature lookalikes of the locals. Working from photos of local people (as seen on the left), D'Amico was creating figures to look like actual residents of the town. The person he was working on when I took this photo was actually a much-loved local reenactor who had recently passed away. A miniature of him on the tabletop seems like a very fitting tribute.

D'Amico also created miniature versions of Alan and Michael Perry, copying photos to create mini-likenesses of the twins as 15th Century craftsmen.



A man of many talents, when D'Amico isn't designing minis, he creates illustrations for games and books. He even drew the 3D Gradara town map (seen left), and the poster for the event. Check out D'Amico's work at: [instagram.com/alandamicoart](https://www.instagram.com/alandamicoart)

*Below: D'Amico sculpts of Alan and Michael Perry with a trebuchet.*



*Left: Minis designed by Alan and featured in Sabaton's Battle Through History boardgame.*



## FORCE OF VIRTUE AND THE SIEGE OF GRADARA

With a little help from his friends, Sam of Masterstroke Games was running bespoke games of *Force of Virtue* for the Gradara event. *Force of Virtue* is a card- and counter-heavy skirmish game (originally) set in Rome during the rise of the Borgias. New warbands, rules, and card decks allowed participants to play games of *FoV* set around the 1446 Siege of Gradara, during which the forces of Francesco Sforza of Milan besieged the castle for 40 days, ultimately failing to snatch it from the local Malatesta clan.



To find out more about *Force of Virtue*, and to join Masterstroke's Gradara Kickstarter, visit [masterstrokegames.com](http://masterstrokegames.com)

## RAMPANT GRADARA



While the Siege of Gradara 1446 and some serious historical gaming with *Force of Virtue* dominated the Gradara board during the morning sessions at the event, in the afternoon, it was all about *Dragon Rampant*, with Gianluca and James Holloway taking the table through some fantasy gaming action, in which the town was invaded by an 'army of darkness', with only a time-travelling, chainsaw-wielding hero (who looked a bit like Ash Williams) to save them.





## SCULPTING IN THE SUN

Never look a gift horse in the mouth, and never say “no” to an invitation from the mayor of the best medieval town in Italy (as voted by Italian TV) to come and visit Gradara as part of a wargames weekend. That would be the advice from the Perry twins and me. While I flitted about the event reporting on activities, Alan and Michael got down to some scalpel and putty work, showing interested attendees how to sculpt a 28mm figure, Perry Mins style. As I spoke to the guys in the airport before we jetted back to the slate-grey skies of England (boo!), they told me: “that has to be the best location we’ve ever been to for playing wargames. Gradara is a fantastically pretty town, and it was a pleasure to be surrounded by its walls while sitting sculpting. The people who ran the event were just as lovely as well! Filippo (the mayor) and his team couldn’t have looked after us any better. It was also great to meet so many enthusiastic Italian gamers, either asking about how we make models, or chatting about our time at Games Workshop. Oh, and the local food and beer was wonderful as well - make sure you mention that in your report!”



## THE DANTE CONNECTION

You can’t wander very far in Gradara without coming across some reference to, or by, Italy’s great writer and philosopher, Dante. Legend has it that the castle was the scene of the famous and tragic love story of Paolo and Francesca. They were caught in each other’s embrace and killed by Gianciotto, Francesca’s husband. This love story was immortalized in Dante’s most famous work, *The Divine Comedy*. While Paolo and Francesca’s antics may be of little interest to wargamers, Dante’s real-life adventures as one of the *feditore* (knights of the vanguard) at the Battle of Campaldino are certainly engaging!

Dante and the Battle of Campaldino, 1292, were represented at Gradara, thanks to the efforts of the AFBIS - a very active gaming group from Florence. They presented a 15mm game, using house modifications to an obscure Napoleonic ruleset, which pitted the forces of the pope-supporting Guelphs against the Ghibellines, who fought for the Holy Roman Emperor. During the 12th and 13th Centuries, rivalry between these two parties dominated political life across Italy.

Although Dante survived the actual battle, I saw his figure carted off to the discard pile at least five times over the weekend!



Right: 28mm Dante from the *Wi Giants in Miniature* range.





## OSHIRO ACTION

The Gradara model commission is the biggest that James of Oshiro Models has ever undertaken. In total, the model is 2400mm x 3600mm, divided into three sections to allow for easier gameplay and transportation. James mainly employed laser cutting, along with some scratch-building, to make the walls and buildings of the model. All the buildings have removable roofs to allow for internal gameplay, and there are even two removable wall sections (seen below right), which hint at the undermining that took place during the 1469 siege.

James has been writing an excellent ongoing blog, showing his work on the model from the very beginning. You can follow it here: [oshiromodels.co.uk/gradaracastle](http://oshiromodels.co.uk/gradaracastle)

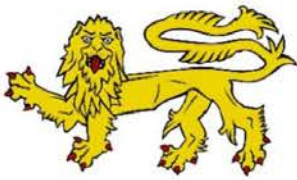


## HISTORY AND GAMES LAB

The History and Games Lab explores games as a medium for historical research, teaching, and public understanding of history, including fostering practical collaborations between historians, game designers, and other practitioners who engage with games. It operates in collaboration with the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, and welcomes further collaboration from wargaming groups and companies. Find out more about H&GL on their website: [historyandgames.shca.ed.ac.uk](http://historyandgames.shca.ed.ac.uk)







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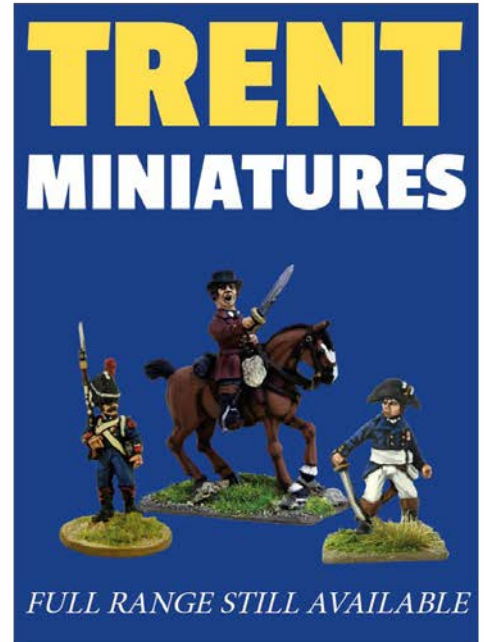
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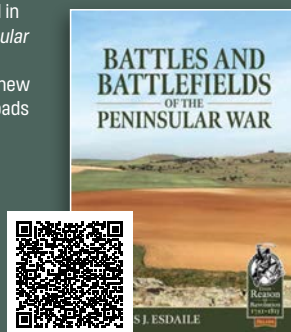
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### Battles and Battlefields of the Peninsular War

Charles Esdaile

A frequent visitor to Spain and Portugal who has specialised in the history of the Peninsular War for his entire career, Charles Esdaile has visited most of the battlefields and other sites associated with that conflict. In *Battles and Battlefields of the Peninsular War*, he places his unrivalled knowledge of the subject at the disposal of all those anxious to follow in the footsteps, not just of Sir John Moore and the Duke of Wellington, but a host of other figures, including such neglected commanders as the victor of Bailén, Francisco-Javier Castaños.

For each of the 28 combats included in *Battles and Battlefields of the Peninsular War*, there is a concise but insightful summary of the historical events, a new colour map showing both modern roads and landmarks as well as historical troop positions, colour pictures of the battlefield, and a guide to visiting the scene of the action today. An ideal companion for anyone who wants to explore the battlefields, it also serves as an excellent introduction to studying the Peninsular War.



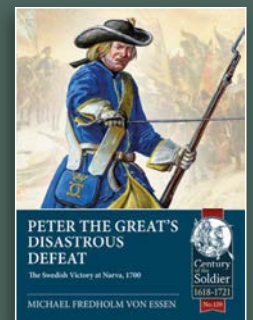
### Peter the Great's Disastrous Defeat

*The Swedish Victory at Narva, 1700*

Michael Fredholm von Essen

*Peter the Great's Disastrous Defeat* details the campaign, presents new research on the battle, outlines the opposing Swedish and Russian armies, and explains the continued development of the Swedish army. In 1699, King Frederick IV of Denmark and Norway, King Augustus II of Saxony and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Tsar Peter I of Russia formed a triple alliance against Sweden, intending to reclaim lands lost during the 17th century. Soon, Tsar Peter declared war and attacked Swedish Ingria in the Gulf of Finland, leading to a Russian siege of the vital port of Narva in modern-day Estonia.

After forcing Denmark to withdraw from the war, King Charles XII of Sweden turned his attention to Russia. The Swedish army reached Narva in late November 1700. King Charles ordered an immediate attack on the Russian fortified defenses. With the aid of a blizzard, the Swedes broke through the Russian lines, causing the Russians to panic, flee, and ultimately surrender to King Charles. This crushing defeat is meticulously chronicled by Michael Fredholm von Essen, who describes the events and tactics leading to the Swedish victory at Narva, presents new research on both the siege and battle, and explains the ongoing development of the Swedish army under King Charles XII.







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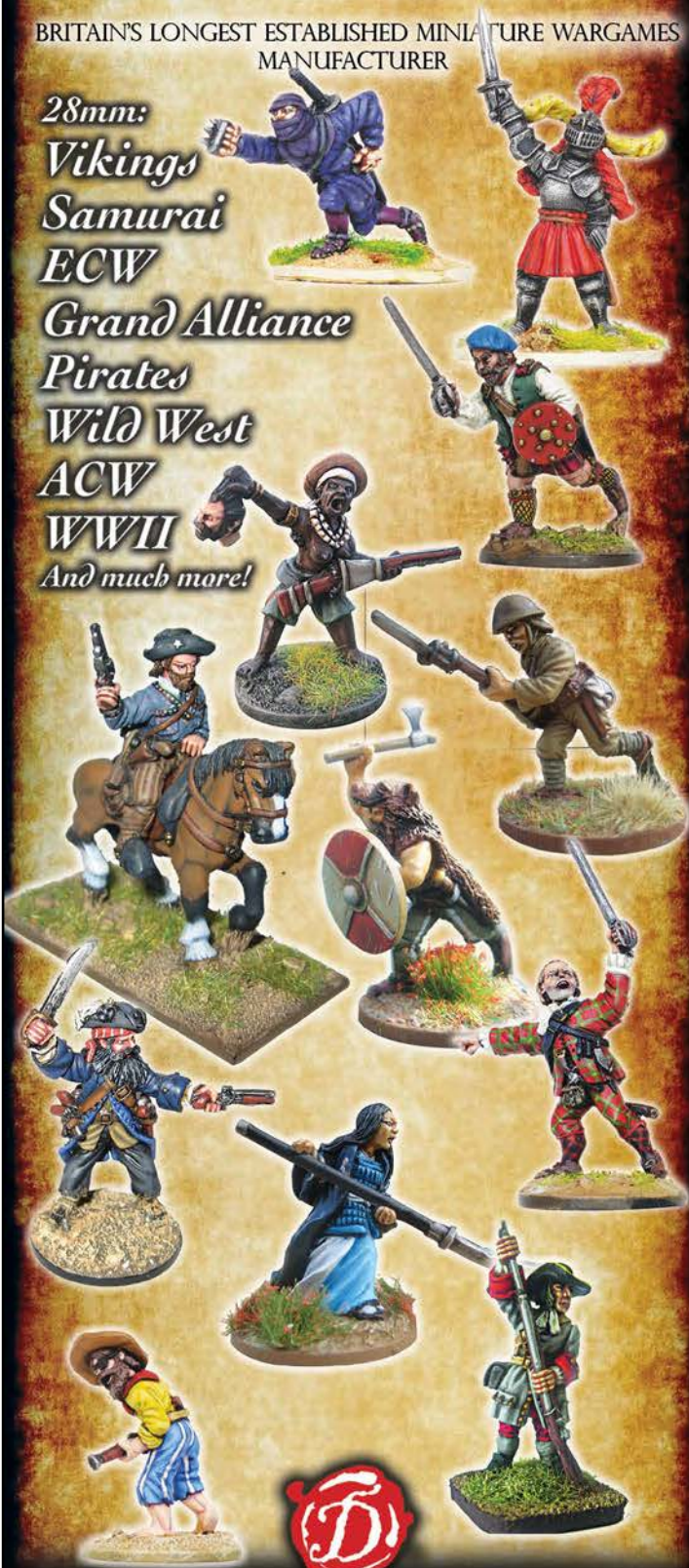
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