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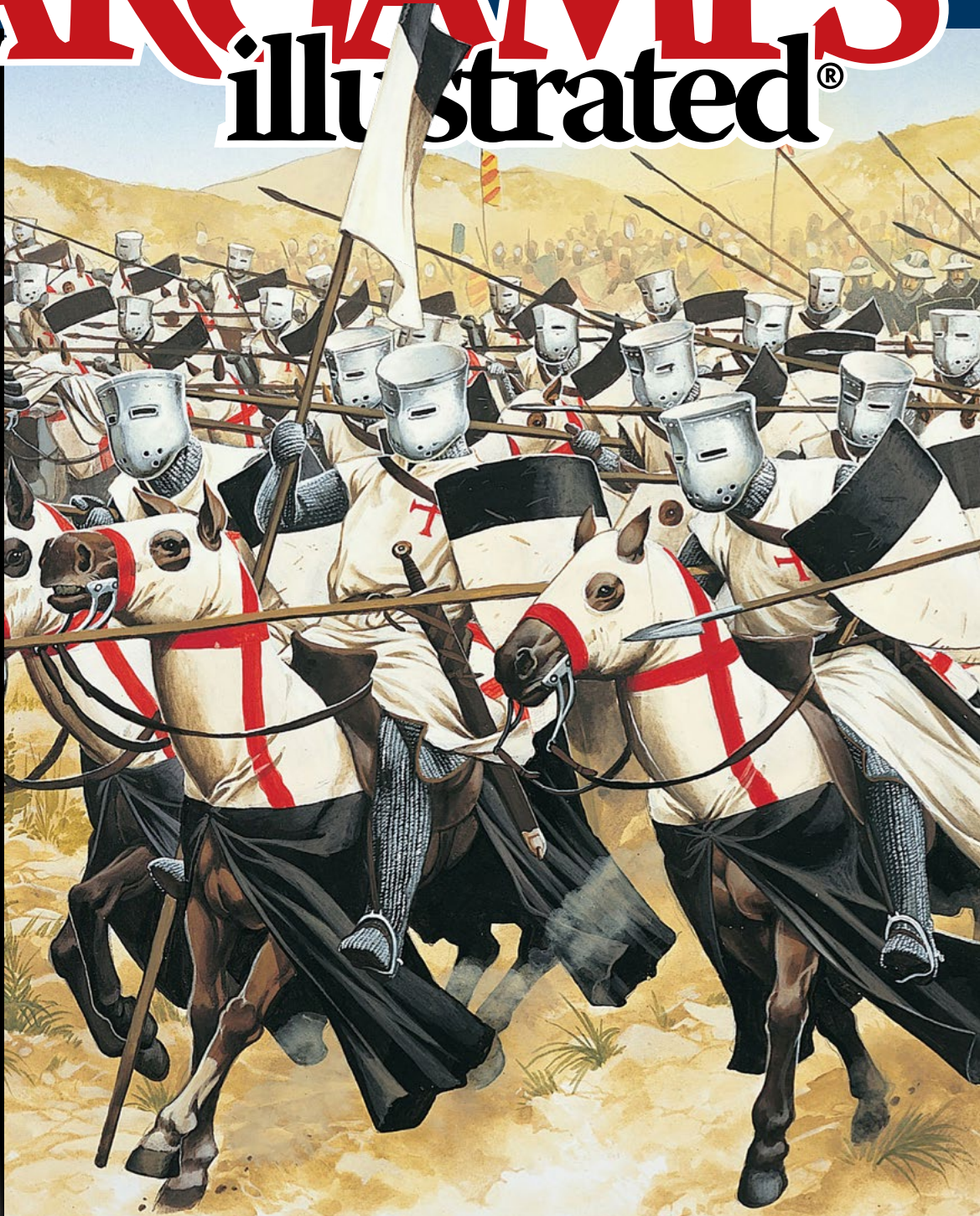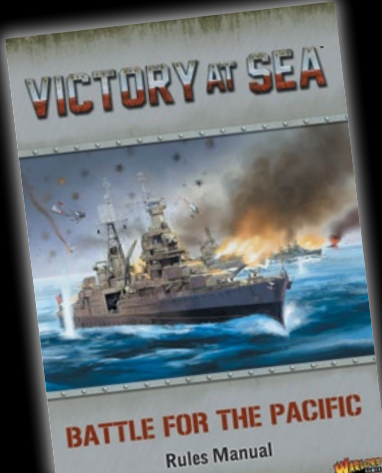
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PLUS: HOW THE WARGAMES INDUSTRY HANDLED LOCKDOWN - AND LOTS MORE!

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CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

As we take further steps out of lockdown and head towards a re-opening of gaming clubs and stores (at time of going to print at least), I thought you might be interested to hear how the wargames industry coped during the pandemic. So in this issue I have contributed a 'Wargames News Special' in which I speak to the owners of various hobby companies and they divulge what it has been like working within wargaming under lockdown

After a one month hiatus we return to magazine themes this month with 'Strategy, Command and Control' taking centre stage. As usual our theme is as uninstructive as possible - covering several periods and totalling a modest four articles.

Beyond our theme content we are pleased to be able to bring you a Designer's Notes by Joseph MacCullough in which he talks us through the changes being introduced in the second edition of *Frostgrave* - the game voted 'Best Rules' in our 2019 readers survey.

You will of course have noticed the *Victory at Sea* Starter Set Rules Manual bundled free with this magazine. Should you read it and have your interest piqued, turn to page 60 to see how it plays and check out Warlord Games for all the 'playing pieces'.

Happy reading.

Dan Falconbridge
Editor and Owner

This month's cover artwork is by Wayne Reynolds. 'The Templars' cavalry charge, in a scene of the mid-13th century' from WAR 91 Knight Templar © Osprey Publishing www.ospreypublishing.com

The vignette 'top left' on the cover is The Eve of Edgehill, a Wargames Illustrated 'Moment in History' set.

CONTENTS

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WARGAMING NEWS

COPING WITH THE GREAT PANDEMIC OF 2020

Editor Dan finds out how the Coronavirus Crisis affected our industry.

I always feel slightly uncomfortable describing the Wargames Industry as an industry. Those valiant men and women who design, manufacture and sell our toy soldiers, assorted vehicles, terrain, games and other tabletop accessories often appear as less of an industry and more as a loose collection of enthusiasts and artisans whose passion for all things miniature has led them to work on the inside of the hobby in an effort to share their love and as a bonus eke out a living. Like most of us, their livelihoods and working conditions have been massively affected by Coronavirus.

As the Editor of *Wargames Illustrated*, I spend a lot of time talking to the people on the inside of the hobby. Probably half the time professionally, "How about writing an article about this, Rick?" and half the time socially, "Fancy going for a curry next week, Rick?". Over the last few months these conversations have pivoted around Coronavirus and its effect on the 'industry'. During the first couple of weeks in June I specifically posed the question "how have you and your business coped during the pandemic?" to several of these people and over the next couple of pages I would like to provide you with their responses and thus an insight into the inside of our Covid-affected hobby.

"Ridiculously busy is the best way to describe it." That's what Paul at **Empress Miniatures** initially said when I asked what business has been like since the beginning of lockdown. "So far we've only had three days off all year," added his work (and domestic) partner Christine. Empress are a two-person team; normally that's enough to cope with the mail/web orders but it became a real struggle following the beginning of lockdown. "I worked 50 days straight," Nick from **North Star** told me. "Having my son Joe as one of our casters helps - whilst the other employees were not coming into the workshop because of safety concerns, myself and Joe were able to work as a family bubble, although we still found it hard to meet demand. We distribute to hundreds of hobby stores around the world and most of those being closed meant we were able to focus on web orders but getting to the bottom of the pile of orders always seemed just out of reach."

Gripping Beast was another company I spoke to which took a financial hit from stores being closed. "Mail order increased but it really couldn't make up for the hit we took from the shops being closed," GB's Lord Sherwell told me. The closure of stores also affected **Warlord Games**, financially and also in terms of their in-house staff. "We deal with several hundred trade accounts around the world which are looked after by our Sales Team. From early in the lockdown those guys were all furloughed*," John Stallard, Warlord Games CEO informed me, "thankfully, as we creep out of lockdown and the stores re-open, we have been able to get everyone back in."

An increase in mail orders was something I heard from just about everyone I spoke to. **Baccus6mm** had to turn their webstore off at one point to avoid being swamped. "We were getting five average weeks of orders in four days!" said Pete from Baccus. Over on the other side of the pond, Bob Murch at **Pulp Figures** reported good sales, but had concerns about the longer-term prospects. "The problem ahead might lay with the economic situation and customers' long-term finances. We will have to wait and see on that one".
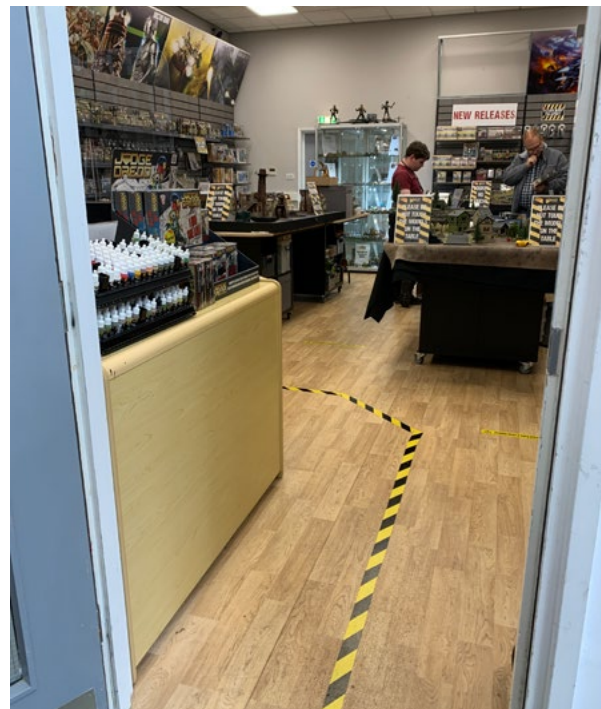
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN BUYING?

I was interested to hear what customers (i.e. you lot) had been buying during lockdown - any shifting patterns or predictable norms? "At the beginning of the lockdown we seemed to experience of bit of 'panic buying' with bulk orders and whole armies being snapped up," Paul at Empress told me. "We were getting customers who we knew were, for example Vietnam gamers that were suddenly ordering whole Zulu War armies." Warlord Games experienced something similar, John Stallard - "we had loads of starter sets flying out the door, but also at the other end of the market we couldn't keep enough paint in stock." So, at one end of the scale big armies, at the other 'finishing products'. "It was clear hobbyists were heading into their lofts or basements and dusting off old figures that needed paint jobs, bases or shield transfer," Lord Sherwell told me. **Arcane Scenery** who supply loads of hobby accessories saw a big rise in grass tufts, scatter and all sorts of general "scenic-ing" materials.

*The Furlough scheme is a UK Government initiative by which all employees are paid 80% of their wages by the State whilst they are not in active work. Several UK companies I spoke to were pleased with the support they had received from the Government, whilst the two I spoke to in Canada and Belgium had not applied for state support.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Working under lockdown with increased demand obviously brings challenges and, as touched on before, staffing has been a big issue. Baccus were on the verge of employing three new staff before the pandemic hit; that had to be put on hold and five of their seven staff were initially furloughed, out of a need to work safely rather than anything to do with demand. "Our biggest challenge was creating a safe working environment for our 103 staff, most of whom are based at our HQ in Nottingham," John Stallard of Warlord told me. "Hats off to our factory manager Keith who did a wonderful job of arranging split-shift patterns so we could all work as safely and productively as possible."

Baccus redesigned their workshop, erecting screens to protect staff, whilst the North Star employees were issued with face masks. Arcane Scenery also split shifts with their four staff working two-days-on two-days-off. Kris Van Dyck over at **Van Dyck Miniatures** in Belgium missed the social aspect of having friends and family over to help with orders and manufacture. "Normally essential work gets done that way and we're enjoying ourselves whilst doing so. This has all stopped with the lockdown, so I have to do everything myself now."

HEALTH AND UNDERSTANDING

At Gripping Beast four of their seven staff were off work in self-isolation at one point, one of whom had the virus. Mental health became an issue, too. "It has been sobering to see how important staff mental health has been at a time like this," John Stallard commented, "it's something we've always taken seriously - all our employees have access to a confidential mental health helpline which they are encouraged to use when required - but all our line managers were aware they needed to give staff a 'pass' if they were struggling during the crisis."

Mental health is important in the wider hobby, too; Empress Miniatures reported several customers getting in-touch to let them know how their received orders for miniatures had helped put a smile on their faces during a difficult time.

"Most customers have been really understanding and supportive over the last few months", Steve at Arcane told me, "… but you do get the odd one or two …." Everyone else I spoke to said the same, 90% of customers have been very patient and understanding during lockdown, but those other 10% have been kicking up quite a fuss. "Where's my order - AND DON'T BLAME CORONAVIRUS!" screamed one disgruntled customer on email. Most of the time orders not arriving has been less to do with our hobby companies and more to do with the post. Although Bob at Pulp in Canada and Kris in Belgium have had better luck (the latter switching to DHL), postage from the UK has been a big problem for a lot of companies. "It's been terrible from the UK to the US particularly. We've had parcels taking all sorts of strange routes," Christine at Empress told me. "Parcels to North America have been a nightmare!" Lord Sherwell exclaimed, "but with 95% less air traffic it's hardly surprising." Whilst wargames companies are looking forward to improvements in most postal services, postage from the UK to the US is about to take another big hit as politics plays a big part in what will be a massive price rise in trans-Atlantic parcel post.

TOUGH ON THE RELEASE SCHEDULE

Whilst sales do seem to have been strong across the industry, new releases/new products have been hit sideways by the pandemic. John Stallard again, "thankfully our customers have been very understanding regarding the (non) release of some of our planned products, notably *Victory at Sea* should have been out by now, but the virus put paid to our schedule." Kris Van Dyck has also felt the pressure of not being able to get new product out, "we had scheduled to release our first WWI game box this year. To promote this, we planned to visit a lot of wargame shows, club evenings and game shops. Since most shows have been cancelled these plans had to be postponed, even the release date for the box hasn't been set." Gripping Beast found that their planned plastic releases also took a knock, with the digital design process slowing down, although the planned Norman box set (designed using 'traditional' methods) is still on course. Over in Canada Bob Murch was luckier, "I managed to get the whole *Dangerous Dames* Kickstarter fulfilment out in a timely manner, so I'm happy about that!"

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

"As terrible as this whole situation has been, and to a lesser extent continues to be, it has given us a lot of thinking time, many good people at Warlord have risen to the challenges presented to us and we now have plans and schemes a'plenty going forward, which I know will help improve the business," Warlord Chief John concluded. And whilst Bob Murch at Pulp Figures had a word of warning, "My wife, Professor Murch, has been receiving scientific papers and some inside info you might not see in the general media, indicating that this bug might be even more dangerous than we first thought and that there may be considerable long-term health implications for those who recover from their first infection. Wash your hands and wear your masks folks," it is clear that our 'industry' seems to have weathered this (first!?) storm, and that which did not kill us has made us stronger.

Forthcoming WWI game component releases from Van Dyck models.

FOUNDRY

FRANCO PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1870

OBSERVATION POST

RULES, SUPPLEMENTS & FIGURES

GALE FORCE NINE BATTLEFIELD IN A BOX
INDUSTRIAL GOTHIC

UNBOXING

Gale Force Nine's 'Battlefield in a Box' range rarely fails to impress, and these latest releases in the 'Gothic' range are no exception. Expanding on the eight Gothic building sections already available, these new sets provided for review are two of the three new corner pieces, plus some additional pillars. Unlike the earlier Gothic releases these are all billed as 'industrial'.

The Large section stands twelve inches tall and the Small is six inches. There is also a nine inch high Medium section, not seen here. All three corners are semi-ruined with the Large Corner featuring a broken floor section, propped up by a separate pillar (included in the same box) - which can accommodate a small number of figures.

The Gothic Industrial Pillars box contains two Tall Pillars, two Short Pillars and one Crater. Like everything in the Battlefield in a Box range they all come pre-painted to a pretty high standard.

A couple of things worth noting are that the windows on the corner sections can be easily detached if required and on the Large Corner a bit of work might be required on the separate column, to help the whole piece sit on the tabletop without a wobble.

Priced between £18 and £25 or $25 and $30 and coming pre-painted, these weighty resin battlefield ready terrain pieces are a great way of creating an impressive looking tabletop straight out of the box.

UNBOXINGS, FLIPTHROUGHS AND SPINS

You will notice that our *Observation Post* features sometimes include in their titles sub-headings of 'Unboxing, Spins or Flipthrough'. These are terms taken from our online Primetime Bulletin, which our Prime members will already be familiar with.

WIPrime members get to see **video** unboxings of games and miniature box sets, along with video 'flipthroughs' of new rulebooks. Plus interactive 'spins' of figures - using the wonder of modern technology all the miniatures you see on the pages of *Observation Post* spin around at the swipe of the mouse, providing a 360 degree view of the figure.

To find out more about WIPrime visit wargamesillustrated.net

WWII NAVAL WARFARE IN A BOX
VICTORY AT SEA
BATTLE FOR THE PACIFIC

GREEK MYTH HIGH QUALITY PLASTIC
CENTAURS

VICTRIX: FRENCH NAPOLEONIC IMPERIAL GUARD LANCERS

UNBOXING

With the release of this latest set in their Napoleonic Wars range Victrix declared "We think this is one of our greatest sets to date, the detail is superb and the figures are packed with animation and character." And indeed they are both highly detailed and characterful. Let's take a closer look.

From this set of four frames for around £27 you can make 12 Imperial Guard Lancers, these were the Polish (blue) and Dutch (red) regiments who fought with distinction for Napoleon from the Peninsula to Waterloo.

Three identical frames each feature three different torsos (two with legs attached) and three horse bodies. Although there are 12 heads on each sprue, there are only two different types; one with a full dress (with plume) czapka the other with covered campaign dress czapka. This gives the figures an 'identical twin' look, but for a face that's only three millimetres high, viewed from a metre above the table, that's not really a problem.

Other components on the frame include arms with lances and pennants attached, separate arms with drawn swords, sheathed swords, carbines and valises, these last to fit on the rear of the horses' saddles.
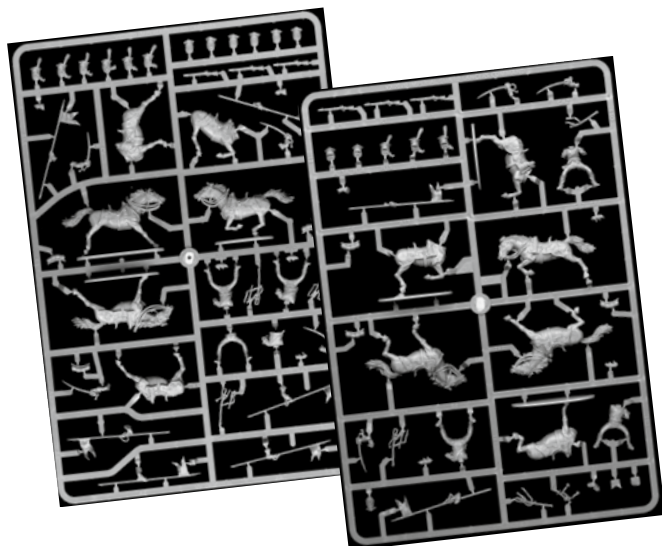
Above: Lancers frame.   *Above: Command frame.*

The other frame in the pack is the slightly smaller 'Command' frame. Here you will find three more different horses as well as an 'Officer' and Trumpeter' body.

Unlike some other plastics manufacturers Victrix sets tend to have prescribed parts to go specifically with other parts, so less mix and match, although I have no problem with that and although off-putting on first glance the 'on header card' instructions for 'what bit fits with what bit' make it clear, and following the instructions leads to the creation of some great looking figures, which as the photo below left shows can paint-up beautifully, something which is helped by the crisp detail on the uniforms and saddlery.

EARLY BLUES

The Polish (blue) Imperial Lancers were raised in 1807 as 'Light Horse' (chevauxléger) and didn't get lances until 1809. If you do want to field your figures as Polish chevauxléger for this earlier period you will find you won't actually have enough arms with swords to do this.

Above: Comparison shot showing (left) a Perry Austrian and Victrix Imperial Guard Lancer. Shown at actual size.

LURKIO FIGURES: 15MM LATE ROMANS AND ALMUGHAVARS

SPINS

Lurkio Figures are a new-ish 15mm manufacture fronted by the author of popular ancients rules *Mortem et Gloriam* (MeG). Unsurprisingly Lurkio produce a range of figures for the ancient period, although they do also have Nine Years War and Victorian Sci-fi miniatures in their catalogue.

Recently released and received for review are a pack of 'Late Roman Auxilia or Legion' and an 'Almughavars Variety Pack' (which is just about the most unlikely collection of words ever strung together!)

Neatly designed and cast 'LRBG02 Late Roman Auxilia or Legion' represent the more poorly equipped troops from the twilight of the Roman Empire. They are armed with late Roman typical oval shields and an array of swords, spears and darts. The figures are nicely proportioned, although that pesky throwing/thrusting arm-angle has proved tricky for the sculptor.

Nice smooth surfaces will make painting easy and as the photo above testifies, the pack looks great as a standard MeG unit. Each bag contains two of each figure, making 24 in total and although this is a standard size for Lurkio infantry packs 'Pack Breakers' of four infantry or two cavalry are (helpfully) available.

The aforementioned 'ALBG01 Almughavars Variety Pack' (right) again contains 24 figures, this time all unique. Wearing chain and armed with spears, short swords and variously shaped shields the Almughavars will line up well as a complete multi-based unit.

Above: Painted LRBG02 Late Roman Auxilia or Legion

Above and right: Some of the figures in the Late Roman Auxilia or Legion pack.

The Almughavars (below) were a class of warriors who fought with the Christian powers during the Reconquest. Unsurprisingly they feature in the MeG army lists along with that of Medieval Spain for DBA.

These packs represent great support forces for *Mortem et Gloriam* or any other 15mm Ancient rules, to which these nicely produced figures would be a welcome addition.

Above : Comparison shot showing (left) a Lurkio Almughavar and (right) a Plastic Soldier Company 'Ultracast' Sassanid.

PERRY MINIATURES: AUSTRIAN NAPOLEONIC CAVALRY 1798 – 1815

UNBOXING

This new plastic Napoleonic box set from Perry Miniatures was due to be released at Salute 2020, but we all know what happened there, so this latest offering – Austrian Napoleonic Cavalry 1798 – 1815 designed by Alan Perry, was pushed back slightly and came out early June.

Inside the instantly recognisable Perry packaging we have a total of nine plastic frames, which form 14 mounted figures, along with bases and a reference sheet.

Four of the frames (one of which is seen right) feature most of the arms, legs and weapons of the cavalrymen. We have drawn swords with arms attached in a charging pose, along with swords in scabbards, empty scabbards and arms and swords at rest.

We also have bucketed carbines and picket stakes - which were used to tie up horses in camp.

There are ten heads per frame plus one separate helmet. All these head variants (more heads that bodies) allow for the option to field different troop types e.g. Cuirassiers or Dragoons, plus cavalrymen from different periods of the war.

It probably goes without saying that the detail on the body parts is fantastic and includes perfectly formed finery like the 'very Austrian' sprig of oak leaves attached to helmets and carbine ramrods attached to some of the torsos.
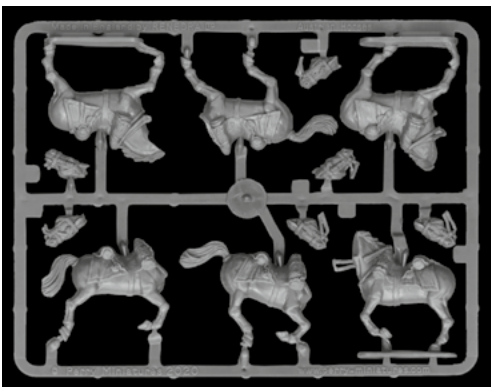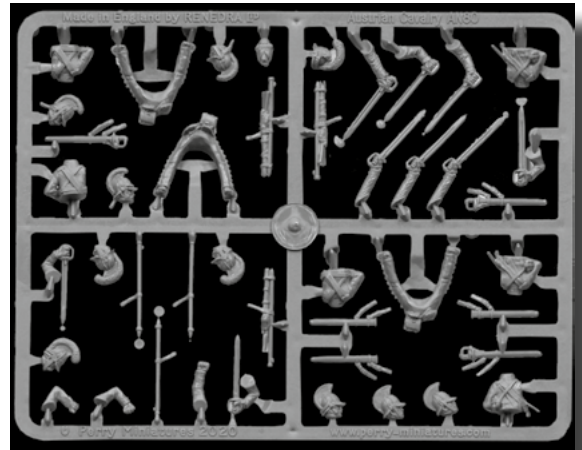
The next frame (seen left) is the horses, or at least six of them. These come in three parts, left and right body and head. Each body comes pleasingly heavily laden with kit and trappings, helping with the 'on campaign' look of the figures. All six poses are different, but all have the horses on the move, I won't embarrass myself by declaring if they are trotting, cantering or galloping.

The last frame is labelled 'Command' and contains components to build four more horses, as well as five torsos, five separate heads and various arms and weapons, including swords, a bugle and a lance.

As well as the obligatory frame of bases we have the less obligatory, but always welcome, well researched reference sheet – four A5 pages showing facings of the various Austrian Cuirassier, Dragoon and Chevauxlegers regiments which can be formed using this set - along with other useful notes on flags, equipment and weaponry. Those sticklers for detail amongst us will be well catered for with information concerning which helmets etc. should be used for which particular years of the war.
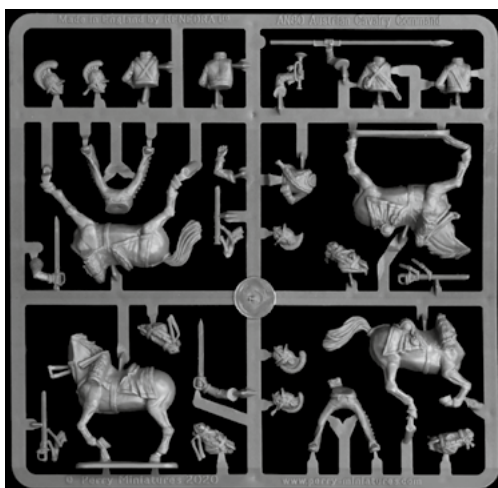
Another fine box set release from Perry Miniatures, which will satisfy their legion of Napoleonic fans just long enough for them to ask "what's next?"

Left: Showing the height of a Perry Austrian figure.

ARTIZAN DESIGNS COMMAND POST

Artizan Designs have released a second/alternative set of figures for their World War Two Command Post. This diorama set is a combined effort between Artizan, Sarissa and Renedra.

To accompany this MDF ruined farmhouse Artzan originally provided a set of five 28mm figures representing: two senior officers, one medic, one radio operator and one motorcycle dispatch rider with bike. This new set of figures consists of: the same motorcycle dispatch rider with bike, a medic, two British Airborne officers and a radio operator – along with his radio. These last three are all wearing the archetypal British Para red/maroon (when painted!) beret.

As well as the building, Sarissa's contribution to the set also includes a bicycle, table and chairs and gardening tools. Whilst Renedra provide the sandbags, which form a partial perimeter around the building.

The whole piece can be mounted on a jagged base which comes with the building.

Whilst not essential kit, this Command Post would be a welcome addition to any World War Two, Europe, wargames table. Reminiscent of early Airfix 'play sets' it is bursting with character, and as the photos hopefully show, looks great when painted up and finished with tufts and gravel.

The set of five British Airborne models for £15 makes for a welcome alternative to the five British infantry models already available.

The complete set with figures, building and other accessories retails at £30 and is available from North Star Military Figures.

PAINTING 28mm WARGAMING MINIATURES 3: THE MAHDIST WARS 1881-85

FLIPTHROUGH

This is the latest book in the Partizan Press range of "how to" painting guides for wargamers. It is an A4 softback book running to 112 pages, which, as you can see, are stuffed full of colour pictures of Sudan era miniatures.

The author begins by stating the aim of the book. He is the first to admit that

"The painted miniatures within this book will never win prizes in painting competitions."

Instead, the painting techniques he goes on to describe are quick methods to get your 28mm Sudan armies onto the wargames table whilst still maintaining a respectable painting standard. I found this a refreshing level of honesty and it also piqued my interest, as no-one wants to read a painting guide where the levels of skill and technique required are well beyond most five thumbed chaps like me. Instead, I was reassured that the techniques described were going to be realistic and achievable. The author then describes his own painting table, the kinds of brushes he uses along with his favoured paints and washes. Advice is provided on how to create a "wet palette" to prevent the precious paints you are working with from drying up before you have finished. I have to admit that I did not know how to do this, so I was already learning before passing the introduction!

The book essentially provides a "step by step" guide with photographs showing each stage of the technique with accompanying text alongside. The author begins by describing how to paint European flesh, then helmets, grey serge uniforms, red jackets and the inevitable khaki drab, which was to be used by most British troops in this campaign. Techniques for painting puttees, webbing and equipment are also detailed, for infantry, cavalry and artillery. Chapter 5 is devoted to the Naval Brigade with Chapter 6 covering the unique uniforms of the Camel Corps.

Indian troops are then discussed, as well as Egyptian infantry in both their white and blue uniforms. Techniques for painting camels and horses are then discussed, with nearly ten pages devoted to horses alone. Given how ubiquitous cavalry were in this campaign, I thought this was time well spent, as nothing looks more impressive on the wargames table than some lovely charging cavalry.

Next up are the Mahdist forces. The author starts with the early Ansar before covering the Beja, Kordofani Rebels, Nile Arabs and the later Ansar, with the distinctive colourful patches on their clothing. A great deal of information is provided on how to paint darker skin tones and, inevitably, how to create depth on plain white robes. Contained here are some great tips on how to use brown, sepia and umber washes to good effect.

Finally, there is some advice on how to varnish your miniatures and then how to base them to provide the best "desert" look. Good "eye catching" bases can really finish off a wargames unit so I was very keen to read this section as well. Chapter 13 provides advice on how to make a Nile whaler, which were used to ferry British troops along the river to battle. This seemed a little out of place in a painting guide rather than in a book on modelling, but was still useful information for Sudan enthusiasts. In the last chapter the author discusses how he makes his own ink washes, which might not be everyone's cup of tea but was interesting none the less.

If I had a gripe about this book it is that, although a painting guide to Highlanders is included, the author does not discuss how to paint tartans, directing the reader instead to some websites that discuss the topic. Personally, I would have preferred some guidance be included here perhaps at the expense of the modelling guide to whalers.

Overall, however, this is an excellent book, full of great painting tips and excellent advice that anyone can follow to make their Sudan collections shine. If you are a Sudan wargamer, this book really is a must.
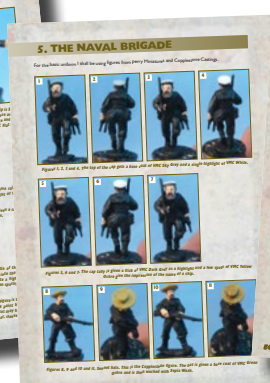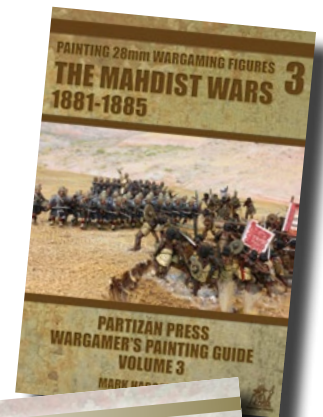
MORTEM ET GLORIAM
15mm BOXED SETS

UNBOXING

I have to admit to becoming a little misty eyed when I opened the review parcel this week, as it contained two boxes of 15mm plastic figures from Plastic Soldier Company. The box art and the sprues of plastic miniatures within took me back to the heady days of my youth and the excitement of opening a new box of Airfix soldiers! These boxed sets are designed to be used in conjunction with the *Mortem et Gloriam* (MeG) ancient rules set, the idea being that there is everything you need in one box for a small (or pacto) game of MeG. This allows anyone interested in the rules to buy two boxes of opposing armies, base them up and start playing. The miniatures are also of interest, of course, to anyone involved in gaming with 15mm Ancients, as they are cast in a new sort of cross between plastic and resin, called Ultracast, which, the box blurb states, is strong, flexible, holds paint well and requires no undercoat. The two boxes we received for review are the Sassanid Persian Army and the Late Roman Army.

The Sassanid Persian box comes with two mounted Generals, 22 heavy cavalry, eight horse archers, 16 unarmoured infantry, 16 skirmishers and 2 elephants! The heavy cavalry come on a mix of barded and unbarded horses and are all attacking with a two handed spear. The detailing on the miniatures is good, with enough definition on the armour and barding to use washes or contrast paints to create depth and shading. The horse archers are all light horsemen, shooting their bows to the front, over their horses' heads. Two of the light horse in my box had barding on their horses, with the other six wearing no armour. The unarmoured infantry have spears, helmets and shields and are posed with half attacking with their spears and the other half standing. Both mounted generals come with their legs moulded to their mounts but with separate upper torsos, so they can be posed how you wish. I found the fit between body and legs a little tricky, but nothing a little bit of filler or a thick glue cannot cure. The real treats in this box were the elephants, who come with howdahs moulded onto

Some of the Sassanid Persian figures included in the starter set.

their backs. They are both differently posed, and come with a separate sprue on which is a mahout, a warrior to go in the howdah, two tusks for the elephant and the fourth side of the howdah. This is a nice touch, allowing you to paint the inside of the howdah, position your warriors within it and then glue the fourth side into place.

The Late Roman box contains two mounted Consuls, two mounted Generals, eight cataphract cavalry, twelve armoured cavalry, eight horse archer cavalry, 24 armoured infantry, 24 unarmoured infantry and 16 archers. The cataphract cavalry are, not surprisingly, fully armoured on barded horses, with the detailing of the horse armour being particularly nice. The armoured cavalry are six on half barded horses and a further six with armour but no horse barding. All the cavalry carry the distinctive oval

shaped large shield, which is cast with a central boss but is otherwise flat, which will make it easier to paint your own design or perhaps to receive shield transfers. The six armoured cavalry with half barding are all carrying spears that are slightly wobbly, following the line of the riders' bodies rather than going

straight up. One of the features of ultracast is that if you bend it, it will spring back to its original position, and so with these I found it very difficult to straighten out the spears. The armoured infantry are very nice, cast in chainmail with oval shields and carrying a variety of weapons, including swords, spears and darts. It was particularly pleasing to see the addition of an officer, musician and standard bearer for both the armoured and

unarmoured infantry, one with a "draco" standard and the other with an eagle. The infantry are posed in a number of dynamic fighting positions, including some crouching with their shield in front of them, allowing the potential to model a "shieldwall" should you be so inclined.

Also included for review were two "booster" packs, one containing 32 Gothic infantry and the other 16 Gothic armoured cavalry. These packs maintain the quality of the miniatures in the boxed sets but allow you to buy a few extra, either to grow your army or to allow you to choose different options from the army lists.

There is a bit of "flash" on some of the miniatures that you will have to cut with a sharp knife or scissors, as the ultracast resin is quite tough, and there are some mould lines showing, especially on the infantry. However, these are minor complaints when balanced against what you get for your money. I really like what PSC are trying to do here. Having all you need for a complete MeG army in one box makes the game, and wargaming in general, more easily accessible for those who are just getting started in the hobby, or for the more experienced amongst us who just want to try a game of MeG. For a relatively small outlay you get everything you need to get you started and these boxed sets certainly show the potential of Ultracast as a moulding agent. Maybe one day this will be how all our miniatures are made?

On this page, some of the Late Roman figures included in the starter set.

ON THE BOOK SHELF BY NEIL SMITH

While arranging this month's books into themes, I pondered what it is historical wargamers actually do, or could do given the right amount of inspiration. Because that is what books do: inspire. I don't know about you, but I can't pick up a new military history book without wondering how that would look on the table; are there rules for this? Figures? That might help explain why I have so many unfinished wargaming projects. That's my excuse anyway. What's yours?

CAMPAIGNS

Most of our games are one-off battles. Modern wargames rules, with their emphasis on points and balance, favour that approach. But there is still room for campaigns; outmanoeuvring our opponents, creating a mismatch, then crushing them on the tabletop. With that in mind, our publishers have produced some books this month that cater to campaigners. Though perhaps no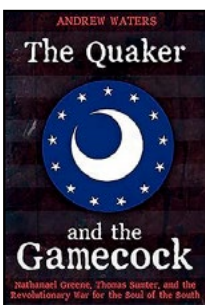t a campaign in itself, though it spurred many of them, we begin in the desert with Steve Tibble's ***The Crusader Strategy: Defending the Holy Land*** (Yale University Press). Just about staying in that period, Julian Romane considers *The First and Second Italian Wars 1494-1504: Fearless Knights, Ruthless Princes and the Coming of Gunpowder Armies* (Pen & Sword). That means painting those wild and wonderful Landsknechts, which I always think look better in 15mm with all those colours.
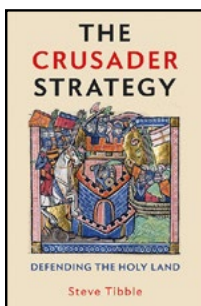
We have to wait until the late 17th Century for our next offering in the category, Michael Glaeser's *By Defeating My Enemies: Charles XII of Sweden and the Great Northern War* (Helion), which lines up with Helion's proposed rules for that war coming out soon, and adds to their already impressive range of books in the Century of the Soldier series. A must have for our late 18th Century gamers is surely *The 10 Key Campaigns of the American Revolution* (Regnery) edited by Edward Lengel. This still seems like an underplayed wargaming period, but as Lengel shows there is a variety of options for this conflict. I favour the Southern campaign with its militias and politics as described in Andrew Waters' recent ***The Quaker and the Gamecock*** (Casemate).
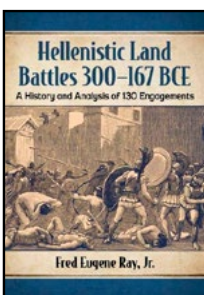
Let's move into the 20th Century with another underplayed war, this time because of a lack of sources I suspect: *The Russian Civil War 1918-1921: An Operational-Strategic Sketch of the Red Army's Combat Operations* (Casemate) by Richard Harrison et al. This month's highlighted World War II campaign may be familiar but is taken from an unusual angle by E C V Foucar in *First Burma Campaign: The First Ever Account of the Japanese Conquest of 1942* (Frontline). We have been promised Battlegroup's *Pacific* rules for a while now, so hopefully they will have arrived by the time you read this. Closing that turbulent century, we have a book loaded with possibilities that thankfully never happened. David Francois' *Operation Danube: Soviet and Warsaw Pact Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Helion) ended the love affair with communism for many in the West, but it could have ended up a whole lot worse for everyone if the West had intervened militarily. That doesn't mean to say you can't try it though and make that Cold War turn hot.
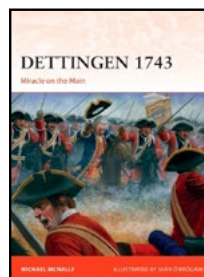
BATTLES

Campaigns are formed around battles, however, and one-off engagements are what most of us go to the wargames club to play. We don't easily tire of reading about them either. I'm a big Alexander the Great fan, but I'll settle for the next best thing, as brought to us by Fred Eugene Ray in ***Hellenistic Land Battles 300-167 BCE: A History and Analysis of 130 Engagements*** (McFarland & Co), which means Seleucids, Ptolemaic Egyptians, Macedonians among others fighting it out in some of the great ancient battles. And if you are doing the math, that is well over two years of weekly club games all in one book – that's also about three battles per ruleset for Ancients in the current market!

We leap forward into the 18th Century and arrive at another underplayed war – this must be the month for those – the War of the Austrian Succession. Michael McNally takes us to a classic battleplan that almost worked at ***Dettingen 1743: Miracle on the Main*** (Osprey). If you refight this at your club, get someone who is clueless on the period to play the Duc de Grammont for a better simulation experience, as he was the one who decided that 'hold your ground' meant 'attack on sight' with catastrophic consequences! Staying in the 18th Century, Ewan Carmichael describes a more well-known engagement in *Like a Brazen Wall: The Battle of Minden, 1759, and its Place in the Seven Years War* (Helion). Most of us use our British Seven Years War armies for the American theatre, but Minden is your chance to roll them out against the French in Europe, using *Honours of War* (Osprey), maybe?

Into the 20th Century we go with a curiously titled book by David O'Keefe, *One Day in August: Ian Fleming, Enigma, and the Deadly Raid on Dieppe* (Icon). Dieppe was such an apparent shambles that it maybe defies wargaming, but that's no excuse for not giving it a go. Back in Burma now for another unusual take, this time for Charles Chasie and Harry Fecitt's *The Road to Kohima: The Naga experience in the Second World War* (Infinite Ideas). I hadn't thought of this before, so where can I get Naga in 20mm? A much more conventional approach to a battle is Jon Diamond's *Hell in the Central Pacific 1944: The Palau Islands* (Pen & Sword), another in the usually excellent and thought-provoking Images of War series. Those wee island assaults are also ideal for solo games, worth remembering for the next lockdo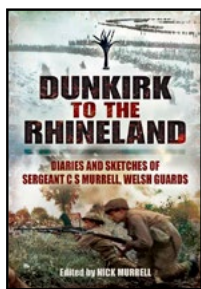wn. We stay in the jungly Far East for J. Saliba's ***Death in the Highlands: The Siege of Special Forces Camp Plei Me*** (Stackpole), a Vietnam War battle with a difference because it significantly involves the ARVN, who always seem to get a worse
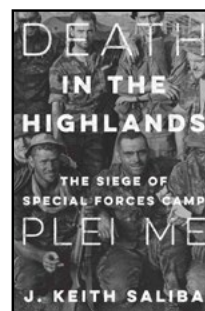
rap than they deserved. I have a note on this for a potential co-op game against programmed NVA attacks, which could be interesting.

SKIRMISHES

Skirmish games might define modern wargaming. Many of the new rulesets are designed for smaller combats. Modern warfare is particularly suited to smaller fights. But how do you wargame the story in Neil Thornton's *Todger: Thomas Jones VC, DCM, 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment* (Fonthill)? Jones seemingly went on a suicide mission, disappearing into No-Man's-Land, only to return with a hundred German prisoners! You could also turn Jones's experiences in World War I into a skirmish campaign: the terrain requirement would not change much. Similarly, for World War II, you could follow a soldier through the entire war, as C. N. Murrell has with **Dunkirk to the Rhineland: Diaries and Sketches of Sergeant C S Murrell, Welsh Guards** (Pen & Sword); much more wargaming variety with him I suspect.
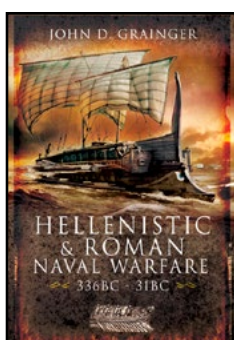
I like to get off the beaten track in skirmish games. Three books this month have satisfied that craving. Damien Lewis narrates *Churchill's Hellraisers: The Secret Mission to Storm a Forbidden Nazi Fortress* (Citadel). This is a most unlikely but true story of a British raid in Italy in winter 1944 with a crazy cast of characters attempting something seemingly insane. I'm all over that! Clandestine operations are usually something we associate with the Allies in Europe. Dmitry Degtev and Dmitry Zubov flip that script with *The Luftwaffe's Secret WWII Missions* (Air World). The skirmish potential in those escapades might make for some different Eastern Front action than the usual Tigers v T34s slogfests. Just to complete this section, let's throw in a couple of modern conflicts for some skirmish actions. Sticking with our theme this month of underplayed conflicts, what about Africa in the 1960s with Stephen Rookes' *Ripe For Rebellion: Insurgency and Covert War in the Congo, 1960-1965* (Helion)? I see this as a gateway book into the numerous African conflicts around that time, which are worth looking at for a new project. And nothing says Vietnam War like helicopters, yet they are mostly used in our games as support, or sitting on the tarmac as targets for the VC. What if the helicopter itself becomes the focus of the skirmish as it comes in to support ground

units? Darryl James's *Phoenix 13 - Elite Helicopter Units in Vietnam: Americal Division Artillery Air Section* (Pen & Sword) provokes some useful scenario ideas for that.

But when is a skirmish not a skirmish? When it's a dogfight, of course. In one of those curious coincidences that sometimes happens in the publishing world, this month sees three books published covering the same incident. In no particular order, Si Sheppard kicks us off with *We Killed Yamamoto: The long-range P-38 assassination of the man behind Pearl Harbor, Bougainville 1943* (Osprey). Dan Hampton covers the same incident in *Operation Vengeance: The Astonishing Aerial Ambush That Changed World War II* (HarperLuxe). The incident in question was the interception of Admiral Yamamoto's plane by the Americans as punishment for his planning and execution of the Pearl Harbor attack. Unlike most aerial games with tiny wee aircraft, this is a mission that can be accomplished using bigger models in a fox-and-rabbit style dogfight. Steve Blake's *Lightning Strikes: The Lockheed P-38* (Fonthill) will help with the arts and crafts side of that game.

NAVAL

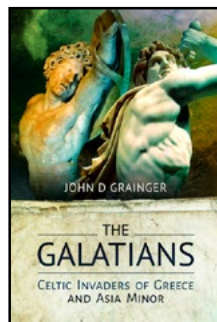Speaking of niche genres within our hobby, let's take a look at some new titles to inspire naval wargames. We start back in the Hellenistic era with John Grainger's **Hellenistic and Roman Naval Warfare, 336 BC-31 BC** (Pen & Sword). Tie that in with Ray's book of Hellenistic battles and what a campaign you could set up. A second style of naval campaign is inherent in Ian Rutledge's *Sea of Troubles: The European Conquest of the Islamic Mediterranean c1750–1918* (Saqi). So much choice with that book, the hardest part will be knowing where to start. No such problem with Phil Thorne's *Japan's Trafalgar: The Voyage of the Condemned Fleet to the Straits of Korea* (Matador), though I am not sure about that title. If you don't know, this is about the spectacular Battle of Tsushima in 1905, a story also told in Phil Carradice's recent book, *The Battle of Tsushima* (Pen & Sword). Finally, a skirmish at sea of sorts with catastrophic consequences. Daniel Knowles describes *The Battle of the Denmark Strait: An Analysis of the Battle and the Loss of HMS

Hood (Fonthill), a fight that also might be staged with bigger models than we usually see on the table.

WARRIORS

There is just enough room left this month for new titles that are self-explanatory, so I will let you skim through them and see what catches your eye. In the Ancient world, John Grainger surveys **The Galatians: Celtic Invaders of Greece and Asia Minor** (Pen & Sword). Our medieval book of the month is Tom Lewis's *Medieval Military Combat: Battle Tactics and Fighting Techniques of the Wars of the Roses* (Casemate). For the Napoleonic gamer, check out Tim Saunders' *The Light Division in the Peninsular War, 1811-1814* (Pen & Sword) – it's very good – or maybe consider something new with David Wilson's *The Danish Army of the Napoleonic Wars 1801-1814, Organisation, Uniforms & Equipment Volume 2: Cavalry and Artillery* (Helion). For World War II enthusiasts, maybe start with James Colvin's *Eighth Army versus Rommel: Tactics, Training and Operations in North Africa 1940-1942* (Helion), or if you prefer steppes to desert, Nigel Thomas' *Hitler's Eastern Legions 1942–45* (Osprey). Staying snowbound, we have David Campbell's *Soviet Soldier vs Finnish Soldier: The Continuation War 1941–44* (Osprey). And try not to chuckle at our last title for this section, *Memoirs of a Kamikaze: A World War II Pilot's Inspiring Story of Survival, Honor and Reconciliation* (Tuttle) by Kazuo Odachi, Shigeru Ota, and Hiroyoshi Nishijima.
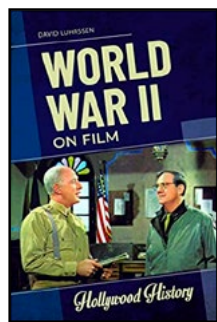
Finally, speaking of wargaming inspiration, David Luhrssen brings us **World War II on Film** (Greenwood). Along with books, movies may be our greatest source of inspiration. But the book is always better, right?

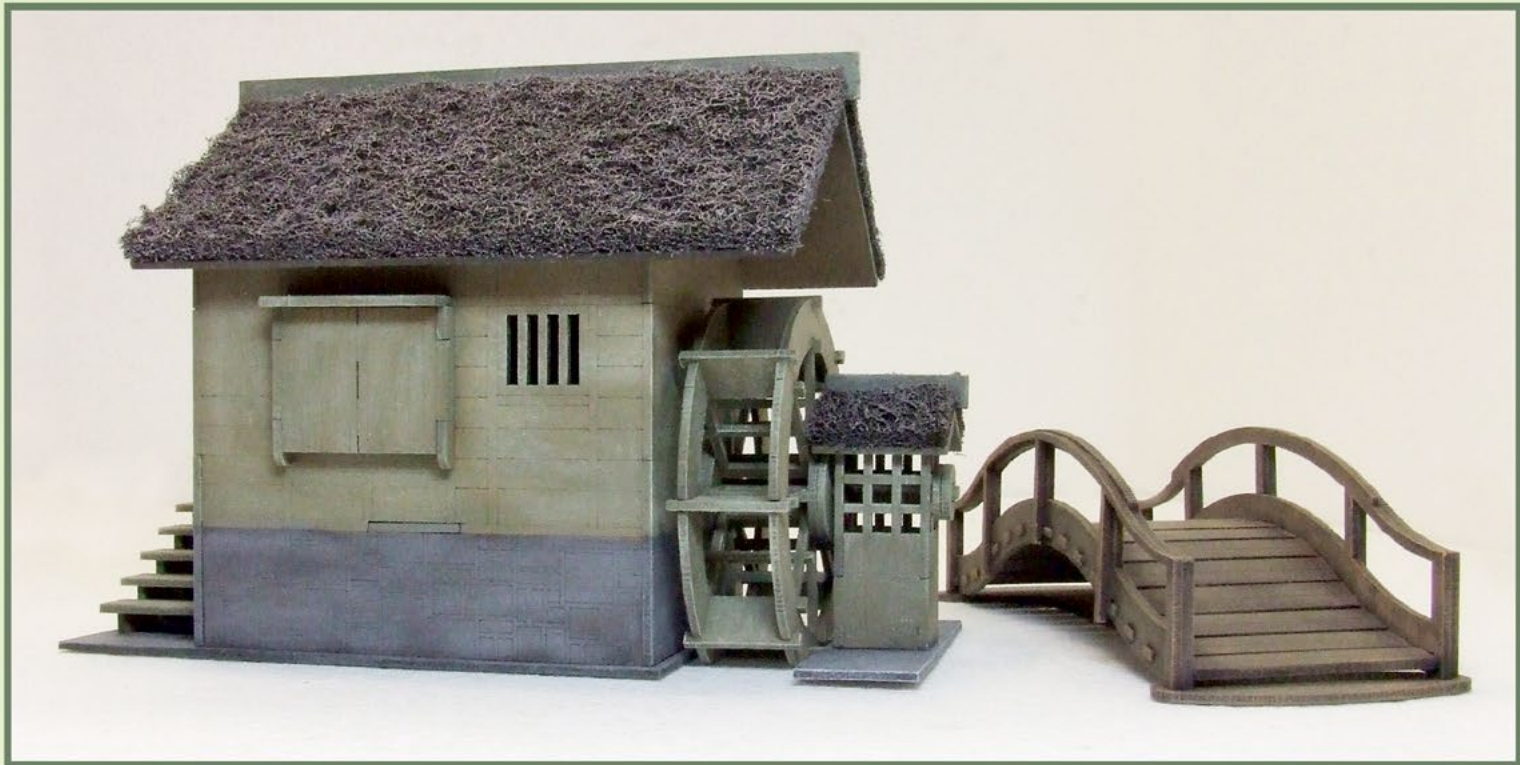Looking for the latest Military History book reviews? Visit hamsterwrangler.com/beating-tsundoku/.

THE PRESSURES OF COMMAND PART 1

In our lead theme article Pete Brown has a look at how we deal with the thorny problem of command and control in our wargames.

There is an old military maxim that states that no plan survives contact with the enemy. In other words, as soon as battle is joined, all our best-laid plans tend to go to hell in a handcart and the best we can hope for is to retain the initiative and respond quickly to the emerging situation on the battlefield. The most successful armies are those with a functioning "command and control" system, as they can respond quickly to changing circumstances, moving troops to shore up a collapsing flank or quickly acting to exploit a gap in the enemy line. It has to be said that this also requires disciplined troops who can quickly put these orders into action. Armies whose reactions are slow or who have little or no control over the forces under their command cannot respond in the same way and will find events overtaking them with no effective way to respond.

Probably the easiest example to give is that of a Roman army facing a Celtic or Germanic one during the 1st century AD. The Roman commander has the ability to move his disciplined troops from one flank to another, deploy skirmishers, effectively deploy reserves and perhaps even swop out tired front line troops and replace them with a fresh second wave. All of this requires discipline and training, but also an effective command system to put it into practice. The barbarian commander, on the other hand, has no functioning command and control mechanism once battle is joined other than to lead his men from the front. He may have reserves he can call up, but the idea of a staff system or aide de camp riding around the battlefield issuing his orders is fanciful. Not surprisingly, the barbarians nearly always end up being beaten.

Given that effective command and control is so central to the conduct of war, how do our wargames reflect the ability of Generals to give orders and, perhaps more importantly, how do we reflect the friction that is introduced when battle commences? After all, orders may not always get through, or some sub-generals may misinterpret them. How effective are our wargames at reflecting the military maxim that "no plan survives contact with the enemy"? In this article, I am going to have a look at a few popular ideas around at the moment and see how Command and Control is presented.

THE FIRST OPTION: IGNORE IT

This is surprisingly common in wargames rules, especially amongst Warhammer style games and those similar to it. Although the occasional unit is designated as "impetuous" and may

"I am going to have a look at a few popular ideas in current rule-sets and see how Command and Control is presented."

advance without warning, on the whole, most units can be moved every turn by the player exactly as he wishes. There is no delay in the relaying of orders and everyone is assumed to know the plan at every stage of the game. All units can perform complex manoeuvres such as wheeling and changing formation, although occasionally rules make it easier for some than for others.

Proponents of this style of game like to leave it up to the players to make their own mistakes and that the "friction" in command is actually the players themselves. The advantage with this system is that you know that everyone is going to do exactly as you tell them every turn, allowing players to plan their attacks and defences in the sound knowledge that no-one is going to throw a spanner in the works.

The disadvantage is actually the same point. This absolute assurance that everyone is going to do as they are told and that all your units somehow have a "hive mind" and know exactly what to do as your plan evolves cannot be

realistic, can it? In small games with a couple of Dark Age warbands on each side I can probably live with it, but in larger games with three or four brigades on each side, would every commander on the board instinctively know what the plan is and react accordingly? Also, this sort of system leads to the "suicide squad" approach, as units of skirmishers, for example, stand without question to be ridden down by knights, simply because the commander wants them to, to prevent another unit from being charged in the flank for example. Surely the decision to stand or run would be made by the unit commander and not by the distant Commander-in-Chief?

THE SECOND OPTION: OLD SCHOOL

Back in the day, Donald Featherstone, Paddy Griffiths and others used a system of staff officers. In this model, an order would be written on a piece of paper and placed under a staff officer figure, which was positioned next to the C-in-C. The staff officer miniature would then be moved across the battlefield each turn

at standard movement rates for light cavalry until he reached the commander to whom the order was addressed. A random factor was introduced to allow for the Staff officer losing his way in the heat of battle, or having his head taken off by a stray cannonball, but usually he arrived safe and sound. Only then could the player implement the new orders, changing the direction of his attack, retreat or whatever. Until then he had to carry out his previous orders to the best of his ability, and would now have to do the same with these orders until new ones arrived. I have seen an updated version of this basic concept, with brigades being given a generic order, such as Hold Position, Advance, Assault and so on. Players need to move their C-in-C to contact the brigade commander to change that order, or roll a dice to do so if too far away.

The advantage of this system is that it has a jolly good go at representing what would really happen on the battlefield. Players can see the command process in action and there is actually a point to moving your C-in-C around the

Above: American Civil War staff officers discuss the "Old School" option. Figures by Perry Miniatures. Figures from the collection of Nick Eyre.
Previous page: British Para forward command post. Figures by Artizan Designs, MDF buildings by Sarissa. Set available from North Star.

battlefield to shorten the time it takes orders to get to crucial sectors, or to change brigade orders.

The first disadvantage is that you need lots of aide de camp models, although some might not see that necessarily as a disadvantage. Also, written orders can sometimes be a little ambiguous, and unscrupulous players may push the interpretation of their orders to continue doing what they want to do. (Surely not?- Ed) A system like this works well for seventeenth to nineteenth century wars, where this sort of command system was practised, but is less applicable to Medieval or Ancient settings, and clearly is not applicable to battles fought in the 20th century.

Below: A Confederate commander (Salute free figure) moves to within "Command Radius" of two units.

THIRD OPTION: COMMAND RADIUS

In this option, the only units the player can be sure of activating, or moving, are those within a set radius of his command base. Sometimes this radius can be extended, if the units are light cavalry for instance, but generally most of the units have to stay in his command zone to be sure of activation. Units outside this radius will either remain where they are or, in some rules, perform random actions.

This system has much to commend it, as it keeps brigades together and prevents individual units setting off on circumnavigations of the board at the player's whim. This command radius can also be extended for those armies with good command and control systems, such as the Romans, and reduced for those armies with less effective control, such as Barbarians, whose units might have to remain within shouting distance.

The disadvantage of this system is similar to that of option 1, in that, so long as the units are within the command radius, they can still do whatever you want them to do, with barbarian units able to wheel, change formation or do all sorts of disciplined manoeuvres that the Romans are usually famous for. If using this command system you still need to place restrictions on what manoeuvres certain units can perform, with militia being less able to wheel, for example, than your Prussian Guards. Players also find this sort of system frustrating if the command radius is too small, limiting their options for manoeuvre. My view on this is, if it reflects the limitations of your army historically, then you just have to live with it.

"Having greater communications and command and control over your forces than your enemy has over his, is a force multiplier."

Colin Powell

Above: Great War Miniatures Crimean War British are designated 'pips' in the form of dice.

Below: In Muskets and Tomahawks *a group of (Conquest Miniatures) Compagnie Franches de la Marine spring into action on the turn of their card.*

FOURTH OPTION: PIPS OR POINTS.

For this sort of system, Generals are allocated a certain number of pips on a dice or a number of command points, dependant on their ability, to move their forces. Disciplined troops might cost one point to move whilst irregulars might cost more. The most popular example of this sort of command and control system would be DBM. The better your General, the more points he might get, or, with DBM, you may be able to decide who gets which points.

The system has the advantage that it limits the player's options, forcing him to prioritise the units he absolutely has to move and does not allow him to move every unit in every turn. It also allows the game to reflect effective command by allocating more points to those armies who had good command and fewer to those who did not, further limiting their options.

The main disadvantage of the system is that players become frustrated with armies who do not get large numbers of points or pips, and these armies do not end up being collected or appearing in our wargames. That was certainly an issue with DBM, where certain "killer" armies appeared regularly at competition whilst others never had a look in. In less competitive games the system can work well, but the main complaint from players is that they never have enough pips to do the things they want with their army, which, no matter how historically accurate, can put them off playing the game.

FIFTH OPTION: CARDS OR CHITS

Whilst I have no doubt this has been around for a while, I have only become aware of this sort of command system in recent years. This system uses a pack of cards or a bag of chits for activation, with each card or chit representing a unit on the board. When your card is turned over, or your chit removed from the bag, you can move the unit associated with that card or chit. The activation of units is thus completely random and does not follow the traditional IGO-UGO system, as units from either side could activate dependant on the card or chit drawn.

The main advantage of this system is that it keeps both players engaged throughout the game, as you never know which card will be drawn next. It also creates an element of uncertainty, as players cannot guarantee that their units will activate before the enemy. Often, if a special card or chit is drawn, the turn ends and all the cards / chits are returned to the pile. This adds even more uncertainty as you may not get to move some units that turn at all!

Systems like this can be a little like marmite, with some players loving it and others swearing never to play such games

> *"If officers desire to have control over their commands, they must remain habitually with them, industriously attend to their instruction and comfort, and in battle lead them well."*
>
> *Stonewall Jackson*

as long as they live. The uncertainty, the argument goes, makes it difficult to plan any effective strategy, as you might want to attack on the right flank but all your cards are for units on the left. You also cannot co-ordinate attacks as you might get one card for the right flank, two for the left and then have the turn end before you get another for the right. This certainly introduces friction to the battlefield and uncertainty into the players minds, and I find this sort of system works well for skirmish games. However, in larger games where an effective and co-ordinated strategy is required, I can see why players might get frustrated if their cards or chits never seem to turn up.

SIXTH OPTION: COMMAND ROLLS

The "Command Rolls" style of command and control allocates a number to the general of each brigade or command, representing his command ability. The general must roll under this number, usually on 2D6, to successfully activate a unit. As long as he continues to roll under this command value, he can keep moving units. For games such as *Black Powder*, this value stays the same, whilst in other games, such as *Blitzkrieg*

Commander, the value is reduced by one for each successful activation, forcing the player to prioritise his activations as they become less and less likely to succeed with each successful activation.

The advantage of this system is that it is fairly easy to understand and players can still prioritise the flanks they are going to attack on and which ones they will defend on, with a reasonable expectation that the generals will follow the orders they are given. You can simulate bad Command and Control in certain armies by reducing the value allocated to their commanders and increase the value of commanders, such as Alexander the Great, to reflect their more effective command.

The main disadvantage of this system is that success is often down to luck. I have known a few players who just could not catch a break and end up spending a whole game doing nothing with their command as they roll consistently over their command value every turn. Whilst this might be historically correct (we all know battles where generals sat idly by whilst their army was destroyed) the players experience of the game is not a good one, and the aim is to have fun after all. Also, the system still allows units to perform actions, such as wheeling

and changing formation, that their historical counterparts would have found difficult to perform, and often this is not addressed. Usually, if they get the order, than can perform the manoeuvre, no matter what the receiving unit's level of training or drill is.

OTHER OPTIONS?

Whilst I think I have covered most wargames' command and control systems above, I am sure there are many others, and they all have their advantages and disadvantages. What I think unites the disadvantages of these systems is that often "command" and "training" are not linked, meaning that anyone can perform certain manoeuvres so long as they receive the orders to do so. As outlined in the introduction, it is not enough to have a good command and control system, but you have to have troops trained and disciplined enough to carry them out.

So is it possible to mix and match our command and control systems within one game, or allow some armies to do one thing but not another? I hope to explore this side of the command and control discussion in part two of this article next month.
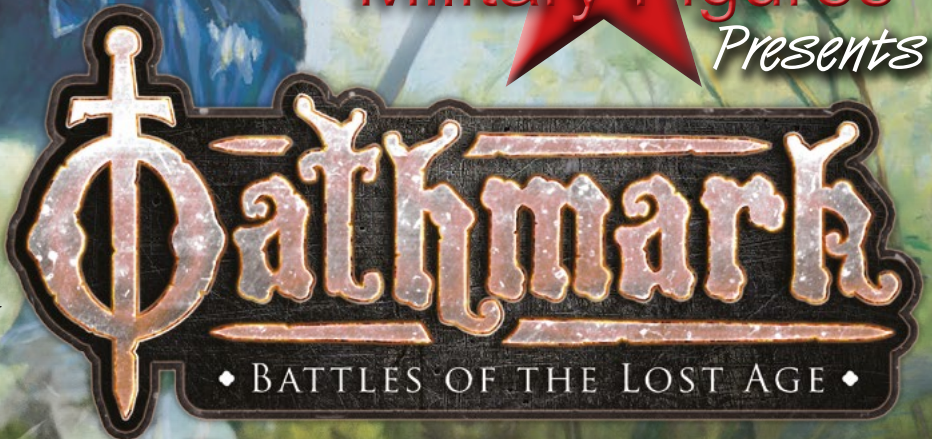

Zut alors! This North Star French 1672 force have rolled above their Command Rating and now can't take any action this turn.

COPPLESTONE'S BARBARICA

DRAGON RAMPANT STYLE

**Author Dan Mersey flies the flag and provides the rules from 15mm fantasy *Dragon Rampant* gaming.
All photos kindly supplied by Kevin Dallimore.**

As soon as Copplestone Castings launched their Barbarica 15mm fantasy range some years ago, I jumped on it straight away. I'd not tried smaller sized fantasy miniatures before, but these swung me entirely.

• I loved the style of the sculpts (hands down the best 15mm miniatures I've ever seen – and they still are).

• I loved the non-traditional fantasy style (so much of the range is immediately familiar from mainstream fantasy but also very much its own world).

• I loved the gaming possibilities of larger fantasy battles in this smaller scale (most of us would agree that 28mm is the 'standard' size for fantasy gaming).

As time went on, I wanted to move my Barbarica collection away from my original *Hordes of the Things* armies to create some new warbands for my *Dragon Rampant* fantasy rules (published by Osprey Publishing), so

dropped sculptor Mark Copplestone a line to find out more about his range's backstory and to ask his blessing on writing up some *Dragon Rampant* stats. Mark kindly sent over his original vision for the range's setting and combatants.

As well as providing me with enough background material to craft unit stats for the full range of miniatures currently available, a few new factions have been hinted at – whether these will ever see a commercial release, we can only hope, but in this article I provide army lists to enable you to field the current major combatants in Mark's land of Barbarica.

PLAYING *DRAGON RAMPANT* IN 15MM

Interested in playing *Dragon Rampant* with 15mm warbands rather than 28mm? No problem. Thankfully, there's nothing you need to do differently from the rules as written – you can use individually based miniatures and the measurements described in the rulebook.

That said, I have standardized my 15mm warband basing as follows:

• Units are mounted on two 50mm or 60mm stands, one with a dice tracker mounted on it (see page 9 of the *Dragon Rampant* rulebook for how I use dice to track Strength Points).

• Some units can be mounted on a single base only – use this for giants, large creatures that fight as individuals, and big-headed heroes who wish to fight alone without sharing the headlines with lesser companions.

• When the unit reaches half Strength Points, remove one base thus making it easy to see whether a unit is at full or half strength.

Otherwise, play the rules as written or with your usual house rules. You could take advantage of the smaller miniatures by playing on a smaller tabletop area and reducing measurements to centimetres rather than inches, but there's no pressure on you to do so!

THE WORLD OF BARBARICA

Unrelated to 15mm or 28mm games (or indeed any other miniature size), I've noted a trend for players to field more than the envisaged 24 army point warbands – 36 army points seems quite popular. My original choice was 24 army points as it gives players some tough choices on what to include and what not to include; this imposes some small restriction in the same way that historical army lists do. However, using larger point sizes is course absolutely fine to do – whatever gives you the most enjoyment from your rulebook.

Barbarica is Mark Copplestone's fantasy version of Ancient Britain (Britannia) on the cusp of the Roman invasion, inhabited by the Picts, the Kelts, the Northlanders, the Ice Tribes, the Bog Peoples, and a number of fantastical races and creatures. These tribes endemically fight one another, and will soon have to deal with the external threat of well-organised and well-armoured Roman armies marching to conquer their lands.

Britannia's geography is based on that of the real prehistoric post-glacial period when Britain was joined to Europe by land, called the Sinking Lands in Mark's world. There is another island, the Dark Isle, in the North Sea. There are still glaciers in the cold and icy mountains of the north, but the south is warm and fertile. There are still vast forests and great expanses of undrained marshland, and the mountains are higher and more rugged than in our reality.

Hidden from view in their underground lairs, emerging mostly at night – brooding on the injustice of their position – are the original inhabitants of Britannia: the Picts. They hate everyone equally.

Within half a century of the Roman invasion, the newcomers will occupy most of lowland Britannia. Siluria and Dumnonia will still be ruled by the Kelts and in the north the fierce Northlanders will continue to rule. Other barbarian tribes occupy the Sinking Lands and Germania.

Above: Map kindly supplied by Mark Copplestone.

MAGIC IN BARBARICA

Magic is omnipresent in the world of Barbarica, drawn from a fluctuating source of magical energy. It flows along ley lines, is concentrated in sacred places, and may be increased by human sacrifice and proximity to stone circles, standing stones (and, in later times, decreased by proximity to Roman buildings).

Almost all tribes have their own wizards, witches and shamans – in *Dragon Rampant* terminology, these are rarely full-on Spellcasters, but minor magic is common in the form of Wizardlings (as I describe them in the rulebook, 'the fantasy equivalent of supermarket own-brand lager'). Other magic in gameplay is represented not by spellcasting but by a magical or psychological effect on the battlefield (such as Fear).

Few armies take to the battlefield without spiritual support. However, the Wise Folk know that this rich channel of magic will soon be interrupted and neutralised by the straight lines of Roman roads and towns after an inevitable conquest via Belgica and the Sinking Lands.

Ley Lines & Worship in Barbarica

Trilithons (stone arches) are ley line portals, stone circles and standing stones magnify magic. These are fairly commonplace in Barbarica (and resin models are available from Copplestone Castings); when you set up the battlefield, roll a six-sided die – on a five or six place one such terrain feature on the board (the attacker places on a roll of five,

the defender on a roll of six). Any spellcaster/wizardling unit in such terrain gains a +1 modifier when testing for spellcasting rolls.

Any warband may also purchase a statue of worship (@ 2 points) to place in their own deployment zone. This depicts one of their Gods and offers a spiritual bonus, The statue gives +1 bonus to all friendly units' Courage tests within 12". The Copplestone range includes a suitably tentacled statue, ideal as a Pictish idol.

THE ARMIES OF BARBARICA

The following lists cover the current range of Copplestone Castings miniatures, based on Mark's background materials. There are three main groups, although I've chosen to pull the Dwarves out into their own list as I think they're a worthy race in their own right.

Note that where Foot and Mounted Warchiefs are included in a list, you may choose only one such unit – you can never have more than one Leader in play!

THE NORTHLANDERS & ICE TRIBES

The northern region is inhabited by squabbling tribes of hairy and ferocious close-quarter fighters with little armour and a lack of long range weaponry (most Northlander tribes despise the use of missile weapons). The Ice Tribes of the far north are the most primitive of all the Northlanders.

The metal weapons of the Northland tribes are forged by the secretive Dwarves of the mountains, whose warriors sometimes fight alongside them. Bears, giants and snow trolls can be seen accompanying the warbands of the North, and rumours of shape-changing warriors who transform from human to bear form when enraged are proven to be true.

Warband options:

• Ice Tribe warbands may only use Warriors, Archers, Snow Trolls, Cave Bears and Giants – their primitive culture has not yet evolved to include a hierarchy of chiefs, champions, or skalds.

• Larger Snow Trolls can be represented by 28mm Yetis from the Copplestone Castings 'Back of Beyond' range. These qualify as Greater Warbeasts.

• May add Spearmen or Axemen units from the Dwarf list as allies.

Unit	Type	Notes	Points	Options	Pack Code
Mounted Warchiefs	Greater Warbeasts	Leader Cunning	8 points		FM19
Foot Champions	Elite Foot	Enchanted Weapons	7 points	Exploder (berserk fury) @ +2 points	FM04
Mounted Champions	Elite Riders		6 points		FM19 & FM22
Skalds & Witches	Heavy Foot	Wizardling Fear	8 points		FM04
Warriors	Bellicose Foot		4 points		FM02 & FM03
Shapechangers	Bellicose Foot / Lesser Warbeasts	Were Creatures: Bears	10 points		FM08
Cavalry	Heavy Riders		4 points		FM20
Snow Trolls	Heavy Foot	Offensive	6 points		FM05
Giants	Greater Warbeasts		6 points	Ponderous @ -1 point	M17 & FM18
Cave Bears	Lesser Warbeasts		4 points		FM09

THE PICTS

The Picts once ruled the whole of Britannia, but successive invasions have pushed them underground. Now, only the Dark Isle remains a Pictish realm – it has never been conquered by outsiders, and is a place of dark magic and the worship of ancient demonic gods.

Elsewhere, Picts lurk below ground in hidden places, a secret army armed with poisoned weapons, ready to creep from their hidden lairs to raid for slaves and food. Years of brooding have made them masters of dark, demonic magic fuelled by human sacrifice and battlefield slaughter.

Cave trolls sometimes accompany Pictish warbands on their forays above ground, but most feared of all is the Great Burrower – a huge multi-tentacled horror that bursts up from underground tunnels to throw its enemies into its gaping maw.

Warband options:

• A Dark Isle warband may field more than one unit of Shamans & Witches – these additional units lose the Leader rule.

• The Shamans & Witches, and Champions units may choose the Slayer rule (humans) @ +4 points.

• The Shamans may cast a dark fog over any units they wish before the game begins: add Invisibility @ +3 points per unit.

• Archer and Warrior units may be given the Fearful rule @ -2 points per unit.

• Warrior units may be given the Burrowing rule @ +2 points to represent their knowledge of Ancient Pathways and long forgotten natural lore.

• Another alternative is for the Shamans to be Summoners @ + 3 points, able to summon Warriors and The Great Burrower itself. You may wish to use the Copplestone Hidden Lairs as an immovable spawning point for summoned units (place one anywhere along a table edge during deployment and use this instead of the Summoner's location).

Unit	Type	Notes	Points	Options	Pack Code
Shamans & Witches	Bellicose Foot	Leader Venomous	7 points	Fear Dark Fog @ +2 points	FM27
Champions	Bellicose Foot	Venomous	7 points		FM27
Warriors	Bellicose Foot		4 points		FM12
Archers	Light Missiles		4 points	Venomous @ +3 points	FM13
Ambushers	Scouts		2 points	Venomous @ +3 points	FM13
The Great Burrower	Greater Warbeast	Burrower Fear	10 points	Flame/spore attack (tentacles) @ +2 points	Not yet in production
Cave Trolls	Heavy Foot	Offensive	6 points		Not yet in production (can use FM15 in different colour scheme)

THE BOG PEOPLE

The Sinking Lands are inhabited by the Bog People, the hereditary enemies of the Picts. The Bog People are a dark-haired ancient tribe who occupied the lowland areas of Britannia before the arrival of the Romans and Kelts.

The Bog People fight well in the broken terrain of their kingdoms, laying ambushes and fielding good cavalry and archers alongside their warriors. Witches and wolves accompany armies into battle, and like the Northerners, the Bog People have shape-changing warriors who transform into wolves when the fight goes against them.

Warband options:

• When defending may deploy pit traps and marsh fire magic for 1 point: Deploy two small areas of boggy land; one is dangerous terrain (rulebook page 55) – keep it a secret which this is until a unit enters it.

• Foot units may camouflage themselves: Invisibility @ 3 points.

• Any unit may be given Hatred of Picts @ 1 point per unit.

Unit	Type	Notes	Points	Options	Pack Code
Foot Warchiefs	Elite Foot	Leader	6 points	Enchanted Weapons @ +1 point	FM01 & FM07
Mounted Warchiefs	Elite Riders	Leader	6 points	Enchanted Weapons @ +1 point	FM23
Foot Champions	Elite Foot		6 points		FM01
Mounted Champions	Elite Riders		6 points		FM23
Witches	Light Foot	Wizardling	5 points	Invisibility @ +3 points	Witches from FM04
Wolfskin Warriors	Light Foot / Lesser Warbeasts	Offensive Were Creatures: Wolves	10 points		Cloaked warriors from FM06 & wolves FM10
Warriors	Light Foot	Offensive	5 points		FM06
Archers	Light Missiles		4 points	Sharpshooter @ +2 points	FM11
Hunters	Scouts		2 points		FM11
Cavalry	Heavy Riders		4 points		FM21
Wolf packs	Lesser Warbeasts		4 points		FM10

THE DWARVES

Dwarves inhabit the mountains of the North. They are skilled metal workers, wearing more armour than other tribes – except for their berserkers who shun such mortal protection and rely on the mystical powers of the Gods to shield them. Dwarves can be found as allies to some Northerner warbands, but on occasion they emerge from the mountains to muster for battle as a power in their own right.

Warband options:

• Dwarf Spearmen (sic) and Axemen are found as mercenaries in other armies – usually those of the Northerners (and never fighting for the Picts). Both types of unit may be included in other armies.

Unit	Type	Notes	Points	Options	Pack Code
Lords	Elite Foot	Leader Fear (war horns)	8 points	Blessed Weapons @+2 points	FM16
Berserkers	Bellicose Foot	Enchanted Weapons	5 points	Exploder @ 2 points (berserk fury)	FM16
Housecarls	Elite Foot		6 points		
Spearmen	Heavy Foot		4 points		FM15
Axemen	Heavy Foot	Offensive	6 points		FM14

GAZING INTO THE BARBARICA CRYSTAL BALL

The following warbands are not currently available as miniatures from Copplestone Castings, but they round out the vision of Barbarica. As I've not seen the miniatures yet (except for a couple of tantalizing glimpses of some superbly Frazetta-inspired Romans), I've not provided full unit descriptions, just broad descriptions of how these warbands may fight in *Dragon Rampant*. Let's hope these ranges eventually see the light of day!

THE KELTS

Brightly dressed, tattooed and equipped with stylistically dazzling bronze helmets and shields, the Kelts hail from Belgica but their influence stretches across the Gallic Sea into the southern areas of Britannia. After the coming of the Romans, they hold Siluria and Dumnonia. Their kings, queens, and nobles fight as cavalry or from the back of chariots. They are also blessed with the strongest of all magic – that of their druids, who worship in sacred groves of enchanted trees.

• King or Queen: Heavy Riders (option for chariots) or Elite Foot.

• Champions: Heavy Riders (option for chariots) or Elite Foot, either with enchanted weapons.

• Druids: Light Foot with Spellcaster (the strongest magic in Barbarica).

• Nobles: Heavy Riders (option for chariots).

• Sword Dancers: Bellicose Foot causing fear.

• Warriors: Bellicose Foot.

• Slingers: Scouts.

• Giant Boars: Greater Warbeasts.

Druids may take the Summoner fantastical rule to bring the Cauldron of Rebirth to the battlefield. From this, they may summon undead warriors (Zombies or Skeleton Soldiers from the rulebook's Graveyard Dwellers list).

The Kelts may also field a grove of enchanted trees (as the Bog Dwellers pit traps, but depict as woodland); druid units are immune to the effect of the trees.

THE ROMANS

A swift conquest by Rome results in the establishment of two new provinces of the empire: Britannia Prima and Britannia Secunda. On the fringes of these provinces, the earlier inhabitants of Britannia remain. Soothsayers read omens before battle (represented in the rules by Quests), and Roman roads, shrines, and temples dispel Ancient Magic.

Roman armies are disciplined, well equipped, and include the following units:

• Emperor & Praetorian Guards: Elite Foot.

• Legionaries: Heavy Foot (when using testudo formation) or Offensive Heavy Foot (when using pila).

• Auxiliaries: Light Foot with short range missile weapons .

• Thessalian Centaurs: Elite Riders.

As an option, a Roman warband may place a Roman temple, shrine or road on the battlefield at a cost of 2 army points. This cancels the effect of all magic – any Spellcasters or Wizardlings in the opposing warband must lose this fantastical rule for the duration of the battle. It does not affect Summoners. The army points usually spent on these magical traits must instead be used to field other units or upgrades.

THE GOTHS

Further east on the mainland, beyond the frontiers of the empire, lies Germania. The mostly-mounted Goth tribes who inhabit this realm have never crossed the Sinking Lands, but their wild, jealous eyes are always cast towards the riches of Rome.

• Kings: Elite Riders with mystical armour and enchanted weapons.

• Champions: Elite Riders with hatred of Romans.

• Cavalry: Elite Riders.

• Warriors: Bellicose Foot.

• Archers: Light Missiles.

COMMANDING FROM A DISTANCE

Those of us who wargame in the 17th Century will be familiar with Barry Hilton aka The League of Augsburg as an advocate of all things lace wars on terra firma but his attentions have recently drifted out to sea as he runs an Anglo-Dutch Wars naval campaign. Barry tells us how he pieced together a campaign in which all the players are several hundred miles apart.

I once played a wargame by mobile phone using two identical tables with the first set up at home and the other 300 miles away. We fought our battle in real time with several calls per game-turn and got a result in about three hours of a single afternoon. I wrote an article about it for this mag a few years back. I mention it only to posit that gaming without your opponent in the room can work. Extending that concept somewhat, an opportunity arose to game with players who didn't even know where and when the fight was on. In the end it turned out that at least one commander was 3,000 miles away. Like despots of old, he and the other leaders had to wait for the arrival of a vital communique from distant shores to know whether their forces had been victorious.

Having completed upward of one hundred pieces in 1/2400 scale for Anglo-Dutch Wars naval gaming, I was encouraged to get these diminutive yet attractive models on any table as frequently as possible. They can be set

up and put away with minimal fuss and are individually inexpensive, although buying 150 packs blows a large hole in that line of argumentation. The financial and modelling time investment on this project focused the mind on getting some output and thus, having presented means, motive and opportunity, it's all starting to sound a bit Dexter-esque.

The idea was essentially about solo gaming however, by creating an option to contribute for a limited number of players, an additional ingredient was added to the recipe. Play-by-email campaigns are not new; nonetheless the shape of this endeavour was strong enough to attract attention from gamers with similar interests to my own.

REELING IN THE PLAYERS

To get others involved the first step was to circulate a points list requesting each player choose their own assets and admiral or, to use a popular phrase of the period - general at sea. The scope for force construction was wide. Players picked anything they wanted from the

period 1650 to 1720 and with luck, the right models to fulfil each choice would be available in the already completed ship inventory. That worked very well with some interesting forces created which actually motivated me to paint a few new ships to fulfil participant choices. This, as will become apparent, was not a chore but a pleasure.

Most fleets were conventional, representing Dutch or English between 1660 and 1690; however, there were two very interesting exceptions. The first was a privateer fleet commanded by Jan Baert (Jean Bart) operating out of Dunkirk and the other was a Barbary pirate force based in Tripoli mixing both Arab and European vessels. The Bart privateer fleet proved intriguing and motivated me to paint the 4th rate *Maure* (*The Moor*), his actual flagship, for the campaign.

A point value ceiling was set for campaign commencement. Whether number crunchers agree or disagree with its construction, all players used the same list - therefore, it worked.

Once fleets were picked, captains named, crews assigned and choices around guns, marines and the like made, it was down to battle. Each force embarked on a series of connected scenarios. Players' fleets were always drawn against a house opponent although it is possible that they could meet each other under some circumstances in future outings. My role is as their opponent but with the added twist that I also manage their force at the same time. This satisfies my need to throw dice and move toys whilst creating interesting command challenges for the participants. Some enjoyable character play, force-building and fleet management makes for a nice low effort, high return experience which is some compensation for being unable to physically move the ships. Anticipative tension is high when the express communications from each action are dispatched by very un-17th Century email accompanied by digital photographic evidence. No van de Velde drawings here, it's the full Nikon P600 treatment delivered by Microsoft.

Above: A vengeful Admiral Tocht off Dunkerque, 1672 - opening shots of the Franco-Dutch War at sea.

Below: The legend that is de Ruyter liberates two impounded VOC ships from the English on the Gambian coast, 1664.

THE BATTLES UNFOLD

The scenarios were fun to put together, each being different and generated from scratch. Opposing forces are always historically compatible as I am still haunted by Parthian versus Pict situations thirty years after putting *WRG* 6th edition on the shelf for the final time. In each scenario, fleets are of equal points value and if any slight disparity exists (usually no more than 5%) it is carried as a handicap by the side with the higher value.

The process continues after having chosen the enemy force. The game table is laid out and photographed. These set-up shots are sent to each player with a request to provide a battle plan which I attempt to execute. Players receive details about wind direction and speed, sea conditions and visibility as the action commences and, by return, their sailing orders and engagement plans inform my approach to the battle.

Each game has an open-ended number of turns and is played to a realistic conclusion. As the representative of each general at sea I act as impartially as possible and in cases of ambiguity invariably offer the advantage to the player's fleet and not the house. Each turn is photographed for a post-battle write up and notes detailing important aspects such as damage, officer casualties, prizes, collisions, accidents and the usual nautical nonsense that happens with sailing ships are made as each battle unfolds. With no pressure to finish before the last bus home and the luxury of leaving the 4 x 4 feet table set up, these games have become relaxed, stress busting personal hobby time of the highest quality.

After each battle is finished the winner is judged based on criteria such as mission completion together with damage inflicted and received. A report is then created and sent to each admiral with points lost or gained and a request for their instruction on ship repairs, upgrades and purchases.

Defeated fleets are permitted to go into debt to buy new assets and a published league table has two versions. The first is issued at the end of the current turn and the second at the beginning of the following turn. League positions can vary dramatically between these two iterations depending on whether admirals chose to spend their well-earned victory points on new ships, upgrades or gamble by going into debt to the treasury following defeat.

Full write ups of each scenario appear on the League of Augsburg Blog after each admiral has received news of his fleet's performance.

Above: Unpaid duty? The game set-up. De Ruyter's attempts to rescue two VOC spice ships held for non-payment of taxes by the greedy English. Gambia 1664.

TYPICAL FORCES

To illustrate, here are two of the fleets chosen by participants with the first iterations followed by the form currently in play.

Admiral de Ruyter operating in West African waters has been bold and successful in his endeavours as can be seen by the growth in his fleet.

DUTCH FLEET 1664: ADMIRAL MICHIEL DE RUYTER

This force is based on the squadron taken by de Ruyter to Africa and the Caribbean in 1664/65.
It is owned by a player in Canada.

Force	Points
Spiegel, 68 guns: Veteran crew, Master gunner, light guns (Flagship)	135
Provincie van Utrecht, 58 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	92
Geloof, 50 guns: Veteran crew, light guns	96
Noorderkwartier, 50 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	76.5
Groene Kameel, 10 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	25

Its current shape in the campaign is as follows;

Force	Points
Spiegel, 68 guns: Veteran crew, Master gunner, light guns (Flagship)	135
Provincie van Utrecht, 58 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	92
Klein Hollandia, 58 guns: Veteran crew, light guns	120
Geloof, 50 guns: Veteran crew, light guns	96
Noorderkwartier, 50 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	76.5
Groene Kameel, 10 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	25
Reijger, 8 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	25
Oliphant, 6 guns: Drilled crew, light guns	25
Drommedaris: Fireship, Drilled crew	45

DUNKERQUE PRIVATEERS 1690: JAN BAERT

Based on Jan Baert's fleet operating by proxy on behalf of Louis XIV during the guerre de course against William III's Anglo-Dutch navy. This force is commanded by a player in The Netherlands.

FORCE	POINTS
Maure, 46 guns: Veteran crew, Marines, (Flagship)	145
Adroit, 42 guns: Drilled crew	115
Jersey, 38 guns: Raw crew	45
Mignon, 32 guns: Raw crew, heavy guns	33
Comte, 32 guns: Raw crew, heavy guns	33
Alcyon, 30 guns: Raw crew	30

Its current shape after Baert did well raiding a supply convoy bound for Hoylake from the Maas is detailed below. The privateer commander chose to upgrade the crew quality and hitting power of many of his ships.

FORCE	POINTS
Maure, 46 guns: Veteran crew, Marines, Master gunner, heavy guns (Flagship)	178
Adroit, 42 guns: Veteran crew, Marines, heavy guns	167
Jersey, 38 guns: Drilled crew, Marines	90
Mignon, 32 guns: Drilled crew, heavy guns	48
Comte, 32 guns: Drilled crew, heavy guns	48
Alcyon, 30 guns: Drilled crew, Marines, heavy guns	45
Beemster (Prize), 30 guns: Raw crew, light guns	

One thousand Irish
March 19th 1689

1689. Jacobite VA O'Brien is landing 1,000 Irish infantry in Scotland to support Dundee. A veteran frigate squadron is about to interdict.

Williamite squadron

O'Brien's squadron

Transports

Duncreige

landing underway

Ardnamurchan
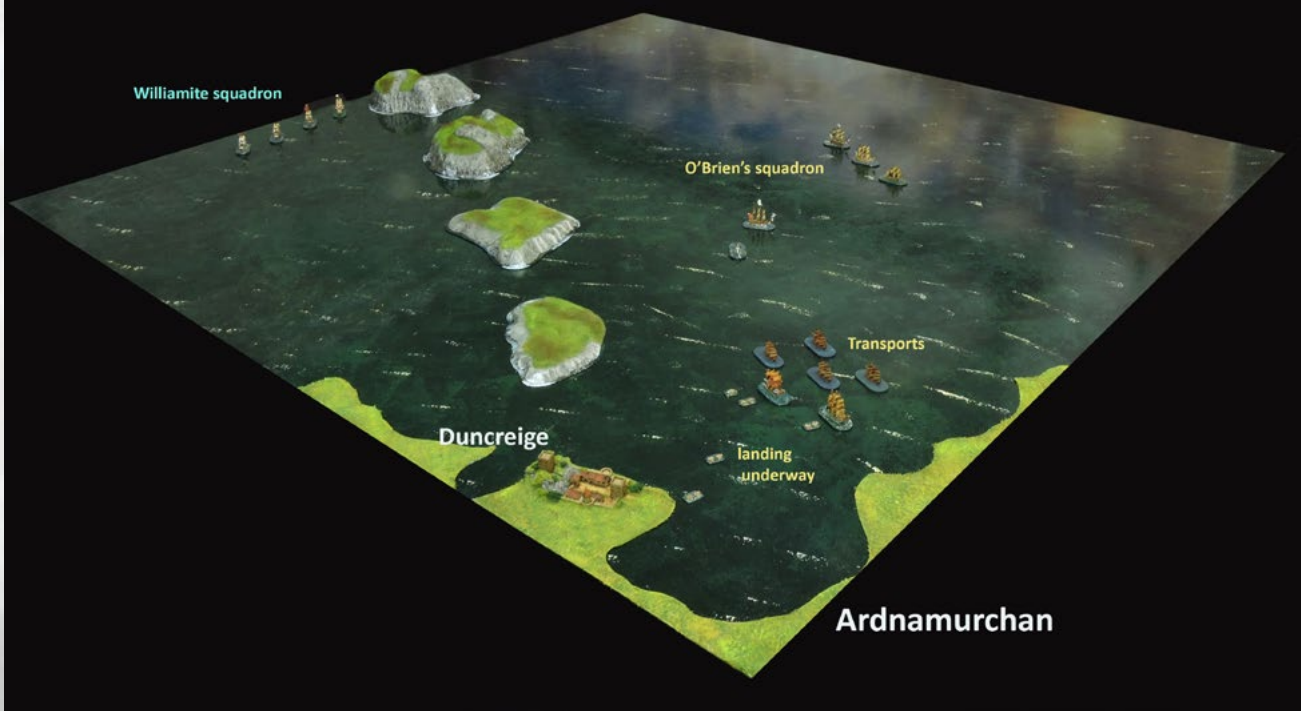
SCENARIOS

The scenarios have been fun to create and included the rescue of VOC ships impounded by the English for non-payment of duty on the Gold Coast, a convoy raid on William III's supplies bound for Ireland, the escape of a Jacobite fleet from a neutral harbour under the watching eyes of a large English 2nd rate and an issue of protocol whereby French ships sailing off the Isle of Wight refused to lower their colours in deference to King Charles's warships thus incurring the wrath of the King's navy.

Amongst the latest batch of scenarios is the planned capture of a slaving fort on a heavily silted Gambian river where larger ships have a danger of grounding, and a raid on a Scottish fishing port by Baert's privateer fleet.

All battles have been fought on the same 4 x 4 feet table which is more than adequate for actions of between six (the lowest number of ships) and twenty-two (the largest game thus far) models.

MODELS AND BLING

Everything I have painted so far comes from the 1/2400 scale range from Tumbling Dice. The models take a little getting used to, but I have grown to love them dearly and really enjoy the assembly, painting and rigging process. All are based on 40 x 20mm pill shaped mounts with plaster sea effect – painted and yacht varnished. Completion time per model including rigging made from synthetic brush bristles, is about two hours per ship average with smaller vessels easily done in thirty minutes and larger ones taking perhaps three hours and thirty minutes. The table terrain is often made from offcuts and discarded material covered in static grass and painted. The buildings are out of scale but at such a small size the eye accepts 2mm buildings with 1mm scale ships. These are mostly from Brigade Models with some pieces from Irregular Miniatures. I also use Irregular's 2mm Pike & Shot models for garrisons, shore batteries and local army and militia troops. The islands are from Amera Terrain.

RULES

The whole thing kicked off when I got hooked on Neil Fox's rules for refighting the *Battle of Solebay* in 1672. From his very playable two pager I developed my own interpretation and added to it slowly but surely until it reached a level of detail that stopped the tinkering. The simple campaign rules and points system followed from there. None of the games, even the more complex scenarios, have lasted more than two and a half hours. Every game has - thus far - been a solo affair.

Above: Admiral Barre's squadron of 3rd rates off Harwich in 1666. Looking out for a Dutch herring fleet fishing illegally in English waters! Damn those Dutchies.

Below: Sin City – Adafoah on the Volta River is a hotbed of Arab slaving. Is it about to become a hotbed of Dutch slaving? 1665 – back with de Ruyter.
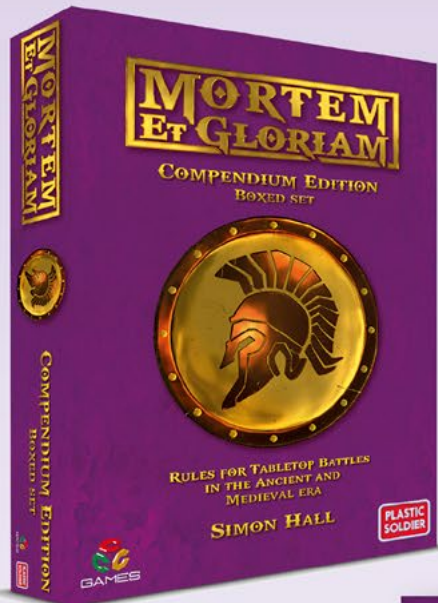
The idea is transferable to any period and theatre. The scale lends itself beautifully to such an endeavour and I cannot remember the last time I derived such complete satisfaction from wargaming.

A pleasant surprise has been the response to the detailed after-action reports. Often these are completed for personal amusement and memories, but the enthusiasm amongst a wide group of gamers for such summaries is most gratifying. A lot of work? Maybe, but to my mind worth it and proof that our hobby can be enjoyed and bring people together at such a distance in an alternative manner to computer screens, headsets and gaming consoles.

COVID CAMPAIGNING

Colonel (Retired) Bill Gray gives us one wargamer's account of keeping his hobby alive during the Coronavirus Crisis.

The 15th of March 2020 was the day wargaming died for me. That was the last day of the half full HMGS Cold Wars convention here in the colonies. The next week most states went into full quarantine to try and stem the Coronavirus, shelter in place orders were implemented and most meetings of any size were banned. Getting together with the lads for a solid miniature game became a distant memory. Not that I'm complaining mind you. Folks in high risk categories wisely stayed away from Cold Wars, and given I'm 65 with a recent history of sepsis, spinal stenosis and cancer garnished by heart valve surgery (seriously, I have a warranty card good for 28 years with a replacement guarantee if I die), I decided to do likewise. Then HMGS Historicon 20 scheduled for July was cancelled, then HMGS Fall In 20 scheduled for late October was cancelled, as were smaller US cons like Enfilade, NJCON, Drums at the Rapids, KublaCon, and Huzzah! The miniature wargaming Apocalypse was upon us.

Or was it…?

My wife remarked that perhaps this was a "blessing in disguise" and I responded with Winston Churchill's oft quoted remark that "If this is a blessing, it is certainly very well disguised." Turns out, in a twisted, sorta ironic way, she might well be right. Read on and contemplate a very scary thought – this may happen again.

SCENE 1: QUARTERMASTER AGI

That's Annual General Inspection for all you not military types out there and it all comes down to this. I try to put on a different game from a different time period at each convention or two I attend. I do this to force myself to break out the required miniatures and start painting and basing, converting terrain and constructing buildings etc. In this case we're talking 1864 Danes for a winter battle (I already had the Austrians and Prussians on standby), and quite honestly, they are pretty much a snap to deck out; black leather belting, black or navy kepi, black or navy long winter coat.

About the only thing complicated was the color and after a rousing discussion on Facebook about this very important subject on which world peace depends, it was decided it didn't matter as most armies back then defined navy as a "shade of black." But since their expected appearances were cancelled along with the relevant conventions, I shelved the project because I really didn't have anything to do.

Instead I pulled out the bags of Danish troops and decided that since I was in that part of the basement, why not do a quick inventory of what kind of lead/pewter/resin/paint I actually had on hand. Damn. There was a lot of stuff in there.

I have this really (understandable) habit of grabbing wargaming stuff that's on sale, huge discounts especially, prior to knowing what I just bought without considering if I need it (of course I do) or if I will ever use it. So, when The Armory went out of business and sold their watercolor paints for about 25 cents a bottle, I just grabbed the whole thing. So now I am sorting this by color to

Above: Miniature Figure Tubs to be Sorted.

include valid historical hues such as Orc Flesh and Goblin Wart Green. Great for Russians, trust me.

I segregated my minis and buildings and sorted them by era, war, nationality, unit type (infantry, cavalry, artillery), painted or unpainted and manufacturer. I placed them in plastic boxes to protect the inhabitants from a basement flood, then stacked them from top to bottom by date. As the earliest dated army, my Alexandrian Macedonians led off the entourage, with my World War I lads being the last. And the World War I collection is a good example of my world-famous frugal perspective. I wanted World War I, emphasis on cheap, so when I saw a huge number of Minifig and other brands for sale, I just bought the whole thing; same for a huge box of the old 15 mm Heritage Napoleonettes. There were about a bazillion blister packs, I love the product line, they were dirt cheap and I was sure I'd use them somewhere. Ditto for my Mexican War assortment where I have enough figures at scale for Santa Anna's entire army. I also buy every ACW limber I can get my hands on because the French design used pretty much equipped armies worldwide from the Crimean War thru 1914. You just paint them up in the color of the nationality you need. All 192 packs of them!

And then there is my huge box of Spanish American War figures, American only. But I don't play Spanish American War, have no interest in that period of history and thus will never paint or deploy them on the tabletop. Yet there they are, in this big box and I have absolutely no idea why I have them, when I bought them, from whom or why. But like the early

Japanese Samurai I found (no clue here either), I bet they were dirt cheap.

I needed a purge. I have to sell stuff, a lot of stuff. eBay and I are going to become good friends very soon.

SCENE 2: BIBLIOGRAPHIA

Another thing is books, because unlike other genres of wargaming, the miniature variety requires a lot of research on the part of its participants, an aspect most adherents find a lot of fun. So, I buy a lot of books in support of my hobby. Nowadays I buy mostly on Kindle. Not only are they cheaper, but I simply don't have room for paper anymore. Having them for Kindle also helps in another aspect. If you try to buy the same book again, Amazon lets you know. This is good, because although the inventory to organize my library was completed quickly, it also exposed eleven duplicates. Yes, I have eleven hardcopy books for which I have a second copy, and one for which I have three copies!

But the biggest surprise was finding out how many of the books I haven't read. That does not mean I have not used the books, but I haven't read them. If you're like me, you buy a lot of tomes for the hard data; uniforms, flags, weapons attributes, detailed maps, even more detailed orders of battle. This is the stuff you can find in the appendices of books, never having to read the text at all. I have a bunch of Helion's Century of the Soldier paperbacks, such as the volume on the army of the Holy Roman Empire during the pike and shot era. I just bought it for the regimental lists and clothing data.

Yet, my book inventory was the catalyst for reminding me of how much time I don't have to enjoy my hobby under normal circumstances, even if retired.

I picked up Nick Dorrell's *Marlborough's Other Army, the British Army and the Campaigns of the First Peninsular War 1702-12* and began to thumb through a few pages. The color plates and quantified information was exceptional,

but the narrative quickly caught my attention as well. I went cover to cover, as I did with several others in the Helion Century line and also Quenton Barry's *Last Throw of the Dice*, *Bourbaki* and *Werder in Eastern France 1870 – 71* (great color maps BTW). Now I am plowing through a massive two volume set on the Great Northern War called the *Great Northern War Compendium*. Yes, the hard data is there, but the narrative is particularly unique in that it comes from 70 articles by acknowledged experts on this conflict, covering topics I never knew had any relation to the subject overall.

Seriously, read anything you have. There is a lot of good stuff between the covers besides numbers, and if we go into lockdown again, this is a great way to enjoy your hobby as you never have.

SCENE 3: RAGE OF EAGLES IN GEEK LAND

I wrote and publish *Age of Eagles II* (AOE - Napoleonic Fire & Fury) and its various expansions, I continued to print and ship product during quarantine. What came as a massive surprise to me was that I saw a 320 % jump in sales over the same time last year. When not dealing with orders I took time to give the AOE Website an overhaul to include new images for the slide show on the homepage. I also started writing and designing the last digital expansion module in the AOE Age of Valor product line, that being *AOV Revolution 1848*, covering the Schleswig question, the Hungarian Revolution and the First Italian Risorgimento. But what I 'accidentally' ended up spending ages on during lockdown concerned a well-known Website called Boardgame Geek (www.boardgamegeek.com), lovingly called BGG for short.

One of my French customers (we produce a French version of AOE) indicated he had set up an AOE page on boardgamegeek and advised me to expand it. BGG, for those who don't know, is really a high visibility online
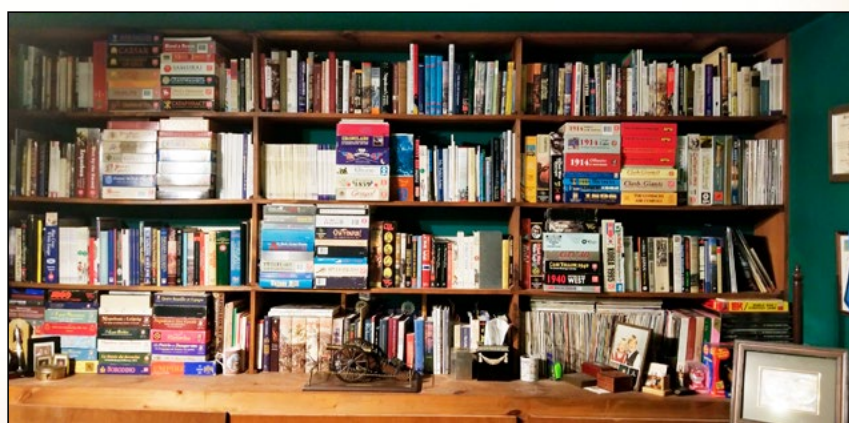

Above: Book and Game Shelf .

database for every boardgame made, and the BGG definition of "boardgame" includes miniature wargaming. The BGG staff simply manage and otherwise approve the content. The actual design and material on each game page comes from either the designer/publisher or their customers. Pages include a description of the game, lots of photographs of the game components and game play, customer ratings and a list of database information such as what historical eras the game represents (so you can look at other games covering the same subject) or gameplay characteristics such as whether the game uses random movement or some other method. For me it seemed kinda neat because I was able to pull individual pages for all the AOE publications and display them, something tougher to do on the AOE official site.

So, I said to myself, "Self, how hard can it be? You need one product series home page and then one page for each of twelve books." Pretty damn hard as it turns out, not to mention complex and very time consuming.

I started this process on Friday, February 28th, 2020 at 10:53 pm and finally finished on Wednesday, May 6th, 2020 at 7:14 am. Between those two marks on the wall there were 868 (plus) messages and other communications between me and the BGG staff to make this thing come out the way I wanted it and the way BGG would allow. Most concerned image approval (every image has to be approved), but the admins were quite helpful in all other areas, answering questions, fixing code and overall teaching me the rules of the game. Probably nothing consumed my hobby time more during lockdown, but now that it is done the BGG entries are ridiculously easy to maintain. If you're a designer, or just a fan, this process is a must.
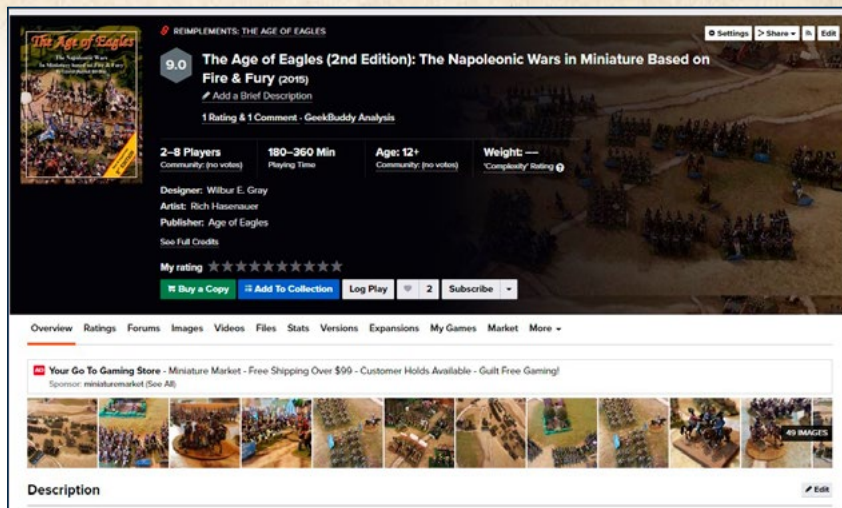
Above: AOE II Boardgame Geek Page.

SCENE 4: FINIS

My own miniature gaming sweet tooth had to be satiated by digital versions of legitimate miniature rules, such as *ESR Napoleonics* using Tabletop Simulator, or master designer Richard Bodley Scott's digital ports of his many famous miniature rules. Yes, RBS is not only an accomplished pewter pusher, but also an exceptional software programmer as well. His digital versions of *Field of Glory* and *Field of Glory Renaissance* look and work exactly like their miniature counterparts down to the detailed and historically accurate figures (they actually port the shield patterns from Little Big Man Studios) and terrain a lot better than what I see in Ancients tourneys.

But otherwise, no game playing and no painting.

Yet my hobby plate was not only full but actually ranneth over. The pandemic really underlined unlike cardboard counter and computer wargames, miniature wargaming involves a lot of behind the scenes time before the first stand of figures moves across the table.

Unlike the other two genres, miniature gaming is an art form and more like a social event than simply a game. Research, reading, managing the legions of toy soldiers under our command, creating the battles we wish to play, these are integral parts of the hobby, but often aspects for which the mundane issues of everyday life provide little time.

Ironically, this deadly pandemic provided an unexpected silver lining, the so-called "very well disguised" blessing that Sir Winston spoke about, for our small niche hobby, at least for those who remain healthy. The mundane is gone, as are the actual games themselves in great degree, but the other aspects are now available for unwrapping. It's a small ray of sunshine in an otherwise dreadful situation, yet one not to be overlooked

Supposedly, a second wave of the virus might hit this fall, and this means back into quarantine, "put on another 15 pounds mode" for another couple of months. But this time, I am ready.

Stay safe lads and lassies!

Left: The digital version of Field of Glory.

WARGAMES CAMPAIGNS AND MEDIEVAL STRATEGY

A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

Dr Steve Tibble, author of *The Crusader Armies* (Yale, 2018) and *The Crusader Strategy* (Yale, 2020), looks at wargaming multi-player campaigns, and why we might take the idea of 'medieval strategy' more seriously.

This short series of articles looks to address two things that have struck me very forcefully during my many years of wargaming.

Firstly, why have I not played more multiplayer campaigns? In practice, I already know the answer - they take time, commitment and a lot of planning. But, on reflection, they more than repay the effort. When I look back at the games I've most enjoyed, the real highlights of my wargaming experience, the few campaigns that I have been involved in certainly stick out - they have been fun, they have been sociable, and they have depth. I'll remember them, and the happy hours spent with much missed friends like Brendan Hardy and Steve Webster, more than any number of one-off games - I should have done more and I plan to do more.

Secondly, why does the general public tend to assume that medieval warfare and 'strategic' thinking are almost contradictory notions? Academics certainly know otherwise. As wargamers, we are far better informed than most, but I am conscious that we all (myself included) often enjoy sweating the details rather than looking at the bigger picture - we agonise about the differences between, say, 'light cavalry' and 'heavy cavalry', rather than looking at how armies were really employed, and how they achieved the objectives of the societies that created them.

So, over the next couple of months, I will use my knowledge of the crusader states to provide some case study solutions to both of these issues. I will set out ideas to create some interesting multiplayer campaigns. And, at the same time, I will

try to show that the nuances of medieval leadership and strategic thinking were far more subtle than we might imagine.

CRUSADER STRATEGY?

It is easy to see medieval warfare as being long on activity, but chronically short on reflection. Contemporary chronicles, and most modern narrative accounts of medieval history, read more like a soap opera than a strategic planning document. Armies invade and fight. The warrior elite have their moments of glory or disappointment, a stream of celebrities wandering across the stage of history with chroniclers as their paparazzi. Not entirely aimless perhaps, but implicitly lacking in what we would now describe as any form of strategic direction.

For many people, the idea of 'medieval strategy' is a modern joke, a contradiction

> *"For many people, the idea of 'medieval strategy' is a modern joke, a contradiction in terms. This is lazy thinking, however, and potentially very misleading."*

in terms. This is lazy thinking, however, and potentially very misleading.

We believe we are good at strategy because we use the word a lot. Modern governments, their generals and their PR teams all talk a lot about 'strategy'. But talk is cheap. Actions are always more powerful and far more telling.

In the crusader states, on the contrary, where the resources and structures for planning and communication were in chronically short supply, there was far less talk of strategy. If we care to look for it, however, it is surprisingly evident in the activities of most of the major players. We find this evidence through deconstructing actions on the ground, and establishing patterns of behaviour.

First, we need to accept that the major participants were not all idiots: and why should they have been? Some were, of course, but most were reasonable, highly motivated people, surrounded by well-informed advisers. Secondly, by deconstructing the actions that took place on the ground, we can arrive at a far more realistic assessment of what was actually intended. And lastly, working back from that, we can examine the patterns of real behaviour as they played out over time, and deduce the broad lines of strategic thinking that underpinned military and political activity.

Of course, there are no surviving 'strategy' documents, no memos or irritating Friday afternoon meeting notes from the crusader states. Probably, in the modern sense at least, there were never any formal strategy documents in the first place. But there is an abundance of evidence to show that planning took place and that the development of long-term strategies was a direct consequence of those plans - they enacted strategy in an intuitive but often surprisingly subtle way.

DEFINITIONS

We need to be clear about the language we use. The word 'strategy' has come to mean so much that it now means almost nothing. The word 'strategic' in modern usage often means something little more specific than 'important'. Or just 'big'. Or something which you would like to achieve (which, incidentally, is really an 'objective'). So, for the sake of clarity, let's define certain phrases as follows:

- 'Strategy' (and 'strategic activity') is designing and implementing the forms and structures of warfare needed to pursue the policy goals of a given society: if our goal is to conquer Egypt, for instance, how can that best be achieved? Strategy is thus the direction of warfare above the level of the battlefield, as the military expression of statesmanship, policy and the objectives of the state.

- 'Operational activity' is the conduct of campaigns which see that strategy played out on the ground (mustering troops, organising logistical back-up, long distance manoeuvring, and so on).

- 'Tactical activity' is manoeuvring and fighting on the battlefield or in a siege – the sharp end of the military interface.

But if we define what strategy is, we also need to understand what it is not. It is not, for instance, the objectives, or the objective setting: it is about how to achieve things, rather than trying to establish what those things might be.

Despite occasional appearances to the contrary, crusader military decision making was rarely 'random'. As we shall see in more detail later, strategy was certainly being enacted, if we care to look for it.

THE COASTAL STRATEGY 1099 - 1124

The first clear strategy that we see emerging in the crusader states was the 'coastal strategy'. Capturing Jerusalem, the extraordinary culmination of the First Crusade, was always a beginning rather than an end. Landlocked, under-populated and barely self-sufficient, the Holy City was almost indefensible.

Fundamentally, if the crusade was to be anything more than just a one-off hugely violent act of pilgrimage, the first phase of Frankish strategy needed to focus on quickly taking control of the entire coastline of Syria and Palestine. The only way to maintain direct links home was by capturing the fortified ports along the Palestinian and Syrian coastlines.

These links were not just an expression of logistical theory. Without a constant flow of reinforcements and money, the isolated new Christian states would quickly be wiped out. The immediacy of this danger inevitably helped to shape strategy.

So the logic behind the coastal strategy was clear. But if the crusaders were to survive in the East, they also needed to be able to roll out this strategy in practice. For embryonic states, with no fleets of their own and only tiny armies, this would never be easy.

THE HOLY LAND 1146 - 86

THE SIEGES

Caesarea provides a good case study of how the coastal strategy was rolled out.

Early in the morning of 17 May 1101, Christian assault teams with scaling ladders rushed towards the walls of the ancient coastal city. They were keen to see the job done quickly, and their leaders were prepared to lead from the front. Once they had got to the walls, a knight, armed 'with just his breastplate and helmet and sword, and with many following him, climbed the ladder right up to the top'.

The knight got to the top of the wall first and, for a moment, was there alone. Just then, as more men rushed onto the ladder to help him, it shattered under their weight. Luckily for him, several other assault squads, on other parts of the wall, made it to the top at almost the same time – outflanked, the Egyptian defenders decided to pull back to their inner line of defences. He made his way along the wall to the next tower.

In an episode too odd not to be true, and strangely reminiscent of an unnerving scene at the end of *Saving Private Ryan*, he found himself in a fistfight on the stairs. A 'Saracen who was coming down the tower flung himself on top of him. He gripped [him] powerfully with his arms, and the [knight] held him. As they came tumbling down, the Saracen said: "Let go of me, and it will be for your own good, as you will be able to get up the tower faster and safer" '. They decided to call it a draw and ran off in different directions.

With this bizarre encounter behind him, the knight was able to turn his attention to getting more of his men into the town as quickly as possible, and Caesarea was soon captured. As so often in the crusades, however, all was not what it seemed. The storming parties consisted entirely of Italian sailors and marines, rather than Franks. The knight leading the charge was the Genoese consul Guglielmo 'Testadimaglio'

('Hammerhead') Embriaco, and the siege was largely driven by Italian know-how and matériel. He was known as 'Hammerhead', not because he was a good man to have by your side in a bar brawl (though his performance suggests that this was indeed the case), but rather because he had been in charge of much of the timber work in building the siege engines at Jerusalem in 1099. Caesarea was a siege with an Italian fleet providing

JUST A REMINDER - THE BATTLE OF THE SPRING OF THE CRESSON

Crusader generalship could be surprisingly sophisticated - but we should not forget that they had their fair share of mentalists too.

May 1, 1187. A Templar column, about 130 cavalry in total, had set off in pursuit of Turkic raiders earlier in the day. The knights had been desperate to catch the intruders, eventually intercepting them near the Spring of the Cresson, one of the traditional watering holes and muster points for the kingdom of Jerusalem. They should have been more careful about what they wished for.

Having found them, the Templars realised that the 'raiding party' they were chasing was in fact a group of some 6,000 to 7,000 cavalry. There were several Muslim armies operating in the Holy Land in May 1187, and this was just a flying column that had broken away from one of them. The numbers involved were huge, dwarfing their Frankish opponents. Despite its size, a force like this did not even qualify as an 'army' in the Muslim sources: Ibn al-Athir merely described it as 'a good-sized detachment'. But if this was a 'detachment', it was one which significantly outnumbered the entire mounted arm of all three crusader states put together.

Frankish reinforcements were on the way but the Templar commander, Gerard of Ridefort, overruled his lieutenants and ordered a frontal charge on the enemy. With an air of grim inevitability, the Frankish cavalry moved forward at a walking pace. They were aimed squarely at the centre of the huge force in front of them. The vast numbers of Muslim cavalry outflanked the knights on all sides. The crusaders' only chance, and a tiny chance at that, lay in killing the commander at the heart of the enemy army.

As the crusaders speeded up into a trot, arrows started to rain down, doing little to damage the men, but inflicting cumulative carnage on their unprotected horses. The Turkic cavalry to their front flinched as they continued onwards, edging nervously backwards. No one wanted to be on the receiving end of the first fury of a Frankish charge.

The fragile Templar line charged into the Muslim centre. Turkic horsemen were thrust off their mounts, lances shattering on impact with their horses and armour. Swords were drawn as splintered lances were discarded. But the vast majority had simply advanced around and behind the tiny Frankish squadron. As they did so, they loosed wave after wave of arrows, bringing down the vulnerable crusader horses. Close quarters fighting continued across what remained of the chaotic line of knights, but the energy of the charge had been sustained and absorbed. The horses were out of breath or wounded and starting to fall. The knights were exhausted and surrounded. Line after line of fresh Muslim cavalry crashed into the Templar survivors from all sides.

The end came with shocking speed. Within minutes the entire crusader force was either dead or taken prisoner, awaiting death or captivity. A bad Templar commander, with no sense of strategy, had thrown away the lives of some of the best knights in the Holy Land.

the blockade, using Italian timber for siege engines built by Italian carpenters, and firing artillery manned by Italian crews in support of teams of Italian soldiers.

Even the wrestling match with the 'Saracen' on the staircase was subtly counterintuitive from a wargames perspective: most of the 'Muslim' garrison were Christians, either Nubian or Armenian mercenaries. The cultural gap between 'Hammerhead' and his 'Saracen' opponent was perhaps not as wide as one might suppose, and may partially explain how pragmatism helped trump fanaticism on both sides at that adrenalin-filled moment. The Franks have a reputation for siege warfare, and capturing the Muslim coastal cities was vital, but it was never a straightforward process.

The key to the coastal strategy was the crusaders' ability to conduct a series of successful sieges against some extraordinarily well protected cities. The coastal ports of Palestine and Syria were rich, populous and highly fortified. They usually had naval support in their fight against the Franks, either from the Fatimid regime in Egypt or, in the case of the Byzantine ports of northern Syria, from the imperial fleet operating out of Cyprus. And in addition to their own garrisons and urban militia, they also had occasional access to military help from the Muslim armies of Egypt and Syria.

Frankish armies adapted as best they could and became skilled at using their numerically small but heavily armoured shock troops to assault enemy fortifications. They used rams and siege artillery, but placed a special emphasis on the intimidating siege towers which could deliver their knights to the enemy's battlements. Perhaps even more important, however, was their dependence on allies from Western Europe to provide the naval resources needed to overcome their opponents. These naval assets were able to create a blockade by sea, and also (something which is far less widely recognised) to provide essential timber and siege engineers. The crusaders could bring good quality manpower to a siege, albeit in limited numbers, but they needed the

mundane expertise of naval craftsmen and matériel far more than their chronicles would have us believe.

But by 1110, with this Italian naval assistance, all the coastal cities of Palestine and Syria had been incorporated into the newly established crusader states, with the two exceptions of Tyre and, in the south, the Fatimid military base of Ascalon – the sea routes back to Europe had been secured.

STRATEGY OR SERENDIPITY? DIPLOMACY AND POLICY

But did this really constitute 'strategy' in any meaningful use of the word? Did it involve long-term planning? Or did the Italian squadrons which made it all possible simply turn up because they happened to be in the area, cruising for commercial opportunity?

A cursory reading of the chronicles certainly gives the impression that the fleets appeared in an entirely fortuitous way. In fact, of course, nothing was ever that easy, nor were motives ever that one-dimensional. There was genuine piety in the maritime states that provided the Christian fleets, but they were in the Eastern Mediterranean to compete with each other for long-term commercial gain. The timing of their expeditions was similarly neither coincidental nor fortuitous. Their presence was the culmination of extensive diplomatic activity carried out by the crusader states to further their own strategic objectives.

Irritatingly from a historian's perspective, the oral nature of this diplomacy, and

the inevitable disappearance of most of the (few) written records, means that hard evidence of strategy and long-term diplomatic initiatives is scarce. The Venetian crusade of 1122–1124, however, provides a fascinating case study of how this process really played out in practice.

On the surface, this was a very typical (and typically fortuitous) intervention. In writing of the arrival of the Italian fleet, Fulcher of Chartres makes the expedition sound like a splendid surprise ('we were delighted to hear that a fleet of Venetians had entered many of the ports of Palestine'). Its movements, he implied, had been the object of gossip rather than planning, as 'rumour had for a long time foretold its arrival'. William of Tyre makes a similarly rather bland introduction, merely stating that the Venetians 'had learned of the straits in which the kingdom of the East was placed and had ordered a fleet to be made ready'.

It is only by accident that evidence for the far more complex nature of the Venetian crusade has survived. As well as writing about the arrival of the fleet, William decided to quote the agreement with the Venetians in full. With the survival of the complete legal document, it suddenly becomes clear that everyone was skating over much more prosaic issues: the planning and strategy that had made it all possible.

In negotiating the division of spoils after the capture of Tyre, for instance, we find that the patriarch of Jerusalem had 'confirmed the promises of the said King

Baldwin according to the proposals made in his own letters and messages which the king himself had previously sent by his own envoys to Venice to this same doge of the Venetians'. In fact, preparations had been in train for a full five years before Tyre fell. So, far from being a random or fortuitous event, we find out in a chronicle (and even then only as an accidental aside) that the Franks had been sending letters to Venice long in advance of the expedition, making detailed proposals for its objectives and the rewards that might be forthcoming, carried by a series of envoys.

With the fall of Tyre in 1124, the coastal strategy came to a natural conclusion. The strategy had been successful, as the crusaders capitalised on Muslim disunity to establish control of a series of highly defensible fortified cities on the coastline of the Eastern Mediterranean. By doing so they were able to build a vital bridgehead into the Middle East and maintain the all-important links back to Europe.

That very success masked far more fundamental problems, however, and created a false sense of capabilities. The coastal cities could be taken with very limited manpower, because of the presence of European fleets in the Eastern Mediterranean. As we shall see in the next article, however, the Muslim population centres of the hinterland, where the Franks were far from Italian support and were themselves surrounded, would not succumb so easily.

WARGAMING THE CRUSADERS' 'COASTAL STRATEGY'

The wonderful thing about making a multiplayer campaign out of the 'coastal strategy' is that it can operate on so many levels, and allows different styles of wargaming to be incorporated.

On a grand level, it acts as a form of competitive board game, pitching a range of different players against each other. It is best to have at least three players - one crusader, one Fatimid Egyptian and one Turkic Syrian. If there are more than three players it gets even better - both the crusader forces and their Turkic enemies in Syria naturally split to create as many competing roles as might be required. There are a range of different boardgames that are useful for this. *The Crusades* (1978) by SPI and *Onward Christian Soldiers* (2006) by GMT Games both have great maps of the region and lots of counters and cards that can be used by a number of different players. At the time of writing - in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown - this phase of the campaign

is particularly appropriate, and can be started using Zoom or Skype calls.

Once we move on to the operational level of the campaign, we get to the intricacies of siege warfare. Once again, some boardgames are helpful. *The Art of Siege: Acre 1191* (SPI 1978), for instance, has a good map and some useful mechanisms for siege resolution. Once we are out of full lockdown and able to game together, however, you might want to move on to tabletop rules such as Warhammer Historical's beautiful and inspiring *Siege & Conquest* rules.

And finally, it is easy to forget that there is often a tabletop tactical level in all this. The Fatimids had the biggest regular army in the region, and all the local Turkic players have very effective cavalry forces at their disposal. Crusaders carrying out coastal sieges always had to worry about being attacked by Muslim forces on land as well as by sea.

So, enjoy - and look forward to the post-lockdown delights of multiplayer crusading!

PART TWO NEXT MONTH

Onward, Christian Soldiers HKSW meeting of 19 October 201? @ Room 698-9, KITEC, Hong Kong
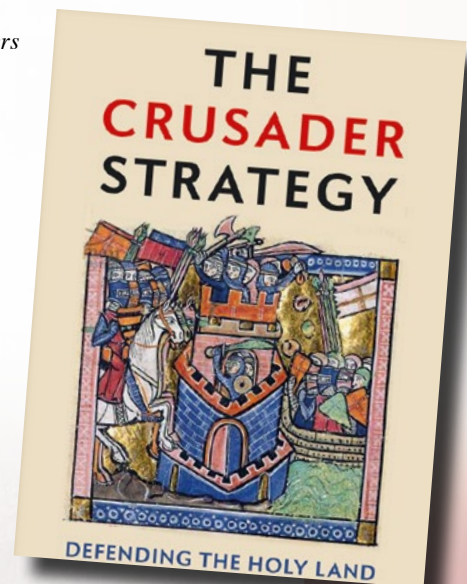

(Left to right) The Crusaders by SPI (1971).

Siege and Conquest by Warhammer Historical.

Onward Christian Soldiers by GMT Game (2006).

Right: The Crusader Strategy (Yale 2020) is available for pre-order on Amazon.

Many thanks to Ron Ringrose for supplying all the photos for this article, using figures from his collection, many of which were painted by Dave Upton.

THE CRUSADER STRATEGY

DEFENDING THE HOLY LAND

MAKE, DO AND BUILD

Chris Breese explains how lockdown restrictions can be turned to a wargamer's advantage when it comes to creativity in terrain modelling.

How would you sum up 2020 so far? Must do better.

But in April, shortly after most of the world's wargamers had packed up their hopes of attending another show, or even getting a club game done, I started to see where the light at the end of the tunnel could lie for the hobby.

Much has already been said about some of the armies we expect to see on tables when restrictions on big social gatherings are eventually lifted, but new ground has also been broken in terrain over the last few months.

For a short time some suppliers suspended taking orders altogether, meaning if you really wanted just a base, or something more ambitious, you were more likely to have to make it yourself.

Suddenly the most mundane of objects had potential. I became a suburban predator. Anything left lying around the house was fair game for an experiment.

Here are five simple things I discovered can be turned into cheap battlefield beauty. Costs exclude any regular model paint or static grass I already owned.

1. MIXED WOOD TO TIMBER FRAMING

The coffee stirrer dispenser as tiny woodyard is an established tradition. But I discovered different brands use radically different widths. Combine a handful of them with a few lollipop sticks and matches and you have a much more realistic representation of what was used to build medieval timber-framed houses.

There are plenty of late-medieval terrain suppliers out there. But in my view the cheaper ones are often far too uniform in their depiction of the size and cut of timber, and often the beams are simply too out of scale for my taste. Working from a realistic layout plan, I used my mix-and-match miniature wood to create a house of my own, with a more realistic wonky and hand-cut appearance to the timber. The rest involved well-established methods, using mainly thin, firm card from the box a broadband router was delivered in.

Total cost: £0

Time spent: Whole building was approx 16 hours work in total, but worth it.

1. A stack of different-sized coffee stirrers makes an ideal woodpile for a timber framed house.

2. Stirrers can be split and combined with matches to create the higgledy-piggledy appearance of old timber.

3. Subtle differences in shapes and sizes make for a more realistic finish.

1. Modern lino-style flooring is durable yet easy to cut and shape.

2. UNUSED FLOORING TO UNIT BASES

This was a real unexpected gamble. The type I have are offcuts from a dining room floor about 2mm thick. The kind that comes in strips mimicking hardwood on top with a bevelled rubbery underneath.

It cuts up wonderfully easily with a craft knife, you can even carve smooth curves in it, and the top surface takes paint and glue well. The bottom surface provides a bit of grip if you want to glue it to anything, and the whole material is a little flexible without being prone to warping. Given you're supposed to walk on it, it's extremely durable. A eureka moment.

Total cost: £4.95 worth of offcut makes enough bases for approx 100 minis (price is £21.95m2).

Time spent: Ten minutes to cut up ten bases to size and basecoat.

2. The top side takes a base coat well while the bottom has a bevelled effect.

3. The finished base is no different in appearance to 2mm MDF and arguably just as durable yet easier to work.

3. MUD TO, ER ... MUD

Never a fan of sand for stone or mud on bases, I've long been a weird mud-scrabbler. I used lockdown to experiment with different kinds and also to start using a sieve. For the best representation of 28mm mire, you want to look for the silty stuff. Typically the kind that forms in run-offs from trees or at the edge or bottom of puddles on tracks. Dry it out and prevent future mould growth by baking it in the oven on high for 45 minutes. Sieve it down a couple of times and hey presto, basing mud which only needs one or two runs of a dry brush for better results than any sand can provide.

Total cost: £0

Time spent: About an hour's worth of effort can provide a big tub.

1. Flatten out your chosen mud on a baking tray covered in tin foil and bake for 45 mins in an oven on high to dry out and prevent future mold.
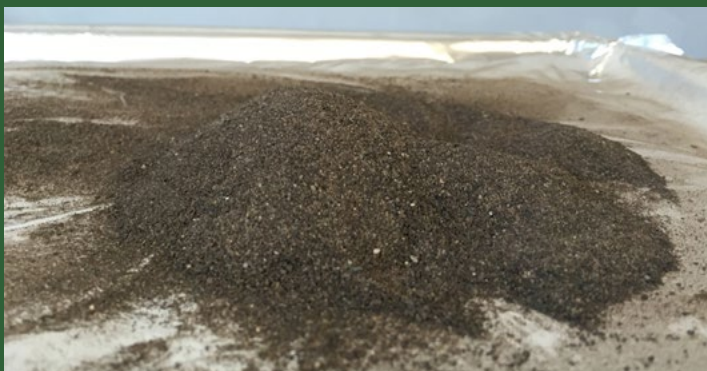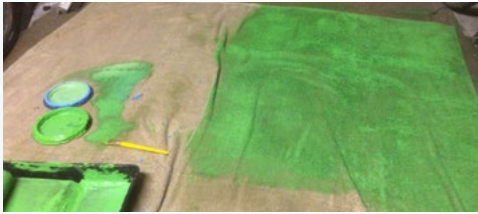

3. The final mixture is a very fine earth which only needs one dry brush on a base.

2. Sieve the dried mud in a fine sieve two or three times to discard the larger granules.

1. 6ft by 4ft brown towels can be bought online.

2. Use cheap grass green house paint and a roller to apply a base coat.

3. A mix of lighter green and yellow on the base adds realism.

4. Finally some light patches of brown for bare areas.

4. BROWN TOWEL TO GRASS MAT

This was inspired by a need for a new larger gaming mat. I wanted something with a grass texture but the only static grass mats I liked were few and far between and cost in the region of £100. In essence, it's a thick fabric with a deliberate texture. The airing cupboard was my next victim. However, unless you're Andre the Giant, your bath towels won't be 6ft x 4ft. Some this size are available online, and come in suitable colours, although not grass green. I settled on a brown as a base and also bought a tub of £12 household own brand matt paint plus two £3 starter pots - one yellow, one a lighter green.

I applied the grass green with a roller, then used a brush to blend in patches of the lighter green and then the yellow for variation. The last touch was some patches of dark brown applied with a spray can I already had. I'm delighted with the result - a textured grass-look gaming mat which can have terrain placed on top and underneath to create height variations. The pile is not so thick it creates problems for movement trays.

Total cost: £38 (towel £20, paint £18, with plenty left over)

Time spent: Approx five hours .

5. The finished article can have books or other items slid underneath to create height and looks realistic.

5. POKER CHIP TREE BASES

For a long time I've had a set of Woodland Scenics trees sat baseless in a cupboard. I wanted to base them singly, on something with a bit of weight to stop them from toppling over. Two penny pieces were too small, and some circular MDF bases I had were too light. The solution presented itself in sacrificing six poker chips from a collection of more than 100 I own, bought ten years ago and gathering dust ever since children and then wargaming arrived. They need to be slightly higher-end - carrying a little bit of weight. But once the kids leave home and late night card games oiled with whisky and gunfights resume, I'll still have plenty.

Total cost: £0 (plus the immeasurable anxiety of an uneven poker chip set).

Time spent: 30mins to glue, paint and base six trees.

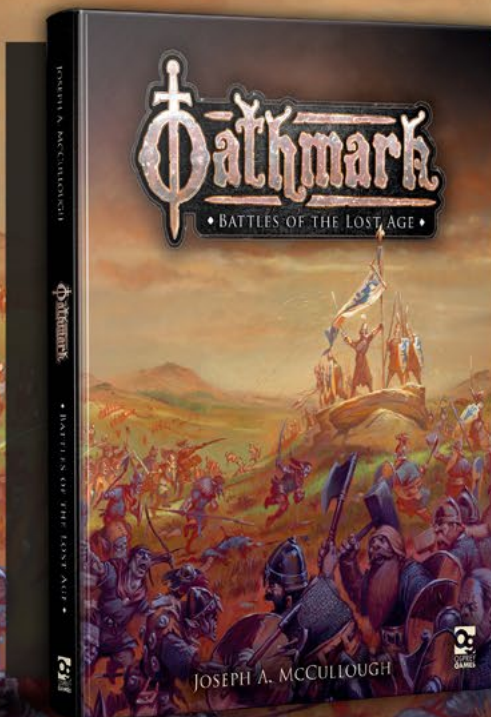*1. Poker chips can be used as weighty bases, especially effective with trees.*

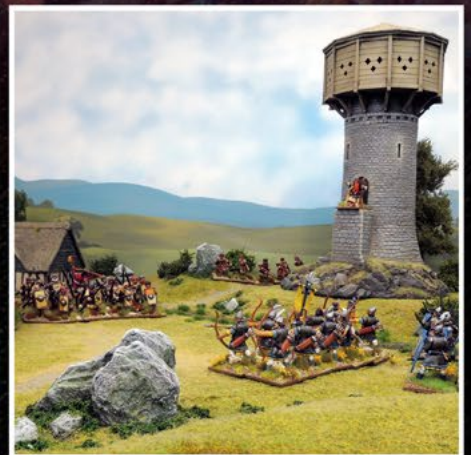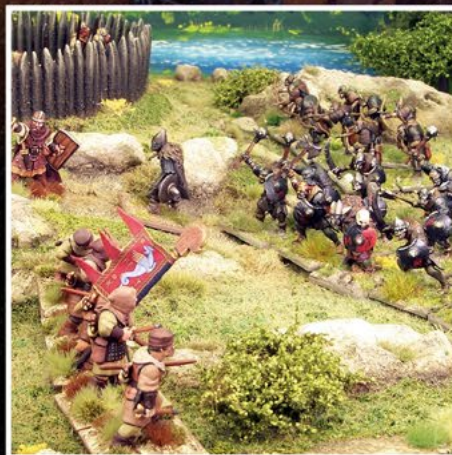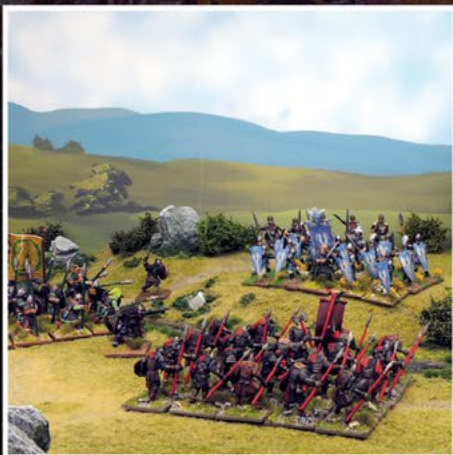*3. A completed poker chip tree base complete with grass and rocks.*

SOMEONE HAD BLUNDERED

Rick Priestley muses over a couple of examples of how little control battlefield commanders really have in heat of battle.

When Lord Raglan formulated his famous order at the Battle of Balaclava he intended that Lord Cardigan's Light Brigade should drive off Russian infantry engaged in removing Turkish guns from a position they had overrun. Doubtless he thought it seemed a 'good idea at the time'. How was he to know that ensuing events would provide the textbook 'blunder' for the creators of wargames more than one and a half centuries later?

Anyone who reads accounts of battles ancient or modern will be familiar with countless examples of similarly misconstrued intentions, though rarely

are they quite as salient as on that famous occasion. The battles of the American Civil War are well documented and few more thoroughly than the Battle of Gettysburg. Here the fighting over Little Round Top developed as a result of a series of poorly executed, and even deliberately ignored, orders. On the Confederate side Hood's Division, meandered from its intended course towards Houck's Ridge, taking it eastwards over the slopes of Round Top and towards Little Round Top. On the Union side Major-General George Meade had intended Sickle's Corps to cover this part of the line, but Sickle obstinately deployed to the west where he felt the ground gave better opportunity to place his guns, thereby creating an undefended gap at Little Round Top.

The Union response to the threat at Little Round Top tells a tale in itself. It is a tale that has its own hero too: Brigadier-General Gouverneur K Warren, Meade's chief engineer. Warren was dispatched by Meade to assess the situation, and on arriving at Little Round Top he was able to observe the Confederate advance towards the Union army's exposed flank. At this point Warren acted decisively, dispatching staff officers to nearby units to summon help. This call was met by Major-General George Sykes (V Corps), who in turn ordered Brigadier General James Barnes (1st Division) forward to meet the threat. However - and here's the interesting bit - Sykes's messenger is on his way to Barnes when he runs into Third Brigade commanded by Colonel Strong Vincent. Without waiting for orders, Strong Vincent leads his brigade

intro position to defend Little Round Top, arriving barely minutes before the Confederates. Vincent's rapid initiative succeeds, the first wave of the Alabama Brigade is repulsed, and the defence and ensuing battle develops from there.

Unpacking that sequence of events from the point of view of the Union command, it is interesting to see that Meade didn't directly order any troop movement at all. Instead, it was Warren who seized the initiative, effectively assuming command on the spot. Also take note how Warren's messengers work within the chain of command, yet it is the spur of the moment action of the Third Brigade and the personal intervention of Strong Vincent outside of the command structure that saves the initial position for the Union. Whether this was the decisive moment in the Battle of Gettysburg is something that historians have argued about ever since; and quite a few wargamers too for that matter. I must admit to have fashioned a one-sided and rather brief summary in order to make a point. Those in the know will be aware of the broader factors at play, especially on the Confederate side where Hood was wounded early during the advance leaving the division temporarily leaderless and in a state of some confusion.

When it comes to our wargames we might consider the respective stories of Lord Raglan and George Meade. In terms of the kinds of approach we take to command and control, Raglan attempts to micro-manage his troops: he gives specific instructions, instructions that have a specific aim, and which

he must have imagined to be entirely clear in intent and detail. Meade, on the other hand, and whether he intended to do so or otherwise, places command resources in what turned out to be the right place at the right time. Neither could have been aware of the situation on the ground as are we with the benefit of hindsight: Raglan could not see the position from Cardigan's point of view nor could Meade observe the Confederate advance from the hill itself. To replicate this faithfully we would have to conduct our wargames from remote locations, receiving and issuing orders via third parties, who would interact with actual players at a wargames table, all overseen by one or more umpires who might adjudicate the timing or interdiction of messengers. That's not impossible, and might even be jolly entertaining on occasion, but I venture to suggest it's not how most of us want to play our wargames.

In both examples we see the basic methodology of intelligence gathering and the issuing of orders via messengers, something that is common to all battlefields up until the twentieth century with varying degrees of sophistication and success. Indeed, if we see ourselves as commanders-in-chief of our miniature forces we must assume that this is the means by which our intentions are relayed to subordinates even if only abstractly. We can attempt to model this process should we wish to do so. I'm sure most readers will be familiar with vintage rule sets - as well as some more modern - that do this. It's either a tokenistic nod towards representational

realism or a serious attempt at granular modelling depending how you look at these things.

Modelling the actions of command control via messengers tends to fall foul of scaling issues with wargames. Basically, although we like to imagine our games are 'historically realistic' we rarely fight on tabletops that scale up to anything like the size of a real battlefield. Unit frontages establish a ground sale whether consciously adopted or otherwise. Assuming a 'battalion' frontage of 200mm a six by four feet table approximates to a battlefield a little over a mile by about three quarters of a mile, whilst both Balaclava and the second day of Gettysburg took place within an area just under four miles square. That's an area roughly sixteen times that of a 'standard' wargames table.

We can still learn lessons from our respective generals, even if we find it hard to apply those lessons literally in the context of a game. Players, like Raglan before them, might like the idea of controlling every unit as if they were on the spot, but experience teaches us that affairs rarely work out that way. The attack on Little Round Top was characterised by a series of accidents, recalcitrant behaviour on the part of some commanders and heroic initiative on the part of others. Blind fortune too played its part on both occasions. Neither the charge of the Light Brigade nor the fighting over Little Round Top were part of the respective commanders' plans; both illustrate just how events can overtake an army and just how little control commanders really have in the moment.

(IN LOCKDOWN) RULES SHOWCASE:

VICTORY AT SEA

Naval enthusiast Dom Sore casts his eye over the latest game from Warlord and dreams of life (or games) on the ocean wave.

I have been waiting for this update to *Victory at Sea* for quite a while. At least three years if memory serves me well, so probably four. I have played the original and liked it; as a game and an area of interest it grabbed me. It is a form of warfare that I find lends itself to 'What if' much more readily than other forms of warfare. World War Two naval warfare in particular intrigues me when it comes to wondering what may have happened.

The changes in naval warfare of the time were phenomenal; the battleship went from ruler of the seas to expensive, and vulnerable, white elephant. All brought about by the rise of the aircraft carrier; with its ability to project its force way beyond the reach of naval guns. My particular interest actually lies away from aircraft carriers, in areas like the Mediterranean theatre and playing about with giving the Italians some extra ships, or support from the Kriegsmarine, or the French navy being commandeered. *Victory at Sea*, the original anyway, was good for that. So how does the new version feel?

MAKING DO

Firstly, I have not had my hands on the full set yet (please feel free to contact the editor to tell him to rectify this situation!) {Ed: See 'Stop Press' below!} so I have used some tongue depressors from my terrain stash as ships to give it a run through. It is something you can do although real toy ships would be much better. It is also limited by only having the rules for a few ships. Which means the *Bismarck* has been chased by HMS *Eagle* and a surprisingly large number of

Japanese destroyers and the *Yamamoto* by USS *Idaho* and *New Mexico*.

There are no full fleet lists available just yet, only the basic rulebook you get in the starter set. Eventually there will be a slipcase format rulebook and fleet list book which will be more comprehensive. Until then the ship cards are available in the relevant box containing the ships in question. The cards themselves are on good quality, if a little thin card, as are the marker pegs. I would suggest protecting them by laminating if you can. The other components are of a similar card stock and are best handled with care.

SHIPS AND THEIR CARDS

I will briefly talk about the ship models even though, like most of you, I have not held them in my hands. They come with a base; a rather large and thick base. Many people online have criticised these bases but I am not one of them. Given the fragile nature of models in this scale and the need to standardise movement to minimise model advantage is reason enough to like them. However, the greatest advantage I see to them is being able to label them so you know which ship is the *Bismarck* and which is the *Tirptiz*, or *Idaho* and *New Mexico*. I cannot tell which is which at a glance. And then there are destroyers, if you have six of the same type and want to keep track then a ready identifier on a base that does not require you to lift them up is brilliant. In synopsis, I like them, you just might too.

Above: USS Northampton.
Right: Northampton *ship card,*

Ship cards hold most of the information you will need while playing *Victory at Sea*. The type, speed, armour rating, traits, weapons, and damage are all contained in one easy to read format. The weapons have the ranges, number of attack dice, armour piercing ability, number of damage dice, and any trait the weapons have. This reduces the amount of rulebook checking you will need to do.

All in-game information is on one side of the card, the reverse contains technical information about the ship, a little bit of history, and details of refits. The refits information allows you to model the ship at various points in its service. These updates might be better torpedoes, increased AA capability, new radar, or even reduce the effectiveness of the ship's guns. This makes the card very flexible and increases your choices of fights.

Of all the statistics on the ship cards Flank Speed might be the most crucial. Not only does it determine how far a ship can travel each turn it also determines how manoeuvrable a ship is. A ship must move at least 1" each turn unless it is dead in the water and can only make a 45° turn once it has travelled 2". For example, HMS *Eagle* has a maximum Flank Speed of 4" so can make two 45° turns in a move; the *Bismarck* has a maximum Flank Speed of 6" so will be able to make up to three 45° turns in a move. The ship trait Agile increases the turns to one for every 1" of movement whereas Lumbering means a ship can only turn once per move.

THE TURN

Turns are made up of four parts: Initiative Phase, Movement Phase, Gunnery Phase, and End Phase. Initiative is important in the game, the person with it moves second and shoots first. This double benefit can be critical as you will rarely want to move first but you *will* want to shoot first. Both movement and gunnery are done on a ship by ship basis alternating between the players. And all ships must act, you cannot skip a turn, no matter how much you would like to.

Manoeuvring allows you to maximise your gunnery effects. All guns have an arc they can fire in, as indicated on the ship card, so getting that right can make the difference between sinking that pesky destroyer and missing entirely. You should be able to get into range without guessing as pre-measuring is a feature of the game. If you're out of range then it is your skill as a commander that has let you down.

Shooting is done via a simple D6 roll, the number of dice rolled will depend on the weapons you are using. Modifiers are limited and easy to understand but be aware torpedoes will miss at long range unless you can get the Stationary Target and/or Large Silhouette bonuses. Each hit then has the potential to cause damage. Some guns, usually the bigger ones, get

NORTHAMPTON-CLASS HEAVY CRUISER

130 points

TYPE:	Cruiser
FLANK SPEED:	6"
ARMOUR:	2+
HULL:	23/7
TRAITS:	Aircraft 4

WEAPONS SYSTEM	FIRE ARC	POINT BLANK	SHORT	LONG	EXTREME	AD	AP	DD	TRAITS
A Turret (3 x 8-inch)		8"	16"	24"	32"	3	-	1	-
B Turret (3 x 8-inch)		8"	16"	24"	32"	3	-	1	-
X Turret (3 x 8-inch)		8"	16"	24"	32"	3	-	1	-
Light Guns (8 x 5-inch)		3"	7"	11"	15"	6	-2	1	DP, Restricted, Weak
AA Battery		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Local 1

USS NORTHAMPTON 1942

Above: A flight of Mitsubishi Zeroes pass their carrier.

multiple Damage Dice per hit which are each rolled to see if they beat the target ship's Armour Rating. Each successful damage roll causes one damage point against the hull. Once you have caused enough damage to an enemy ship it will become crippled; reducing the speed by half and reducing the effectiveness of its lighter weapons, and the possibility of turrets being put out of action for the rest of the game, crippling indeed.

A natural six can cause a critical hit and does mean you can cause a critical hit without causing any hull damage. Any natural sixes are rolled again and on a 4+ a critical hit is scored.

A critical hit affects the Engine, Weapons, Crew, or Vital Systems area. The first three of these are tracked, up to level six, and all effects are cumulative. There is no area on the card to track these so you use the critical hit tokens - you could end up needing a lot of these! Vital Systems is where the immediate danger lies as any hit here causes another die roll. If that roll is a six then you suffer a catastrophic explosion and the ship is lost immediately.

The final phase of a turn has players check for damage control and escalation. A roll over four allows a player to reduce the Critical score level by that amount; a five reduces it by one and a six by two. This removes any negative effects but does not repair hull damage. These repairs can be critical if you have hit the Escalation point on the Critical Score. After repairs you will need to check for Escalation, each failed roll increases a Critical Score by one, further hampering and damaging a ship. Choose your repairs wisely as once you reach level six on any track you will soon lose your ship.

ACTION IN THE AIR

The major innovation during World War Two was the carrier and the payload of aircraft it carried allowing force projection over much greater areas than traditional naval craft. These are just as important in *Victory at Sea*. One of their main weapons is speed, where ships travel up to 7" per turn, flights can be 30" or more per turn making as many turns as they need. Ships are not defenceless and all AA batteries will fire on enemy flights if they are in range; this is outside their normal fire sequence.

Attacking ships is done by moving into base contact with the ship to be attacked. Note that any aircraft with a zero in the damage dice column will not be able to harm a ship. Attacking with aircraft takes place instead of firing a ship's guns and ALL flights will attack regardless of how many of the enemy ships are engaged, it is an all or nothing scenario. At the end of all Gunnery actions is when dogfighting occurs, all flights engaged with an enemy flight will fight - not fighting is not an option. Fighters are able to escort the more vulnerable bombers and torpedo bombers so that they take on the dogfight instead.

Most Flights will be equipped with one shot weapons and once they have attacked need to return to a carrier to re-arm. Only one flight can be launched or land each turn and they must be sailing into the wind to do so. No turns are allowed and they are unable to evade.

Launching or retrieval is a dangerous business so you will need to not be caught unguarded while you try it. It is possible to deploy carriers off the table in some scenarios meaning they will only be able to be targeted by enemy flights.

OBJECTIVES

One very interesting aspect of the game is the objective settings. At the start of the game neither player knows what they will need to do. Both players roll on the Fleet Objective table which then informs them of what they will need to do to win. These objectives have priorities assigned; high, medium, or low. High priority objectives get you an extra 10% of points available, whereas low priority removes 10% of your fleet. There look to be some interesting combinations that could come up (I only played simple attrition encounters to get to grips with things) and they will be next on my list to play through. Both players trying a Fighting Retreat will be interesting as you give your opponent Victory Points when you leave the table but you have to leave the table to fulfil the requirements of the victory. Very much a strategic conundrum. There are suggestions of

STOP THE PRESS

Late breaking news

At the 11th hour before going to print I received a copy of the Battle for the Pacific starter set which gets players going with the Japanese and US fleets. It's a remarkably small but heavy box; I can see me simply using this box with a bit of foam to transport my tiny fleet around. The playmats provided are sturdy paper and, if you look after them, they will survive long enough for most players' needs, although being thick, folded paper they don't automatically lie flat.

Let us address next the most controversial aspect of the game so far. The base on the new ships. They are not as thick as they appear on most of the photographs you might have seen. Personally, I think they are a little wide on the cruisers in the start set. I was surprised to see they are actually resin, as for some reason I thought they were plastic. It will make removing the bases more problematic, and more dangerous to the model, so even if you really hate them, I wouldn't risk removing them. The detail on the ships is good for the scale they are in (1:1800) and they look like they will paint easy enough. Even I can manage to paint these, maybe even this year (that is not a promise).

The Damage Slider parts are thin because they need to be, but I can see them wearing out quickly. The Re-arm tokens are in danger of going AWOL given they are rather small. The tokens and Turning Gauges are all made of nice thick card. I would keep an eye out for aftermarket parts that allow you to track things easier if that is your bag, I remember seeing some for *Cruel Seas* that make things easier. The rule book is nice. A4 size, good paper, and it lies flat when you turn the pages. Having a lie flat rulebook is a real bonus for me, it means I'm not going to destroy the binding with my standard dismissive treatment I dish out to things.

Having now seen all the components 'in the flesh' my overall impression is actually more favourable than viewing the photos and I'm really looking forward to getting the ships on the table properly with gaming friends as soon as I can. Until then the children will be press ganged for some training runs, I am sure they won't mind. I am looking forward to the big book coming out and hopefully a nice Regio Marina set that somehow makes its way to me for review (… just saying Ed).

matched objectives for competitive play and it leads me to thinking secret objectives could be an interesting prospect. Not knowing if what you're doing is helping your opponent adds an extra bit of sea fog of war to the game.

After objectives there is a simple Deployment determiner, lowest roll deploys first. Where you get to deploy is a result of your Scouting prowess. Here you send off destroyers, cruisers and flights and if you win well enough you can have a much wider deployment area. However, these scouts may not return to the fight and when they do, they come on a random table edge. Do you take the chance of having a much-reduced fleet in the coming battle and win the scout? Or keep your fleet together where you know where it is?

I have very favourable impressions of the game so far and look forward to playing it "properly" with club mates once I get my hands on those ships and more importantly the cards. It does not have submarines at this point which is a shame as they were an important part of many battles. We have the ability to have some large size games at our club, especially as

we have some big blue cloths. I really want to get my grubby, little paws on the big rule and fleet books when they are released (I am sure the editor will pass a review copy on, right?). You will need to get the sets to get the ship cards which are an integral part of the game which I understand annoys people. I also understand why many people do not like

the bases. Yet the bases are easy enough to remove. Supporting the game means it will be round longer and there is more chance you will get those lesser known ships in lightweight plastic. Looks like I might be getting that Italian fleet after all. I wonder how easy it would be to combine it with *Cruel Seas* and *Bolt Action* to 'what if' the invasion of Malta …

Below: An Imperial Japanese dive bomber lines up the USS Essex.

SAVING DENMARK

THE SWEDISH INVASION OF DENMARK: MAY 1945

One of the last great 'What ifs' of World War Two - Jerry Richardson introduces us to operation Rädda Danmark.

Sweden and Denmark are next door neighbours in northern Europe separated by the Öresund, a sea channel 28 km long and just 4 km wide at its narrowest point. It follows that what happens in one of the two countries impacts the other. We need not go into the full historic relationship between Sweden and Denmark for the purposes of this article. Let's just say it is complicated. Highlights include King Christian II of Denmark's massacre of Swedish nobles in 1520, which caused a violent backlash, leading to the enthronement of Gustav Vasa as the first king of modern Sweden. Denmark, having lost Sweden territorially, held sway in the Öresund through its navy until that ended with Danish defeat in the Torstensson War in 1645. In 1709, after the Battle of Poltava between Sweden and Russia, the latter emerged as a major power in the Baltic. Denmark tried hard in the early 18th Century to reassert itself, but failed. From that time, Denmark became much more self-contained, wary of becoming entangled with its Baltic neighbours. Besides, with the rise of Prussia in the 18th Century and the unification of Germany in 1870, Denmark had more reason to look south for threats to its sovereignty. Denmark just about remained neutral in World War I and hoped to do so again as the 1930s promised another major war. But dealing with Hitler's Germany was an entirely different proposition from the Kaiser's.

BLITZKRIEG AVOIDED

Denmark held little interest for Hitler. He had bigger fish to fry. So when the Danes bargained for a non-aggression pact in 1939, the Germans were fine with it, though they did want to use Denmark's

Above: Early War Danes by Great Escape Games.

ØRESUND STRAIT

ports. However, the strategic position changed almost overnight in early 1940 when Germany decided that Norway had to come under its control. Denmark was chosen as the best staging post for the planned invasion of Norway and Danish neutrality was not about to get in the way of that.

On 9 April 1940, the Germans launched Operation Weserübung against Norway. The first stage involved invading Denmark. The outgunned and outmanned Danes could do little to stop the battle-hardened German military machine that poured over their border. Moreover, without immediate active support from its neighbours or the Allied powers, Danish resistance could only result in heroic defeat at best with the worst-case scenario unthinkable. They did the right thing under the circumstances and surrendered: the invasion had lasted just six hours. The Germans set about securing their supply lines for the invasion of Norway, which was already underway, and planning for long term control of the seas and skies across the Baltic.

The German occupation of Denmark remained benign, at least for a while. They allowed the King and government to remain in place and run the country, but they stripped the country of its military, leaving just 3,300 men in Denmark's puppet forces. Some Danes were recruited into the German army, some moved into the nascent resistance, while others fled across the Öresund to Sweden. Otherwise, with Norway secure and the Germans occupied elsewhere, the Danes got on with life as best they could. That was until October 1942 when a flippant reply to a Hitler telegram by the Danish King brought down his wrath upon Denmark. It came with increasing resistance by the Danish. Within a month, the Danes had a German-appointed Prime Minister and the Danish army was banished from Jutland. In August 1943, the Germans completed the job, disarming and confining most of the Danish army to a POW camp for the duration. Denmark became a fully occupied, but increasingly unruly, country until May 1945.

THE SWEDISH TIGHTROPE

So where was Sweden in all this? Staying as neutral as possible is the short answer. The Swedes saw the war coming as well as anyone, but their fighting days were over. Despite its rich military history,

Sweden had not been to war since 1814. Only a fool, however, could not see the war clouds gathering over Europe in the 1930s. Sweden acted in 1936, increasing and modernizing its military capability. In 1938, it instituted the draft to train its male population, and in 1940 the Swedish Home Guard was formed. By then they had 800,000 men under arms, including conscripts. All the while, though, the Swedes reiterated their neutrality. Nevertheless, the Swedish defined that neutrality in interesting ways.

Left: Swedish infantry in Gotland.

Below: Swedish tank on manoeuvres 1943.

They backed Finland with money and logistics in its war with the Soviet Union, for example, and impounded Polish submarines when that country fell to the Germans in September 1939.

Both the Allies and the Germans blockaded Sweden during the war, yet trade continued with both, albeit at reduced levels. The Swedes bought warplanes from Italy to supplement the ones they had bought from the USA before the war. When Germany invaded Norway, they demanded to use the Swedish telephone system, which suited the Swedes who broke the German codes! The Germans also transported troops and artillery 'clandestinely' through Sweden to attack Norway and then in 1941 to support their invasion of the Soviet Union.

The Swedish approach to Germany changed in 1943 as the direction of the war in favour of the Allies became clearer. They accepted less demands from the Germans, but still sold them steel. In August 1943, however, the Swedes began training Norwegian and Danish troops as 'policemen' to deflect German enquiries. By May 1945, those men were ready for war.

THE DANISH BRIGADE

The Danish Brigade (*Den Danske Brigade*, Danforce, or DDB) consisted of Danish military escapees from German controlled Denmark along with other refugees, including 750 Danish Jews. The Swedes supplied them with weapons and uniforms, but the proud Danes painted their flag on their helmets and wore red, white, and blue armbands. In addition, the Swedish trained a Danish squadron of Saab 17 bomber-reconnaissance aircraft, bearing a red and white Danish roundel. The exiled Danish formed a naval contingent (*Den Danske Flotille*) from ships that escaped the German imposition of direct control in August 1943.

RÄDDA DANMARK

As early as Christmas 1943, Major General Carl August Ehrensvärd had begun planning the invasion of Denmark by the Swedish armed forces, codenamed *Rädda Danmark* (Free Denmark). In late April 1944, USAF Major General Frederick Anderson visited Sweden and finally managed to persuade the Swedish Prime minister, Per Albin Hansson, to join the Allies. With German defeat all but certain by May 1945, it was time to act. On 4 May, the plans had been tweaked in readiness for the imminent invasion of eastern Denmark to coincide with the Allied attack on the west of the country. The invasion units mustered in the province of Skåne in the south west of Sweden: the countdown had begun.

The plan called for the Danish Brigade to lead a Swedish invasion force consisting of the 3rd Army Corps broken into the I and IX Divisions, and the 7th Motorized and 8th Armoured Brigades. That amounted to 60,000 soldiers and more than 6,000 vehicles. Over 1150 small vessels, and about 100 naval vessels were tasked with carrying the load across the Öresund in two operations: *Rädda Själland* (Free Zealand) to capture the island in east Denmark and the Danish capital Copenhagen, which would be supported by Swedish heavy coastal artillery consisting of 21cm and 15cm guns and supplemented by the Swedish Navy battleships *Oscar II* and *Tapperheten*; and *Rädda Bornholm* to take the island controlling the entrance to the Baltic just south of Skåne. The Swedish Air Force, based in Skåne, would provide air support and ground attack capability. The attack was set for 18 May with a surprise assault on Helsingborg by a reinforced brigade leading the charge. Meanwhile, the 28,000 German defenders blocked the harbour at Copenhagen. They were aided in their defence of Denmark by the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, the light cruiser *Nürnberg*, four destroyers, four minesweepers, two mine-laying vessels, twenty patrol boats, and four auxiliary cruisers. Sweden's entry into the war promised to be quite the fight!

Right: The return of the Danish Brigade from Sweden, May 1945. In reality they didn't have to fight their way back into the country.

Left: The Danish Brigade arrive in Helsingor from Sweden. In reality most of the German occupation force surrendered without incident to Allied troops on 5 May. However, three Danish soldiers were killed by snipers as they marched into Copenhagen.

DELIVERANCE

Then, at 8:35pm on the evening of 4 May 1945, came the news Denmark had been waiting for:

"This is London! The BBC, broadcasting to Denmark!"

"At this moment, it is being announced that Montgomery has stated that the German troops in the Netherlands, northwest Germany and Denmark have surrendered. This is London. We repeat: Montgomery has just now announced that the German troops in the Netherlands, northwest Germany and Denmark have surrendered."

Thousands of Danes poured into the streets to celebrate. The Germans stayed in their garrison barracks, fearing to venture out. The Resistance took control while waiting for their Swedish liberators to arrive. When they did, the Danske Brigade led the way, but three of them died from sniper fire as the last pockets of Germans and their Danish supporters held out. The operation for Bornholm did not go to plan, however, when the Soviets pre-empted the Swedes, bombarding the island and landing on 9 May. They would remain there for nearly a year before retiring. For Denmark, though, the war was finally over.


Left: Danish S.S. soldiers disarmed by resistance fighters in Copenhagen, 1945.

Below: Danish resistance members during the liberation of Denmark 1945.

SWEDISH ARMY UNIFORM

In 1939, a new uniform was introduced for the Swedish army, the uniform m/1939 (*Vapenrock M/39*). The colour of the uniform was grey-brown-green. The jacket was single-breasted with four buttons and equipped with business suit style lapels, with bronze arm of service insignia attached; it was similar in cut to the German M36 uniform. The greatcoat m/1939 was in the same colour as the jacket. The battledress trousers were equipped with a strap at the bottom to fasten the trousers to the ankle boots. Short canvas anklets (gaiters) or puttees typically covered the ankles, keeping dirt out of the boots. A new headdress was adopted in 1939, the side cap m/1939 (*båtmössa*). The side cap was in the same colour as the jacket and trousers. The two late war Swedish helmets were the m/26 and m/37 both painted grey-brown with the blue and yellow national emblem on the sides. An ammunition holder (*ammunitionsgördel*) with large leather pouches at the front was worn around the waist and could be suspended by a Y-shaped yoke (*Hänglesen*). An M/39 backpack made of a canvas attached to a steel frame was worn on the back and carried much of the soldier's equipment.
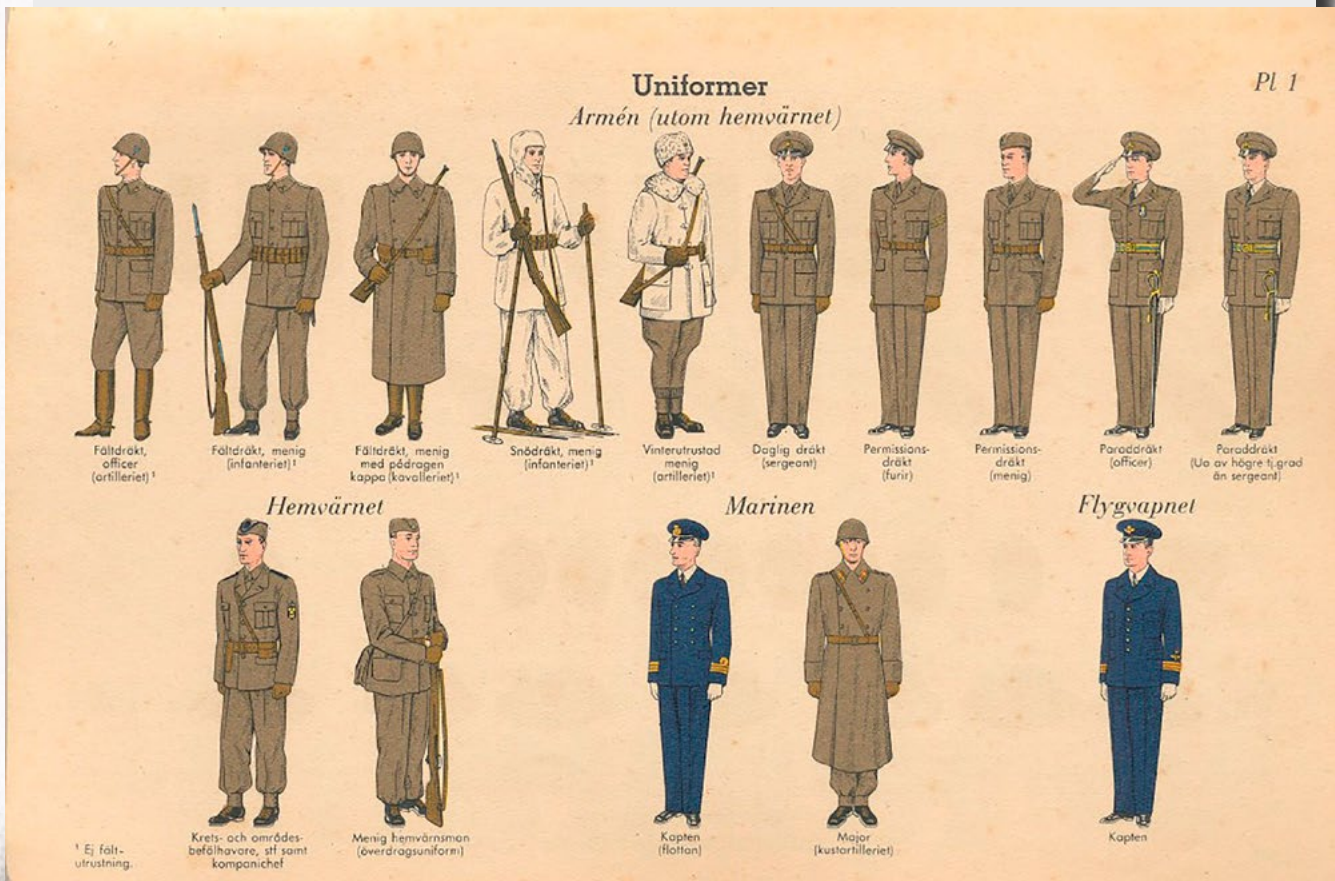
WARGAMING RÄDDA DANMARK

Although the Swedish invasion of Denmark ended as a damp squib, that doesn't mean we can't have fun with it. There is a variety of wargaming opportunities offered by this seemingly marginal event, and we could even do a combined-ops campaign. Air superiority plays a major role in modern warfare, so some *Check Your 6! Wings of Glory*, or *Blood Red Skies* action should sort that out. The waters of the Öresund are perfect for coastal combat, involving MTBs zipping around, destroyers chasing them down, and even the *Prinz Eugen* making an appearance to try and stop the party. Throw in some mines and coastal batteries and that lot could get messy quickly. The troubled *Cruel Seas* rules should get you going with all of that. We can fight the war on land at all levels. *Spearhead* covers Divisional and Brigade level games, then work your way down with maybe a bit of jiggling through *Rapid Fire*, *Chain of Command*, *Battlegroup*, *Bolt Action*, and, well, just about any set of WWII rules that takes your fancy.

We are not short of scenarios either. An attack on Copenhagen harbour would have been interesting with the flotilla of small Swedish boats unloading soldiers into the attack. The urban warfare that might have followed the landing is standard fare, but the inclusion of Danish soldiers and the need to not get too many of them killed adds a wee wrinkle. But two distinctly unusual scenarios are also generated by the war in Denmark. The first is a mission by the Danish Resistance to smuggle Jews out of Denmark on boats, with the Germans attempting to intercept them. The other is the Swedish versus the Soviets for the control of Bornholm island. That would be interesting.

ARMOUR CAMOUFLAGE

In 1941, *Arméorder* number 155 established a multi-coloured camouflage system for vehicles. This consisted of four colours: olive, yellow-brown, grey, and black. Tactical markings were three digits in white outline on the turret side. Unusually these digits were the last three numbers from the registration number (*Militärnummer*) and did not refer to the vehicle's platoon or company. A national marking consisted of the Swedish flag was on the hull sides.

Above: These interesting looking vehicles are *Terrängbil m/42s*. Designed as an interim solution to 'armoured infantry'. Based on an F11 Scania truck chassis this APC could carry a section of infantry.

DENMARK'S JEWS

One of the most remarkable stories from Denmark during WWII was the rescue of Danish Jews. When Hitler annexed Denmark in August 1943, he immediately ordered the deportation of the country's Jews to concentration camps. The Danish Resistance, supported by hundreds of ordinary Danish citizens, spirited more than 7,200 Jews out of the country to Sweden in boats, 90% of all the Jews in Denmark. Of those, 750 joined the Danske Brigade.

Above: Danish Jews escaping to Sweden.

FIGURES

The real issue for wargaming this campaign is what figures to use? In 6, 10 or 15mm scale the Polish are a good fit, but the larger the scale the more you will need to convert your figures. Plastic sets in 28mm probably provide the most scope for that. Italian metal heads on German late war bodies, with additional pouches modelled across the front are a good start. German bolt action rifles are ideal, and the *Automatgevär m/42* can be represented by the Gewehr 43, and the Model 37-39 SMG with the Russian PPSh-41. Machine guns will work using American BARs and Browning MGs. The *Pansarvärnsgevär fm/42* is a little more complex but the PTRD-41 makes a good base for conversion with the pistol grip moved forward, and the muzzle brake, butt and carrying handle removed. The Germans are standard, and if you wanted to throw in some Resistance fighters, they too are now widely available.

If you are more inclined to the Early War in Scandinavia, Great Escape Games have recently released an extensive range of Danes for the 1940 German invasion (below).

GERMAN FORCES IN DENMARK

The German garrison in Denmark changed over time but by late 1945 consisted of the following major formations:

• 160. Res.Div.

• 166. Res.Div.

• 264. Inf.Div.

• 325. Inf.Div.

• 328. Inf.Div.

• 614. Div.Stab z.b.V.

The main armoured force in was the 233rd Reserve Panzer Division under the command of Kurt Cuno, in central Jutland and was responsible for training replacement panzer and motorised troops. The Division had older equipment and was not up to strength. It was made up of a small motorised HQ and:

• 5. Reserve Panzer Regiment situated at Viborg

    16 - Pz II

    27 – Pz III various

    17 – Pz IV short

    15 – Pz IV long

• 3. Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion situated at Mariager, Hobro and Hadsund

    Armoured Car Company I Used captured armoured cars

    Motorised Company with a platoon of halftracks

    Motorcycle Company

    Heavy Company

• 83. Reserve Panzergrenadier Regiment situated at Aarhus

    Two battalions, motorised but no heavy companies

    Pak Company (Pak 38 and 40) and an Infantry Gun Coy

• 3. Reserve Panzergrenadier Regiment situated at Odder

    Two battalions, cycle mounted but no heavy companies

    MG Company and Infantry Gun Coy

• 3 Panzerjager Battalion

    6 Marder

    11 Pak 40

• 59. Reserve Artillery Battalion situated at Randers

    4 – 105mm

    4 – 155mm

• 208. Reserve Panzer Pioneer Battalion

    2 Bridging Companies

    1 Motorised Assault Engineer Company

BLOOD ANGEL: REDCOATS IN THE OHIO VALLEY

OR HOW I USED CONTRAST PAINTS TO GET STARTED IN THE FRENCH & INDIAN WARS

James Morris show us how he used Contrast Paints to get some new recruits on the table in double-quick time.

There was a substantial amount of chatter about Games Workshop's Contrast paints when they were released a little over a year ago. Opinions on social media ranged from 'magic in a pot' to 'typical overpriced GW rubbish – nothing you can't make yourself for a third of the price'. Fortunately GW stores were (prior to the Covid 19 lockdown) full of enthusiastic staff willing to demonstrate the products to potential customers, including myself. Dropping into Warhammer World on a Sunday afternoon, I was able to have a play with the new wonder product with half an eye on the historical painting possibilities.

What I picked up pretty quickly was that these aren't just an overpriced wash; I'd call them more of a highly-pigmented stain. The effect that they produce is similar to a block colour with a wash

over the top, except that this is achieved in a single coat. In addition, the colours are so strong that the coverage is truly impressive, and the blues, reds and greens are especially vibrant. I thought that they would be a useful base to work up from and also handy for eras with tricky uniforms – the kind that feature lots of different coloured areas requiring fiddly shading and highlighting.

My theory of painting miniatures is fairly simple: I want to get good-looking forces on the table in the quickest possible time frame. Having come through the obligatory black undercoat and three-layer-highlights era, I now try to use anything that I can to speed things up: coloured undercoats, dips, washes, wiping off oil paints and so forth. However, I make it a rule of thumb to always use more than one technique on a

figure. You can paint an entire miniature by simply dry-brushing, block painting or washing all the areas, but it can finish up looking very 'samey'. So I try to pick a method to speed things along but follow it up with some detailing using a different technique. For example, a few years ago I painted a large warband of Azande for *Death in the Dark Continent* with a coloured undercoat and oil wipe technique (taking approximately two minutes per model to get all the flesh done) but then followed this up with the shields - painted using traditional layers and highlighting in acrylics. The result was a very effective-looking army that had taken around 15 minutes per model to paint.

Being caught up in the *Muskets & Tomahawks* excitement in March, I bought and painted a Huron force,

MY TOP CONTRAST TIPS

• If possible, go and try some out (at a GW store or borrowed from a friend) before you buy. They're not for everybody but are an incredibly useful tool for the right job.

• Test the colours you have on some spare models – one of my friends has created a colour palette using some old figures painted in each of his Contrast paints. It's impossible to see the actual colours from the paint pot itself.

• Buy a pot of Contrast Medium – it's incredibly useful as you can create some very different effects by thinning down the standard colours (Contrast doesn't thin with water). Try a thinned down Black Templar over armour, and a very thin Wyldwood for natural linen.

• Use a bigger brush with a good tip that can hold enough paint – size 2, 3 and even 4 can be useful here. Rinse your brushes really well afterwards; Contrast takes a little more shifting than standard acrylics.

• Let it dry thoroughly in between coats. Paint or assemble something else while it's drying. Obvious but worth repeating!

• Highlight a few key areas of the model and use some conventional block and highlight painting techniques alongside the Contrasts.

• Accidental splashes on areas of the model will show up if you are planning to over paint them with lighter Contrast paints but can be neatened up first with white acrylic.

intending to get 'just the one' force … and then got sucked in to getting the British as well. This, as my gaming friends will tell you, is somewhat out of character – my preference for miniatures usually involves tribal underdogs, the scruffier the better (hence the proliferation of Picts, Welsh, Ethiopians and Azande in my loft.) Nevertheless, I had committed in the knowledge that I had a plan, so when the parcel from Galloping Major arrived, I cleaned up a test model and set to painting.

Fortunately Lance of the aforementioned company and many others on the *Muskets & Tomahawks* Facebook groups had been especially helpful with painting references and advice. (I did question my sanity after being made aware how many different British regiments there were in North America and the sheer variety of coat facings and lace! My old chum Steve Jones helpfully chipped in with 'uniforms had been simplified by the American War of Independence', which obviously didn't help much with the current situation!) Anyhow, I settled for a unit with buff facings and white trim (nominally the 27th Inniskillings) for a couple of practical reasons: firstly, units with buff facings were apparently the second most common in the FIW (yellow was most common, I'm told) and – with my speed-painting hat on – I reckoned I could use the GW Contrast Snakebite Leather (a yellowy-brown) as the base coat for both the facings and the trims.

Here's how I did it.

PREPARATION

After a clean-up of mould lines (an absolutely minimal job on the Galloping Major miniatures, but an essential one, as any imperfections will show up with Contrast paint's ability to hug fine detail), the figures were superglued onto a strip

of mounting board and given a couple of thin coats of Halfords White Primer (car spray paint). I confess that I haven't actually tried the official GW primers as I've had perfectly good results with this. I worked in batches of about 15 figures.
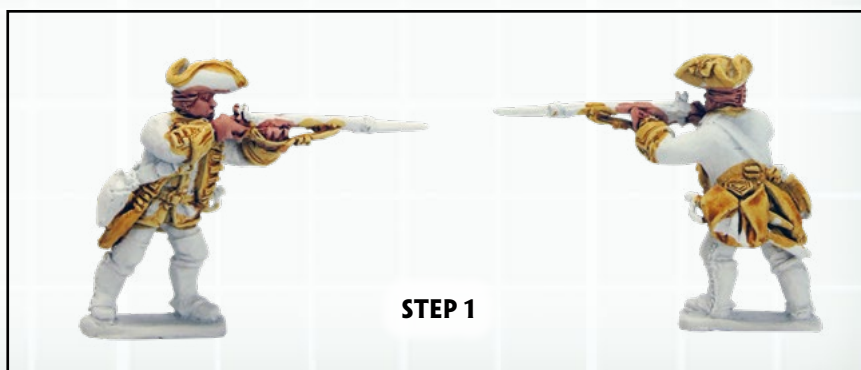
PAINTING

STEP 1

Although the temptation is to do the red coat first, I actually found it was more efficient to start with the facings and trims (the musket sling was also included being of a similar colour). These were given a generous coat of Contrast Snakebite Leather, slightly thinned down with GW Technical Medium and applied with a fairly big brush (I tend to use size 3 for this kind of work). You can see that they're not especially neat as the red is strong enough to cover over any overspill. Then I left this to dry thoroughly; Contrast makes a horrible mess if you try to paint next to it when wet, as the two colours will bleed into each other! So, my advice would be to go off to paint something else while you're waiting. When the Snakebite Leather was dry, I used Contrast Guilliman Flesh to do the face and hands – you can see in the photo how effectively it defines the fingers and eye sockets in particular.

STEP 2

Next up was the Contrast Blood Angels Red – generously but neatly applied to the coat and breeches. Again, I've overpainted the belt and splashed a bit on the boots, but tried hard to stay off the facings and trims. Any serious overspills can be repainted in white acrylic if necessary.

STEP 2

STEP 1

Step 3

With all the previous layers dry, I painted the hat with Contrast Black Templar and used a conventional black acrylic paint for the bag, boots and sword. The belt and rifle were given a coat of Contrast Cygor Brown – this particular paint is very dark and dense so is ideally suited for painting over areas of lighter colour.
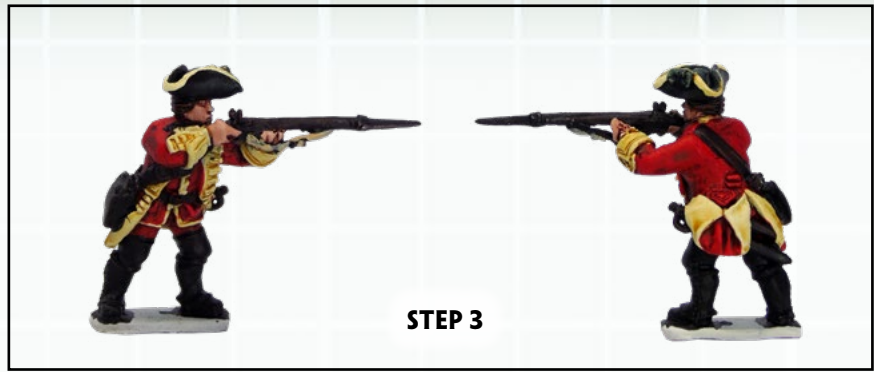
STEP 3

STEP 4

Step 4

This is where the use of Contrast as a base coat begins to come to life. I highlighted various key sections using a size 1 brush and acrylic paints: the wooden parts of the musket were painted Chestnut Brown, the belt and bag strap dark brown, and the hat, coat trims and buttonholes picked out in white. The buff coat facings had a quick highlight of Iraqi Sand although I'm not sure it was strictly necessary. After this was done, the buttons were picked out in black and the soldier's hair was painted brown.

Step 5

The boots and leggings were very lightly dry-brushed with Iraqi Sand – a really quick method to bring out the detail – and the metal parts of the muskets and the pewter buttons were picked out in gunmetal (I was saved the cardinal sin of accidentally painting them in brass by help from more knowledgeable hobbyists!)

STEP 5

Step 6

The sword hilt was picked out in brass, the bayonet was highlighted with a dash of silver and the figure was given two coats of Testors Dullcoat Matt Varnish before basing.

STEP 6
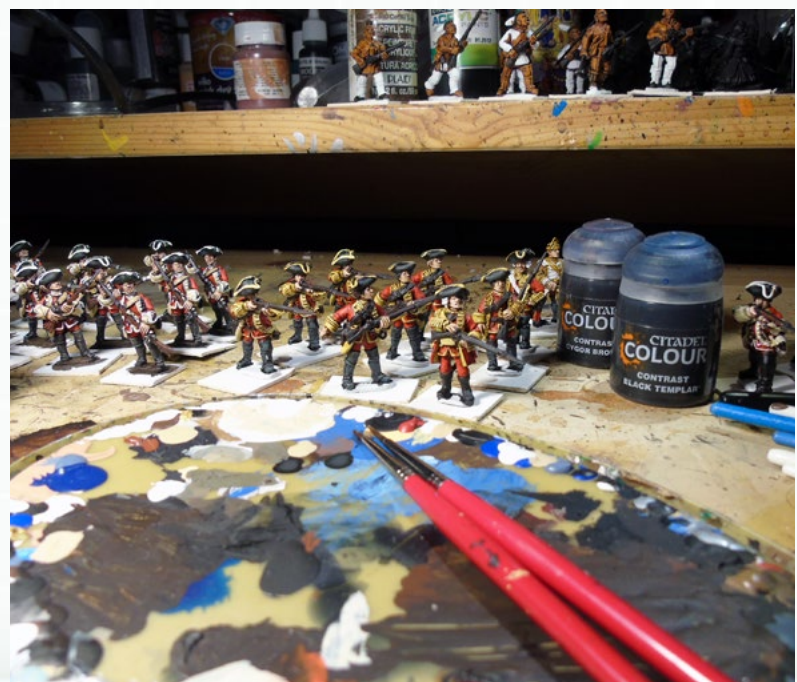
PAINTS USED

Halfords spray White Primer (undercoat).

Games Workshop Contrast Paints:

- Technical Contrast Medium
- Blood Angels Red (coats and breeches)
- Snakebite Leather (facings and trims)
- Guilliman Flesh (hands and faces)
- Black Templar (boots/ leggings)

The following paints were used to supplement and highlight the Contrasts, although any acrylic ranges would be fine - I just used what I had available.

Vallejo Model Colour:

- 70.950 Black
- 70.820 Off-White
- 70.819 Iraqi Sand
- 70.801 Brass

Army Painter Warpaints:

- Gun Metal
- Shining Silver

Miniature Paints:

- 86 Umber

Foundry Paints:

- 7A Buff Leather

Working in batches of 15 figures, each model had taken me around 25 minutes from start to finish – so, although the Contrasts I had purchased cost me more than conventional paints – I believe that I probably saved between five and ten minutes per miniature. In other words, my little force of 30 redcoats arrived at the gaming table somewhere between 2 ½ - 5 hours earlier than expected, which is enough time to play at least one game of *Muskets & Tomahawks*! I had also enjoyed experimenting with the Contrasts and adapting my painting techniques to fit the new medium.

Despite their fantasy origins, Contrasts have found quite a following in the historical gaming community and there are now numerous guides out there on social media about speed painting WW2 uniforms. Some gamers are also producing amazing results on smaller scale miniatures – I have seen some incredible 10mm paint jobs out there. I have found them an incredibly useful tool for the right job and will certainly be including them in my painting plans for the future.

DESIGNER'S NOTES: FROSTGRAVE: SECOND EDITION

WHAT'S CHANGED?

The incredibly popular "Fantasy Wargame in the Frozen City" is back with a second edition and we talk to author Joseph A. McCullough about what's new.

In 2019, the readers of *Wargames Illustrated* voted *Frostgrave* the 'Best Rules' of the year, an award I accepted with pride. Now, less than one year later, I have changed the rules! Perhaps this is foolishness, or arrogance, but I honestly believed I have made the game even better. To help you decide if I am right or wrong, the editor invited me to write this article presenting what is new and different in *Frostgrave: Second Edition*, coming in August, 2020.

I began my work on the new edition with two main goals:

1. Make the game more fun, not less.

2. Make the rules clearer, more balanced, and more streamlined, but not at the cost of #1.

Now, *Frostgrave: Second Edition* does not contain any sweeping changes. It is still the same game of wizards throwing spells, soldiers grabbing loot, wandering monsters causing chaos, and the fickle D20 destroying all of your best laid plans. Most of the core mechanics are identical to the first edition. That said, there are numerous little changes, here and there, many of which I'll share with you now.

As with the first edition, the second leaps right in with creating a wizard, and, in truth, not a whole lot has changed. The system for creating wizards seemed to be one of the strongest and most enjoyable parts of the game for a lot of people, so I didn't want to mess with it much. You still choose from the same ten schools

of magic, all of which have the same connections to the other schools. You still select eight spells, following the same rules as in first edition. Now, some of those spells have changed, but we will get into that later.

In fact, the only changes I made to creating wizards are very minor, and all have to do with items. First, wizards no longer pay for their starting items. Charging a wizard 5gc for a sword, when the game is usually dealing with magic items worth hundreds of gold crowns just seemed fiddly, and tended to cause confusion in other parts of the system.

A few people might be horrified to learn that I have dropped the +1 Fight for wielding two weapons. The biggest problem with this was that it was just too good. Rules-wise, there was just no good reason for a player not to take two

create warbands that were just no fun to play against – the 'all archer' or 'all treasure hunter' warbands are the most egregious. Now, in truth, very few people actually played this way, so it was never a huge problem, but it bothered me as a game designer, a lot.

In order to fix these two issues, I started by dividing soldiers into two categories: standard and specialist, in much the same way I did for *Ghost Archipelago*. Now, when you are creating a warband, you can have eight soldiers, with a maximum of four specialists. Standard soldiers include thieves, thugs, men-at-arms, infantrymen and a few others. So, they aren't all bad, but they are mostly limited to just fighters. Additionally, thugs and thieves can now be recruited for free. This means, no matter how badly your warband gets mauled, you will always be able to field a full complement of figures for your next game. This eliminates the biggest potential imbalance in the game. The specialist soldiers include archers, crossbowmen, and all of the higher-level fighters such as treasure hunters, knights, and barbarians.

While I was initially worried about these restrictions, I actually believe they make constructing a warband more interesting. Now, you really have to think about how you want to approach the game. If you want lots of archers, it means you aren't going to be as good in hand-to-hand (especially since archers and crossbowmen are no longer as good in hand-to-hand). Not only does this eliminate the issue of 'unfun' warbands, it also has a couple of knock-on effects

weapons (the hallmark of a bad rule), which led to all these wizards running around like duellists with their swords and daggers. Anyway, the rule is gone. On the other hand, the first dagger carried by a wizard (or apprentice) no longer takes up an item slot, so everyone gets a free back-up knife!

Following a similar thought process, two-handed weapons now take up two item slots, and wizards wanting to carry a bow will also have to carry a quiver. These rules are designed to offset the advantages conferred by these weapons, and make it less likely that wizards, especially higher level ones who tend to have lots of magical gear, will carry them.

And that's it for wizards; they are otherwise the same as in first edition.

Apprentices, on the other hand, have gotten slightly better! (Do I hear applause? I did say slightly.) Basically, I made a couple of changes to their Stats. First, their starting Shoot score is now equal to the wizard's (+0). This is actually irrelevant to most people, but it eliminates the awkward -2 Shoot that all apprentices had. Much more importantly, Apprentice starting Health is now only two less than the wizard, meaning they start with Health 12 (instead of 10).

While this isn't a huge gain, it means that apprentices can take a little more damage, and, even more importantly, have a little more Health available to empower spells. As an interesting side-effect of these two changes, starting apprentices are now only six levels below their wizard, so if your wizard dies, you only lose six levels when promoting your apprentice. This will hopefully lessen the psychic blow to players when their wizard dies, and help keep campaigns feeling more balanced.

Finally, Apprentices now only cost 100gc. This is part of a general restructuring of money, and has little effect on assembling your warband in the beginning, but does mean that it isn't quite so costly to replace an apprentice down the line.

While the system for creating wizards and apprentices changed very little, the system for recruiting soldiers is probably the largest single change in the new edition. As I have played and watched hundreds of games of *Frostgrave* over the years, I have noted two problems with soldiers. First, if a player got really badly defeated – gained no treasure, and lost several soldiers – it could often be impossible to dig back out of this hole in a campaign, especially if it happened early in a campaign. The other problem is that I allowed so much freedom when buying soldiers, it allowed players to

which I like. First, it helps keeps a campaign balanced, preventing a player who has made a big score treasure-wise from going out and spending it all on the best soldiers. Also, it means the rules work better with how most people actually play the game. Most people like to buy their ten miniatures, paint them up, and continue to use these same miniatures throughout a campaign, maybe just upgrading a figure or two. These rules work better with that idea, as players will end up keeping more of the soldiers they have instead of immediately discarding them for better ones. That said, players still have the freedom to switch out soldiers as often as they want.

Some soldiers have had their stats changed, and many of the prices for recruitment have changed, but I'll leave that for players to discover when they get the book.

Moving into the core rules of the game, once again, it is more about tweaks than major changes. The biggest is that only five treasure tokens are now placed on the table, incuding a 'central treasure'. This system has been seen before in *Ghost Archipelago* and *The Maze of Malcor,* and I think most players will agree that it works much better. Having the odd number of treasure tokens promotes player interaction, because somebody is usually going home with more loot than everyone else! Movement still works exactly the same, with the addition of a new rule 'Run For It!', which allows a figure to forego all of its actions in order to move 3", which helps those poor wounded soldiers, carrying treasure, through mud to actually makes some progress! Combat hasn't changed at all, except that a figure is now limited to a maximum bonus of +10, no matter how many modifiers it has. Oh, and critical hits have changed so that they only do +5 damage instead of double damage. This will still, of course, kill most things, but doesn't feel quite so over the top!

It's only when we get to spellcasting that we see some really important changes, and these are subtle. The biggest change is when a spellcater successfully casts a spell, the Casting Number is treated as either 14, or the number rolled. Meaning that all spells have a minimum Casting Number of 14 for attempts to resist. This eliminates the strange issue of your high level spellcaster casting a spell he knows really well, but the Casting Number being so weak that anyone would be able to resist it! On the other hand, a spellcaster is no longer allowed to empower the Casting Number of any spell beyond 18. The Casting Number can go higher via the actual roll, or other bonuses, just not empowerment. This eliminates the issue

of players empowering their spells up to levels that are impossible to resist. Also, any Will Roll of '20' is now an automatic success, so a figure always has a chance to resist.

Taken together, these rules make spellcasting more fun, both for the caster, who has a better chance of casting an effective spell, and for the target of the spell who is always going to have a chance to resist.

But what about the spells themselves? Working on the spells was my main motivation for creating the Second Edition. Of the eighty spells in the game, there were a few that were too good, a few that weren't strong enough, and some that just never got used. So, I went through every spell, one by one. I won't go through all of the changes, but here's a sample: 'Elemental Bolt' is now only a +7 Shooting Attack. 'Leap' and 'Telekinesis' both have more restrictions on their use. 'Circle of Protection' now works against demons and undead. 'Illusionary Soldier' can now be used before or during a game.
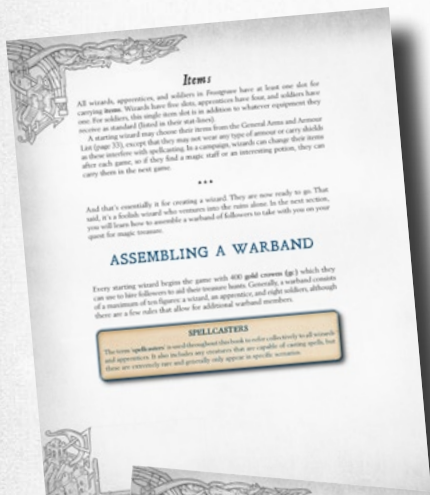
WHAT ABOUT THE FIGURES?

Since the release of *Frostgrave* first edition North Star Military Figures have produced the official range of metal and plastic figures to accompany the game. We asked North Star Nick what initial figure support for FG2 was looking like.

There will be loads of new releases for *Frostgrave II*. We're hoping to have a set of plastic 'Specialist Soldiers' ready for the launch in August. This will allow for the creation of a complete Warband in plastic, as it includes Knights, Templars, Marksmen and Captains.

There will be another new plastic set for November release, something unexpected and completely different.

There won't be a Nickstarter - at least initially. Like most businesses, North Star has been affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. We're focused on getting out orders, with little spare capacity for promotions. With the threat of a 'second spike', I wouldn't want to plan a Nickstarter in August to find we're all under a new severe lockdown.

Someday this'll all end, and we'll celebrate with a new Nickstarter.

One thing that I realized was completely missing from the game was a spell that could affect treasure while it was being carried. Now there are two. 'Fool's Gold' has been rewritten so that soldiers discover they have grabbed illusory treasure instead of the real thing, which is actually sitting just over there. There is also a new spell, 'Suggestion', that can cause soldiers to drop their treasure. *Frostgrave* is at its best when players are using magic to scrap over a treasure token, and these spells should really encourage that.

Oh yes, I said new spell. Some spells just couldn't be salvaged, or got combined with others, so I replaced them. Thus the game includes several new spells including: 'Animate Skull', 'Blink', 'Bridge' and 'Destroy Undead'. I'll leave you to discover exactly what these new spells can do.

Moving on to campaigns, which remain at the heart of *Frostgrave*, there are a few changes that hopefully, again, make the game more fun and balanced. First off, wizards don't die quite as often, and, as mentioned before, when they do, apprentices aren't quite as far behind them. The experience point table has changed, but since it is basically the one found in *The Maze of Malcor*, this

will be of no surprise to most players. One change that people might find odd is that there are a few more limitations on how wizards can spend their levels. Essentially, they may only improve one Stat and one Casting Number after each game. If they have any other levels available, they can use them to learn new spells, or save them until after another game. The reasoning behind this is two-fold. First, it slows down the improvement of wizards, which both keeps a campaign more balanced, but also makes each individual improvement

more valuable and interesting. Also, it encourages wizards to learn more new spells, which fits with the theme of the game.

Beyond that, the only other significant change to campaigns is in the buying and selling of items. All items now have both a cost and a selling price. In general, wizards can't get as much money for selling items as they used to. This is to encourage players to actually use the items they find instead of instantly selling them off for something 'better'.
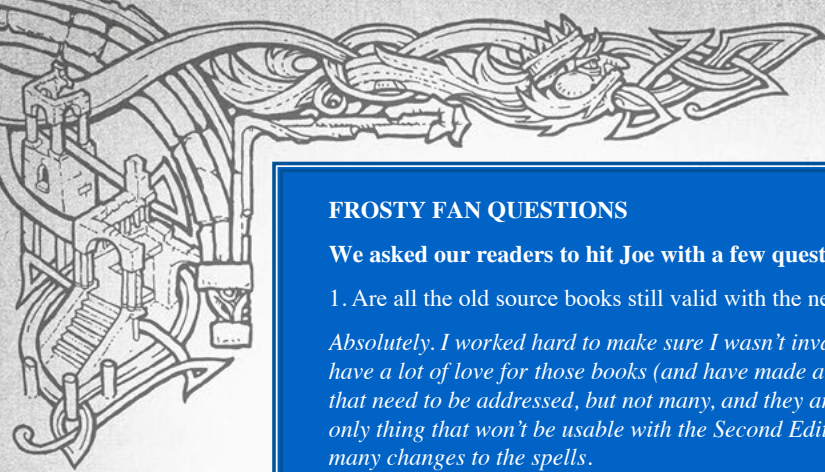
FROSTY FAN QUESTIONS

We asked our readers to hit Joe with a few questions regarding FG2 -

1. Are all the old source books still valid with the new edition?

Absolutely. I worked hard to make sure I wasn't invalidating any of the supplements, because I know people have a lot of love for those books (and have made a significant investment in them). There are a few changes that need to be addressed, but not many, and they are all covered in an appendix in the Second Edition. The only thing that won't be usable with the Second Edition is 'The Grimoire' (the spellcards) as there have been so many changes to the spells.

2. In the previous edition some spells where very useful or very powerful compared to other spells. Are they more balanced in v2?

I think the three mentioned in the article – 'Elemental Bolt', 'Leap', and 'Telekinesis' were the biggest offenders for most people, and they have all been tweaked to make them less powerful. But, I have gone through all of the spells and tried to ensure that they were all useful and desirable. I'm sure people will still have their favourites, but I think we'll see an even greater diversity of spell usage in the new edition.

3. Are all *Frostgrave* miniatures still supported in the new edition?

Of course. Frostgrave has always been a game that encouraged players to use any figures they wanted, so the official figures never had any special standing in the game anyway. You can keep using them, or you can get some of the new ones that will be produced for Second Edition, or you can use figures from any other manufacturer you choose.

4. Are there any changes to table size in the new edition?

Nope. Frostgrave never had a fixed table size. It had suggestions, and those suggestions remain, but you can play Frostgrave on just about any table. I've had some fun games on a 2'x 2'. They are quick and bloody, but they are fun!

5. Will there be new spell card packs published for V2?

Yes, but there have been some issues that have caused pretty big delays on this, so they won't come until sometime after the new book is out.

When I first started work on the second edition, my intention was to write ten new scenarios to replace the ones found in the first book. However, the more I thought about it, the more I thought those original ten really did their job well. They had introduced so many people to the game that they had kind of become classics. I didn't want to leave them out. So, I modified them slightly to fit the new rules, and then I added ten new ones as well! So, the rulebook now contains twenty different scenarios. With the basic ten still there, it allowed me to get really creative with the new set, including some more intricate scenarios. So, now there are scenarios with a giant summoning bell, a magical mine cart, and even a minefield!

This means there are scenarios for new players and veterans alike, and hopefully a huge number of games that can be played with the core rulebook alone!

That leaves just the Bestiary. I didn't make a lot of changes there. I increased the likelihood of creatures showing up, both because there are less treasures on the table to potentially trigger their appearance, but also because many players have noted this as their favourite part of the game. I have also included a list of Creature Attributes, which means I can stop writing the same rules under numerous different creature entries! Warning: a few of the creatures have gotten a little meaner! (I'm looking at you, vampires!)

There are probably other little changes that I'm forgetting at the moment, but those are the main ones. As I said, it is more of a tidying and tightening that a massive reworking. I think players that know and love the original game, will find the same magic with this one! Of course, *Frostgrave* has always been a game that encouraged house rules, so if you don't like any of the changes, you don't have to listen to me!

CAPTAIN K

Brush Demon Ben Macintyre puts paint to brush and brush to metal on the latest *Giants In Miniature* figure – Captain K.

WHO IS CAPTAIN K??

It might be easier to explain who Captain K isn't – he's not a character from the 2019 movie *Jo Jo Rabbit*. He shouldn't be mistaken for the Nazi officer who trained Hitler Youth recruits and took part in the defence of 'the city' following the invasion of Soviet troops, whilst dressed in an elaborate homemade outfit. He certainly wouldn't say "Today you boys will be involved in such activities as marching, bayonet drills, grenade throwing, trench digging, map reading, gas defence, camouflage, ambush techniques, war games, firing guns and blowing stuff up. The girls will practice important womanly duties such as dressing wounds, making beds and learning how to get pregnant."

Start out by cleaning, removing any mould lines, and priming your miniature. Prepping your miniature is a very important step as it will help make the painting process much smoother and more enjoyable.

I've used mainly Vallejo paints for this miniature but you can use any brand of paint. Just make sure that you are thinning the paints properly before you apply them and that you use an appropriately sized brush. I generally work with a size 1 brush for most things, however there are elements that will require a small brush such as a size 00.

Captain K is dressed primarily in a standard Wehrmacht uniform of black and dark grey, so we can start by blocking in the majority of the miniature in the same colour. As we add more layers of highlights we can start to differentiate between the areas by using varying tones for each one.

PAINTING GUIDE

1 I started by creating a mix of equal parts Vallejo German Grey and Black. This was applied to Captain K's trousers and boots. His tunic and helmet were blocked out with an equal mixture of Black and Vallejo German Fieldgrey.

With all of that blocked in, we can go back to the other details of the miniature and fill those in with the darkest shade of that colour.

1. Vallejo Pale Blue Grey
(Uniform piping)
2. Vallejo Black
(Leatherwork)
3. Vallejo Black Red
(Cloak)
4. Games Workshop Bugman's Glow
(Flesh)
5. Vallejo Gunmetal Grey
(Metalwork)
6. Vallejo Beasty Brown
(Woodwork)

2 Next up is to start adding more depth and contrast to the different areas of Captain K with a layer of highlighting. We want to pick out the areas and edges that catch the most light. Focus on applying these colours to the uppermost parts of K's face, the edges of cloth folds, and the ends and edges of belts.

1. Vallejo German Grey
(Trousers)
2. Vallejo German Fieldgrey
(Tunic)
3. Vallejo Pale Blue Grey mixed with White (50/50)
(Uniform piping)
4. Vallejo Black mixed with German Grey (50/50)
(Leatherwork and boots)
5. Vallejo Red
(Cloak)
6. Games Workshop Cadian Flesh
(Flesh)
7. Vallejo Oily Steel
(Metalwork)
8. Vallejo Heavy Brown
(Woodwork)

3 Now we want to further increase the contrast between the areas of light and shadow and to accentuate the details of the sculpt.

We still want to be focusing on those uppermost folds of cloth, edges of metalwork and raised muscle groups. The brighter the colours get the smaller area they should cover, so it's best to apply them with a smaller size 0 or 00 brush.

1. Vallejo Neutral Grey
(Trousers)
2. Vallejo German Fieldgrey mixed with Light Green Blue (50/50)
(Tunic)
3. Vallejo White
(Uniform piping)
4. Vallejo German Grey
(Leatherwork and boots)
5. Vermillion
(Cloak)
6. Vallejo Basic Skintone
(Flesh)
7. Vallejo Silver
(Metalwork)
8. Vallejo Khaki
(Woodwork)

4 Now we want to do one final layer of highlights on Captain K, really pushing those colours in the areas that the light will catch the most. The highlights at this stage are pretty small so you might want to switch to a size 00 or even 000 brush for this bit.

1. Vallejo London Grey
(Trousers)
2. Vallejo German Fieldgrey mixed with Light Green Blue (25/75)
(Tunic)
3. Vallejo White
(Uniform piping)
4. Vallejo Neutral Grey
(Leatherwork and boots)
5. German Orange
(Cloak)
6. Vallejo Light Flesh
(Flesh)
7. Vallejo Chrome
(Metalwork)
8. Vallejo Green Ochre
(Woodwork)

To finish up we need to go back and add a small amount of our dark colours from Stage 1 into the recesses and shadows of each area. Take a small brush (a size 0 or 00 will be fine) and apply the colours into the deepest recesses and areas where two colours meet. This technique helps increase the contrast of the miniature and exaggerate all of the details

I also used this stage to add a few details to Captain K, such as his eyes, cigarette and the more intricate medal ribbons and decorations.

The last step is to apply a protective varnish layer to Captain K and base him to match your chosen army and game. In this case I have based him charging through the rubble, using a mixture of browns and greys.

Jon Sutherland begins a series of articles investigating figure ranges and manufacturers that you may have missed, but can't afford to ignore.

Antediluvian Miniatures is a small figure manufacturer based in North West Scotland. The company is run by Andrew Taylor and consists of an eclectic set of ranges clearly inspired by retro science fiction and fantasy. Amongst the ranges are the Conquerors of Mictlan (conquistadors and zombies) and their Wars of the Bruce range. At present, as far as historical gamers are concerned, these are the two ranges that have significant interest. The new conquistador range hit the market at the beginning of 2019, and was originally launched as a 2018 Kickstarter. The figures are sculpted by Paul Hicks, Phil Hynes, Martin Buck, Dave Cauley and Paul Muller. The Kickstarter was very successful and allowed Andrew to extend the original plans beyond the conquistadors and conquistador style zombies. The range now includes Mictlan Zombies and undead skeletal elite Jaguar Warriors.

The Conquerors of Mictlan consists of four packs of conquistadors and eleven additional packs of zombies, undead characters and creatures. Foot figures work out at around £4.00 each, a reasonable price considering the numbers of figures you might need and the unique nature of the castings. The main competitors and complementary ranges are TAG, Gringo 40's, Eureka, Outpost and Wargames Foundry. We'll look at the alternatives in a bit more detail after looking at the Conquerors of Mictlan.

I asked Andrew about the range and what he had planned for the future.

Jon Sutherland: Can you tell me a little about yourself and why you created the range?

Andrew Taylor: I've been into miniatures since I was very young. My grandfather served in WW2 and my father taught classical studies, which is where my diverse interest in history began! When my older brothers started playing *Dungeons & Dragons* I was pretty much instantly hooked on metal minis for the rest of my life! As I've had a bit of a passion for the culture clash that is the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, and also being a fan of the fantasy genre, I decided to combine the two!

JS: Who designed and sculpted the range and what were your influences?

AT: We used several sculptors to create this range; most of the work was by Paul Hicks, who did the conquistadores. We

were inspired by Werner Herzog's film *Aguirre, Wrath of God*, based on the historical character Lope de Aguirre. We figured man's descent into madness would play a big part in encountering the terrors of undead Aztecs! We also decided to add a wizard based on Leonardo da Vinci, and we couldn't have him without also having homage to Mona Lisa! We think Paul Hicks does some fantastic historical sculpts and we were not disappointed when we first saw the results.

JS: How would you say the range matches competitors' figures in size and look?

AT: Paul Muller worked on the undead Aztecs. We chose Paul Muller as he

is a master of all things grotesque and rotting! Our idea was to have undead Aztec priests as the main adversaries for our heroes; they would control skeletal warriors, zombies created from their sacrificial victims and the unfortunate explorers who succumbed to their dark magic! We also had a couple of items by Martin Buck (warning signs and the grotesque mermaid!), Phil Hynes (war dog and his puppy) and Dave Cauley (Gorgonopsids, which can be found in our Lost World range).

JS: What's in the range right now and how did you settle on pack sizes and price points?

AT: We think they could fit in well with similar historical ranges such as Gringo's (who does some great conquistadores) and TAG. The undead are very distinctive, but Paul has also designed zombies for Otherworld which would also work well. We have four different packs of conquistador adventurers, we mostly decided on packs of four to give a good mix. We have six packs of undead; two are Aztec Liches who are available as single minis or a set of the two that come with treasure. The sets of skeletons and zombies come in threes, allowing a bit of variety if you want to build up larger units. There are also a couple of other items such as warning signs for piranhas and quicksand which we thought would add a little fun to the games!

JS: Which wargame rules do you see as being ideal for your range?

AT: We think they'd be perfect for *Frostgrave*; *Ghost Archipelago*, and the role playing game *Dragons Conquer America*. They'd also be fun for themed armies for Osprey's *Dragon Rampant* and *En Garde* rules.

JS: How has the range been received at shows and on social media?

AT: We've not done any shows yet due to our geographical isolation! Maybe one day soon we'll make it along to one though. We originally launched them successfully on Kickstarter, and had a good amount of interest.

JS: Where is the range going and what's the timeframe?

AT: Over the next year or so we have plans to add some more conquistadores, this time with a less fantasy approach so they can also be used in historical games, and also a few more variants for the undead. We might also possibly include the odd Mesoamerican themed monster!

JS: How would you like to see the range being used by wargamers?

AT: The adventures make up a small force with all the characters needed for a skirmish game; wizards, sharpshooters, thieves, etc. They'll also be useful for unique characters in other wargames and role playing games, both fantasy and historical. The Aztecs are pretty niche and can be used to make up anything from a small skirmish force to a huge shambling horde!

JS: Some wargamers may not buy into the range as a whole; can you see any of the figures being useful for other theatres or periods?

AT: Definitely. Some of the adventurers would fit in perfectly for historical games of a similar period, and our conquistador zombies would work well in other fantasy settings.

JS: What else do you have in the pipeline that we can look at another time?

AT: We're currently building up a medieval range for the Wars of the Bruces which we're pretty excited about, including both Scots and English forces. Also still to come is an exciting top secret fantasy project with concept art by a well-known comic artist!

WHAT IS *MICTLAN*?

The underworld was a significant part of the belief systems of the Aztecs and the Mayans. *Mictlan* is the underworld realm of the dead (known as *Xibalba* to the Mayans). The souls of most people would enter the underworld and wander through it until they reached the deepest levels of the realm. In many ways, *Mictlan* is similar to the Norse *Niflheim* where those who broke religious or moral rules were punished. The realm is inhabited by the fleshless or the *Atlecalocan* (skeleton-like zombies). A soul entering *Mictlan* would be expected to traverse nine layers of the underworld; this would take four years to complete.

THE FIGURES

The castings are excellent and it was nice to see that the figures needed very little clean up (not even a bit rough on the underside of the bases) and there is minimal construction, only the Mictlan Jaguar Warriors need to have their shields stuck on. There are no visible mould lines either. The "living" figures are all sculpted by Paul Hicks and the undead by Paul Muller. It is clear from the range that these would not be out of place in a RPG scenario set in an alternative South America. As a fan of the original *Call of Cthulhu*, this range would offer an exciting and challenging backdrop to a campaign. Looking at the figure ranges you will be reminded of flash-backs in the first *Indiana Jones* movie and there is certainly a whiff of the old *Mummy* franchise, albeit with a South American flavour.

Let's have a closer look at the packs Andrew sent to me:

Conquistador Explorers set 1 - Leonardo the Mage, "El Loco", Francesco the Apprentice, Bernal the Swordsman (£16.00).

The pack consists of two mages with books under their arms and what appear to be an accomplished fighter and his side-kick. All of the figures are pretty much bang on 30mm, slim built with decent sized bases. They feature an elaborate set of clothing from a fur lined long coat to a very workmanlike set of armour. A particularly nice touch is the tame monkey sitting on the shoulder of the fighter's apprentice.

This is a diverse pack indeed with a Halfling making off with a golden object, a Dwarf with a crossbow and a matching pair of fighters. There isn't much difference in height between the Halfling and Dwarf, but the latter is noticeably broader across the hips and chest. The best two figures in the pack are the sword-wielders. The female is at rest, with slender proportions and resting on a long sword. The male is armoured from the thighs up and even has a metal face mask. He is brandishing an elaborate two-handed sword.

Conquistadors Explorers set 2 - Mendoza the swordsman, Lisa the swords woman, Alvarez the Dwarf marksman, and Pedro the Halfling thief (£16.00).

Conquistador Zombies set 1 (£12.00).

The first of the zombie packs with three wobbly-bodied conquistador undead. Nice crisp castings and perfect to switch with human characters that have bitten the dust in game. The second conquistador zombie set has three more figures, one with a morion helmet and another with a sword. If anything the zombification process seems to have added a couple of millimetres to figures as these are slightly taller than the humans.

These are three lovely figures, with the biggest at around 40mm including the head-dresses. Just what you would expect a Jaguar warrior to look like, except they are undead! Nicely detailed weapons and exquisite shields with feathers attached to them. Certainly the "elite" zombies if such a thing exists.

Mictlan Jaguar Warriors (£12.00)

ADDING A BIT OF VARIETY

If you wanted to beef up your conquistador force the simplest choice is to go for the boxed set of plastic crewmen from the *Frostgrave Ghost Archipelago* range developed by North Star. If you are taking the *Frostgrave* approach with these figures, then the old El Dorado range sculpted by Mark Copplestone for Wargames Foundry is a good bet. I'd also consider looking at the Wars of Religion range by Warlord; they have very nice swordsmen, together with pikes and arquebusiers.

TAG has over 30 packs of Spanish that would be suitable for the conquistador period including several mounted figures. Gringo 40's has a small range of conquistadors and some rather lovely casts of Cortez, Montezuma II (the Aztec Emperor) and Pedro de Alvarado. There are some rather intriguing artillery pieces in the same range.

Mictlan Lich - An undead adversary who commands the dead (£5.00).

A single undead figure with a distinctive bird-shaped headdress. This is a very elegant and spindly character depicted in the process of summoning up some more zombies. With the headdress, he stands a shade over 30mm.

Some of the most characterful conquistadors are from Eureka; the range also includes a handful of native troops and some Portuguese sailors. Outpost Wargames' Warfare in Meso-America range is one of the largest on the market. It has extensive lists for the Mayans, Aztecs and Incas along with the conquistadors and their allies. No undead!

Finally, California-based Moonlight Miniatures have a range of pirate related "heroic 28mm" figures. Most of them are skeletons, zombies or otherwise undead in some way, shape or form. A careful look across the range will reveal several likely candidates to beef up your zombie horde.

Setting the undead aside for a moment, Antediluvian has some lovely human figures that would be as much at home in a *Frostgrave* scenario as a historical dust up pitting the conquistadors against the Mayans, Aztecs or Incas.

Antediluvian Miniatures (www.antediluvianminiatures.com).

HOW TO...
MODIFY A TOWER
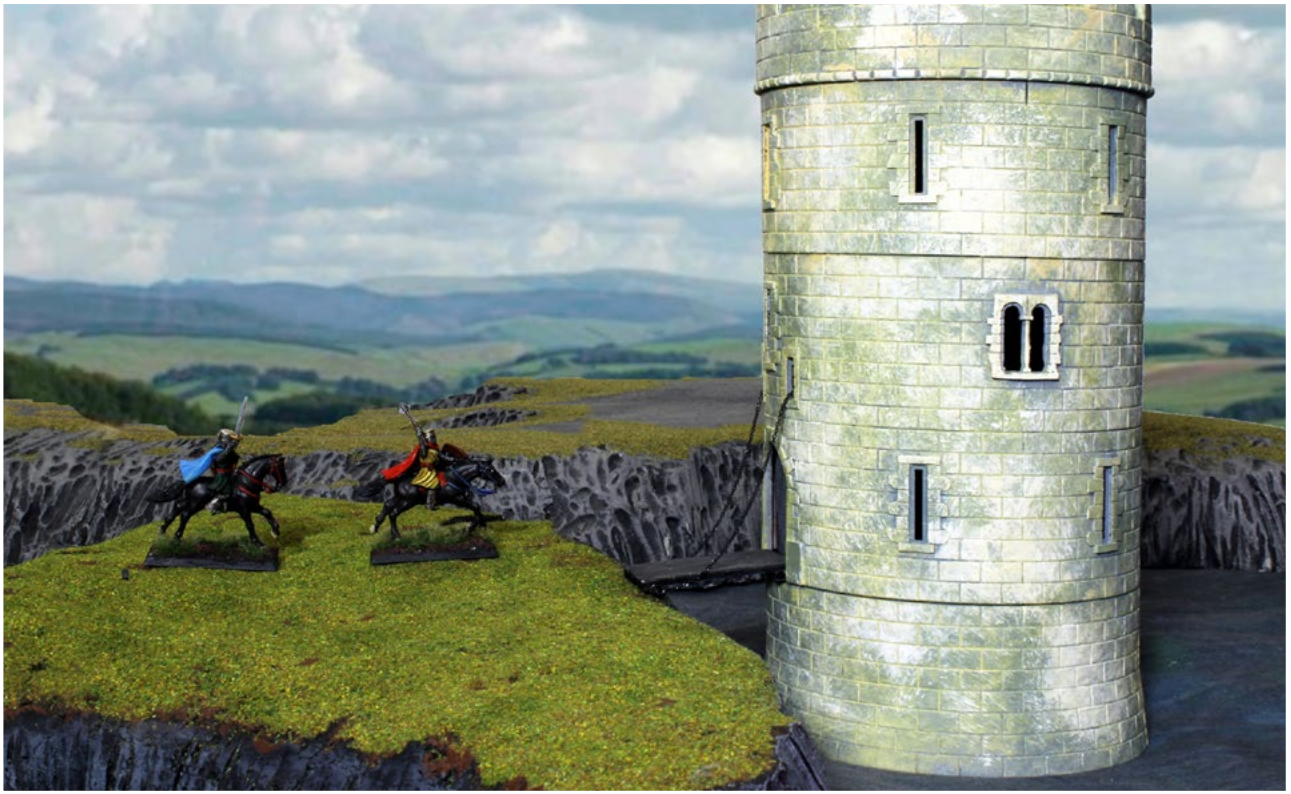
Our regular 'how to-er' Paul Davies returns to show us how to take on a tower conversion.

I'd been thinking about building a medieval tower for some time, loosely based on the one in the 1965 film *The War Lord* which starred Charlton Heston as Chrysagon de la Cruex, a Norman knight tasked with defending a village from Frisian raiders. You can scratch-build towers using the cardboard tubes used for storing carpets, but when I noticed that Warlord Games' Round Tower was available again for just £5, I decided on a slightly quicker, if lazier, approach, and I ordered two, and my next 'How to…' project, just seemed to kick-start itself.

The tower sections fit together securely without glue thus allowing access to each level, so you can place figures inside, and is essential if you want access to the drawbridge winding mechanism.

The original un-modified tower.

A NEW MAIN ENTRANCE

The original model has the entrance at ground level, but I wanted my version to stand in a river (or moat), so it needed a higher entry point to accommodate a drawbridge.

First I cut a suitable opening to match the height of my terrain. If you use terrain clothes, fleeces or throws, then you might need to build a small 'mound' onto which the drawbridge will rest when open. I'd suggest you make the mound first, THEN cut the entrance aperture to match it.

WINDOWS

I wanted extra windows in my tower, and I raided my 'bits box' for some suitable metal ones. They were quite deep compared to the thickness of the tower walls, so I thinned them down using my Black & Decker® Wizard Rotary Tool set at its slowest speed.

Next I cut matching apertures, gently curved the windows to follow the curve of the tower and glued them in place.

I also cut some narrower windows to which Plasticard lintels and sills were added top and bottom, and plastic brick edging was glued to the sides.
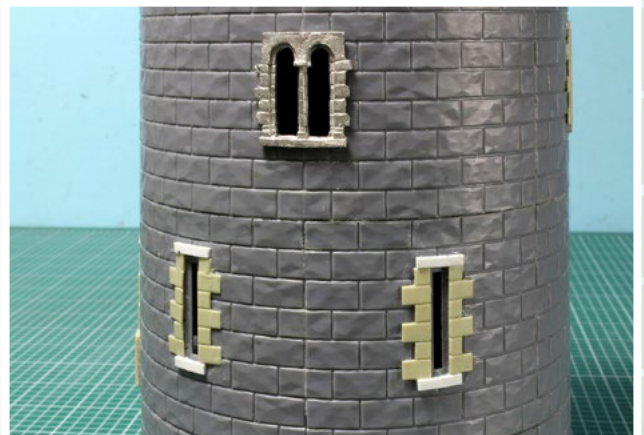
FINISHING THE MAIN ENTRANCE

To finish off the main entrance I added two large rectangles of Plasticard forming the abutments, and more brick edging. I cut the latter partially between each brick so it could be bent to follow the shape of the archway and finished off the main entrance with a keystone made from Plasticard.

Next I cut two narrow slots, rainures, through which the chains supporting the drawbridge run, and edged them with strips of thin Plasticard.

The lower edge of the battlement piece has a solid ring around it I thought looked too regular, so I made a series of cuts to break it up. I also filled a few gaps using Perfect Plastic Putty® by Deluxe materials. It's a one-part filler, dries quickly, fills deep gaps, gives a really smooth finish, takes paint well, is low-odour, and is reasonably priced, so it ticks all my boxes.

I decided my added brickwork looked too neat so I randomly cut off a few corners.

The tower looked rather 'bitty' at this stage so I gave it a grey undercoat to blend everything together.

MAKING THE DRAWBRIDGE

The first step was adding a bar made from plastic rod across the bottom of the gateway.

A drawbridge was made from balsa, with lines scored on the upper surface to simulate individual planks. On the underside I glued transverse balsa 'reinforcing' strips. The reinforcing strip at the door end fits over the plastic rod to create a hinging mechanism. And at the other end I glued a piece of plastic rod to which the chains to raise the drawbridge would be attached.

Between the transverse strips I glued thin strips of wood-grained card, because in my experience, if you score both sides of thin balsa it can weaken it or make it curve.

Although I didn't see the need for a scale reproduction of an historic winding mechanism, I needed some method of raising and lowering the drawbridge. My solution could hardly be described as elegant, but it was functional.

Two brass eyes, with a spacer made from plastic tube, were screwed into a block of balsa, and three holes were drilled into a short length of barbeque skewer which formed the horizontal winding shaft - the outer holes for the chain, and the centre for a locking pole to stop the drawbridge lowering of its own accord. This latter element wasn't really necessary because the balsa drawbridge was so light that it stayed raised, but I didn't want to take any chances. The barbeque skewer was threaded through the eyes to complete the mechanism. I wanted to be able to remove the mechanism, so gluing it in position was out of the question, so I drilled a fixing hole through the centre of the balsa base.

I positioned the mechanism in the tower and using the previously drilled hole on the balsa base as a guide drilled through the floor. The winding mechanism could then be firmly held in place by pushing a cocktail stick through the base and floor. Prior to fitting, the winding mechanism was painted black and lightly drybrushed grey.

We'll return to the winding mechanism when we get to the drawbridge fitting stage which comes after the main tower is painted.
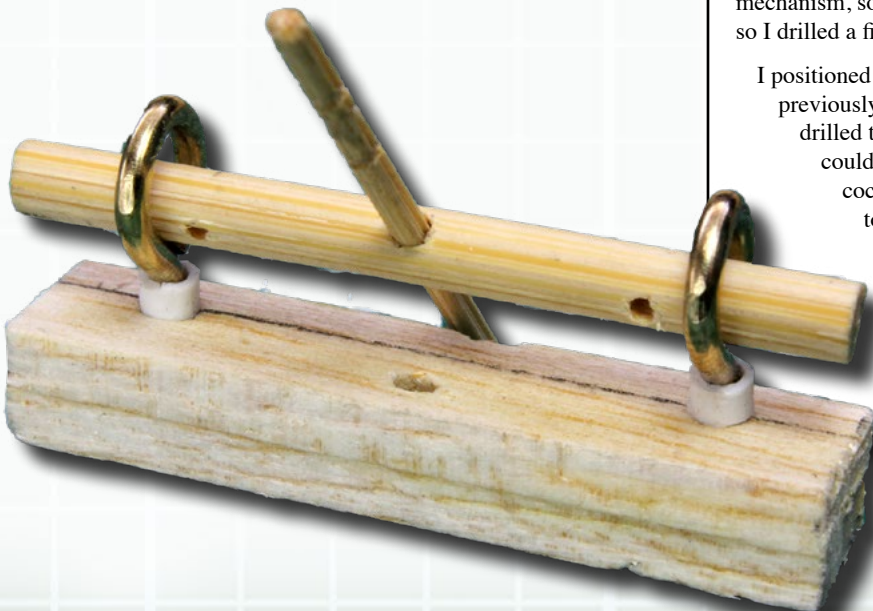
DOORWAY

The door was made from balsa scored with a ballpoint pen to simulate the planks, and I made some inner supports from scrap Plasticard to hold it in place.

The door fitted neatly in position.
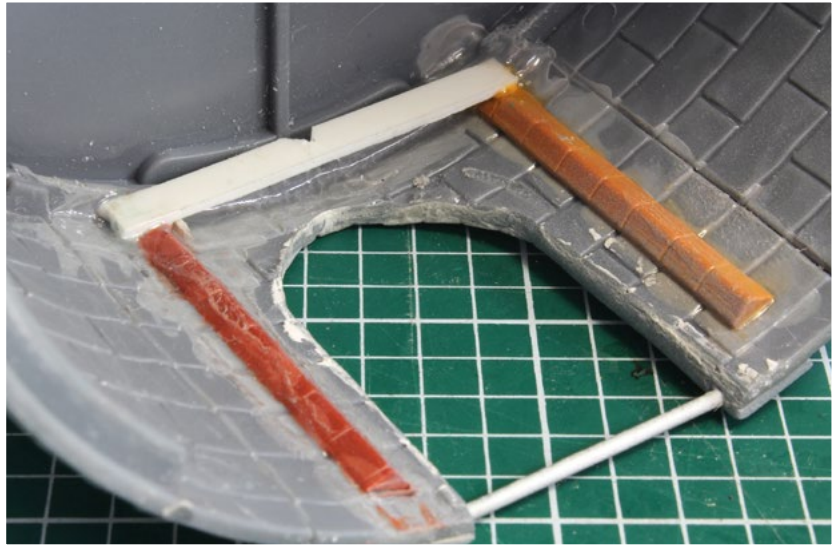
PAINTING

I sprayed the tower with random 'blotches' of different greys to break up the overall surface. But I felt that it needed something more. So I thinned some Dulux Golden Umber 3 to the consistency of milk, and using a piece of sponge, dabbed it over the tower. The extreme thinning combined with the 'sponging' generally avoids hard edges. When the paint had thoroughly dried, I added thinned white to the mix and 'sponged' that randomly over the tower too. The final result worked for me, although strangely even though the colours used were grey, orangey-yellow and white, the overall impression was 'green', but for old stonework it seemed appropriate; I'll definitely use this colour combination again.

To complete the painting stage, the drawbridge and door were painted black and drybrushed with successively lighter coats of grey.

ADDING THE DRAWBRIDGE

The tower end of the drawbridge was slotted into position over the bar in the tower doorway; the other end lowered onto the 'bank'. To connect the drawbridge to the winding mechanism, I 'borrowed' a length of fine chain from my wife's jewellery making box and sprayed it matt black.

I clipped off the clasp leaving the closed ring to fit over the length of plastic rod that was attached to the underside of the drawbridge. The chain was then cut into two pieces. Working on one side at a time I looped the ring over the rod and threaded it through the rainure and the left hand hole on the horizontal shaft.

Maintaining light tension on the chain I dripped superglue onto the chain where it rested on the shaft. Once the superglue had set, I trimmed off the excess chain and put it in my 'Bits box' for another project. To prevent the chain sliding off the drawbridge rod I cut a short length of plastic tube and slid it over the end of the rod.

I then repeated the procedure with the right hand chain, and touched up the drawbridge and fittings as necessary.

As already mentioned, I had drilled a hole for a locking rod to prevent the winding shaft 'unrolling' and with the drawbridge raised, a length of cocktail stick was inserted into the centre hole to complete the winding mechanism.

And that's about it … one modified medieval tower ready to be besieged or defended.

93

TOP TIPS FOR OUTSTANDING
WARGAMING VIDEO REPORTS

Where are all the good quality wargaming video after action reports? Greg Wagman of Little Wars TV shares his experience and top tips for improving the quality of online AARs.

Today, we live in a true golden age for wargaming videos. Cameras are cheap, the quality of HD recording is high, and basic editing software is free. Combine those tools with the global audience of YouTube and Facebook, and the miniature wargaming hobby should be more visible and accessible than ever before. By simply opening your web browser, you are one click away from a flood of dazzling, exciting video reports of wargames from around the world.

Or not. Where are all of those high quality videos? Certainly not on YouTube. You'll find plenty of wargaming videos, no doubt - just don't expect to be entertained or impressed. Looking for poorly-lit photo-montages with thumping rock music in the background? Check. How about a shaky camera bobbing over a felt battlefield for an unedited, continuous ten minute shot? Check. Or maybe you prefer an exhausting turn-by-turn narration of someone's latest, home-grown rule system? Trust me, they're the best, most realistic wargaming rules ever written and there's a thirty minute video of a guy playing in his basement to prove it.

As a hobby community, we can do better. Ours is a visual hobby, so the raw material for compelling, exciting videos is already on the table. Thousands of players around the world maintain impressive blogs and websites with photographs of their battles. Why not videos? If wargamers spent half as much time filming their games as they do painting their miniatures, the entire hobby could experience an online renaissance. It's a renaissance urgently needed to draw in the next generation of tabletop players. We know that critical young audiences consume a staggering amount of content on YouTube - over 80% of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25 watch YouTube, and the average user watches over an hour of video there per week!

Are you getting excited to break out your camera and start recording your next wargame? Good. But before you hit "record," take a moment to consider why so many existing video reports are so terribly unwatchable. Ask yourself: What do viewers really want to see in a good video after action report (AAR)? Reflect on that question first and you'll already be well on your way to producing one of the better videos available online.

As a fellow wargamer, I confess to watching video AARs for two reasons: (1) I want to see miniature eye candy; and (2) I want to hear players talking strategy. Remember these two goals when you're planning to record your next battle and once you've drilled those twin objectives into your mind, consider the following ten tips for producing a video AAR worthy of more than 35 YouTube views.

RULES TO REMEMBER

#1

YOU ALREADY OWN THE TOOLS

Just about everyone has access to all the necessary tools for creating outstanding video AARs. You don't need any unusual or expensive equipment to do this job well. In fact, all you need is a basic camera and a computer. Digital video can now be captured with inexpensive recorders, webcams, and even your cell phone. Video editing software has never been easier to operate--your basic PC comes equipped with "Windows Movie Maker." Better still, Mac owners have access to "iMovie," one of the best video editing programs available anywhere. Virtually every wargamer is already equipped with all the tools, so there are no excuses for inaction.

#2

BRIEF YOUR PLAYERS

Before filming a video AAR, take a few minutes to talk to all the players and brief them on your plans. You'd be surprised how many people are uncomfortable on camera, so spend time disarming them before the film starts rolling. Remind them to act naturally and ignore the camera when you're recording live game play. For any pre-game or post-game interviews, give participants a moment to compose their thoughts and encourage them to be concise. If they stumble or lose their train of thought during an interview, just stop the recording and try it again. The beauty of digital video is that you can shoot as many attempts as necessary to get the right footage.

Above: Use of multiple cameras with shotgun microphone attachments can step up production quality to another level.

#3

PLAYER STRATEGIES

Whenever I watch (or read) a wargame AAR, I immediately want to know the strategies of the opposing commanders. If you're planning a video, set aside time to interview the players on both sides and have them explain their initial plans. Are they plotting a sweeping flank attack? Are they hoping to hang back and allow the enemy to make the first mistake? If it's a historical scenario, how are they departing from history? Are they trying to avoid a specific tactical mistake by their historical counter-part? I aim to devote at least 20% of my overall video time to setting the stage with pre-battle planning.

And when the game ends, ask the players one simple question on camera: "In three sentences or less, tell me if your initial plan worked as you intended?" That's usually enough to get them on the right track for post-game analysis. Any good AAR wrap-up includes a discussion of what players would do differently next time.

If you're feeling especially ambitious, you can pause the game between turns to film a mid-game interview update. There's no need to pause between every single turn (Rule #7 forbids it!), but one or two such breaks can offer excellent material. Players behave differently on camera during the battle than they do before or after the game ends.

As you might imagine, capturing all this footage is much easier when a referee or GM is the one handling camera duties. If one of the game players also doubles as your camera operator, opposing commanders won't be forthcoming with their battle plans. If you do lack an independent GM for filming, just set your camera on a tripod in a separate room and have the players record themselves. This "self recording" option tends to work best if your players are already experienced with video AARs and know what's expected of them on camera. If you are attempting to film your very first AAR, have an independent GM direct the filming duties. This way, when players are uncomfortable or rambling off topic on camera, he can rein them in and offer direction. As a final word of advice, remember to keep any player interviews as brief as possible - each spot should be well under 30 seconds. In the editing bay, you'll try to cut those segments shorter still.

#4

CAPTURE MANY ANGLES

Do not film your entire battle from a single angle. To create visual interest, you need quick cuts from different angles to keep the viewer engaged. When filming your game, be sure to capture multiple vantage points, including: (1) overhead shots, showing the full tabletop; (2) close ups of the best painted miniatures; (3) sweeping panoramas from the eye-level of the table; (4) shots of the players themselves. It's easy to forget this last part! In addition to the game in progress, viewers do like to see the players rolling dice, moving miniatures, or talking shop table-side. Show human interaction.

If you suffer from a debilitating case of "shaky hand syndrome," employ a tripod for a stable platform. I've discovered the trick to capturing steady shots without the help of a tripod is to hold my breath and only film for ten second intervals. My most recent video AAR ran five minutes, which included almost 40 different clips, which means my average edited shot time lasted under ten seconds.

Above: Modern DSLR cameras capture excellent video quality, but most phones also contain surprisingly effective cameras.

#5

FIND THE TURNING POINT

Every wargame, like every real battle, has a pivotal moment when the outcome hangs in the balance. What was your Pickett's Charge moment? Your video must identify this climax, either in a voiceover or live player interaction filmed mid-game. This is the single highlight of the battle every viewer is waiting to see, so you better deliver the drama. Some games have a more obvious and exciting turning point than others, but no matter how deep into the footage you need to dig, find that moment and underscore it in your video.

It should go without saying that there is no need for you to film an entire four-hour game. Footage of players moving miniatures around the table is nice for ten seconds of filler or a quick montage, but no one wants to watch several minutes of a live-action turn. There is no faster way to lose a viewer's attention than panning across the tabletop, telling us what each individual unit is doing every turn. I don't care, and neither will anyone else. During the editing process, it will be up to you to comb through your available footage and highlight only a handful of critical scenes. And how will you transition between those highlights in a seamless, logical manner, all while explaining to viewers what's happening in the game? Voiceovers.

#6

VOICEOVERS

The voiceover track is your friend - probably your very best friend - when making a video AAR. This wonderful tool allows you to string together a seemingly random collection of footage and tell a coherent story to the viewer. Best of all, you can record the voiceover after watching and editing your footage. I liberally take advantage of voiceovers to explain everything happening on screen. Often, I'll write a brief script for myself and read directly from the script in the voiceover.

Computer microphones are quite inexpensive, but what if you don't own one and don't feel like spending $10 to acquire one? No problem - just use your video camera. Set up a tripod and simply record a video of yourself reading the scripted voiceover, then overlay that perfect audio into the editing software. In fact, I've found through experience that the audio quality on my Canon camera is vastly superior to my $10 computer microphone.

#7

EDIT MERCILESSLY

Nowadays, it seems that people's online attention spans are exhausted faster than you can finish reading this sentence. If you don't believe me, consider this - the average video watch time on Facebook in 2019 was a mere ten seconds! What does that horrifying statistic mean for your wargaming video AAR? Keep it short. While it may not be possible to tell a satisfying story in less than ten seconds, your goal is to tell the full story of your game in the least possible time.

Allow me to suggest a few basic guidelines. If you're filming a video for a game that lasted three or four hours, you want an edited video clocking in around five minutes or less. Do your best to limit the length as much as possible, skimming over most of the game's action to focus on player strategy and a couple of critical battlefield moments, when a commander is killed or a major break-through occurs.

#8

GUNFIRE! EXPLOSIONS! BUGLES!

Little additions like sound effects can go a long way toward enhancing your AAR. It's easier than ever to download thousands of interesting sound effects online and incorporate them into your video. Gunfire, cannon blasts, bugle calls, drum rolls, the rumble of tank tracks, the buzz of an airplane propeller - you get the idea. Help capture the full effect of your battle with a judicious sprinkling of authentic sound effects. Modern video editing software allows you to drop those sound effects directly into the video with the click of a button. If you're looking for a place to start, try the YouTube Audio Library, where you can search, preview, and then download hundreds of copyright free effects.

THE IPHONE AAR CHALLENGE

Not long after completing my first video AAR for our local wargaming club four years ago, a friend made an off-hand remark which evolved into a full-blown challenge. His exact comment, taken verbatim from our club's private Facebook group, was: "My iPhone takes very good macro photos, but I wouldn't try to do an entire AAR video with it." Sure enough, I resolved to use nothing but my phone to both film and edit our next video battle report. How did I fare? Judge the results for yourself by visiting YouTube and searching for "Second Manassas 6mm War Game." And when you watch that old video, just keep reminding yourself what can be accomplished with a cell phone or tablet. When it's time to edit your raw footage into a compelling video, remember that free editing software is available for handheld devices. All editing you see in this Second Manassas video was done four years ago on an old iPad, running a free Apple program called iMovie. Imagine what you could do today, with more powerful free editing tools! Go ahead and take the "iPhone AAR Challenge" at your next club event.

#9

CUT THE MUSIC

We may have reached Tip #9, but this is Problem #1 in almost every video AAR online today. Cut the music. No one wants to watch your video with a four minute rock-anthem soundtrack. That's not interesting for viewers. Remember the two goals you pledged to follow at the beginning of the article - viewers want to see eye candy and hear player strategy. Your personal musical playlist is not part of the equation.

This is not to suggest that music, like sound effects, cannot enhance a video AAR. I often use brief clips of period-appropriate music in my own videos, but never more than thirty seconds at a time. Your video AAR is going to be short and concise, so don't waste valuable screen time with musical tracks. Audiences want to hear voiceover from players, discussing game strategy and decision-making.

Above: : The Battle of Isandlwana filmed in 6mm scale on a custom tabletop.

#10

CUT AGAIN

When you have a rough cut of your AAR prepared, let it sit for a day and return with fresh eyes. Watch it again and ask yourself what else can be trimmed out and left on the cutting room floor. I like to take a piece of paper and note the screen time whenever I find my attention slipping or the action has lulled. Afterwards, I open my editing software and hunt for ways to trim down those problem areas. Devote most of your discriminating attention to the opening thirty seconds of the video - statistically, almost all online viewers decide whether or not to continue watching a video within the first ten seconds!

Greg Wagman studied history at the University of Notre Dame and is the author of the grand tactical American Civil War rules *Altar of Freedom*. He is the co-creator and producer of Little Wars TV.

#11

WATCH SOME EXAMPLES

The best way to improve your own video AARs to is to go online and watch others. If the video captures your attention, note what they did right; moreover, if you barely made it past the one minute mark without clicking away, what didn't work? Despite the depressing preponderance of unwatchable video AARs online, there are a number of excellent examples out there, waiting to be discovered. In the summer of 2018 my local gaming club decided to stop being armchair critics of other videos and get off the sidelines. We launched Little Wars TV with the intent to film ten famous historical tabletop battles. That was two years ago - today we're closing in on 150 videos and two million views. It's fun to look back at some of the earliest videos and see how we improved at following the advice in this article through practice. We hope Little Wars TV may inspire others to pick up a camera and film their own games.

Producing higher-quality wargaming reports benefits our entire hobby community. Friends and club members enjoy watching them, almost as scrapbook mementos, for years after the battle. But just as importantly, the internet allows the best videos to be shared with a global audience of fellow gamers for all of us to enjoy, as well as giving the hobby increased exposure to a younger generation of potential hobbyists.

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