

Historicon 2023: Gaming Up A Storm

Snappy Nappy: Russia 1812 Campaign Day

Old Favorites: Dealer Area And More

Tournaments: Photo Gallery

Walkabouts: Photo Gallery

Digression: PELA Awards

Back in Walkabout Action: Photo Gallery

Hail of Fire: Kursk 1943

Star Schlock: Dealer Demo Game

Hotel Room: Wall Art Game Board?

GameMaster of the Year: Martyn Kelly

Pour Encourager Les Autres (PELA) Awards

HMGS Fall In! 2023: November 3–5, 2023

Let's Scarper: Traveller RPG - Wanted Dead or Alive

Operation RoundUp Playtest: 1943 Invasion

Books I've Read:

Battle of the Cities: East Front Urban Warfare

Before Augustus: Collapse of the Roman Republic

German Peasants' War 1524-26: Retinue to Regt 17

Panzers of Prokhorovka: 1943 Citadel

F-8 Crusader Vietnam 1963-73: Dogfight 7

Albuera Eyewitness: 16 May 1811

Roman Special Forces and Special Ops

Midway Submerged: Submarine Ops May-June 1942

Naval Battles of WWII: Atlantic and Mediterranean

US Naval Aviation 1945-2003: Images of War

Javelin Rain (Sci fi novel)

The Space Merchants (sci-fi novel)

Time Travelers Strictly Cash (sci-fi novel)

The American Revolution 1774-83: Essen Histories

John Hampden and Battle of Chalgrove 1643

El Salvador: Volume 1 Latin America at War 32

Dutch-Indonesian War 1945-49: Men at Arms 550

The SVD Dragunov Rifle: Weapon 87

War in Ukraine 2022: Europe at War 28

Early Pacific Raids 1942: Campaign 392

History of Jungle Warfare: Early Days to Vietnam

Covert Radar and Signals Interception

Nazi Spies & Collaborators in Britain 1939-1945

Rooks in Afghanistan: SU-25 '81-85 Asia War 42

The Reichstag Fire: Case Against Nazi Conspiracy

Nine Lives of the Flying Tiger: Asia at War 43

Rommel's Afrika Korps in Colour: WWII Photography

Texian Volunteer vs Mexican Soldier: Combat 74

Real Weathering: Reference for Military Modellers

US Navy Protected Cruisers 1883-1918: New Vngd 320

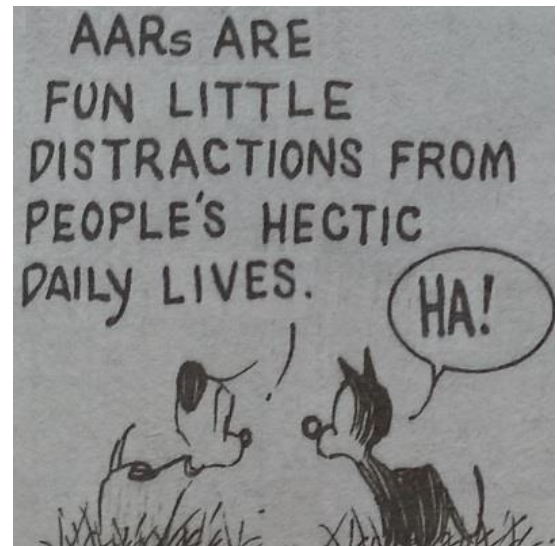
Allied Tanks at El Alamein 1942: New Vanguard 321

P-47 Razorbacks of 8th AF Colours

German Self-Propelled Artillery 1940-45: Images War

The Battles of King Arthur

The Roman King Arthur? Lucius Artorius Castus



Historicon 2023: Gaming Up A Storm

by Russ Lockwood

The ride west to Lancaster, PA, took longer than usual, in part due to construction traffic, but was otherwise uneventful. Indeed, as if to make up for the time, I had missed a turn in Lancaster and its one-way streets but found the entrance to the parking garage next to the Lancaster Convention Center all the faster. I gotta remember to make the same mistake next year.

The Marriott room.

I will make my apologies early for my photography. Technology can only do so much for me. I'll also apologize for not capturing every game, although I tried to do walkabouts throughout the convention.

After hotel check-in, it was down to the convention on Thursday just after noon-ish. My first stop: a 14-table, 20-gamer *Snappy Nappy* game already in progress.



The 14 tables (in 2.5 rows) used for Snappy Nappy.

Snappy Nappy: Campaign in a Day 1812

Mark, with assist from Peter and James, had started the *Snappy Nappy* Campaign in a Day event with all 20 tickets taken. They brought the 14-table (each 4x6 feet) set up to the Freedom Hall (next to dealer area) and by the time I arrived at about noon-ish, the game was in full swing -- I believe it started at 10.

The full report will be on Peter's Blunders On the Danube blog, but I will relate what transpired as best I can. For full disclosure, I created *Snappy Nappy (SN)* and it is published by On Military Matters, which had a booth at the show.

This game was set in northern Russia during 1812. Napoleon may well be on his way east towards Moscow, but our game focuses on a French force tasked with heading north to St. Petersburg. Naturally, the Russians want to stop that and if possible, push south to grab (or maybe torch) the French supply base at Polosk.

PELA-worthy painting of 28mm figures, but when you have to bring 14 tables-worth of terrain, flat felt saves weight and bulk.

The First Three Turns

Mark had created and GMed this campaign back in fall of 2022 up in CT (see the 12/01/2022 AAR for the recap) and used the results from the day to tweak a few things. First off, his fall 2022 pre-game recon was brilliant -- map-driven with extensive "purple prose" about cavalry scouting and the spy on each side. Obviously, he couldn't do that before the show, so he used the first three turns to allow cavalry brigades to move across the tables in an effort to pinpoint the enemy.

Alas, I missed it, but several folks I talked to during the event commented on the appeal of such scouting.

What's this about not bunching up?

Don't Bunch Up

Bear with me here...

When you GM a game in the back room of a game store with 14 tables, you have a sort of buffer from the rest of the store and can walk between tables to sort out anything that occurs. In addition, since a big *SN* game has been run for eight years, returning players have an idea what to expect and how to maneuver.

When you do the same at



an open ballroom with new gamers, plus all the coming and going, chaos is a bit tougher to tamp down. It's tough enough with a single table. Now consider 14 of them. They may be relatively next to each other, but that's why you need extra umpires.

Umpire Peter (striped shirt) helps four players battling in the center sector.



After the initial flurry of scouting moves, the reports came back about enemy positions and the C-in-Cs issued orders and the commands were off to the races.

Except it seemed to be when I showed up that there was one huge battle on one table, one medium-sized battle on another, and most of the other tables empty.

At the huge battle, gamers were waiting for turns to be completed so they could enter the table with their troops. It was a fine traffic jam, but also a fine smash and bash for the leading commands.

Umpire James (tan cap) ran this "western" table all day long as more and more commands descended upon it. Note that Umpire Peter (upper right) also came over to lend a hand. This was at 3:20pm real time on Thursday.



The Big Pushes

After scouting, the French and Russian forces made a beeline for each other. That's a great idea to get into battle quickly, but has one drawback: the commands stack up and back up. When the two sides went after each other, they had limited road space.

That's what *SN* does: puts time and space maneuvering into a wider framework than on just one table. When you physically isolate commands (and commanders) on separate tables, the fog of war factor goes up and you start to understand the benefits of scouting and deciding how to cross areas that don't seem to have any troops nearby.

Withdrawals from the central sector to head over to the other table as the C-in-Cs kept calling in troops. This was at 3:22pm real time on Thursday.

What forces are off table to the flank? Do I stop to check every road so I won't be surprised, slowing my march? Or do I march as quickly as possible to try and surprise the enemy on their flank? As C-in-C, will my sub-commanders follow my orders and appear where I want them to quickly, or will they get bogged down by enemy forces with the same idea?



Flanking Maneuvers

With the two main forces locked on the western part of the campaign area, a small French command tried to loop around through the center. The Russians had the same idea. These two met on a different table, with the Russians enjoying what looked like a 3:1 edge in troops.

By 3:30pm, the French are setting up a blocking position. The Russians will enter via the road next to the woods.

I watched as first one Russian command, and then another, and then another appeared on side roads. The French became quite concerned. Then the battle began as both sides probed the other and sought to get a handle on the combat mechanics. They seemed to get the idea soon enough, but a funny thing happened on the way to a Russian victory here -- the French put up a heckuva fight.

The battle raged on in the central area.

The Eastern Campaign Area

The "eastern" area contained a main road that was about as direct as possible between the victory cities of St. Petersburg and Polotsk. Aside from a single Russian cavalry brigade that used this road to hook around the French, not one single command appeared on this wide-open flank from about 1pm to the ending time of about 4pm.

The Russians arrive at 3:37pm (real time), fake left and exit the table to the right where the player is standing. That road led to the big battle on the far table (upper right corner of photo).

Hours of game play and not one command beyond the cavalry explored the roads.

Out of earshot of the players, I wondered if there was a reason for this. In our fall game, this was the most bitterly contested bunch of tables with deep flank penetrations and withdrawals to find better defensive positions before the flankers put a hurt on the flankers.

The gist I ascertained from overhearing conversations was that each side wanted to concentrate to overwhelm the other, and likewise, the other needed to concentrate to foil the overwhelming. The end result was two large armies that formed into traffic jams.

When the central battle was reported, both C-in-Cs recalled their forces to doubly secure their size "advantage."

Table labels help the GMs keep track of what table is where. The gray felt is a deployment zone where troops arrive/depart along a road.



Obviously, I have 20-20 hindsight about how the maps connected and where the players were at various moments in the game. I have even more hindsight about how long a typical command will last in a battle barring horrendous die rolls for morale.

But I will point out this is why armies marched as best they could on parallel roads. And the fog of war still seemed to be active as the concentration of troops accelerated on both side.

Everyone On One Table?

At the end of the game, had all movements been carried out, all players were going to end up on the same table. And I mean ALL 20 players on one table.

I had never seen that happen before. Strange things have happened during Campaigns in a Day, but that's one for the books.

With the game called, Mark led the debrief session as players saw all the "real" maps and how they connected.

Mark adjudged it a minor Russian victory based on casualties and geographical occupation.

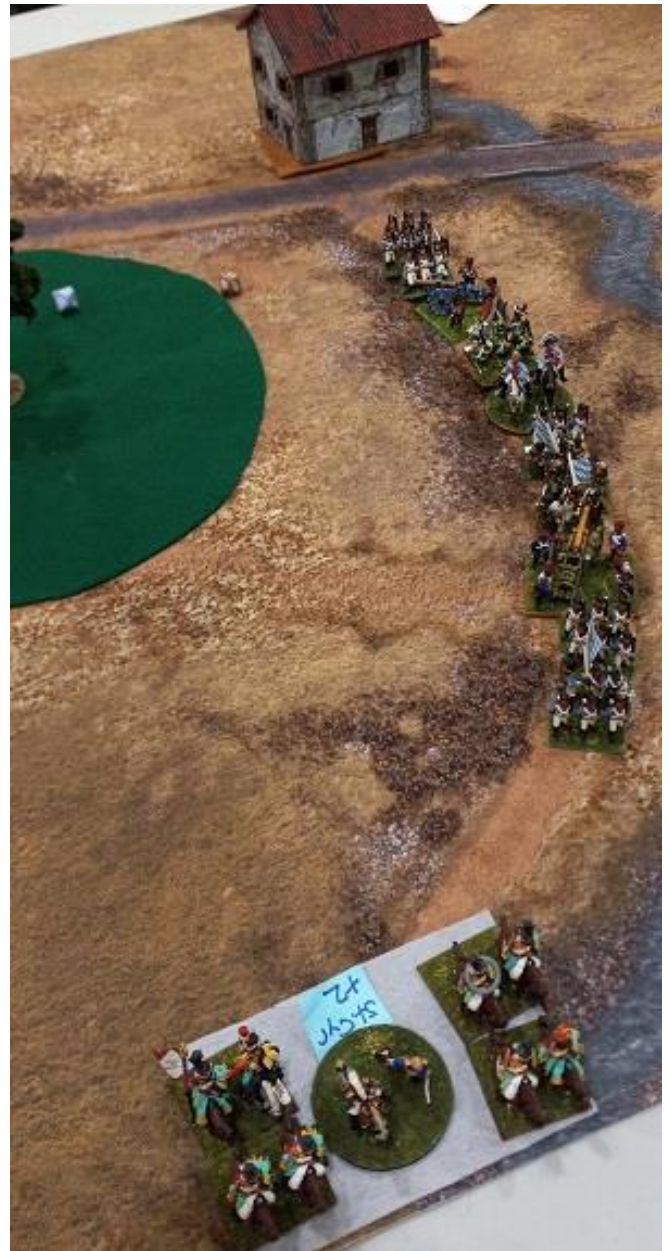
Right: A deployment zone in action. When you move here, you call an umpire over and he takes you to the connected table.

Bottom: First time ever in a SN game – all 20 players move to one table!

Some Post-Game Thoughts

As I helped pick up the game, I thought about the difference between the two games that used the exact same layout and forces. Remember, Mark, Peter, and James brought enough terrain for 14 4x6 tables -- that's 336 square feet! I got to think a lot.

Familiarity with the idea of spreading out to cover a 14-table campaign area versus playing a tactical one-table game probably had a lot to do with it. After the show, I noticed that the summary objectives noted the French should take St. Petersburg but omitted that the Russians should take Polotsk. The idea of keeping terrain free of enemy as a victory condition was probably a galvanizing concept versus the specific capture of St. Petersburg or Polotsk. This might explain the Russian emphasis on concentrating their forces.



On a tactical level, the battles proved intense as players learned the system. Again, that's always a challenge coming into a convention game -- you want to try out a rules set before actually having a copy.

Creator of the scenario and GM extraordinaire Mark (left) debriefs the game, explains the historical result, and shows off the chart how tables actually connect.



Both GM Mark and Umpire Peter takes a well-earned rest after umpiring the game. Umpire James is off photo to right.

In the CT Campaigns in a Day, at least half the gamers are veteran players, so James' 10-minute overview of mechanics is usually more refresher course than introductory explanation.

All that said, I suspect that if these gamers try again, they will spread out more, which would alleviate some of the jam and embrace even more of the fog of war. They all certainly rode to the sound of the guns!

Thanks To All

Thank you to all 20 gamers who participated, especially to Mark who GM'd and is probably still not recovered, and to Peter and James for umpiring.

Shameless Plug: For more on *SN Campaigns in a Day*, visit Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog. All the *SN*'s run over the years are posted, including all maps, OOBs, and player and umpire commentaries. The Quick Reference sheets are also available for download.

Shameless Plug II: Visit Little Wars TV for their *SN Marengo Campaign in a Day* video and also the rules review. Other Campaign recaps and reviews can be found with a web search.

Shameless Plug III: On Military Matters carries the *SN* rules, as does Caliver Books in the UK and other FLGS. *SN* is available in printed and PDF form.



Old Favorites: Dealer Area And More

Dealer Area



*Left: Dealer Area left
Below: Dealer Area right.*

*View from Tournament area in
Freedom Hall.*

Per usual, I did some shopping in the dealer area. I didn't really need the new figures, but they were there, I was there, and out came the wallet. I didn't take my usual aisle photos. Too much chatting and gawking around the show...

Wally's Basement

I bought some items in the WB flea market area. I didn't really need the new figures, but they were there, I was there...oh, I already used that rationalization. I almost went for more, but I have yet to use what I picked up at Cold Wars...

*Entrance to Wally's Basement flea market
on Saturday morning at 10:57am.*

HMGS tried something different with the times, opening it in the evening and closing it in the afternoon. I heard some of the dealers praise the move because gamers would come in and browse the dealer area.

Game Library.

I know I was fooled by the hours, heading down in the afternoons and finding it closed. It pays to read the convention program. No worries, plenty more to see elsewhere in the show.

Come to think of it, I only went in WB that one time.



Game Library

It may be my imagination, but this seems to get more and more popular with each show. Fork over your badge and get a game to play. Hand the game back and get you badge back.

Of course, putting it just outside Wally's Basement helped...

Hobby University

I was determined to find Hobby University and I did: On the Fourth Floor. You need to use the elevator to get there. This is the place where you can take a course in painting up miniatures or terrain. It was well attended when I popped in and with young folks, too.

According to the convention booklet, kudos to Cotton Jim's Flags, Gaddis Gaming, Michigan Toy Co., Phalanx Games, Reaper Miniatures, and The Wargaming Co for sponsoring H.U.



Hobby University in progress.

War College

I failed to attend even a single talk at the show, mostly because they were held on the top floor of the "tower." Pity. Many a good one, but I am always so torn between expert lecturers and expert games. Often, they are one in the same.

I do read a lot, so I can rationalize that I already get a good dose of history.

*Freedom Hall
Tournament area on
Friday morning at
9:14am.*



Member Meeting

For the first time in a long time, I missed the HMGS member meeting. I plead a good excuse: a gaming buddy from 25 years ago attended the show and it was old home night, so I went to dinner with him and another buddy who is moving back into the area after decades elsewhere in the country. It was like the clock never moved from decades ago!

The big news, from what I gather, is that there will be no Cold Wars 2024. So, don't complain about Valley Forge if the alternative is no convention.

Tournaments: Walkabout Photo Gallery

So those are the events I missed, but here are events that I made, if only to watch a bit, maybe talk a bit, and photo a bit. My details are skimpy per game, but I rationalize that I needed to keep moving to cover three floors of gaming.

Why, yes, I certainly do rationalize a lot at a show.

First, the tournaments...

Firelock Games' prep area.



Blood and Plunder: Easter Island

At the time, I didn't see gamers in intense competition, but I did find the best tournament table at the show -- the big heads made an appearance. Sure, other tables' terrain was better, but look at the big heads! Firelock Games gets a tip o' the electron.

The big heads of Easter Island...or are they from Third Rock from the Sun?



Blood and Valor

Another Firelock tourney, this one underway. Skirmish level WWI if I can squint enough.

Blood and Valor tournament in progress.

Bolt Action

Classic WWII skirmish action in the heat of action. Always well attended.

Flames of War

Another classic WWII rules set. They always bring great boards and fierce competition.

As it is a tournament with a point system, you do get same country on same country battles. I watched a German on German game...drawn in by the inclusion of a train.



Bolt Action tournament stretches to the wall.

Art de la Guerre

I see the same *ADLG* gamers in tournaments multiple times per year. The competition is at a high level and there's a worldwide rating system akin to chess so all can rise and fall depending on how they did in official tournaments -- like the one here at Historicon.

Both 15mm and 25mm tournaments were held.

Warrior

Warrior continued to draw in adherents as the photo shows.

Once a year, we pull out the Persians and Greeks for a bronze age



*Above: Warrior tournament action.
Right: Flames of War tournament in progress.
Below: OMM's Dennis in ADLG tourney.
Below right: Phil (left) and Lou in ADLG tourney.*



battle and try to remember the rules -- or at least I do. Fortunately, my gaming buddies know it far better than I, but I always try and remember to roll well.

Other Tourneys

Alas, I don't seem to have taken photos of other tournaments. The convention program mentioned *Triumph*, *Middle Earth*, *Warhammer*, *Wargods*, *Heavy Gear*, *Saga*, *Mortem et Gloriam*, and *Impetus*.

Walkabouts: Photo Gallery

In no particular order other than alphabetical by my own idiosyncratic system...

ACW

I'm not sure of the battle, but the 15mm game was in full swing and the Confederates seem to have their hands full attacking the Union.

The ACW game.



Age of Sail: 1666

A long line of wooden ships and iron gamers feed the sea with cannonballs and splinters in a Four Days Battle 1666 game. One of the pages says *From on the Admiral's Wake*, which seems to be the rules set used. It seems to use a roster system for damage.

The Age of Sail game plays out on a hex grid.



Age of Sail: French Devils

A different Age of Sail game presented by Ed Harding and the Chitown gamers, sez the sign. Some admiral seems to have split the French line of ships.

No hex grid but plenty of cannon action.

Alamo in 15mm

This game was oft admired and well attended. I believe it was up for a Best of Theme award.

Below: The Alamo.

Below Right: Axis & Allies.



Supersize Axis and Allies

This is the popular boardgame with minis that Bryan supersized, not to mention gathering and painting all the minis that populated the map and making the aircraft fly with base and pole. Admire the various aircraft types.

As for the map, the original was scanned in many pieces and then stitched together in a graphics program before being printed at a copy shop.

Now, that's a boardgame! I shouldn't be surprised. Bryan is always up to something clever.

BattleTech

The *BattleTech* robots hammered each other at the top of the escalator. It's been a long time since I played the game. For a while, it was hot and heavy in the 1980s as our group graduated from small mechs to medium mechs to big mechs.

The BattleTech battle.

Alas, unless they have changed the system, the quartet of 80-ton mechs each of us maneuvered needed lots and lots of d6 rolls for damage to even dent the armor.



I eventually made up my own big robomech rules that flowed faster, used any sci-fi mech or vehicle (I created engineering rules), and allowed a goodly force to be fielded and played to a conclusion in an evening. I eventually ran a campaign that worked for about six months before a big battle settled things in the galaxy once and for all. Well, at least settled things for an armistice to occur.

Battleground: Bloody Gulch

Ah, the big iron rolls out with 28mm tanks and some of the nicest flames and smoke I've seen. As I recall, this was in the HAWKS section. I later saw the tanks, sans flames, in action.

Big tanks. Big flames. Big impression.

Combat Patrol: Boer War

I caught this relatively at the beginning, with a British column presumably about to be ambushed by Boers.



Combat Patrol: Crete

The Germans and New Zealanders in a skirmish game. I'm not sure who won, but the advance against entrenched infantry proved hazardous.

*Above: The Boer War with Combat Patrol.
Right: Crete with Combat Patrol.*

Boshin War

HMGS gave this a prime spot and for good reason. I've seen this Japanese and Dutch crowd pleaser set up at multiple shows, always packed with people, and just a visual delight with a fort, ships, and lots of 25mm figures.



The Boshin War: A game filled every time I saw it being played.

Brazen Chariots: WWII

Adam Wine runs multiple games and multiple variations of this tank on tank game -- this one set in North Africa during Operation Crusader. Each player controls three tanks and the d20 system depends a lot on skill rolls (noted on the card) to perform certain actions, or get a tank out of trouble from certain actions.

I enjoyed chatting with Adam about WWII in North Africa -- he's quite the fount of information. He pointed out that his British tanks are painted as per historical "layers" (for lack of a better word) of color that take into account changes to actual color due to fading from sun.

I later came back and took a photo of a different *Brazen Chariots* game. It's been a while since I played *BC*, but I still have the certificate he handed out taped to the wall in my office.

Of interest is that he's working on an East Front version because tankergamers love the Eastern Front.

*Right: A couple of Honeys charge.
Below: Brazen Chariots in action.
Below Right: Square under attack.*



Colonial 54mm Square

I'm not sure exactly what this is about, other than my notes that this is a 54mm game with a cool-looking square and hordes of natives attacking it. This may be from the big Khartoum game, but I am not sure.

I need to take better notes before my head swivels to yet another fantastic table.

Somebody wants the local oasis. Sudan action.



British Colonial: Sudan

This 28mm game in the Sudan may be *The Men Who Would Be Kings*, as Dave is running the game and he ran a game locally that I played in. If so, the natives are sweeping around the oasis and presumably the British are coming in to try and take it.

The riverboat docks at Khartoum? Or is it just another village?



Khartoum

I liked the riverboat, so I took a photo. The game had yet to start. It was a big game, with long tables of sand-colored terrain.

Another fantastic C&G set up. This one for the ACW.



Carnage and Glory: ACW

David, John, and the rest of the C&G crowd always put on packed, gorgeous games using the computer-based software. I'm not sure of the battle, but running the battle lengthwise instead of widthwise adds depth to a game.

A tip of the electron to John for "forcing" his son to the computer as GM for one of the C&G games. Actually, the lad looked to be enjoying himself and for the time that John and I chatted, the lad seemed to have a knack for GMing.

Chain of Command: WWII Skirmish

My local gang played a lot of CoC, which has been chronicled in my AARs. This one involves the PanzerLehr sez my notes. Nicely done table.

PzLehr Chain of Command game.



Digression: PELA Awards

Steve runs the HMGS Pour Encourager Les Autres

(PELA) awards, earned by GMs whose games showcase artistic talent and audience participation. Once again, I answered his call to do a walkaround during an assigned time slot, this time with AnnaMarie, to award one or two PELAs.

Peliliu game board early in the convention.

Well, I walk around anyway, so this is just an official way to offer my two cents to well-deserving GMs. There are criteria we PELA judges follow, such as it cannot be a company demo, the more players the merrier, and so on. It can be a bit tough, but between the two of us, we weigh the factors and come to a decision. That's not to impugn other GM efforts, but decisions, decisions...

Another reason to send judges around is to doublecheck that GMs are actually running games and how many players are participating. All this data gets recorded on a sheet and presumably entered into a database.

The PELA awards are listed as they occur. I was smart enough to snap photos of the award boards for Friday and Saturday. The award is a base with a large miniature. You'll find the full list from Steve after my Historicon report.

Here are the ones we presented:

Happy gamers and a very happy GM.

PELA 1: Peliliu

A brilliant piece of terrain and eight very involved players marked this as a winner. The photo is from a previous trip around the hall. I can't believe I forgot to take a photo of the winner. *Mea culpa!*

PELA 2: Falcons of Malta

Another bit of terrain wizardry for this *Chain of Command* game. It's a what-if with Italian paratroopers landing on Malta and trying to capture that key piece of terrain: bridge and tunnel.

This time, I managed to keep my wits about me and snap a photo of the GM (center) and the four players that wanted to be part of the photo.



PELA While Gaming

I was actually playing in this interesting WWII Kursk game using *Hail of Fire* rules when all of a sudden, the game is stopped and GM Bob is awarded a PELA. I heartily endorse the decision.

The funny thing was that the award came relatively early in the game as the Germans ground forward to try and take a commanding hill from the Soviets. The game got even better and more intense as the turns rolled by. You'll find my recap later on in my Historicon report.

Another PELA award winner: Bob holds the award and well deserved, too.



Back In Walkabout Action

And now back to our travels around the convention...

Apologies to Downsync game creator Carl for snapping a photo during a blink.

Downsync Demo

I watched a 15mm sci-fi skirmish tank on tank game called *Downsync* for a little while. The key, at least to my untrained eye, is the countermeasures each tank features when being shot. It seemed the demo tanks had two each, but they are not automatic -- you need to factor in some modifiers and make a die roll. I saw them deflect a shot away and also fail to do anything. I believe you can also use them offensively to jam the jammers, so to speak, but the gamers seemed to use them defensively. Die roll movement.

Although each player only had two tanks, my guess is that this line will also include sci-fi infantry.

The armada like you've never seen it before. Lack of lighting was obviously mood lighting. Tentacles in middle top. Flying ship in upper left corner. Landing boats head to shore.



Dragon Rampant: Fairyland Special

This ethereal game pits the Spanish Armada and invasion force against the defending British -- with all sorts of magic and fantastical creatures. The giant tentacles caught my attention first. The flying galleon caught me twice.



I have no idea how it played, but this was just a spectacular looking game. It's a pity it was in a dark spot. The lighting in the Commonwealth room needed some help.

ECW: Newbury

I was on walkabout off the beaten path on the third floor when I ran across the Walnut Room conference room containing a big game of the ECW Battle of Newbury.

On the plus side, it was quiet.



Fistful of Lead

I believe this was a Horse & Musket version of the rules. I don't know which side or faction was ahead, but this skirmish game had a nice look about it.

I think it's FFoL...

Galactic Heroes

A sci-fi game that looked like a skirmish game. It had tanks and infantry that seemed far apart, but I don't know the firing range.

*Below: Galactic Heroes.
Below Right: Santa Marta.*



Santa Marta: July 1813

A nice looking game where the attackers seem to be trying their luck to press through the woods and avoid the defending artillery.



Gettysburg: Second Day

The Pratt gamers put on this game that uses plastic flats instead of miniatures. I guess that makes 'em flat Pratts. I should have taken a close up photo.

The generals seem to be 54mm? They're larger than life in any case. This looks to be just getting started.



Above: Gettysburg
Left: Hannut 1940

Hannut 1940

This 3mm game used a printed cloth in the style of last year's much drooled over Malta game. Bruce is getting good at this...

Pyramid Battle: HAWKS

In the HAWKS section, I found this Battle of the Pyramids in full swing. Best of all, it had a pyramid. You can't have a battle of the pyramid if you don't have a pyramid.

Pyramid power at one of the many HAWKS tables.



Queenstown

GM Eric believes in speaking loudly so he can be heard over the gaming din and carrying a big stick.

The game moved quickly as the Americans tried to get troops off ships and onto land to grab the town before the British collected enough troops. Then again, if a player dawdled, the GM with the stick urged the player to start moving or firing.

Actually, the stick was a pure pointer with the bonus of delivering various pipe cleaner markers.

Eric wields the big stick while GMing his Queenstown game. The Americans had initial surprise and managed to take all three buildings of the town briefly, but the British forces hurried to the sound of the guns.





Above: The Hack system gets a workout.

Right: Space Marines battle across sci-fi terrain.

Romans vs. Britons

This might be the *Joe Hack* rules, which attracts a good crowd every convention. Kid friendly, too.

Space Marines

The Space Marines were out in force in what seems to be a *Warhammer 40K* game.

Stalingrad

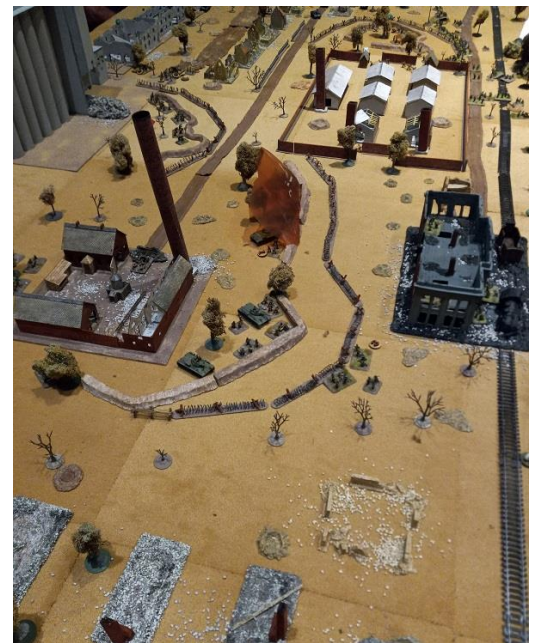
A 15mm version of the battle, but I don't know which rules were used. Although the board seems pretty open for a city, I do like some of the terrain blocks. Masterfully crafted.

At right: *Stalingrad*.

Below: *St. Elmo*.

St. Elmo Siege

The Turks are the men in motion as they try and capture the fort at St. Elmo in this 1565 battle. Massive terrain and nicely done.



WWI: Tanks and Yanks

A Viverito special pits a massive German tank force against the Allies in 1918. Besides suitably trench-like terrain, artillery barrages that miss add shell holes to the terrain, adding to the tension of trying to cross no man's land.

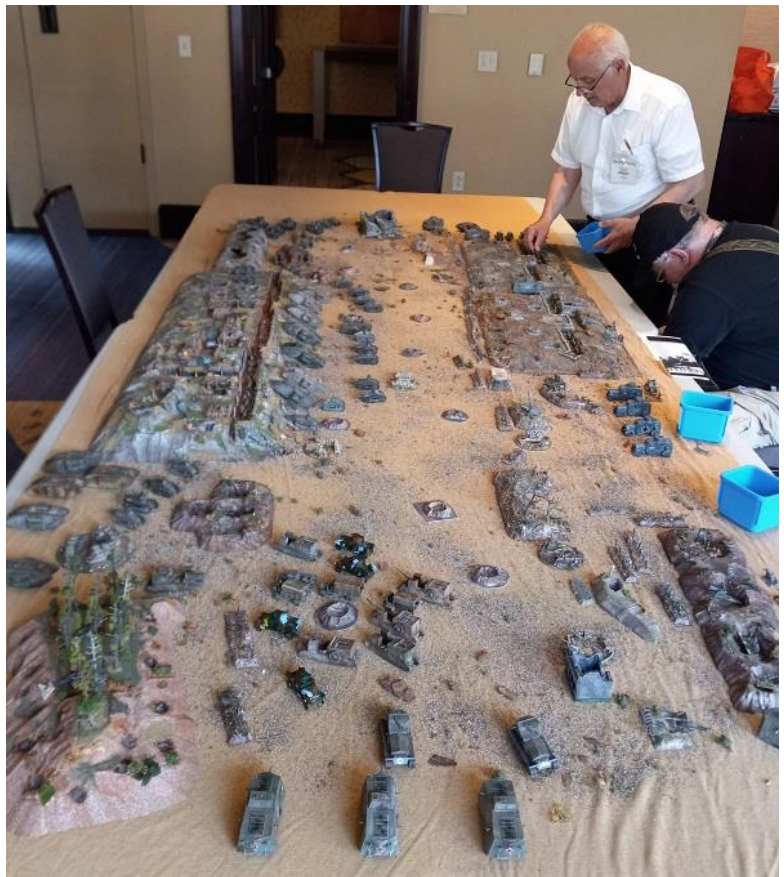
In this game, Allied tanks "ditched" (got stuck) while trying to cross their own trenches!

The Germans were trying to intercept an Allied resupply convoy on the north side of the battlefield while the Allies were trying to grab the middle bunker and key to the German defense line.

Death and destruction for all.

This won a PELA award.

GM Phil Viverito sets up the WWI battlefield. Lots of tanks!



Warhammer 40K: Double Blind

I love double blind games, having run a few with the *Panzerblitz* hex board game back in the day when the Earth was young. This one takes place in the *W40K* universe as both sides seek to grab something or other from various rooms. Meanwhile, they play hide and seek, snipe and scoot, and other nefarious tactics to lure the enemy into ambushes.

Two GMs really hopped to it to make sure everything moved smoothly, or as smoothly as possible. One lucky shooter notched a couple of kills when the enemy turned a corner and advanced up the corridor.

All gamers appreciated the effort!

Umpires (standing) coordinate the double blind game.



Wild West: Double Eagle Dance

What? No B-17s?

The iron on the table was a hogleg or scatter gun.

Prepping the scenario.

Reach for the skies, ya varmint!

WWI: Aerial Duels

I took a photo of this scrum of 1/144-scale 3D printed aircraft, but the camera seemed to focus on the table, not the planes.

Ah well, the players seemed to zero in on the enemy well enough.

WWI: Austria and Russia



GM Jesse oversees a WWI battle between the Austrians and Russians.



Left: WWI aerial duel.
Right: WWI East Front action between Austrians and Russians.



Walkabout Whew!

I know I missed a ton of games, but I hope this selection offers you a glimpse of what was available. If you missed Historicon this year, it will be back at the Lancaster Convention Center in July of 2024.

Starting positions for Soviets (right) and Germans (left). My Soviet command is bottom middle to bottom right corner.



Hail of Fire: Kursk

I usually don't sign up for a game, but after reading *Panzers of Prokhorovka*, Kursk was in my head and the chance to try a new rules set -- *Hail of Fire* -- set at the opening of Kursk proved too tempting.



One PzIV destroyed. Another about to be...

I sat down as a Soviet player on the left side of a nice terrain board. *Hail of Fire*, as best I can recall, uses half-squads per infantry base and individual tanks and guns. In my case, I have a platoon of infantry in the deep fields

in front of a hill, a MG team in an improved position, a pair of Zis-2 76.2mm AT guns, and a trio of T-70 tanks hiding behind the hill.

To my right was another Soviet platoon and a MG team in an improved position backed by dug-in mortars.

To my far right, atop the objective hill, was a pair of AT guns backed by a platoon of infantry, more guns, dug-in mortars, and a dug-in platoon of infantry.

Soviet mortars hammer German infantry and mortars in the rough terrain. The German panzers leave the two eliminated tanks behind and advance. One of my brave infantry half squads sits in the middle of the road.



Across the table from me were two German commands, one primarily of Panzer grenadier infantry, including a mortar section, and one primarily of PzIV tanks backed by motorized infantry. Next to them was a Tiger tank platoon and a PzIII platoon command. And on the extreme flank was the fourth German command of a lot of panzergrenadiers.

The first wave of German panzergrenadiers take the hill, but a platoon of Soviet infantry wait to counterattack.

The Rules

It took a couple of turns to figure out the rules as the twist is in the casualty mechanics. Firing is fairly straightforward with rolling a number of d6s for line of sight shots and needing a base 4+ to hit, with 5+ if the target is in cover or at long range, or a 6+ if the targeted stand is at long range and in cover.

If you get a hit, you place a hit marker on the target unit and if you get multiple hits, you place additional hits on units within four inches of the targeted stand.

And the Soviets retake the hill. Notice the Tigers (upper left corner) are supporting the attack from afar.

If the hits were against soft targets, then at the beginning of the next enemy turn, the enemy rolls a d6 per hit. On a 4+, the hit



gets shrugged off, on a 2 or 3, the hit is converted to a suppressed (I recall no move or fire), and on a 1, the unit is eliminated and removed from play.

Release the tigers! Tigers with infantry support retake the hill. PzIIIs are behind and more panzergrenadiers are flanking the hill.

However, if the AT shot hit a tank, the firing player rolls two d6s looking for a 6 to destroy the tank. Otherwise, no immediate effect but the hit is placed on the tank and the above d6 is rolled per hit on the enemy's turn.

In essence, it's a variation on roll to hit and roll to save.

There is also an interrupt (or overwatch) mechanic which required the phasing player to activate one formation before the enemy can use any interrupt.

The rest is straightforward, albeit with rolling 2d6 for movement plus a 6-inch road bonus for vehicles.

The German start to hit my infantry, including the MG in the bunker.

The Game

The Germans advanced and right from the start, I got lucky. I fired my Zis-2 AT guns at the PzIVs that just moved within range. I managed to put two hits on the lead trio of German tanks opposite me. I then rolled a 6 for one of them, eliminating one, and on the German player's next turn, he rolled a 1 to eliminate the second tank.

That brought a mass of fire on the AT guns that kept them suppressed throughout most of the game.

My Soviet infantry platoon ran away from too many casualties, leaving a lonely MG to confront the converging German infantry platoons.

After my infantry attracted too much attention from German mortars and MGs, the Soviet mortars on my right plastered the rough terrain where the Germans were hiding. That helped suppress some of the fire and allowed



my platoon of infantry to move up. I was trying to reach the house, but my movement roll was a bit under par.

I kept my T70s behind my hill -- no sense bringing out targets for the PzIVs.

Meanwhile, the German assault to take the main hill ground forward. The Tigers were held back for fire support. The AT guns atop it were destroyed and German infantry clambered up to the crest, only to face a determined counterattack by the Soviet platoon that threw them off the hill.

In the center, the Germans panzergrenadiers slowly moved up, exchanging fire with the Soviet platoon and taking the house.

At this point, the Germans opposite me put a storm of fire on my Soviet infantry. We used small red dice to denote the number of hits on a stand and my lads seemed to have caught the measles. When my turn came around, I rolled 1 after 1 after 1 and obliterated my platoon. Only one stand was left along with the officer stand, which by definition of the rules meant the entire platoon was removed.

I rolled and received a pair of T-34/85s as a reinforcement. They appeared behind the hill next to the T-70s. It was time to use the T-34s. I rolled 2d6 for movement: snakeeyes! I could only move 2 inches (+2 more inches inherent to the tank). Those four inches weren't enough.

Blast! The odds had been with me until they weren't.

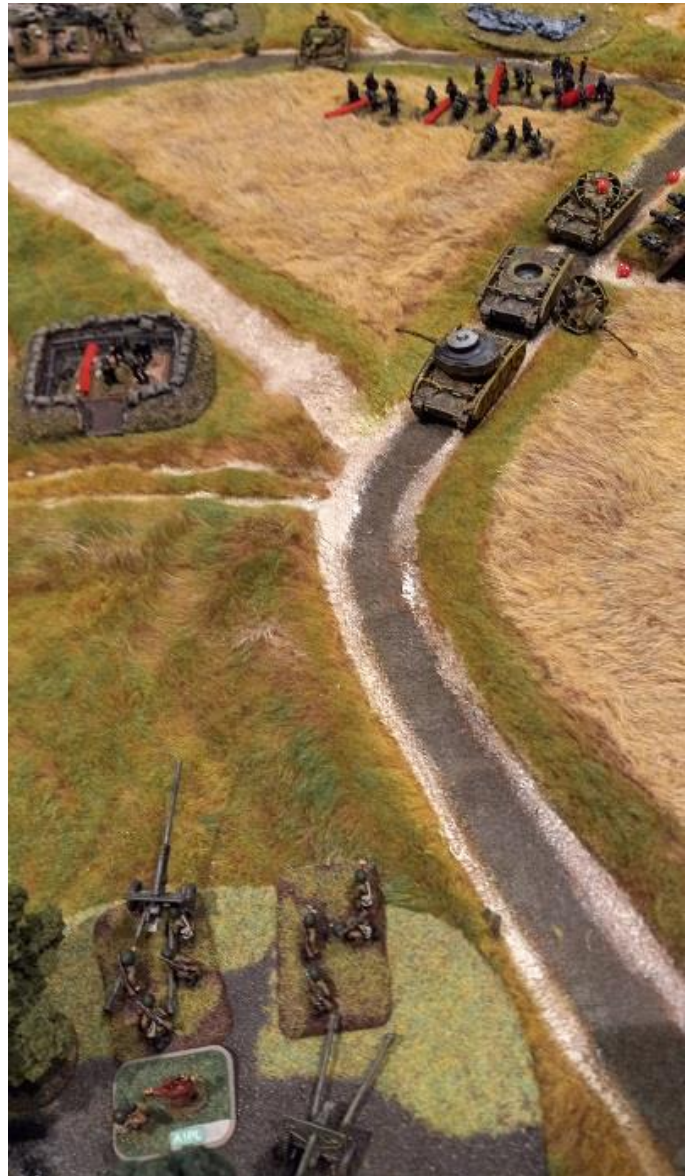
That convinced the Germans to push his tanks forward down the road towards my lone remaining suppressed Zis-2 AT gun.

What one lone AT Gun (bottom left) can accomplish against a trio of PzIVs when the fates allow. The other AT gun is destroyed. The red pipe cleaners indicate the stand is suppressed.

Meanwhile, in the struggle atop the objective hill, a most amazing shot blew up a Tiger. All the PzIIIs that swung around the hill were destroyed. A pair of Tigers survived atop the hill and the one remaining PzIII swung into the center to revive German fortunes. The panzergrenadiers were taking significant hits and being whittled away.

Then Fate swerved back into my dice. I rolled off the officer stand suppression. I rolled off the AT gun suppression. I rolled 3d6 and rolled three hits: one per PzIV. Then I rolled two d6s and got a 6! The lead tank brewed up. I rolled two d6s for the second tank. Another 6! The second tank flew. I rolled two d6s for the third tank. Alas, no 6, but on the German player's turn, his d6 rolled a 1 and blew itself up. Three hits, three kills and morale surged.

My T-34/85s (bottom right corner) atop the hill ambush a PzIII 2/3 of the way across the board.



I sent the T-34s and T-70s atop the hill. The T-34s drew a bead on a PzIII in the center and smoked him. The T-70s were about to hose the infantry in front of me when the game was called.

Although the Russians were depleted, so were the Germans. The main objective hill was still being contested, but two Tigers on a hill with panzergrenadiers to call on had a bit more presence than Soviet infantry. However, German armor was decimated: one of three Tigers, five of six PxIVs, and all four PzIIIs were smoking wrecks.

It was adjudged a minor Soviet victory for the damage to German forces and at least staying in contention for the objective hill.

As I noted before, the game earned a PELA award and well deserved from my seat at the table.

Star Schlock: Dealer Demo Game

While wandering the dealer area, I passed this new offering and figured any company that would have a humorous product name deserved a look see. So I poked around the booth and discovered the new sci-fi line of figures were influenced by 1960s and 1970s TV shows. I was about to watch a demo when I was asked if I wanted to play instead of watch. Sure.

It's basically skirmish level with small groups of figures equipped with appropriate weaponry and graded on Level, Vigor, Will, and Skill. It's a d6 system (using special dice with icons for hits, saves, and special effects) of generally roll for hits and roll for saves. I recall rolling seven or eight d6s per team, looking for a target number than depended on cover. Some special attributes are for the single heroes. As this was a demo, I just tried to exterminate the other side.

I had two units of Dronetroopers and a hero. It was fairly simple to pick up, although firing distance compared to movement distance seemed a bit short. Then again, if you are used to *Warhammer 40K* distances, this shouldn't come as a surprise.

I advanced a little, fired a little, and took damage a little. Actually, I took damage a lot -- my opponent proved a Jedi or Sith at rolling checkmarks (hits). I proved less adept at rolling shields. Even his sniper perched on a hill managed to roll the special event (instant kill in his case) multiple times. Dronetroopers proved fragile under that avalanche of accurate fire. My hero, good at rallying her troops, proved unable to rally dead ones.

I'm not sure what the background is for all the factions planned, but from a mechanics perspective, it played quick enough. I'm also sure I only touched the surface of what each faction offers and nothing threw me for a loop in the demo.

The Hotel Room: Wall Art Game Board?

Marriott reservations screwed up bad. The original reservations would let you reserve a room, but not, repeat not, with designating whether you wanted one king bed or two queen beds. The latter is much preferable when sharing a room with a gaming buddy. I wasn't the only gamer caught.



Convention director Joby sent out an e-mail earlier in the year with request for preferences, but when check-in came to shove on Thursday about noon, one king-sized bed it was for me and Dan. Hey, Joby tried, but apparently to no avail. Blame Marriott!

Sadly, Dan could not make it, so all's well that ends well for a one-gamer per bed deal...this year.

Speaking of rooms, have you ever looked at the "room rate" on the back of the door: \$999 per night. I will say the air conditioning and hot water worked, even if the bed had all the attributes of a hammock. The staff is back to straightening the rooms and replenishing the towels each day, which is welcome.

The wall art in my room was interesting. It looks like a challenge to make a wargame out of it...

GameMaster of the Year: Martyn Kelly

Martyn Kelly of gaming group WAMP earned HMGS' GameMaster of the Year award for his exceptional efforts. We had a short ceremony in the hotel bar, where he showed off his GM of the Year award as well as a PELA. Besides the usual good-natured ribbing of his efforts, Pat of WAMP provided a fitting speech to honor Martyn's achievements.

I chatted a bit and Martyn's new "big" project will be ready for Historicon 2025 -- the 500th anniversary Battle of Pavia, complete with all the walls. It sounds like an epic game in the making.

Martyn holds the GameMaster of the Year award (left) and the PELA award.



And That's A Wrap

Sunday morning came too early, but I pointed the car eastwards and had a smoother return trip. Once again, HMGS delivered an excellent convention. Well done, to all who made Historicon possible.

Pour Encourager Les Autres (PELA) Awards

by Steve Boegemann, HMGS, Inc. Awards Chair

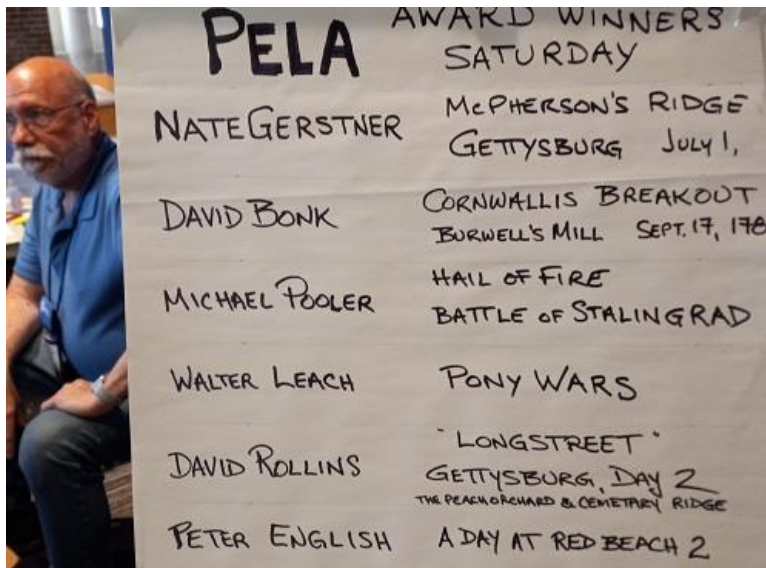
In order of presentation:

Racing in Germany by Jon Lundburg
 Khartoum! The Wargame by Jim Purky
 Siege of Fort St. Elmo 1565 by Doug Fisher
 Gnome Wars by Jim Stanton
 Fort Necessity by Bill Molyneaux
 Engagement at Santa Mart – July 1813 by Timothy Wilson
 The Panzer Lehr Counterattack by Steve Waddell
 Test of Honor – The Shimonoseki Incident by David Hill
 Resupply Indeed, Sir by Bradley Pflugh
 Hail of Fire at Kursk by Robert Schaible
 Hello 2nd Armor Bloody Gulch by Michael Gessner
 Gettysburg – July 2, 1863 by Benjamin Bentley
 Peleliu by Tony Marano and Miles Reidy
 Malta by Joe McGrath
 Chickamauga 1863 by Mike Pierce

PELA	AWARD WINNERS
	FRIDAY
BRADLEY PFLUGH	RESUPPLY INDEED, SIR
ROBERT SCHAIBLE	HAIL OF FIRE AT KURSK
MICHAEL GESSNER	HELLO 2ND ARMOR BLOODY GULCH
BENJAMIN BENTLEY	GETTYSBURG JULY 2ND
TONY MARANO AND MILES REIDY	PELELIU
JOE MCGRATH	MALTESE FALCONE
MIKE PIERCE	CHICKAMAUGA 1863
JEFF WASILESKI	THE MIRRORS OF MORTLAKE

The Mirror of Mortlake by Jeff Wasileski
 Cornwallis Breaks Out, Burwell's Farm, Sept. 17, 1781 by David Bonk
 McPherson's Ridge, Gettysburg Afternoon of July 1, 1863 by Nate Gerstner
 Hail of Fire – Battle of Stalingrad by Michael Pooler
 Pony Wars by Walter Leach
 Gettysburg – Day 2 – Longstreet by David Rollins
 A Day at Red Beach 2 by Pete English
 Wolverines! by Michael Pierce
 Breakthrough: Treat Them Rough by Phil Viverito

Peek a boo. Winners listed as the days rolled on.



HMGS Fall In! 2023: November 3 – 5, 2023

by Scott Landis (director@fall-in.org)

Greetings to all historical miniatures gamers, game masters, historians, vendors, artists, and others who are members of our great gaming community. I am pleased to announce that Fall In! 2023 planning is underway.

The convention takes place Friday – Sunday, November 3 – 5, at the Wyndham Lancaster Resort and Convention Center (2300 Lincoln Highway E, Lancaster, PA 17602-1114). The theme this year is "America: Rise to World Power, 1898 to Present."

It's the final part of our combined "America at War" Convention themes for the year.

As we continue planning your show, we will release further information, including submission dates for game masters, information packets for vendors, War College presentation requests, tournament information, and details on many other special events for the convention.

Start making plans now to attend Fall In! 2023 at the Wyndham Lancaster Resort November 3 – 5. We are working to bring you the best in historical miniatures wargaming!

See you there! -- RL



Dang! Almost forgot to include the photo for a Crazy Horse western game. The costumes helped set the mood.



And a few more photos...



Above: Freedom Hall. Saturday Morning 10:54am.



Above: Commonwealth Room. Saturday Morning 11:51am.



Right: Heritage Room. Saturday Afternoon 12:03pm.



Above: Heritage Room. Saturday Afternoon 12:04pm.



Above: Commonwealth Room. Saturday night 10:58pm.

Great Convention! See you at Fall In.

Let's Scarper: Traveller RPG - Wanted Dead or Alive

by Ed

Alas, again, I missed the session. Thanks, Ed, for recording more action of the Crimson Permanent Assurance Co (CPACO). Marten II is an Imperial Treasure Ship with a ship's safe and a large, super secure vault. Photo by Dan. -- RL

Gaines left the Imperial embassy on Wildeman with a disappointing 200,000 credits in his pocket. It wasn't the four million they'd claimed they were worth. He'd miss those "ex" marines. A good bunch.

He turned toward the TAS facility for the rest of his week off ship, then saw a familiar face, staring at him from the bulkhead. He knew that face. He saw it every day in the mirror.

"Wanted for questioning," it said. Out of the rogue's gallery plastered there, it wasn't the only face he recognized.

Uh oh.

Gaines paid the captain of the *Caconym* 80,000 credits. She and her crew weren't scruffy, exactly, but after the first two days on board he decided the whole bunch of them exuded that indefinable odor of Imperial Agent, a smell he'd learned to detect standing unending watches on diplo duty back on Tobia.

But they didn't ask him any questions about why he was willing to pay four times the going rate for a five-parsec jump to Drinax, and he didn't ask them what the story was with their little courier vessel.

Standing in Dock Zone Green, he stopped pulling the automated cart holding his luggage and looked up at the Ship Board. Gaines had no right to be this lucky: there was the *Harrier*, three days in station. He dug the earbud out of his pocket, inserted it, keyed it on, and broadcasted, "I'm back. Drop everything for an important briefing."

Is It Nice to Be Wanted?

The *Harrier's* conference room had a flavor of nostalgia, with its antique furnishings, worn plasteel deck plates, and that slightly weird color spectrum to the lights. After exchanging greetings, Gaines dived right in.

"I'm going to pass along some intel, and as a result we're going to want to do certain things. Like, right away."

"Don't you want to hear about the haul we just pull--"

"I don't need to hear about it. The Imperium buzzes like a hive about it. The navy -- the Imperial Navy -- plans an extensive punitive expedition against pirates in the Trojan Reach in response to the theft of an IMPERIAL TREASURE SHIP."

Gaines unrolled a poster and slapped it against a bulkhead. "In particular," he noted.

Karlsbad looked out at all of them: full face, profile, a few lines of biographical information...and at the bottom of the poster: Reward: 1,000,000 Credits.

Gaines repeated the process, looked at the faces around the table, pointed at someone he didn't know. "I don't know you, but you managed to make the Most Wanted List, too." The man named Fletch spread his hands and shrugged.

"And they're on to our ships," Gaines went on, setting down little holo projectors that showed accurate renditions of the *Harrier* and the *Valkyrie*.

The buzz of conversation filled the briefing room. "You're gonna want to hear this," said Wendell to Gaines, noting the three million credits found in the safe before turning to the uncrackable vault of the treasure ship.

"Drinax tech boys opened it up. The main thing is this signed treaty between the Imperium and the Aslan Heirate." He called up a star map of local space, painting the tabletop with symbols for star systems, space stations, trade routes. The Heirate border burned a yellow, just two parsecs from Drinax. Anton keyed in some data, and a line from the Imperium's border, a comforting crimson, sprang into life, denoting a six parsec zone. All the rest gained a light yellow highlight.

Wendell continued. In exchange for advantageous trade terms, the Heirate agreed to keep their paws off anything within six parsecs of the current Imperial border, but could do as they pleased with all systems outside the exclusion zone. This included most of the systems Anton picked out in green as having friendly local governments.

They ordered lunch after a few hours of debate about what to do. Gaines suggested they park the Crimson Permanent Assurance Company for the foreseeable future and scrap the treasure ship, a distinct, unique ship class.



"Can't we disguise it?" Wendell wanted to know.

"No way," said Anton. "It will always be identifiable as an Imperial Treasure Ship. And I've already heard through the grapevine that King Oleb wants it gone. The shipyard can't even break it down for parts. Too many eyes, too many spies. He's parked some bulk freighters around it for now to screen it from unfriendly eyes, but he wants it out of here as soon as possible."

"We could turn it into a floating base out in the dark," Karlsbad suggested, manipulating the star map on the tabletop until Drinax system swelled large, and he placed a hand in an empty parsec of space. "A jump one out to here, some random bit of vacuum only we know about, and the *Marten II* becomes our Fortress of Solitude."

"No way," said Coleman. "We should use the thing. It's got eight turrets and a huge cargo hold!"

"We could turn the hold into a hanger for the *Harrier*," Karlsbad suggested, but when he ran the numbers, the cost was a sobering 55 million...and Anton reminded them that Drinax didn't want the ship in port any longer than necessary.

The debate went on until dinner, and they sent the new guy to the auto chef to generate meals for everyone.

"Who's the new guy?" Gaines said.

"Some broker we hired on Thebus," Wendell replied. "Pirate Dorkozorko stole his ship or something."

What To Do?

Gaines saw with a little dismay that while he'd taken himself out of a share of the spoils, they'd raked in a huge score, more than three million credits. His share of proceeds from before the treasure ship caper ran to about a tenth of that. He shrugged. He was still way ahead of where he'd be collecting his pension and running a bar or something on Tobia....

They reconvened for dinner and talked into the night. Finally, they came up with a cover story. It was better than nothing if they got caught and interrogated by Imperials. One of the details Gaines shared was that the famous Dr. Sparks was thought to be held hostage by the pirates who stole the Imperial Treasure Ship. "We make Irontooth the fall guy," said Fletch. "And we ransomed Sparks and the other engineers who helped out the Imperials."

"It'll have to do," said Wendell. "Now, about this plan to sell the treasure ship...where, again?"

"We sell it to the Strend Cluster," said Karlsbad, flicking the map twenty parsecs to center on a four system polity all the way around to the north of Florian League space. "They're high tech, they've got the money, and they hate the Imperium. And as a bonus, the trip will take us more than a year. We'll be gone while the heat is on. For once we can maybe get a good price for one of our prizes, and we don't have to worry about any Imperial blow-back. We do the trading thing along the way...."

Scout for the Stars

The details required hours of work. They decided to keep the *Harrier* with them, despite the Jump Two restriction that imposed. They could use Jump Two to get to Crescent, then *Valkyrie* and the *Marten II* could jump to Strend using their bigger drives. They'd have to allow shore leave, given the extra crew they'd have to hire (and everyone hired onto the *Marten II* had to have "Turret Gunner" as a secondary skill).

The trip to Strend would take 16 jumps, with many but not all the jumps accompanied by shore leave. They offered a bonus to new hires for there to be no shore leave for the first three jumps, to help get them out of an area that would by now be a bit hot.

Meanwhile, the two free traders would make money on trading runs around Drinax. Our new ship, the *Corsair*, will join them as an escort once the new J drive is installed.

They set off on this Grand Tour, and all went well for many jumps. The three-ship flotilla -- *Harrier*, *Valkyrie*, and the *Marten II* -- jumped to Torpol, then Oghma, and then to a Thebus.

Here, they sold freight at a good profit and met a spokesperson for the Pirate Peter Vallys, who agreed to a mutual aid agreement, which brought a number of systems into Favored Nation status with the group.

Looking Out for Number One

Lurking near the gas giant in Number One system, having retrieved personnel on shore leave, the pirate Irontooth showed up with a four-ship flotilla. Alarms blared, and the group prepared to fight, but sensors showed Irontooth's ships included a 1200-ton "pocket battleship" equipped with an inaccurate (vs. smaller ships) but devastating bay-mounted weapon that could easily destroy the *Valkyrie* or *Harrier* if it hit. Anton ably got the *Marten*

II into Jump despite proximity to the gas giant, and the group moved on to Tiktik, where it wasn't hard to convince the hired crew to forego shore leave: word of the pocket battleship had gotten around.

The group jumped to Sagan and on to Janus, then a planning flaw became clear. Procedure so far had been to use gas giants for refueling, keeping the treasure ship out of sight. But no gas giant existed in the Connaught system. The fleet diverted to 291-540 instead, and the treasure ship and *Valkyrie* then used Jump 3 to reach Solaria, while the *Harrier*, with its Jump 2, would go to Yggdrasil, right on the fringe of Florian space.

Dpres, with its Imperial Fleet base, was to be avoided. The fleet would meet up at Thor and the planned stellar path would continue to Strend. There was simply no other way to do it that kept the Marten II out of port. The *Harrier* would have to refuel at a port in Yggdrasil, but it was that or the Imperials.

Lay An Egg in Yggdrasil

In Yggdrasil, a prime target presented itself: an Aslan-built courier, equipped as per *Jane's All the Galaxy's Ships* with a sandcaster. The crew of the Crimson Permanent Assurance Company, suddenly remembering their roots as privateers, sprang into action. Alarms blared. Armor was put on, then taken off again and different armor put on. It turns out one can't wear powered armor when operating a ship's turret. Who knew? Not Gaines!

The *Harrier* issued its challenge to stand and deliver, then the jamming started. The target vessel shut off its engines and signaled compliance.

Deeply asleep from having worked the night watch, Brax turned over in his bunk and snored on. Obviously, he suffered from too much shore leave.

Twenty minutes from intercept, the encounter became weird...very weird. Half way into his powered armor, Coleman looked up at a humanoid figure phasing into existence right next to him. A humanoid figure bulked out by powered armor and holding a bulky weapon -- a plasma rifle!

Six borders teleported onto the *Harrier* and initiated hostilities.

We were given to understand this is some Florian League / Zhodani tech that we can't duplicate.

Gaines, hearing the alarm, promptly fired into the Aslan-built ship. Karlsbad headed off the bridge. Wendell stayed at the helm, comforted no borders had appeared there yet, and launched a salvo of missiles that mostly wrecked the enemy vessel. Coleman fought desperately to keep the enemy from using his plasma weapon. Cormac dodged into a side room and readied his advanced combat rifle. The new guy, Fletch, huddled in his cabin, clutching his stunner and doing cargo loads in his head.

In engineering, Anton had his hands full with an invader, so he activated Robbie the Robot, pulled out his Gungnir Electro-Shield and chainsaw sword, and kept his foe busy hand to hand.

Soon Wendell had company, and he charged to melee, knowing the armored figure couldn't use a Gauss Rifle in close quarters. Gaines left the turret and helped Wendell, pumping laser shots into the foe's side. Karlsbad pulled out some science-fiction snuck up behind one of the invaders and used a mono-molecular garrote.

In engineering, all hell broke loose, and a firefight the group had no right to expect they'd win started. But the borders had bulky weapons and weren't rated Expert shooters, while Cormac and Coleman definitely were. Coleman, one of the galaxy's finest Heavy Weapons artists, kicked loose from his foe and obliterated an enemy with his plasma rifle. Cormac wasn't far behind, pumping round after round that punched through armor (he brought the right ammo to this fight!) which brought screams of telepathic rage to his mind.

The enemy blasted back, destroying walls and equipment left and right, but miraculously missing the crew. Robbie the Robot blasted away with his shotgun, but took a plasma hit, which slagged him. On the bridge, three-to-one odds eventually told their inevitable story, and that foe fell unconscious after failing to strike at Gaines using his mind.

In engineering, Anton's shield proved useful as it fended off the armored fists of his attacker while he hacked again and again, the armor-chopping quality of his sword proving up to the task. And much to everyone's surprise, Cormac and Coleman won the firefight, but not before blasting a hole into the velvet darkness of space, depressurizing engineering.

Aftermath

The Fellowship of the Stars took one prisoner, who suicided immediately upon regaining consciousness. An examination of the Aslan ship showed the six armored humans, presumed to be Florians, what with their flagrant psychic abilities, had taken the ship from an Aslan crew some weeks before. A poorly-secured computer revealed the armored psyker's orders were to destabilize the Trojan Reach and kill King Oleb.

The thought of doing anything useful with the 90% trashed Aslan ship -- Wendell's missile salvo devastated the vessel -- wearied CPACO and the decision was taken to set it on course for the local sun, put the M drive on a timer, then abandon it.

The crew of the *Harrier* disposed of the bodies, salvaged two sets of combat armor (the kind with 18 protection), and looked ahead to the rendezvous with the *Marten II* and *Valkyrie* in the *Solaria* system.

Hours later, after lots of sweat fixing the hole in the ship, patching the damaged M drive, fixing the sewage line leak, and dealing with half a dozen other "fix it now or else" problems caused when lasers, automatic rifles, and oh yeah PLASMA RIFLES are uncorked inside a starship, the ship was repaired enough to sail.

Brax stumbled out of his cabin, looking for a meal. "What's all this mess, guys?" he said, before learning that he'd missed quite a firefight. "What, no one wanted to wake me up?"

"If alarms and plasma blasts didn't do it, nothing will," Gaines retorted.

"Pity. I missed a good fight."

The theory is we leave the *Harrier* at *Crescent* and the two other ships Jump 3 to *Strend*, then after the sale we come back to the *Harrier* using the *Valkyrie*.

The Cover Story

We perfectly innocent fast-freight traders helped out the Imperials and their broken ship, who repaid us by hiring away our best engineers. So we lifted off planet, intending to transit out and carry on our business, until all hell broke out down on the planet.

There were rebels, or revolutionaries, or something. Then the *Marten II* takes off and we get a message from some pirate asking us how much we'd pay to get our people back. So one parsec over we paid, of course we did. All our guys ever saw was guys in powered armor, masks set to Mirror-Mode.

We got the hell out of Dodge, of course we did -- we didn't want to be any closer to that mess than we could help. We do anti-pirate stuff when we're not doing trades. Got this ship off pirates not that long back, for example.

You ask me, the Imperium has it wrong -- Sparks wasn't the only one that was on board when those pirates or fake revolutionaries or whoever stole the *Marten II*, it was all our guys. We shelled out a couple hundred thousand to get them back. Just frosting on the cake for whoever stole it.

I think we're lucky Dr. Sparks was on board, helping out -- I think those pirates knew how famous he is, and didn't just snuff everybody. Yeah, that's the ticket. We got lucky, right in the middle of being damn unlucky, and now we're on all these wanted lists when all we did was help out when asked.

Karlsbad's Idea

The name of his new spacefighter is called the *Rabbit*.

While idling at Thor, Karlsbad noted, "You know guys, I think I'm going about this all wrong. I know you're all afraid of this Treasure Ship and the Imperials, and believe me. In the beginning I was too, but I think right now this ship is the beginning of where I want the end of my life to lead. Give me the ship and the crew, I will take it, Carlos, its NPC crew, and the *Rabbit*. I want to pursue a few of my own goals. I will give you all a sizeable share of the freight and loot I make but I have a few things that I need to do before I get a bullet in the back of my head."

The idea was simple enough. Give Karlsbad a little time on the back burner using the treasure ship as a freight business while he goes and pursues a couple of things he wants to pursue. He will deposit the CPACO share to a system of our choosing.

Considering a year moves pretty fast when in jump space, Karlsbad doesn't feel like it would be that crazy for him to take his trip.

Gaines noted this is a massive ask, as it takes away an expected huge payday. He asked how much is this 1600-ton vessel worth? Cover story aside, we're on the Imperium's naughty list and now we're not going to get the full value of our villainy? It also derails our current plan, which is to continue on to *Strend*.

Plus we'll miss Karlsbad, a lot. Gaines said, "Ain't nobody doctors up a document like Karlsbad doctors up a document. He's the Dr. Sparks of forgery."

Gaines also had a totally separate thought: "Y'know, probably the best way to get the Imperium off our back is to let ol' Irontooth think he recovered the *Marten II* and let him be on the bridge when the Imperials show up."

Brax didn't think handing over a payday as large as the *Marten II* was a smart idea, but since he slept through it all, he'd go along with the majority.

Operation RoundUp Playtest: 1943 Invasion

by Russ Lockwood

I set up a playtest of this upcoming *Against the Odds* game with Dennis at OMM. He took the Allies and I took the Germans. After a quick rundown of the rules, including the clever little wrinkles, he launched his invasion: UK at Calais and US at Boulogne.

As this is a "What-If" wargame, the victory conditions swirl around control of three ports: Calais, Boulogne, and Dunkirk, and expanding the beachhead off map to either the East or South. The idea here is to establish something the Germans can't contain like they did at Anzio.

Dennis storms ashore.

Game Scale

Most units are divisions, although a few are regiments or battalions. Stacking is one division-sized unit per hex plus one non-division-sized unit per hex. A hex is two to three miles.

German Reactions

In the rules, Hitler's reaction to the second front is random. You pick one of four chits from a container: German forces arrive from France, Belgium, and Italy; German forces arrive from France, Belgium, and Italy with a heavy Luftwaffe reinforcement; German forces arrive from France, Belgium, Italy, and Russia; or German forces arrive from France, Belgium, Italy, and Russia with a heavy Luftwaffe reinforcement.

In our playtest game, I arbitrarily picked the first option.

While the Allied victory conditions are the same no matter what the Hitler option, German victory conditions are split. The first two options have one set of victory conditions and the last two have another, tougher set of conditions. The idea here is that the more the Fuhrer sends, the more is expected of the German player.

The British land at Calais.

Landings

The allies get four beachheads -- two British and two US -- and automatically get air superiority on turn 1.

Dennis opted for a British landing at Calais and a US landing at Boulogne. He quickly surrounded the ports and cut the German garrison in half. You could see that the ports would fall on Turn 2.



The Germans start with only four units on the map -- one each in the three ports and one in a town called Cassel. The Dunkirk unit stayed put while the Cassel unit moved up as best it could -- static divisions are slow...

Reaction

A die roll determines how many units arrive from rear areas and units are randomly selected from a container. The key here is the turn sequence. German reinforcements arrive after the movement phase -- so they sit on the edge of the map until next turn. The Allies get to see what's coming.

Dennis ponders his attack to the south, but those big German panzer reinforcements give him pause.

I got lucky early with the rolls and the random draw with big panzer divisions rolling up from Italy. Later, I'd roll 1s...

I was able to get a solid line heading towards the south end, a tenuous line around Dunkirk, and a sketchy line in between with a huge gap in the middle. The Allies could drive a couple corps through.

Middle of Turn 3 – A mighty big gap in the German lines. Notice the red British beachhead and green US beachhead markers by the ports.

However, the Allies can only bring on four units (plus one non-divisional unit) per turn through the beachheads and one unit (plus one non-divisional unit) per turn through a captured port. It would take a while for the Allies to build up. Fortunately, they have two airborne divisions and a couple airborne regiments -- they put together the semblance of a line quicker than the Germans.

End of Turn 3. A German line of sorts...

The Race

So, the Allies are trying to punch a hole that they can hold to an edge while



the Germans are straining to contain the invasion. I was able to mass big panzers on an exposed US division in Montreuil and cut it in half. The rest was all defense.

By Turn 3, the Allied line secured the invasion sites and threatened the porous German line.

One wrinkle is that a player can select Move and then Combat, or, Combat and then Move. The former is usual mechanics while the latter allows for a hole to be punched and then exploited. In the Standard rules, there is no mechanized movement.

The German panzers, including the Tiger tank btn, attack the US 36th division in Montreuil.

Allied Airpower

The weather roll turned Clear into Storm on Turn 2, which helped the Germans move into position. The rest of the game was Clear weather and the Allies never lost air superiority.

Indeed, on Turn 5, a bad German Luftwaffe roll and a great Allied Air roll gave the Allies 12, count 'em 12 tactical air support (TAS) markers. Dennis blanketed the front line. If a battle is under a TAS influence (the hex it is in and the six surrounding hexes), the owner of the TAS gets a favorable shift on the CRT odds column.

For example, in my big Panzer attack against the US infantry unit, my 4-1 odds were dropped by one because it was defending a town and another odds column because it was under TAS influence. So, my 4-1 became a 2-1.

At the end of Turn 5, the lines are set and the Germans have retaken Montreuil (bottom left corner). The British push to Dunkirk (upper right corner).

Dennis rolled well for air and usually had seven or eight TAS counters to cover most of the front. He even stuck a couple near the entry points of German reinforcements to slow them down.

Attack and defense in the crucial central sector with lots of Allied Tactical Air Support markers.

Allied Attacks

As the Allies cannot be everywhere, they picked and chose their attacks. Stranded German units, although out of supply, still needed to be cleaned up. Indeed,



one half-strength German static division found an opening and "counterattacked" towards Gravelines, pulling Allied units away from the frontline. Sure, it was eliminated, but it bought a turn.

Turn 8

We played through Turn 8 in about four hours, which included numerous stops and starts to explain rules, show examples, and redo some unit placements to "what-if" the rules. At this point, there was some question about the Allies being able to punch through to an edge. Pity we ran out of time. It would be close.

Victory

For the Germans, it was a Tactical Victory, for I kept control of one port and did not allow the Allies a supplied edge.

For the Allies, it was a slightly better Operational Victory, for Dennis controlled two ports, all four beachheads, and had then all in overland supply.

Another fine playtest gave me more noodling to do. One combat results needs a nomenclature change to better describe the result and a couple other tweaks need doing to clarify Standard rules and add Optional rules.

This is another game where wargamers will be able to quickly understand the general rules but need to adapt to the clever wrinkles.



Positions at the middle of Turn 6.

Books I've Read

by Russ Lockwood

Battle of the Cities: Urban Warfare on the Eastern Front. by Anthony Tucker-Jones. Hardback (6.3x9.4 inches). 248 pages. 2023.

The book contains 20 chapters, with each chapter an examination of the battle for one city, and a 21st chapter as a wrap-up of events common to most of the cities.

The subtitle is a bit of a misnomer. To me, and it just may be me, the subtitle conveys combat within a city. Not exactly -- it mostly covers operational-level combat outside the cities, mostly at division level, but with anecdotes that delve into block-to-block assaults by regiments and battalions.

Tucker-Jones' prose is as sharp as ever, offering an explanation about why a city was important in WWII, followed by superb analysis of operations to conquer or defend it. All the big names are included: Stalingrad, Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, Berlin, Budapest, Breslau, and so on.

All the chapters are excellent, but two deserve special mention: the German drive on Grozny offers exceptional insight about the attack and defense, and the Romanian attack on Odessa -- mostly without German support.

The book contains 69 black and white photos, 13 black and white maps, and one black and white cutaway house-to-house attack.

Now, if you're looking for street- and sewer-level combat worthy of a platoon commander, this is not the book for you. Plenty of books cater to that sort of hyper detail. But if you are seeking an army-level view of battles around a city, this one's superb.

Enjoyed it.

Before Augustus: The Collapse of the Roman Republic. by Natale Barca. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 352 pages. 2023.

This book covers the internecine political battles within the Roman Republic, from about 59BC to 27BC. The ambition and greed led to machinations to grab power, if not for oneself, then for one's friends. Think current political knife fights are vicious? Back then there were real knife fights -- and more than just Julius Caesar on the ides of March.

Coups, assassinations, proscriptions, and civil wars play out across the pages. Just keeping track of who's who and when earns the author kudos. It's absolutely fascinating to see the maneuverings that devolved republic politics into autocracy.

Be warned: the prose uses "historical present" -- in other words, mostly uses the present tense, not the past tense. It's a bit off-putting at first, but no worries. You'll get used to it soon enough because the information was so good and the analysis so interesting, you make the effort. The most jarring part is when a sentence switches to past tense and then back to historical present tense. It's my only knock.

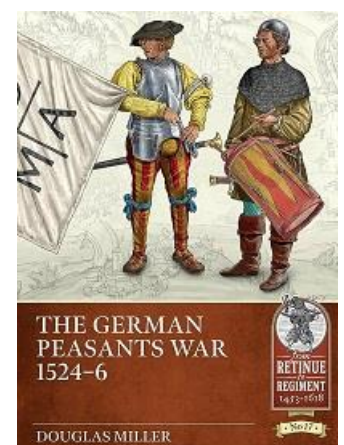
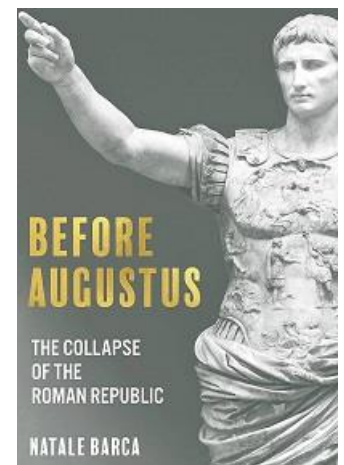
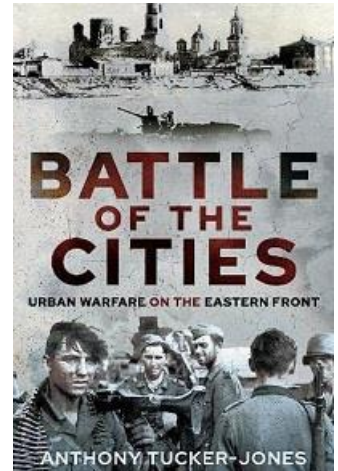
The book contains two color maps, 14 color illustrations (paintings depicting various events in Roman history), and two color photos (bust of Caesar and Pompey).

You have to love the irony that an author named Barca wrote a history about the Roman Republic. Pity some of the main histories about Hannibal Barca are lost to time, but Before Augustus offers an excellent amalgamation of events and analysis of political motives and moves before Octavian took charge.

Enjoyed it.

German Peasants' War 1524-26: Retinue to Regiment No. 17. by Douglas Miller. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 190 pages. 2023.

Just after Martin Luther nailed his complaints to a cathedral door, the German peasants decided they had enough of the feudal system and asked for more rights. When rejected, they took up arms, forming 'bands' of armed men, usually within 10km to 15km of a town marketplace (p30). The start was June 23, 1524 when the peasants in the Black Forest near the Rhine River refused to collect snail shells for the Countess of Lupfen (p53).



These bands didn't have a structured organization, so they varied in size, although most seemed to be built using companies of 400 to 500 men. Being peasants, they were armed with all sorts of weaponry, mostly farm implements, but as they convinced towns to open up their gates or attacked and sacked them, they accumulated the weaponry of the time, including artillery.

And this is just the tip of a fascinating iceberg of a peasant revolt that spread across Germany. Band by band, geographic region by geographic region, the history of the war unfolds through the pages. While not a traditional chronological history, it nonetheless discusses and analyzes the burning of castles, looting of towns, negotiations, and the occasional battle worthy of a tabletop.

The book contains 70 black and white illustrations, 16 black and white maps, 21 black and white photos, four color maps, nine color illustrations of uniforms, and 16 illustrations of flags and standards.

The *Retinue to Regiment* series continues to impress me with much information about relatively obscure topics. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.

The Panzers of Prokhorovka. by Ben Wheatley. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 352 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Myth of Hitler's Greatest Armoured Defeat*

The 1943 Battle of Kursk has been covered extensively, so what makes this book different?

Panzer inventories discovered in 2020 by the author in a "secret annex of NARA" [US National Archives Records Administration] hidden in a separate once-classified file (p20).

Er...what? I sent off a request for clarification.

Wheatley explained: "It said so in the NARA record guides!"

There's a chuckle! Only bureaucracy would actually tell the public about secret archives. So, where was this revelation?

"The main holding for 6th Army records is detailed in part 3 of their guide series," explained Wheatley. "However, the key 6th Army inventories were located in the records covered in part 9 of their guides for captured German records. Those in this guide are largely records which were previously security classified or otherwise not available for microfilming."

Wheatley added: "It is always worth remembering that the Bundesarchiv only holds records that had been first held in the USA (captured) and then returned to Germany -- NARA is therefore the best place to search for German records."

Mind you, the NARA folks I dealt with in Archives II were always knowledgeable and helpful.

Wheatley thought my 'secret' query a tad odd. As I explained: HMGS folks are usually OOB and numerical enthusiasts and I found his explanations pretty clear. The key was in this new "secret" information. I thumbed through (but did not read) the 1500-page Kursk book from 10 years ago (pre-covid at least) that was the be-all, end-all of the battle. But as I sometimes remind folks, "there's nothing new like history." Someone finds something misplaced that may add to the knowledge base, or at least adds to the discussion of a topic. Looks like he found the 'new.'

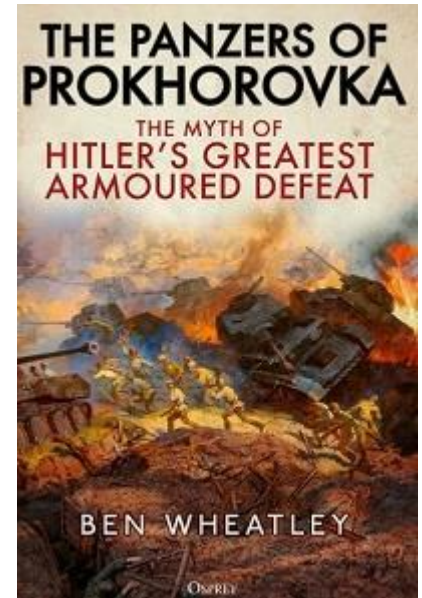
Back to the book. Basically, the German engineering officers certified the status of each unit's tanks, from operational to complete write-off. Wheatley found these reports for the II SS Panzer Corps in said file and compiled and analyzed all the reports to come up with a definitive list of German tank losses during Citadel (July 5-12 in the north pincer and July 5-17 in the south).

This book compiles those actual reports and the German tank loss numbers are far less than the conventional wisdom of history would have you believe -- 42 (p167), not hundreds.

The myth started as all good myths do -- a Soviet commander trying to impress the boss (Stalin) so he doesn't arrest and execute him. The 5th Tanks Guards Army lost so many tanks, its commander reported the Germans also lost hundreds of tanks. The propaganda took it from there.

On July 20, the Germans reported 93% of Tanks were still in inventory (p167-168). The larger losses in the south pincer to II SS Panzer Corps came from a latter battle along the Mius River and to an extent Kharkov -- not from Citadel itself.

The book contains 126 black and white photos, 14 maps, and 67 tables with numerical information. Many of the photos are aerial photos from the Luftwaffe -- not exactly easy to interpret. Wheatley must have used a high-powered magnifying glass, but he likely was closer to the originals than the reproductions in the book. You gotta squint a lot to match caption info to image detail. Appendices that slice and dice the data run from p185 to p229.



This is a truly impressive undertaking. The author must have exhibited great patience sorting through the data for his spreadsheets. So I asked how large was the spreadsheet he made to keep all of this straight?

He replied: "Very - it took a long time to trawl all the records!"

It sure does. The book exudes great numerical dexterity within the text and may not be the most scintillating prose. Indeed, all that detail sometimes exacts a price on the English language, but it's one I'm pleased to pay for the numbers. As soon as the analysis appears, you'll be pleased at the trouble he took to ferret out the numbers from the German sources. Impressive. Just impressive.

Enjoyed it.

F-8 Crusader Vietnam 1963-73: Dogfight 7. by Peter E. Davies. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

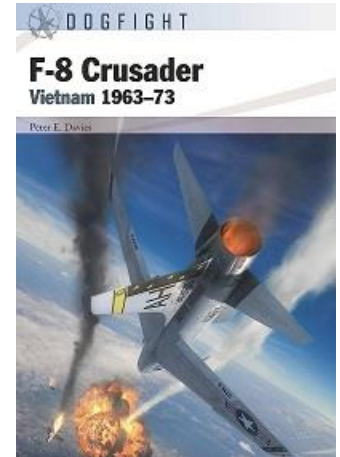
As with all *Dogfight* volumes, this one on the US Navy's F-8 Crusader fighter provides cockpit-level views of dogfighting. The F-8 tangled with MiG 17s and MiG 21s in the skies over Vietnam. The pilots explain the combat capabilities of the aircraft, how their tactics overcame the superior turning radius of the MiGs, and the frustrations with Sidewinder missiles that failed or 20mm guns that jammed.

It wasn't all the F-8s way, for North Vietnamese pilots scored kills on the Crusader, which made for evaluations and changes of tactics.

The booklet contains 33 black and white photos, one color map, 15 color photos, four color illustrations, one two-page color action illustration, and three air combat ribbon diagrams of dogfights.

For modern air combat enthusiasts, some good tabletop missions within. For others, the usual informative Osprey overview of F-8 Crusader combats.

Enjoyed it.



Albuera Eyewitness: 16 May 1811. by Guy Dempsey. Hardback (6.5x9.4 inches). 280 pages. 2023.

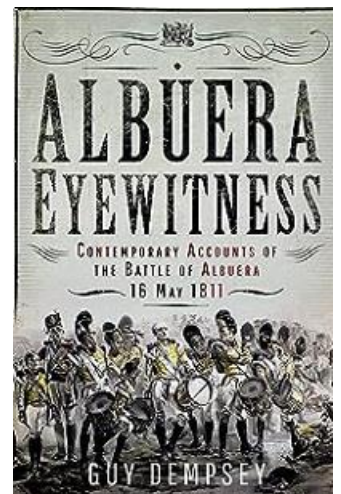
Subtitle: *Contemporary Accounts of the Battle of Albuera*

Back in 2008, Dempsey wrote a book called *Albuera 1811*, which I have not read but I am guessing that he referenced all the material inside this new book. *Albuera Eyewitness* offers official reports, letters, parts of memoirs, and other works recounting the Battle of Albuera. As such, this is not a traditional chronological narrative of the battle, but is what the Spanish, French, (mostly) English, and (few) Portuguese participants remembered.

If you are writing a book about Albuera, this offers first-rate, contemporary info. If not, then you'll find it a bit repetitious. That's not to say it wasn't interesting in places, but after about the first 40 pages, I decided to hunt for the most prominent participants, like Soult, and the obscure Portuguese records. After that, I skipped around.

The book contains 17 magnificent black and white maps and two black and white illustrations.

There's no OOB, which I assume is in the previous book, but those maps that came from the *Albuera 1811* book are enough to set up a tabletop full of terrain and units.

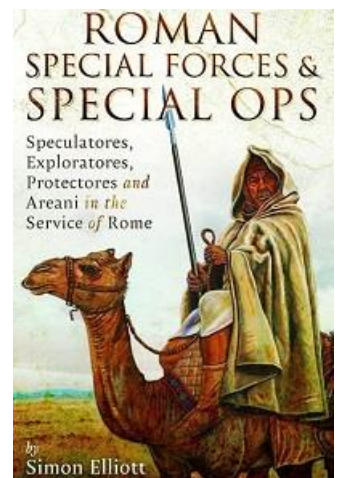


Roman Special Forces and Special Ops. by Simon Elliott. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 157 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Speculatores, Exploratores, Protectores and Areani in the Service of Roman*

In short and sweet prose, the various categories of Roman specialist troops -- roughly the equivalent to modern special forces -- receive as thorough an examination as written and archeological records allow.

Speculatores (tactical intelligence), Exploratores (strategic intelligence and missions), Protectores (agents of the Emperor), and Areani (fragmentary evidence that they were only British, only in about the middle 300 ADs, and only irregular forces that fought alongside the legionnaires) take up most of the book. They are well



explained and placed in historical context.

The *Frumentarii* came from the logistics end of the Roman Army and fulfilled some of these roles under their own HQs. The *Vigiles Urbana* (firemen) and *Cohortes Urbana* (police) are also covered.

The book contains two black and white photos, 17 color photos, and one color uniform illustration of a legionary scout that may be the same weaponry, armor, and equipment of a *Speculatores* or *Exploratores*.

For ancient campaigns in the Roman era, adding these fellows could be an interesting ploy. The book helps explain how they can be used.

Enjoyed it.

Midway Submerged. by Mark W. Allen. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 226 pages. 2023 revamped reprint of 2012 book.

Subtitle: *American and Japanese Submarine Operations at the Battle of Midway May-June 1942*

The original 2012 version was basically Allen's thesis. Although I never read the original, this revamped version likely reads much better than an academic work.

Submarines generally get overlooked at the Battle of Midway, but this exhaustive sub-by-sub examination showcases the differences between USN and IJN naval doctrine and strategy. It is highly critical of the Japanese command system and questions the wisdom of Yamamoto's complex plan to ambush and sink the US carrier fleet.

Besides the micromanagement and set-piece orders for the Japanese subs, it's interesting that a last-minute change to the submarine deployment from set lines of patrol to a forward sweep in front of the IJN fleet was not acted upon. That omission took the IJN subs out of the battle before the battle started.

The USN fared a little better, with at least one of the dozen submarines able to intercept a portion of the IJN fleet and even fire (malfunctioning) torpedoes. The best that could be said is that the Japanese destroyer that depth charged the sub eventually headed back to the main fleet -- just in time for the USN dive bombers to spot it, follow the course, and find the IJN carriers.

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

Of note: The first 101 pages contain the text of his research and arguments. Pages 103 to 182 contain patrol reports of US submarines (I skimmed through these as they are rather repetitious. If this is what updated his thesis book, it is less than useful). So, about half the book consists of mind-numbingly dull official log reports. Pages 189 to the end contain end notes and bibliography.

Overall, this would have made a great *Casemate Illustrated* series volume or an Osprey *Campaign* volume. Still, for presenting new information on an old battle, ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

Naval Battles of the Second World War: Atlantic and Mediterranean. by Leo Marriott. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 151 pages. 2023.

Each chapter offers a naval battle, from the River Platte to the Battle of Casablanca (during Operation Torch). Each chapter is two to four pages of text (Background and Action) followed by some photos and often a map (all lack a scale). The book ends with a list of ships and their specs.

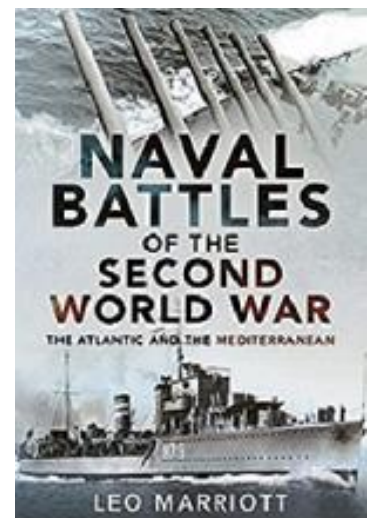
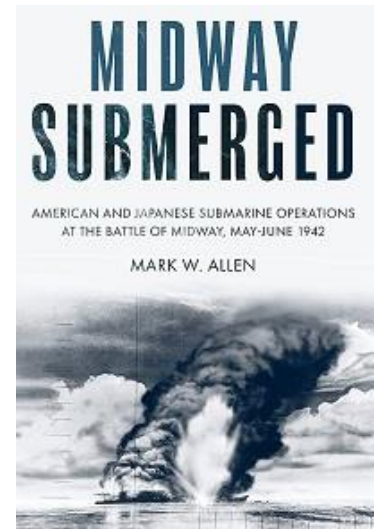
Obviously, you're not going to get a lot of detail from these short Wiki-like chapters, but most offer enough OOB detail to sail warships around a table.

One chapter covers the U-Boat battle for the Atlantic, another the air raid on Taranto, and a third on a convoy (PQ-17). The rest involve warship encounters.

The book contains 128 black and white photos and 18 black and white maps.

It's a quick read and a quick reference for scenarios.

Enjoyed it.



US Naval Aviation 1945-2003: Images of War. by Leo Marriott. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 179 pages. 2023.

This is the followup to the earlier *Images of War* book: *US Naval Aviation 1898-1945* (see the review in the 7/28/2021 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

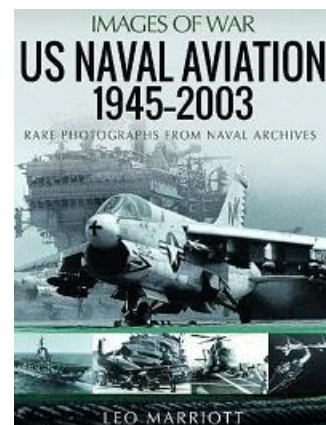
In 1945, the US fielded 29 fleet carriers, 69 escort carriers and 41,272 naval aircraft (p13). Two years later, it was down to 11 fleet carriers and three in reserve, although Marriott fails to do the full comparison with numbers of escort carriers and aircraft. Sloppy.

The design change to angled decks is covered as the US changes from prop planes to jets through the Korean War, Cold War, and Vietnam. Many WWII-era CVs were retrofitted with the angled decks -- that must have been an architectural challenge to balance the new and old.

Note that modern 'Gulf War' air, from 1990 to 2003, is covered in one chapter (p140-p155) and these photos are printed in black and white, not color. Given the shift to easier color printing, I admit to becoming less tolerant about printing color photos in black and white.

That's not to disparage the 198 black and white photos and accompanying captions -- they are often captivating. I can see this as a photo reference source for a larger "Cold War gone hot" in the 1950s and 1960s with the numerous aircraft models, including helicopters and some of the experimental models.

It's just that as you get into the modern age, you need to include color photos.



Javelin Rain. by Myke Cole. Paperback (4.2x6.7 inches). 338 pages. 2016.

This is the sequel to *Gemini Cell*, which I did not read, as *Javelin Rain* was a discount bin pickup. Bear with me here...

Apparently, our hero Jim was turned into the undead -- a fast, strong, heightened senses undead -- who escaped the Institute. Most of this book consists of him escaping with his living wife and son through a national forest.

Meanwhile, the Institute releases the mindless undead "Golds" which kill everyone in a small town population 1,500 plus some camping Boy Scouts for good measure. Golds, like Jim, are souls inserted into dead people to make them rise again. Jim managed to keep his wits about him. Golds are murderous demons, but good at tracking Jim. Collateral damage, you understand.

An Institute sorcerer tries to insert a 'djinn' into a living person with fatal consequences. But oh so close. Collateral damage, you understand. Of course, a Senator is involved, but nothing will stop Jim from destroying the Institute so his son can live free.

Obviously, there's a third book involved because nothing has been solved. The prose is fine, if 'talky' and overly descriptive. To me, the plot take too long to unfold. I guess I'm too impatient and a wee bit bored.

If you're interested in zombie fiction, this might prove interesting. Otherwise, forget it.



The Space Merchants. by Frederick Pohl and C M Kornbluth. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 216 pages. 1952.

This novel starts as an uneven satire of the advertising industry of the future, complete with interconnected influences, corporate rivalries, and executive perks. The main character, Mitchell Courtenay, works his way up to the top of agency Fowler Schoken, dodging assassination attempts, until he's kidnapped and sent to a labor cooperative. Then, the novel turns into an adventure as he works his way out of this jam.

It's a bit schizophrenic as a whole, but generally entertaining as he once again climbs the corporate ladder.

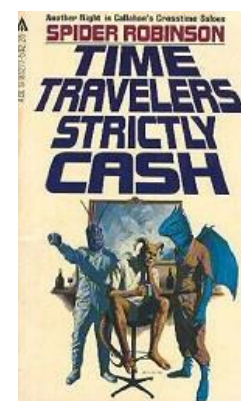
Enjoyed it.



Time Travelers Strictly Cash. by Spider Robinson. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 200 pages. 1981.

Another quartet of *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* stories (see the 12/21/2020 AAR for the review of the original book) plus seven other short stories. The stories were originally printed in various magazines from 1975 to 1981.

Some of the puns within the stories are quite good. Some I had to think about to get. Some sailed past me. Most were OK, although the characters in the story enjoyed them far



more than I did as a reader.

All stories get a little non-fiction explanation about the events behind them, which is sometimes more interesting than the story. I'm going to steal the explanation (p44) of the difference between a book critic and a book reviewer for some future On My Mind column.

Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

The American Revolution 1774-83: Essential Histories. by Daniel Marston.

Softcover (5.9x8.3 inches). 144 pages. 2023 reprint of 2002 book.

For an introduction into a period or war, Essential Histories volumes offer a good, overall introduction. The marketing says this reprint contains 50 new illustrations -- I'll take Osprey's word for it.

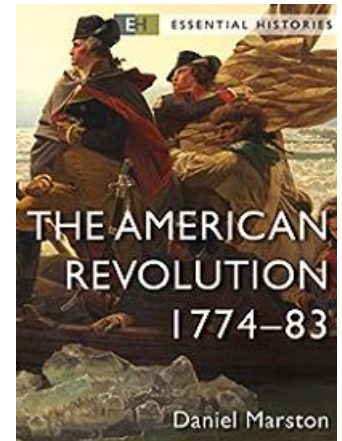
This volume hits all the pre-war high points, from complaints about taxes and other Imperial impositions to noting the effects of the Quebec Act. As for the war itself, the main armies and associated allies receive their due, followed by a year by year examination of the main aspects of the war.

Strategy, operations, and battles are dealt with quickly -- if you want more battle information, Osprey offers plenty of other booklets, not to mention all the other books from other publishers.

As for all this new imagery, the booklet contains a total of 42 color illustrations, six black and white illustrations, two color photos, and seven color maps.

There's not a lot for tabletop recreations, but to introduce a youngster to the American Revolution, this Essential Histories volume is a good place to start.

Enjoyed it.



John Hampden and the Battle of Chalgrove 1643: Century of the Soldier 102. by

Derek Lester. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 175 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Political and Military Life of Hampden and His Legacy*

Reading offers a fine way to expand your knowledge about a particular battle, campaign, war, individual, group, and so on. It also improves your vocabulary. I ran across two words I had no idea what they meant, even within the context of a sentence. Here are the words and definitions:

Advowson (page x): The right to recommend a member of the Anglican clergy for a vacant benefice, or to make such an appointment.

Zugzwang (p62): A situation in which the obligation to make a move in one's turn is a serious, often decisive, disadvantage. This is often used within the game of chess.

Learn something new every day...

As for John Hampden and the Battle of Chalgrove, you learn even more. Hampden refused to pay the King's Ship Money Tax, levied by a not-so-secret court, not the Parliament. He started the idea of no taxation without representation and was arrested, tried, and paid a fine. That also hardened him against the King and he raised troops.

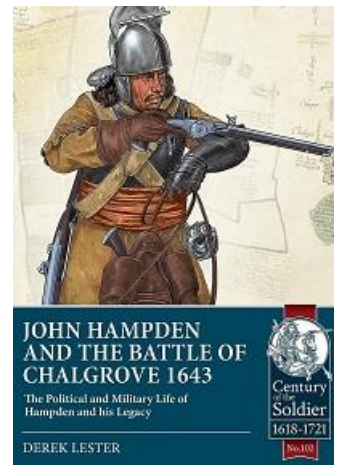
The actual cavalry battle (pages 49-77 in the book, including pre-battle maneuvers) wasn't a very big one, so it would be good for small units on a tabletop. A series of excellent maps (p72-77) will give you all the terrain you need. The text also contains excellent descriptions of terrain, especially the "Great Hedge" -- double row of stock-proof hedges a few feet apart often with a modest ditch running between them (p61)."

The few openings in that hedge were key to the combat, although there is a reference that Rupert charged through it, which the author analyzes. As for an OOB, you'll have to pull the numbers and units from the text, but it was about 600 under Rupert versus 560 Parliamentarians with another 350 in reserve (p66).

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

As a bio and battle, the text often switches back and forth among topics. You have to pay attention while you read. Still, what a great source for an ECW battle featuring Rupert.

Enjoyed it.



El Salvador: Volume 1 Latin America at War 32. by David Francois. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 86 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Crisis, Coup and Uprising 1970-1983*

Every time I read one of these Latin America at War booklets, I think fondly of Terry Hooker, who edited *El Dorado*, a quarterly magazine published by The South and Central American Military Historians Society. It was quite the archive of such history. He would have loved the LAaW series.

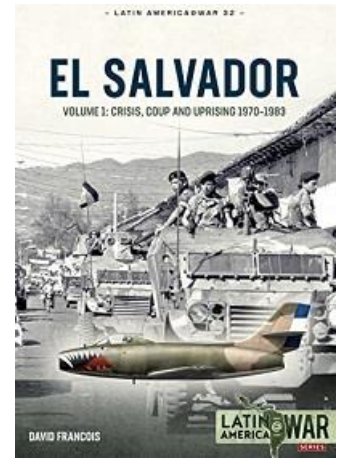
El Salvador had a lot of military coups in the 20th Century, including guerrilla actions that came to the fore in the 1970s and 1980s. When you have concentrated wealth in a few families and massive poverty in the rest of the country, revolt seems like a reasonable option. Most were crushed, but a serious uprising occurred in 1979.

The alphabet soup of communist guerrilla organizations get their due, helped by the Sandanista government of Nicaragua, as does the government forces and the numerous attacks and counterattacks throughout the country. "The war boiled down to cat and mouse between the guerrillas and the FAES [government force]" (p58). So the text summarizes even as it delves into well-written detail.

The booklet contains 101 black and white photos, three black and white maps, one color map, and 19 color camouflage illustrations (six vehicle, four aircraft, five helicopter, and four uniforms).

The OOBs per skirmish are a little sketchy as you might expect, but you can extract enough to put on a tabletop battle -- or at least get the flavor for one.

Enjoyed it.



The Dutch-Indonesian War 1945-49: Men at Arms 550. by Marc Lohnstein. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Armies of the Indonesian War of Independence*

Here's a topic I know nothing about, which is perfect for an Osprey booklet. After WWII, the Dutch figured they'd re-establish their colonies, but the Indonesians had other plans. Nonetheless, Dutch, British, Indian, and Japanese troops sought to bring the islands back under Dutch control.

They succeeded early on to a lesser or greater effect, depending on the island, but as the nationalistic guerilla movement gained support, that control faded. The British pulled their troops out, the US threatened to withhold Marshal Plan funds, and the Dutch exited. That left a four-way battle between the nationalists, Islamists, ethnic Chinese, and Communists using a variety of captured Japanese kit or discarded British kit.

The booklet contains 35 black and white photos, two color maps, and eight pages of color uniform plates (24 figures).

It's a good, brief introduction to an obscure topic, or at least obscure to me, with the usual excellent Men-at-Arms emphasis on uniforms and weaponry.

Enjoyed it.



The SVD Dragunov Rifle: Weapon 87. by Chris McNab. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

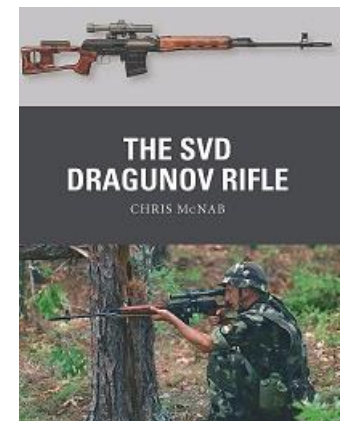
This sniper rifle began to be designed in 1957 for a 1958 competition. Of the three entries, the Dragunov was chosen for production, which started in full run-up in 1963.

Like all the Weapon series booklets, this volume contains all the ins and outs of development, deployment (from Vietnam War to present day), and usage of the main rifles and the various variants.

For example, in 1980, the USSR deployed one sniper per platoon of three squads, but as they became more involved in Afghanistan in the 1980s, every 9-man squad had a sniper (p42).

The booklet contains four black and white photos, 59 color photos, three action color illustrations, and none rifle color illustration. Of note, a photo shows a Peshmerga soldier aiming a sniper rifle while an assault rifle is slung on his back (p61).

Enjoyed it.



War in Ukraine 2022: Europe at War 28. by Tom Cooper, Adrien Fontanellaz, Edward Crowther and Milos Sipos. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 88 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Volume 2 - Russian Invasion February 2022*

An excellent recap of the original Russian invasion strategy and operations -- and why the attack failed. It evaluates units and their deployments, including insight into skill levels and preparedness for battle. This is valuable information if you're going to figure out how to create a tabletop battle.

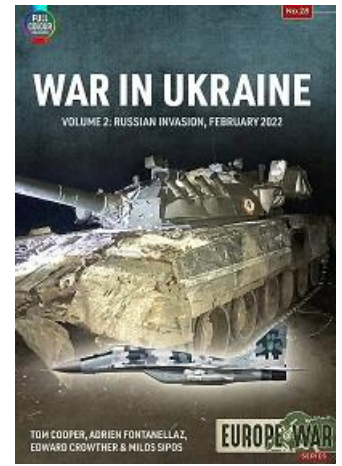
It covers February and March 2022 and includes Ukrainian defense plans and unit evaluations.

You get a full OOB, including the various equipment used.

The booklet contains five color maps, 65 color photos, one black and white map, two black and white visual TO&Es, and color camouflage illustrations: 18 vehicles, four infantry uniforms, eight aircraft, and one helicopter. Kudos for making this a full-color book.

Looking forward to the next volume.

Enjoyed it.



Early Pacific Raids 1942: Campaign 392. by Brian Lane Herder. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The American Carriers Strike Back*

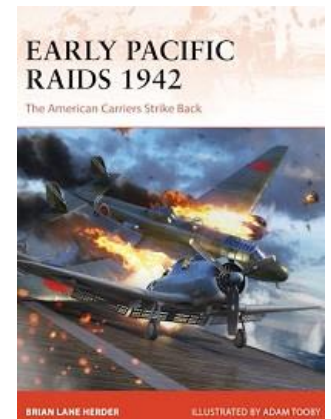
What happened between Pearl Harbor and the Doolittle Raid? Quite a bit more than is popularly known.

Three US carrier groups, each built around one carrier, set out to bomb Japanese garrisons, harbors, and airfields in the Eastern and Central Pacific. Escorting cruisers and destroyers added shore bombardments. And then, the groups left to go hit somewhere else before heading back to the US and avoiding any retaliation. At the time, the Japanese carrier force was running wild in the Indian Ocean.

The most interesting raid was on Japanese shipping at Lae (Papua New Guinea), where a number of Japanese transports and some warships were sunk and damaged. This delayed the planned Japanese invasion of Port Moresby by a month. The overall effect was to pull assets back to Japan.

The booklet contains 54 black and white photos, 13 color photos, 11 color maps, and three color action illustrations. The usual Campaign analysis of commanders, plans, and OOBs offer an opportunity to put together a mini-campaign.

Enjoyed it.



A History of Jungle Warfare: Early Days to Vietnam. by Bryan Perrett. Softcover (6.1x9.2 inches). 208 pages. 2022 reprint of 2015 book.

This reprint needs a big bit of little font help -- too small for my grognard eyes and the excerpts are even smaller. It seems like it's in the original two-column format and merely shrunk to fit the smaller page. Horrible.

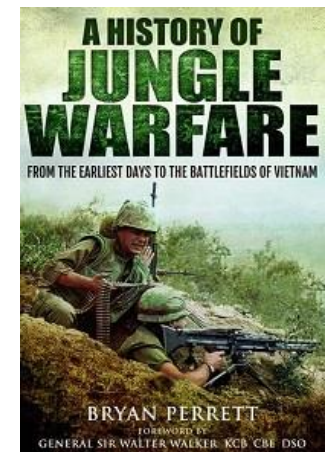
As a general historical overview, it covers many campaigns within its pages. Romans in Germania and British in the Seven Years War are rather odd to lead off since the Teutoberger ambush and Braddock's Defeat were in forests, not jungles.

After that, you get more targeted jungle warfare: pre-WWI US in Philippines, WWI Africa, lots of WWII (Burma, Philippines, and Guadalcanal), and a host of post-WWII battles in Malaysia and Vietnam. The book ends with Khe Sahn.

As an overview, you get a little of everything if you're willing to squint your way through the text. I tended to skip my way through, but I did find this interesting gem of a WWII factoid: Thai troops joined the Japanese to attack the British tanks with "frangible glass grenades containing liquid hydrogen cyanide (p45)." The idea was the glass would break, the cyanide would vaporize, and the ventilation system would draw in the cyanide gas to kill the crew. "Its success was very limited (p45)."

The book contains 150 black and white photos, often rather dark, 21 black and white maps lacking a scale, and four black and white illustrations.

I encountered too many reproduction obstacles for my taste, even if it serves as a good introduction to the subject.



Covert Radar and Signals Interception. by Peter Jackson and David Haysom. Softcover (6.1x9.2 inches). 198 pages. 2022 reprint of 2014 book.

Subtitle: *The Secret Career of Eric Ackerman*

This book is about the spread of radar and radio telemetry in WWII and the Cold War. Eric Ackerman became a specialist in signals intelligence, flying over occupied France in search of German signals, then following up the Allied invasions of North Africa, Italy, and France. Along the way, he even ended up in 1944 Poland investigating V-weapon signaling, although Soviet perfidy sent him and his team back with junk automobile parts, not V-weapon controllers. Some allies...

He continued right on into the Cold War, running stations in Germany for radio intercepts and ultimately graduating to satellite signals. He held honorary RAF rank, ultimately working his way up to "Wing Commander."

Part of one odd letter caught my eye (p131): In September 1946, German POWs were made to build a barracks hut with a large room to hold a sand pit. It was finished by Christmas and said to be used for the recreation of battles. Alas, nothing more was said about this sand table, but was this guy a wargamer?

The book contains 136 black and white photos, five black and white maps, and three black and white illustrations.

The actual information on Ackerman is rather thin -- he seems a secretive person, which is why you get a lot of letters that mention ancillary things like sand pits. Thankfully, this book is not a technical tome and chronicles a roughly chronological history of signals intel by using Ackerman's service as a touchstone.

Enjoyed it.

Nazi Spies & Collaborators in Britain 1939-1945. by Neil R Storey. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 256 pages. 2023.

The British kept a 'Black List' of suspected "fifth-column" spies and traitors during WWII. This book investigates all of them, some with a short one-sentence bio and others with extensive bios. It also covers German agents landed on the coast or parachuted in -- most of them captured almost immediately after landing.

Efforts by the German intelligence agency and their agents are often comical. Sometimes it's just an oversight, like reversing the numbers and streets in an address on government documents. Other times, it's not memorizing the local area, citing towns that are nowhere near where the agents are being questioned.

And other times, it's an agent with wet trousers and shoes because he waded in from the surf, or clothes that belong in Berlin, not rural England. They also tried to land bicycles via the rubber rafts -- not a one made it to shore.

Many of the spies caught early on were hanged if they did not become a double agent. Later on, as invasion pressures lessened, the British interned the captured agents.

The book covers all these 'Black List' people by individual entry (p107-p240). I can't say I read all of them, but I did skim through them.

The book contains 134 black and white photos, nine black and white maps, and six black and white illustrations.

If you're running some sort of WWII spy campaign, or even a pre-war campaign, this would be a handy reference source for period information on people, clubs, and activities.

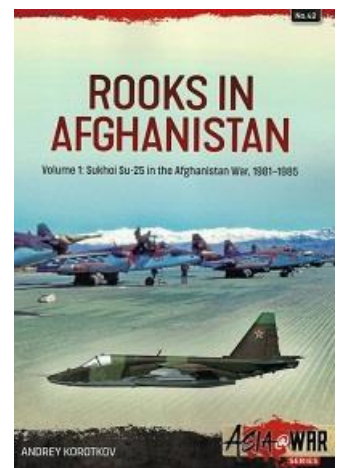
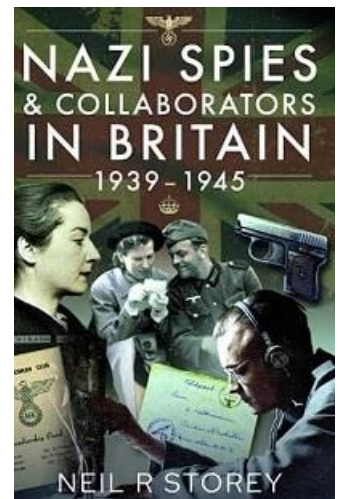
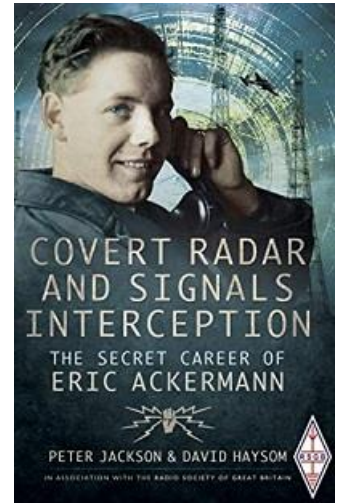
Enjoyed it.

Rooks in Afghanistan: Asia at War 42. by Andrey Korotkov. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Volume 1 - Sukhoi SU-25 in the Afghanistan War 1981-1985*

Lots of first-person accounts, anecdotes, and observations about air operations by Soviet SU-25 squadrons in Afghanistan make this an interesting read about the Soviet aircraft, weaponry, and tactics used against the Afghan militias.

One interesting takeaway was a need for front-line fixes of shoddy Soviet production aircraft. In many ways, the pilots and ground crew seemed to be using



prototypes, with alterations reported back to the factory for production changes.

The biggest problem faced from a maintenance standpoint was the omnipresent sand that worked into the fuel system and eroded engine blades.

Well, that and the weather which saw August-September temperatures of 40 degrees C (104 degrees F) to 50 degrees C (122 degrees F) inside metal buildings. The air conditioning never quite worked well enough...

The pilots tried to loiter over the battlefield as long as possible, for it supported the troops and kept Afghan actions to a minimum. As the SU-25 was a ground-attack aircraft, the usual tactic was bombing runs followed by intermittent strafing runs.

Couple typos: "measure d" has an extra space between the e and d (p10) as does "took command" (p30). One probable typo: SU-25s were "armed" and more likely to survive is probably "armored" and more likely to survive, as all combat aircraft are armed.

The book contains 98 black and white photos, six black and white maps, one black and white illustration, three color photos, two color maps, 14 color aircraft profiles, and four color illustrations of the 'Rook' (Raven) nose art. The original art appeared in a children's book, was adapted by a local Soviet artist, and despite official banning, became so popular it became the local logo.

Interesting to see how the volumes play out as Russia just sent SU-25s to Belarus.
Enjoyed it.

The Reichstag Fire: The Case Against The Nazi Conspiracy. by Sven Felix Kellerhoff. Softcover (6.1x9.2 inches). 198 pages. 2023 reprint of 2016 English translation of 2008 German language book.

Conventional wisdom says the Nazis started the fire at the Reichstag, which they then used to pass the Enabling Acts that gave Hitler political power not seen in Germany for decades. Yet, this examination asserts a lone Dutch arsonist, Marinus van der Lubbe, apprehended inside the building and immediately confessing, was the culprit and Hitler and company seized the fire as an excuse to grab complete political power.

Snippets of conversation recorded by newspaper reporters accompanying Hitler and his entourage, court transcripts, and unwavering and repeated confessions by Lubbe are set against Berlin Fire Department's efforts to extinguish the fire. Explanations by fire investigators about how someone would start a fire are juxtaposed with Lubbe's account, SS access via basement tunnels, and past Nazi violence.

As Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg noted at the time, "Hoped it wasn't done by our boys. It's exactly the kind of stupid thing they might do" (p77).

The book contains 26 black and white photos.

What the fire investigators did not understand at the time, and what Kellerhoff seizes on via contemporary descriptions, is the now known phenomenon of 'backdraft.' They noted the fire started in the restaurant with additional smaller fires started in various hallways. Then it blew.

Lubbe was executed, but four co-defendants were exonerated...which doesn't mean much as evidence given the Nazi proclivity to eliminate any opposition. Whether or not there was a Nazi conspiracy to light the fire remains in question, but there sure was a Nazi conspiracy to take advantage of the ashes.

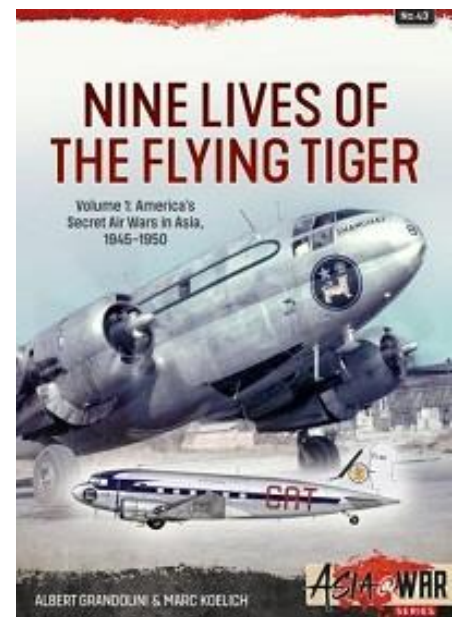
Enjoyed it.

Nine Lives of the Flying Tiger: Asia at War 43. by Albert Grandolini and Marc Koelich. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 106 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Volume 1: America's Secret Air Wars in Asia 1945-1950*

The US started basing aircraft in China in the 1920s, where this book picks up, carries through the 1930s with the American Volunteer Group (Flying Tigers), covers the years of WWII, and ends with the Communist victory and exit in 1949-50. The rise of the Civil Air Transport (CAT) begins the covert US air efforts.

This recap of the political maneuverings in China and the US aircraft export restrictions and abundance offers a theater-level overview of how airpower affected the fortunes of China. If you're interested in adding airpower to Chinese tabletop battles, you'll have your pick of models and



manufacturers -- a real hodge podge lodge of cast-offs. The included OOBs help determine what to add when.

The book contains 186 black and white photos, one black and white map, one color map, and 27 color aircraft profiles.

It's a good succinct start to the topic.

Enjoyed it.

Rommel's Afrika Korps in Colour. by Ian Spring and Anthony Tucker-Jones. Hardback (7.2x10.0 inches). 286 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Rare German Photographs from the Second World War*

For those who look at a color WWII photo and wonder whether it was an actual reproduction of a color slide or a colorized version of a black and white photo, the color photos in this book will blow your mind. They are all original color.

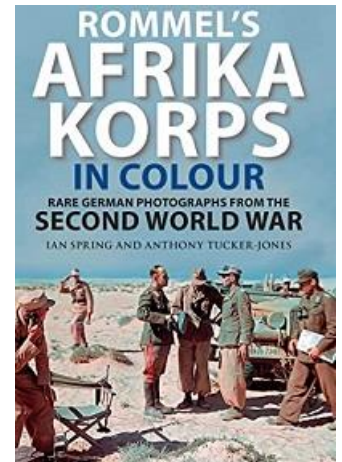
The minimal text introducing the book offers a good overview of desert conditions and the captions provide sharp analysis of the image. The 255 color photos provide the eye-popping visual candy for modelers and tabletop desert terrain buffs.

The photos resulted from Ian Spring's obsession with collecting color images, mostly slides. He created a company, Pixpast, to market the images to those who want to see contemporary color photos of WWII.

The book offers an extensive collection of uniform, camouflage, and vehicle references. Magnificent.

This is a sequel of sorts to another Ian Spring and Anthony Tucker-Jones book of color photos: *Life and Death on the Eastern Front* (see the 8/21/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org for the review).

Enjoyed it.



Texian Volunteer vs Mexican Soldier: Combat 74. by Ron Field. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Texas Revolution 1835-1836*

The Texas Revolution started as most revolutions do, with objections to changes in the 1824 Mexican Constitution and increases in taxation. Like the British army attempt to grab cannons and gunpowder at Lexington and Concord, the Mexican army attempted to retrieve three brass swivel cannons that had been sent to the Texas frontier. Small skirmishes here and there in 1835 drove out the Mexican troops, and Santa Ana decided to come back with an army.

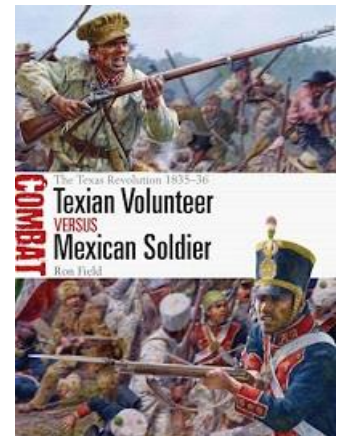
This volume follows the usual series format with a concise guide to the uniforms, weapons, training, organization, and tactics of both sides. The Mexicans basically used their 1835 military manual, although the ill-trained conscripts usually used a frontal assault, while the Texans bought and used US military manuals.

Three battles feature the Texian and Mexican soldiers: The Alamo (March 6, 1836), Coleta Creek (March 19-20, 1836), and San Jacinto (April 20-21, 1836). The Coleta map does not have a scale printed, but the other two do.

Included are OOBs (p76-78) for all three battles for those wishing to create a tabletop battle.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, 22 black and white illustrations, 13 color photos, 21 color illustrations, five color maps, three two-page color action illustrations, and four color uniform illustrations (front and back of Texian and front and back of Mexican).

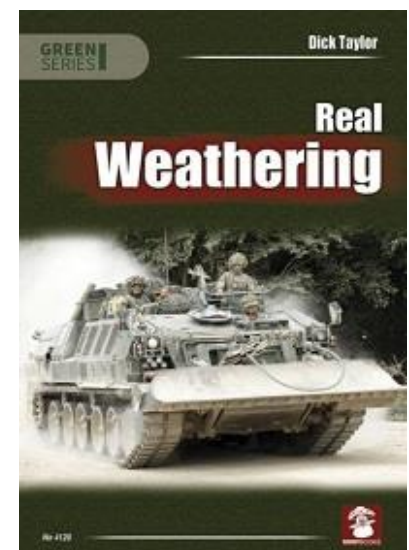
Enjoyed it.



Real Weathering: Reference for Military Modellers. by Dick Taylor and Andy Brend. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 156 pages. 2023.

This is a photo reference book that zeroes in on the aging of tanks and other military vehicles from WWI to present (mostly Cold War era and modern vehicles). There's almost no text, but it contains 297 clear color photos, including many close-ups of individual bolts, grease points, and so on, so that the modeler can add that extra detail.

It is not, repeat not, a book offering any weathering tips or techniques. It is a photo reference source, not a modeling book.



The larger your model, the more helpful this book may be. If you are in the 6mm to 10mm model size, it's unlikely you can even see such details. You might see your way to spiffy up a 15mm tank, but this is more for the plastic modeler with larger sized tanks.

It was still interesting to see what was photographed to show various systems of the tank, including treads and engines, as well as various effects like rust and grease.

Enjoyed it.

US Navy Protected Cruisers 1883-1918: New Vanguard 320. by Brian Lane Herder. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

A sequel of sorts to *US Navy Armored Cruisers: 1890-1933 - New Vanguard 311* (see the 11/03/2022 AAR for the review), this covers the design and development of the class of warships called Protected Cruisers, followed by short histories of the ships and operations of the Squadron of Evolution.

Protected cruisers were lightly armored with sloping armor, versus armored cruisers that were heavily armored with a armored belt to protect the ship.

The first proper protected cruisers were the *USS Atlanta*, *USS Boston*, and *USS Chicago* -- known as the ABC ships. More followed, including the *USS Newark*, which sported the then new US Navy designation of C-1. Before that ship, ships were referred to as names, but as the Navy grew, so did the shorthand nomenclature for the ships.

The Squadron of Evolution started with the ABC warships and the gunboat *USS Yorktown* being sent to Brazil to keep an eye on the new revolutionary government there.

The booklet contains 27 black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, six color photos, two color illustrations, one two-page cutaway color illustration of the *USS Columbia*, two one-page color action illustrations, and eight color warship profiles.

The *USS Baltimore* saw action in WWI as minelayers and the cruisers ultimately ended their service in 1923. The most famous protected cruiser commissioned, the *USS Olympia* (p30), which led the fleet at Manila Bay in the Philippines in the Spanish-American War, still floats. She is preserved in Philadelphia, PA, as a museum ship and is the world's oldest surviving steel ship (p45), as opposed to iron or wood.

Enjoyed it.

Allied Tanks at El Alamein 1942: New Vanguard 321. by William E. Hiestand. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

The technical aspects of the various US and UK tanks at El Alamein get the design and development analysis -- Matilda, Valentine, Crusader, Churchill, Stuart, Lee, and Sherman being the main tanks.

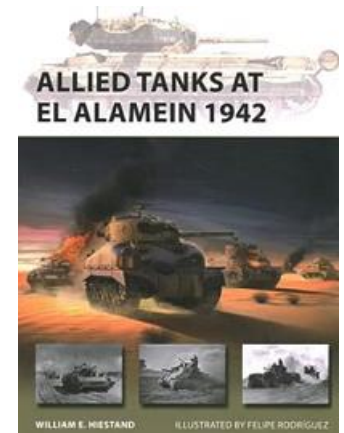
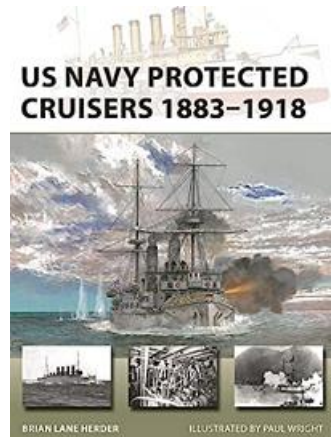
This funnels into a pretty good overview of the Second Battle of Alamein, including tank OOBs and a clever deception plan that placed fake truck scaffolding atop the tanks. I hadn't read about this before, but the booklet says it worked. The booklet contains a black and white photo (p35) and a color profile (p31) -- make sure you check out the three middle wheel painted black to sell the illusion.

Now you have two umpire tank tactics for the tabletop: At El Alamein, put truck models on the table until spotted, and then they become tanks. In 1944-45 Western Europe, put nothing but Tiger tank models on the tabletop until spotted and they become Pz IVs and Vs.

The booklet contains 40 black and white photos, one two-page color action illustration, and 13 color tank profiles. Enjoyed it.

P-47 Razorbacks of 8th AF Colours. by Artur Juszcak. Softcover (horizontal 11.7x8.25 inches). 56 pages. 2023.

This offers a color fighter reference source of US Eighth Air Force color camouflage profiles. There's very little text, but each individual aircraft receives a bulleted list of notable assignments and achievements. An OOB of the squadrons that flew P-47s is also included along with some general guidelines for markings and symbols.



Otherwise, it's a collection of 106 color P-47 fighter profiles along with 49 color nose art illustrations. A modeler's delight, indeed. Enjoyed it.

German Self-Propelled Artillery at War 1940-45: Images of War. by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 111 pages. 2023.

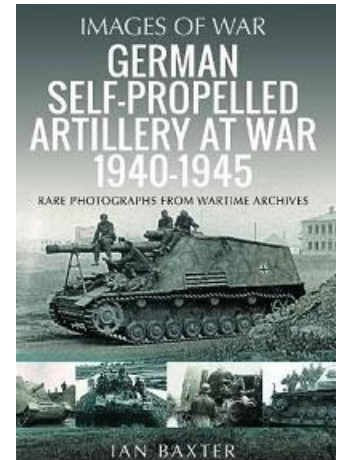
This photo-heavy coverage of German Self-Propelled Artillery divides into three main chapters: 1940-41, 1942-43, and 1944-45. The vehicles change, but the mission remains the same: plaster the enemy, move on, and fire again. Each chapter gets a couple of pages of overview.

Vehicles covered include Bisons, Hummels, Wespes, Grilles, Brummbars, and others toting 150mm and 105mm guns. There's even some errant werfer half-tracks with side-mounted rocket launchers which stretches the definition a bit, "but is still worth noting (p76)."

Under the category of "Learn Something New...," a caption referred to the 11th Panzer Division as the "Ghost Division" (p76). I thought it was the 7th Panzer, so off I went to google it. Sure enough, both divisions seemed to have acquired the same nickname. I guess the tankers of the 7th might have been a bit perturbed.

The book contains 138 black and white photos fit for modelers and dioramists. An interesting photo of a four-vehicle battery of Hummels camouflaged and ready for firing proved to be the most interesting photo to me, edging out the three-vehicle battery of Grilles ready to fire (p46).

Enjoyed it.



The Battles of King Arthur. by Tony Sullivan. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 270 pages. 2022.

From the title of this book, what might you expect? Mull it over for a second or two...

If you're expecting an analysis and possible recreations of Arthur's dozen battles, that was what I was expecting, too.

The problem rests in the scant sources. I have a old book in my library that reprints and analyses "all" (in quotes because I don't know if it really is all) the literature containing references to King Arthur, Arcturus, Artur, or any one of a number of variations.

So, a book concentrating on an investigation of the actual battles caught my eye.

Errr...not so fast.

The book might be more accurately titled: "Trying to Locate King Arthur's Battles."

Once you wrap your head around that, you'll find an exhaustive examination of locating the 13 battles mentioned in Historia Brittonum. In many ways, this is a superb recap by historian as detective, starting with the remnants of Roman Britain holding out against the Angles and Saxons and proceeding through a literature analysis matched with geographical analysis. Commentary on other modern authors' efforts to locate the battles is included.

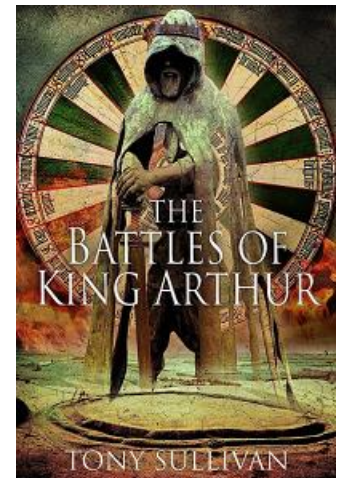
It's quite an impressive feat to keep all the names straight, dipping into etymology, and more importantly, putting all this fragmentary information within a timeline. Here's where myths meet facts, or as close to facts as can be surmised. A chapter about weapons and armor helps with understanding circa 500AD warfare.

The book contains three black and white illustrations of tactics and formations and 51 black and white maps. Alas, here is where us folks from across the pond need better maps. I have a general understanding of British geography, thanks to reading about British history and a couple of vacations via car there, but I was often lost with the book's rudimentary UK cartography.

Yes, I demand better maps. First, all maps should have a scale, Second, if you are referencing modern cities and towns, how about including them on the map.

One typo: "calvary" should be cavalry (p145).

As for the 13 battles, Sullivan did what he could in locating them (p186-p226), or at least providing his best guess. He's very honest about being at a loss for most of them, although he claims to have pinpointed seven of the 13. There's so little historical evidence of what happened during the battles, it's hard to even place one -- but he lays out his evidence and analysis.



What this book does not do is provide anything that would help with recreating a tactical battle. I know: scant historical evidence, but it would have been nice to take that extra step. But then again, that's the book I wanted to see, not the one delivered.

The detective work is great, but understand this is a literature and map search. No OOBs. No tactical maps. Once you switch your mindset, you'll enjoy the effort.

Enjoyed it.

The Roman King Arthur? Lucius Artorius Castus. by Tony Sullivan. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 213 pages. 2022.

Unfortunately, I read this immediately after I read *The Battles of King Arthur*, which eliminated Lucius Artorius Castus (LAC) as the "real" King Arthur. It also repeats much of the explanations and analysis of that book. So, I skipped a lot of the King Arthur text (p152-p191) and concentrated on the history of LAC.

Apparently, he was a centurion who saw much of the Roman world and killed many of its enemies. He is a real soldier for his funerary monuments are relatively intact, even if the inscriptions are incomplete (the stone was used in the construction of other buildings). And he made good in climbing the ladder as an equites ("knight") to become procurator.

This book concentrates on examining the theory, as noted in the 2004 movie *King Arthur*, that LAC was a Sarmatian sent to Britain and led a group of equites circa 500AD. That is disproved in this book, for LAC soldiered in around 200AD.

A couple typos: a missing space between "." and "However" (p66) and "risen to one 180" (p67) seems like the word "one" was accidentally left in.

The book contains 30 black and white maps, five black and white illustrations, and four black and white photos.

The "King Arthur" aspect is tenuous at best, but as this is Sullivan's third "King Arthur" book, one guesses the marketing department figured that name was better known than LAC. The King Arthur angle becomes more palatable if you did not read his other book.

However, what you do get is an excellent analysis of Imperial Roman social, cultural, and military practices using LAC as the pivot point -- and that's a pretty good extrapolation from a couple of broken funerary stones.

Enjoyed it.

