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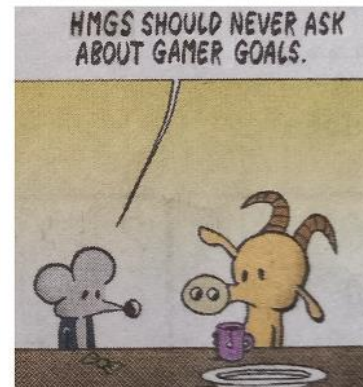
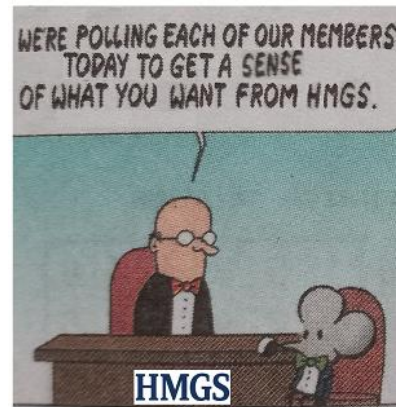
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Books I've Read

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1217: The Battles That Saved England
Manfred Von Richthofen: Red Baron
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The Beagle Conflict: Volume 1 (Lamer at War 36)
The Beagle Conflict: Volume 2 (Lamer at War 39)
Far From Suitable? Haig, Gough and Passchendaele
Germany's French Allies: 1941-45 (MAA 556)

Tanks on Iwo Jima: 1945 (New Vanguard 329)
Soviet War in Afghanistan: 1979-1989 (EurWar 50)
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Chain of Dice: WWII Skirmish

by Russ Lockwood

I had missed Dan's earlier *Chain of Command (CoC)* game due to circumstances beyond my control -- sorta like a *Twilight Zone* episode. In any case, he was kind enough to run another *CoC* skirmish game for me and Fred. By dint of where I sat, I was the Soviets and Fred the Germans.

The Basics

CoC uses dice as command control functions -- what you roll on 5d6 determines what units you can activate. The basics: a 1 allows you to activate a team (like a sniper team, anti-tank rifle team, or mortar team), a 2 allows you to activate a junior leader (squad leader), a 3 allows you to activate a junior leader or vehicle, a 4 activate a senior leader (Lt) who can activate units within 6 inches of him, a 5 gets you a small command chip (6 of them gives you a big command chip that lets you do a variety of actions), and a 6 is a nothing -- unless you roll two 6s, in which case you get to take a free turn (albeit rolling only 4d6 instead of 5d6).

German Fred (left) and Soviet Russ as the game winds down. Photo by Dan.

Each activation allows you to do something: shoot, move, deploy to the tabletop from off table, and so on.

Victory comes from knocking down the enemy's Force Morale status points. We each started with 9. When you lose a team or squad or vehicle, or if a leader is wounded or killed, you roll to see if that total drops by 1 or 2. When the enemy captures a deployment spot, you roll to see if that total drops by 1 or 2.

You can kinda get the gist within a couple turns, although understanding how all your troops and the enemy troops interact on the battlefield will take a while to finesse.

My initial deployment of the Senior Leader, the Lieutenant, and a squad.

Dan had already placed the "jump-off" deployment spots (three each) on the tabletop in secure positions. He also made up cards for each unit - team, squad, vehicles, leaders, and so on, which helps you learn the game.



I should point out that *CoC* was hot and heavy in our group a few years back, but faded, Now it was back with a vengeance due to younger players painting up units.

Hop To It

I deployed my first squad and a Lt. in the middle of the board. I shook the troops out into a firing line and infiltrated into the woods, keeping a small hill between me and the Germans, which Fred had deployed in the center in a woods line.

My squad, augmented by a mortar team, expands into the woods. The Germans are in the woods yonder

Then I deployed a rifle squad on the right flank. Fred matched with a German squad.

I deployed my T-26 in the center. Fred matched with a Pz IID.

A third Soviet rifle squad appeared on the left flank, again matched by Fred. I dropped the mortar team in the center, behind the hill. That needed a spotter if it could not self-spot. Fred's mortar also went into the center.

I kept the anti-tank rifle team in reserve. Fred kept a flamethrower team in reserve. Sure seems even, eh?

My right flank deployment of a Rifle Squad. Note the unit card Dan created.

First Blood

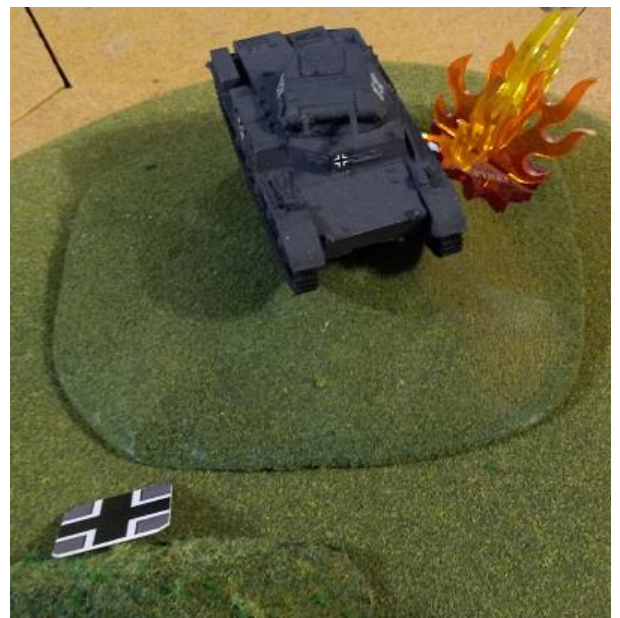
My T-26 slowly ascended a small hill just to the left of my center troops. Across the board, Fred's Pz IID accepted the challenge and drove to the top of a hill. The gun duel commenced.

With brilliant tactical precision, I outrolled Fred. His Panzer IID blew up. Aha! In the land of infantry, the one-eyed tank is king. I moved it slowly towards the front line.

Meanwhile, on my right, Fred and I got into a firefight and my Soviet lads put a world of hurt on Fred's infantry squad.

In general, you look for 4,5,6 to hit and then 4,5 (to inflict a point of fatigue) or a 6 (kill one figure). Unit quality, range, and cover alters those numbers, but after trading fire, I had inflicted 8 fatigue on Fred's squad and sent it reeling. When fatigue equal remaining figures, the unit pins. When fatigue doubles remaining figures, the unit routs. Fred ordered the squad to retreat and he slowly started to reduce fatigue (1 activation by a leader subtracts one fatigue point).

I set out in hot pursuit, except my 'charge' movement die roll (3D6) failed to be high enough so that the troops could dash across open space and into the woods holding the Germans.



Fred's Pz IID brews up after stellar shooting by my T-26. The cross marker is a Jump Off point.

Flame On!

Fred very cleverly rolled the right die numbers to bring on his flamethrower -- it is by far the deadliest team on the table. An intact squad (10 figures) tosses 10D6 for hits. My T-26 firing high explosive tosses only 4d6. A MG tosses 8D6. The flamethrower? 12D6. That's right, twelve six-sided dice. And it ignores cover bonuses!

Fred's flamethrower team mans field fortifications just as my squad fails to roll high enough to make it into the woods. Not that I would have gotten a cover bonus.

Uh-oh.
AMBUSH!

Out came the flamethrower team and Fred rolled 12d6 -- and amazingly rolled 11 misses and only one hit! And his team is sitting right in front of my squad.

Aha! My turn!

I failed to roll either a 2 or a 3 on 5d6. That means, I can't activate the squad. Oh, Shotakovich!

Fred, on his turn, managed to roll the activation number and this time, whooosh! Flaming commies!

My squad, or what was left of it, routed to the rear, meeting a lagging senior leader on the way.

The flamethrower landser managed to hit the ignition button the second time. Fried Soviets fall and the unit is Pinned. Up top, the German sergeant continues to rally the squad from near rout.

On The Left

With so much attention in the center and right the left was a bit shortchanged in activations. I finally formed a line at woods' edge and traded shots with the German squad. Neither of us was very effective.

The Gaminess Part

The use of dice to control activations is a gamey part of the rules. If I was writing a story of this skirmish, I'd say Fred got the flame drop on the Soviets in the woods, but the Soviets were closer than expected and the flamer boys panicked. In turn, the Soviet



troops suffered from inaction by the sight of a flamethrower.

At the same time, the die roll meant most of my units were petrified and unable to activate. Fortunately, wise in the ways of *CoC*, I kept my Lt. leader within 6 inches of the center units. Whenever I rolled a 4, I'd activate him and his 3 activations -- and he would "order" the vehicle, mortar, and infantry squad to do something. That's the "chain of command" comrade.

But it still meant that my flanks sat down and had a picnic. On the right side, my lads became the toasted marshmallows.

Another flame squirt and now my squad routs, dropping the bodies they had carried away. The Lt. is trying to rally the living.

Chip to the Rescue

Remember that when you rolled enough 5s you got a big special chip? One action was tossing the big chip in and moving the deployment spot 18 inches. I moved it towards the center and deployed an anti-tank rifle team to cover the spot and bring fire on the flamethrower team. It was ineffective fire, but at least I had a fighting chance.

The Right Stuff

As my krispy infantry squad fled off the board, Fred's flamethrower team charged my one senior leader (Lt). Due to a quirk in the rules that neither of knew about, I actually had the advantage and managed to kill off two of the three men in the team (including the flamethrower and assistant). Alas, the flamer team killed my leader, but at least that flank was clear for the Germans.

The flamethrower team, thinking themselves invincible, are gunned down by the lieutenant and the lone survivor is pinned. Alas, the Lt. also was killed.

Center Advance

It turns out that even a light tank is invulnerable to any type of infantry or mortar fire. Onward the T-26 crunched. Between the tank, mortar, and infantry fire, I sent Fred's infantry and mortar packing.

At this point, I had another special chip. There was a chance Fred to could rally his troops before they ran off the table. If I spent the chip, I'd "end the turn" and they would have to make a rout move off table and be forever gone. I spent the chip.

Gamey, I know.

The Right Collapses

Now, Fred worked wonders eliminating fatigue on his infantry squad -- so much so the battered squad was fully recovered and inched its way around my flank. I could not stop it with the anti-tank rifle team and the newly moved Soviet deployment spot was within their reach. It was time for a tactical retreat. I conceded.

Whenever a unit or team is lost, you roll to see if your Force Morale status drops by 1 or 2.



Excellent Game

Just about every game of *CoC* we play ends up a close match. This one was no different. We each had our chances. We played well in terms of moves. Even the dice proved equally beneficial and fickle at times for both of us. Fred was just a little sharper in his moves.

Thanks, Dan, for hosting, and Fred for the game.

Chain of Dice: The Umpire's View

by Umpire Dan

This game used three pre-set Jump-off-Points (deployment spots) per side, skipping the Patrol Phase. Tableside choose was determined by Russ, based on which side had the wooden chair.

('Tis true. Dan has plenty of chairs, but my bad back rebels at sitting on most folding chairs. But a couple of the chairs around the table are wooden with contoured seats. My back thanks Dan for them. --RL)

Fred had a German infantry platoon with three squads (one with an LMG), a flamethrower team, an 81mm mortar team, and a PzIID. Russ had a Soviet infantry platoon with three squads (one with an LMG), an ATR team, an 82mm mortar team, and a T-26S.

My T-26, having destroyed the Pz IID, takes pot shots at German infantry on the rise. My left flank infantry squad moves through the woods to trade shots with the Germans. Umpire Dan looks on .

Scenario

The scenario was an engagement to force back the opposition. This was a true see-saw battle where each side would get a local victory, try to push the momentum, lose the next engagement, and then the other side tried to push their luck.

Both sides started with a Force Morale (FM) at 9. Fred lost the PzIID, dropping his FM to 7. Fred forced a firefight on his left, but Russ delivered more than he received, forcing the German squad back with almost 50% casualties.

The Soviet squad followed up to finish the job, but were ambushed by the flamethrower team, causing horrendous casualties. Shortly after, the Soviet squad was no more, so the Soviet FM dropped to 6 from the loss of the squad and leader casualty. The Soviets pushed up the center using the T-26S to harass the German infantry with impunity.

Firefights all along the front erupted as the Soviets claimed the center hill. The German center squad took on mounting casualties, eventually breaking, while the German right squad wounded the Soviet platoon commander orchestrating the battle in the center. German FM down to 6, Soviet FM down to 5.

The flamethrower team advanced to try to take the Soviet right flank Jump-off-Point with only the Soviet Lieutenant left to defend it. The Soviets use their Chain-of-Command special die to move the Jump-off-Point, thwarting the German team from taking it. The Soviet ATR team deploys to defend the Jump-off-Point. (This is about when the image was taken.)



The Germans attacked the Soviet leader. The Soviet leader "wins" the close combat, but is killed, leaving the German team pinned. Soviet FM down to 3.

The Soviets rushed the German central Jump-off-Point, forcing the German mortar team into close combat.

German Infantry Squad	German MMG Team	US Rifle Squad	T-26S
1 x NCO (SMG: 4D6, 12" range, 6" close) 1 x LMG Team (belt-fed), 2 crew, 8D6 (5D6 if 1 crew), 18" close range 1 x Rifle Team (8 men), Rifle: 1D6, 18" close range 21	1 x MMG (belt-fed), 3 crew, 10D6 (7D6 if 1 crew), 18" close range 10	1 x NCO (SMG: 4D6, 12" range, 6" close) 10 x M1 Rifle, M1 Rifle: 1D6, 18" close range (Re-roll 1's) 19	T-26S Armor: 3 AP: 5 HE: 4 Slow Speed NCO: "1" to activate List 4

Dan's unit cards.

The mortar team "wins" the close combat, but routs.

The Soviets eventually claim the Jump-off-Point, but their NCO is wounded. German FM down to 3. Soviet FM down to 1.

With the German left flank squad finally rallied and closing in on the ATR team and Jump-off-Point, the Soviet player concedes the game.

House Rules

I changed the Vehicle Table 3 result of '1' to "Roll twice on Table 2".

Leaders do not take SHOCK (i.e. fatigue), so they can always go 3D6 for movement -- but I've decided that for each wound they take, minus 1 die (as well as -1 order).

A leader that is reduced to '0' orders is killed.

Chain of Requests: More Chain of Command

By Dan

At the request of several players, I hosted a *Chain of Command* game over Memorial Day weekend. I wanted to be careful not to have too many players, so I planned for up to six players and after soliciting dates and interest, I ended up with five players plus myself.

An earlier *Chain of Command* game. Start of second phase on Turn 1: Michael (right) moves a German squad upstairs in the building overlooking the road. The M11/39 is just behind his right hand and Michael's second squad is deployed behind his left hand in improved positions. Erik (left) has his Americans in a central position behind improved positions. Keith (back, standing) helps John (black shirt, sitting) deploy his Germans behind the shed. A Russian squad is deployed in a small wooded area behind improved positions with a platoon leader ready to supervise future deployments. Photo by Dan.



I made this a Bring Your Own Troops game, as players that "invest" in the period and game rules should be allowed the option to bring their figures and terrain to play and share with others, which four players did. This was

fortunate, as I had enough Germans and Russians to comfortably field 4 platoons, but expanding to 6 platoons would best represent two opposing companies not quite at their “paper strength.” I created cards for the squads, teams, support, and HQ units with their game capabilities on them so players would not always have to consult a table.

With one player bringing Italians, one player bringing Germans, and two players Americans, this would not be an “historical” encounter -- but we were assembled to learn the game and enjoy it (which we did). This was my first time hosting a “Company-sized” game instead of one or two platoons a side. Two players had never played *Chain of Command* and the rest of us had played it twice or more, but none in at least a year, so it would be an interesting learning experience for all. Fortunately, I had enough markers and play-aids for everyone, which helped facilitate the game.

Explanations

After the new terrain was added, all terrain features were explained to all the players. The single stream was treated simply as a -1D6 to movement except at the fords and bridge. The woods had 4-inch visibility and considered “Rough,” while the green hills and grassy areas were “Broken,” counting as light cover if troops were stationary or moving 1D6 inches. All buildings were hard cover, as were stone walls.

Line-of-sight was literal: All woods were as tall as the trees on them and effectively blocked all line-of-sight from hills or buildings, limiting cross-table fire opportunities. Hills were more like undulations as the levels were not very high. This meant that vehicles entering from both sides of the road were visible down the entire road despite the change in elevation.

I often skip the Patrol Phase and pre-set the Jump-off points, but decided to use it with modifications to show the players how this abstract pre-game aspect of the game works (and how it can affect the start of the game significantly). This experiment worked well, I thought, as both sides had useful Jump-off points that were not too vulnerable.

The scenario was relatively simple: A meeting engagement where control of the road was an objective for a future advance. The Germans took control of one of the buildings overlooking the road very early, while the road itself was contested by vehicles from both sides throughout the game.

The Axis had choice of table side and started the Patrol Phase. The Americans players decided the Patrol Phase strategy and attempted to flank the German right with limited success. The Allied right side Jump-off point was a bit of an afterthought, but was positioned opposite the German left flank Jump-off point. The Russian player would use this during the game.

The Western Front

The Axis won the Initiative and started the turn. All players deployed some of their platoons, with Michael controlling one building overlooking the road and Fred bringing on his M11/39 tank at the end of the road. With nothing to shoot at, the phase transferred to the Allies.

The Americans deployed and soon started shooting. Erik deployed a squad with one MMG team and started an exchange with Michael’s Germans in the building. After a couple of phases, Michael decided he was getting the worse end of the exchange and retired downstairs to the ground floor, ending the firefight with Erik’s Americans. Erik would maintain his position with the MMG team for the rest of the game to ensure the Germans would not come back upstairs (and they never did).

Keith’s Americans traded shots with John’s Germans. John responded by firing back and consolidating his position and adding more troops to his defense while Keith tries to flank the Germans with a second squad. Casualties started to mount on both sides.



A great 2d6 die roll advances too far... Photo by Erik.

Fred advanced his M11/39 to support Michael's Germans and deployed an Italian squad in the woods near the building on the other side of the road. These are not visible to Erik's Americans that are below the crestline. Erik, in the spirit of General Patton's wishes, does a "Marching Advance" towards the Italian position, but does not define an objective or feature to stop at. He rolls a '12' on 2D6 and ends up 2" from the Italians, resulting in close combat. Erik finds out why you don't attack an enemy position without trying to wear it down first and takes significant losses and is driven back. He explains he *really* wanted to get to the crestline to start a firefight, but never expected to move so far – so his lesson learned was to indicate an objective of the move. Nonetheless, the close combat was interesting for all the players and Erik appreciated the uncertainty of any action in the game.

The Italians fared better against Erik's Americans, but were at a bit of a stand-off against what the Americans had left. This section of the battlefield became a bit quiet as both sides were now out of line-of-sight and neither side eager to advance and start another firefight. Fred kept his on-table Italian force and off-table forces in reserve to respond to the emerging threats on either flank.

The Eastern Front

On the Russki side of the table, the Germans and Russian traded shots, often without any effect because of the hard cover each side was in. Michael added an MMG team to add more firepower, while the Russians deployed a second squad behind a nearby hill and these eventually show themselves to add into the firefight. A third squad deploys behind the bridge. Michael uses the Germans in the ground floor of the building to exchange fire with the Russian 3rd squad, but there are no windows on this side of the building, so only the LMG can fire from the corner of the damaged building.

Over several phases, the dice averages begin to play out and losses start to slowly mount, but the Russians have more local firepower versus the Germans on this side of the table and the Russian player manages to roll sufficient Command dice to keep all three squads and an MMG in action every phase – but for now, it's just a sideshow.

One Big Happy Front

John deploys a PzII on the road. He *really* would like to use it with his force, but is convinced to keep it on the road. Fred's M11/39 fires at a Russian T-26 that deployed at the far end of the road, hitting it, but only causing some shock. The Americans deploy a bazooka team to take out the M11/39, but miss – twice. The Russian play deploys an ATR team and manage to hit the M11/39, but only cause some "shock". The PzII fires at the T-26, hitting it, but only adding some more shock.

The T-26 finally returns fire and hits the M11/39 (despite the "shock" penalties it has) and knock out the M11/39. An American M8 armored car enters the road and eventually takes out the PzII. An Italian AB41 armored car enters the battlefield, but moved behind the building to help out Michael's Germans against the Russians. The two Allied vehicles advance a little bit down the road to look over the center part of the battlefield and fire upon the Italian position with no effect for the rest of the game.

Keith presses the German position on the right, threatening to capture the German Jump-off point. John commits his last squad of Panzergrenadiers and a vicious firefight and close combat ensue. Although John "wins" the melee, his losses are so severe that his Force Morale drops to '0' and his command is driven off the table. Keith's Americans are in barely better shape with a Force morale of 3, but capture the German Jump-off point.

At this point Erik's Americans are also feeling the pressure from fighting the Italians and are at a Force Morale of '3', while the Italians are in much better shape. However, Michael's platoon has suffered losses over time from the ongoing firefight with the Russians and his Force morale has dropped to '3' after his left flank squad and MMG team are annihilated and routed, respectively, while the Russians are at '8' with their much lighter losses.

With the Germans gone, the Russians start to advance their second squad to capture the German jump-off point. Michael has one squad left of Panzergrenadiers on the table, but not in a good position to stop this move. The Italian armored car fires on the Russian squad but does little damage, forcing Michael to commit the Panzergrenadiers to boldly advance out of the woods to engage the Russians, triggering other Russians on Overwatch to fire on the Panzergrenadiers, killing two.

Fred has seen enough and suggests to end the game, which all players agree to. The game lasted six hours with ongoing food breaks.

Fickle Fortune

While a long game, it was filled with a lot of action. The fickle fortune of the dice manifested themselves several times, but tended to favor the Allies more than the Axis: The Russian player got a roll of 4, 6, 6, 6, 6 at a rather fortunate time in the game, ending the turn after the Allied phase, removing the "Overwatch" makers on three Axis units, and allowing the Allies to start the new turn. The 4 result allowed the Russian to use his senior leader to activate a squad, MMG, and a mortar team to keep the firepower against his German opponent.

That same opponent had earlier rolled double 6's, giving him a second phase, but he failed to roll a '4' in either phase to use his senior leader to rally a routing MMG team before the turn ended, so the German MMG team fled off-table and was lost. Earlier in the game, the Italian player rolled three 6's, ending the turn – but it allowed the Allies to start the new turn.

It was an interesting battle and a great learning experience for all the players with no arguments of any significance and all issues and questions resolved fairly easily. It prompted a lot of post-game comments about doing future games in a "campaign" setting or series of games as part of a larger battle, but we'll see how far we get with that. The table was great to look at and play on and everyone got to "exercise" their figures. It was a pleasure to game with all who could attend - some who I haven't seen in a year or more.

Familiar, Yet Surprised: CoC

By Mike

I will now reread the rules with the benefit of having freshly played them, and there were aspects that surprised me at bit. Some house rules might be needed, but I do really like the *CoC* rules.

It took a bit of time before the platoons started losing cohesiveness, and then it went rather quick. That's probably how it should be, but I have to think few company commanders - unless ordered - would sacrifice their unit to the point we did; (almost) to last man. So while I thought the "roll for section wiped out/breaks" and then a separate roll for "Junior Leader wounded/killed/routs from table" strange, the rules don't prescribe other victory conditions than causing the enemy to lose its Force Morale. Perhaps the solution is other scenario dictated triggers of die rolls against the Force Morale table. Say, expanding location trigger beyond the JOP loss. After all, we played 6.5 hours.

I believe it was Keith that said the rules intended a game was to lead to the next, but if today's game is typical, then the next game would be six players each controlling a squad, barely, and the 3rd game a skirmish game with a couple of figs per player. Yes, I know some of the "killed" were probably wounded that then recovered, replacements joining, etc., but you get my point.

Actually, upon further reflection, I think the loss/breaking of a friendly platoon should be another Force Morale die roll trigger, with results alike Senior Leader killed or routs from table, perhaps even worse. Just a thought.

Thank you Dan for hosting and feeding us and to all of you for making it a fun day and interesting game.

More CoC Thoughts: By the Umpire

By Dan

As I expressed during the game, the Patrol Phase can get a bit gamey, so in many instances I pre-set the Jump-off points to avoid the "opportunity" of getting screwed before the game even begins.

The "Bad Stuff Happens" table is a second aspect that can get a little gamey, as I've seen Force Morale deteriorate when the same leader gets hit twice and roll so bad that the platoon laments the loss of one man a little too much, so I'm willing to let multiple instances that happen at once (like the squad's wiped out, including the leader) to roll for all circumstances but suffer the single worst one of them instead of all of them.

Today's scenario was a meeting engagement where controlling the road was an objective, which neither side accomplished. The Germans took control of one of the buildings early on, while the road itself was contested by vehicles from both sides throughout the game.

The Americans followed the spirit of General Patton and took the fight to the enemy with significantly casualties on both sides, driving off one platoon and barely hanging on to capture a Jump-off point, while the Italians fared better against the second American platoon, but were at a bit of a stand-off against what the Americans had left. It became a battle to see who drove off who.

The left flank German platoon got into a firefight with an increasing number of Russians, who outnumbered the Germans three platoons to 2 for most of the game. The Russian player was fortunate enough with his Command dice to activate all three squads each phase plus one or more support weapons (helped by the circumstances that all the troops came from the same Jump-off point and the Senior Leader was in the midst of them all). That activation advantage gave the Russians more firepower per phase than the Germans, so on average the dice would wear down the Germans faster than the Russians. This was primarily a side-show until the Germans were eliminated at the left Jump-off point, allowing the Russians to risk a squad to make a run for it.

I agree that a shorter scenario based on an objective that ends the game when its accomplished would shorten the game (like blowing up a bridge, train, or a radio station, retrieving secret papers from a downed plane or glider, or intercepting a convoy or getting it off the board).

It was great to game with everyone. This was a really nice experience without arguments or drama as we figured out how to play this again.

Reflections: Connected CoC Games

By Erik

I've wanted to try out *Chain of Command* for over a year or two now and it was cool to do so on Mike's incredible terrain. I'd love to do a set of connected games at some point.

I definitely agree with Mike's thoughts on the force morale impact of friendly platoons collapsing, and poking around in the Big Chain of Command supplement I noticed that there's a bad stuff table for that:

Maybe the first two rows of the chart could be something to implement in the next multi-platoon game? Keith and I had each lost 2 command dice by the end of the game, and that definitely could have pushed down each other's force morale enough to kick the Americans off the table while messing up Dan's morale, while John's platoon withdrawing would have put a big penalty on the other Axis commands.

I did want to mention that a leader who's Command Initiative is reduced to 0 is already killed without any house rules needed, although they hide that rule reference in a paragraph of text on page 39 of the rulebook:

"In either of the above situations a Leader who has been hit must roll a D6 to see how badly he has been affected. On a roll of 1 he has been killed outright and is removed from the game. On a roll of 2 or 3 he has been wounded and cannot be activated for the remainder of the current Turn. On a 4 to 6 he has been lightly wounded and from now on the number of Command Initiatives he gets when activated is reduced by one for the remainder of the game. If he is wounded enough times for his Command Initiative to be reduced to zero he has been killed."

I do like keeping leaders at a fast movement pace so they can zoom around and help out their platoon, but maybe that should just be for senior leaders, as junior leaders can only give orders to their section. For the vehicle table house rule - two rolls on the Two Net Hits Table will in most cases knock out a vehicle anyway. See 14.8 on page 63 for this section:

"The amount of Shock a vehicle can amass before its morale is negatively affected is determined by its commander. A vehicle commanded by a Junior Leader has a basic morale level of 3. A vehicle commanded by a Senior Leader has a basic morale level of 4. For a Green crew reduce this by one level; for an elite crew increase it by one."

A Vehicle with Shock equal to its morale level may not advance any further forward than its current position. A vehicle with Shock greater than its morale level will be abandoned by its crew and may not be activated for the remainder of the game."

Looking at the vehicle damage table on page 56 on the Two Net Hits section shows that damage results 1-5 each deal 2 shock, and a roll of 6 takes out the main gun (which doubles all subsequent shock taken for the remainder of the game for the vehicle). So for a vehicle to survive two rolls on that chart they'd need to have a senior leader commanding the vehicle with no preexisting shock, or be led by a junior leader with no preexisting shock and roll a 6 as the second result.

I don't have a problem with using this as a solution, but it's not really going to alleviate the instant kill mechanism that people seem frustrated by - although it does give the slightest of chances!

I had a blast, especially when accidentally charging the Italian fortifications. I really love the randomness element to the order and movement systems.

CoC: Experience and Tactics

By Dan

As with most miniatures rules (and boardgame rules), as you understand the basics and how they work, you get a better understanding of tactics -- which hopefully reflect what the game represents. When you get to fully understand all the rules, you can appreciate the design fortes and flaws. When the rules start to feel out of sync with the perceived reality, players start to question the validity of those rules or come up with house rules to fill in the gap or play the game the way the players agree with.

I have my own perceptions over the course of a dozen games over the years of what's working and what's not. Some of my suggestions/house rules have actually been adapted by TFL (whether by reaching the same conclusions from the game they put on and/or accepting my reasoning), but there are no *2nd Edition* rules available -- you have to chase down the errata and clarifications.

I reorganized the rules in Word and added a glossary of terms to avoid the redundant words they use interchangeably that confuse me and others. Some of the support weapons may need "scenario rules" as I don't agree with some of their effects, I part based on other gaming systems. Vehicles are a potential source of interpretation on how they should behave on the battlefield, but we rarely use them, so I'm not going to spend much time on them.

The various circumstances for rolling on the "bad stuff happens" table I think could get out of hand on occasion - but I like how they address deterioration of cohesion and morale. I'll let the scenario-organizer handle any potential extremes and I've explained why I mitigated some circumstances in games I run.

On the other hand, literal use of these tables can shorten the game, sometimes precipitously - but that might promote gaming the rules (which I've seen at some convention games - which might be OK but I find myself not liking that aspect).

The campaign game, or at least putting together a series of scenarios for the same teams of players, appeals to me as well. I've done *Squad Leader* themes where players fight multiple battles simultaneously on different tables with the results impacting later battles and sometimes in real time and ending with a finale with all the players on the same battlefield. There are a number of aspects to consider such as missions, force limits, time limit, and replacements between games. Pre-set Jump-off points can save time from the Patrol Phase.





Steve (left) and Scott ponder which cards to buy and which to ignore.

Martian Spreadsheet: *Terraforming Mars*

by Russ Lockwood

Headed over to Steve's for a game of *Terraforming Mars* with Scott. They had played, but I was the noobie. No worries, how difficult could it be?

Er...not particularly in a mechanics way, per se, but plenty to keep track of and plenty to do in the correct order.

Terraforming Mars is another resource-allocation eurogame. I call it a spreadsheet game because it's not about story, but about manipulating points of this and points of that to gain something that will translate into victory points at the end. Cracking the resource algorithm is the enjoyment.

Ostensibly, you control a corporation that wants to strip mine Mars to build cities, forests, oceans, and so on while increasing the temperature and oxygen level. Each corporation has some sort of benefit -- mine was the Phobolog Corp that gave me a starting supply of 10 titanium resources and 23 bucks. My special ability was that each titanium resource was worth 4 bucks when buying something instead of 3 bucks each.

As with all spreadsheet games, you need to acquire some resource prerequisite in order to buy an intermediate something like a city, forest, ocean, or whatever. The intermediate something boosts your intermediate score (more money) and certain ones increase temperature or oxygen levels (bonus).



The Ganymede VP card I played along with the plastic domed city. The 20 is the cost. Symbols in upper right are Jupiter, Titanium, and City, which are often used for actions on other cards. This one gives me 1 VP per Jupiter symbol.

The random bits come from cards at the beginning of a turn that you can buy for 3 bucks each. Then you have to pay the amount of resources on the card to play it, which usually allows you to place a terraforming tile on Mars or one of the moons.

My playmat at the start of Turn 3. Lots of money (top), but all those cubes on zeroes indicate I don't get any more at the start of the turn.

For example, I paid the 3 bucks to keep the Ganymede card and then paid 20 bucks (combo of money, steel, and titanium resources) to play the card. This allowed me to place a city on Ganymede and at the end of the game, every Jupiter icon on cards I played would be worth 1 VP.

Everything is recorded on your playmat. It took me a couple of turn to figure out that I needed to buy and play cards that increased my resource production. That Ganymede card didn't -- it was a VP card only.

My cards at the start of Turn 3. The pink cards replenished my money supply.

Steve and Scott paid more attention to growing their recourse bases than I did. Indeed, Steve had the money train chugging along that was pretty amazing.

With those resources, they also paid more attention to building more tiles and being smarter with their placement. I also concentrated on building oceans because I had a card that needed six ocean tiles to be on Mars before it could be played.

Tile placement at beginning of Turn 6. Blue cubed tiles are mine, red cubed ones Steve, and green cubed tiles Scott.



I also failed to grasp the importance of Milestones and Awards contributions to VP totals. And I really didn't appreciate tile placement.

In other words, I played like a noobie.

I did get in on the colony rides, especially the one with the free money. The twist: Only one player can trade at a colony. So, the first player in a turn immediately grabbed the money.

It took four hours to play a nine-turn game. They had to explain things to me from time to time, so figure that it would have taken only three hours with experienced players.

Scott rallied with excellent placement of his tiles in the home stretch and squeaked out a three or four VP win. Scott was mid 80 VPs and Steve in low 80s. Yours truly chugged into third place in the low 60s.

The thick deck of cards using the basic game and the expansion no doubt will provide a variety of new resource calculations in the next game. By the way, Steve had picked up the deluxe Kickstarter edition, so I understand the components are a step up from the basic versions. I did like using miniatures instead of cardboard counters -- adds to the game, although we didn't use many of the real cool tiles with geological features.

Would I play *Terraforming Mars* again? Sure. I enjoy the camaraderie that goes along with the gaming. But understand it's a euro-spreadsheet game. I've played a lot of them over the decades. Every once in a while, one of these resource manipulation games will grab me: *Thanos*, *Space Base*, *Kingsburg*, and *Quacks of Quinlinberg* are those that come immediately to mind. *Terraforming Mars*? Middle of the pack.

But thanks to Steve for hosting and both Steve and Scott for the gaming.

End of game after Turn 9.





The game set up. Soviets along the top, Germans on the road heading east. Tan rectangles are wheatfields, RR track is on elevated ground, and rises are slight, but all three blocks line of sight, including where it crosses the road. Woods are woods.

1941 Battle of Alytus: *Command Decision*

by Russ Lockwood

June 22, 1941 proved a momentous day as the Germans launched Operation Barbarossa -- the invasion of the Soviet Union. The panzer and motorcycle battalions led the way to secure the river crossing and the crossroads of Alytus. In their way, a tank brigade and infantry battalion with orders to recapture the objectives.

Soviet Daniel (left, fedora), Umpire Marc (middle) and German Allen a turn of two into the game.



So began another game of *Command Decision* with Marc's 20mm setup. Per history, the Germans had a qualitative advantage, but the Soviets had a quantitative advantage -- plus several platoons of T-34s. Daniel and me were the Soviets. Pat and Allen were the Germans.

Germans Move First

The motorcycles roared up the road and dismounted into the town of Alytus. They brought with them a 37mm Anti-Tank gun. Now, the T-34s might ignore such a threat, but the vast majority of Soviet tanks were T-26s and BT-5s.

Motorcyclists burrow into the town, 37mm AT gun at the ready.

I moved up my T-26s on the left side of the woods, careful to keep the railroad bed to my left as a screen against the German PzIV platoon. I successfully called in and placed harassment artillery fire on the PzIV, freezing it in its tracks.

The high wheat fields reduced visibility for the opposing Pz38s, which slowly advanced against me. My infantry infiltrated into the woods to get close to the town. Alas, Umpire Marc ruled I had no Anti-Tank rifles among the infantry, much as I suggested that confiscated AT rifles from the Poles would be available. Man, that Umpire is tough on weasel players...



My other T-26s swung around the right of the woods, holding behind a slight rise. I wanted it to be an All Together Now moment.

Daniel, who had all the T-34s plus a couple armored cars, crept up to and stuck his noses over the rise. The Pz38s immediately blew apart the armored cars. As the entire armored car unit was in flames, that caused a morale test for all around. Daniel rolled a 10 on the d10 and failed the T-34 morale test. The behemoths pinned. So much for All Together Now.

My T-26 gun line forms as my infantry enters the woods. German panzers protect the town.



Daniel's other tanks, including the overall leader of this battle, swung far right up and over a wooded hill in an effort to get into the flank of the German advance.

Pat and his Pz38 tanks ignore the flanks, although he zeroed in on the Soviet commander, blowing up his command tank platoon, but the command staff escaped on foot.

German Pat (left) watches as Daniel moves armored cars to the rise as T-34s swing wide. The other T-34s (right side of photo) would also move up.



A Game of 10s

Having got a T-26 gun line in operation and my infantry ready for attack, the German 37mm AT gun opened fire against one of my T-26s. It flubbed everything, but the deluge of return fire put the crew out of action.

Alas, now the German artillery came in on the infantry. Although it did little but annoy the MG platoon, it did trigger a morale test. I rolled a 10 and pinned the infantry. So much for the All Together Now moment.

In game mechanics, when a unit pins, it may roll to unpin. If successful, it must stay in place. However, if a commander rolls off the pin, the unit may perform an action. Usually, your commander has better things to do. Of course, the one time I shook loose the commander -- and the Soviets have few of them -- I rolled poorly and failed the morale test, so the unit remained pinned.

The Pz38s veer to meet the T-26 gun line.



I can't tell you how many times a roll of 10 came up for a morale check on an intact unit to pin the unit.

Moral of the morale story: Don't pin your hopes on only one unit. Reserves are a wonderful idea.

The usual result: T-26s brewed up and the commander pins. Meanwhile, an errant round of German artillery on my infantry in the woods forces a morale check. Failed. Pinned. Ugh. I believe Allen failed two morale checks all game: once for th Pz38s and once for the infantry in the town. Both times he rolled a 10.

Learning to Use the Commander's Command

One of my T-26s had fallen back under German fire, but the rest of the line stayed whole. Another T-26 had been forced back into the woods. I wanted to run the T-26s back up while keeping the line at the halt. I used the commander's order to order one of them.

Marc then showed me how to position the order cube to cover both of them and the HQ tank platoon. Aha. Learn something new every game.

Daniel takes out a Pz38, but loses two armored cars.

Crumbling T-26s

Allen's Pz38s, even though outnumbered 2:1, chipped away at the T-26s. When he reached parity, out came the PzIV platoon and another Pz38 platoon on a flanking attack across the railroad. My T-26 line eventually became a smoking ruin of pinned tanks. My infantry in the woods, so far unscathed except the loss of one stand, nevertheless pinned along with the remaining tanks, however diminished they were.

When I envisioned All Together Now, I meant a coordinated advance, not a coordinated pin.

The Panhard burns as one T-26 platoon falls back from the furious last stand fire of the Panhard.

Slow Right Flank

Daniel ground his way around the right, trading shots with Pat's tanks. Ultimately, T-34s smoked Pz38s, but it took a while to hunt them down. Unfortunately, the overall commander was eliminated on the wooded hill, leaving my commander as overall commander.

Amazingly, a T-34 vs Panhard armored car shootout ended up with both intact from abysmal shooting. The Panhard scooted away, chased by a couple of Daniel's T-26s, who tracked it down in a wheatfield and smoked



it.

With no Germans on the right flank, Daniel curled the T-34s around, ever closer to the town. Alas, by that time, only two T-26 tank platoons of the nine that started remained on my left flank. I managed a measly one Pz38 kill. Egad. A 7 to 1 kill ratio? That's history, comrade.

Too late my T-26s swing around to the rear of the Pz38s. Notice that one Soviet and one German tank platoon are facing away – this indicates a force back. Not enough to kill, enough to chase them away.

My command T-26 was heading towards the German rear area, protected only by the German overall command Pz38 platoon. Actually, I also saw two PzJg I platoons as well, which gave me pause about continuing to reach the bridge. That's also when Marc reminded me that I was the overall commander and rather important at the moment. Oh yeah. I made a U-turn. I would, of course, blame the failure of our attack on the town on the original commander, now dead and unable to defend himself.

The PzIV and three remaining Pz38s formed up around the town, facing off against Daniel's four T-34s and my command T-26. My lone T-26 from the gun line tried to skirt around the woods and back to the railroad for a sneak attack on the rear of the Germans, but that would take a while.

So, it was a stalemate of sorts, but Marc correctly noted that we Soviets had failed to take the town or bridge and the loss ratio was decidedly not in our favor.

Thanks Marc for hosting and all for the game.

The Soviet tank graveyard.



Stalemate: T-34s (top) stare down the PzIV and Pz38s.



HMGS: Next Generation

by Russ Lockwood

HMGS:NG brings miniature gaming into schools and libraries as a fun, friendly historical gaming experience. Kids -- and their parents -- learn about history, geography, and teamwork via tabletop gaming.

The Darien gamers.

1429 Joan of Arc: Darien CT Library

by John Spiess

The setting was generally based on Joan of Arc's Loire Valley campaign in specific the June 11, 1429 Battle of Jargeau where the French forces attacked the English in the suburbs outside the city.

The Darien kids are mostly 7th graders, or about 12 years old. They've played the Viking Dark Age version of these rules, but I was impressed on how they picked up the additional Hundred Years War concepts, including longbows and the different troop types.

The battle in progress. The 'kid' with the beard and hat is John. Photo by Jim Stanton.

The French players concocted a pretty good plan with an echelon attack starting on the left and rolling to the right. The English proved most vulnerable on the right where they possessed no defensive cover.

As the battle progressed, the English fed troops into the farm areas to keep control, but as the battle reached this vulnerable flank, the French mounted knights previously held in reserve swept in.

Some of the troops used in the game.

The library was also celebrating its 130 year anniversary, so they had a party outside with free ice cream. The library is also across the street from the veterans cemetery. When I was leaving, I noticed the local boy scouts and girl scouts finishing up planting all the flags. Very nice.

Sci-Fi Father's Day: New Canaan CT Library

by John Spiess

Technically, this annual Father's Day Game event was held a week early on June 9, 2024 as the library would be closed that Sunday.

This sci-fi gaming event was specifically requested by the library because their summer reading program is kicking off with the theme of "Space." Historicals will be back next month.



Father's Day gamers.



The fathers and kids really enjoyed themselves, so we might have a few new attendees next month. I also handed out the Historicon flyers.

1429 Joan of Arc: Greenwich CT Library

by John Spiess

Held on June 20, 2024, this proved to be one of our best events yet, and Greenwich is getting to the point where we will need to have more than one game to accommodate everyone.

Word gets around. The Greenwich gamers.

The slots of 10 players filled up and we had four on the wait list. I don't like turning kids away, so we told everyone to show up and just play teams. This worked out extremely well, since it accomplished our goals of interaction and teamwork.

This was the same June 11, 1429 Battle of Jargeau we presented at Darien, so it was interesting to see the difference in plans for the French attack.

Teamwork in action. Photo by John.

One funny note about how the die rolls can bounce. The English defender named Luigi was facing a pretty large charge by French knights. English units consist of 10



longbowmen figures and five men-at-arms figures. Luigi placed his longbowmen in front for shooting with his three English units. The English commander orders him to fire the French knights.

Luigi is number 1, but not as he had wanted. Photo by John.

He had 30 longbowmen and rolled 30 six-sided dice, looking for 6s to hit. Statistically, he should have gotten five hits, but he came up with no hits.

The English commander now orders Luigi to put his men-at-arms in the front, but Luigi decided to get one last volley of arrows. So, he rolls another 30 dice. This time, he gets one hit.

Basically, he goes 1 for 60 after two volley rounds. He should have averaged 10 hits and that would have really hurt the French.

Instead, the intact French crash into his units and only need a roll of 3 to 6 to eliminate a bowman instead of needing a 5 or 6 to eliminate his armored MAAs. The French player rolled above average and Luigi's units pretty were pretty much obliterated.

(I feel Luigi's pain. Decades ago, in a WWII naval battle, I rolled 42 d6s and failed to get a hit. Egads, what ill luck! John later told me about a gamer named Rich who rolled 79 d6s during a Tactics game and failed to get a single hit. I feel his pain, too, but such are the legends that tabletop gaming creates. -- RL)

Many parents arrived a bit early to watch with favorable comments. I handed out more Historicon flyers.

The English side... Photo by John.

Atlantic City: New Jersey Library Association Conference

We traveled down to Atlantic City, NJ to make a presentation in an effort to expand our presence in libraries and promote HMGS and Historicon. The Pennsylvania Library Association will have their conference in October, just before Fall-In.

The start of the Greenwich game.



News



Adam Wine, center in tan shirt, running another game of Brazen Chariots at Historicon 2023.

Game Master of the Year 2024: HMGS Award

by Steve Boegemann

Without a Cold Wars in 2024 we select from the major category winners of two shows Historicon and Fall In! 2023. Even went back over some previous show years to look over PELA winners. Fortunately, we added a Best Terrain category in 2023, widening the Best categories.

I reviewed the PELA and Best of categories awards of 2023. The Game Master of the Year is usually selected as someone who has won Best of Theme and Best of Show from our three shows in a convention year. That year is considered HCon, Fall In! and the next Cold Wars.

The clear winner is Adam Wine with multiple PELA awards in 2023, Best of Theme and Best Terrain at Fall In! 2023.

And the reason for looking back at show and awards history is Adam has also won PELAs in the past for his fine game hosting.

I believe he deserves the Game Master of the Year award.

Early 14th Century English Archers: New Figures

by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games continues to roll out a variety of 3D resin-printed miniatures. His new figs, among many, are early 14th Century English archers in 28mm, 40mm, and 54mm.

Each set contains six assorted miniatures -- all unpainted and all in a single piece.

Price for 28mm: \$16 per set; for 40mm: \$22 per set; and for 54mm: \$36 per



Early 14th Century English Archers

set. If you order 2 to 3 sets, you get 10% discount. If you order 4 to 20 sets, you get 15% discount. Packing fee: 50 cents. More info about these and other figures: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com>

Update: Source Pre-Colored Hex System and *TimeStrike*

by Russ Lockwood

Adventure Together Games is preparing to ship its *Source* pre-colored interlocking hex terrain system and its *TimeStrike* game to backers -- the company raised \$277,514 in pledges from 1,130 backers via GameFound.

Source boxes come in one of five environment themes: Forest, Desert, Highlands, Frozen Tundra, and a generic "8-bit" mix. The retail price for each is \$114.99 (although it was \$79.99 via GameFound, which closed its initial deal on June 13th). Each box contains 282 hexes of various types within the theme.

The company's pre-colored miniatures were on offer at the partner MyMiniFactory booth at UK Games Expo in June.

Adventure Together Games will be at GenCon from August 1-4. Source and three new independent games designed to play on the hex terrain system will be premiering at GenCon from August 1-4 and attendees can sign up to play them in the First Exposure Playtest Hall.

Finally, Quartermaster Direct will be selling *Source* to distributors, so retailers can reach out to request copies of a sales sheet from QD.

More info: <https://www.adventuretogether.games/>



New Wargame: ECW Volumes 3 and 4

by Russ Lockwood

Three Hooray's for the King

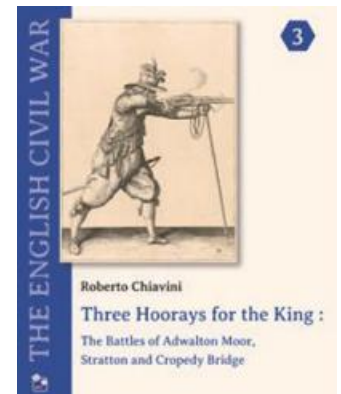
Volume 3 of Roberto Chiavini's series of eight ECW games contains the Battles of Adwalton Moor, Stratton and Cropedy Bridge in one package. The three battles were fought and won by the Royalist forces in 1643 and 1644. These battles marked the lowest point of the Parliamentarian forces in the English Civil War and ushered profound changes in the Parliamentarian's leadership and army.

Each copy of *Three Hooray's for the King* contains: Two 8.5x11-inch and two 11x17-inch map sheets; 238 single-sided, unmounted units; One Players' Aid Sheet; Six pages of rules.

Cost: \$18.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00. To view samples of the game's components and access the order form, visit: www.hfdgames.com/ecw3.html

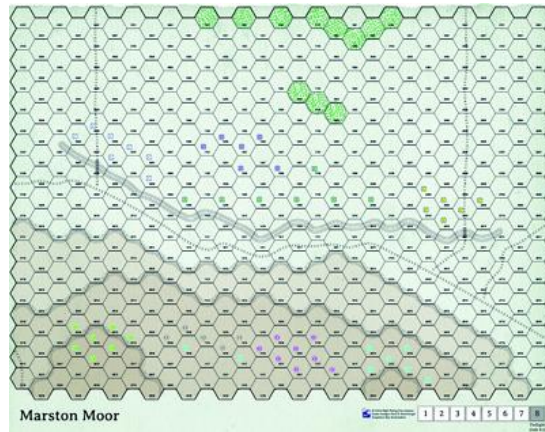
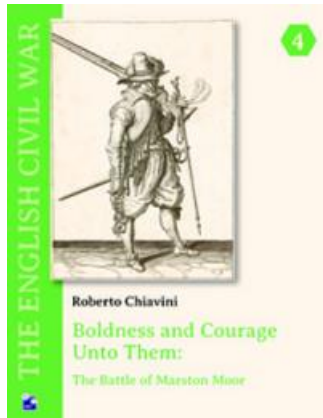
Boldness and Courage Unto Them

Volume 4 contains the Battle of Marston Moor, July 2, 1644. It was the first major Parliamentarian victory in the war and one where Oliver Cromwell and his cavalry force played a major role in defeating the Royalists.



Each copy of *Boldness and Courage Unto Them* contains: two 11x17-inch map sheets; 196 single-sided, unmounted units; One Players' Aid Sheet; Six pages of rules.

Cost: \$18.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00. To view samples of the game's components and access the order form, visit: www.hfdgames.com/ecw4.html



HMGS: 2024 Election Results

by Jon Lundberg

The final results of the election are in. Congratulations to everyone that participated. We had a variety of candidates with impressive backgrounds and resumes. Michelle Preziosa, Kevin Carroll, and Patrick Devine all won seats on the board. Dave Allnut will be the Board Alternate. The new board will be seated between now and Historicon

Votes	Name	Percentage
229	Michelle Preziosa	54.5%
184	Kevin Carroll	43.8%
183	Patrick Devine	43.6%
166	David Allnut	39.5%
152	Eric Shanoltz	36.2%
140	Dale Zartman	33.3%
86	Eric Jacobson	20.5%
65	Lee Gaddies	15.5%

In addition, all three referenda passed with more than 90% of the votes.

Knights of Freedom: More WWII Photos

by Russ Lockwood

On the *Knights of Freedom* website, another 42 photos from Chapter 14 will be added to the 13 chapters worth of photos already posted. Note that the book contains about 600 photos, but author Fred Brems jr had 900 photos in all taken by his father. In addition, he includes color versions of the maps, posters, and postcards that are perforce black and white in the book and other photo enhancements such as zooms, brightening, and so on. Chapter 15 soon to come and there are 18 chapters in all plus an epilogue and appendices. From Chapter 14: Three children play in the rubble of Berlin (p.255). Also, three zooms accompany this photo on the website.



You can find all the additional photos at: <https://knights-of-freedom.com/>

My original review is at:

www.hmgs.org/blogpost/1779451/498470/BOOK-REVIEW-Knights-of-Freedom



Artist Keith Rocco in front of his Omaha Beach mural at the First Division Museum.

New Wargame and Books: *Bloody Omaha*

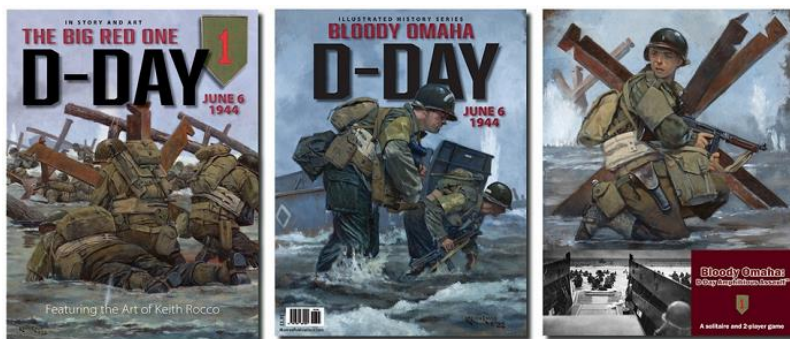
by Russ Lockwood

Acclaimed historical artist Keith Rocco created two murals for the First Division Museum outside of Chicago. These extraordinary images, along with additional portraits and scenes Keith painted for this project, were used to create a 112-page hardcover book (top left) – selected as a finalist for an Indie Book Award in the military category – a 20-page illustrated historical guide and overview (top center), a solitaire and 2-player board game conceived by Hall of Fame wargame designer Dana Lombardy, and a foldout poster showing the entire murals for both June 6 & June 7, 1944. A second foldout poster featuring the research and original art of historian and filmmaker Michael Akkerman portrays the German defenses the Americans faced at Omaha Beach.

Bloody Omaha: D-Day Amphibious Assault is a challenging solitaire and 2-player board game that comprises multiple landing waves and drift, beach obstacles, fortified defensive positions and strongpoints, hedgerow terrain inland, large 1-inch counters representing American infantry companies and battalions, U.S. engineers and tanks, hidden defense die-cut marker tokens including German armored vehicles, plus playing-card-enhanced tactical opportunities and challenges. Final version will include the playtested rulebook and movement/engineer/combat and Random Event tables, plus a 6-sided die.

You can help finish developing *Bloody Omaha: D-Day Amphibious Assault* by downloading and printing the paper components (cutting, folding, and gluing required). Everyone who fills out and sends us the playtester feedback form gets their name printed in the game credits. A deluxe expansion has thicker die-cut counters (playing pieces), a larger 18-by-18 inch mounted game board map, a storage box for everything, and new illustrated battle notes with more illustrations and commentary.

Website for more details: <https://www.backerkit.com/c/projects/lombardy-studios/bloody-omaha-big-red-one-solitaire-and-2-player-boardgame#top>



Point Breeze: Joseph Bonaparte's NJ Exile

by Russ Lockwood

I had read about Joseph Bonaparte, older brother of Napoleon, leaving Europe and settling in the vicinity of Bordentown, NJ, at a place called Point Breeze. I also read that his elegant house had burned down and nothing was left except a landscape painting -- although many objects of art were saved from the burning building by neighbors.

The painting of the estate.

Sad to say, I never gave it another thought until the D&R Greenway Land Trust, which owns part of the once huge Point Breeze estate, had an open house featuring traditional Lenape Native American stories told by Bluejay and Uma Cinnamon.

It turns out that Bonaparte had built quite a few buildings on the property, including an 1820 Gardener's House. D&R Greenway funded the reconstruction of the two-story structure. So, not all of Joseph Bonaparte's legacy is gone.

As for the Lenape stories, they seemed pitched to children as just about all of them had a moral to them, much like Aesop's Fables. They were also short and delivered one after another in a Bluejay and Uma Cinnamon tag-team fashion.

I don't remember the stories, but I do remember that many focused on treading on a straight and narrow path that you were meant to take.

Bluejay (left) and Uma Cinnamon. Photo by D&R Greenway.

The Bonaparte Connection

This was a busy house when we were there. Besides the story hour, a private function was underway in one room along with a request not to bother them.

So, I toured the two upstairs rooms, which included archeological finds from around the house as well as within the tunnels below the property. Apparently, Joseph was sufficiently paranoid that he had escape tunnels made that went down to the river.

My theory is that he had tunnels dug so he could pursue the great American pastime of smuggling -- taverns near rivers sometimes had a tunnel system for such a purpose.

The rest of the house offers a museum of local flora and fauna and other 19th century artefacts. For example, a print of a Bonaparte Gull was in the case. A painting of Joseph Bonaparte hung in one room. A small gift shop was heavy on Lenape items the day were visited.

Painting of Joseph Bonaparte. Photo by D&R Greenway.



Outside is a giant sturgeon statue along with a period garden with plants common to the early 19th century.

And with that, we were off after a pleasant hour and a half.

The Louis Maillard House, aka, The Gardener's House

If you're interested, D&R Greenway has a seven-minute video about the history of the house.

The front (with flags) and side of the Gardener's House.



<https://drgreenway.org/news/enjoy-our-new-video-about-the-history-and-ecology-of-the-newly-preserved-point-breeze-in-bordentown-nj/>

The Exile of Joseph Bonaparte

I cobbled together an overview from a number of websites, including D&R Greenways, Wikipedia, Community News, and others. I forgot to note their URLs, but as I Googled, so can you if interested.

As the allied troops marched on Paris, Joseph, the one-time King of Italy and Spain, left his French residence at the Château de Mortefontaine and escaped from Europe in the hull of a ship without his wife but with papers designating him as an "M. Bouchard."

He renamed himself Comte de Surveilliers after the title of a petite property near his Mortefontaine residence, but he was swiftly recognized and encouraged to seek political asylum from President James Madison. Madison refused to meet officially, but permitted Joseph to stay as long as he did so discreetly.

In 1816, Joseph bought the property and the land from American diplomat and former High Sheriff of London Stephen Sayre (1736–1818). The estate was located on a promontory which overlooked Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware River.

He built a three-story mansion of palatial grandeur and would own more than 1,800 acres in the surrounding area, which included the estate where he lived from 1816 to 1832 before returning to London and then splitting his time between the two until 1839, when he left Point Breeze for the last time before his death

Other buildings built included a large belvedere observation tower, bridges, a temple, and a massive European-style garden. To take care of everything and execute Joseph's vision, the picturesque Point Breeze required an exorbitant number of laborers and maintenance workers, many of whom also lived on the grounds populated with statuary and fountains.

Members of high society, politicians, and overseas dignities visited what "Bonaparte's Park." Soon it became famous for its landscape, gardens, extensive art collection with more than 150 paintings by Flemish and Italian masters, and 8,000 volume library, which was one of the largest libraries in the United States at that time. Bonaparte had the original painting of his brother Napoleon Crossing the Alps by Jacques-Louis David prominently displayed in the house.

On January 4, 1820, Bonaparte's first mansion burned down and he had another built. Bonaparte also devised a system of underground tunnels to better maneuver across the vast estate, which connected to the waterway for commerce and transportation as well as to provide a potential escape route.

Oddly enough, his wife never came to live at Point Breeze. His daughters, Zénaïde and Charlotte, arrived after a few years later along with naturalist Charles Lucien, a collaborator of John James Audubon. Charles married Zénaïde and lived in the "Lake House."

In 1839 Joseph Bonaparte returned to Europe for good. He never returned to Breeze Point. When he died in Florence, Italy in 1844, Point Breeze was inherited by his grandson Joseph Lucien Bonaparte, who sold the estate and most of its contents at auction three years later. The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts later acquired a significant amount of furnishings and paintings from the house.

In 1874, the Vincentian Fathers of Philadelphia purchased Point Breeze for use as a summer retreat. In 1911, they sold it to industrialist Harris Hammond. After the 1929 stock market crash, the house was repossessed by the bank and lay vacant for over ten years. In 1941, Divine Word Missionaries, a Roman Catholic missionary religious congregation, acquired the property. Divine Word used the property as a seminary and in later years as a retirement community.

In 2021, the property was purchased by the state of New Jersey, Bordentown and D&R Greenway.

The Audubon Society Renamed The Bonaparte Society?

D&R Greenway Trustee Peter Tucci explains in a video how the Audubon Society might have been named for Charles Lucien Bonaparte, a close friend of the famous John J. Audubon. These early ornithologists spent time together at beautiful Point Breeze. Audubon created a drawing of the Bonaparte Gull which once could be seen regularly at Point Breeze.

The Bonaparte Gull.



Sturgeon Statue

The large, life-sized fish, based on a taxidermy sample from the New Jersey State Museum, is located on the property's left side and points to the Delaware River, while the smaller one, known as the baby sturgeon, is on the opposite. The two pieces, which flank the Gardener's House as it faces the road, can be a reference point.

Right: Joseph Bonaparte as King of Spain. Painting by François Gérard, 1808. Image from web.



Joseph Bonaparte as King of Naples by Jean-Baptiste Wicar. Image from web.



BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

Countdown to D-Day: The German Perspective. by Peter Margaritis. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 112 pages. 2024.

Offers a day-by-day analysis of the German build-up of the Atlantic Wall, most often through the eyes of Rommel, who was responsible for coast defense from Denmark to Spain and Spain to Italy and toured these coastlines almost daily. Starts with a short overview of 1943 pressures on the German and then goes into an interesting examination of what needed to be done and what was done from Dec. 2, 1943 to Jun 6, 1944.

It's at the strategic level viewpoint of the fieldmarshal, including the push and pull of whether to station the panzers near the coast (Rommel's view) or in the interior for a counterattack (Von Rundstedt's view) and exactly where the Allies would land. Rommel evidently covered hundreds of km per day, pushing the commanders under his direct command to build more obstacles.

Also includes the various tech developments for beach obstacles and other ad hoc efforts to prevent the Allies from coming ashore.

While well-worn territory for some, narrowing the focus to just the German viewpoint gives the book a nice twist on the usual D-Day book.

Enjoyed it.

The Battle of Thapsus: 46BC. by Gareth C. Sampson. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 254 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Caesar, Metellus Scipio and the Renewal of the Third Roman Civil War*

This is the third book in the series covering the "third Roman Civil War" as Sampson defines it. The first two chapters summarize the first two books: *The Battle of Dyrrhachium: 48BC* (see the review in the 06/29/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org) and *The Battle of Pharsalus* (see the review in the 11/20/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org). Those covered Caesar's victories that brought a tenuous grasp of victory against the Pompeians across much of the Mediterranean. Now Caesar, having sorted out Roman politics in Italy, heads to North Africa to defeat the so far untouched Pompeian armies and their economic support.

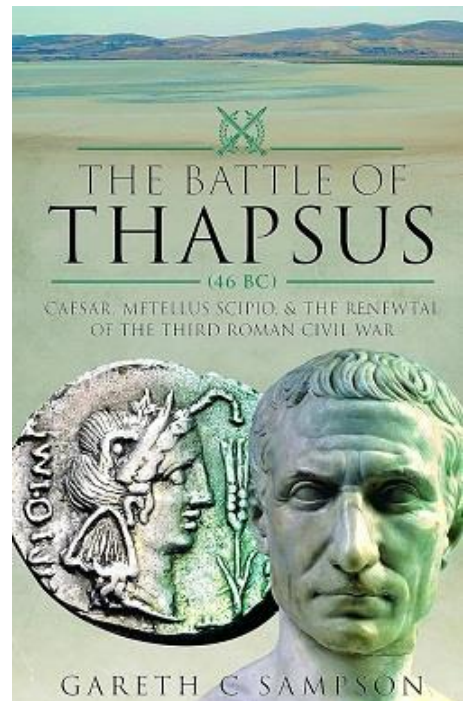
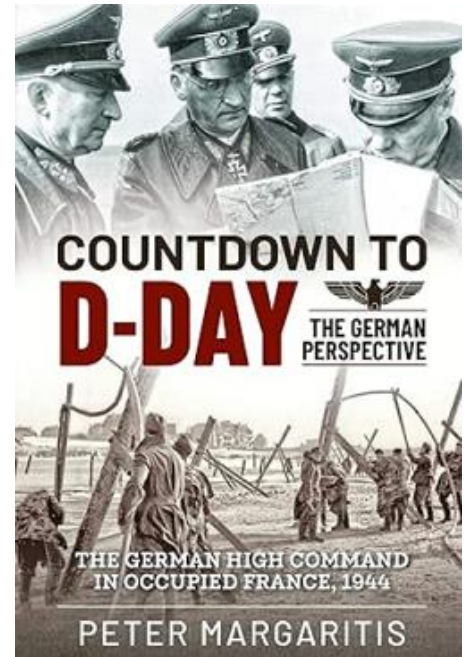
The three-month campaign uses the same coverage as before: excerpts from surviving literature coupled with military analysis. In North Africa, Caesar was hard pressed at times, but a little luck and a lot of tactical expertise in one near-run battle after another allowed him to remain viable until further reinforcements arrived. Add in a second front from Spain through the Western portions of the Mediterranean coast and the campaign came to a successful conclusion for Caesar.

The political angle is also well covered as Caesar balances, sweet-talks, and crushes various factions in Italy and North Africa. Ultimately, he extorts a whopping 200 million sesterces from "the 300" merchants of North Africa that had been funding the Pompeians, plus some more from other areas. It's all well told and reasoned.

The book contains 14 black and white photos six black and white maps -- the Thapsus battle maps are horrible blocky and virtually useless just like the other two books' maps. Many other battles besides Thapsus are covered. It would be nice to actually have maps of those, too, but alas, nada. One can hope...because other books actually put in the effort with maps.

The OOBs within the text are as good as accounts and speculation can get, so you can get the gist of a tabletop battle even if all Caesar's troops are represented by one single block on a blocky map.

Enjoyed it.



The German Way of War: A Lesson in Tactical Management. by Jaap Jan Brouwer. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 237 pages. 2024 reprint of 2021 translation of 2017 book.

This is a concept and example-style book, where a variety of tactical concepts -- Kampfgruppen and Auftragstaktik are probably best known -- combine with other leadership, training, and situational awareness concepts to present the German idea of warfare. Although primarily WWII, earlier examples from WWI and before trace development and application.

British and US comparisons highlight differences that often saw German troops tactically successful in defense and counterattacks. Soviet concepts and operations are not covered except in passing.

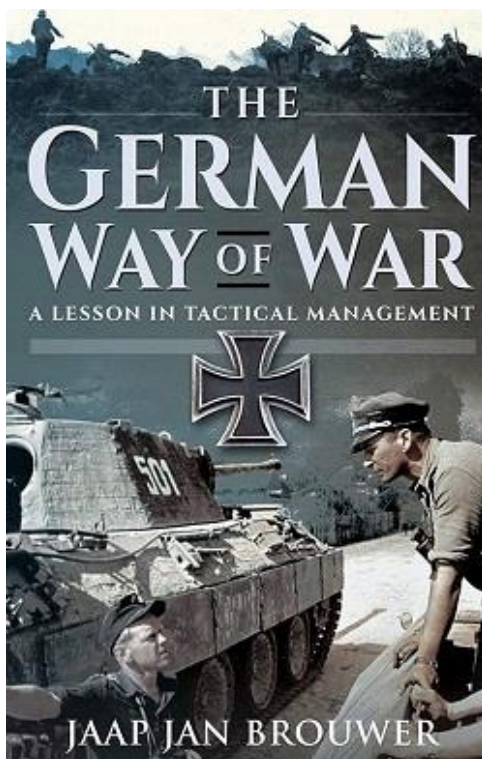
The biggest difference seems to be the integration of new troops into existing formations. The US plugged newly trained troops into units on the front line as needed. Too many reple-deple replacements and US units' combat efficiency fell. The Germans rotated units out for reconstitution, creating framework for new landsers to absorb lessons from veterans. And if incapable of pulling a unit out of line, the use of Feldensatz did about the same thing, if truncated.

The book contains 22 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, and five black and white tactical maps.

For what is essentially an evaluation of military manuals, it's not a bad read. Indeed, the examples are quite interesting at times, showcasing successful tactics. The numerical analysis of how efficient German soldiers -- man for man -- were versus Allied soldiers is contained in appendices: About 1.5 to 1 in WWII against the West and about 6 to 1 versus the Soviets.

If the German logistics and strengths were equal to the Allies, WWII may have been a different story. Fortunately for the West, as one German noted: we ran out of ammunition.

I'd add that for all their tactical excellence, the Germans in WWII ran out of just about everything. Enjoyed it.



Armies of the Normans: 911-1194. by Gabriele Esposito. Hardback (7.2x9.9 inches). 154 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Organization, Equipment & Tactics*

Another in the long-running and well-regarded series books about specific armies concentrates on the Normans -- essentially the Vikings who expanded into France and settled in "Normandy." The coverage of the various revolts and rebellions that honed the military prowess, not to mention the political acumen of the survivors, continued up to 1066 and the conquest of England.

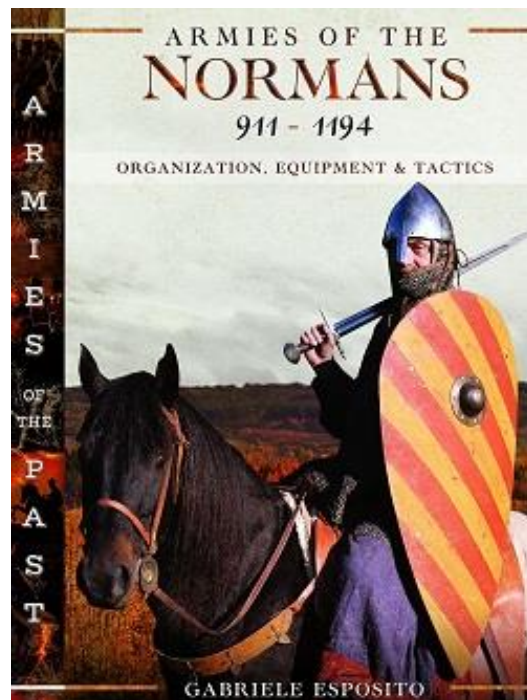
More squabbling, and the Normans were first-rate squabblers, contributed to the civil war between Steven and Maude that was called 'The Anarchy.'

Yet the Normans also extended their domains into Sicily, Southern Italy, and the Dalmatian coast all the way to Byzantium territory. In 1022, the Normans mercenaries started the Italian conquest that eventually defeated the Papal forces. By 1091, they kicked the Arabs out of Sicily and then went on Crusade.

The book contains 83 color photos of re-enactors in various uniforms and armor.

Two typos that I found: "stablished a form of coastal defense" (p8) should be "established, and, "nephew...son of his daughter" would be his grandson or son of his sister.

Another fine volume in the *Armies of the Past* series. Enjoyed it.



Haunted War Tales: True Military Encounters with the Bizarre, Paranormal, and Unexplained. by R. C. Bramhall. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 249 pages. 2024.

About a decade ago, I read a series called *Ghosts of Gettysburg*, so I expected similar stories. And indeed, plenty of ghost and odd sighting stories up to an including Afghanistan are included: the harpies of Tora Bora and US outpost atop a Russian graveyard provide two of the most memorable stories. Encounters with Bigfoot and other cryptids are also inside. At Kandahar (p25), the Green Berets lost a man dead from a spear toss by a 12 to 15-foot-tall giant, which (who?) was gunned down and the corpse sent to the US for study. Who knows, maybe to the same installation where alien autopsies were done? I made that up -- the book doesn't specify where the Giant of Kandahar ended up.

Yet, there's more: 1966 Marine outpost at Dong Den got attacked by Rock Apes (p35). Guns eventually won, but four Marines were med-evaced after the fight; lots of Vietnam stories about troops being attacked by tigers, centipedes, and rats. The Australian Army sending troops to eradicate 20,000 crop-eating emus (p71-73).

At Fort Leavenworth, ghosts have been seen of Mrs. Libby Custer, Major Ogden, Capt. Buel, a 'crazy lady,' and a 'helpful nanny.'" And so it goes on to include Japanese cannibals of WWII and Nazi SS occult efforts.

The book contains one black and white photo of Battery M, 2nd US artillery, at Gettysburg. Allegedly, while stopped, the author's car was shoved forward without anyone around, or anyone corporeal.

I don't know what to tell you about a book that compiles a lot of internet stories as well as paper-published stories. I've heard of some before. Most are new. It's not all ghost stories, but considering the appetite for the unexplained, there's plenty of unusual happenings and eyewitness accounts to reinforce those who believe in paranormal events or bring scorn from a skeptic.

1217: The Battles That Saved England. by Catherine Hanley. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 319 pages. 2024.

In a war with shifting allegiances of the nobility between King John, brother of King Richard and foil of the fictional Robin Hood, and a variety of nobles backing French Prince Louis, a number of decisive battles in 1217 saved England for the English.

The book concentrates of Siege of Dover, Siege of Lincoln, Guerilla warfare of William of Cassington (aka William of the Weald) in the massive Weald forest between London and Dover, and the naval battle of Sandwich in the English Channel.

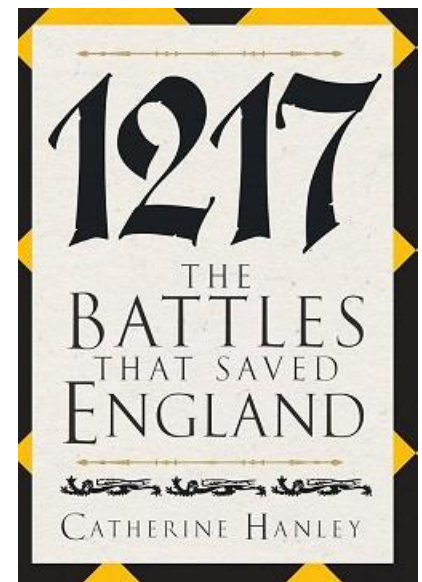
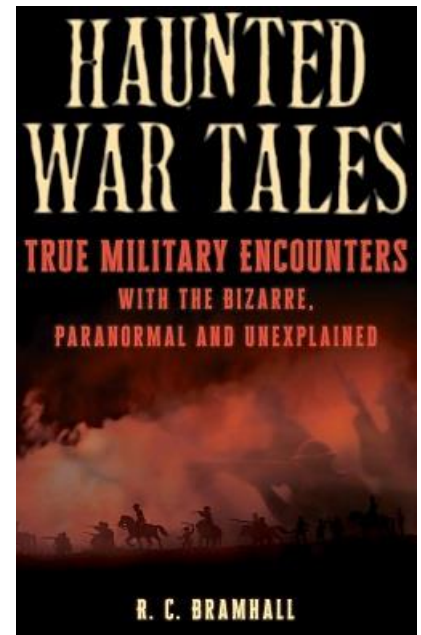
Each one was an English victory, or at least stalemate in the case of Dover, that contributed to defeating the French Prince Louis and his efforts to pull a 1066 and conquer England.

The writing captures the pain of the sieges and the desperation of the naval battle. The hit and run attacks of William of the Weald could very well serve as an historical inspiration for a Robin Hood forest attack. The use of chemical warfare by the English navy -- a concoction of lime carefully crafted in kilns was heaved onto French ships or the dust flung so the wind carried choking clouds onto French ships to create caustic distress. The boarding actions were far easier with French troops and crew suffering burns external and internal.

The book contains four black and white illustrations, five black and white maps, five color illustrations, and 18 color photos.

This may not be the best source for a tabletop siege or battle, but this pleasant read can inspire further OOB and terrain research.

Enjoyed it.



Manfred Von Richthofen: The Red Baron and the High Price of Glory. by Tim Hillier-Graves. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 293 pages. 2024.

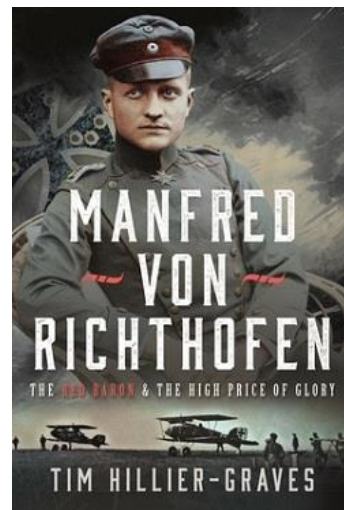
The biography uses extensive excerpts from letters, von Richthofen's 1917 autobiography, reports, and other remembrances of WWI dogfighting to present an image of a pilot hungry for glory with a government desperate for heroes in a declining military situation.

From his military cadet days to his demise at being shot down, his story is presented against the backdrop of society and military necessity. While generally lucky at not being hit during dogfights, he was severely wounded in the head. The wound needed daily rebandaging and the effects of long-term concussion were not well known during WWI. He flew wounded and air pressure and airplane maneuvers may have led to poor judgement in following a plane down near the ground.

So what's different in this biography? It emphasizes the pressure placed on a national hero. He fully believed he needed to be with his outnumbered pilots to teach them how to survive the air war. When in the air, losses were acceptable. When he was collecting medals and giving speeches at factories, unit losses increased.

The book contains 37 black and white photos and three black and white illustrations.

Enjoyed it.



The Army of Transylvania: 1613-1690 (Century of the Soldier 115). by Florin Nicolae Ardelean. Softcover (6.7x9.7 inches). 150 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *War and Military Organization from the 'Golden Age' of the Principality to the Habsburg Conquest*

The Renaissance Era certainly had enough armies engaged in warfare all across Europe. The Transylvanian Army proved, for a time, to be resilient and efficient, helping carve out an independent country between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires. When the ambitious George Rakoczi II decided to conquer Poland and grab the Polish crown, all the carefully crafted military and political actions that made Transylvania a minor power crumbled. The "country" never got such momentum back. The Polish invasion might make for an enjoyable campaign game.

A full description of the various troop types and contingents, including weapons, armor, uniforms, and tactics provides a great starting point for building your own Transylvanian Army. The regulations are fun to read -- just about all transgressions result in the death penalty.

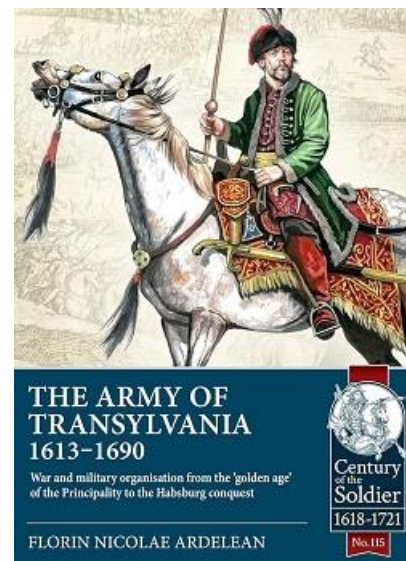
Actual battles and sieges are discussed, although numbers may be problematical due to the paucity of sources. A good GM will be able to sort through the text for a basic framework, with perhaps more research to fill in the gaps. This also covers forts and fortresses, which were quite important in the era.

The book contains 29 black and white photos, three black and white maps, six black and white photos, and eight color uniform illustrations.

One typo: "divers" (p55) is likely "diverse."

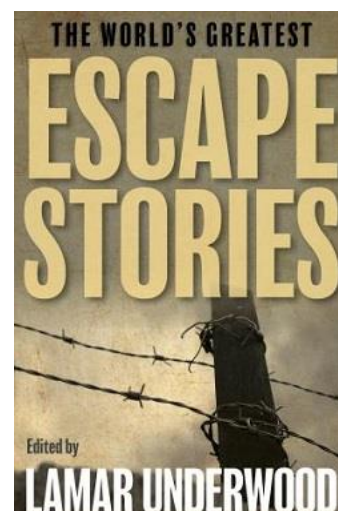
The *Century of the Soldier* series offers generally excellent information about whatever subject is being covered. It's lasted more than 100 books due to each volume's quality. *Number 115* is no different -- just an excellent read loaded with details.

Enjoyed it.



World's Greatest Escape Stories. edited by Lamar Underwood. Softcover (5.5x8.5 inches). 245 pages. 2024.

This collection of 12 tales consists of fiction and non-fiction, with the non-fiction being excerpts or reproduced articles. Fiction comes from oft-reproduced Edgar Allen Poe (*Pit and the Pendulum*) and Jack London (*To Build a Fire* and *Love of Life*). Excerpts come from Winston Churchill (Boer War) and Theodore Roosevelt (Amazon jungle). Other accounts cover WWII's The Great Escape, ACW's Libby Prison escape, and John Muir's Alaska travelogue.



About half are nature stories and the other half combat-related stories. World's Greatest? Well, kinda...maybe. The inclusion of fiction dilutes the impact of the non-fiction. Then again, I've read a number of these stories, either in short-story form or as part of a book. Much to recommend. Much to ignore. Ties go to the author, er...editor.

Enjoyed it.

Inside the Roman Legions: The Soldier's Experience 264-107 BCE. by Kathryn H. Milne. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 252 pages. 2024.

This interesting book covers the Roman Republic Army from the viewpoint of the soldiers, mostly from written sources, but also including tombstones and other archeological finds.

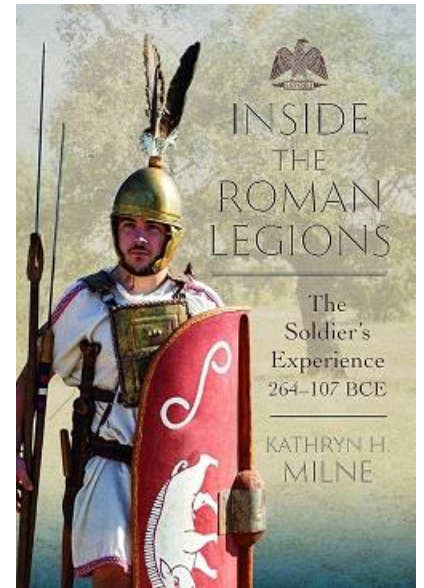
Thankfully, the information receives vivid prose and not, repeat not, per usual dumped en masse on a page. To me, excerpts should be used sparingly to provide impact for a particular point -- and Milne does an excellent job of providing impact where impact is needed.

Interesting that in the Republic usually recruited only four legions per year in 'peacetime' with service beginning in the summer (p21). In successful years, the number of temples dedicated to Fortune and Victory increased. In desperate times, not so many were built.

The book contains only one black and white illustration of a Roman marching camp.

From recruitment to training to marching to camp construction to battle to the aftermath of campaigns, the legionnaires receive the praise for successful campaigns and the damnation for catastrophic campaigns. This exceptional book will explain why. Well done.

Enjoyed it.



Clash of Crowns: The Battle of Byland 1322. by Harry Pearson. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 184 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Robert the Bruce's Forgotten Victory*

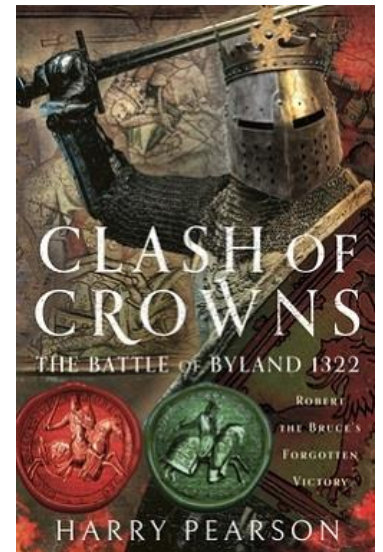
The Bruce, King of Scotland, used every bit of his diplomatic and military acumen to secure his crown against the forces of Edward I, Edward II, and a few Scottish clans, too. His campaigns, battles, and sieges prior to Byland receive a nice overview. You can follow the successes and failures that ultimately ended the Anglo-Scottish war.

The actual Battle of Byland is relatively simple: The 8,000 to 10,000 English troops atop a hill awaited the Scots. The 5,000 to 6,000 Scots mounted a frontal assault while the Highlanders looped around and hit the flank. As the flank disintegrated, the English army routed with the Scots in hot pursuit.

The book contains 84 black and white photos, 20 black and white illustrations, nine black and white maps, 10 color photos, and seven color illustrations. It's a pity the medieval manuscripts were not in color -- the illustrations are always entertaining if not enlightening. This contains a good topographical map of the battlefield for those wishing to create a tabletop battle.

The book ends with a comprehensive walking tour of the battlefield. It's a nice, succinct book of the campaigns and Byland battle.

Enjoyed it.

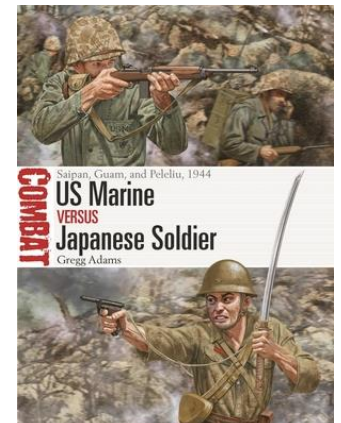


US Marine Versus Japanese Soldier: Combat 77. by Gregg Adams. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Saipan, Guam, and Peleliu 1944*

Like other volumes in the *Combat* series, this volume follows the format that compares and contracts the soldiers' uniforms, weaponry, tactics, and OOBs. Three battles are used as examples -- in this case the invasions of Saipan, Guam, and Peleliu islands -- from the prep work to the combat to the lessons learned (or not).

The booklet contains 47 black and white photos, three color photos, four color maps, two color two-page action illustrations, and four color uniform illustrations (two



of the US Marine and two of the Japanese soldier).

It's hard not to take Ospreys for granted -- they've been publishing so much for so long, a good review is almost automatic. They do botch one from time to time, but not this one. It's another fine volume.

Enjoyed it.

Panzer III vs T-34: Duel 136. by Peter Samsonov. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

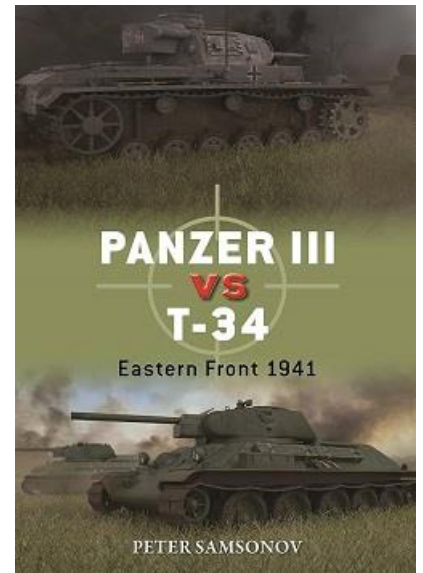
Subtitle: *Eastern Front 1941*

Per usual, this volume follows the *Duel* format with a look at the technical specs, design, crew, tactics, and actual performance. While the PzIII served well enough, the T-34 proved to be a better tank. Indeed, the T-34 was superior in every way except visibility. The USSR's biggest problem was crew training -- German crews outfought the Soviets with better leadership and tactics.

The booklet contains 29 black and white photos, nine black and white illustrations, 16 color photos, two color maps, two color two-page action illustrations, three color illustrations, and 18 color profiles (eight PzIII, eight T-34, and two main guns).

The font is a tad small -- why can't the font size be the same as in the *Campaign* booklets? I harp because grognards read print copies and at some point in time, the squinting effort of reading will outweigh the benefits of the text. Other than the font size, it's another fine addition to the series.

Enjoyed it.



Jamestown 1622: Campaign 401. by Cameron Colby. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Anglo-Powhatan Wars*

Ah...a font size I can read without grumbling.

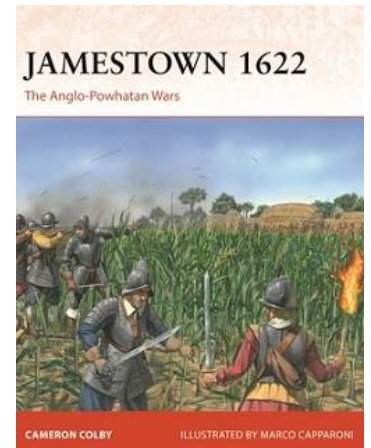
A decade ago, I visited Jamestown and read the signs and so forth. Wish I had this booklet with me at the time. Although 400 years of development obscured most of the sites, it would've been interesting to see if even a roadside sign marked some of the places discussed in the booklet.

In any case, the Native Americans may have discussed whether these illegal immigrants were going to be a bother or not. As it turned out, waves of immigrants flooded the shorelines. Powhatan thought the colonists accepted he was their king while the colonists thought Powhatan accepted the English king as overall monarch. When they figured out the reality, the warfare more or less started.

Raids and other harassments, plus some larger skirmishes and sieges formed warfare at the time. Attacks, counterattacks, and massacres seemed the order of the day. It's all well described within in terms of uniforms, armor, weaponry, and tactics.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, 21 black and white illustrations, 15 color photos, 12 color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and 30 color illustrations.

Enjoyed it.



Bf 109E: Battle of Britain (Dogfight 12). by Andy Saunders. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

The comparison of the Messerschmitt Bf 109E versus the British Hurricanes and Spitfires is well-worn territory. I can't say I found anything particularly earth-shattering, but I did find a comprehensive overview of tech specs, performance, and first-person pilot accounts that explained the strengths and weaknesses of the 109 versus British fighters.

Combats over the English Channel and coasts of Britain were more pounce, shoot, and run instead of Hollywood-style dogfights. The biggest challenge for Luftwaffe 109 pilots was the minimal range of the fighter. It took too long to fashion and supply drop tanks to extend the range.



The booklet contains 53 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, one color photo, two color maps, three color two-page 'ribbon' illustrations (about as clever a method to show 3D battles on 2D pages as you will find), two color tactics diagrams, one color two-page action illustration, and one color illustration.

It was good to revisit the Battle of Britain. Tack-a-tacka-tacka always rings in my head from the movie. Fun fact from a TV show about a decade ago: The aerial stunt coordinator was getting stiffed by the movie producers, who shot the film on a shoestring, so he got 'paid' in aircraft -- 6 Spanish 109 equivalent fighters.

Another fun fact: In the UK, an acquaintance of mine took a half-hour flight in a Spitfire trainer (two-seater) and flew it for about five minutes. Cost is about 2,000 pounds (about \$2,500 in US dollars or so).

Enjoyed it.

The Beagle Conflict: Volume 1 (Latin America at War 36). by Antonio Luis Sapienza. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 108 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Argentina and Chile on the Brink of War: 1904-1978*

The almost conflicts between the two countries started in the 19th century with the 'Armed Peace' from 1890 to 1902, ended with the signing of the Pacto de Mayo of 1902 to settle their border dispute. Alas, three islands of Chilean ownership in the Beagle Channel formed the sticking point that went on and on for decades.

The timeline is a bit disjointed, which makes this a tad more challenging to read than usual. Excellent tabular data for OOBs of aircraft, ships, and ground forces at various points in time allow for the start of a 'what-if' battle.

However, 1978 proved decisive as Argentina declared all previous treaties -- including the 1977 Arbitration Agreement -- null and void and prepared for a shooting match and island invasion around Christmas time.

One typo (p38): Pope John Paul I was elected in "1678," which would have made him a long-reigning pope indeed. Also, some of the captions needed a bit more specificity about who was who in the photo.

The book contains 260 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, 10 black and white maps, two color maps, and 17 color profiles (six vehicles, nine aircraft, and two ships).

It's a good volume 1 and I looked forward to volume 2.

Enjoyed it.

The Beagle Conflict: Volume 2 (Latin America at War 39). by Antonio Luis Sapienza Francchia. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 92 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Argentina and Chile on the Brink of War: 1978-1984*

Given the build-up in *Volume 1*, I expected the war to start in *Volume 2*. Er...no. Although some incursions did occur and some missed opportunities for firing on ships and aircraft occurred, Vatican diplomacy prevailed -- although it took until 1984 for both countries to sign a treaty.

While thorough, a disjointed timeline disrupted the flow of chronological info -- a little better structural organization would have cured that. I lost a little focus on events and that dissipated the tension a bit.

One odd timeline factoid needed a bit of clarification. "On 21 December, Argentina forcefully rejected the Chilean proposal...Hours later, General Videla gave the order to attack" (*Volume 1*, p50).

Yet "The Beagle Conflict reached its climax on 22 December 1978 when the Argentine military junta ordered Operation Sovereignty..." (*Volume 2*, p2). It would have been nice to know the crucial times. Was the Chilean proposal submitted in the morning? Noon? Evening? Was the Argentine rejection just after midnight? Early morning? Late morning? Noon?

This would go towards mindset. It seemed from the previous pages that Argentina was spoiling for a fight no matter what. Actually declaring war was the major step and the time frame would help understand the timing of responses.



The book contains 254 black and white photos, 12 black and white maps, three color maps, and 17 color profiles (three helicopters, 12 aircraft, and two ships). As this is late 1970s, it would have been better to run this in color.

Nice two-volume set of a non-war, but grist for the mill of what-if tabletop battles.
Enjoyed it.

Far From Suitable? Haig, Gough and Passchendaele: A Reappraisal. by Nicholas Ridley. Softcover (6.7x9.7 inches). 302 pages. 2024.

Analysis of the Third Battle of Ypres, better known as Passchendaele, from July 31-November 10, 1917. It is not a narrative history, although parts of the battle will give you a general idea of how the offensive fared. It is an analysis of the formulated plan of attack, deficiencies in the plan, and whether needless casualties occurred from continuing the plan despite losses.

The criticism lands squarely on General Sir Hubert Gough and cites three main reasons: attempted too much given practical limitations, lack of concentration of force on Gheluvelt Plateau, and reckless continuation of defective plan of attack, including a shift in the main offensive from Fifth Army to Second Army with inadequate preparation and wasted time.

The author, a lawyer by trade for 25 years, uses that skill to meticulously lay out his case. The initial plan called for Fifth Army attack, Second Army demonstration and flank support, and Fourth Army attack along coast supported by amphibious landings to recapture a number of ports. Yet this plan and its objectives kept changing due to 'mission creep' and overly optimistic projections. Indeed, an interesting tidbit notes Gough tried to cancel the offensive, but Haig overruled him (p19). The offensive played out, including a disastrous hiccup that wasted the fine September weather but launched in the stormy October weather -- yet another criticism.

The book contains eight black and white photos and eight color maps.

A typo: "produced a handwritten a Note for" (p102) has an extra "a" in it. I thought "ambit of the first day" (p78) was actually gambit, but in fact, "ambit" is a word meaning scope or extent, with usage in the Oxford dictionary as "within the ambit of federal law." Ah, a "legal" word, in the sense of law as well as not a typo.

In many ways, this is an academic exercise, or perhaps more accurately, a legal exercise, and it often reads as such. At times quite interesting and sometimes less than scintillating, students of Passchendaele will find this fascinating. For a more general reader, not so much. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

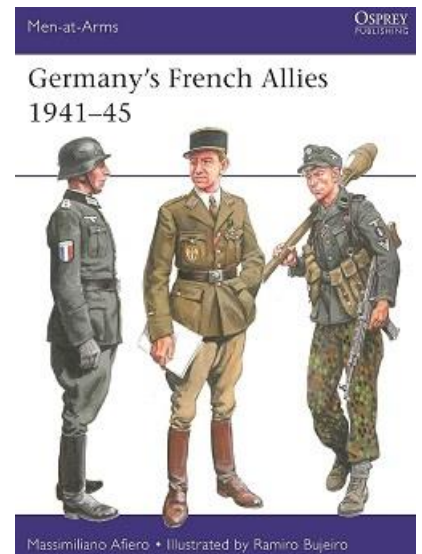
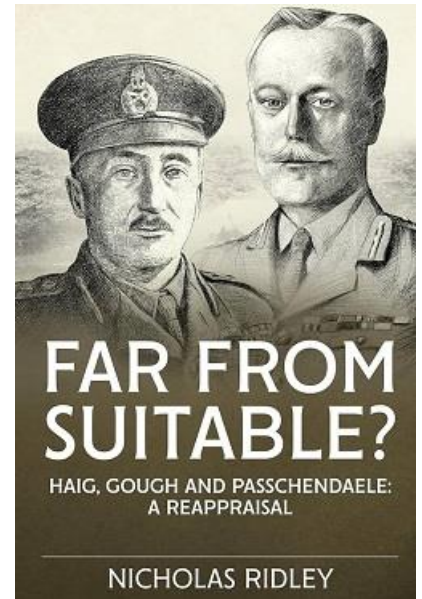
Germany's French Allies: 1941-45 (Men-at-Arms 556). by Massimiliano Afiero. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2024.

Having just watched the movie *Casablanca*, along comes this volume in the *New Vanguard* series. Alas, Vichy French uniforms are not covered, but Legion des Volontaires Francais (LVF), its successor Legion Tricolore, Phalange Africaine (Vichy troops who did not switch to the Allies), and Waffen SS are covered.

Most of these were equipped with German uniforms, although Legion Tricolore retained a French appearance. The LVF arrived on the Eastern Front in time for late fall 1941 operations and remained either fighting partisans or on the front line through the end of the war. Eventually, the French troops were placed in the Waffen SS division Charlemagne -- although by that time in the war, 'division' was a somewhat grandiose description.

The book contains 34 black and white photos, one black and white map, three color photos, and two color illustrations (recruitment posters), 21 color uniform illustrations, and eight color unit insignias and decorations.

A nice recap of the various units' wartime operations offers some possibilities of putting post-1940 French troops on the tabletop -- although mostly in German uniforms.
Enjoyed it.



Tanks on Iwo Jima: 1945 (New Vanguard 329). by Romain Cansiere. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2024.

Whaddayaknow. An Osprey tank book not by Zaloga. It must have been a Harmonic Convergence for Cansiere and he came through with an excellent examination of US and Japanese tanks (or tankettes if you prefer) as well as LVT amphibious vehicles with turrets holding 75mm guns that battled on Iwo Jima.

The Japanese had 35 tanks in total from the 26th Tank Regiment on Iwo, but records are fuzzy about how many were Type 95s and Type 97s (p5). The Japanese also had about 40 47mm AT guns (same caliber as in Type 97 tanks). The US landed LVT(A)-4s and M4A2 and M4A3 Shermans (eight with flamethrowers that could shoot up to 140 yards and two with bulldozer blades). Of news to me was the attachment of wooden boards to the side of Shermans to defeat Japanese magnetic mines.

Japanese tanks were usually entrenched to hold up infantry until US tanks arrived, but three Japanese tanks counterattacked at night -- one disabled and captured (now in a Fort Lee, VA museum) and two driven off by artillery.

Of note: two Japanese troops occupied a disabled Sherman and figured out how to operate the 75mm main gun. They managed to shoot and hit another Sherman before being destroyed (p39). Put that in a scenario and hear the US player howl...

The book contains 44 black and white photos, one color photo, one color map, one color two-page action illustration, and 12 color profiles (10 tanks, one LVT, and one half track).

A worthy addition to the series.

Enjoyed it.

The Soviet War in Afghanistan: 1979-1989. by Ilya Milyukov.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Asia at War 50*

For the milestone 50th issue of the *Asia at War* series, along comes a 'just the facts, ma'am' chronological recap of the Soviet invasion of and eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan. Day-by-day within a year-by-year format, it mostly recalls Soviet deaths and occasionally Afghan deaths. It's like a summary of headlines, albeit with an injection of tables with considerable data throughout.

Every protest, massacre, and retaliation are mentioned, including various operations with an overall bell curve of success and failure.

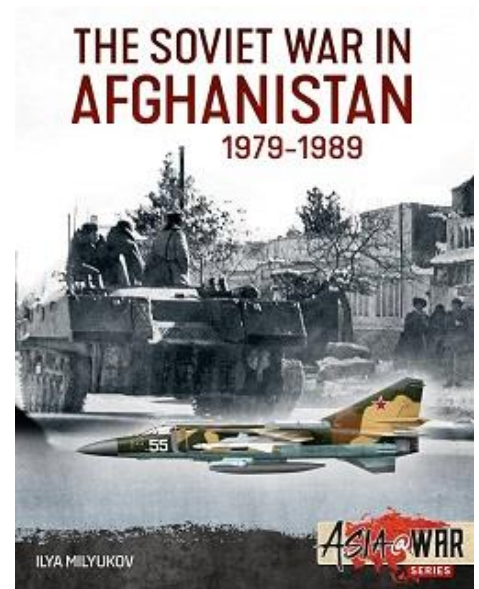
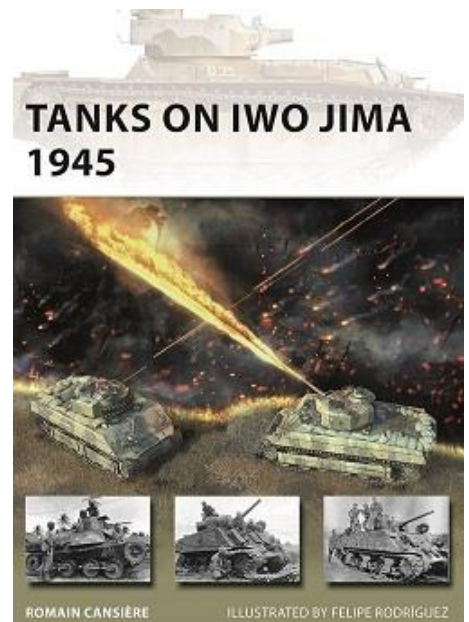
Of interest was that foreign aid to the Mujahideen from all sources (US, China, India, Iran, and so on) were completely managed by Pakistan's ISI intelligence agency. This also slowed down distribution, not that crossing the border into Afghanistan was easy with an active Soviet interdiction program in operation.

The much vaunted Stinger missiles only arrived in 1985. Up to that time, the Afghans made do with Soviet and Chinese man-portable AA missile systems (p19). In June 1980, Soviet helicopters dropped chemical bombs (p27), but doesn't mention the type.

One spelling conundrum: Paktia province (p27 and p41) in the text and Paktika in the map (p30) unless there are two provinces with similar spellings -- my knowledge of Afghan provinces is severely limited.

The book contains 98 black and white photos, one color map, six black and white maps, and 27 color profiles (nine vehicles, four helicopters, 11 aircraft, and three uniforms).

It's a dull read without a lot of style but with a lot of substance. This makes for an excellent reference source. Enjoyed it.



The Hill: Brutal Fight for Hill 107 in the Battle of Crete. by Robert Kershaw. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 184 pages. 2024.

The intermingling of German and New Zealand viewpoints cover the battle for Hill 107 overlooking the Malame airfield on Crete with exquisite hyper-tactical detail. Better yet, the prose flows so smoothly, you'll keep reading and reading. Best yet, the excerpts are sprinkled in sparingly, not just dumped en masse like in some other books.

A couple of new points (at least to me): The local Cretans unearthed ancient firearms to fight the Germans and were brutal in executing some prisoners. That led to German reprisals. Also, the British were not lucky to intercept the ad-hoc sea invasions using small Greek vessels and escorted by an Italian DD and light warships -- Ultra intercepts fed the British the date, time, and location of these flotillas.

The book contains 22 black and white photos and seven black and white maps.

Yes indeed, Kershaw knows how to weave history to encompass the emotional impact amid an airborne operation that came oh so close to failure. Well done.

Enjoyed it.

Caesar's Gallic Wars: 58-50BC (Essential Histories). by Kate Gilliver. Softcover (5.9x8.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024 update of 2002 book.

Essential Histories volumes generally provide a fine overview of the topic and this is no different. Caesar's Gallic War is a well-covered topic and I've books on this for decades. I didn't find any new info or analysis and the battles are rather vague, so tabletop gamers likely will need to look elsewhere for tabletop-worthy details. Yet it was still good as a refresher history.

The book contains five black and white photos, 46 color photos, seven color maps, one black and white illustration, and one color illustration.

All said and done, if you are trying to introduce someone to Caesar's conquest of Gaul, this is an excellent place to start. It's not very long, has an abundance of illustrations (especially from museum collections), and reads well. Use the battles against the Nervii (p53) and Helvetii (p45) as tabletop fodder and you might have a miniatures gamer on your hands.

Enjoyed it.

The Siegfried Line: Then and Now. Edited by Daniel Taylor. Hardback (7.2x9.9 inches). 312 pages. 2023.

This is another *Then and Now* book that is based on articles published by *After the Battle* magazine -- in this case from 1983, 1991, and 2014.

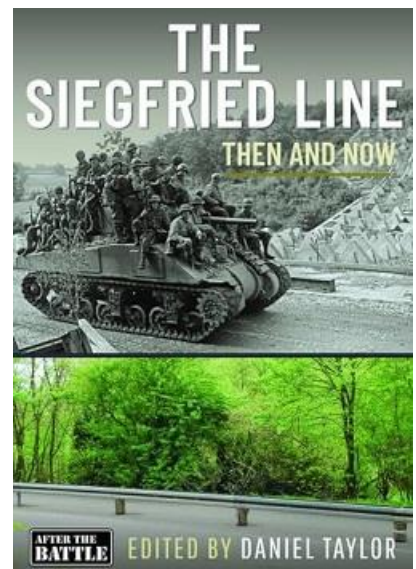
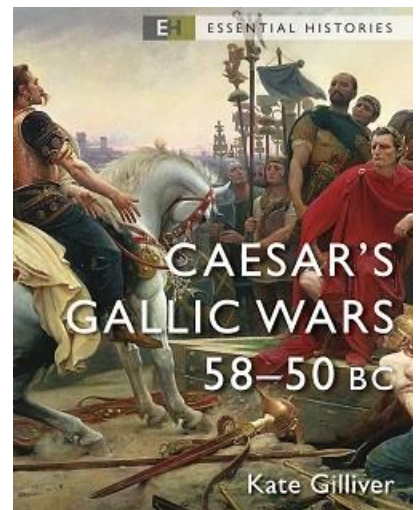
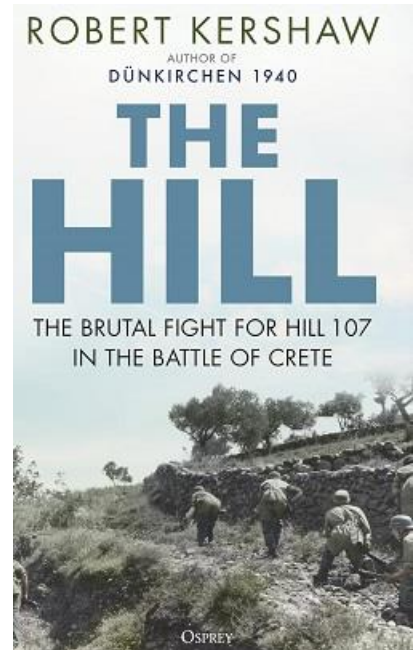
It offers a fascinating look at the design and construction of the Westwall bunker system pre-war and then in 1944 as the Allies swept across France, Allied operations to breach the fortification zone (prominently Hurtgen Forest, Aachen city fight, and Kall Trail), and travel suggestions to see bunkers, tank traps, and bunkers turned into museums.

Germany completed 2,000 bunkers by 1938 (p19) in a series of building programs that shifted emphasis to different places along the border. By May of 1940, the zone included 11,820 infantry bunkers, 1,192 anti-tank positions, 2,673 artillery positions, 1,544 AA positions, and 32 larger, self-sufficient fortress bunkers (p45). Of the 17,261 fortifications built, about 850 survive (p235).

The book contains 296 black and white photos (often a wartime image and a 'current' (depending on the original article date) image, 109 color photos, 15 black and white maps, 10 color maps, and 128 black and white illustrations.

It's quite extensive, well-written, and offers enough detail to set up a bunker or three for a skirmish game.

Enjoyed it.



Operation Allied Force 1999: NATO's Airpower Victory in Kosovo. by Brian D. Laslie. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Air Campaign 45.*

I wish I knew a Kosovan curse word to describe "too small fonts that make me squint and my eyes water." Alas, to me, that's the *Air Campaign* format. While the info within is golden, I suggest boost the page count, reduce the number of photos, or edit the text to make the font the same size as the *Campaign* format. Grogard eyes will thank you. Maybe sales will, too.

Anyway, this succinct account of NATO's air war against the Serbs shows how airpower was instrumental in halting ethnic cleansing. Descriptions of operations, especially the coordination of many air forces (although the US was the major combatant), offer excellent examples of generally successful airstrikes. Some targets had to be revisited multiple times, some dummy sites were targeted, and most targets were hammered.

Recaps of the downing of a F-117 stealth fighter and subsequent search and rescue mission show not everything went the US way. For a complete account, including a mind-numbing history of radar algorithms, can be found in *Shooting Down the Stealth Fighter* (see the book review in the 5/27/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The book contains five black and white photos, 72 color photos, seven color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

What's that? Too small a font for my recommendation? A-ha! Fair's fair.

Admiral Canaris. by David Alan Johnson. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 254 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *How Hitler's Chief of Intelligence Betrayed the Nazis*

The young naval cadet worked his way up the command ladder and in the process learned Spanish well enough for assignment in South America. Contacts and his language ability helped the cruiser *Dresden* escape the WWI Battle of the Falklands by finding hiding places along the coast and learning when it was safe to sail. Ultimately, he became head of Abwehr, the counter-intel agency, where his Spanish expertise helped funnel German agents to South America during WWII.

An enthusiastic supporter of Hitler for tearing up the Versailles Treaty, the events of Kristalnacht in 1938 turned him away from the regime, although he kept his opposition secret. He begins his efforts to foil the Nazis, including sending a report on August 22, 1939 to a Dutch contact about the September 1 invasion of Poland. This was passed along to the British and French in the hopes the countries would dissuade Hitler from starting a war (p45-55).

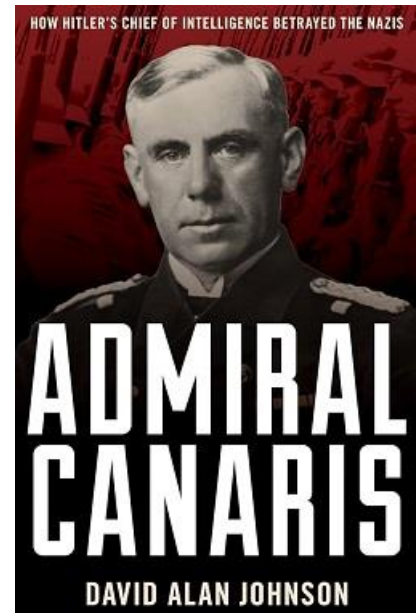
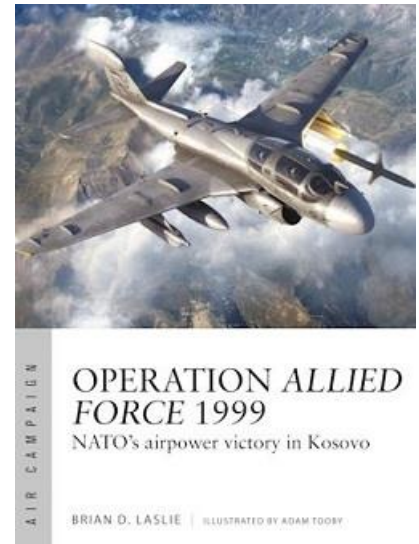
He personally briefed Franco about Hitler's request to traverse Spain to attack Gibraltar and how to avoid joining the Axis while feeding false intel about how abysmal Spanish transportation infrastructure would prevent sending German division through to Gibraltar (p78-79).

Canaris apparently smuggled a few Jews to Spain, including sending a number of them to South America as alleged spies. He was part of the anti-Nazi movement, which wanted to install a constitutional monarchy with Prince Louis Ferdinand, the grandson of former Kaiser Wilhelm II, on the throne, but the Brits and US were uninterested. FDR opined only the obliteration of Germany via complete military victory would prevent a negotiated surrender that could only lead to another world war -- just as WWI armistice failed to prevent WWII.

Hitler had suspended Canaris as head of Abwehr in February 1942, but Canaris sweet talked the Fuhrer back into his position (p111). Yet the failure to detect the Anzio invasion in Feb 1944 led to his permanent dismissal and the discovery of his anti-Nazi diaries led to his arrest and imprisonment. He lasted far longer than any other anti-Nazi conspirator, but was ultimately hanged on April 9, 1945.

The book contains 13 black and white photos.

Canaris cultivated a ruffled and slightly incompetent persona to screen his anti-Nazi activities, including supplying military intelligence to Swiss agents who passed it along to the British. As this is the first Canaris biography I've read, I have nothing specific to compare it to in terms of revisionist history or not. Himmler ultimately



tried to play both sides without success. Maybe Canaris did too, or maybe not. That the Nazis hanged him leads credence to his long-term opposition. Interesting character. Interesting book.

Enjoyed it.

The Typhoon Truce 1970. by Robert F. Curtis. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 261 pages. 2024 reprint of 2015 book.

Subtitle: *Three Days in Vietnam When Nature Intervened in the War*

This memoir of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot covers his service in Vietnam, offering observations about his missions and the occasional humorous and serious events that make for good anecdotes. About 90% of his missions involved carrying a slingload of ammo, food, and water to hilltop Fire Support artillery bases. Most of the time, this did not involve the North Vietnamese or Viet Cong shooting at him or any other CH-47 of the 159 Assault Support Helicopter Battalion.

As he was located at a base, air conditioning, hot water for showers via a jury-rigged clothes washer, and other creature comforts were available for a price or via some innovative adaptations. The weather proved more of a problem than enemy in the I Corp area.

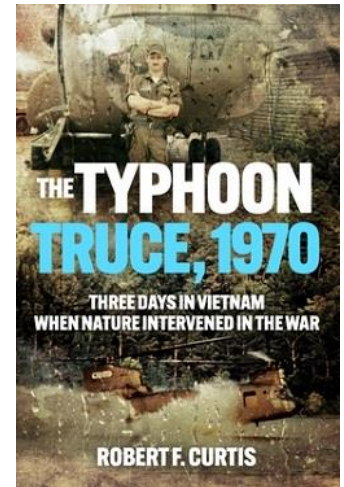
The title event comes at the end of the book, when typhoons Joan and Kate came one after another and essentially covered the lowlands with water. Then, the CH-47s were sent on rescue missions to inundated villages, carrying villagers to higher ground. During those three days, they landed on hillocks and once in the water (CH-47s actually can float) for rescues, unbothered by any fire at all that normally would have come so close to the ground.

For example, AK-47s and other small arms reached to 1,500 feet, 12.7mm MGs reached to 3,000 feet, and 14.5 HMGs reached to 4,500 feet (p51). The CH-47s usually cruised at 6,000 feet.

For those of you painting CH-47s, originals came painted flat green, but peeling paint and bullet holes were touched up with other greens that never quite matched, resulting on a mottled appearance (p48).

The book contains 28 black and white photos and one black and white map.

This is an easy read about camp life and routine missions, with occasional accidents and special events. Enjoyed it.



Japan Runs Wild 1942-1943: War in the Far East. by Peter Harmsen. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 234 pages. 2024 reprint of 2020 book.

If you consider that WWII began with the Japanese invasion of China, the quick war promised to Emperor Hirohito dragged out without end. Once the decision to bomb Pearl Harbor was made, the rest of the Japanese offensive ran like clockwork across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, although it was "war on a shoestring" (p10).

Initial success came with extensive Japanese prep work and significant underestimation of Japanese capabilities by the Allies. Except for a slight setback at Wake Island, all went well for a while and results generated optimism.

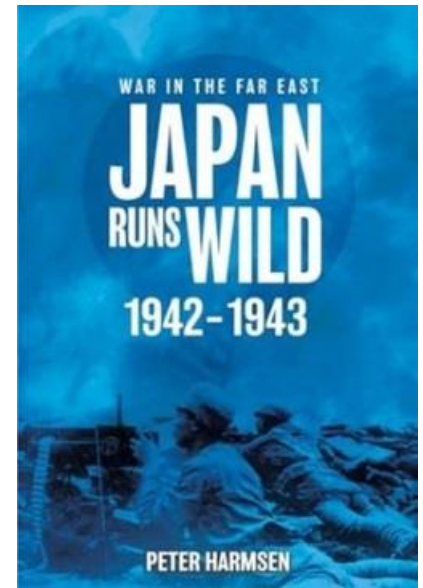
Yet as time progressed, other operations ended on less than ideal circumstances, such as the Battle of Coral Sea and offensives in Papua New Guinea, and then the Battle of Midway occurred followed by the Guadalcanal campaign. This second book of a trilogy ends with the US capture of Tarawa.

One typo: "fours day" (p144) should be "four days."

The book contains 48 black and white photos and 15 black and white maps.

This is a sweeping overview of the Pacific Theater hitting the high points of various operations. It cites mostly secondary sources but also taps 21 oral histories. Those familiar with WWII in the Pacific won't find anything earthshattering, but for those new to the theater will find much of interest. For me, it was a nice re-introduction to campaigns I hadn't read about in a while.

Enjoyed it.



Belleau Wood and Vaux: 1 to 26 June 1918 and 1 July 1918. by Maarten Otte. Softcover (5.5x8.5 inches). 191 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The American Expeditionary Forces in the Great War*

Subtitle: *Battleground: The Americans 1918*

These handy recaps of WWI battles offer car and walking tours at the back of the books. In this case, you get the US offensive into Belleau Wood by US Army and US Marines as well as the supplementary attack into Vaux by the US Army.

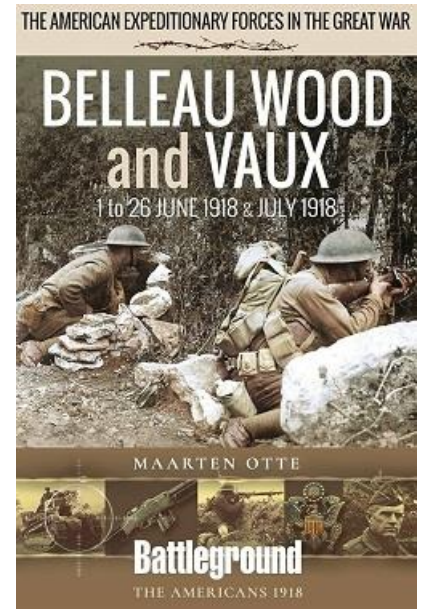
As with other volumes in the series, the history of the attack and defense are intertwined with first-person accounts and lots of photos. You'll also find a complete OOB -- US and German -- for wargaming the battle and a variety of maps to use as a reference for the terrain.

The book contains three typos that I found: "180,00" (p3) should be 180,000; "first and second waves were supplied with automatics and grenades, the second and fourth..." (p40) should probably be "third and fourth"; and then "out artillery began shooting" (p49) should be "our artillery."

The book contains 167 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and 26 black and white maps.

You get a good feel for the grinding battle within the woods, which featured units getting lost during the attack and several false claims of capturing the woods. Numbers and artillery eventually told and the US, especially the Marines, got the job done.

Enjoyed it.



Surviving Three Shermans: With the 3rd Armored Division Into the Battle of the Bulge. by Walter Boston Stitt, jr. Hardback (6.3x9.4 inches). 203 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *What I didn't Tell Mother About the War*

The hook for this book consists of reprinting his relatively innocent letters home to his mom and then explaining what really happened.

Digression: My grandfather was on WWII Western Front from January 1945 on. He said he was a cook. He was not. He was a telephone linesman who laid phone lines, including cables to the artillery forward observers. German snipers took a toll on those who set the telephone lines in trees along roads, patrols did a number on US teams that laid the wire to the forward observers, and he literally ran through the town of Ohrdruf (Germany) during an artillery barrage and small arms firefight laying cable to a FO to start the US counter-battery fire. That's what the Bronze Star reports said. My grandmother simply said he went to the war with dark hair and came back with white hair. My grandfather, like so many of his generation, refused to talk about the war.

In any case, this book offers a fun read. You'll learn a lot about training, shirking duties, and of course, heading off to WWII as a replacement loader and later gunner for a Sherman tank. Also included are sidebars with snippets of history about tanks, weapons, operations, and various anecdotes.

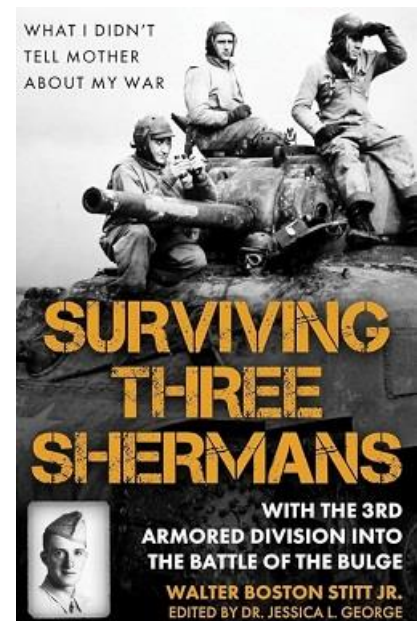
Mostly, he discusses non-combat time in camp and on the front line. He discusses the three Shermans shot up while he was in combat, wounding him twice. A long-standing dislocated shoulder injury from training (accident driving his jeep versus hitting a tank) finally sends him to medical evac. At least that's what he told mom. Shrapnel in the head combined with "combat fatigue" sent him back to England and a clerk spot in the Army Air Corp.

The book contains 65 black and white photos, two black and white maps, and two black and white illustrations.

One typo: He notes the Germans were firing 155mm artillery (p149), which is the US size. As far as I know, the Germans used 150mm and 170mm artillery, not 155mm.

While almost nothing is useful for the tabletop, it still makes for an interesting and breezy read.

Enjoyed it.



Hitler's Gold: The Nazi Loot And How It Was Laundered And Lost. by Norman Ridley. Hardback (6.5x9.4 inches). 215 pages. 2023.

I ignored this book for a long time because I thought it was some sort of encapsulation of History Channel treasure hunter efforts that usually find nothing.

Instead, this is an excellent and fascinating account of the systematic looting of government gold reserves in occupied countries and often convoluted way to launder it into foreign currency used to pay for raw materials from neutral countries such as Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Turkey. Likewise, it also recounts Poland, France, Belgium, and other occupied countries' efforts to keep the gold out of German hands and physically transfer it somewhere safe -- like the US, which at one point held 60% of gold reserves (p20).

While Austrian and Czech gold fell into German hands relatively intact, Poland went to extraordinary measures to smuggle the gold out of the country -- to the USSR, then to Romania, Turkey, French Syria, and ultimately to France. When France fell, the gold continued its journey.

Belgian gold resulted in a tug of war between France, Germany, and the UK as a shipment wandered down into Vichy France in Africa. The British bombarded and then tried to invade Dakar to grab the gold, but were repulsed empty handed. The gold eventually arrived in Berlin on May 26, 1942 (p31).

The book includes accounts of gold extracted from Jews and laundered despite Allied efforts to pressure neutral countries to rejecting German gold payments. Switzerland was a prime target and mostly ignored Allied pressure. The paperwork shenanigans were indeed impressive. The neutrals eventually got tougher in 1944 when the war turned decisively in Allied favor.

As for current day treasure hunters, German records indicate gold bars, gold coins, and currencies were stored in mines or buried all over Europe, especially in Germany and Austria, or sent to South America, especially Argentina. Much was recovered, but much remains missing. Only one chapter (p169-179) pays lip service to such efforts, although a chapter (p148-163) traces Martin Bormann's escape in 1945 and his golden smuggling efforts to Argentina -- although contradicting testimonies indicate he may have died in Berlin trying to escape. A botched DNA test did not conclusively identify his alleged remains, which were subsequently cremated and dumped in the Baltic Sea.

The book contains 16 black and white photos.

One typo (p106) refers to Major General Collins of the 42nd Rainbow Division helping himself to some Nazi loot on first identification and only "Major Collins" on second reference, missing "General."

The Nazis looted \$1.7 billion worth of gold in WWII (p180), with Swiss banks handling about 80% of the involved financial transactions. A variety of post-war efforts convinced the Swiss, albeit grudgingly, to pay reparations. Yet, a franc is a franc to Swiss banks, and they allegedly are involved in laundering \$200 million in Russian gold (p181) despite Western sanctions.

So, kudos to the author for fascinating text.

Enjoyed it.

King George's Army: Volume 2 (Reason to Revolution 130). by Steve Brown. Softcover (6.6x9.7 inches). 376 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *British Regiments and the Men Who Led Them 1793-1815*

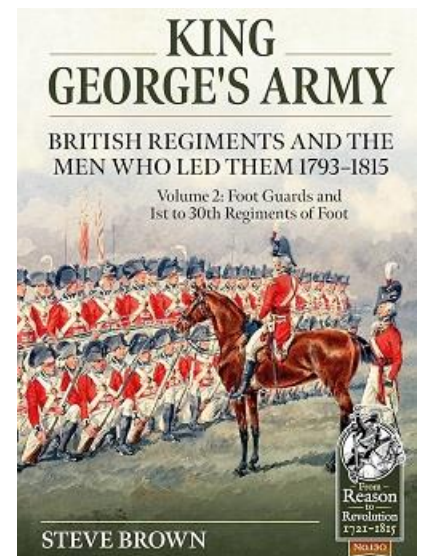
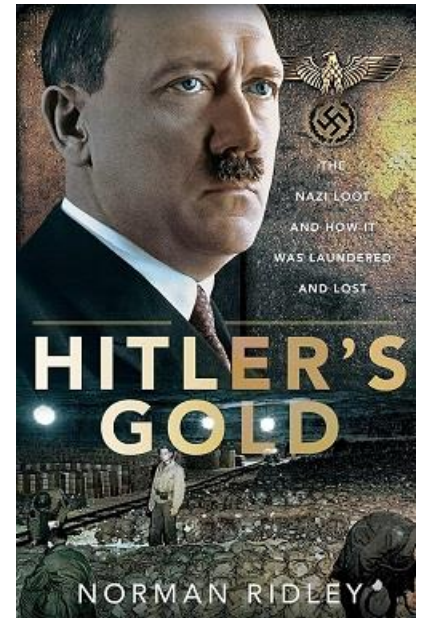
Subtitle: *Volume 2: Foot Guards and 1st to 30th Regiments of Foot*

The second of five volumes covers exactly what the subtitle indicates. *Volume 1* covered administrative and cavalry units.

I can't say I read this cover to cover. Indeed I only parsed here and there of this encyclopedic reference that lists foot regiments 1 to 30, their year-by-year locations (field or garrison), strength returns by year by battalion, and 1,038 mini biographies of officers major and above who led units during the Napoleonic wars.

Each officer of a regiment receives a short service history including promotions, awards, residence, political office if any, death, and sources used.

It's a mighty compilation that will cover more than 4,500 officers when the series is finished.



Tabletop-wise, those seeking officer names for their OOBs will find them here (well, after all five volumes are published) and the unit troop numbers can be helpful in a campaign-style game.

The book contains no images. It also does not contain an index of names -- that may or may not be included in volume 5. My efforts to see if there was a Lockwood hanging about will have to wait. The names per unit are categorized by rank and are not alphabetized either. Amateur genealogists may be frustrated at a quick find or not, although random flipping through the names and service histories can be entertaining at times.

Enjoyed it.

The Destruction of the Imperial Army: Volume 2. by Grenville Bird.

Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 610 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Battles Around Metz*

Subtitle: *From Musket to Maxim No. 36*

This second of four volumes about the Franco-Prussian War picks up from *Volume 1* with a number of August 1870 battles around Metz, including Borny, Rezonville, and Gravelotte. The hook here is relying heavily on the French Official History to balance out the Prussian Official History, along with the usual plethora of diaries and memoirs. Hence the focus on the [French] Imperial Army as per the title.

Combat movements and descriptions range from corps down to companies, providing an understanding of operational maneuvers along with the tactical ebbs and flows of small-scale actions. Excellent text descriptions of the terrain fought over add to battlefield considerations. Towards the back of the book, a series of period color maps show units and movements -- wish they were closer to the actual text description so I didn't have to flip back and forth so much. Keeping all the place names straight proved overwhelming.

The French Marshal Bazaine comes in for intensive criticism about the way he conducted the campaign. Apparently, he was a micro-managing busy-body who would dash all over the field placing batteries and regiments, but fail to coordinate corps. At his court martial, he offered some, ahem, interesting excuses.

Napoleon I once said something to the effect of better one bad commander in charge than two good ones sharing command. Napoleon III would likely disagree. Not that Napoleon III had two good generals. Apparently, he had many who squabbled a lot. A lack of focus at the top and subordinates left to their own devices ends up with the French divided of purpose, even as individual French companies and regiments fought well.

The impeccable research about units' efforts receive make this a valuable source for tabletop scenarios, including magnificent French and German OOBs that provides troop and gun numbers -- often by unit and always by division.

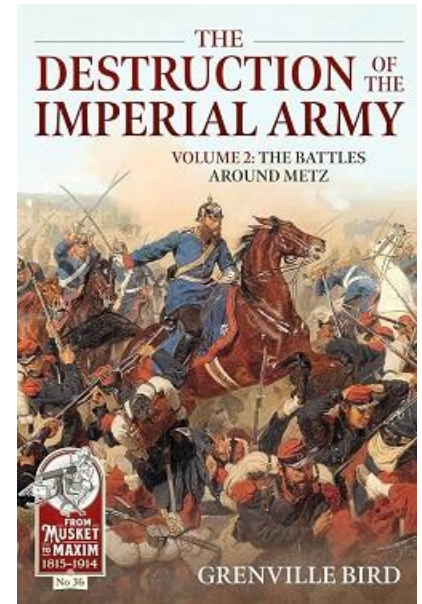
Those are the positive aspects. Now for the two negative aspects, both involving presentation.

First: Too many extraneous excerpts that interrupt the flow of the narrative. Sometimes, it's multiple paragraphs per page. Sometimes it's an entire page with one excerpt. Sure, some of the info is nice to know, but it can be summarized within the text far quicker and less intrusively than inserting indented paragraphs. Eventually, whenever I saw numerous excerpts, I skipped the page. Eventually, I skipped all of the Battle of Gravelotte. Admiration only got me so far. I can always go back if I jump into the Franco-Prussian War.

Second: Excessive footnotes that mention individual units. The text will refer to "X number of artillery batteries" or generic "infantry." A footnote brings you down to the bottom of the page naming the specific units. Likewise, although fewer in number, a footnote might drop you down to a quote from one officer or another. In both cases, it breaks the narrative. If the unit info or quote is so important, embed it in the narrative text. If not, either drop the footnote or make them end notes so my eyes are not going up and down like a yo-yo reading footnotes to get to those occasional ones that are footnote worthy.

The book contains 79 color photos, 60 black and white photos, eight color illustrations, 12 black and white illustrations, and 16 color maps.

If this is not your period, you may want to start with a more general history and work your way up to this series of volumes -- although the OOBs may draw you in. But if you want an in-depth look at the France-Prussian War, especially from the French viewpoint, here is your series. If this is your period, you will likely hang on every excerpt and footnote while enjoying the detailed company-level tactical recaps and analysis. If you've exhausted the usual entry-level and general histories of the war, here's your graduate course in understanding how the war evolved.



The Destruction of the Imperial Army: Volume 3. by Grenville Bird. Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 610 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Sedan Campaign 1870*

Subtitle: *From Musket to Maxim No. 39*

Fair warning: I did not read this book, merely skimmed it to confirm my comments on *Volume 2*. So... Ditto.

Same magnificent OOB and maps. Same format. Same admiration for the research.

The Army of the Kingdom of Italy: 1805-1814. by Stephen Ede-Borrett. Softcover (8.25x11.75 inches). 173 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Uniforms, Organisation, Campaigns - Revised Edition*

Subtitle: *Reason to Revolution No. 132*

The original first edition appeared in 2021, but this second edition includes additional illustrations. This is primarily a uniform book and what a magnificent collection of color plates and images, some known and reproduced in many places elsewhere and some less so.

Unit by unit, the text covers headgear, coats, breeches, equipment, and so on in detail, supplemented by the color illustrations and a brief service record. At various points, troop numbers in OOBs provide a little OOB info.

The book contains 101 color uniform plates (most with multiple figures), one color map, 10 color illustrations, 16 color photos, 31 black and white illustrations, and eight black and white photos.

One sorta typo: the page numbers change from Roman numerals (p. XV) to Arabic numerals (p16).

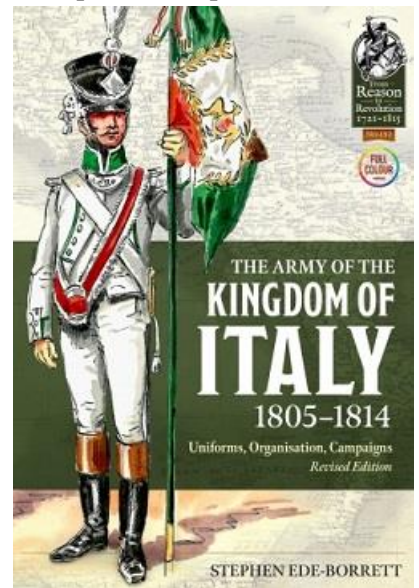
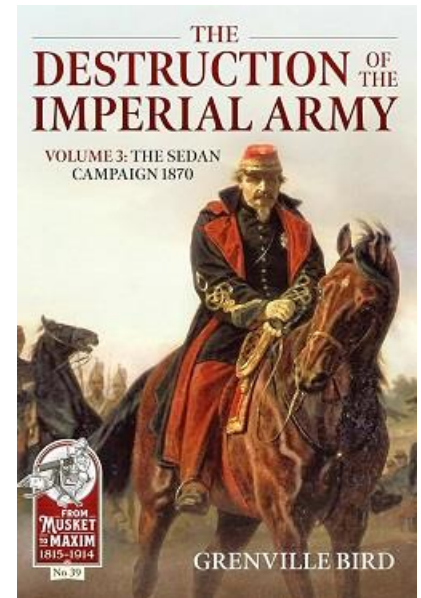
One sorta print glitch: An orange smudge-spot (p136 and p137) that lands on the text and fortunately not on the uniform plates.

One bizarre part: The overall history of Italy during the Napoleonic Era (p. XIII to p 19) is a reproduced 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica* article. Seriously?

Fortunately, except for that, this is an excellent color uniform guide.

Gentlemen, if Italian forces are to be part of your Napoleonic armies, start your brushes with this on your painting table.

Enjoyed it.



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