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Pedestal: The Convoy That Saved Malta

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Penda: Mercia's First King

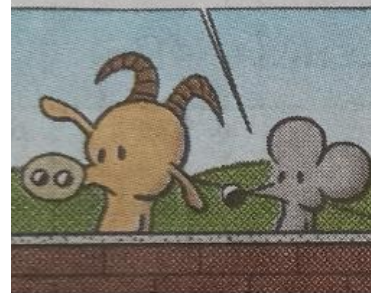
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DON'T YOU HATE HOW
SOME TROOPS ARE
GIVEN CERTAIN ADVANTAGES
IN SOME RULE SETS?



LIKE WHAT?



CAMELS WITH MGS.



We have confronted
adversaries in the
past and crushed THEM
by being nice.





Pre-game, the commanders begin to assemble. L to r: Pat, Larry, Umpire Phil, Marc, and Jay. French on the right, Allies to left.

The Pain in Spain: Napoleonic *Shako*

by Russ Lockwood

The heat and humidity bore down on the troops with unrelenting oppression, creating agony with every step. But enough about NJ weather...

Dave's basement was nice and cool, made even cooler with a table full of terrain representing Spain and hundreds of 28mm Napoleonic troops. Umpire Phil's figures were old, real old, with some more than 50 years old from the era of Scruby and contemporaries. As a couple of the young guys commented, the troops were older than they were.

Historic troops...Photo by Mike.



Umpire Phil explained this was a meeting engagement in Spain between the French and the Allies (British and Spanish). All the victory areas were in the middle, worth 1 VP per building, except the one in dead center of the table was worth 2 VPs. Technically, a building represented a number of buildings in a town, but each tabletop building held a maximum of one battalion.

The basic unit in *Shako* is a battalion and it has three basic formations: column, line, and square. Some units can split apart into skirmish stands, but once split, they cannot reform. I had two skirmish stands at start, so pre-game I turned over my half-battalion to Commander Marc so he could form a full battalion. He had the center to cover, which was more than the wooded right flank I was in.



Above: Allied commanders (l to r): Chris, Marc, Pat, Jay
 Right: French commanders (l to r): Larry, Dave, Sam, Rich, Mike.



Per usual, we used a random die roll selection process to "choose" up sides. Me, Chris, Pat, and Jay joined Commander Marc as British (Jay was Spanish) versus Mike, Sam, Dave, Larry, and Rich as French.

By dint of where we were standing at the time, I was the right-most right flank, Commander Marc was in the center, Cavalry Chris was in between us, and Pat and Jay formed our left flank. I mostly faced Monsieur Michael, with a little Monsieur Rich and Monsieur Dave tossed in.

My British troops enter the woods and fields.

The Advance

Michael and the French had a slight advantage on my right flank side of the line. I had woods in between me and the town, although some fields offered a faster, if slightly longer, path.

Monsieur Michael popped into the town first, grabbing three of the four buildings. I managed to sneak a skirmisher through the woods to grab the fourth building. However, while I could swerve a bit to take advantage of the fields, I also had to stop to change from column into line formation.

I sent my horse gun (why my infantry had a horse gun, I don't know, but I appreciated the ability to move and shoot) skirting the woods, just inside the 12-inch command zone. I later learned the range was 18 inches, so no problems. The gun took some pot shots at Michael's infantry to some effect, although French counter-battery fire smashed half the battery.

In the meantime, Michael kicked me out of the one building, so he now had all four under his control.

My skirmisher enters a building, but not for long.

The Counter-Attack

Well, with my troops now in charge range, I sent three battalions against my previously occupied building. All troops involved being even in morale, the melee would be my d6 against the French d6+1,





Above: My three British battalions attack the one French battalion garrisoning the building on Turn 5.



Right: End of Turn 3.

with the +1 being the favorable terrain of the building.

In *Shako*, you don't get any bonus for more troops, but you do toss 1d6 per battalion in melee. Since I was hitting Michael from three sides with three battalions, I tossed 3d6 versus his defending 1d6+1. I would take the best of the three die rolls.

Chris' cavalry overrun the French skirmisher.

First, however, was firing. If he rolled a 6 on a d6, I'd be staggered, suffer a hit, and be stopped from attacking. On a 4 or 5, I'd be staggered and unable to close into melee.

Monsieur Michael rolled the die and it bounced to a 3. The 3:1 attack went in. I rolled a 6 on one of the three dice, Michael rolled a 4 (+1 = 5) and I squeaked out a victory. His battalion was tossed out, suffered a stagger (disorganization), and was sent packing a full move out of town. I occupied the building.

It was sheer tactical genius on my part! A brilliantly-conceived attack. A tour-de-force of planning and execution. A spectacular...

Oh yeah, I rolled a 6.

Indeed, I planned a later attack with the same general parameters, but Monsieur Michael rolled the 6 (+1 = 7) and completely stopped my attack.

Later, I rolled a 6 on another attack and succeeded.

So, melees are often a game of 6s. If you roll additional dice from additional battalions, you have a better chance of rolling a 6.

It was a real see-saw battle inside the town, but the British reinforcements were coming...

My British, coming from bottom of photo, press the attack on the town.



Cavalry Collapse

Chris brought on the Allied cavalry. Dave brought on the French cavalry. Both met on the Plain of Bloody Unforgiveness in a mighty clash of sabers. French Dave and Rich peppered Chris' horsemen with long-range cannon fire, which had an effect of putting a couple staggers and hits on various regiments.

Monsieur Michael took a shot or two at the cavalry, but I put a pest of a skirmisher right up against his guns (-1) to shoot through.

Yet Chris was undaunted. When Dave bore down in a clash of titans, Chris sent Dave packing more often than not. Yes, both sides suffered, but Dave broke first and the French cavalry fled the field. Now that's right proper definition of "streaming."

Oooh, yes, that was good. Annnnd, no, I'm not going to pardon your French!

Right: Dave (right) charges his French cavalry into Chris' cavalry while Sam (left) captures the tower town.

Below: Chris' victorious cavalry clears the field.



Center Hustle

I'm not entirely sure what happened in the center between Commander Marc's troops and Frenchy Sam's troops. I mean, I was busy enough with the French in front of me.

I know Sam grabbed the medieval tower town first, and I believe he kept it all game.

My only interaction was a single long-range cannon shot at one of Sam's battalions, which never noticed the cannon balls whizzing by.

My British troops continue to push further into the town while pressing forward on the right flank. Frenchy Rich (left) marches to help Mike (right) and Dave (off photo left).





*Left: Larry secures half the town on our left flank for the French while Spanish Jay secures the other half for the Allies.
Right: Big melee outside town. Green chip indicates disorder. Red chip is failed volley. White rings are casualties.*

The Left

Again, except for one quick trip to the other side of the battle for a photo, I knew little of what happened with Pat and Jay versus Larry and Dave.

At one point, the French held half the town and the Spanish/British the other half. After that, I can only see that the Spanish were quite organized in nice lines, so I guess they had most of their troops still fresh.

On the Right

Now, while Monsieur Michael and I traded buildings, my higher-quality, higher morale reinforcements arrived. I shoved them forward and started taking and keeping the buildings.

Meanwhile, my skirmishers in the farm fields scored a quite remarkable die roll of 6 against a French battalion: stagger and a hit. Some desultory fire back and forth and then, to my astonishment, my skirmishers did it again. 6s are good in firing, too.

The town fight continues, albeit the tower remains French. My victorious battalion (bottom of photo) is about to charge a French battalion in the flank (by woods).



At this point, I pulled them outta there and charged the peppered French battalion with an intact British unit. The French line fired in defense and whiffed, suffering a failed volley. In the melee it was my British d6 versus the French d6 +1 (defending wall) -1 (more casualties) -1 (staggered) and -1 (failed volley). I rolled high, he low, and the French battalion suffered two more hits to obliterate it.

A supporting Brunswicker battalion tied up and drove off the French skirmishers. A French battalion charged the Brunswickers and chased them away, but in the very next turn, my victorious British charged those victorious French in the flank. One big victory and a second French battalion streamed back to Paris.

Meanwhile, I was slowly winning the battle of the town, capturing three of the four buildings.

End: I take three of four buildings.

Monsieur Michael was teetering on the edge of disaster due to unit losses, but he hung in there. Truly he was the bravest of the brave of the French commanders.

Game End

That's when the game ended. I believe we played 9 or 10 turns in three and a half hours.

Umpire Phil tallied the building VPs and then added the unit destroyed VPs. When all was said and done, it was British 21 and French 18 -- a narrow British victory.

Right: End game: A close run thing.

Below: A pleased Allied C-in-C.

Now, technically, the British should have had an additional VP. Why? Because although I had captured three of four buildings in my town, Umpire Phil had said that the "tower" building in my town did not count.

"What? Oh, Fiddelysticks!" sez me. Welllll, maybe not Fiddelysticks, but something close.

Yet a team win is a team win.

Thanks, Dave for the use of your table, thanks Umpire Phil for hosting, and thanks guys for an eye-candy evening of gaming.





The Pedestal Convoy in all its glory. Note the rule alteration that allows up to three ships per hex.

Operation Pedestal: Opening Moves

by Russ Lockwood

After an earlier rousing double blind Battle of Coral Sea (see the 4/26/2024 AAR for the recap), Bruce put on another double blind winner: Operation Pedestal. The British sailed from Gibraltar in 1942 with a convoy of vital supplies for Malta and the Germans and Italians unleashed warships, aircraft, and submarines to try and stop it. Historically, the Royal Navy took severe losses and only a few merchant ships and one half-sunken oil tanker made it to Malta, but it was enough to keep the island going.

But could Garth and I as the Axis stop John and Phil as the British? That's what wargaming is all about.

Something I said? British masterminds John (left) and Phil prep far away.

For Bruce's double blind games, he uses the *Axis and Allies* 1/1800 scale ships and planes and system (not the board game). Each air unit was about six planes, each ship was a ship, and each turn equaled four hours. Bruce added his own rules for ports, searching, and other aspects not covered by the A&A rules.

Hide and Seek

We Axis knew the convoy would start in Gibraltar, just as the British knew where all our air and naval bases were. What we didn't know was the route the convoy would take. The fastest route was 18 hexes.

However, in our favor was that the Mediterranean Sea was small compared to the Pacific Ocean, the convoy only sailed one hex per turn (not two per turn), and we had search coverage for 22 hexes without taxing our bomber



coverage. We had a considerable number of air units, although some of the types, like the CR-42 biplanes, looked problematical if going up against Hurricanes and Spitfires.

The map. The convoy (red counter) starts in Gibraltar.

Just to remind you about air combat: bombers don't shoot back against fighters. Historically, fighters mostly came out on top against single-, twin-, and tri-engine Axis bombers with limited firepower. I'm not sure what happens in a game if B-17s are around, but fortunately for us Axis, none were around that we knew about.

After coming back from an air strike, all planes required one turn to rest and rearm. Search and combat air patrol (CAP) units did not. This is important to remember.

But the convoy was pretty safe for about eight turns -- the time it would take it to reach our first line of searching.

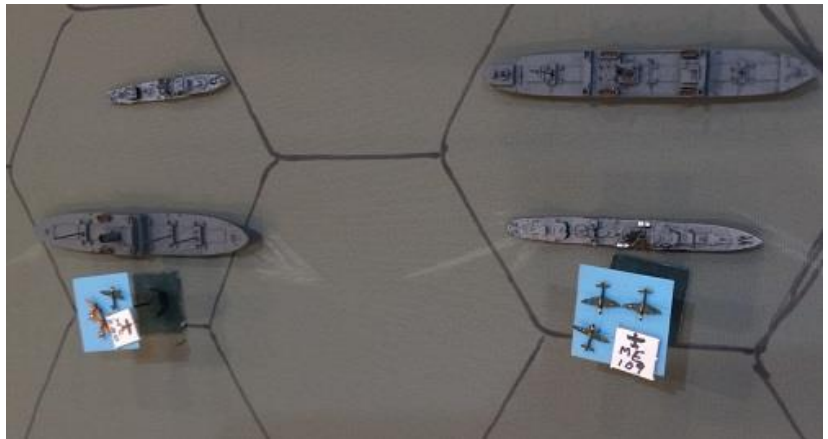
Garth and I decided on a picket line of search hexes from Algeria to France. If the convoy enters a searched hex, it is automatically spotted.

Then we put a cordon around Malta two hexes in every direction plus some outlying hexes. That bore fruit.

First Find

We Axis discovered a small convoy out of Malta: one destroyer, a destroyer escort, and two merchant ships. I remember that sinking ships in the Pacific was difficult, so we sent a massive 32-unit strike at them. I guess you could call it overkill.

One ME-109 escort (counter) and three JU-87 Stuka units attack the British convoy out of Malta.



First off, the convoy had no combat air patrol (CAP) over it. Second, merchants didn't have much AA. Third, I forgot how good Stukas were and we sent six units. That was all we needed: All four British ships sunk, only one lost Stuka.

First blood to the Axis.

Second Find

We found British minesweepers outside the harbor of Malta. All we had available were two Italian R2001 fighter units and two Z1007 bomber units. We ended up sending them against the airfield. The British put up four Spitfire units. It wasn't even close: Two R2001 splashed and the bombers aborted. Those Spitfires are lethal!

The Axis attack on Malta's airbase.

British Counterattack

The British sent some bombers our way. The first strike by Marylands on Pantellaria did nothing, but the second against Tripani airbase scored three hits and killed three air units on the



ground: Two JU-87s and one ME-109.

That's when we found out the British had 12 units of Spitfires (11 day and one nightfighter unit) on Malta. Twelve? Oh, those are speedy spicy roundels!

The CAP Conundrum

That air raid on Malta pointed out a lesson I only vaguely glimpsed pre-game: CAP units do not have to spend a turn resting and rearming. CAP is continuously in the air and is never hit on the ground. That means those 12 Spitfires will always be available unless they accompany a strike.

Also, you could put 100 hits on an airbase and never put it out of commission. A hit will destroy a random air unit that is resting and rearming, but not a CAP unit, which is never on the ground (except at night).

However, there is no CAP on night turns, while bomber units are half effective at night. So it looks like a massive bomber attack on the first night turn is in order. It might be the only way to nail the Spitfires.

Air vs. Sub

The British searched and found an Italian "pack" of three submarines and sent one Albacore unit to attack.

When submarines are in "Move" mode, they are considered on the surface and fair game for air. They have 2 dice for AA (and unless you roll boxcars, quite ineffective) but can crash dive on a d6 roll of 1 or 2. Sure enough, in the crash dive Garth rolled a 2 for the Italian sub and we thought that was the end of it.

Nope, the aircraft could attack.

What? Any benefits from the successful dive?

Nope.

Er...come again? Why bother crash diving if you have no benefit. You might as well shoot AA and have at least a 1 in 36 chance of aborting the aircraft.

Bruce thought that compelling enough to offer up a snap 50-50 die roll for a successful crash dive get out of depth-charge jail. The Albacore rolled well, attacked, and got a hit to cripple one sub.

Odds wise, that boils down to the sub can crash dive and get away with a d6 roll of 1. So, you get a 1 in 6 chance to get away, which is better than a 1 in 36 chance of aborting a plane unit.

End of Game Session 1

And with the end of the four day turns in three real hours on a Wednesday night, we had to end the gaming session. It would pick up next week, but alas, I would not be able to attend. Obviously, the losses at Tripoli necessitated recalling a scapegoat to Rome to answer to Kesselring.

Bruce noted: The point totals at the end of the session were the Axis with 23 Points (4 Points for shooting down the Beaufort and 19 Points for the destruction of TF Y (the two merchant ships and two escort ships) -- not to mention the loss of 20 potential Allied Points if those four Operation Ascendant ships had reached Gibraltar) and the Allies with 52 Points (22 for shooting down or bombing Axis aircraft and 30 Points for successful completion of Operation Bellows).

Operation Bellows was the successful resupplying of Malta with Spitfires -- which explains why there were 12 of them. After the game, I'm going to have to look Bellows up -- apparently, there's a British carrier about we did not find despite all the searching. I should note that aircraft transfers are three times normal range, or about 9 hexes I believe. There were holes in our Axis search coverage, so maybe the carrier started in one of those holes and stayed there? Don't know, but that's the great aspect of a double blind system!



I gotta say Bruce's organizational ability is very impressive. All those aircraft at six planes per counter / model, the individual ships, and just plain setting it all up.

Thanks Bruce and fellow gamers. Look forward to hearing how the next session went.

On a Pedestal: The Umpire's View of the First Session

by Bruce

The 10th of August 1942 came with the Pedestal convoy sailing into the rising sun of dawn. Meanwhile, in aerodromes across the central Mediterranean, aircraft engines began to drone. Soon the sky would be filled with opposing aircraft in their hundreds. The weather was clear, and would remain so all day.

Naval forces in Malta, consisting of the local minesweeping flotilla and TF Y, the Operation Ascendant participants, departed Grand Harbour. The Allied Team did this on advice of the umpire who pointed out to them the hazards of getting caught in harbor under air attack. As it turned out, Italian and German aircraft from Sicily scoured the area for 100nm around Malta, locating TF Y at sea.

The Axis followed up with a massive air assault on the small convoy, sinking the merchantmen *Orari* and *Troilus* as well as the escorts *HMS Matchless* and *HMS Badsworth* for the loss of one JU-87 Stuka unit.

My apologies as the Allied Team ceremoniously handed the "TF Y" map counter to me.

British Retaliation

Malta Air Officer Commanding (AOC) retaliated with raids on aerodromes at Pantellaria and Trapani with Beaufighters, Beauforts, and Marylands, escorted by Spitfires. No losses were recorded on either side in either raid.

In mid-morning, an Axis raid on Malta's aerodromes was met by Spitfires that shot down two Reggiane fighter units and caused the BR 20 bombers to abort.

Meanwhile, in the Western Mediterranean, the Pedestal Convoy continued its journey while the Axis tried to track it. After flying off her Spitfires to Malta, Operation Bellows, Albacores from *HMS Furious* discovered three Italian submarines on the surface and attacked. Although the Giuseppe Finzi was able to crash-dive, the aircraft were able to detect, attack and damage the sub.

In the final action of the day, and the session, concluding the 1700 turn, AOC Malta conducted another raid on the Trapani aerodromes. For the loss of one Beaufort unit to AA, one German ME 109 and two Italian Stuka units were destroyed on the ground.

On a Pedestal: The Umpire's View of the Second Session

by Bruce

During the night of August 10th / 11th, radar-equipped Wellingtons from Malta sighted and tracked the Regia Marina Cruiser Division 3, (three CA and seven DD), southwest of Cagliari, the first indication of Axis heavy surface forces at sea.

Regia Marina Cruiser Division 7 (three CL, five DD, and one TB) was later spotted near Majorca.

Admiral Syfret ordered an air strike on Cruiser Division 7 from *HMS Indomitable* with one Martlet, two Hurricane, and two Albacore units. AAA was heavy, causing the loss of half the Albacores and the other half aborting. The Martlets were able to strafe and cripple the TB *Ardito*.

HMS Victorious hit by Italian torpedo. Photo by Bruce.

Italian Submarines Vs. Convoy

At dawn on the 11th three Italian submarines south of Ibiza spotted the Pedestal convoy, now reinforced by Force "B" following the successful completion of Operation Bellows.



The Axis submarines pressed their attacks on Pedestal crippling the cargo ship *Waimarama*, sinking the destroyer *HMS Foresight*, and damaging carrier *HMS Victorious*. For this they were all sunk by combined destroyer and Albatross ASW.

British Raid Italian Air Bases

In Mid-morning Malta Air Officer Commanding, (AOC), launched raids on aerodromes at Augusta and Trapani with Beaufighters, Beauforts, and Marylands, escorted by Spitfires. No losses were recorded on either side in either raid.

Meanwhile, in the Western Mediterranean, the Pedestal Convoy continued its journey while the Axis tracked it. The crippled *Ardito* shadowed Pedestal as it moved south of Minorca, within airstrike range of Cagliari.

Axis Air Attack On Convoy

In the final action of the session, concluding the 1300 turn, the Regia Aeronautica and Luftwaffe struck Pedestal from Cagliari. Ten SM79 Torpedo Bomber and one Z1007 Level Bomber units escorted by two JU88 units pressed their attacks.

They were faced by a full complement of Martlets, Fulmars, and Hurricanes on CAP as well as intense AAA from the fleet. The air attack split into four groups — two groups of one JU88 and three SM79 units each bore down on cargo ships *Port Chalmers* and *Almeria Lykes*, while six SM79 units went for *HMS Furious*. The Z1007s tried to hit *HMS Victorious*.

Italian SM-79s attack HMS Furious. Photo by Bruce.

A vicious dogfight between Hurricanes and JU88s resulted in mutual destruction and another SM79 unit was lost to CAP.

All SM79s that penetrated the CAP and AA missed with their torpedoes, with the exception of one squadron. This group of SM79s hit *Almeria Lykes* with four torpedoes, sending her down within seconds.

ADM *Syfret* took the opportunity to sink the pesky shadowing TB *Ardito* following the air attack.

Point Totals

The point totals for the second session are:

Axis earned 24 Points: 10 Points for the sinking of the *Almeria Lykes*, (not to mention the loss of 20 potential Allied Points if she made it to Malta), 6 Points for the sinking of *HMS Foresight*, and 8 Points for aircraft losses.

The Allies earned 51 Points: 18 points for Axis aircraft losses and 33 points for three submarines destroyed.

The point totals for the game so far are:

Axis: 47 Points

Allies: 103 Points



On a Pedestal: The Umpire's View of the Third Session

by Bruce

We had our third session of Operation Pedestal 2024 that covered three turns: 1700 of 11 August and two night turns of 12 August.

During the last daylight turn of August 11th elements of the 10th Submarine Flotilla from Malta sighted the Regia Marina 7th Cruiser Division off Cape Spartivento, Sardinia. Pedestal was spotted by Italian air recce as it traveled SE of Minorca on a course of 120 degrees. A flurry of activity began as both sides launched airstrikes while a surface / subsurface action occurred off Cape Spartivento.

Axis airstrike on convoy. Photo by Bruce.

As the three British boats (1 "S" and 2 "U" classes) approached the Italian Task Force southwest of the cape, they were surprised to learn that there are also enemy subs on patrol nearby. Travelling on the surface, British sub *HMS P34* was torpedoed and sunk by Italian RM sub *Cobalto*. Meanwhile, Regia Marina Cruiser Division 7 (three light cruisers and five destroyers) steamed on course 270 degrees.

What followed was a melee of hide of hide and seek. *HMS P222* moved to attack and struck CL *Montecuccoli* with a torpedo. A second salvo missed. In their frenzy to protect their three light cruisers, the Italian destroyers executed aggressive search and destroy patterns. Unfortunately for RM sub *Dessie*, she was found and sunk by RM DD *Oriani*. *HMS United* escaped detection and attempted to finish *Montecuccoli* but missed. She then put a spread of three torpedoes into CL *Attendolo*, sinking her. Having expended all torpedoes, the two British boats departed the area leaving the Italians to pick up survivors from the sea.



Italian submarine DaVinci sunk by HMS Antelope and HMS Wolverine. Photo by Bruce.

Air Strikes

The British launched a combined air strike on the Cagliari aerodrome complex hoping to catch the raiders from last turn on the ground. A maximum effort of 10 units of bombers -- Wellingtons, Marylands, Beaufighters, and Beauforts from Malta were covered by two units of Fulmars, two units of Hurricanes and two units of Martlets

coming in from the west from Pedestal. Twelve CR42s on CAP were swept away, while one SM79 bomber unit and one Z1007 bomber unit were destroyed on the ground. No loss to the raiders.

Simultaneously, a strike launched from Cagliari appeared over Pedestal. Two units of Macchi fighters escorted six JU88 and three SM79 bomber units and were met by Pedestal's reduced CAP of one Fulmar and five Hurricane units (because of the strike on Cagliari above). The attack split into three groups, two groups of one fighter and three bombers each on *Rochester Castle* and *Brisbane Star*, and three JU88s on the forward destroyer screen. The attack succeeded in sinking *Rochester Castle* and DD *HMS Wishart*, while crippling *Brisbane Star* and DD *HMS Malcolm* with no loss to the raiders.

Italian submarine Bianchi hits British cargo ship Port Chalmers with a torpedo. Photo by Bruce.

Axis Submarines

As the sun set behind the convoy, Pedestal entered a submarine infested area which was to lead to a harrowing night. The first attack, in zone #1321 for those following on their maps, was conducted by RM subs *DaVinci*, *Bianchi*, and *Barraca*. *DaVinci* was detected and sunk by the teamwork of *HMS Antelope* and *HMS Wolverine* before she was able to attack. *Bianchi* was able to hit *Port Chalmers* with a torpedo before being pinned and sunk by *HMS Ledbury*. *Barraca* decided to withdraw to fight another day after missing with her salvos.

The next submarine action took place in zone #1421 as RM subs *Axum*, *Emo*, and *Scire* attempted to take on Pedestal. *Axum* found herself amongst *HMS Cairo* and *HMS Somali* escorting *Melbourne Star*. A torpedo hit *Melbourne Star* but *HMS Somali* sank the *Axum*. On the port edge of the convoy, RM sub *Emo* sank *Santa Elisa* and crippled *HMS Pathfinder* before succumbing to *HMS Fury*. Finally, *HMS Bramham* detected RM sub *Scire* attempting to penetrate the screen and sank her.

Italian submarine Axum (above blue counter) attacks cargo ship Melbourne Star escorted by HMS Cairo and HMS Somali. Photo by Bruce.

Point Totals

The point totals for the third session are:

The Axis earned 34 points -- (20 Points for the sinking of the *Rochester Castle* and *Santa Elisa*, (not to mention the loss of 40 potential Allied Points if they made it to Malta), 6 Points for the sinking of *HMS Wishart*, and 8 Points for sinking a U-class submarine.)

The Allies earned 80 points -- (Axis aircraft losses: 14 Points, CL Attendolo: 12 Points, and 54 Points for six submarines destroyed.)



The point totals for the game so far are: Axis has 81 Points and the Allies have 183 Points.

Convoy Status

The current state of the Pedestal convoy which started with 14 merchant ships: three Sunk, two Crippled, and two Damaged. The convoy is approximately 350nm from Malta.

Next Issue: Conclusion

Stay tuned, readers, in the next AAR for more exciting history of the wargaming convoy. Same AAR time. Same AAR e-mail channel.

Halloween Headstart: *Sleepy Hollow* Tarot Deck

By Russ Lockwood

Halloween is coming, as if the changeover in retail store displays wasn't enough of a clue, and soon goblins and ghouls and so on will be overrunning neighborhoods and the media. I've been a fan of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* tale and its headless horseman, not to mention the various movies based on the tale and at least the first season of the short-lived TV show.

Imagine my surprise when I found out that Schiffer publishing, which has a military history division, also has the Red Feather division filled with supernatural and philosophical books and other items. The book *WWII Ghosts: Artifacts Can Talk*, reviewed in this issue, is but one item in a catalog filled with such.



Sample cards: The Fool: Ichabod Crane Coming to Town; Death: The Hessian trooper sans head; Temperance: The Barmaid; Three of Cups: Friends sharing a drink; The Hermit: Woman in White haunting Raven Rock; Ace of Swords: The Headless Horseman and a pumpkin; Eight of Pentacles: The art of carving pumpkins; and Eight of Swords: British spy awaiting execution.

One item is the *Sleepy Hollow Tarot Card Deck*, sent to me via headless horseman, or maybe it was my regular delivery person – not sure. In any case, I popped open the deck and shuffled through the cards. The depictions of the tale are slugged to the tarot card names. The included booklet showed a number of card formations designed to answer any question you may have about the future. Each card comes with a short description of what it stands for. So, using the formation info and the individual card info, you can do a reading. Whether you treat such as reality or parlor game is up to you.

I am going to guess that you need to do many, many readings to get the tarot deck truly random – and – in both right side up and upside down positions. There is a difference, sez the booklet, when it comes to interpretation. Maybe the first thing to do is play 78-card pickup and fling them around the room for greater randomization than a few quick shuffles.

I like the balance between scary and suave illustrations – just the right touch for your next literary Halloween party. And if you don't like the vibe of this particular deck, Red Feather stocks plenty of other deck themes to choose from – sort of like all the different versions of *Monopoly* or *Fluxx* -- and many how-to Tarot reading tomes as well.

Now to re-read the original classic tale by Washington Irving ...

If you want to read the original 1822 tale: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/41/41-h/41-h.htm>

NEWS

Race to Ace: Website

by Russ Lockwood

Mea culpa. I forgot to list the website for the *Race to Ace* card game from Lombardy Studios that I reviewed last issue. The web site is: <https://lombardystudios.com/aerocatures/>



New ECW Wargames: Against the Covenant and Naseby

by Russ Lockwood

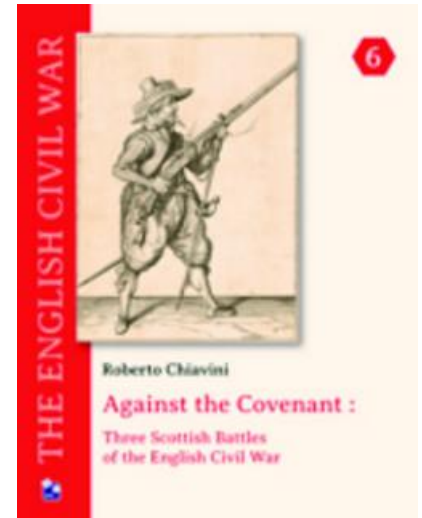
Against the Covenant

Volume 6 in the series of English Civil War battles covers the battles of Tippermuir (Sep 1, 1644), Aberdeen (Sep 13, 1644), and Kilsyth (Aug 15, 1645). Designed by Roberto Chiavini.

Contents include: three 8.5x11-inch maps, 196 single-sided, unmounted counters, one Players' Aid Sheet, and four pages of rules.

Cost: \$16.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

Info: www.hfdgames.com/ecw6.html



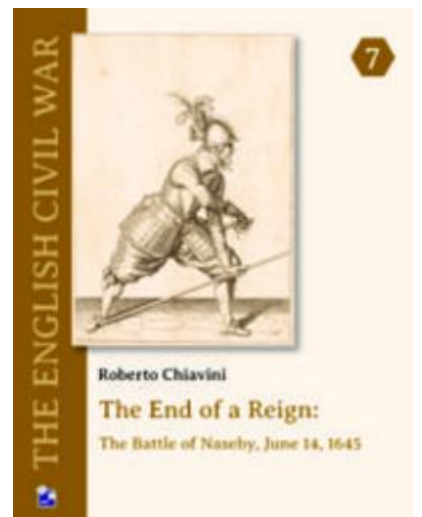
The End of a Reign: Naseby

Volume 7 in the ECW series covers the Battle of Naseby (Jun 14, 1645). Designed by Roberto Chiavini.

Contents include: one 11x17-inch maps, 140 single-sided, unmounted counters, one Players' Aid Sheet, and four pages of rules.

Cost: \$16.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

Info: www.hfdgames.com/ecw7.html



Naseby Map and Counters.

Princeton Battlefield Society: Tours

by Russ Lockwood

Sunday tours of the American Revolution battlefield will continue through the summer into October. Our team of historical interpreters, Larry Kidder, David Price, Will Krakower, Tom Kane, and Roger Williams are eager to welcome you at an upcoming tour, which includes the historic Thomas Clarke House and the Trace Road. Go to www.pbs1777.org to select an upcoming date and register.

Army Builder Program: CP Games

by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games reported such a great response to its birthday sale that CP decided to offer a permanent discount. If you enter the code 'armybuilder' at check out and spend more than \$30 on miniatures (not rules), you will get a 25% discount. The shop page will contain a reminder.

Info: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com/announcing-the-army-builder-program/>

New Mini: Headless Horseman for Halloween

by Russ Lockwood

If you're a fan of *Sleepy Hollow* and the headless horseman, this AWI Banastre Tarleton figure from Chris Parker Games might be a figure for your Halloween skirmish. Available in 28mm (\$5.00), 40mm (\$8.00), and 54mm (\$13.00) plus 60 cents packing.

Package has one figure in gray plastic, and heads and right arms need attaching.

The AWI line includes mounted and dismounted British Legion cavalry as well.

Info: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com/awi-banastre-tarleton-and-legion/>



New Minis: 100YW Medievals and WWII Australians

by Russ Lockwood

A selection of early 100 Years War figures are now available from Chris Parker Games. The Early 100yw Mounted Knights With Great Helms set contains three plastic unpainted mounted knights cast in one single piece. The lance is not included. Available in 28mm (\$16.00), 40mm (\$22.00), and 54mm (\$36.00) plus 60 cents packing. Knights with Bascinetts (lance not included), French foot with Pavises (spear not included), and Genoese Crossbowmen sets are also available.



As for the WWII Australians, the set contains 10 plastic unpainted Australian infantry miniatures cast in one single piece. Available in 28mm (\$25.00), 40mm (\$36.00), and 54mm (\$50.00) plus 60 cents packing. HQ and MG sets are also available.

More info: www.chrisparkergames.com

New Wargame: Old School Tactical IV -- WWII Italy

by Russ Lockwood

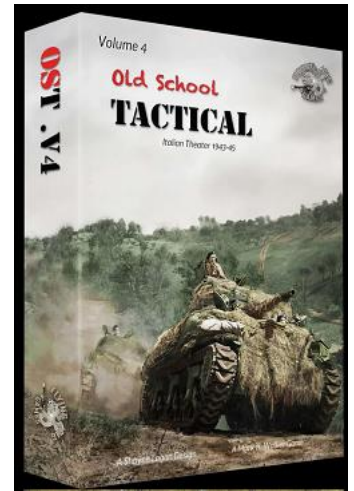
Flying Pig Games introduces *Old School Tactical Volume IV: Italian Theater 1943-1945* that brings WWII British forces into the game to battle German and Italian units in difficult terrain. Vickers machine guns, Commandos, Bren guns, PIATs and sticky bombs will see action in the game on the side of the British. They also have an allotment of vehicles including Sherman and Churchill tanks.

The German and Italian forces counter with many panzers including the Marder III and Elefant. A large map of beautiful Italian countryside is designed for players to contest the many exciting scenarios included in the playbook. \$125.00

The game contains: Three sheets of unit, weapon, vehicle, and condition counters; 30x41-inch mounted game map (with 1-inch hexes); 27 luck cards such as Tank Killer, No More, and Veteran Skills; 40+ unit data cards; full-color Playbook with 14 scenarios; Two player aid cards; color rule book; dice; and a massive box.

Info: <https://flyingpiggames.com/shop/ols/products/old-school-tactical-v4-italian-theater-1943-45>

Old School Tactical IV box art, map, and counters.



GHQ Summer Sale: 15%

by Russ Lockwood

Place your order for \$100.00 or more in GHQ products, and use discount code LIBERTY to save 15%. Discount cannot be combined with other offers. Spare parts orders are excluded from the sale. Due to the volume of orders, we respectfully request that no spare parts orders be placed during the sale.

Sale ends Tuesday, September 10th, 2024.
www.ghqmodels.com

Army Expo: Sep 14-15, 2024

by Russ Lockwood

To be held at the Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, PA. Looks entertaining and informative.

More info: www.ahec.armywarcollege.edu

HMGS NextGen Game: Sep 14

HMGS Next Generation will put on an Aztecs vs. Mayans game in Corona, NY (Queens borough, NYCity).



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Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Solo Wargaming: A Practitioner's Guide. by David Heading. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 185 pages. 2024.

A lot of common sense goes into this book about prepping and playing solo wargames. In addition, plenty of solo mechanics are included so you can duplicate much of prose theory on your tabletop.

For example, one-off wargames are nice, especially when testing out a variety of mechanics, but Heading goes into details about creating campaigns. I especially liked the "philosophical" section about six campaign "plots": Defeat a monster, Rags to Riches, Quest, Comedy, Tragedy, and Rebirth. Your tabletop forces, be they an individual in charges of a few henchmen to a vast army, need a reason for the campaign. These six plots will help you focus on the first step of campaigning -- a purpose.

There's not much on logistics (p106 to p114) except Heading's recommendation to "ignore" supplies. It doesn't stop him from offering a mechanic or two as well as a helpful supply load chart (p109).

The book contains nine black and white illustrations and 24 tables.

Two notes about references: one headscratching and one vanity. The headscratching one is why there's only a passing mention of the Solo Wargaming Association a decades-old organization dedicated to solo wargaming. It's the first place I'd send someone asking about solo gaming. The vanity one is I can't believe a book on solo wargaming would ignore *Wally Simon's Solo Secrets of Wargame Design: Volume 3: A Tabletop Toolkit of Ideas, Analysis, and Rule Mechanics*. I say vanity because I edited the booklet ... which is still in print ... plug, plug ... as are all nine volumes ... plug, plug ... from On Military Matters and Caliver Books ... plug, plug, plug. Oh well.

In any case, *Solo Wargaming* provides a considerable amount of advice for setting up and running solo games.

Enjoyed it.

Voynich Reconsidered: The Most Mysterious Manuscript in the World. by Robert H. Edwards. Hardback (8.9x11.2 inches). 336 pages. 2024.

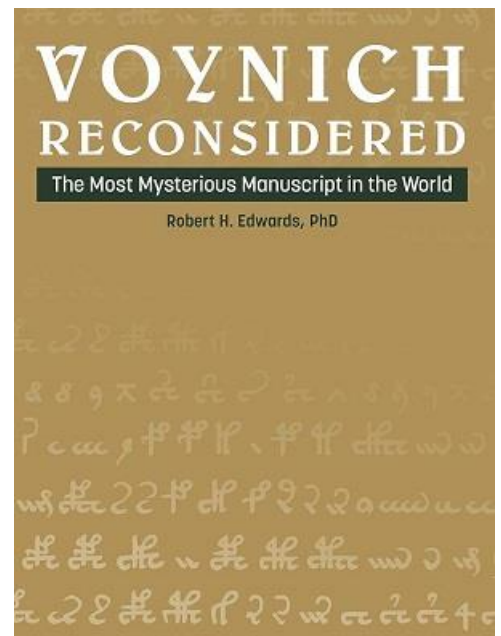
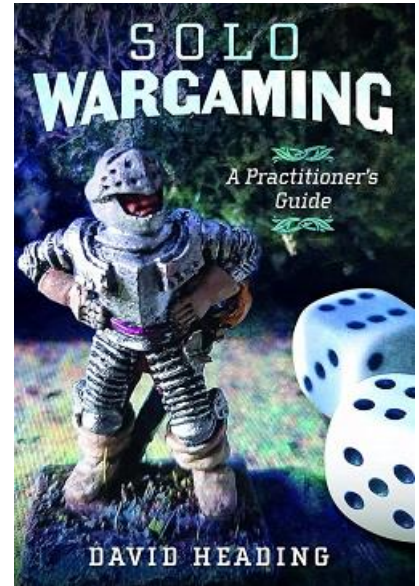
I saw a TV documentary on the Voynich Manuscript that noted the complete bafflement of the code-breaking community. Named after a book dealer who bought this medieval book, it is written in a so-far undecipherable language.

What the documentary missed, and this book explained in detail, is all the efforts throughout history to decipher this book. Some basic details: The vellum on which it is written has been carbon-dated to the 14th and 15th centuries circa 1308–1458 (p28). It contains lots of text and illustrations -- of the 227 pages, 195 contain substantive illustrations (p30). Sections include herbal, astronomical / astrological, pharmaceutical, and biological. The astrological section has 12 pages, but only 10 signs (for some unknown reason, Aries and Taurus get two pages each).

This is a detective story par excellence as effort after effort fails to generate anything that can crack the writing. The "letters" (called glyphs in the book) are considerably different from any known language - - that goes for English, Arabic, Chinese, Indian, and all in between from ancient through modern eras. Many have tried to peg the glyphs to all sorts of languages. None have succeeded.

This has led to the theory that it's all gibberish or a hoax or the constructed language ravings of a madman. It might be or might not.

One hoax theory is that it uses random "glyph dice" to create "sentences" (p85). The author wanted to try but couldn't find any writeable dice. Apparently, he never looked in any DIY craft store or Amazon, all of which carry wooden cubes that can be written on. You need a lot of dice -- the manuscript contains 71 glyphs (p47). The top 12



"glyph words" (p230) are in a table just across from a full-page table comparing the seven most frequent Latin letters (e, i, u, t, s, a, n) with frequent glyphs (p231). It's enough to make Wheel of Fortune players' heads spin.

Sample part of the manuscript.
Image from web.



Yet within the research, it seems that the text is written left to right and top to bottom. The jury is still out on whether some flourishes in glyphs are part of the glyph or punctuation (as there are no identifiable periods, commas, and such).

This all reminds me of a book I read about the Mayan language. It took a while for someone to decipher that. Egyptian hieroglyphics baffled researchers until the Rosetta stone came along. So, to my mind, just because we don't know how to read the glyphs doesn't mean it is gibberish.

Pre-computer efforts relied on comparisons with other languages, including obscure dialects such as medieval Illyrian. Sometimes, one word gets translated into something recognizable, but not reproducible in any other part of the manuscript.

The descriptions of computing power applied to digitized versions is impressive for its thoroughness, multiple avenues of investigation, and brute-force techniques. Word repetitions, letter positions, and all sorts of permutations get a CPU workout to no avail. For example: Seven glyphs occur over 10,000 times (p47) but the manuscript contains 158,947 glyphs (p49).

The strange part: I can actually follow the methodology described -- helped by a generous supply of conversion tables. Give the author a round of applause for clarity. Sure, none of the methods worked, but this encyclopedic explanation reads like a detective story albeit without a captured crook.

I did not count the illustrations or tables. It's a lot. Note that this book does not contain a full copy of the medieval book. This is all about trying to decipher the manuscript.

A couple errors: the glyph translation chart with a proposed v101 alphabet is missing the last line (p46). A footnote is missing the name of its source (p239), perhaps Monarchia I-III?

By the time I got to the end of the book, I could see how those interested in code cracking would be baffled by the manuscript. Wise guy that I am, I think it could be the original Cthulhu Necronomicon in the language that drives people insane.

Well, OK, that may be a long shot, but let's face it, if the CIA and a legion of academics and computer geeks can't make heads or tails of the book, my theory is just as valid.

Do I have anything constructive to contribute? Ah...no. But I can say that if you want to take a crack at the language, the first stop is the full manuscript posted by Yale University at:

<https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2002046>

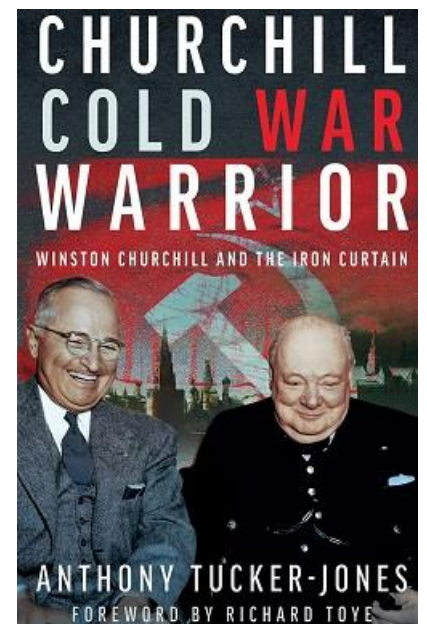
After that, grab this book so you don't try to reinvent all the failed secret decoder rings.

Enjoyed it.

Churchill Cold War Warrior. by Anthony Tucker-Jones. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 298 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Winston Churchill and the Iron Curtain*

This is a sequel to his excellent *Churchill: Master and Commander* (see the review in the 12/23/2021 AAR or up on hmgs.org). Whereas the first one covered his early life through the end of WWII, this picks up the story after



WWII with his ouster as Prime Minister and continues through the end of his life.

Churchill campaigns in 1945. Image from web.

Superb prose describes his travels and speeches until his return as PM in 1951. Those years saw him remain a Member of Parliament offering opinions about a variety of challenges facing the western democracies, including USSR's Berlin blockade, establishment of Israel, and increasing violence in Ireland. His highlight that resonated through history was his 1946 speech in Fulton, MO, about an "iron curtain" descending over Europe -- even as he hoped for moderating Communist policies that would revive democracy in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. His continuing efforts to diffuse USSR-Western tension proved illusory.



The main theme of the 1950s and 1960s is the end of the British Empire as colonies more often than not opted for complete independence instead of Commonwealth dominion. Churchill did not want to give up the empire. Indeed, he became upset with President Eisenhower that the US supported the French in Indochina, but not the British in its colonies. Churchill's push for Commonwealth entities proved only partially successful. Major challenges included a Communist insurrection in Malaya, retaining the Suez Canal (including deploying 80,000 British troops to defend it), and grudging independence for Kenya.

I couldn't help chuckling at the many bon mots issued by Churchill that combined policy perspective, sarcasm, and calls for action.

Operation Unthinkable: I never heard of this British plan to attack the USSR and drive the Red Army out of Germany and Poland. It needed French, German, and US support, and little of that was forthcoming, especially as the US still had to finish the war against Japan. The British military gave the plan its name and was ostensibly to start on July 1, 1945.

One typo: "in1948" needs a space (p104).

The book contains 36 black and white photos and nine black and white maps.

Churchill died on January 24, 1965 and so passed one of the 20th Century's greatest statesman. Both of ATJ's volumes explain why with aplomb.

Enjoyed it.

Target Hong Kong: A True Story of US Navy Pilots at War. by Steven K. Bailey. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 376 pages. 2024.

I'm not sure why the subtitle had to mention "true story" but the Osprey marketing folks must have thought the book needed such reassurance. Odd, because Osprey already released a *Campaign* series booklet about the exact same subject -- 1945 US Navy carrier operations -- Operation Gratitude -- against the Formosa and the Chinese coast, including air raids on Hong Kong. See the 04/22/2023 AAR for the review of *South China Sea 1945: TF 38 (Air Campaign 36)* or up on hmgs.org.

This book, being about four times the length of the *Campaign* series booklet, has the space to go into much greater detail. Indeed, it also covers the plight of civilians at the internment camp in Hong Kong, who watched many a raid on shipping in the harbor or attacks on nearby airfields. Fascinating.

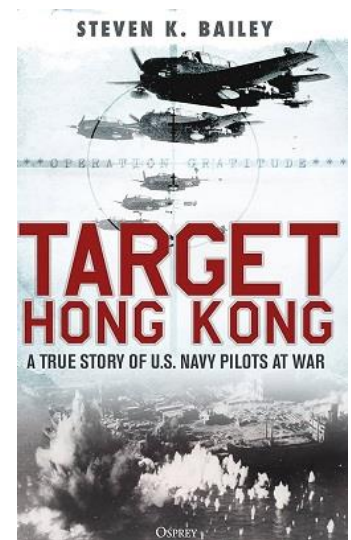
Japanese efforts to send tankers down to the Dutch East Indies for oil were thwarted when the US Navy sunk them and other merchant ships in Hong Kong harbor. US mission strike planning and Japanese AA plans are covered in detail. Missions receive virtually minute-by-minute successes and failures as individual dive bombers, torpedo bombers, and fighters work through their attack runs.

The book contains 22 black and white photos.

One possible typo: VT-20 carried Mark 13 torpedoes (p111), but VT-7 dropped Mark 18 torpedoes (p112). As that is the only reference to Mark 13s, that is probably a typo, although I don't know enough about US torpedoes to say for sure.

This is one of those books that combines operational planning with tactical descriptions. It reads well, reads quick, and shows what a US Navy carrier task force can accomplish against the declining strength of the Japanese in January 1945.

Enjoyed it.



Yom Kippur War 1973: Air Campaign 43. by Shlomo Aloni. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Airpower in Israel's Hardest-Fought War*

This eminently readable account of the Israeli Air Force during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 contains day-by-day air operations and the Egyptian and Syrian counters to Israeli attacks. The use of surface-to-air missile batteries in quantity and with Soviet troops gave the Israeli air force fits, not to mention shooting down a number of fighters and fighter-bombers.

Per usual with *Air Campaign* series booklets, you get a full OOB of the forces involved on both sides.

The booklet contains 55 black and white photos, 20 color photos, nine color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

Also per usual with *Air Campaign* series booklets, the type fonts are squint inducing. In fact, the regular text font is so small, even the footnote fonts are the same size. Yes, I am on my soapbox only because the content is superb. If only the typographical factor matched the information excellence. Don't misunderstand, the information within is golden, but I can only read these *Air Campaign* booklets in fits and starts. Annoying, even if I...

Enjoyed it.



Operation Sheepskin: Latin America at War 38. by Matthew J. Lord.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 86 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *British Military Intervention in Anguilla 1969*

You can always find interesting content in the *At War* series, even when the particular operation isn't very interesting. The British wanted to set up a three-island independent nation called Associated State from three of its island colonies: St. Kitts, Nevis, and Anguilla. The Anguillans would have none of it and wanted independence, especially from the tyranny of St. Kitts political leader Robert Bradshaw.

The British ignored the Anguillans' political wishes and the assigned British governors made the situation worse. After two years of "rebellion," the British eventually invaded the island with Force Anguilla, which consisted of 2 Para regiment, 40 policemen from Scotland Yard, and a few other support units.

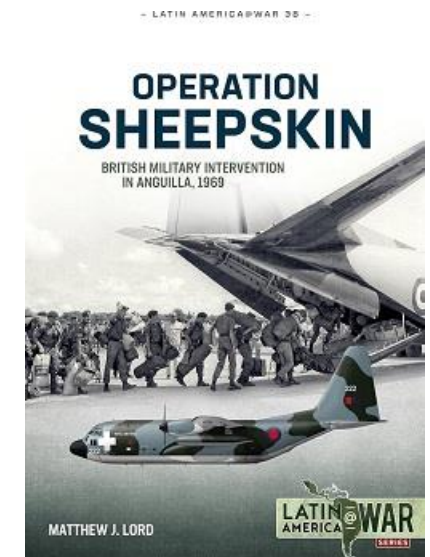
The daybreak invasion was met on the beach by a thunderous echelon of US news reporters. The Anguillans barely had a police force, much less any sort of organized military. The most dangerous moment came when photographers took a multitude of flash photos -- the flashes led some to think the Anguillan military was defending the beach. It's a good thing the invasion was NOT supported by naval gunfire or airstrikes. The "invasion" was a walkover and aside from a couple of events of exchanging cross words, all opposition proved peaceful as the politicians hashed out an agreement.

A most fortuitous stroke of luck occurred when St. Kitts' Bradshaw died. Animosity between Anguilla and St. Kitts immediately dissipated and the British military pursued a relatively successful Hearts and Minds campaign.

The book contains 52 black and white photos, one color map, and nine color profile illustrations (four aircraft, one helicopter, one Land Rover, and three uniforms).

The big battle in the book was a farcical Anguillan "raid" on St. Kitts with all the hallmarks of a Monty Python skit. British military restraint and Scotland Yard intervention defused what few tense situations occurred on Anguilla. Otherwise, this is mostly a political recap of the diplomatic efforts bouncing between St. Kitts, Anguilla, and Britain.

Enjoyed it.



The Defeat and Attrition of the 12SS PanzerDivision HitlerJugend. by Arthur W. Gullachsen. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 334 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Volume I: The Normandy Bridgehead Battles 7-11 June 1944*

This hyper-detailed unit history covers the 12th SS HitlerJugend panzer division just after the D-Day invasion mostly down to company-level, with some platoon-level, action included. The unit's main opponents were Canadian units pushing inland, while the 12SS HJ's mission was to drive them back into the sea.

Fortunately for the Allies, a host of problems confronted the 12SS HJ, including considerable command confusion, starting too far back from the beaches, Allied air superiority, and when active, considerable Allied artillery fire supplemented with naval gunfire.

Tactically, the division attacked in a piecemeal fashion in part due to transportation woes -- and the 12SS HJ didn't suffer as much from fighter-bomber attacks as other German units. In many respects, the 12SS HJ attacked alone instead of part of a three-division (12SS HJ, 21st Panzer, and Panzer Lehr) attack. It did well enough initially, but as Canadian artillery came into play, the attack stalled.

This is all marvelously described in great detail. The supporting maps could be more plentiful and each could focus on a smaller time period, but at least it's a proper custom-made map with scale, terrain, units, and so on. As I understand it, authors usually have to provide their own graphics, which is why you often find the same public-domain photos and maps in books. For tactical-level books, more is better. Sooo...please sir, may I have some more maps for *Volume II*?

One typo: "spent three and one years" (p45) is perhaps three and one-half years?

The book contains 38 glossy black and white photos, two glossy black and white photos of WWII German maps that are too small to be of much use, one black and white photo in the text, and eight black and white battle maps with company-sized units that can be used to set up a scenario using one stand equals one platoon and above scale. There is also four reproduced pages of German orders, but no English translation (save for a couple paragraphs), which is less than useful unless you read German. If it was that important, Google Translate and subsequent editing is a option missed.

You also get a full 12SS HJ OOB, complete with commander names, although the tanks, vehicles, and other equipment used by each company will be in the text.

So, this is all a marvelous unit history except for two aspects. The first is not too bad: every once in a while Gullachsen inserts something like "to be discussed shortly" (p111) and "operations will be discussed shortly" (p151). If the topic is important, don't tell me something is coming, tell me now. If the topic can wait, then tell when you need to and eliminate these phrases. Phrases like these halt the narrative and the narrative is too detailed to be halted.

The second is pure annoyance and it happens often: the author sticks "author" into the prose like it's amateur hour at the Bijou. Phrases like "it is logical for the author" (p109), "the author can only surmise" (p113), "it must be acknowledged by the author" (p114), "statement made by the author" (p126), "it has never been determined by the author" (p154), "it is unclear to the author" (p155), and so on.

All this hemming and hawing and hedging creates two problems -- more full stops on the narrative and a gradual erosion of faith in the author to analyze the historic record and provide the history of the unit. He did the research, so his analysis and interpretation is the reason you buy his book. Sure, there will never be perfect knowledge of every movement and event, but he's the expert. He delved into archives usual and obscure. He put together a detailed timeline narrative. He discussed the leadership decisions that went into the operations. But his constant hedging keeps lowering my confidence in what I'm reading.

Don't even get me started about how a possible friendly fire incident was "explored and discussed in online internet Normandy forums..." (p161). Really? No other info? Footnote maybe? Bibliography reference?

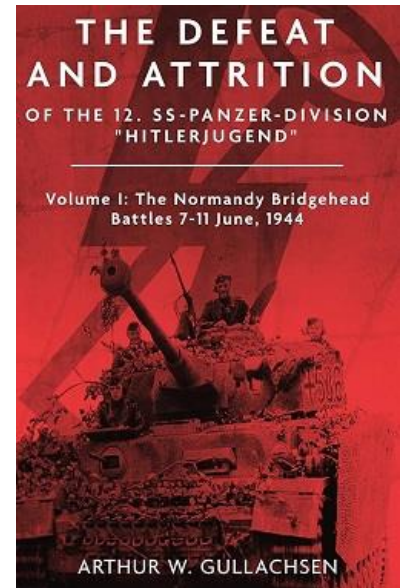
As this is the first volume of a multi-volume series, I can only hope that the editor will not be asleep at the keyboard and send *Volume II* back to the "author" to eliminate such hedging distractions and prose breaks before publication.

Maybe these breaks don't bother you. I can't remember encountering them in his marvelous *Bloody Verrieres* books. Gullachsen should believe in himself. I do. Without those prose-interrupting phrases, his book tells a tale with authenticity and style.

Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

Note: Pair this book with *Armoured Thunder* to get dueling depictions of some of the same battles.



Armoured Thunder. by Daniel M. Braun. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 278 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Canadian Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment in the Normandy Campaign*

This unit history covers the Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment (battalion equivalent in US terms) in considerable detail -- just the way ultra-tactical enthusiasts like it. Not only does the book discuss company-level actions, it often delves into platoon and individual tank actions.

As this covers the unit in Normandy, attention is paid to the training and subsequent landings in France, followed by a considerable number of actions against the German 12SS HitlerJugend Panzer Division. The Sherbrookes lost tanks and took significant casualties in their attack and the Panzer counterattack.

The unit later drove onto Falaise. After that, the book only sketchily recounts the Sherbrooke's movements as a sequel called *Armoured Fist* is planned for 2025 and presumably will take the unit from Falaise to the end of the war.

One aspect I found interesting is the frequent use of speculative fire on suspected enemy positions -- something usually banned in wargames. For example: "Tanks used spec fire against hedges, trees, buildings, and slit trenches" (p81). "Shot at haystacks using spec fire" (p75). "Considerable speculative shooting was done" during Operation Atlantic (p138). "Laying spec fire on suspected mortar positions" (p138). Makes you wonder about using some sort of optional or house rule for spec fire.

Typos: Preface (page x) notes "Abel Company." Subsequent mentions (example p8) are "Able Company." The maps on p83 and p89 are identical.

Headscratcher: The 12th SS Panzer Division had two flame-throwing Tiger tanks in operation during the Normandy campaign (p140)? Never heard of 'em...

To the web: "Hitler. On 5th December 1944, during a conference, he requested that a long-range flamethrower should be mounted behind as heavy an armored chassis as possible...This demand was repeated by Hitler on 29th December 1944 and the task passed over to Obert Crohn of the Entwicklungskommission Panzer (Tank Development Committee).

...On 19th March 1945, Hitler ordered Maj.Gen. Thomale to fit the flamethrower system to a turretless Tiger I...the first steps in putting together this experimental heavy flamethrower on a Tiger I had taken place at Wegmann, Kassel on 21st and 22nd March with completion of the project estimated by 15th April...Allied bombing meant that the target completion date of 15th April was missed and the vehicle was never completed." From <https://tanks-encyclopedia.com>

Maybe some other tank? Some other flammpanzer type? I couldn't find a web reference. Let's not allow one gaffe to diminish a fine unit history, but I do wonder about the source.

Then there's this anecdote (p120): German tank fired from 800 yards away and the AT round passed through A Sqd tank, through a second tank, and hit a third tank -- three disabled tanks in one shot. No footnote. Strange event or another illusory Flammpanzer Tiger gaffe?

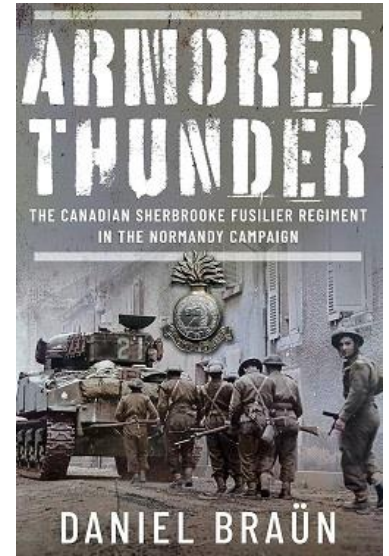
The book contains 37 black and white photos, five visual OOBs, and 38 marvelous black and white maps with scale. Appendices contains Canadian and German OOBs in Normandy.

Other than that one likely gaffe and one unlikely but possible anecdote, this is an excellent unit history and just the ticket to pull out a number of scenarios for the wargames table.

One other note: Don't confuse this book with *Armored Thunderbolt* about the Sherman tank in the US Army. Likewise, do not confuse his upcoming sequel *Armoured Fist* (due out 2025) with the book *Armored Fist* about the US 712th tank battalion.

Enjoyed it.

Note: Pair this book with *The Defeat and Attrition of the 12SS PanzerDivision HitlerJugend* to get dueling depictions of some of the battles.



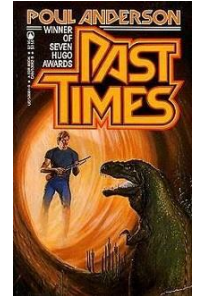
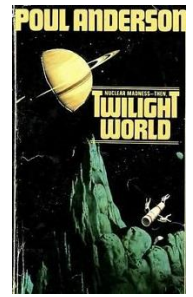
Twilight World. by Poul Anderson. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 250 pages. 1983 reprint of 1961 book.

A nuclear war devastates the Earth, and worse, causes most births to be mutants -- and only some are the cute and cuddly X-Men kind, but mostly all sorts of tentacles for limbs and such. The US begins to recover from this dystopian reality, but the Earth is dying. Only Mars seems a viable alternative if it can be terraformed.

So begins a race to repair enough infrastructure to create a manned mission to Mars. However, the rival Siberian Empire is also rebuilding and a direct threat.

I don't quite understand how US genius Alaric Wayne dealt with the Siberians, but the book reads well enough.

Enjoyed it.



Past Times. by Poul Anderson. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 288 pages. 1984.

This book reprints a collection of time travel or time-related short stories first published in 1950-1960 time period, plus a portion of a 1984 essay. As a whole, they are quite good, although *Flight to Forever* is essentially a reworking of HG Wells' *Time Machine*. *The Light* proved to be the most interesting, involving a mission and a painting.

Enjoyed it.

WWII Ghosts: Artifacts Can Talk. by Richard J. Kimmel. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 192 pages. 2009.

Those who've watched *Ghosthunter*-style TV shows understand that "hauntings" can be residual (do same thing over and over again) or interactive (spirits that can move objects, touch, answer questions) and that the active spirits can range from Casper the Friendly Ghost to Mr. Poltergeist or Mr. Demon. This book argues that all artifacts are capable of offering the same two types of hauntings. All you need to find out is to tap into your sixth sense or bring in a psychic.

The bulk of the book covers 43 artifacts, almost all from WWII, that have such hauntings. A few psychics examine the artifacts and provide information about each by reading the recordings or interacting with the imprisoned spirits.

If you believe in such, I won't dissuade you. If you don't believe, I won't persuade you either. I've never personally seen a ghost, a UFO, Bigfoot, or someone using supernatural abilities like *Star Wars'* The Force. The absence of personal evidence does not prove such things do not exist. TV programs seem to show more than a few video clips that defy easy explanations. I keep an open mind on lots of these things.

The book contains 70 black and white photos.

As for the history of the 43 artifacts examined by psychics, most are competently identified, if sometimes a bit obvious. For example, a bracelet with the engraving "Lt Van Zutphen LA" is described as belonging to an officer with some sort of New Orleans connection. I suppose it could be a Los Angeles connection, and the Lt is probably a rank, not an abbreviation for a first name.

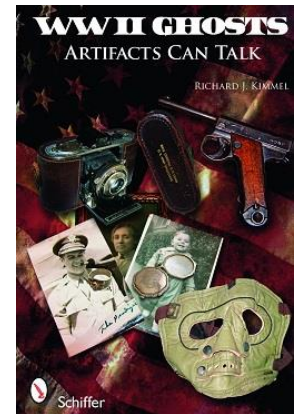
However, some descriptions are off: Only German WWII award higher than Knights Cross with silver oak leaves is silver oak leaves with crossed swords (p81). That's incorrect. At least two grades are higher: Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds and Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Golden Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds. The psychic said it belonged to "Engo." To give her the benefit of the doubt, one was awarded to Engelbert Endrass, captain of *U-46*, in 1941.

The Village Inn in Englishtown, NJ, which served as George Washington's HQ during the Battle of Monmouth in the American Revolution, is allegedly haunted by black slaves fearful that they will be picked up by the British and be used as slaves (p168). That, too seems incorrect. A 1779 British proclamation offered freedom to all slaves owned by rebelling Americans, says the US National Park Service web site. Also, historians estimate that more than 20,000 runaway slaves joined the British during the American Revolution. *

So, a couple historical gaffes lead you to question some of the other historical recaps of the artifacts, albeit most ring true to my eyes and memory.

Accuracy aside, it was entertaining and a quick read. I wouldn't put much credence into the supernatural aspects of the artifacts, but Pulp RPGers might troll these artifacts for cool plot ideas.

Enjoyed it.



* <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/john-hannigan-patriots-of-color-paper-2.htm>

Pedestal: The Convoy That Saved Malta. by Peter C. Smith. Softcover (5.0x7.8 inches). 304 pages. 2024 reprint of 1970 book.

An oldy but competently-written goody with a long list of reprints: 1987, 1994, 1999, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, 2018, and 2023. It's a good launching point for a detailed look at the convoy and various Axis efforts to stop it.

Ship by ship and attack by attack, the convoy chugs along losing ships as it went but exacting a toll on the Axis as well. Some of the things you read about show the desperation in the Allied decisions as the convoy starts to lose cohesion as damaged ships are either left behind or in the case of warships, turned around to go back to Gibraltar.

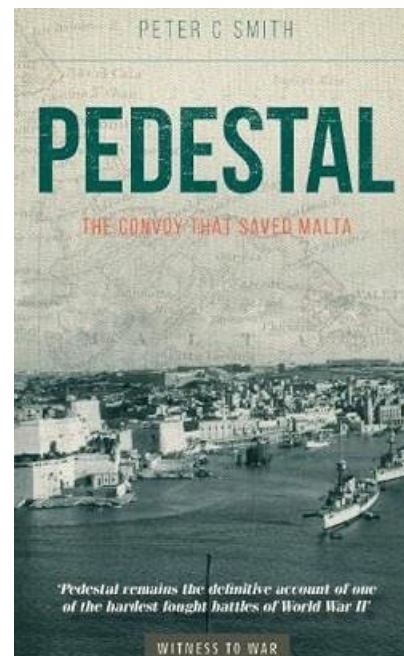
Replicating such desperation would be a tall order for a wargame -- and the wargamers. Sometimes planes arrive with ample warning. Sometimes, the planes surprise the ships. Submarines somehow get close, fire torpedoes, and get away without being detected. Other times, they are caught on the surface. Yes indeed, confusion is rampant once the shooting starts.

It's rather amazing that any typos could survive 10 reprintings, but they do: "neat-miss" (p35) should be "near-miss" and "eight volunteers were eventually found" (p185) should be "were eventually found."

The book contains 55 black and white photos and eight black and white maps. There is an excellent OOB of all air and sea forces involved.

About the only reservation I have with this book is that it's likely more information has become available after 50 years. I only wish I had read this before I played in the double-blind Pedestal wargame.

Enjoyed it.



Prallsville Mills and Stockton: Images of America. by Keith Strunk. Softcover (6.5x9.2 inches). 127 pages. 2008.

You've probably seen this series in all sorts of places -- hyper local collection of old photos and drawings about a particular location. As Stockton, NJ, is the next town over from me. I've been in, around, and through it often. Prallsville Mills (PM) is essentially the north end of Stockton and I've been to many an event there -- art shows, book signings, fundraisers, and so on.

PM is not a town, but a collection of industrial buildings turned into a state park, with some offices, retail buildings, and museum-ish displays. The two-story main mill, still containing the water-powered machinery, is used for many an event. The canal path runs between the mill and canal / Delaware River and stretches down to Trenton and up to Frenchtown. It used to have a train stop, but the canal path became a rails-to-trails project. During the pandemic, we often walked the path.

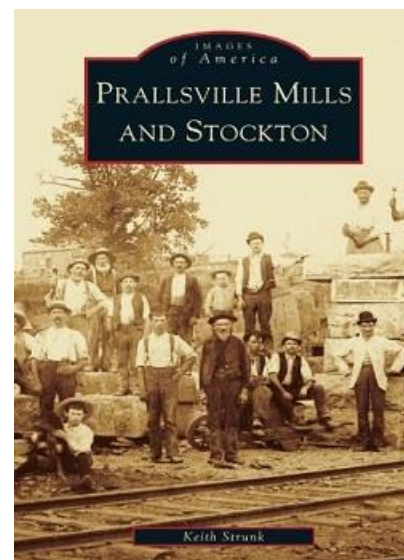
Stockton, a town on the canal/river is so small you can stroll from south to north in about 10 minutes. The former RR station is now a convenience store and a few restaurants are on Bridge Street. The main attraction is the Stockton Inn, whose main claim to fame was a meeting place for show biz types. A Broadway song *The Little Hotel with the Wishing Well* was penned there. The Inn is undergoing a renovation and will turn into a high-end Italian restaurant, succeeding a disaster of a cigar bar, which succeeded a fantastic country inn.

In any case, the photos within chart the history of the town and mill complex with people, businesses, and machinery mostly long since replaced. Stockton suffered a variety of natural disasters including fires, floods, and a lightning strike that destroyed the covered bridge to Pennsylvania (replaced with a steel bridge that still carries traffic).

The book contains 184 black and white photos and seven black and white illustrations.

Obviously, the photos mean more to locals like me than someone halfway around the world, but it's a nice stroll through history for a touch of late 19th and early 20th century Americana.

Enjoyed it.



The School of Fencing. by Domenico Angelo. Softcover (9.2x6.2 inches: horizontal). 144 pages. 2024 reprint of 2017 book that was a reprint of a 2005 book that was a reprint of 1787 book that was an English translation of 1763 book.

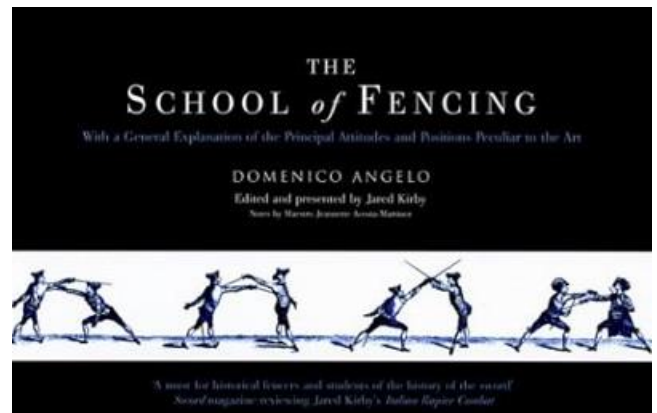
Subtitle: *With a General Explanation of the Principle Attitudes and Positions Peculiar to the Art*

This is a facsimile reprint of the 1787 English translation version of the original French manual. As a result, 18th spelling is throughout, which is fine except for the use of a lowercase 'f' instead of a lowercase 's'. Thus, you will see "cufton of fingle combat" instead of "custom of single combat." It's very slow to read, although the instructions seem detailed enough for book learning. Actual learning to fence, or duel, requires practice, talent, and an actual tutor.

The book contains 50 black and white illustrations that showcase the captioned advice from one of the best fencers of his time. He even includes advice on how to choose a sword for purchase.

I'm not sure how much use this will be useful on a tabletop, but for fencing enthusiasts, this manual of arms will be of interest.

Enjoyed it.



Battle of Stalingrad. by Dmitry Degteu. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 192 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Beginning of the End for Hitler in the East*

As I've read a number of Stalingrad books, the general outline of the 6th Army drive from the Don River to the Volga River and subsequent city fight, encirclement, and surrender is a well-worn one. Yet, because this uses a considerable amount of Soviet archives from the Russian Federation Central Archive, you'll pick up a few new factoids -- including where von Paulus surrendered, text of Hitler calling upon God to save the German war effort, and slight differences in casualties.

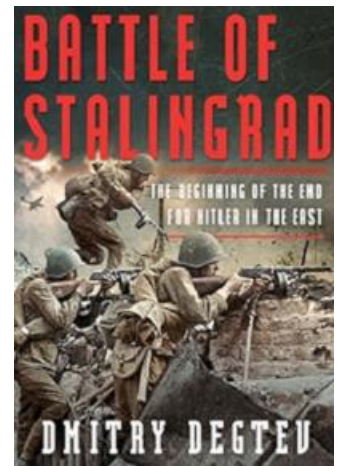
It's a good introduction to the campaign, with considerable details and maneuvers packed within, but it needs maps. I have a bit more geographic knowledge now thanks to working on the upcoming *Against The Odds* magazine's *Operation Heron* (drive from the Don to the Volga) wargame, but exactly where the multitude of Soviet villages are located baffles me.

To be fair, there are four black and white maps -- three somewhat large scale and useless Stalingrad city maps and one useful Astrakhan to Saratov railroad map.

One new (to me) aspect is the German bombing of the Astrakhan to Saratov railroad, which was a major troop and supply line. I'm not sure wargames pay enough attention to that artery, but the book recounts numbers moved and bombings' impacts. Bombing delayed and destroyed troops and supplies enough to impact the Soviet defense, but not enough that the defense failed. On the flip side, not bombing it would have beefed up Stalingrad far more than the historical rate.

The book also contains 28 black and white photos.

This book reads well enough to condense the Stalingrad offense, pocket, and surrender into a short volume with equivalent detail to the three Osprey *Campaign* booklets, but less than Beevor's classic volume and way less Glanz's *Stalingrad Trilogy*. Pick your level of detail sought, but *Battle of Stalingrad* is a fine place to start. Enjoyed it.

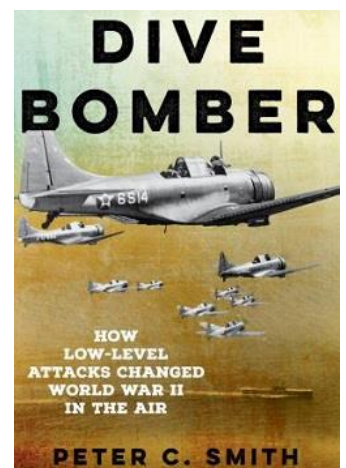


Dive Bomber. by Peter C. Smith. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 378 pages. 2024 reprint of 1982 book.

Subtitle: *How Low-Level Attacks Changed World War II in the Air*

An excellent deep dive into the creation of dive bombers and close air support for attacks versus ground units and naval units. Concentrating on US, Britain, Germany, and Japan, it also covers other countries' efforts, including USSR, France, Italy, China, and Sweden.

The technological developments starting with WWI experiments receives



considerable attention, as does the techniques of dive bombing -- including a fairly detailed discussion of approaching a target, accuracy versus angles of attack, and bomb release heights.

All of the theory is backed with examples of dive bombing attacks during WWII as countries compared dive bombing with level- and glide- bombing. The Junkers JU-87 Stuka, Aichi Val, and Douglas Dauntless receive considerable coverage for their exploits.

One typo: The beginning of a sentence needs a capital D instead of a lower-case D (p225).

The book contains 65 black and white photos, 39 tables, and 26 black and white illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

Pacific Profiles: Volume 15. by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (7.0x9.8 inches). 104 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Allied Bombers: B-26 Marauder Series Australia, New Guinea and the Solomons 1942-1944*

I hate to sound like the record's stuck... the record's stuck... the record's stuck... but for consistency of research, illustration, and overall quality, this new volume in the *Pacific Profiles* series offers the same excellent research, illustration, and overall quality...

Oh my, my review record is indeed stuck.

But it is also accurate. If you are interested in the Pacific Air war centered around the SW Pacific area of operations, these volumes offer a comprehensive squadron by squadron and aircraft by aircraft compendium of Allied and Japanese units. This one covers the B-26.

Sure, the US camouflage scheme is fairly uniform, but the IDs, nose art, and other markings along with short descriptions of individual airframes provide individuality for those painting models.

Take your pick: the book contains 84 color aircraft profiles, four color maps, six other color illustrations, and close-ups of 109 color nose arts and other markings. Also contains 48 black and white photos and four color photos.

The initial design had a number of flaws that caused fatal crashes, including a battery drain causing electric pitch propellers to enter a flat pitch just after takeoff. A generator was added to the aircraft and a 24-volt battery system replaced the 12-volt system to correct the flaw.

One aspect that stands out: accidents claimed lots of bombers. An engineer filled the tires with pure oxygen that exploded (p73), ground crew ran a bomber into a ditch and it caught fire (p39), and a co-pilot retracted the landing gear instead of the flaps while taxiing (p61). The 408th Bomber Squadron recorded six planes lost to enemy action and nine lost to accidents.

I did not know that then Congressman and future US President Rep. Lyndon B. Johnson earned a Medal of Honor in the Pacific on a B-26 (p44). He was part of a VIP fact-finding tour that included flying a combat mission out of Port Moresby (New Guinea). Of the four B-26s carrying the four VIPs, one was shot down and the other three came back to base. All four VIPs, including LBJ, received the Medal of Honor for the one mission. Note that LBJ received the medal despite his plane having to return after a half hour due to equipment failure -- he never fully participated in the actual combat at Lae (New Guinea). Politics, eh?

A consistently excellent series.

Enjoyed it.

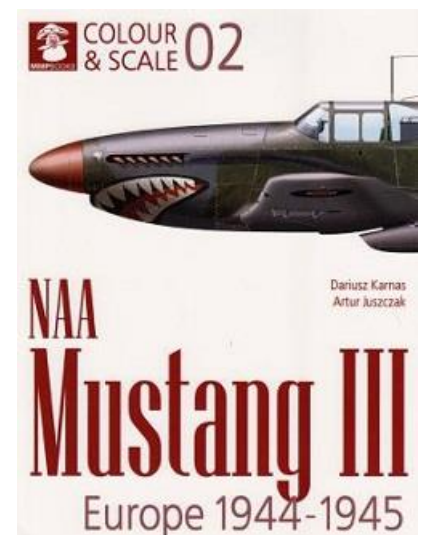
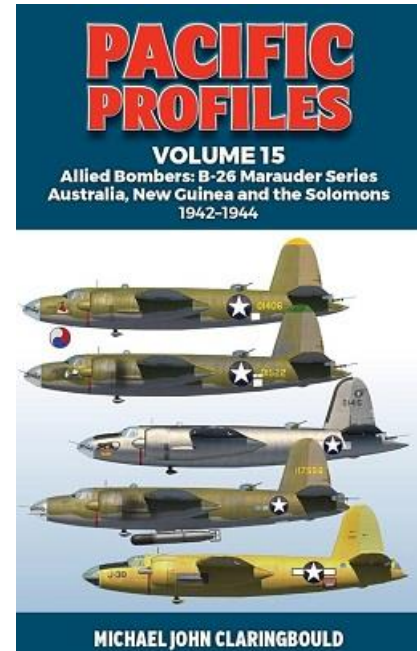
NAA Mustang III: Colour & Scale 02. by Dariusz Karnas and Artur Juszcak. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 16 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Europe 1944-1945*

For modelers, this contains six 1/72-scale drawings, eight 1/48-scale drawings, and 15 color aircraft camouflage schemes for RAF Mustang IIIs. English captions explain the colors. It also contains one page of Polish text explaining the aircraft profiles.

Not much to read, but it's for modelers. For that purpose, it works well.

Enjoyed it.



Admiral VAT Smith. by Graeme Lunn. Hardback (7.3x10.2 inches). 248 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Extraordinary Life of the Father of Australia's Fleet Air Arm*

This biography of Admiral Sir Victor Alfred Trumper (VAT) Smith details his life from 13-year-old naval cadet in 1927 to Chairman of the tri-service Chiefs of Staff in the 1970s.

As a lad, he learned the ropes of naval life at the academy and at sea before transferring to the aviation arm of the Navy. He learned the trade of aerial observer and served in various postings during WWII in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.

Although often described as not particularly bright, he was always described as having considerable common sense and dedication to duty. He was promoted up the ranks and was instrumental in establishing the aircraft carrier-based Australian fleet air arm after WWII.

The book contains 65 color photos, 110 black and white photos, eight color maps, and seven color illustrations.

The workmanlike prose explains in full the nuances of a go-getter who served his country with distinction in war and in peace.

Enjoyed it.

Penda: Mercia's First King. by Paul Barrett. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 241 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Last Great Heathen Warlord of Anglo-Saxon England*

I know little about the 6th and 7th Century Dark Age period in England, so this was a treat. Here's where including background before addressing the title topic comes in handy with a survey of cultural, political, economic, and military aspects of the area. The decline of the Romano-Celtic culture, superseded by the Saxons and later by the Angles and Jutes, fragments England into lots of warring factions.

Enter Penda, a descendant of the Iclingag line (p16), who is a minor warlord that slowly bashes his way up the pecking order, accumulating warrior and lands in central England. At some point, he slips up and must swear an oath to another king to escape encirclement and likely destruction. Nonetheless, this ally protects a frontier, allowing Penda to expand elsewhere.

What sets Penda apart from other period warlords and kings is a shrewd application of statecraft that sought stability through diplomacy and alliances (or at least non-aggression pacts) on most sides of his kingdom before plunging into another war. Furthermore, he often conducted his wars like a raid -- bash the opponent, take livestock, and go home to divvy up the spoils. You might make a multiplayer campaign out of the era.

The Kingdom of Mercia grew under his mantle until he violated his own rules, which included never going to war in consecutive years, splitting his kingdom and relying on tribute troops, and paying off the troops before attaining his home safe haven. He was betrayed, caught in bad terrain, and went down fighting.

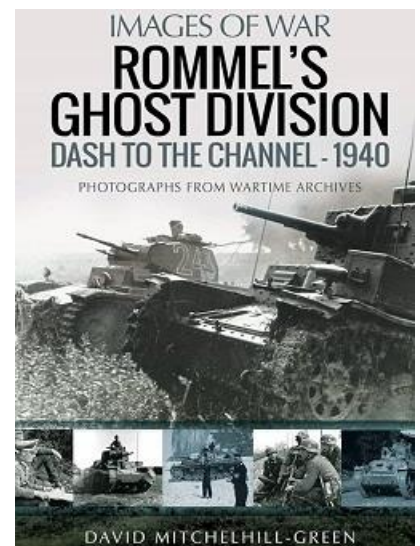
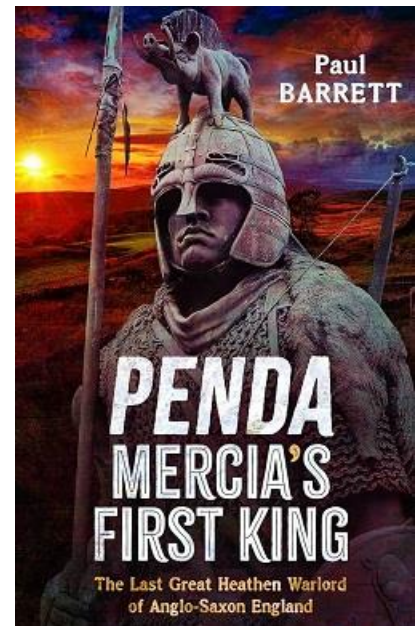
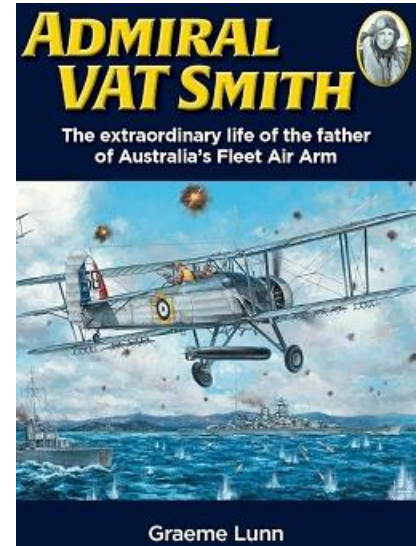
The book contains three black and white maps of 7th Century England.

Pleasant prose, correlations to modern locales, and a compelling story scraped from the minimalist sources make this an interesting read. I don't know if Barrett plans a sequel, but I'd vote for one.

Enjoyed it.

Rommel's Ghost Division: Dash to the Channel 1940 (Images of War). by David Mitchelhill-Green. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 235 pages. 2024.

These photos come from the US National Archives, and many specifically from the Rommel Collection. Apparently, Erwin was quite the



shutterbug, so many photos are from him, although obviously not the multitude that show him in the photo. Others are showing tanks, vehicles, equipment, and troops that Rommel made famous with his attack across France in 1940.

All his famous locations receive coverage: crossing the Meuse River at Dinant, driving through towns and forcing surrenders, and reaching the English Channel.

Captions provide most of the prose and some interesting tidbits will likely make wargamers' brains rattle a bit vis a vis tabletop rules.

German infantry sans AT guns fired flare guns at approaching French tanks, which thought the flares were AT rounds and fled (p55). A German 37mm AT gun hit a Somua S-35 seven times at 350 meters, doing no discernable damage. The same gun hit another seven times at 250 meters before the last shot penetrated the armor (p66). Rommel believed in opening fire into an area which he believed held the enemy: i.e. recon by fire (p87). Almost 30 German divisions saw no action at all in France as they marched in pursuit of the rapidly moving front (p87).

Two typos: "company.This" needs a space after the period (p92). "French army mobilized 500,000 million horses" needs to settle on one number or the other (p104).

The book contains 308 black and white photos, nine black and white maps, and two black and white illustrations. The photos offer a bell-shaped curve of quality. It would have been nice to go over them with a Photoshop process. The clear cover photo is lighter and sharper than the original printed in the book (p227). Although many are sharp, I wish all photos were as clear.

For photo buffs, the *Images of War* series offers a nice looting of archives. For Rommel buffs, this *Images of War* book shows you the beginnings of the Rommel legend.

Enjoyed it.

Rommel's Ghost Division: Victory in the West (Images of War). by David Mitchelhill-Green. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 235 pages. 2024.

The sequel of sorts to *Rommel's Ghost Division: Dash to the Channel 1940* continues Rommel's 1940 advances that capture St. Valery, Le Havre, and Cherbourg, plus a victory parade in Bordeaux and re-enacting his crossing of the Somme for a propaganda film (including lots of aerial shots). A few duplicate shots and the same OOB are in this sequel.

Some typos of the missing space after a period kind, such as "BEF.With" (p76). Nothing fatal.

The book contains 338 black and white photos and three black and white maps.

Enjoyed it.

British Lend-Lease Warships 1940-45: New Vanguard 330. by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2024.

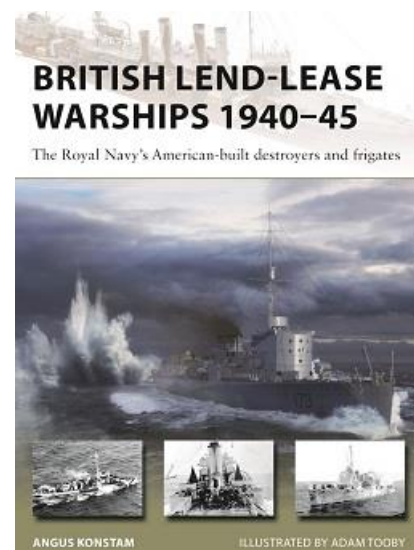
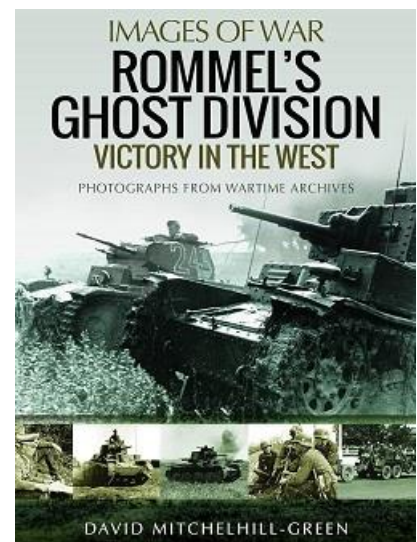
Subtitle: *The Royal Navy's American-Built Destroyers and Frigates*

The transfer of 50 WWI-era US four-stack destroyers to Britain during WWII is well known, but those weren't the only ships transferred to help the Royal Navy against the German U-Boats in WWII.

The US had 273 destroyers enter service between 1918 and 1922 -- and many were immediately mothballed. Many were scrapped, but 50 of them were transferred to Britain in exchange for 99-year leases of British naval bases in the Caribbean (p12). The Royal Navy then had most of the ships modified and updated for convoy work. Some warships went to Canada, Norway, Netherlands, and USSR.

Destroyer and Destroyer Escort (frigate) refit details as well as armament, Asdic, and other associated equipment per class receive coverage followed by deployments. One of the most famous deployments was the *HMS Campbelltown* (former *USS Buchanan*) that was used to attack the dry dock at St. Nazaire. Most were assigned convoy escort and U-boat hunting -- recapped nicely.

The booklet contains 40 black and white photos (some particularly sharp with camouflage patterns), one color photo, eight color ship profiles, two color action illustrations, one two-page cutaway color illustration of the *HMS*



Campbeltown, and three small color illustrations of the *HMS Campbeltown* as she looked when she was the USS Buchanan, when she performed convoy duty, and when she was modified for the St. Nazaire raid.

Enjoyed it.

Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (3): Campaign 403. by Timothy J. Orr. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Third Day*

The third and final *Campaign* volume of the Gettysburg campaign covers the major actions of Culp's Hill, Stuart's cavalry battle, Pickett's Charge, and the Confederate Retreat. See also the reviews of *The Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (1): Campaign 374* (in the 04/02/2022 AAR) and *The Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (2): Campaign 391* (in the 06/30/2023 AAR or both up on hmgs.org).

It's a fine recap, even though I've read and re-read the history over the decades. Being a large battle, there's always some new anecdote to learn. In this case, it's a tragic story of three young lads who found a musket in January 1865 and played around with it without a problem until one day they decided to heat it up in the family stove. Alas, it was loaded and the round cooked off, shooting the seven-year old in the head and killing him (p91).

The booklet has 60 black and white photos, seven black and white illustrations, 10 color illustrations, seven color maps, two of the less-than-useful 3D maps, and three color two-page action illustrations. There is a full OOB, albeit without troop numbers -- you'll have to find another source for those numbers.

As I noted before, of personal interest, Union General Henry Lockwood, undoubtedly one of my ancestors somewhere in the family tree, commanded a fire brigade of sorts in Ruger's division. He was sent with two regiments to counterattack rebels on Cemetery Hill, then turned around and sent back into quasi reserve. The next day, he was sent back into the fray at Culp's Hill with three regiments.

Of note, he had been in the Army a long, long time, but had no ACW field command experience. In the convoluted way of seniority, had he been officially attached to the troops assigned to the fishhook, he would have out-seniored all and been put in command.

Thankfully, he recognized his limitations. Union high command created the legal fiction of an 'independent command' and so could allow the generals who had fought at Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg, not Lockwood, to wield this part of the Union Army. Not that losing both battles would be an enthusiastic endorsement of "experience," but at least it was command under fire, which is better than parade-ground experience.

I don't know of any diary or collection of General Lockwood letters, but it would be interesting to read about his views about the seniority issue -- for the Union cause, I imagine, or at least would like to think.

Enjoyed it.

