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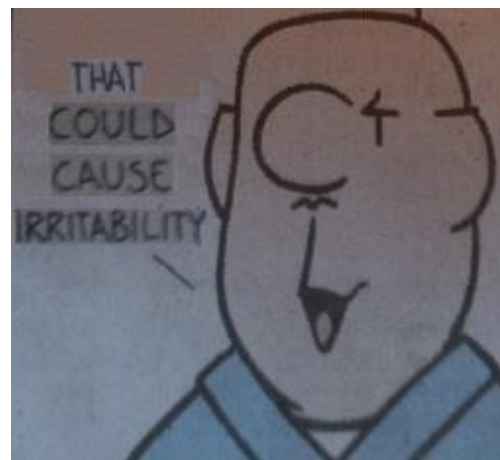
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Above: The pre-game fog bank of game boards allow for hidden setup. Brits on the left and Spanish on the right. Clockwise from left: Steve, John, Nathan, Umpire Dan (standing), and Aiden.
Below: My Spanish squadron and associated crew.

Age of Sail: British vs. Spanish

by Russ Lockwood

The WizKids game *Pirates of The Spanish Main* may be intended for naval battles between pirates and galleons on the Spanish Main, and we've certainly played a fair number of these, but it's also great for Age of Sail fleet actions. In this case, we pitted a British fleet against a Spanish fleet.

Umpire Dan was trying to balance out the sides in terms of experience, for we had two lads on the Spanish side who had never played. "Nonsense," I said. "The British should have more experience. Leave the lads with me." I *knew* that kids roll better than grown-ups. Bwa-ha-ha.

The System

Each player had four ships, usually one four- or five-masted squadron leader, a three-master, and one or two one- or two-masted ships. In total, each of the squadrons totaled 12 masts and 12 cannons. Hulls equaled from 12 to 14 per squadron. As you might expect, when all hull, masts,



and cannon boxes are hit and crossed off on the ship chart, the ship sinks.

A sample ship chart. It's special ability is to get a saving throw if hit by forts. As no forts were in this scenario, no real benefit.

This is all recorded on a chart per ship, which also sometimes included special benefits: ignore the first hit, reroll missed shots, extra moves, possible repairs at sea instead of at a dock, and so on. The main problem among us Admirals was that we often completely forgot about special characteristics. We kinda picked up on that after a few turns when Dan asked if we had paid attention to said benefits.

Ummmm. Maybe we were just being polite?

Nah. It's CRS Disease: Can't Remember Ship...or something like that.

Each ship also had bonus crew scattered around the squadron: a captain, helmsman, marines, shipwright, and so on. Which ship had what helped make all ships just a little different. Even though said crew tokens were on the sheet, we still suffered another version of CRS: Can't Remember Sailors...or something like that.

The Brits: Steve, Dan, and John.

Eventually, we got hip to certain benefits. Sometimes even before the ship sank.

Anyway, we put up the Fog Bank (old game boards) for a secret start. Most tablespace was open ocean, but Central Island and Skull Island were in the middle. You could land and scrounge for information or treasure.

I was in the center with Almirante Nathan to my right, er, starboard, and Almirante Aiden to my left, er, port. I knew I could reach Central Island on turn one and figured it was worth a chance to see if I could find something useful.

With that, Umpire Dan rolled for the wind direction and the fog lifted.

The Spanish (l to r): Nathan, Russ, and Aiden. Central Island in the middle. Photo by Dan.

Opening Maneuvers

I had full faith in the young admirals getting into battle, but was a bit confused by the British maneuvers. Admiral John was on the other side of Central Island and made his way towards my ships. I sent my two smallest ships to explore the island (2d6 each), only to find out that one found nothing and the other discovered information that the British fleet was in the area. Oh, joy. My other two ships headed south of the Island in preparation that all four would fall into line.

Almirante Nathan looped around Central Island to the north and headed for John. With good fortune, we would trap the cursed English squadron between us. One ship landed and discovered buried treasure.

WINDJAMMER			9
Cannons			Notes Get a "saving throw" against any hit from fort guns for a 3+.
3	2	3	
5"	7"	5"	
Cargo			
3 Masts			
12	8	4	< Movement (inches)



Meanwhile, Almirante Aiden headed for Skull Island.

British Admiral Steve immediately tacked against the wind heading north aiming at me while Admiral Dan headed south and aimed at Aiden. I have no idea why they didn't head for the nearest Spanish ships.

John uses a turning template to maneuver one of his ships. Steve has already tacked his ships, heading in opposite direction as Dan's ships (upper left side of photo).

Photo by Dan.



Wild Winds

Over the first few turns, the wind direction would swing 180 degrees. In fact, it changed so radically so often, I joked we must be fighting in the eye of a hurricane.

I later learned that Umpire Dan would roll 2d6 for wind direction and kept rolling snake-eyes (2) and boxcars (12), which is as erratic as 2d6 can get.

Then again, I once sailed against the wind...and backwards. Thankfully John caught this embarrassing oversight. I can only plead CRS: Can't Remember Sailing...or something like that.

John, gaining initiative, crosses the T of my line. The small ship at bottom right corner lands to check for treasure and info.



Initiative

Each turn, each side rolled 1d6 to determine the initiative. I never won initiative the entire game. This became frustrating on about the third or fourth turn when John and I were on a collision course aiming for the same spot on the ocean. He won initiative, I did not, and his ships turned the corner and crossed the T of my ships. Hey, that's what happens with die rolling.

I fouled one of John's ships with a successful, if ongoing, boarding action, but not the other.

The rest of his line rolled right in and I started to take a pounding.

The bigger problem was that as I was boxed in, I could not get my two smaller ships into the line -- losing valuable cannon shots.

Let's face it, sports fans, John outmaneuvered me.

John not only outrolled me to unfoul, he rolled boxcars to get a critical hit on my ship and then boxcars again to start a fire! The crew could do nothing except try and put it out.



Best I could do was "foul" and try to board. In this I was successful and fed the sea with the ghosts of his special crew. He outrolled me the next turn twice: once to win initiative and again to break free. As Almirante Russonova, I should be able to say a few invectives, but I couldn't. You got it. CRS: Can't Remember Spanish...or something like that.

His cannon pounding continued.

Ahhh! Hot! Hot! Hot! My flagship is on fire amidst the maelstrom of cannon fire.

Photo by Dan.

Down South

British Admiral Dan, Scourge of the Seven Seas, took on Almirante Aiden in a swirling display of seamanship. So sure of his superiority over the Spanish, he sent his smallest ship back towards me.

The trading of cannon fire echoed across the ocean, although Dan slowly gained a bow rake on the Spanish ships. The Spanish fought back valiantly, but the flag signals were flapping in the breeze.

Central Island

If Admiral John's British ships held me up from sailing south, so did my ships hold him up, too. Almirante Nathan swung in behind and helped me pummel the British.

Meanwhile, British Admiral Steve finally entered the maelstrom of shot and shell, joining John in pounding away at me.

I finally shook my two small ships free and plinked at the ships that John slipped around my main ships.

Two of my ships sink, leaving the bonus crews to swim for the island. The sharks got 'em first.

At about this time, now that we had two battered squadrons, we started to remember to use all the benefits. These sure helped both sides.

Indeed, John made good use of his movement. He hove to in front of one of my ships, fired, and then rolled a "6" to gain a second move action. He sped away. It was a drive-by bow raking.

Admiral Steve contributed an ever escalating amount of damage on my ships, pounding my small ship *Santa Lucia* within a box of her life. Somewhere in there, my two largest ships, the *Argonauta* and the *El Leon*, trapped in a crossfire, succumbed to all the damage and went glug, glug, glug on a heading towards Davy Jones' locker. My special crew clung to wreckage for a while until the sharks ate 'em.



Not All One Sided

With me pounding one side of John and Almirante Nathan the other, John's British ships took more and more damage. The *HMS Antelope* sank first, followed by the *HMS Victory* and then the *HMS Apollo*. The *HMS Viceroy*, hurt from broadsides and hunted down by the Spanish ships *Neptuno* from Almirante Nathan's squadron and my own *Cazadora*, soon slipped beneath the waves.

John's HMS Viceroy (bottom left corner) suffers stern rakes from Nathan's Neptuno with an assist from my Cazadora.

Admiral Steve's ship the *HMS Valiant* suffered many a hit and splintered into flotsam, although his small schooner *HMS Lord Lineton* emerged from the battle unscathed and his big ship *HMS Dreadnought* suffered only minor hull damage.

Spanish Withdrawal

With so many ships sunk and others shot up, we ended the game. The Spanish had only four ships able to escape off their side of the board and the British had only five...but, the British were more than likely to either or capture three stranded Spanish ships. For example, my *Santa Lucia* had one box (one cannon) remaining intact while Almirante Aiden left behind his *El Tirador* with a single box and the *Acorazado* with only three boxes left. His *Resolucion* was in good shape but was hammered by Dan's ships and likely would be lost barring special ability.

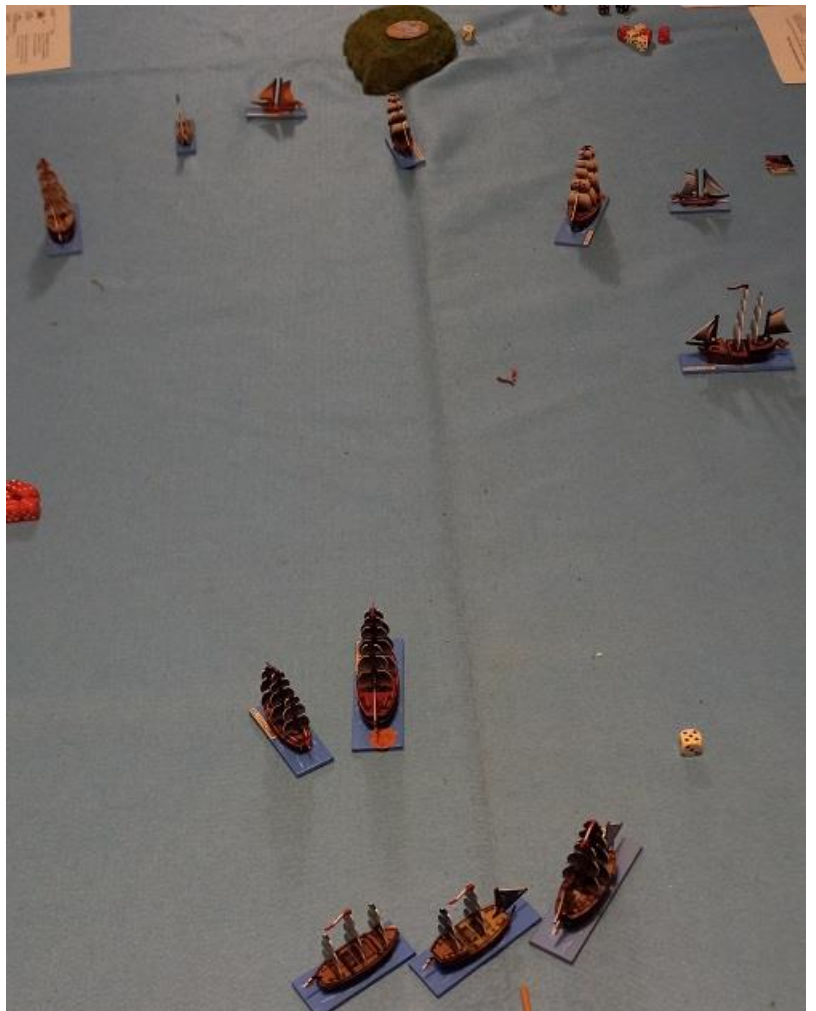
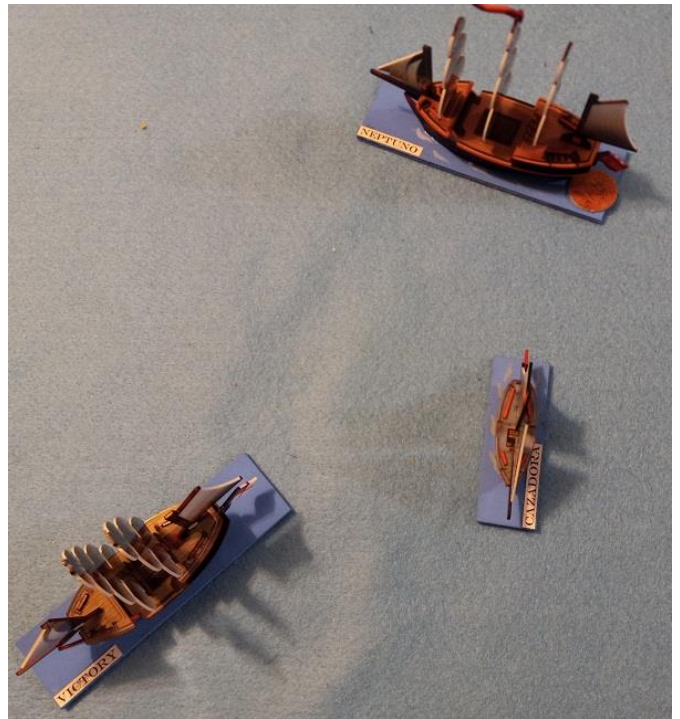
End of game positions. Dan's ships (bottom) are raking Aiden's ships while ships of Steve, Nathan, and myself sail and fire around Central Island.

Great Game

We last played this game in 2017 as a wild game with pirate, British, French, and Spanish factions -- all intertwined with goals, friends, and enemies. Lots of action and reactions all around on multiple tables.

This year's game was a big fleet action of 11 ships on 11 ships that played fast and furious. It probably would have lasted a bit longer than the three to four hours of game time if we had remembered to use benefits -- or maybe not. Benefits that added to the possibility of hits may have balanced out with benefits that allowed ships to escape hits. Dunno. I plead CRS: Can't Remember Specifics...or something like that.

What I do know is that the game proved a great little scrum. Thanks Dan, for hosting and umpiring.





John, me, and Steve assemble our superheroes as we enter the end game. Thanos has made good progress in getting close to grabbing the six Infinity Stones and putting some hurt (red cubes) on our superheroes. Photo by Dan.

Avengers Assemble: *Thanos Rising*

by Russ Lockwood

After a bit of dinner, four of us -- Dan, John, Steve, and me -- sat down for a game of *Thanos Rising*. We first played this quite a bit in 2019 and 2020, but it has tailed off. However, we pulled it out yet again to see if the Avengers could thwart Thanos' plan to obliterate half the universe.

Thanos Rising uses die rolls to generate a number of icons used by the Avengers to recruit superheroes and to kill off evil hench-monsters and leaders. Thanos himself is untouchable, dealing out damage via a die roll and via his hench-monsters. The superheroes' powers are listed on their respective cards and can be used to dampen the effects of evil attacks.

This is a cooperative game with all players as Avengers versus the system. Much depends on the shuffling of the card deck that pops up superheroes and hench-monsters. In our game, we got lucky in that the initial rounds brought out more superheroes than hench-monsters. The result was we were able to recruit more Avengers, which usually generate more dice, more healing, or other benefits.

Of course, luck in die rolling is needed, too. Recruiting a superhero is often difficult due to the combination of icons needed. I managed to recruit two of them in one round with spectacular low-odds rolls.

Other times, we spent our bonus tokens (gained from putting a hit on a hench-monster) to provide that one last icon to do something.

The Battle

I pulled Captain America, Steve had Dr. Strange, John had Thor, and Dan had Black Panther.

It's difficult to recap the game without recording every die roll and decision making process. One key mechanic is that after you roll your dice, you assign one or more dice to try and recruit a superhero, try to hit a hench-monster, or try to activate a special ability. Then, you pick up all the remaining dice and roll again.

My team mid game. When you match heroes, you get extra dice.

As you can imagine, that leads to many options on each die roll. Quite often it came down to rolling that 1-in-6 chance to complete the icon list needed to recruit, hit, or use a special ability.

It was looking pretty grim there for a while. Thanos had run up the tokens needed to grab an infinity stone, although every time he reached the exact number needed, one of us would toss in a lose one stone token or invoke a power to remove a Thanos stone token. We hopped to it multiple times during the game.

We also managed to apply just enough healing powers or tokens to prevent most of the superheroes from being killed. I think we had a total of five killed by game end.

To win, we had to kill off 10 of the hench-monsters. As the game went into the Endgame, we concentrated on nailing the hench-monsters. One after another they fell, with us four scrambling to keep Thanos' hands off the stones.

In the end, we survived long enough to kill off the last hench-monster and save the universe...until the next game.

Clever and easy to understand mechanics that doesn't feel like a eurogame, although the allocation of which dice to roll again and which ones to leave in situ requires some thought. Getting the superhero pairings right also requires a little bit of planning.

Years ago I played a Harry Potter version -- although if I thought my knowledge of Marvel superheroes is lacking, it's even more so with Potter and friends. I imagine other movie variations on this theme are around as well.

As for *Thanos Rising*? Still fun.



Game start with Steve, Dan, and John. Dan reviews the rules as we had not played in a while.



HMGS Next Generation sets up at the Library. John H. performs a last-minute check.

Game Fest 2024: HMGS Next Gen

by Russ Lockwood

The HMGS Next Generation folks made the trek to the Hunterdon County Library in Flemington, NJ, to participate in the Library's Game Fest day. Upon entry into the library, a group of teens manned a table with information as well as next to a table of door prizes. The event lasted from noon to 4pm.

Spread across two floors, the Community Room on the main floor housed the HMGS NG group of games while the downstairs held board games and role-playing games. I took a quick walkaround downstairs and saw three *Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)* games, a number of card and euro games, and one game of the old 1960s boardgame *Sorry*.

Two *D&D* tables had a mix of lads and dads. I watched a *D&D* game for a couple minutes -- a party was battling a dragon. The set up was drawn on graph paper with 1-inch squares. The player characters were miniatures, but the dragon was drawn on the paper. I believe "treasure" was handed out on colored 3x5 cards -- or at least the one card discussed was a small locked chest.

The teenage *D&D* game proved livelier as they seemed more familiar with the rules.

54mm WWII.

HMGS NG

The main attraction for miniatures gamers was the HMGS NG room with eight main games ready for the kids: *Wings of War* WWI Air, WWII, Medieval Castle Siege, *Magic Card Game*, Ancient Rome Gladiators, Sci-Fi *Halo*, a *Star Wars* card game, and a Disney card game.





Gamers are filtering in at 12:40pm.

Of them all, *Wings of War* received the most players. John ran the games for the most part and the simplicity of the system made sure the kids and parents flew and fired quickly. One of the umpires, Mike, had to fill in to make the sides even, and one young lad had the time of his life when he fired on Mike and pulled the damage card with the explosion -- instant shoot down!

Battle of the aces...

The Disney card game had a quartet of young gamers play over the couple of hours I attended. I didn't see any gladiators, Jedis, or knights take up the challenge, but the 54mm WWII had a few gamers young and old battling Germans or Soviets.

The *Magic* games had a number of players, including adults, game away.



Halo

I enjoyed the *Halo* series of video games -- or at least until my 360 Xbox gave up the ghost, so I sat down with Ken, owner of Koros Wargames store in Flemington (Rte 202, just south of the circle), for a learning game.

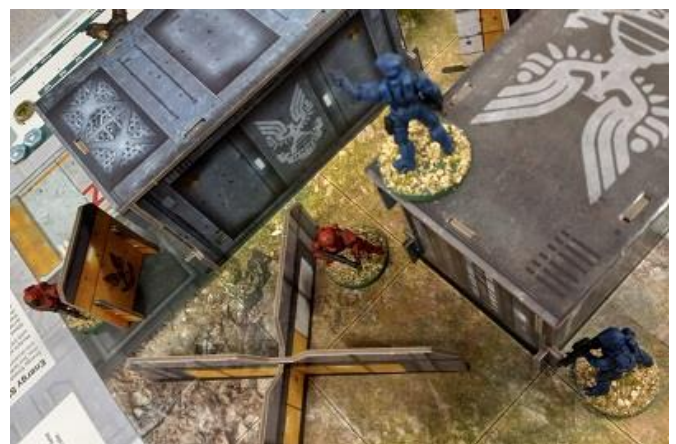
If you play any sort of skirmish miniatures games or hex wargames, this is simple to learn. I'm sure it had more advanced play options and nuances, but for a simple game, it's move and shoot.

Halo set up.

Basically, you get one long action or two short ones -- the most common short combination being move and shoot. Movement is two squares for short action or three for a long action. In the basic game, elevation doesn't matter.

Shooting is a short action. Each figure has some special characteristics that add or subtract the number of dice. Shooter and target start with 3d8 and add or subtract as per situation (cover, etc.). Line of sight is as you see it. The squares are large enough that you can shift the model within for tactical positioning.

All four of our Spartans are engaged in a shootout.



It's roll to hit and roll to save with eight-sided dice and "extended" (not sure that's the term) die results. When you roll an "8," or with some characters a "7" or "8," you count that as a hit or save **and** roll a bonus die. If that die gets an "8" (or "7" or "8"), you count the hit or save and roll another bonus die. Subtract saves from hits for damage.

A game of Magic: The Gathering. Ken of Koros Wargames is standing.



The Spartans have two shields that absorb the first two damage (not unlike the Star Wars *X-Wing* game if you are familiar) and the armor absorbs two more damage. If you manage to roll more damage, that goes into the Spartan -- most have 4 hit points. When the Spartan takes four hits (or whatever the HP for the character has), it's killed.

We played a couple of turns before the kids came in. Ken showed me the special ammo rules and saves and so on. It plays quick, as such games play. The game contains the plastic Spartan soldiers, mounted game board, dice, and thick cardboard constructs (tower, walls, buildings, etc.).

Simple, fast, and with 54mm equivalent figures -- great way to introduce kids to skirmish gaming.

The Disney card game in action. The adult (standing) later played Magic.



An American Revolution Surprise

I began talking to two of library staff, Mary and Benjamin, and mentioned I had been doing some work at the Hunterdon County Historical Society Archives and had run across an article about the local Flemington skirmish between a British foraging party under Cornet Geary and the local militia. The HCHS Director had attended a Sons of Revolution meeting that was presenting a talk about Geary -- and the HCHS has the buttons from his jacket.

The two mentioned they had done a tour of area American Revolution sites that included a visit to the marker where Geary died. The 1895 article noted the Historical Society was going to open the grave for some reason. Maybe it was to steal his buttons -- the article does not specify. And then place a marker at the site.

While talking, I was surprised to learn they created an American Revolution role-playing campaign based on the rules *Nations & Cannons (N&C)*, which is based on *D&D*. For example, *N&C* British Grenadiers are rated as *D&D* Barbarian class.

I had reviewed *N&C* (see the 08/21/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org) and thought it was an interesting effort to try and move *D&D*ers into historical. With the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution coming in 2025 and especially in 2026 and beyond, maybe *N&C* will gain a second wind.

Starting up the WWII game.

Heading Out

And with that, I headed out. I know it's a lot of work to coordinate such a day, so kudos to the Library for arranging Game Fest and HMGS NG for participating. Thanks to all who made this day enjoyable.



Gaming WWI History: HMGS- Next Generation

by John Spiess

WWI Balloon-Busting

During WWI, both sides used observation balloons to track enemy movements and guide artillery. Planes would try to shoot these balloons down.

The gamers plot their moves.

In our Darien, CT, game, the German team had to try and shoot down a British observation balloon. The British team had to defend it.

The kids have played this game before without a balloon, so they picked up the rules right away and had a great time. If a player got shot down, we just recycled the plane so they could keep playing. We had 10 players, so there were six on the German team, and four on the British team.

Action gets closer to the balloon.

Alicia was probably the most skillful player, shooting down at least five German planes and never getting shot down herself. But the Germans finally were able to scoot through the defending British planes to start hammering the balloon. Even though they lost many more planes than the British, they finally shot down the balloon before it could be lowered and won the game.

At the end, I played a clip from the *Red Baron* movie showing a WWI aerial battle around a balloon. The movie translated how the model biplanes and triplanes on the tabletop might have battled in the air.

Right: Smiles at the end of the game.



Left: It takes great concentration to fly a biplane.

Battle of the Bulge: HMGS-NG Greenwich

By John Spiess

At the library in Greenwich, CT, we had seven kids participate, including three first timers. These newbies came with a friend who is one of our regular gamers. So we're starting to get pretty good word of mouth. The librarian told me that there are some big projects due, so a lot of our regulars have been busy.

It was good to see Karena and Anul again since they are always very good players. I asked the group if they knew anything about the Battle of the Bulge. No one had heard of it except for Anul (the small boy with black hair and glasses), who as usual, did his research and actually watched two documentaries on the battle to prepare. He knew all about the bad weather, and even the different types of guns on the tanks. Pretty impressive.

As for the game, it was a pretty straight forward German attack on a small hamlet while some American Sherman tanks were trying to break through and relieve the hard pressed defenders. As usual, the Shermans held up pretty well against the Mark IV tanks, but were completely demolished by a lone Tiger. The night didn't end well for this section of the Bastogne defense.

I also gave a historical summary of the battle since the kids are not really learning the details of the different battles, but more of a general overview of WWII in school.

I am also reaching out the one of the high school history teachers to propose some events at the school to go along with whatever they are studying. They are on the WWI unit, so that might work for early next year.

Jersey-Opoly:

Monopoly With New Jersey Names

By Russ Lockwood

I have not played *Monopoly* in decades, but I've seen all sorts of novelty versions. My brother-in-law sent one as a gift a few years back about Wyoming, which probably makes more sense to him since he was a museum director in Wyoming at the time.

Linda (l) pays rent to Dennis as Susan waits her turn.

Alas, I am not really a *Monopoly* fan. Once you play wargames, a lot of classic games fall by the wayside.

Nonetheless, Dennis from On Military Matters popped up a copy of *Jersey-Opoly* for us to play. This is NJ based, not UK's Jersey (Channel Islands), which has its own version.

Ummmm. It plays like *Monopoly*, only with a NJ-centric real estate focus. Somehow, I managed to buy Washington Crossing (don't tell the Swan Historical Foundation), the NJ Performing Arts Center, Liberty Science Center, and so on.

I tried to orchestrate a three-way deed swap since three of us had two of the three deeds in a particular color, but to no avail. They called me greedy, but I had the least valuable properties and needed one free rent pass.

Oddly enough, I managed to win as I had the most cash on hand when time expired – then again, time expired because desert called and we all called back.

It was entertaining because of the company.

Greenwich Library Teen Event

Thursday, December 12, 2024

The Battle of Bastogne





Austrians on the left, French on the right, and Umpire Phil in the middle. Clockwise from left bottom corner: Marc, Pat, Chris, Jay, Umpire Phil, Rich (obscured), Mike, Larry, and Dave.

What's Shakin', Davout?

1809 *Shako II*

by Russ Lockwood

Once again, we gathered around a tabletop full of 25mm Napoleonic figures set out by GM Phil (see the recap of *The Pain in Spain: Napoleonic Shako* in the 8/24/2024 AAR), with some of them 50 years old. Only this time, we were in 1809 Bavaria recreating the Battle of Laichling, Davout's contact with the Austrian army immediately before Eckmuhl.

The French (l to r): Rich, Mike, Larry, Dave, and Russ. Photo by Pat.



We again used *Shako II* rules and per usual, rolled dice to see who was on which side. I rolled in on the French side, down on the left flank adjacent to a large patch of woods. Otherwise, most of the terrain was open in the center and a swamp on the French right flank.

The Austrians (l to r): Marc, Pat, Chris, and Jay. Photo by Mike.



The goal, besides putting a load of hurt on the enemy, was to grab the villages -- one close to each side's baseline and one in the middle. The French side contained a mix of French elite units (5s in *Shako II*'s morale parlance) and Bavarian regulars (4s) facing Austrian 4s for the most part. Skirmishers were out in front.

Hide and Seek in the Woods

In the woods to my left on the far left French flank were two blue tokens -- one representing a dummy counter and the other representing a French infantry battalion (only a 4 if you're keeping track).

Opposite me was the canny Austrian General Baron von Marc den OstBerg, the evil twin of General Baron von Marc den [WestField]. He had a pair of yellow tokens on his side of the woods. I assumed one represented a battalion and the other a dummy marker. The thought crossed my mind that he might have two battalions, which might make events rather ugly in a firefight -- and remember, as les Smokey les Ursa says, only distance can prevent forest firefights.

Some of my French battalions.

Le Plan

With all the troops lined up woods to swamp, and a reserve coming in behind our lines, there really wasn't much maneuvering. In the pre-game sequence, Dave and I were splitting the nine battalions that made up the maneuvering element. By dint of where we stood, I controlled four and the two tokens in the woods and Dave controlled the other five.

As per umpire instructions, I took advantage of a slight re-ordering of troops and swapped two of the elite battalions to Dave for two of the regular battalions. That way, when Dave contested the village in the center, he would have one better in melee. He also took the sapper, who would give him another +1 in melee. The regular battalions would back up my elites.

As for our pre-game pow-wow, like I said, there wasn't much maneuvering. I'd secure the woods and advance to threaten the Austrian village occupied by von Marc, Dave would take one half the central village, Larry would take the other half, Mike would push forward the Bavarians beyond the central village, and Rich would bring in the reserves in the center. Such was the French plan.

The French deploy on the hill and grab the town. Von Pat's cavalry advance next to the town while the artillery on Thunder Road (top middle) soften us French up.

I imagine the Austrian plan was pretty much a mirror image, except the Austrians had lots of artillery placed on a central hill. Before the game, Umpire Phil ruled that hilltop to hilltop artillery firing was fine even if friendly troops were in the path -- if the friendlies were down in the valley.

Von Pat's cavalry charge up the hill to cover von Marc's advance. Von Pat also assaults the town.

As for firing ranges, musket fire is 6 inches straight ahead (no degrees off left or right corner as in



many other rules) and field cannon range is 36 inches (canister 9 inches). That yard-long range is pretty potent.

Close-up of von Pat's cavalry charge into my so-called Elites.

Le Advance

With flags a flying and drums a beating, we French and Bavarians stepped out and headed towards the Austrians. It was then we noticed that the Austrians had set up Der Grosse Artillerische Batterygutenboppen on the central hill. The pounding commenced from the get-go. Our poor excuse for artillery support tried to respond, but apparently quite feebly. The bounce-through rolls meant each shot at the lead battalion often had the chance of hitting the following battalion.

Patrick was in charge of most of the cannons. The fortunes of war seemed with him every step of the way. It was rare he rolled a miss. "Staggers" (the term for disordered) and losses accumulated on the French.

The end result of von Pat's cavalry charge: a hole in my line and two "elite" battalions high-tailing it for Paris. Dave's infantry stands firm.

Charge of the Lichte Brigade

While von Marc kept up a steady advance to meet my troops next to the woods, von Pat sent his cavalry on a screaming death ride against my troops. My targeted battalion had a choice of staying in line and firing, or, rolling a d6 to change into hasty square.

Turn 5 says my notes.



Given the distance modifier, I had about a 2/3 chance of making the square, which would provide a big modifier in the melee. If I failed the square, I'd pretty much be swept away barring a really favorable die roll difference.

If I fired, I had a 50% chance of gaining a small +1 bump up or a 33% chance of a big +2 bump up. Combined with my elite status versus the cavalry's veteran status, it would just about be the same as forming hasty square without the risk of virtual instant death. Even if I failed the firing roll, I'd still have a slight edge.

So, I stayed in line and fired. I blew the firing die roll. I blew the melee die roll. My lead targeted battalion was swept away. Merde!

Von Pat faced a decision: recall back or charge ahead. He charged into the next battalion. My second battalion failed the firing die roll...and then failed the melee die roll. It, too, fled off the board. This Austrian cavalry was hell on hooves.

And my guys were the elites?

Faster than you could sing Freere Jacques, I had a hole in my line.

There the Austrian cavalry sat, in the middle of the French line, victorious, but blown.

Pat tried the same cavalry charge with Dave, who took note of my inept rolling and went for the all-or-nothing attempt to form a hasty square. He succeeded and defeated the cavalry, which fled with damage.

I moved my big reserve of skirmishers, who had been chased away by von Marc's troops, to flank the Austrian cavalry and fired. A hit for a stagger. Dave wheeled his reserve battalion to the other flank. Another hit for a real hit.

Pat pulled back his cavalry, only to be charged in the rear by Larry, which slaughtered both units of the Austrian cavalry. He was in turn caught by artillery and infantry fire and chased away with casualties.

Mid-game action in the center.

The Central Village

Dave reached the village first, in part due to high initiative rolls. In *Shako II*, each leader rolls a d6 and those that roll a 6 move first. Then the 5s move, and then the 4s, and so on.

To be fair, my attention was riveted on my own problems, but I believe von Pat tried to storm the village. Dave's elites actually performed like elites and repulsed the attempt. A second Austrian effort met the same fate.

Meanwhile, Der Grosse Artillerische Batterygutenboppen hammered us Frenchmen like Thor's hammer. So many shots came our way that we renamed the Austrian position as Thunder Road. We were getting mighty thin on the hill.

Bavarian Gale Becomes a Zephyr

In the center-right between village and swamp, Larry and Mike charged and counter-charged von Chris and von Jay's charges and counter-charges. This was a scrum where first one side prevailed, until it didn't, and then the other side won. Back and forth the firing and melees went.

When one of our battalions fell, Rich filtered in replacements.

Yet, from the top of my hill, I could see no real movement in the center and right. Maybe if I had been at the top of the tower, but I wasn't.



The Victorious Von Marc

Ignoring the cavalry, my tokens, one real and the other a dummy, maneuvered in the woods towards the Austrian tokens, which stayed back. I thought that strange, for it left the Austrian flank exposed.

My elites charge von Marc's 1st battalion, 22nd IR. The green chip indicates staggered (i.e. disorder), an advantage to me.

No matter, I held up just short of sight distance from von Marc's tokens. My outer token was real, but my inner one was the dummy.

As for my push in the clear, I charged my elites against the regular first battalion of the 22nd Infantry Regiment. The Austrians fired and put a stagger and a hit on my unit. Then they proceeded to win the melee. My elite battalion joined the other two that had been beaten by von Pat's cavalry.

If at first you fail. I go in again, this time with a leader, staggered, and casualties. It would be even up if I could close.

Great! An entire regiment rallying at the hospital and cemetery. On the bright side, after the battle, the remnants of these disgraced infantry will make for a fine penal battalion.

No matter, I sent my next battalion against the Austrian 1st battalion -- same bloody result and repulse. Oh Francesca! Only I didn't exactly say Francesca...



Now it was the Austrian chance to charge and von Marc did not disappoint. Onwards came the 1st of the 22nd IR, froth dripping from their mouths in expectation and wild with blood lust, trampling the bodies of dead and dismembered French fusiliers.

Now the Austrians try a charge and for once, I gain the upper hand.

For my Jacques and Pierres and Jean-Lucs, it was do or die. They shuffled into as solid a formation as possible, aimed, and fired.

When the smoke cleared, many an Austrian lay upon the ground in death and the 1st of the 22nd faltered, never to close. Finally, the fortunes of war were changing for me.

An awful lot of Austrians are advancing.

The Woods

Back in the woods, I swung the token of the real troops against the Austrian outer token. That proved to be a dummy and was removed. Then von Marc swung his dummy token to reach my dummy token. Both vanished.

Von Marc demanded of his staff: "Why is that French token still there? It should have been removed!"

My token turns out to be real – three battalions and an officer show up deep in the Austrian flank.

From inside the woods came the reply in German with a heavy French accent, "Nein, nein, nein! No it doesn't."

Von Marc flashed a skeptical look, calling oaths down upon me for a dirty French trick. My laughter floated among the treetops. The



token advanced to sighting distance of an Austrian unit. Now it was time to 'fess up.

To my surprise and delight, that token was worth not one battalion, but three battalions. I lined up on the deep Austrian flank with another battalion in support. The third battalion advanced to within firing range of a lagging Austrian skirmisher. My own skirmisher lined up on the flank of the three battalions of the Austrian 22nd IR.

Two of my battalions charge into the flank of an Austrian battalion, sweeping it away. Note the cannons and infantry (top photo) will turn to face.

I won the initiative and slammed into the flank of the deep flank Austrian unit. It disintegrated. My other battalion managed to roll a 6 and obliterate the Austrian skirmishers. Now I roll another 6? Where were those rolls when I faced the cavalry or the 22nd head on? No matter, we'll take the turning of the battle.

My casualty-ridden battalion (right side) stagger and repulse the charging 1st battalion, 22nd IR as the skirmisher brings flanking fire. My battalion is poised to slam into the Austrian flank if I can roll and gain initiative over von Marc.

I advanced to the edge of the hill overlooking the Austrian village. I then saw von Marc's reserve troops and cannon turn to form a firing line. His cannons played the 1812 overturn on my lead unit. My third battalion moved into position for a charge into the flank of the 3rd Battalion of the 22nd IR. All I needed was the initiative, but I was on a roll.

End Game

Alas, the real midnight hour was fast approaching. Having started planning at 7:30 and playing at 8:00, Umpire Phil declared the end of the game and began tallying up the points: 1/2 point for killing off skirmishers, 1 point for killing off a regular unit, and 5 points per building (two buildings per village).

Amazingly, the final score was 43-42 for an exceedingly narrow French win.



Maneuvering

The only maneuvering occurred in the woods. General Dave said I turned inward too late, but in my original plan, I went deep because I expected my elite units to at least stalemate the Austrian advance. Not quite, eh?

End game positions.

I didn't see any units go into the swamp, and probably quite rightly, too. Otherwise, this was a straight-up, straight-ahead slugfest.

My vote for unit of the game was the Austrian 1st Battalion of the 22nd Infantry Regiment. With all those 5s and 6s von Marc rolled, that regular battalion behaved like Elites. If this was a campaign game, I'd argue that battalion should be bumped up from Regular class to Elite class.

On the flip side, given all the 1s and 2s I rolled, three battalions of the French force (forgot which units) should be downgraded from elite class to regular class. The die itself was hung from a tree, its pips drawn and quartered and scattered to the four directions.

Napoleon did mention that he'd rather have lucky generals than good ones.

Thanks for hosting, Dave, thanks for umpiring, Phil, and thanks for the game, everyone else.



Austrian Tales From Swampside

by von Jay

The French had indeed lost more troops, but controlled the center village (worth 10 points). The French won by a point.

Early game. Von Pat positions Der Grosse Artillerische Batterygutenboppenfor maximum effect. Photo by Larry.

As I understood it, three of the French divisions were one unit away from a big morale test. Dave already survived one while several Austrian divisions had not sustained a single loss. Don't forget Russ' units in the woods that only appeared in the late going. All of those French elite units were quite daunting. Von Marc's heroic stand on the right coupled helped the Austrian's good showing.

Von Chris' attacks with cavalry took out one Bavarian unit. Mike was then a bit more careful especially since my two dummy markers appeared to be turning a flank. The timely arrival of our Croats took out another unit just as my reserves established an infantry line allowing the blown cavalry to recover. Neither I nor Chris had lost a unit by games end.

In the center my reserves buttressed von Pat's successful attack up hill. Pat's attacks on the center and one of the houses proved to be somewhat mutually attritional. I believe that Mike and Larry were one unit away from a check and Dave was on the verge of yet another check. I believe von Pat was one away from a check as well. Luck



and our grand battery were key thus far. I imagine another turn or two would have rebounded to the Austrian favor. Rich's force was stuck behind Mike and had few options.

Saving the French Center

by Rich

I love a game with lots of figures and this one had plenty to fill the table. It seemed like there were unlimited Austrians. Phil pointed out that some of the French were among the first figures he painted so long ago. They certainly stood the test of time.



Der Grosse Artillerische Batterygutenboppen on Thunder Road beyond the town. Rich begins to maneuver his troops and guns into position to plug a hole. Photo by Larry.

While it was declared a minor French victory, it certainly seemed to me that there were many more French casualties being carried off the table than Austrians.

Thanks to Phil and Dave for a fun game to end this year.

Bavarian Battering

by Mike

As to the battle we fought, I think we Bavarians did okay, but I cannot explain why and how. I know the Austrians were the losers of the game, but it was only by one victory point, or a 3% difference if I remember the summations right. That's a tie anytime in my book and only because we called the game at that point.

As Russ suggests, had we played another turn or two, the scores would likely have been very different. Rich's command was pretty much unscathed and unexposed behind mine when the game was called, but my command was in deep trouble.

I also want to add my voice to the choir and thank Dave for setting up and Phil for running the game. I truly enjoy the comradery at and around the table. It was a good bunch enjoying a great hobby together.

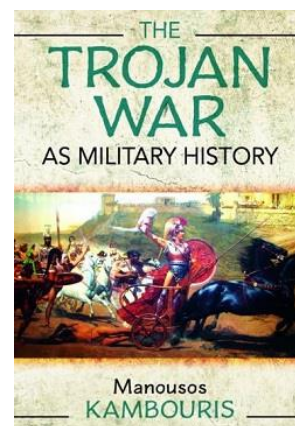


NEWS

Trojan Horse: Alternate Theory

*A reader of the book review of *The Trojan War: As Military History* (see the review in the 10/28/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org) offered an alternate theory about what the Trojan Horse was if it wasn't a wooden horse filled with troops. I thought the theory interesting. --RL*

The explanation I prefer for the Trojan horse is: it was an earthquake. In the Greek mythos of the time, the lands were islands upon the sea, and earthquakes were caused by the god of the seas, Poseidon. Why a horse? Horses were sacred to Poseidon, who is often depicted riding a horse. And Poseidon favored the Greeks over the Trojans.



Kulm Success: ATO Kickstarter

by Russ Lockwood

Against the Odds magazine reports another successful Kickstarter with *La Bataille de Kulm*, which serves as a good entry-level wargame to the *La Bataille* system. The project had a \$7,000 goal and the KS site notes that 589 backers pledged \$46,972 to help bring this project to life. A total of 22 "stretch goals" (upgrades and extra goodies in KS parlance) were reached by the Dec 15 deadline.

Details about the game:

www.atomagazine.com/Details.cfm?ProdID=195



33rd Annual Midwest Open 2025: Victory in the Pacific Tournament

by Russ Lockwood

On Saturday and Sunday, March 1 and 2, 2025, MidWest Open will hold its 33rd Annual *Victory in the Pacific* Tournament in Kenosha, WI. For \$100 pre-reg (by February 16, 2025, \$120 on-site reg), gamers play three games on Saturday and three on Sunday. Lunch and dinner are provided on Saturday and lunch on Sunday.

Note: If you have never attended a Midwest Open, there is a \$40.00 special pre-reg offer to attend that includes the gaming and meals -- Subway sandwich lunch, hamburger-and-brat dinner on Saturday, and pizza lunch on Sunday.

Open Swiss Competition Rounds of play are at 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 7:00 pm. Chess clocks are provided, but players should bring their own VitP game. This is an A.R.E.A. sanctioned tournament. Awards are presented at the end of the sixth round late on Sunday night.

The tournament will be held at the Salvation Army Corps Community Center, 3116 75th St., Kenosha, WI 53142-4444. Open gaming will be available at 12 noon, Friday, February 28.

The 2024 tournament had 25 players, although only nine gamers played all six rounds. Jim Eliason took the top spot -- his fourth VitP championship.

For more info: Glenn E. L. Petroski, Tournament Director, AREA1@ATT.net



American Revolution: War in the South

by Russ Lockwood

The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table runs four scheduled lectures per year in person. The next one is March 10, 2025, 7:30pm via Zoom.

This Fierce People: The Untold Story of America's Revolutionary War in the South. Author Alan Pell Crawford explores how the British surrender at Yorktown was the direct result of the southern campaign, and shows that the battles that emerged below the Mason-Dixon line between loyalists to the Crown and patriots who fought for independence were, in fact, America's first civil war. Crawford is the author of *This Fierce People*.

Future Zoom lectures:

The Riflemen. June 9, 2025, 7:30pm. Historian John Weaver will speak about the role played by riflemen during the Revolutionary War. The rifle companies were the first soldiers officially authorized by Congress. Their distinctive weapons, dress and modes of fighting marked them as uniquely American.

Governor William Franklin: Enemy to the Liberties of This Country. September 15, 2025, 7:30pm. Historian Joseph E. Wroblewski, former educational consultant for the Crossroads of the American Revolution and docent at Morven, in Princeton, will provide insight about the career of the often-reviled son of Benjamin Franklin who served as the last colonial governor of New Jersey.

Previous Meetings

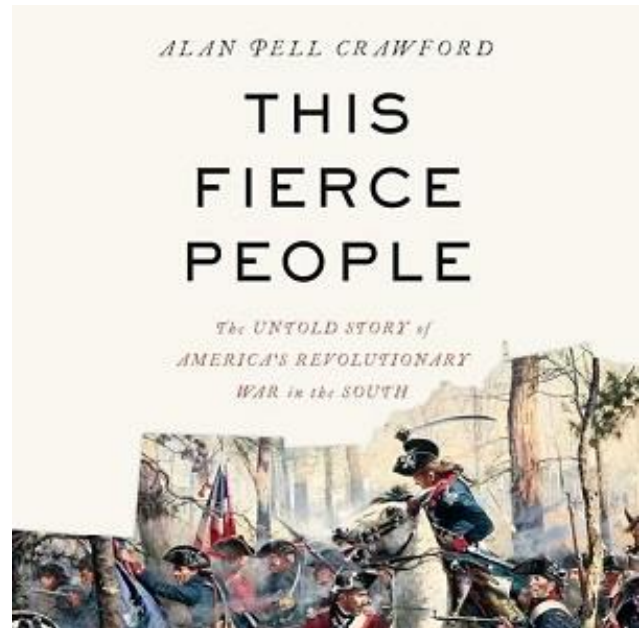
Recordings of meetings are available on You Tube. Some are audio only, some audio with slides, and others with video. Visit the website for the links.

- When France Saved America - Joseph F. Seliga
- War at the Shore: The Pine Robber Phenomenon - Dr. Joseph E. Wroblewski
- The Battle of Edge Hill, December 7, 1777 - Robert N. Fanelli
- Joseph Reed, George Washington's First Military Secretary - John Fabiano
- Joseph Perkin: A Gunsmith, A Complete Artist - Matthew Skic
- Logistics for the Main Continental Army: An Overview circa 1777 - Edward Greenawald
- Remember Paoli! - Jim Christ
- The Alamo of the Revolution - Jerald Hurwitz
- Charles Thomson, Secretary to the Continental Congress - Bruce Cooper Gill
- Washington's Return to New Jersey: The Second Battle of Trenton and March to Princeton - Joseph E. Wroblewski
- The Service of HMS Roebuck - Robert N. Fanelli
- The Battle of Germantown - Michael C. Harris
- Annis Boudinot Stockton - Dr. Joseph E. Wroblewski
- Washington's Lieutenants: The Generals of the Continental Army- William M. Welsch?
- Dr. Benjamin Rush - Steve Yacik
- The British Army's March to Monmouth - John Fabiano.
- The Day Is Ours! The Battle of Princeton: Changing Interpretations and a Lasting Legacy - William Krakower

To join the e-mail list or request a Zoom link, email: wroundtable@gmail.com

Otherwise, visit the website:

www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org/washington-crossing-american-revolution-round-table.html



Washington Crosses Delaware River: Prints

by Russ Lockwood

The Swan Historical Foundation sells a print of Lloyd Garrison's artwork.

Top: *The Crossing*. This print (23.5x31 inches) is available for \$300 framed and \$135 unframed.

Top Left: *Leaving PA*, December 25, 1776

Top Right: *Landing NJ*, December 25 & 26, 1776

Bottom Left: *Battle of Trenton*, December 26, 1776

Bottom Right: *Battle of Princeton*, January 3, 1777

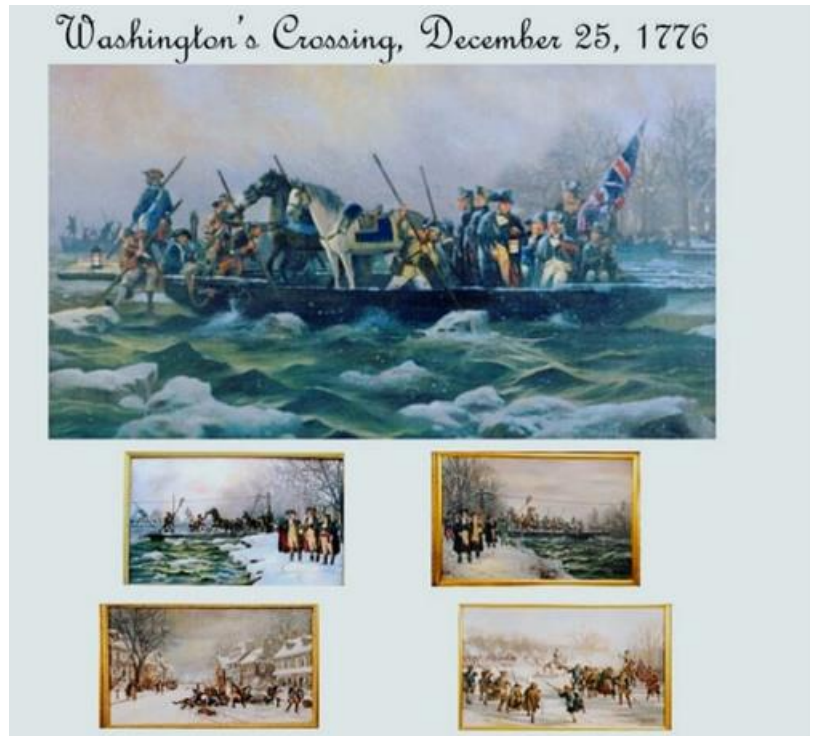
All prints are available matted, framed (11x14 inches) and signed by the artist, Lloyd Garrison, for \$130.

Shipping extra.

Web:

www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org/shf-garrison-paintings.html

E-mail: swanhistoricalfoundation@gmail.com



New Wargame: Battle of Dunbar 1650

by Russ Lockwood

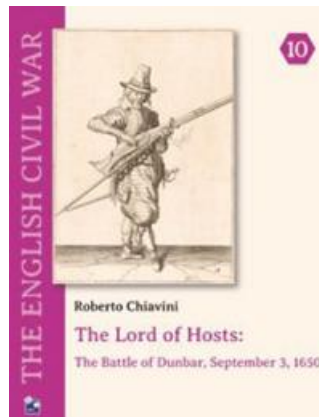
High Flying Dice released the wargame *Lord of Hosts: The Battle of Dunbar - September 3, 1650* -- the 10th and final wargame in Roberto Chiavini's *English Civil War* series.

The Scots were confident of victory as they assembled for battle against the Roundheads. Their position north of Doon Hill was sound, but a more determined stand along the Brox Burn was undone when the Parliamentarians successfully crossed to the west, as well as gaining a bridgehead just south of Dunbar.

Fractious Scottish command undermined orders and Cromwell's New Model Army routed the Scots. Nearly all Scots not killed ended up prisoners and became indentured servants.

Contains: One 11x17-inch hex map, 140 single-sided un-mounted counters, one Players' Aid Sheet, and five pages of rules. \$16.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters are an additional \$8.00.

Info: www.hfdgames.com/ecw10.html



New Wargame: Battle of Fort Meigs 1813

by Russ Lockwood

High Flying Dice released the wargame *A Most Resolute Action: The Battle of Fort Meigs - May 5, 1813* -- the sixth game in the *Battles of the Old Northwest* series. On May 1, 1813, British, Canadian, and First Nation troops laid siege to Fort Meigs, located on the Maumee River near present day Perrysburg, OH. On May 5th, American

General Harrison ordered two sorties by the US garrison to destroy British siege guns that were east and west of the river.

Contains: Two 11x17-inch hex maps, 112 double-sided un-mounted counters, one Players' Aid Sheet, and eight pages of rules. \$18.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters are an additional \$8.00.

Info: www.hfdgames.com/meigs.html

A custom card set for all of the games in the *Battles of the Old Northwest* series that replaces the standard deck of playing cards called for in the games' rules, is available for \$11.00 or included free with the purchase of four HFD games.



HMGS at Pax Unplugged

By Russ Lockwood

HMGS had a booth at the Pax Unplugged convention in Philadelphia. I didn't go, but John Spiess was nice enough to send a photo.



WWII Australian 25 Pounder Short Cannon: 3D Printed

By Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games released a 3D-printed WWII Australian 25lb short gun and crew. Package includes one gun and three crew figures. All miniatures are single pieces and all are unpainted plastic.

Available in 28mm (\$20), 40mm (\$30), and 54mm (\$45) plus 60 cents packing charge.

Also available: Australian troops and Australian Light Mortar.

Info: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com/>





The adventurers gather (l to r): Ed, the south end of a north facing John, Jared (back to camera), GM Fred, Dylan (pink cap), Connor, John, and Dan.

Fortal Portal: D&D Adventure Continues

By Russ Lockwood

So enthused we were from our last two *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures that Fred kept our party on the move in a new adventure: Fort of the Wannabe Lich.

To summarize, the first adventure was a 15-person mega-*D&D* battle of the Siege of Sheffield across five tables (see the recap in the 10/21/2024 AAR). The second adventure (11/21/2024 AAR) found us as a smaller group tracking one prong of the defeated monster army in an effort to find the big bad boss. We cleared out a necromancer-led rearguard that tried to hide in a cave and then followed the trail of a retreating army to a fort at a river crossing.

A Thought About D&D Campaigns

I'm calling this a campaign, as we are in one continuous story. I don't know if this is adapted from an old campaign booklet prevalent in the 1980s or is a new campaign created by GM Fred -- and I don't want to know. It's all good.

The "problem" for GM Fred is being forced to adapt each adventure to the rotation of players who show up, show up partway through, or have to leave early. He must be forced to consider the balance of bad guys to good guys depending on the personnel of the party.

For example, this time out we had no Pickles. Last adventure, that gnome-to-raging giant slaughtered ogres, trolls, and other monsters with wild abandon. Sure, he needed considerable magical healing from Kuel and Nevar, but without him, I'm not sure our party would have gotten very far. I'm also sure GM Fred would have altered the bad guys to suit. There's an art to that that he has mastered over the decades -- enough peril to challenge our respective RPG brains, luck, and characteristics without slaughtering the party on the first round of combat.

So, with a changing personnel roster, on with the adventure.

Hail And Well Met

We bid three of our stalwart party, Pickles the gnome fighter, Cristof the wizard, and Scurg the bugbear fighter a fond farewell as they escorted our captured goblins back to Stillwater for some extra hands to repair the village.

That left Tazan Rell the Archer (me), Keul the Asimar Cleric (Ed), Nevar the Alchemist (Dan), and Gavriel the Wizard (Connor). In the meantime, coming up the trail, we welcomed Zarge the Barbarian, Paunch the Warrior

Dwarf Monk who was as wide as tall, Rufus the Cleric, and Gorven the ranger to our ranks. The latter two had been with me in the catacombs and west wall during the Siege of Sheffield.

The eight of us stood on the ridge with a good overview of a valley with ford and a stone tower under repair. We were south of the fort.

On the west side looking east. South is to the right. White tower is the wooden tower next to the goblin camp.

Three giants were on top and maybe 20 to 30 giants, trolls, and ogres plus a number of goblins milled around. We also saw a woolly mammoth dragging old growth large logs from the nearby slopes of the valley. It was ridden by a hill giant and bringing the logs to repair the stone fort. Another hill giant with obvious druid abilities was reconfiguring these large oak logs to shore up the tower and fill in the holes from old damage. Thorn brush had been dragged to form a forward hedge barrier. A small wooden tower had been constructed next to a goblin camp.

Every so often, we saw an ogre or goblin head to the unseen north side of the stone tower and never emerge. Hmm. That needed some scouting, but Gavriel's magic scouting book couldn't travel that far and the entire southern side of the fort consisted of tree trunks -- wood used in the construction of a wooden palisade around the stone tower.

Do We Stay Or Do We Go?

If we stay and fight, there will be trouble. If we sneak past, we'll leave a hostile force in our rear and it will be double. We had a lively discussion concerning our options, including the notion that our mission is to track the big bad lich to its lair. Upon further scouting, this stone tower under repair, probably damaged because the monsters stormed it on the way to Sheffield, also had four gargoyles perched on top of each corner.

I joined ranger Gorven in sneaking west along the ridge to scout closer and pick up more information. We discovered an unoccupied camouflaged hunter's blind on the slope. Despite Gorven's fascination with exploring it, I convinced him not to pull the rope or enter or do anything to trigger an obvious warning system.

We eased among the trees at the edge of the goblin camp, spotting some guards, the odd ogre, and a cattle pen. It seemed they did not expect anything. I can only surmise that news of our cave attack had not reached the fort, even though large black ravens or vultures tracked our movement. Maybe we lost the eyes in the sky when we headed into the woods. Maybe they were depending on Flash Goblin, now a rotting corpse outside the cave, to run and tell them. No matter.

As for the disappearing ogres and goblins, the north end of the stone tower possessed an archway that opened to stairs leading underground. Ranger Gorven and I headed back with our news that the western way along the ridge and downhill towards the camp was slow but passable.

Nevar came up with a plan, which we tweaked a bit and then agreed to strike while the enemy wasn't vigilant.

But before we went, I leapt atop a stump. "Fellow adventurers! We have braved the siege of Sheffield and the cave of skeletons and ogres -- and swept all before us!"

I pointed to the group. "Our hearts are pure and our deeds heroic. Now we advance upon a fort with stealth and smarts and strength. We will vanquish all that is evil and avenge our fallen friends and comrades. To battle and victory! GO TEAM!"

So temporarily inspired, and with a minor spell of fortitude by our cleric, all but Nevar headed across the ridge and down into the valley west of the fort.



The Diversion

Nevar used invisibility and flew to the east, opposite our entry point on the west side of the fort. He used his alchemical skills and spells to start a bonfire and drop a flagon of smokejuice in the eastern woodline. A hill giant and one gargoyle immediately went to investigate. He then dropped a second smokebomb atop the stone tower and hid within the smoke.

Nevar creates a bonfire and drops smokejuice in the East Woods (top left corner) while Tazan burns the big tent in the goblin camp (bottom right corner). The West Woods (off photo right) is adjacent to the cattle pen (left side of photo).



Meanwhile, I snuck out of the west woods past the wooden tower and hurled a pot of oil into the big tent. In went the torch and within seconds, the entire tent was on fire -- along with the ogre sleeping within. I padded further east, using the cover of the camp wall to find a lovely spot to set up an ambush.

The rest of the party, led by Zarge the barbarian, attacked the ogre tending the cattle and the hill giant. The surprise was complete and the monsters turned to face the angry blades and arrows of our party.

Gavriel headed to the wooden tower. For some reason, Rufus bypassed the ogre and cattle and hacked down a section of the fence to start a stampede.

Alarm!

The monster response proved disjointed, doubly so because of the distractions. The goblins shot what they could see, the ogres battled whatever was fighting them, and the Spell Giant tried a spell that Rufus snuffed out.

Here comes our attack.. Clockwise from bottom left: Dan, GM Fred, Connor, John, Dylan, Ed, John, and Jared.



I shafted the goblin atop the small wooden tower while other goblins tried to shaft members of the party. One of the goblin arrows nicked me. I drew and nocked an arrow and retaliated. One dead goblin at the well and another soon thereafter. Gorven the ranger joined in the arrow storm, picking off goblins along the palisade.

Zarge the barbarian hacked away at the hill giant. Paunch the monk pirouetted and struck the ogre in the cattle pen, leaving few marks but considerable battering. Gavriel battled goblins at the wooden tower.

Troll And Gargoyle

From out of the underground passage emerged a troll, a giant, and goblins. Perched atop the palisade, the troll spied Rufus in the cattle pen and charged. Gargoyles flocked to join in. The battle of the pen began.

Zarge continued to battle the hill giant and Paunch traded blows with the ogre.

Fire and Firing

Back at the camp, the ogre emerged from the flaming tent with himself on fire and getting angrier by the second. Screams of agony split the air as he swatted at the flames and stumbled among the goblin tents. Yet for every step he took, he spread the fire and proved too good a target for Tazan.

I sighted carefully and shafted the ogre with a pair of arrows, putting him out of his misery. The goblin tents burned.

Spell Giant and three gargoyles atop the stone tower. In the background, Taz's diversion.



The Retreat

Zarge finally hacked down the giant as Paunch smashed the ogre and Rufus and friends immolated the troll and gargoyle. Gavriel, with help from Rufus, defeated the goblins at the wooden tower. Most goblins were shafted or otherwise eliminated. We tossed the troll into the flames of the goblin camp so it would not regenerate.

With increasing losses, the Spell Giant and some goblins fled into the stone tower archway and pounded down the stairs out of sight.

Taz (right) shafts the ogre.



Questioning Dorch

One goblin in the goblin camp had hid among the supply boxes and was dragged out for questioning. Named Dorch, he told what he knew of the tunnel beneath the stone tower: The stair descends deep and comes to a double door. Beyond the door is a chasm with a series of rock spires with flat tops, leading across. That was all he knew, for they loaded him with a box that he had to tote up the stairs.

A trio of battles: Rufus versus troll and gargoyle (bottom left corner). Zarge the Barbarian versus Hill Giant and Paunch the Dwarven Warrior Monk versus Ogre (upper right corner).



What about the monster in the river?
We throw dead bodies into the river to feed it. Then we can use the path next to

the river to head into the slot canyon without being eaten.

Battle at the Wooden Tower: Rufus (blue cloak) and Gavriel (white cloak) versus goblins.

The party glanced around at all the dead goblins and ogres. "Such a feast it will have," I remarked. "Let us restock and bandage as needs must and then descend."

"Like, what shall we do with this goblin dude Dorch?" Keul asked.

"Well, Dorch," I answered by addressing the goblin. "We can throw you in the river and you take your chances with the river beast, or, you can travel south along that road to get to a hill giant friend of ours named StoneFist, tell him what you saw today, and join his band of goblins."

The goblin gaped. "Not to be killed?" he asked.

"Not if you head towards StoneFist."

"I'll go south!" Dorch exclaimed. "I need my gear."

He headed towards the burning tents, trying to figure a way to pass through the flames to his tent. We yanked him back to safety.

"You go now," I stated, with a finality that brooked no opposition.

We gave him a small pack and food from the supplies, as well as a knife. "On your way, Dorch. And don't even think of stopping until you find StoneFist. Tell him Tazan Rell and the rest of the party offer him greetings."

The goblin headed south, clearing the fort, the field of stumps, and headed up the trail towards the top of the ridge.

"I miss him already," I joked.

Upstairs, Downstairs

Down we crept 150 feet to the bottom of the stairs. Giant-sized wooden doors embedded with iron bands were at the landing. Closed, of course. Up we went.

We decided to have a short rest to recoup much of our strength, refresh our magic, and tend to minor injuries.

In short order, we returned to the barred doors. Nevar began a drilling ritual that ended after five inches. So, it was the turn of the Zarge and his magic axe. He hewed mighty strokes and small chips began to fly off.

I knew this would take a while, so I headed up the stairs with Gorven. We would watch the backdoor.

In the open air, we saw that cursed black bird circling above.

I asked Gorven, "Whaddaya think? About 200 feet?"

"Bout that."

I reached into the quiver for two arrows. Nock, aim, draw, and release for the first and repeat for the second. Both flew true and punctured the complacent bird. It wobbled a bit, but remained flying until Gorven punctured it with two more. Its death squawk was short and it plummeted to earth and landed with a thud.

I drew both my arrows out, as did Gorven. Then I plucked two feathers.

"You gonna put them in your cap?" Gorven chided.



"Nope. Already got one. These will go to Nevar. The alchemist is always collecting bits and pieces of all sorts of things. Maybe he could use these."

We examined the bird. Definitely an oversized raven.

"Chopping stopped," Gorven commented.

"Maybe they're through. Let's take a quick look around and join them."

Peeping Gavriel

A square foot of door down to five inches had been hacked away. Nevar performed his drilling and after four more inches, success. Gavriel sent his ghost scout book through the hole. Waiting for us were four goblins, a giant, and a goblin spellcaster. A beam of wood fit into supports to bar the door.

Hacking through the door to make a big enough opening was out of the question, so we relied on magic. Nevar created his magic bonfire via cantrip and the door began to burn, baby, burn. Smoke was being drawn through the peephole and the wood burned nicely.

This disquieted the defenders and we heard the beam lift and both sides of the door creak open. Two unarmed goblins holding bags of something were shoved out onto the landing.

Our hacking was swift enough to kill off one goblin, whose water bag broke without doing much to the fire.

The other goblin, luckier than his compatriot, survived long enough to dump it on his half of the door.

Goblins, giant, rats, and a minor goblin wizard greet us at the burning door. The chasm is behind the wizard at right.

Bum Rush

Rufus tossed a thurmaturgical spell of opening that parted the doors further and most of the party bum rushed in while hacking at all the defending monsters. Up at the arch, Gorven and I descended the steps as fast as possible.

More goblins showed up and formed a rough line across. Giant rats showed up too to bite Paunch. Then the giant hit the monk as well.

Three goblins managed to target and hit Gavriel with arrows. He staggered a bit from the impact, but pressed on. Rufus engaged the giant in combat.

The goblin wizard suddenly became five wizards, which confused Paunch for a moment. The wizard retreated by grabbing a tendril dangling from the ceiling and swinging to the next pillar of rock like some goblin ninja warrior. Paunch flung two daggers at the swinging wizard.

Paunch leapt after him and reached the first rock pillar. That's when a giant rock lobster launched from the ceiling, narrowly missing the monk, who kicked it off the platform and resumed his stepping-stone chase of the wizard.

By this time, Gorven and I reached the bottom of the stairs and quickly pumped arrows into the giant. Rufus stepped up and finished the slaughter of the giant, at which point the remaining goblins surrendered.

The Roof Is Falling

Paunch triggered more falling rock lobsters and a stalagmite. The lobsters failed to hit and Gorven and I punctured more than a few with arrows.

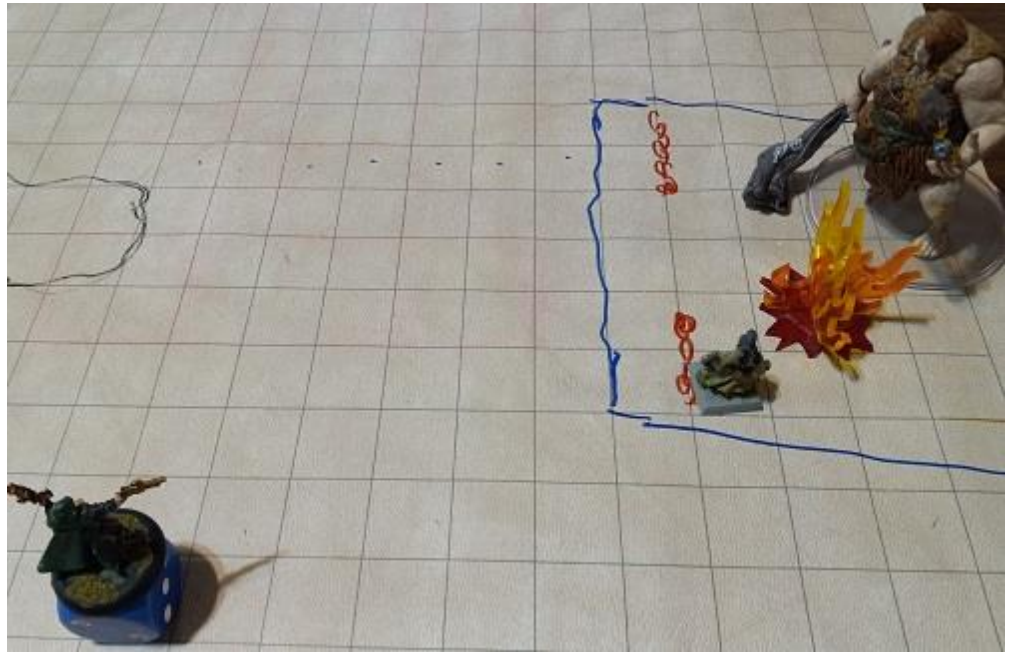
Three tentacles reached down from the roof and tried to ensnare Kuel, who evaded two but the third gripped him. Before it could haul him upward, I carefully sighted the stalactite's tentacle and loosed an arrow. It severed the tentacle, leaving the cleric free for action.



To our wondrous eyes, the tentacle regenerated almost as fast as it had been split. More tentacles descended and again grabbed Keul as well as Nevar and Rufus.

Gorven shot the tentacle beast twice, but Nevar's boom stick finished the job. The monster released its grip on our comrades and fell into the chasm.

Nevar (left) battles with the Spell Giant and a pasky goblin archer.



Long Range Duels

Nevar flew over the chasm doing battle with the Spell Giant who stood on a platform with the goblin wizard and supporting goblins across the chasm. The Spell Giant cast a magic bolo that wrapped up Nevar and exploded, wounding him. Our comrade started a bonfire around the giant. SO the duel continued.

In the meantime, I continued my reign of feathered death among the goblins, shooting across the chasm. Gorven chose the Spell Giant as a target, shafting it a number of times.

Out of the darkness, an arrow struck me, cutting a nice line along my leg and spinning me around. Gorven looked over. "You OK, Taz?"

"Would have preferred not to take the leg hit," I replied. "Now I have to repair my leathers. Some goblin is going to pay for that."

Kuel interrupted. "So uncool to get hit, dude, but let me help." He cast a heal on my leg.

"Much obliged."

Nevar cast a poison spray at the Spell Giant, who cast another exploding bolo.

Meanwhile, the goblin wizard sent a fireball our way, engulfing Kuel in flame, although Gavriel and Gorven leapt clear. I popped another arrow into the giant.

That was enough, the monsters retreated and slammed another heavy oaken and metal door shut.

Just when we thought, we could catch our breath, another stalactite dropped from the roof. It impaled Gorven and hurt him bad. Zarge slaughtered the beast as other healed our ranger.

Stop, Drop, and Roll

For those of us who could not fly, we tied off a rope and shimmied down to the chasm floor. We made the crossing, taking care to avoid anything that looked dangerous, and climbed up the other side to the landing. All except Paunch, that is. Claiming he had special training, he leapt off the rock spire to the chasm floor, avoiding most damage with an agile roll that belied his size.

So there we stood, on a landing staring down a hall at another solid oak and metal door. We probed ahead, finding two passages, one on each side, and wooden caltrops in between us and the door. We removed the center section of caltrops, then turned to the right and opened the door to find giant rats and ratmasters. We cleared them out quickly, although Paunch got bit by a giant rat.

The other side passage led to the latrine. Zarge may have opened the door to release the noxious fumes. That was forgivable. But he refused to close it, which is unforgiveable. I guess we expected too much from a barbarian. Taz moved over and closed the door, even as the stench swirled around the hall.

Back we went to the double doors that barred our advance.

Inspiration Yet Again

As we confronted the doors, I knew the party needed a morale boost.

“Despair not, for we have overcome closed doors before. Our righteous cause overcame entire fortresses. Against the odds we battled ogres, and giants, and trolls, oh my, and came out victorious. Not even vast chasms stopped us, for we fought spire by spire to vanquish our enemies. Onward! Victory is in our grasp! GO TEAM!”
I am sure I their spirits lifted with renewed vigor for our purpose.

Surprise

As we contemplated having to burn down another door, you have to give the monsters credit. They cranked open the doors and fought fire with fire -- literally.

We were surprised that the monsters (right) opened the doors to do battle.



Two goblins tossed oil and Sparky the Wonder Hellhound acted like a flamethrower and lit the pool up. Zarge the Barbarian and Paunch the Warrior Monk took the brunt of it, but Gavriel was splashed as well. The sad news was Zarge's loincloth and Paunch's speedo were burning and they soon swatted the flames out. Healing spells soon eased their pain.

Behind the goblins and Sparky, a hobgoblin and a tougher goblins tossed javelins. Our front line took more hits. After that, they pulled melee weapons. We faced a scimitar-wielding goblin, pike-wielding goblin, a goblin with a black sword, a big sword-wielding goblin, and a spiked mace-wielding hobgoblin. It was quite the reception committee.

Gorven and I continued our usual sniping, with Sparky taking it on the snout. Zarge swung his giant axe in damage-dealing arcs and Paunch slid by to strike at the bigger baddies behind the front line.

Set back in the room was a massive rune-carved platform altar with the Spell Giant and a Big Goblin Sorcerer chanting and intoning and casting spells against a bound prisoner in apparent torture.

This could be bad.

Zarge Surge

Zarge may have taken just about all the hits by the monster reception committee, but he soon dealt out his own brand of justice. First he beheaded the scimitar-wielding goblin, then carved up the pike-wielding goblin, and hit the hobgoblin. Healing spells pampered our barbarian with sweet relief even as more wounds opened up.

Paunch raced up the rune altar to take on the Spell Giant and goblin sorcerer, who seemed to have a nasty temper and a withered left arm. As Paunch fended off some blows, but took damage from magical attacks, he screamed, "Cursed sorcerer is a lich!"

A second hellhound breathed fire, but Gorven soon shafted it with an arrow in the eye.

Kuel barreled into the battle, his vortex of skulls hammering the monsters. A pack of giant rats showed up and nipped at the cleric.

Gorven killed off the hobgoblin with a well-aimed arrow. Zarge moved off to slay the rat pack and a minor goblin. I hit the big goblin with a pair of arrows.

But Wait, There's More

Bow-armed goblins streamed from behind the and fired. Then an ogre ducked behind the platform and emerged with a howdah upon its shoulders with four goblins armed with long spears inside.

Gavriel would have none of that and loosed a psychic fireball that fried every cell inside the monsters' small brains. The ogre toppled and the four goblins sprawled around the ogre.

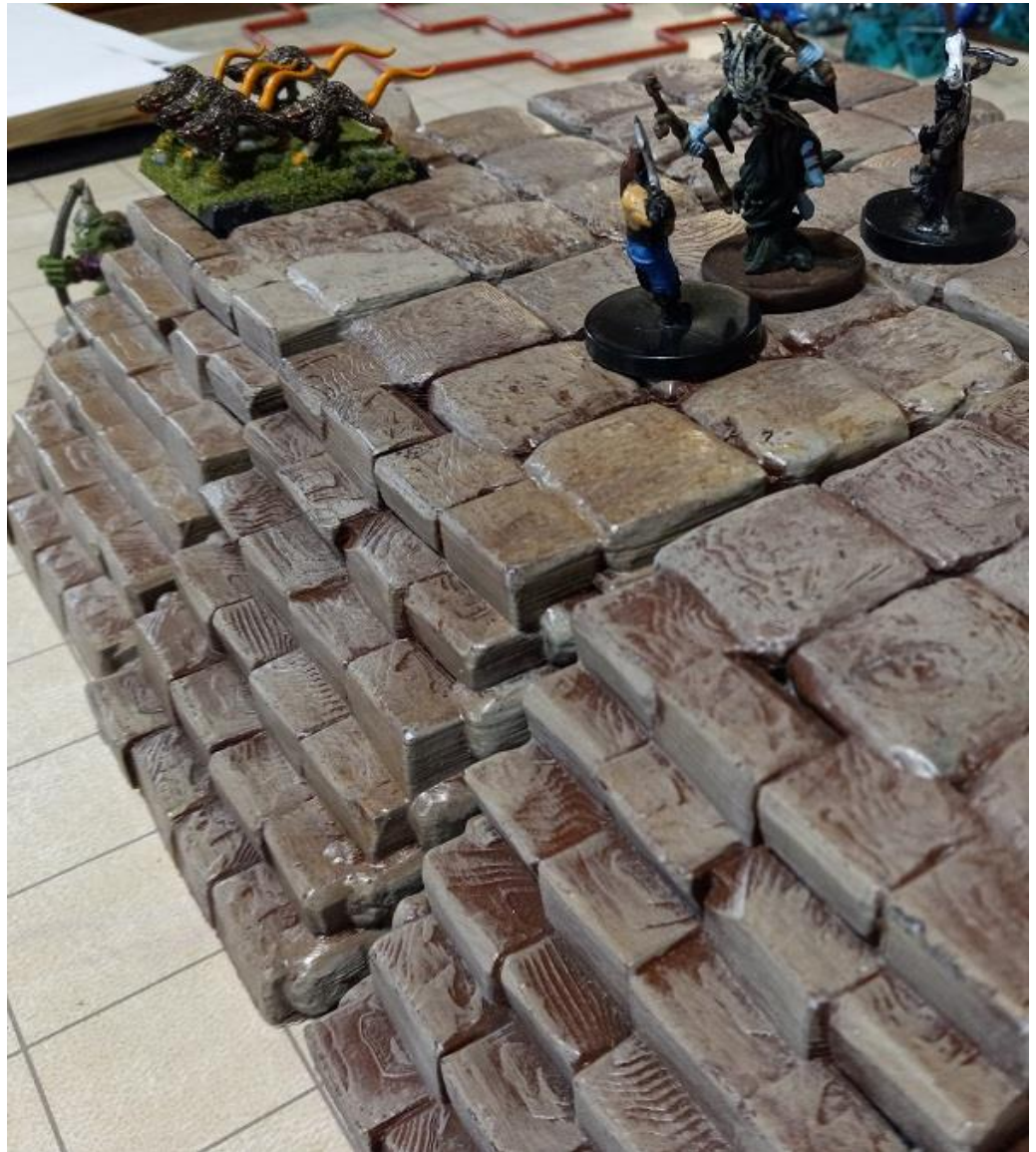
Gorven and I tag-teamed the Spell Giant with more arrows as the others took care of the rest of the reception committee.

Alas for Paunch, while he diverted attention away from the rest of us, he soon succumbed to the evil attacks and fell, his bulk now a maze of slices and magic carnage awash in blood.

Paunch attacks the goblin sorcerer atop the altar. The dead Drow is behind. A Giant Rat pack is to the left, along with a pesky goblin archer.

Free of enemies, Zarge bounded up the altar steps and slammed into a big goblin standing at the edge of the platform. Down the goblin fell, with Zarge leaping after him. The giant axe needed but one good whack to separate goblin head from body.

Meanwhile, Gavriel's magic book could not enter the airspace above the altar and magic seemed less effective at reaching the Spell Giant and goblin sorcerer.



Say Bye Bye

For a moment, we stared at the last two monsters. The Spell Giant we had met before, but the goblin sorcerer with the withered arm was new. With a flourish of disdain, the air shimmered around them and they disappeared.

"Teleportation," Gavriel surmised.

I agreed. "A fortal portal."

Our clerics began their magical healing enchantments as we picked through the wreckage and sought loot and treasure. The loot part yielded only about 150 gold pieces worth of coin and notes.

A hidden chamber held a chest, which we opened to find three magic scrolls: Raise Dead, Revive, and Cone of Cold. We also found a vellum journal that described the goblin sorcerer's efforts to find pieces of the lich Stirling and graft them upon himself to become a lich. Reading the drow language journal, he apparently succeeded with the arm.

Also in the chest were Drow magic items -- chainmail shirt, a buckler shield, and rapier. Our wizards noted that it was well known that Drow magic wears off when not in the possession of a Drow or is exposed to sunlight.

Also among the dead were two healing potions (8d4+8),

Speak Well of the Dead

With a Séance spell, we talked with our brave dwarven monk Paunch. With a Raise the Dead scroll in hand, we offered to bring him back to the land of the living, but he declined. "I am on a different path now and one that suits me. All I ask is a traditional dwarven burial."

"And you shall have it, brave comrade," we all replied.

Next, we turned our Séance spell to the body on the altar that the goblin sorcerer and lich wannabe had tortured to death. He was remarkably tight-lipped, but he let on that the goblin sorcerer was named Syfax and wanted to become a lich by gathering up body parts from the drawn, quartered, and spread out lich Stirling. He had no idea where the lich Stirling resided, nor where his body parts were, or any knowledge of a mountain redoubt for the monsters which attacked Sheffield.

However, that last part was a bit of a lie. Below his left armpit and tucked inside his skin subcutaneously, we found a small canister containing a map for a giant fortress in the mountains.

Nevar headed back down into the chasm to scavenge the tentacled stalactite, the rock lobsters, and the impaled stalactite for parts and ingredients for his alchemical work. I also presented him with the giant raven feathers, for whatever they were worth.

While scavenging, Nevar found rough wooden reinforced tree trunks were found that could be interconnected to bridge the gaps between the landings and the multiple rock spires. As the lumber was one to two feet thick and three to four feet wide, you'd need ogres and hill giants to put them in place.

A Good Day's Work

We cleared two remnants of the fractured army that had sieged Sheffield: the troops in the Cave of the Necromancer and the Fort of the Wannabe Lich. Better yet, we found a map to a mountain fortress that may or may not be the center of monster activity.

Sadly, we lost Paunch and gave him a proper dwarven funeral.

The path seems to lead north from the fort into a canyon next to a river. Dorch the captured goblin provided the key to avoiding the river monster: feed it before moving into the canyon. As we have plenty of goblin, ogre, and giant bodies, that should be no problem.

Well done, Fred. I thought we were not going to be the victors in the fight at the altar. Thanks for GMing and thanks to the other gamers for a fine afternoon of adventuring.



The Mysteries of Terra Proxima: Space Base Campaign Continued

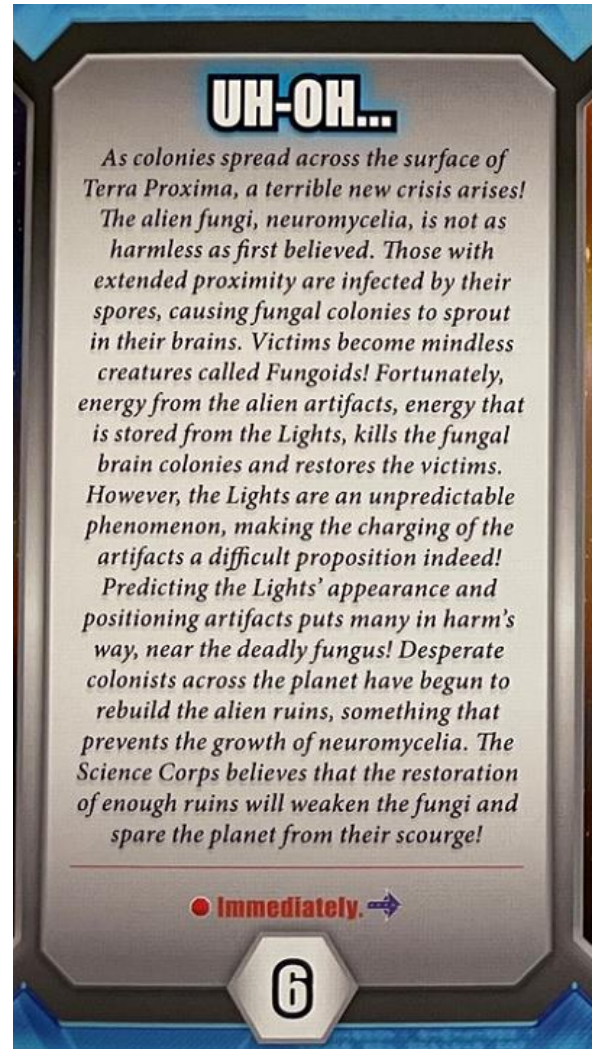
By Dan

On a rainy Wednesday night, Russ and I continued our “exploration” of the *Mysteries of Terra Proxima*, the second “saga” addition that put new wrinkles and permutations to the standard *Space Base* game. Whether you choose to use the expansion cards, dice, and accessories that come with the saga in future games is up to the host and players. It should be a conscious decision as the new stuff will impact the next game significantly from an “ordinary” game.

When last we met (see the 11/21/2024 AAR), we had uncovered new Alien Technology and artifacts with wondrous new effects. Prior to the start of the game, our console expanded from 12 sectors to 13 sectors with new rules that impacted the new 13th sector. As we began a new game, the new Story Card started with the ominous “UH-OH...” That prompted going to the next Story Card that introduced new game components from the “Mystery Box” and a new hazard.

After reading the storyline and new rules, we started a normal game, but with the new 13th sector just begging to be exploited. In fact, if you didn’t, the new fungi hazard would slowly, but eventually, cripple your sectors one by one -- so players had to weigh their options on what new ships to buy and whether to increase their “forecast ability” to counter the new hazard.

The small plutonium dice introduced in earlier expansions as well as this one were still in play, adding another option for players to pursue or not, but for this chapter both of use started with a new green plutonium die to roll with our normal dice. Ending this game was the same as a standard *Space Base* game.



Embrace the New Technology...

Early play quickly revealed the nature of the fungi hazard, which rendered a sector useless for the player on their turn, but still allowed rewards during other players’ turns. I acquired several ships in sectors 8, 9, and 10 with an Arrow card provided by an Alien Colony that pointed to blue rewards in sectors 8 or 10. That arrangement turned out to be more reliable than the plutonium dice I accumulated. This allowed me to acquire additional Forecast Cubes which helped activate my sector 13 reward that yielded either 3 VPs or cured one fungi-infected sector.

I was apparently more successful at this than Russ, who often has three fungi-infected sectors useless to him on his turn. He countered by putting together a grouping of ships that had synergy on the right rolls.

My numbers hit far more often than for Russ, allowing me to rocket my way to victory.

Reaching The End Of The Saga...

We finished at just before 9pm, so we set-up the next game in the saga, which turned out to be the final chapter. Now we could upgrade Sector 13, but the cost would be in resources, not gold (cash). Resources are often more difficult to acquire, plus they determine where your initial Gold each turn, so it’s a real value proposition to now consider whether to spend your Resources for these upgrades.

As it turned out, they seemed worth it. Sector 13 rewards trigger not only on an adjusted roll of 13, but more often by “forecasting” the normal roll of the dice. Buying Forecast Cubes (plus other dice manipulations on certain ships) increases your odds of “forecasting” and getting rewards. I pushed this early and often. Gaining cards that generated Resources helped significantly, as did cards that produced Patrol Ships, which are used to gain Plutonium

dice. I amassed a significant number of Plutonium dice. While I was often disappointed how rarely they produced anything, this *is* a dice game and every now and then I got lucky.

I played the “low number” sectors this game (1-7), while Russ was building a strong network of ships in Sectors 8 and 9. The “Low and Slow” strategy didn’t generate a lot of cash, but did generate a lot of Patrol Ships. This time the Plutonium dice provided a bounty of Resources, which I used to upgrade Sector 13 as often as I could while keeping at least six resources. Those upgrades yielded a whole bunch of different rewards, including cash, bonus rolls, energy cubes, resources, Patrol Ships, and bonus cards.

Russ got an occasional hit on his numbers, but not often enough to keep up. He had many more VP generating cards deployed than I did, but I bought Colony Cards to gain enough VPs for the win.

As we had experienced previously, both of us had to deal with “Analysis Paralysis.” Besides the 18 ship cards available for purchase, there are the 12 Colony Cards (six of which are Alien with special abilities) and the three Sector 13 Upgrade Cards. A normal roll consisted of the two dice you always start with, a Patrol die, and all your Plutonium dice. Prior to rolling, we needed to look at ships for any abilities that pre-fix a die, re-roll dice, alter a die, or shift the result to another sector. Then you assess how the roll can be used.

The Mysteries of Terra Proxima was a fun expansion to play, but this may be the upper limit of how much detail we want to include in *Space Base*. Re-assembling the saga in its original order should be just as entertaining, but players can always decide which expansion elements they want to include or exclude from their normal *Space Base* game.

The Mysteries of Terra Proxima: Fungi Forecasting in Space Base

By Russ Lockwood

I’ve extolled the virtues of *Space Base* as a clever card and dice eurogame of allocating a constantly random amount of resources to buy spaceships that generate a variety of benefits, including the victory points needed to win a game. I’m usually not enamored with these type of spreadsheet-style games because they seem too much like work, but every once in a while, I find one that ignites my enthusiasm. As those who have been reading this AAR for the last year or so, *Space Base* is one of them.

Russ sorts through the Patrol dice and Plutonium dice, as well as his normal dice roll, figuring out what rewards he can gain from them. His sectors 10, 11, and 12 are infected. Photo by Dan.



If the base game was clever, the first expansion, *Shy Pluto*, added to the cleverness. It had a bit of a story to it and the new mechanics introduced didn’t encumber what was a smooth system. Enter the second expansion, *The Mysteries of Terra Proxima*.

This also had a storyline that continued the saga of exploring the galaxy and building up a trading fleet. The veneer proved thick enough to power us through the expansion. In essence, the rule booklet introduced new cards and dice in a measured amount, allowing us to absorb the new mechanics. See the 8/4/2024 and 11/21/2024 AARs for the first two-thirds of this saga.

Penultimate Fungi

In this chapter, alien fungi start to overrun everything, but the brave R&D department is experimenting with a solution in Sector 13 of a 12-sector game. Huh?

Yep, you open the Mystery Box and out pops a thick cardboard sector that hangs off the right of your 12-sector board (console in *SB* parlance). There’s also a small fungi race course that pops out a fungi each time a player

takes a turn. One of your 12 sectors gets fungi-fied and taken out of action. An upside down ship card gets placed on the sector of your choice. Until you get rid of the fungi infestation, that sector is lost to your die rolls – although it grants benefits when opposing players roll the sector, so it's not a complete loss.

Enter Sector 13. You get four orange plastic cubes – one “free” and three you must pay for to try for an anti-fungal solution. The orange cube gets placed on a number from one to six. If you roll doubles and the cube is on that number, you may remove one fungi infestation and the sector becomes available for use again. The upside down card that was there flips over and is placed on whatever sector is printed on the card.

As for the other three orange cubes, you may buy one or more and place them on another number. The key here is that you don't have to roll doubles – if you roll two different numbers that contain orange dice, you fry a fungi the same way as if you have rolled doubles. One of the dice is then placed back in the queue for purchase anew.

Key Mechanic: You may take advantage of die rolls on any player's turn. Most of the game, I was only trying to match during my own turn. Dan correctly used my die rolls to activate the anti-fungal rewards. Doh!

I was pretty much smoked in this game, in large part because I loaded up on numbers that Dan never rolled.

Fungi Fest

For the last game in the saga, we were treated to a variety of anti-fungi upgrade cards that needed resources, not cash, to buy. Some were more rewarding than others.

At least this time, I used Dan's die rolls in addition to my own to fight the fungi.

Once again, I loaded up with cards that would be triggered by Dan's rolls, but this time, instead of Sector 10, I loaded up on the 8 and 9 sectors – especially Sector 8 with an Arrow card that pointed to Sector 9. Better yet, I loaded up on sector shifting cards so that all he had to roll was a 7 on 2d6. I trigger a shift, the adjusted roll would trigger the Sector 8 cards and the Arrow card would trigger Sector 9. I piled 5 VPs, then 7 VPs, and then 11 VPs on those two sectors. I even had three, count 'em three, sector shifting cards (although not all of them were powered up at once).

How many times did he roll a 7 or 8, or even a 6?

Once he rolled a 7, once he rolled a 9, and the rest of the time he rolled so very low. It was uncanny.

A Card Too Far?

It was also about this point that turns were taking longer and longer to play because we had an escalating amount of data to analyze. This last game took two hours, which is an hour longer than the usual game.

I asked Dan if there was a final page in the booklet once the expansion was done. He said no, it was a card. He passed it over: *The End...For Now*.

I joked that there was going to be another expansion because it was too lucrative a franchise. Dan reached for a box on the shelf and plopped down the third expansion: *Genesis*.

From the web blurb:

Following the discovery of alien technology on Terra Proxima, the U.E.S. Science Corps worked feverishly to unlock its mysteries. Only one breakthrough emerged, but it has revolutionized hypernet travel. A new fleet with experimental drives and terraforming foundries are ready at your command!

I can only wonder what they will expand...and hope it won't tip the game into spreadsheet over analysis. Stay tuned.



BOOKS I'VE READ

By Russ Lockwood

A Savage and Romantic War: Wargames 19. by Conrad Cairns. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 137 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *A Wargamer's Guide to the First Carlist War: Spain 1833-1840*

First, let me praise Helion for it's nice, large, readable font. What a nice surprise and a pleasure to read.

Second, let me praise Helion for the content of this source guidebook. It is damn near perfect. Let me delve into this.

Chapter 2 contains about 20 pages of history. My knowledge of this war, which seems to me more like a civil war, is sketchy at best. Here's a succinct and readable account of the competence and incompetence experienced by both sides.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5, about 45 pages, covers the armies of the Government and the Carlist rebels, covering uniforms, weapons, flags, all the different troop types (even if they seem to be equipped the more or less the same), organization, and so on. Aside from the big berets, you can just about use your Napoleonic Peninsular War Spanish troops as they are with shakos and helmets. Not exactly, per se, but close enough. As the forces for the most part used Napoleonic formations, any Napoleonic rules with the battalion as the core unit will do.

Chapter 6, about 40 pages, offers 13 scenarios, complete with tactical maps (including a scale) and OOBs down to battalions.

Here's the only nit I needed to pick: numbers of troops in the OOBs. Some general numbers are embedded in the text. For all I know, these are the only numbers available. Certainly the bibliography is filled with Spanish- and English-language secondary sources (OK, you can ignore the graphical novel). So, perhaps if no numbers existed in any of these books, specific numbers don't exist, or numbers are buried in an archive somewhere. In any case, you can certainly use the information to play 13 scenarios. Like I said, a minor nit.

Chapter 7 offers a mini-campaign from 1837 and an appendix showcases six formation maneuver diagrams from an 1837 manual.

The book also contains 28 color photos of exquisitely painted Perry Miniatures, six color photos of period uniform pieces and weaponry, and 20 color maps (13 for the scenarios and one on p12 that divides Spain up into 60 or so provinces).

Well done.

Enjoyed it.

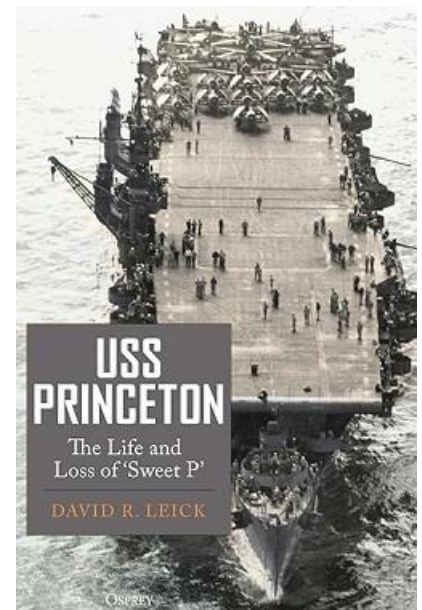
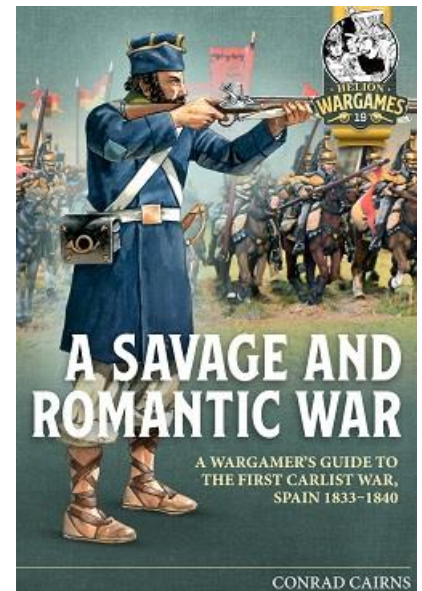
USS Princeton: Life and Loss of the "Sweet P". by David R. Lieck. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 336 pages. 2024.

The air raid on Pearl Harbor lit a fire under the US to build ships for a two-ocean war, especially aircraft carriers. The Princeton was a conversion of a Cleveland-class light cruiser that was already under construction. The light cruiser was laid down June 2, 1941 and the USS Princeton was launched Oct. 18, 1942, fitted out, commissioned on Feb. 25, 1943, sent to sea for a shakedown cruise May 18, 1943, and finally sent to the Pacific Theater on July 21, 1943. Although originally allocated F4F fighters, these were replaced with F6F fighters. So, figure two years from start to finish to deploy a light carrier.

The book follows the Sweet P around the Pacific, noting deployments and air operations, with a considerable number of air-to-air combat accounts. From combats to supply runs to refits, it's all smoothly written.

The USS Princeton was hit by an aircraft bomb in October 1944 during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Here the book became far more interesting to me as internal damage control, aid from other warships, and volunteer sailors from other ships headed over in an effort to save the light carrier.

Alas, as a carrier is full of bombs, torpedoes, and gasoline, the fires eventually cooked them all off with catastrophic consequences, including



significant loss of life and injuries on supporting ships. With the stern separated, it still remained afloat and a considerable amount of torpedoes were required to help sink her -- mostly because they missed due to damage from the torpedo tubes on the firing ship. Gunfire and a massive explosion finished the job.

The book contained 60 black and white photos.
Well done.
Enjoyed it.

Ronny Bar Profiles Spitfire: The Merlin Variants.

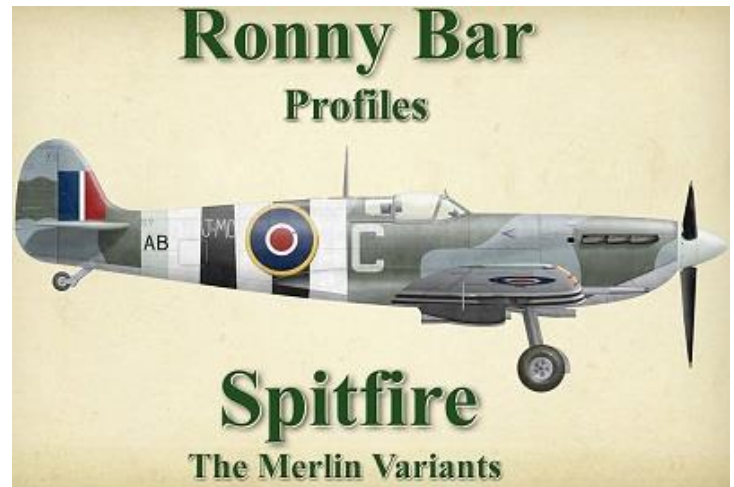
by Ronny Bar. Hardback (horizontal: 12.0x8.5 inches). 228 pages. 2024.

Ronny Bar is a talented artist who creates magnificent color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations. This volume covers the Spitfire -- "the most beautiful airplane of all time" (p7). For modelers, Bar crafted profiles for Wingnut Wings Models and Kotare Models. Some of the illustrations in here were previously published, but the vast majority are new for this book.

Bar starts with the prototype and illustrates the Mk I, II, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and XVI along with Seafires and photo recon variants. Some of them are post-war, but the majority are WWII with markings for UK, US, USSR, and other countries that flew the plane.

All told, 369 color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations are in the book, and just about all of them attached to a specific pilot. For example, page 37 finds a Mk Ia (L1065) belonging to Sgt Alan N. Feary of RAF 609 Squadron stationed in Middle Wallop, UK, in August 1940 while page 137 finds a Mk IX (BR624) belonging to Flight Officer Michael Donnet of RAF 64 Squadron stationed in Hornechurch, UK, in August 1944.

No real text beyond who flew it, but you're buying this for the camouflage artwork. Brilliant.
Enjoyed it.



Raw Generals and Green Soldiers: Century of the Soldier 106. by Pádraig Lenihan. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 183 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Catholic Armies in Ireland 1641-1643*

The English Civil War gets all the press of these years, but the Irish rose up in rebellion against the English. This was but the first act, so to speak, of the rebellion that lasted until 1653.

The book covers the Irish armies of the period, although "armies" may be a bit overstating the number of militia and troops the Irish put into the field. Most of the movements resulted in ambushes and other small skirmishes, with a number of larger actions involving a few thousand troops per side.

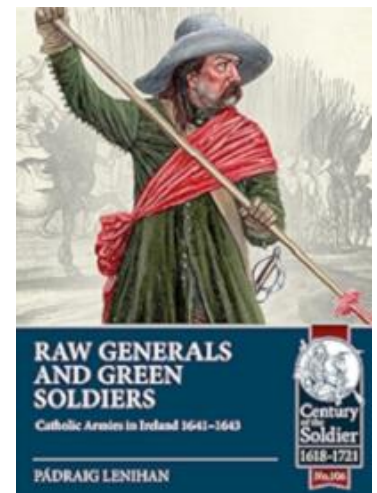
Uniforms, personalities, tactics, weaponry, and strategy are all covered in good detail. Two color maps of Ireland show the main towns and battles -- at least well enough to follow the campaign. Smaller towns and villages are missing, although some of the 19 black and white battle maps show the areas involved and are at least a start for tabletop scenarios.

The prose is a bit detail dense for those like me who knew nothing of this rebellion, but reads well enough over the course of the book. The further along I read, the more I could see this as a nice campaign.

The book also contains nine black and white photos, 18 black and white illustrations, and eight color uniform plates (with one figure per plate).

I've often noted, "There's nothing new like history." Here's a great case of me learning about a "new" campaign.

Enjoyed it.



The Siege of Leningrad: After the Battle Then and Now. Edited by Daniel Taylor. Hardback (7.1x10.0 inches). 96 pages. 2024 reprint of 2004 article.

These Then and Now books reprint old articles from *After the Battle* magazine, perhaps with a little tighter editing. This book covers the WWII siege of Leningrad with wartime photos supplemented by current photos -- or in this case, circa 2003 photos. You can see an example on the cover.

The recap notes that Leningrad had 3.4 million inhabitants when the siege started in 1941 and benefitted as much as possible from draconian rationing. Still, starvation and deaths, exacerbated by German shelling and bombing, made for a horrendous loss of life.

Failed Soviet counter-attacks to break the siege are covered, as is the final success that drove the Germans away from the city.

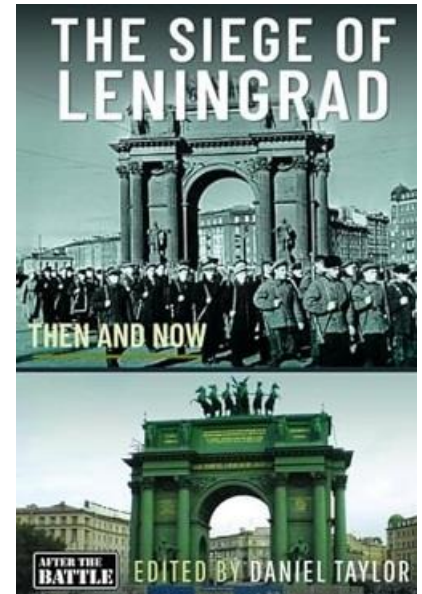
One interesting factoid: The Soviet subs proved annoying enough for the Germans to string two rows of steel netting and mines a whopping 65 miles across the Gulf of Finland from Porkkala (Finland) to an island outside Tallinn (Estonia). At least three Soviet subs were sunk trying to pass and the Soviet sub threat ended -- at least until the siege was broken and the Red Army advanced.

One typo: Photo caption (p36) says "Finish" troops instead of "Finnish" troops.

The book contains 107 black and white photos and nine black and white maps.

It's a serious overview filled with details about life under siege.

Enjoyed it.



The Other Side of the Wire: Volume 4. by Ralph J. Whitehead. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 494 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *With the XIV Reserve Corps to the Bitter End: September 1917 - 11 November 1918*

To be clear, this is a unit history of the German XIV Corps of WWI. This encompasses the retraining of the 26th Reserve Division and the 28th Reserve Division -- the two divisions that made up the XIV Corp -- as well as the 1918 German offensives and the summer and autumn retreat until the war's end. Of note, both of these divisions were retrained with stossstruppen assault tactics, but only certain companies seem to be considered stossstruppen.

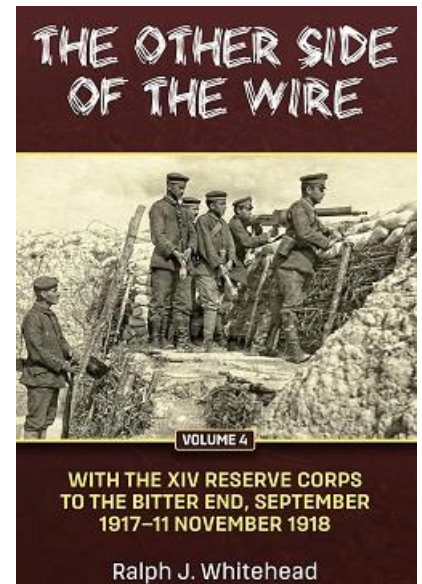
The divisions were often rotated to the rear for rest and refit, and the battalions that made up the regiments that made up the divisions were also rotated in and out of the front trench lines. Rotations were usually every three days (p73) for refits and inclusion of new personnel.

By this point in the war, sentries occupied the trenches closest to the enemy, with machine gun nest strongpoints backing them and stossstruppen companies ready to counterattack any deep penetrations. The sense from all the trench raids and attacks is a line of a porous nature designed to thwart such minor probes and raids, with serious attacks reaching some main line being dealt with by division or even corps-level assets. Indeed, as personnel losses mounted, the regiment often left front lines unoccupied and subject to infiltration. The second regiment of the Reserve 119th regiment had only 192 men to man 1,100 meters of frontage (p74).

Of note, stossstruppen tactics included flamethrowers, smoke bombs, and hand grenades (p56) and the divisions pursued brigade and division-level exercises (p59) prior to the 1918 offensives.

Of course, the divisions had to survive Allied attacks before their big 1918 push. The losses of the 26th Reserve Division in Flanders were heavy, dropping battalions from 600 men on Oct. 15, 1917 (p83) to only 150 to 160 men by Oct. 31 (p94). By March 1918, a company with 100 men, or about 400 men per battalion, was considered in good shape (p121). After the German Army's big offensives, by Sep. 2, 1918, the 26th Reserve Division had only a few hundred men left.

In between the big attacks, there was a lot more trench raids and patrols than you'd expect. For example, from Oct. 22 to Nov. 1, 1917, the 28th Division sent out 25 patrols in its "quiet" sector (p40). Patrols were usually under 20 men (p35) although larger numbers appear in some accounts. It was attritional warfare at its finest and the accounts are filled with officers being killed and the number of men with them dying in raids on both sides. Towards the end of



the war, both divisions had to disband a company per regiment to fill out remaining companies and later disbanded a battalion to fill out the remaining two battalions (p343).

The Michael offensive showcased the Germans overrunning British lines and being amazed at the variety and quantity of supplies.

By the time the war ended, personnel and ammo shortages plagued these two divisions despite culling out rear-area troops, industrial and agricultural workers, and calling up the Class of 1900. The new troops suffered from a lack of motivation as well as few veterans in the ranks to teach them.

Some minor typos involving missing spaces (p70 and p78) and a tense typo "British were still strongly entrenches" (p151), which is likely "entrenched." One possible other error: The Reserve Infantry Regiment 110 was "inserted on the right of RIR109; RIR111 was inserted on the left" (p21), but later on the page "the right wing regiment of the division, RIR 109 occupied the position on the right flank of RIR110." Here's a case of two rights make a wrong statement about which regiment was on the division's right. Or it may be that the regiments were re-positioned.

The book contains 128 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and 36 black and white maps (most with scales). You should be able to figure out the maps for larger scale tabletop scenarios. Skirmish-level trench raids can appear anywhere on the front.

This is an impressive amount of research down to individual soldiers and officers while retaining the corps-level perspective. The details are incredible and if this fourth volume is any indication of the earlier three volumes, a boon to those interested in WWI. Quite good.

Enjoyed it.

Proposed Airborne Assaults in the Liberation of Europe. by James Daly.
Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 231 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Cancelled Allied Plans from the Falaise Pocket to Operation Market Garden*

On August 1, 1944, the Allies created the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) by converting the HQ from the XVIII Corps and adding the 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions and the 1st British Airborne Division. In between D-Day and Operation Market Garden, the Allies planned a number of air drops in Northwest Europe in support of Allied advances across France and the Netherlands. All of them were cancelled.

This book explains the proposals and plans for these airborne support operations: Lucky Strike (breakout from Normandy), Transfigure (block German withdrawal through the Paris Orleans gap), Axehead (Seine River crossing), Boxer (capture or destroy V weapon launching sites between Boulogne and Etaples), Linnet (Tournai-Lille area bridgehead and road network grab), Infatuate (Walcheren Island drop), and Comet (a smaller-scale version of what would become Market-Garden). These were cancelled for a variety of reasons, from bad weather to successful Allied ground advance to too few resources, in various stages of preparation, from last-minute to early on. For example, Transfigure lasted only three days (August 14-17), Boxer had a complete plan by August 19 but cancelled August 25, and Linnet was cancelled at virtually the last second.

Of interest is that Axehead had a briefing model made at 1:25,000 scale and 12 1:5,000 scale models (3x5-foot each for defining the area from Caudebec to Duclair) on order (p101).

Of course, each of these would make a nice what-if wargame. You will need OOBs for the German side, for IDs and troop makeups are few and far between.

A possible typo: "FAAA would still need one Military Policy Company" (p11-12). As this is right after a discussion about Military Police, this may be a need for a MP company, but as this is the only airborne army organization, maybe a HQ would contain a "Military Policy Company."

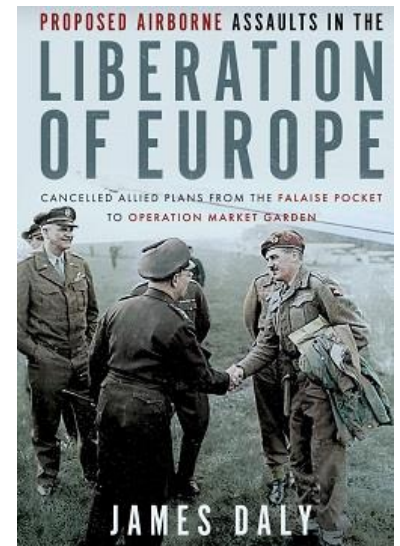
Also, for Operation Linnet, the 82nd Division would be responsible for capturing "Fort St. Aubery" (p143), which may or may not be the same as "Mont St. Aubert" (p150). It may be the same place or two places near each other. The map is not that detailed.

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

Daly seems to specialize in WWII airborne books and there's a hint that a sequel will cover between Market Garden and Varsity. If so, more details other than reciting the Allied side of planning would make for a more interesting book.

Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.



J-20 Mighty Dragon: Technology at War 1. by Abraham Abrams. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 92 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Asia's First Stealth Fighter in the Era of China's Military Rise*

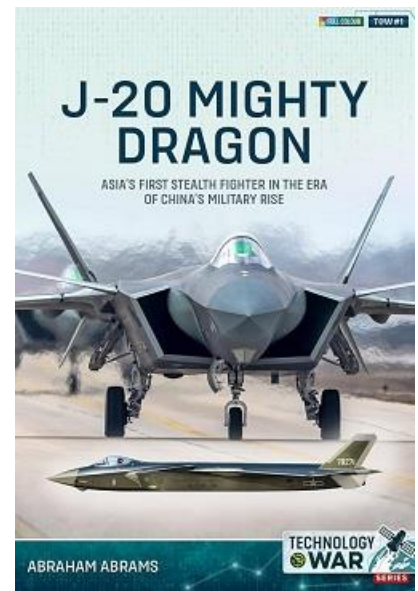
The US military predicted that China would not be able to field a fifth-generation fighter like the US F-22 or F-35 until 2020. Well, a vast engineering talent pool and Chinese government control over the entire economy shredded that prediction. The Chinese turned out an estimated 80 J-20 superiority fighters in 2023 (p46), with an expected bump up to 100 J-20s in 2024 (p44) and currently field 10 Air Brigades -- and possibly three more -- with an uncertain total number of J-20s. It is an estimate, which may or may not be as accurate as the production prediction.

To put this in perspective, and admittedly the US was basking in the glow of post-Gulf War laurels and a peace dividend due to the fall of the USSR (by 1998 Soviet defense spending dropped 95.6% from a decade earlier (p14)), the US needed 15 years from the first flight of the F-15 to operational deployment and 15 years for the F-22. The Chinese did it in six years. Tyranny has its advantages if the citizens don't object to it with rebellion.

Also, that USSR collapse meant that defense exports of the SU-27 were needed to prop up the Soviet economy, and China was the first and best export customer. Reverse engineering, if not acquiring the plans outright, must have been rampant.

The booklet covers the aircraft specs, technical development, and all the subsystems such as stealth, avionics, engines, and weaponry. It also covers variants, supporting aircraft, and drones.

The booklet contains 96 color photos, two black and white photos, one color map of J-20 airbases in China, and 27 color camouflage profiles of various aircraft from the Korean War to the J-20. Nicely done, especially as it's all in full color and with a readable font. Enjoyed it.



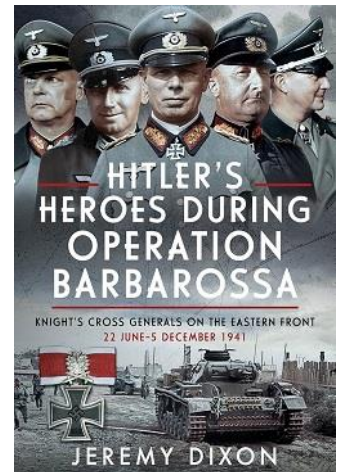
Hitler's Heroes During Operation Barbarossa. Jeremy Dixon. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 213 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Knight's Cross General on the Eastern Front 22 June - 5 December 1941*

This is the first of four volumes of all the generals who were awarded the Knight's Cross, including oak leaves, swords, and diamonds attachments. Each entry has a brief pre-Barbarossa bio, a summary of why he was awarded the Knight's Cross, additional citations for the attachments, and usually a photo.

It reads smoother than a previous Knight's Cross compilation I reviewed: *The Complete Knight's Cross: Volume 2 The Years of Stalemate 1942-1943.* by Kevin Brazier and published in 2022. Then again, that had all recipients, not just generals. Presumably *Volume 1* holds the years 1939-1941, which would include German generals. Oddly enough, *The Complete Knight's Cross* is not in the *Hitler's Heroes* bibliography.

I didn't read this cover to cover -- just skimmed. Unless you have a particular reason for looking up these 172 (out of 554) generals, there is nothing for the wargaming table here.

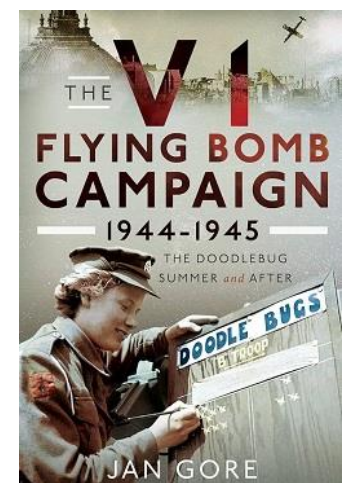


The V1 Flying Bomb Campaign: 1944-1945. by Jan Gore. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 199 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Doodlebug Summer and After*

As conventional aircraft couldn't force Britain to surrender in 1940 during the Blitz or after, the Germans developed a pair of V weapons -- the V1 and V2 -- to rain destruction in 1944. The V1, which we today would call a cruise missile, was referred to as a Doodlebug by the Brits. The V2, which we would call an intermediate-range ballistic missile, didn't get a cutesy nickname.

Like most German advances in WWII, the fundamentals of creating such weapons started early but wasn't seriously considered until the war turned against the



Axis. The V1 needed slightly inclined launching ramps aimed in the right direction -- in 1944 that meant Britain in general and London in specific. A compass set its path, a gyro kept it level, and a mileage counter was set to flip the flying bomb into a dive to explode upon contact. Later, HE-111 bombers were adapted to carry and launch the V1 from the air.

The first week of July 1944 saw 800 V1s launched (p56), although the hastily-developed technology meant that many did not actually cross into Britain. In general, the Germans launched 100 per day (p70) of which 25 to 30 reached London. When they hit, they could do tremendous destruction. Indeed, the book goes to considerable detail month by month about individual attacks and results of killed and injured. First-person accounts tell of listening for the unique-sounding engine. When it quit, the bomb was into its dive.

The Allied Air Forces targeted the launching ramps, ran fighter interceptions, and just overran the ramps in France to eventually diminish the threat. The Germans switched targets to Antwerp.

In all, from June 1944 to March 1945, the Germans launched 10,400 V1s, of which 9,251 targeted London. Of the 7,488 that crossed over the Channel over land, 3,957 were shot down by fighters and AA (p184).

The British had little defense against the V2, but fewer were built and fired. The first V2 hit London on Sep 8, 1944 and Antwerp on Oct 7, with an average of three V2s fired at Antwerp per day (p117). In all, 1,115 V2s fell on Britain (p180) and 1,600 V2s on Antwerp (p128). Other cities fell victim to V1 and V2 attacks, but London and Antwerp were the two main targets.

The book contains 24 black and white photos, seven black and white illustrations, and two black and white maps.

While a bit repetitive in recounting damage and lost lives from the attacks, it provides a good recap of the bombardments, not unlike drone attacks on Ukraine in the present day.

Enjoyed it.



Into The Endless Mist - Volume 2: Asia at War 53. by Michal A. Piegzik.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 86 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Aleutian Campaign September 1942-March 1943*

After reviewing *Volume 1* (see the 08/04/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org), I was looking forward to the second and this is a worthy successor.

As the Aleutians campaign in Alaska was simultaneous with the Guadalcanal campaign, the Northern Command was only grudgingly given men and material by both sides. Toss in abysmal weather at times and you'll find resources stretched and men and machines challenged.

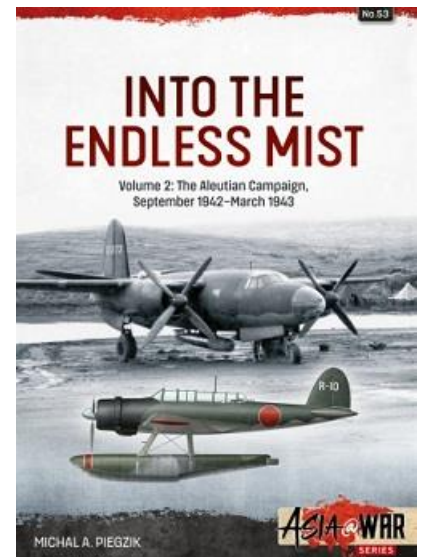
The US response to Japanese occupation of Kiska and Attu was a series of air attacks on the islands, usually defended by floatplane fighters. Surprisingly, the floatplanes didn't always come off second best, but neither did they stop the bombers from hitting the anchorages and bases.

These air raids seldom reached double digit numbers of bombers and double digit numbers of fighters and as the weather turned sour, the frequency diminished. In December, 1942, for example, the US launched only seven that actually made it through to attack (p19).

As Guadalcanal wound down, more resources became available. The US launched more and heavier raids and "invaded" (if you can invade your own unoccupied territory) Amchitka Island to set up an air base closer to Kiska and Attu.

The Japanese abandoned, then reoccupied, Attu, which was invaded and conquered by the US. In the meantime, the naval battle of Komandorski Islands without any interfering air attacks occurred -- and a nice recap and a nice color map of positions and times. A set of ship tech specs offers ships by the numbers.

One typo: "could not rescued" (p10) is missing "be".



The book contains 60 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, one black and white map, eight black and white ship illustrations (side and top), one color map of the Komandorski Islands battle, three color camouflage illustrations of USS Salt Lake City, and 18 color camouflage aircraft profiles.

Nicely done and a pleasant read.

Enjoyed it.

For Now and Forever! 1992 Coup: Latin America at War 42. by Jose Daniel Fernandez Dugarte. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 76 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The 1992 Coup d'Etat Attempts in Venezuela -- Volume 1: Causes and the Opening Moves of the February 1992 Coup*

The Venezuelans, and to a certain extent US foreign policy, suffer from the current Communist regime in power. That coup wasn't the first coup attempt against the government -- lots were attempted, some succeeded and most failed -- by either the military or various left-wing groups.

This volume covers a number of the coup and counter-coup attempts, from 1960s on, including the February 27, 1989 coup that came close and the beginnings of the 1992 coup under Hugo Chavez and other members of the military.

In 1989, the economic slump in Venezuela and the increase in a variety of government-controlled prices generated an escalating series of protests and imposition of martial law. The Feb. 27 coup collapsed as the government regained control and Constitutional rights were reinstated on Mar. 22.

Yet a coup was back on for Dec 1991, but called off at the last moment. That almost doomed the conspirators, but they settled on Feb. 4, 1992. The coup began that day.

Knowing little about the situation, this overview of the political, economic, and military events and motivations fills large gaps in my Venezuelan history. It's pretty well written, too, although I'll ask for a larger font, please. I realize Helion thought the topic strong enough to expand from one to two volumes, but I could do with a few less blurry photos and a half point larger font.

The book contains 86 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, two color photos, two black and white maps, two color illustrations, two color maps, nine color camouflage illustrations of vehicles, four color camouflage aircraft profiles, and four color uniform illustrations.

I look forward to the second volume.

Enjoyed it.

Polish Wings 39: Caudron-Renault CR.714 Cyclone. by Bartłomiej Belearz and Franciszek Strzelczyk. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 104 pages. 2024.

A Polish squadron assigned to the French Air Force received its Caudron-Renault CR.714 Cyclone fighters on March 10, 1940. Training began with the goal of sending the squadron to Finland. For some reason, the USSR was considered a greater threat than the Germans.

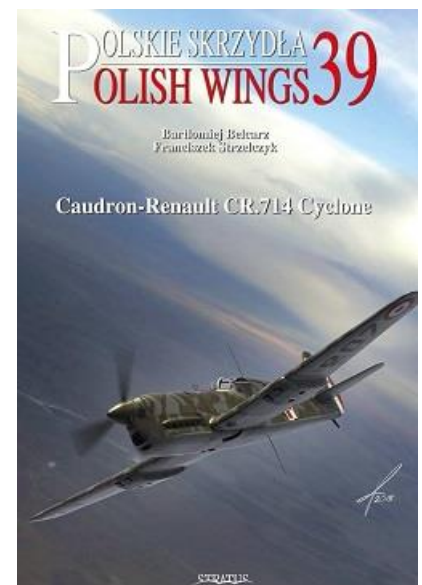
In any case, the German attack on France began May 10, 1940 and this squadron had minimal combats against the Luftwaffe. The largest was a tangle with ME-109s over Vernon.

Otherwise, the text examines the various moves to airfields away from the German attack until the remnant pilots were evacuated on a British ship to Britain.

The book contains 118 black and white photos, nine color photos, two color illustrations, 51 color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations (plus extra wing illustrations for the top down and bottom up illustrations), and six color illustrations of markings.

As a complete record of Polish participation in the West, it's a necessary volume. It is certainly continues the marvelous series for the modeler.

Enjoyed it.



The Emergency in Colour: Ireland in Wartime. by Michael B. Barry and John O'Byrne. Hardback (horizontal: 9.7x8.6 inches). 272 pages. 2024.

This is the third book covering Irish history in photos, and the author is an accomplished colorizer.

The 211 color photos all look great and cover civilian and military images. Most of them are from the WWII years and include crashed aircraft, vehicles, personalities, and uniforms, but a considerable number of civilian topic photos are included as well. The photos go post-war until 1949 when Ireland officially declared itself a Republic.

Interesting that the Irish troops had German-style helmets purchased in 1927, although they were swapped out for British-style helmets. In May 1940, the Irish fielded 13,000 troops. By May 1941, that number had increased to 41,000 troops.

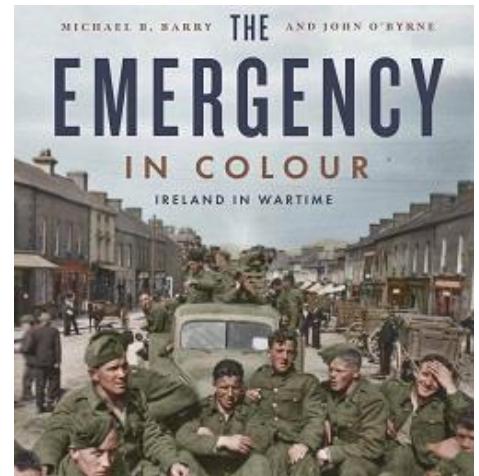
As Ireland was neutral in WWII, Germans that crash-landed there or were washed up from sea were interned with considerable freedom. A total of 54 Luftwaffe and 210 Kriegsmarine troops were in POW camps.

A nuanced wobble in the captions: One plane is identified as a Lockheed B-17 (p197), although it's usually referred to as a Boeing B-17. However, Lockheed did build a lot of B-17s -- 2,750 or so under license sez the internet.

The award for smallest font used for text in a book has a new champion: this book. The chronology (p4 to p5) that covers from 1939 to 1949 is virtually unreadable. I certainly gave up after the first line.

But you buy the book for the colorized photos and they are indeed marvelous.

Enjoyed it.



Luftwaffe Search Lights and Range Finding Equipment - Vol. 2: Camera On 33, by Alan Ranger. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 82 pages. 2024.

Of the 141 black and white photos in this booklet, 132 involved rangefinders in a wide variety of settings and weather conditions. For the modeler, you can really pick and choose a diorama from in a shallow pit, emplaced next to an airfield tarmac, in extensive earthworks, and in a concrete mini-fortification.

The equipment as depicted on the cover is the 4m stereoscopic rangefinder, which was connected to a boxy electro/mechanical target plotting machine that would take into account inputted weather conditions and other data. It took three seconds to spit out a target altitude, azimuth, and other details needed by the AA guns.

Six photos concern searchlights and their teams, two photos show a meteorological team with weather balloon, and one photo shows an image intensifier night scope.

Another excellent photo book in the series.

Enjoyed it.



Messerschmitt Bf 109G: Colour & Scale 04. by Dariusz Karnas and Larolina Holda. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 16 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Finnish Air Force*

This booklet offers 12 1/72 scale ME-109G-2 and eight 1/48 scale ME-109G-6 black and white plan drawings for those who like to build their aircraft. In addition, it contains 15 color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations and three color unit image illustrations for those that paint up their miniatures or models. Captions include colors and other details.

And that's about it, but for those painting up ME-109Gs for their Finnish Air Force, that's all you need. Excellent work.

Enjoyed it.



Potez 63-11: Colour & Scale 05. by Marek Rys and Teodur Liviu Morosanu.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 16 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *France 1940*

This booklet offers six 1/72 Potez 63 black and white plan drawings for those who like to build their aircraft. In addition, it contains 24 color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations and one color unit image illustration for those that paint up their miniatures or models. Captions include colors and other details.

Yes, my review essentially repeats, but this series is all about delivering color profiles and black and white plans. Excellent work.

Enjoyed it.

Henschel Hs-126: Colour & Scale 06. by Robert Panek and Krzysztof Wolowski.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 16 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Luftwaffe*

This booklet offers five 1/72 Potez 63 black and white plan drawings for those who like to build their aircraft. In addition, it contains 24 color camouflage aircraft profile illustrations and nine color unit image illustrations for those that paint up their miniatures or models. Captions include colors and other details.

Yes, my review essentially repeats, but this series is all about delivering color profiles and black and white plans. Excellent work.

Enjoyed it.

If you want a photographic reference source, see *Henschel HS 126: Camera On 30* (see the review in the 05/20/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

Break Contact Continue Mission. by Raymond D. Harris. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 288 pages. 2024.

This novel by a Vietnam vet who performed recon missions across the border in Laos is better than the usual expert turned fiction writer with a well-developed lead character, Sgt. Garner, and a good selection of supporting characters. The prose is generally good as well.

The missions involve a helicopter drop and intel recon, sometimes involving a prisoner grab. The flight and fight details as well as barracks and R&R, offer tidbits of life in the special forces.

The book contains six black and white photos.

I'm not sure how much is true and how much embellished, but as the epilogue notes, it's a combination of characters and situations Harris encountered in 1969-1970, complete with photos. There's certainly enough to create a few infiltration scenarios that may or may not end in running firefights -- and a goodly amount of airpower.

Enjoyed it.

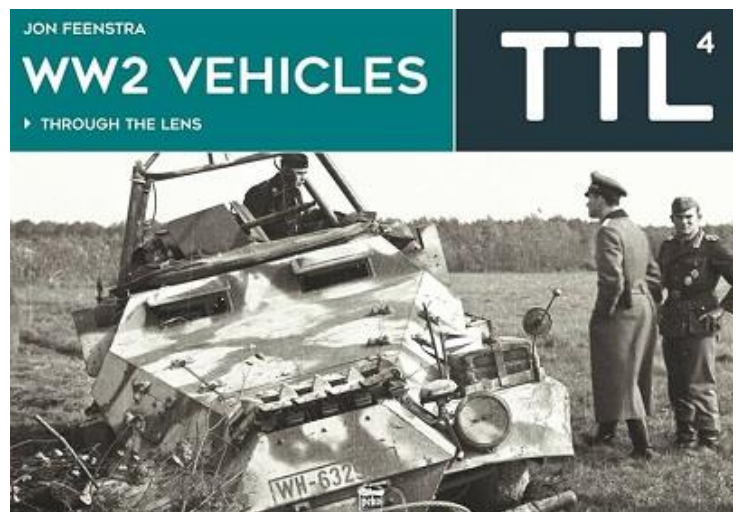
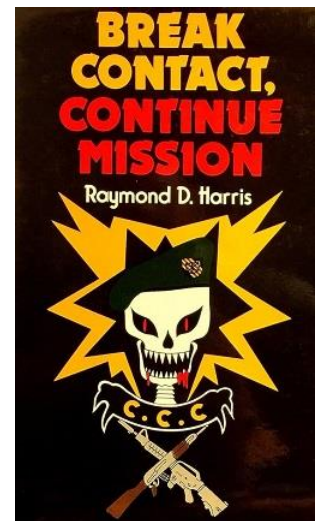
Through The Lens 4: WW2 Vehicles. by Jon Feenstra. Hardback (horizontal: 11.9x8.5 inches). 123 pages. 2024.

The best aspect about the *Through The Lens* series is that each page holds one photo and a caption explaining the nuances of vehicle variants, markings, and other equipment. Modelers should rejoice.

In this volume, the 120 photos cover Pz II, Pz III, Hornet/Nashorn PzJg 88mm self-propelled AT gun, 15cm Panzerwerfer SdKfz 4/1 (halftrack with mounted 150mm nebelwerfer rocket launchers), SdKfz 251 (halftrack), and Toldi I/II tanks.

A lot of the photos show interesting situations, from wrecks to accidents, although most are of intact tanks and halftracks.

Besides the Toldi section, the most unusual



photos for me were the PzII bridging vehicles (p22-23) and the halftracks converted to wood-burning for fuel (p95-96).

Photo quality ranges from sharp to somewhat blurry, presumably depending on the quality of the original, with sharp outnumbering blurry. Each photo certainly invites a close scrutiny, especially when the caption points out some detail or the other.

Enjoyed it.

The Unlikely War Hero. by Marc Leepson. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 233 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *A Vietnam War POW's Story of Courage and Resilience in the Hanoi Hilton*

Biography of Navy seaman Doug Hegdahl, who fell off or was blown off the USS Canberra by gun concussion off the coast of North Vietnam. Rescued by fishermen, he was transported to the Hanoi Hilton POW compound. Tortured, starved, and interrogated, he defied the North Vietnamese guards by playing dumb and pretending to not know how to read or write very well.

Being the only enlisted man in a camp full of pilot officers, he could get away with the ruse. With less oversight at times than his fellow POWs, he could move around the camp and sometimes outside. In the process, Hegdahl memorized the names, ranks, and personal details of 254 POWs at a time when North Vietnam refused to turn over POW names.

Released early, he recited the names to US officials, who changed the status of about a quarter of those from MIA to POW. He made appearances across the US for a year as the Nixon Administration changed policy on US POWs from ignoring them to demanding North Vietnam release names and adhere to Geneva Convention protocols on POW treatment.

The book contains 13 black and white photos.

It's an interesting and well-told tale of cleverness under pressure.

Enjoyed it.

Hero City: Leningrad 1943-44. by Prit Buttar. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 480 pages. 2024.

This sequel to *To Besiege a City: Leningrad 1941-42* (see the review in the 9/28/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) details the Soviet efforts to break the German siege of Leningrad in the swamps east and southeast of city.

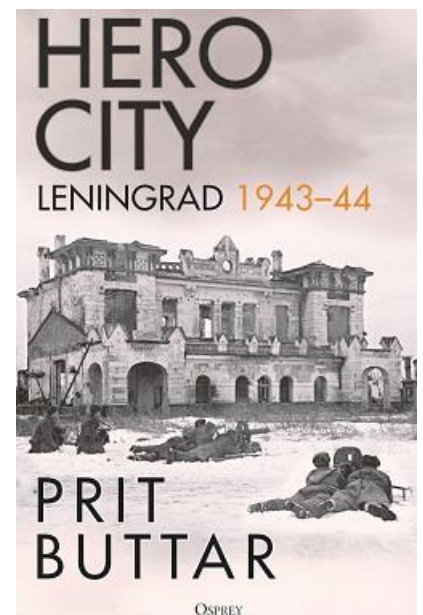
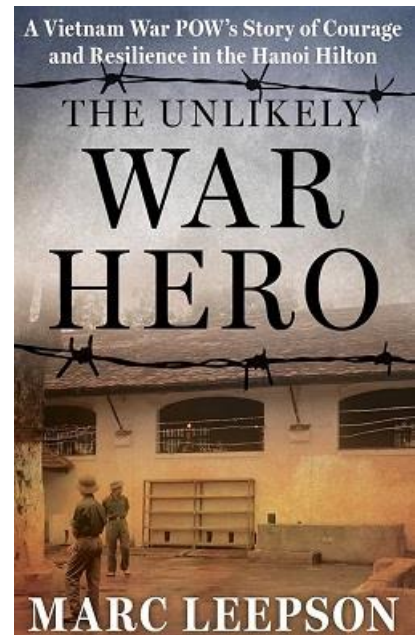
The Soviets took horrendous casualties in killed and wounded trying to cross the Neva River to meet the other pincer coming from the west to meet at the Sinyavino Heights. The Germans also suffered, but with rings of fortifications, the usual 4:1 and 5:1 USSR:Germany losses doomed large Soviet offensives.

Yet, with offensives elsewhere in the USSR, the Germans were bled white and ultimately were forced to give ground and then retreat from the narrow corridor they held. The siege of Leningrad was broken after 900 days.

The book continues with Soviet offensive actions that chased the Germans from the USSR and into the Baltic States. A discussion of how logistics affected offensive and defensive actions was interesting, especially the comparisons between the two armies. Contributions from partisans and security divisions are noted.

The book contains 26 black and white photos and 14 black and white maps. Usually, the maps show divisions as the lowest-level formation, although the chase into the Baltics shows corps- and army-level units.

Analysis of the myths and realities proved especially interesting at the end of the book. However, I couldn't help the nagging feeling that Buttar was under some sort of time pressure -- the extensive use of excerpts in the previous book is repeated -- as if he had to turn in a manuscript quickly. Maybe. Maybe not. Just a feeling.



A good excerpt adds to a narrative. An excessive number -- and I admit that number will vary per reader -- interrupts the narrative flow. He's got smooth prose and analysis. It's a pity he constantly drops in an excerpt when the information can be folded into the narrative. And before you ask which ones, I'll answer about half.

But when he's cookin' with info and insight, it's golden.
Enjoyed it.

From the Battlefield to the Big Screen. by Melody Foreman. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 246 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Audie Murphy, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh and Dirk Bogarde in WW2*

In some ways, this is neither a fish nor fowl book. The subtitle promises the wartime exploits of the actors and actress on the cover -- and it does, but...it's only a small part of the book. It is often combined with summaries of WWII history and mini-bios of other actors and actresses as well as some wartime colleagues. Most of the text discusses their acting resumes, which can directly tie in with their service in movies about WWII.

First off, the lack of a Vivian Leigh photo on the cover also indicates the lack of an extensive biography. She was married to Olivier and gets a slightly more detailed mini-biography than other actors.

As for the three leading men, you get a fairly good litany of the films they starred on, or at least appeared in, along with a decent encapsulation of wartimes service.

Murphy served with the US 3rd Division in Africa, Italy, and France, initially in non-combat roles. Later, and famously as depicted in *To Hell and Back*, he'd been in combat and received a battlefield promotion for his exploits.

Olivier learned how to fly in the US, cracking up three planes in the process, and ached to join the RAF in combat. Alas, being 33 and considered too old, he joined the UK Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm and flew the flights for gunner training. Here, he crashed into two aircraft while taxiing. Bored with being a glorified air taxi, he went back into films to shore up British morale. *Henry V* was a tad too late for morale purposes (1944), but proved a wartime success.

Leigh got bored playing the dutiful pilot wife and joined the British equivalent of the USO and gave recitations and other performances to British troops in North Africa before returning to stage and screen in the UK.

Bogarde is an actor who sounded familiar, but I couldn't place him. He drifted a bit in the military during WWII before becoming an ace RAF photo interpreter. His work for Bomber Command proved fruitful and he was transferred after VE Day to India for photo intelligence work. He then headed to Indonesia and became an aide to a general before heading back home.

As you might expect, the text is sprinkled with mentions of other famous actors and actresses. Like any industry, you hang around long enough, are talented enough, and get lucky enough, you'll ascend through the ranks to the top tier. Of course, a "name" helps pull in other "names" for various projects, good and bad.

The book contains 33 black and white photos and three black and white illustrations.

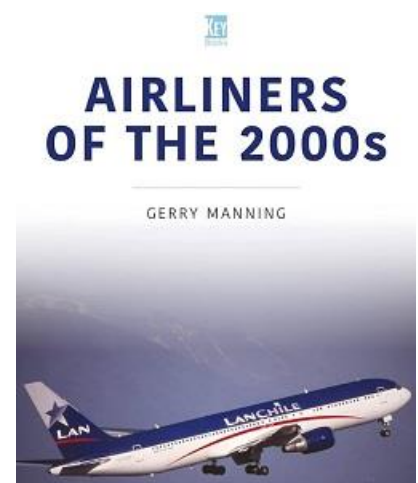
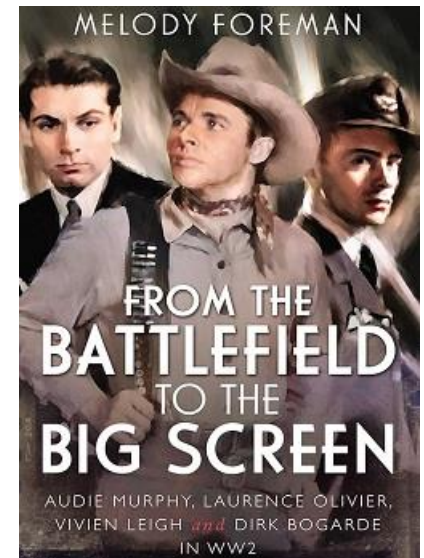
My interest faded in and out as I read. At times, it was a compelling read and at other times, reciting reviews from movie critics about films I never heard of proved deadly dull. Their service proved the most interesting, but that would have made for a good magazine article, not the length of a book. Still, the intertwining of names as they meet and careers merge and part was mildly interesting. Ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

Airliners of the 2000s. by Gerry Manning. Softcover (7.1x10.0 inches). 159 pages. 2022.

The big draw is the compilation of 316 color photos of the liveries of a wide variety of commercial jets and prop planes from the "aughts" (2000-2010). Usually, each page contains two photos and a caption that identifies the aircraft, airline, where photographed, and usually something specific about the aircraft. Often, the date of the photo is identified as well.

Aircraft included are: Boeing 707s to 777s, Lockheed TriStar, McDonnell Douglas MD-82, Fokker F-28, F-70, and F-100, Embraer EMB-120, 145, and 170, Douglas DC-68 and DC-6, Custer C-46, Antonov AN-128,



12, and 26, Ilyushin IL-62, 76, and 96, Tupolev TU-134 and 154, Airbus A310, A319, A320, and A330, small business jets, and more.

If commercial aviation is your passion, this volume and series will fire it up.

Enjoyed it.

Armies of Anglo-Saxon England 410-1066. by Gabriele Esposito.

Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 159 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *History, Organization & Equipment*

Subtitle: *Armies of the Past*

The *Armies of the Past* series offers a good overview of a particular army of a particular period. In this case, it's Britons and Anglo-Saxons from 410 to 1066. The text offers a considerable amount of history, including touching on Arthur, Alfred the Great, and a host of squabbling royal families and warlords who sought to unite Briton or at least stave off being overrun by Vikings and other invaders.

The 108 sharp color photos of re-enactors pepper the pages of the book -- and provide contact information as well for the UK-based groups. Many photos are full-figure shots, but a considerable number of them are close-ups of specific aspects of weapons, armor, equipment, and uniforms. Chapters of text explain the lot. Miniature painters and modelers will appreciate the imagery.

One non-fatal typo (p108): "Nor dman foot" should read "Norman foot."

About the only nit I'll pick is that the bibliography is a bit dated. The earliest book is from 1977 and the latest is from 2020. Now, there's nothing wrong with referencing earlier books, including the 1980 WRG book *Armies of the Dark Ages 600-1066*, but I'm wondering if there had been "new" archeological information, library research, or interpretations about inter-kingdom/warlord relations. Maybe they were consulted. Maybe the Parker chronicle and the Laud chronicle translations were consulted. I can only use the bibliography as a guide. My guess? Most gamers will not worry about it and enjoy the compact military history and uniform details. I certainly did.

Enjoyed it.

Cold War Berlin: Volume 4 (Europe at War 41). by Andrew Long.

Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 92 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *US Forces in Berlin -- Preparing for War 1945-1994*

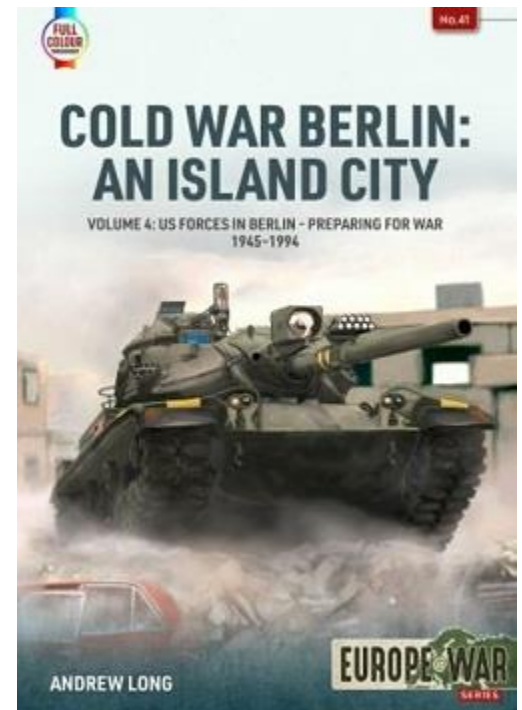
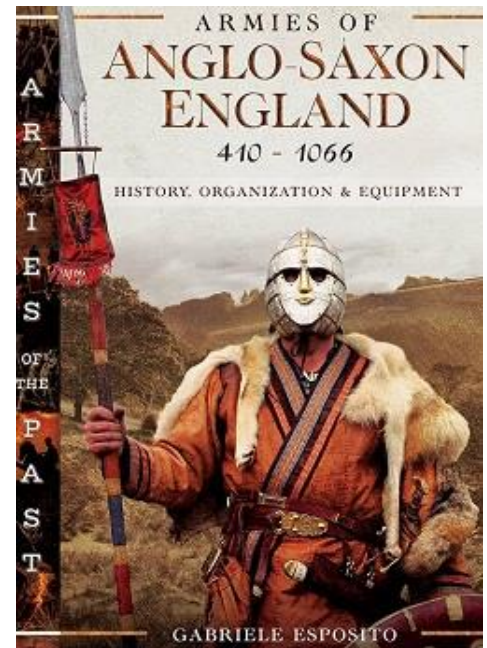
This volume concentrates on the US troops stationed in Berlin during the Cold War: Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Special Forces, Civilians, and so on. The overview covers the units and capabilities, which at about 12,000 would be little more than a speed bump if the entire Red Army and Warsaw Pact allies swarmed westward.

The booklet contains 70 black and white photos, 17 color photos, one black and white illustration, one color illustration, 11 color unit insignia illustrations, three color maps, seven black and white maps, two black and white organization charts, three color aircraft camouflage profiles, 10 color vehicle camouflage profiles, and six color uniform illustrations.

You can find reviews of the previous three volumes up on hmg.org or in the 05/27/2021 AAR (*Volume 1 - Europe at War 9*), the 10/26/2021 AAR (*Volume 2 - Europe at War 12*), and the 08/04/2024 AAR (*Volume 3 - Europe at War 27*).

The changing plans, objectives, and forces might make for interesting scenarios at the skirmish and small-unit end of the scale. Also, you might run a counter-spy RPG adventure interacting with various units' patrols.

Enjoyed it.



Red Army Weapons of the Second World War. by Michael Green. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 249 pages. 2022.

This is a one-volume broad overview of WWII Soviet weaponry, starting with infantry and progressing into artillery, tanks, armored cars, and other armored vehicles, including Lend-Lease. It actually covers from the 1920s through the end of WWII, so some WWI vintage imports and reverse engineered knockoffs are included.

Some interesting factoids embedded within the text and photo captions.

Of the 400,000 WWII Soviet tank crewmen, 300,000 died (p87). Then again, tank drivers in 1941 had between three and five hours of tank driving training (p82). Now you start to understand why the German tanks could outmaneuver Soviet tanks.

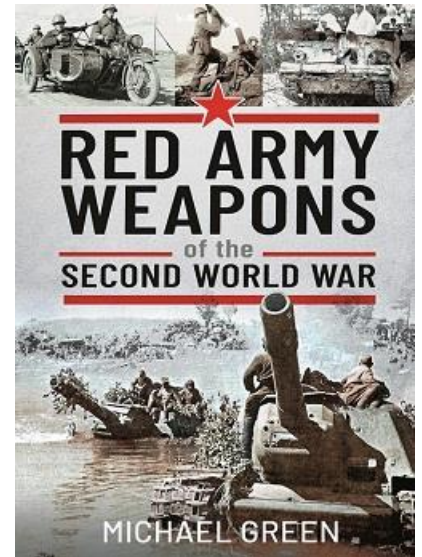
The Red Army had 1,225 T-34 tanks on hand at the start of Barbarossa in 1941 (967 deployed) and lost 2,300 between June and December 1941 -- half from 50mm PzIII and AT guns and almost none from the 37mm AT Guns (p89). In 1943, the Red Army lost 14,000 T-34s as the Germans deployed tanks and AT guns with 75mm weaponry (p90). The Red Army lost 16,900 tanks of all types (mostly T-34s) in 1944 and lost 8,700 of all types (mostly T-34s) in 1945 (p93).

However, Soviet factories churned out 35,000 T-34s with the 76.2mm gun by the time production ended in 1944 (p91) and built 11,050 T-34/85s in 1944 and 7,430 T-34/85s in 1945 (p93). Quantity is a quality all its own -- and Soviet tanks were notorious for breakdowns. The tanks were supposed to last 1,900 miles, but seldom survived past 600 miles (p88), so factories never minded the fit and finish as long as it drove out..

The book contains 225 black and white photos and two black and white illustrations.

The text is relatively smooth given all the specs embedded within.

Enjoyed it.



Bonus Photo: Before the Shako game, Dave auditions for a role in Les Miserables...

