

April 2022

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Books I've Read

Battle in the Baltic: UK vs USSR 1918-1920
British Gunboats of Victoria's Empire (New Vanguard 304)
Corsair Down: WWII Tales of Rescue and Survival
F4U Corsair vs A6M Zero-Sen (Duel 119)
Brigate Rosse: Italy 1970-1988 (Europe at War 15)
C-17 Globemaster III (Legends of Warfare).
Operation Cactus: Maldives 1988 (Asia at War 26)
B-36 Peacemaker of Cold War (Combat Aircraft 144)
The Eagle and the Dragon (historical fiction)
The Last of the Romans: Fight or Die (historical fiction)
The Collapse of Yugoslavia: Essential Histories
Focke-Wulf Fw190 (Eagles of Luftwaffe 1)
Gotha Aircraft: From London Bomber to Flying Wing
Britannia World's End: Book 2 (historical novel)
Leaving Gettysburg (historical novel)
The Last One Out: Yates McDaniel WWII
Panzer Soldaten: Italian Blackshirt Division
Forgotten Tanks and Guns: 1920s, 1930s, 1940s
Waffen-SS at Arnhem: Images of War
Waffen-SS in Normandy 1944: Images of War
When the Shooting Stopped: August 1945
Waking the Bear: Wargaming Great Northern War



Arnhem Video AAR: Sgt. Baskeyfield and the AT Gun

The Amsterdam (Netherlands) 6 Shooters Wargame Club produced this 10-minute video replay of their game highlighting the anti-tank actions of British paratrooper Sgt. Baskeyfield at Arnhem. But this is far, far more involved than pointing a camera. You have to applaud the creativity and effort involved: <https://youtu.be/bo-OSi2NdDs>



War of the Roses: Tune-Up 1

by Russ Lockwood



The start of the War of the Roses game. L to r: Phil, Jay, Dave, Sam, Umpire Dan, Mike, Rich, and Chris.

I always look forward to the annual War of the Roses tune-up game at Dave's. We bloodthirsty nobles clear away the *DBWR* cobwebs and battle it out in a big four-on-four match. I should say that annual is a bit of a misnomer. For the past two years, coronavirus put a halt to Dan's annual "King for a Year" War of the Roses game day that comes a couple weeks after our tune-up at Dave's.

Umpire Dan (hat) on the Yorkist side. Jay is moving to grab the walled field.

Random Sides

Per usual, we diced off for sides. I ended up on the Lancastrian side with Mike, Rich, and Chris. The Yorkists consisted of Phil, Jay, Dave, and Sam. Our parallel lines created on the tabletop, we squinted at each other and commenced movement.

Jay advanced to nab a walled field, which served as a bastion for his forces. Phil came up to support with a pair of pike next to the field and the bow and billmen strung to the flank, culminating with a light horse unit. Dave and Sam kept pace.

As I was the left flank, I figured I better fight like with like. I stuck my two pike in front of Phil's two pike and likewise strung my bow and billmen out to the left. I also put my one cavalry and some auxiliary troops on the far edge to counteract any effort by Phil to swing around my flank. The village of Little Bumbleton anchored our flanks.

The Lancastrians advance, although with a slight curve on the right flank.



Advance

Jay was content to hold the field and Phil was content to defend next to him. I'm not sure what the plan was, but Chris was having none of that. With a mighty roar, he sent his light troops against Jay's troops in the walled field. I could do naught else but support with my swordsmen, even if it meant yielding a factor due to Phil's pike supporting the wall. I still had a slight edge against the skirmishers who took up a defensive line at the wall.

My command of Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Photo by Mike.



The cubes of fate tumbled and Chris and I managed to push Jay's light troops off the wall and control the wall for our own +1 benefit.

On my left, next to Little Bumbleton, my troops danced a fine waltz with Phil's troops, although I was starting to get a tad over-extended. Not to worry. My center bow shot like lions and decimated Phil's center.

Advance in echelon on my left as I try to turn Phil's flank.



The Counterattack

Phil slowly gained the advantage in position as my troops slid further and further forward next to Little Bumbleton. It didn't end well for me. His billmen eliminated my cavalry and my line soon became porous.



My cavalry threat gone on the left, it was up to my bowmen to slaughter the middle. My swordsmen attack the walled field at right.

In the Middle and Right

Due to a small woods, Mike came in on an angle on the right flank against a straight and steady Sam line. Slowly, ever so slowly, Mike formed up with Rich, who was keeping up with Chris. Soon enough, the lines crashed into each other.

I neither saw nor heard of any big breakthroughs, just the steady crushing of units streaming towards the rear.

On the Lancastrian right flank, the shooting starts. Photo by Dan.

Back On the Left

I had to do something about my porous left flank, so I moved up the line and started shooting. Success greeted my missilery and I soon punched a nice-sized hole in Phil's line.

My pike began a push against Phil's better pike but soon recoiled. I tried again, with supporting troops slinking alongside the pike. Phil moved up his general. The big battle was on.

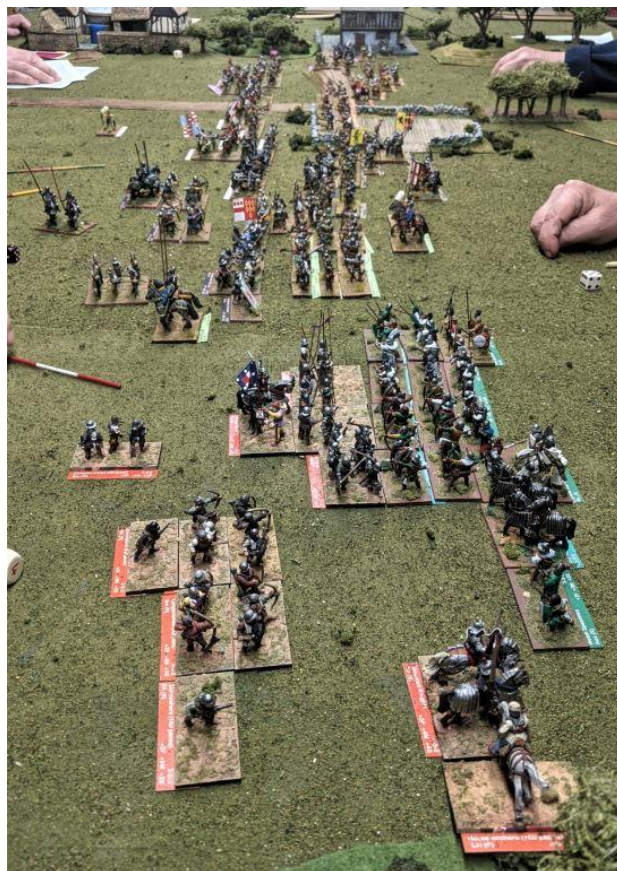
The Yorkists sure seem to be able to keep a nice, neat line while the Lancastrians seem a bit erratic. Combat will do that to a command. Bottom: Mike (red tags) takes on Sam (green tags). Middle: Rich on left takes on Dave on right. Upper Middle: Chris prepares to assault Jay's walled field defense. Top: Russ (left) advances on Phil. Photo by Mike.

The Slime Move Not Taken

There is a perfectly legal move that allows a unit to "hook" a scant millimeter behind an enemy unit to cut off retreat. Never mind that 59mm would be clear, it was the 1mm that counted.

Worse, that oh-so-slight bit of retreat blocking (thus killing the unit should it retreat) is a flank or even rear. The hooking, blocking unit will get a casualty cap, but the unit pushed back dies.

I've never liked that gamey move. I didn't use it against Phil's leader. My theory is that the recoil happens. If you want



to put a -1 casualty cap, I'll concede the point that something may have disrupted the recoil, but an outright kill? Nope.

The crash of the lines as the Lancastrian commanders watch their troops closely.

End Game

At this point, after about three hours, we called the game. It was too close to call. The slaughter had been minimal, a least on the left flank. Phil and I had an equal number of units splattered onto the battlefield, but plenty of fight left for everyone.

Best of all, we reacquainted ourselves with the rules, which offer a good give and take aspect. Just when you think you're a toasted Duke Albert in a can, you can dance away long enough to return the favor.

Another excellent *DBWR* game.

Phil attacks with his personal Talbot stand against longbow. Russ' Beaufort cheers on his men as he tries to exploit the hole in the center and turn the pike's flank...oh, and kill off Talbot, too. This turned out to be the end position for these troops. My notes indicate this is Turn 10, or, about three turns per hour, or 10 minutes per side to move and combat.

A most nefarious and bloody-minded pack of medieval nobles as you can find clustered around another wonderfully-terrained table by Dave. L to R: Phil, Jay, Sam, Dave, Dan, Chris, Russ, and Rich. Photo by Mike.



The 2022 War of the Roses “Primer”: Umpire Recap

By Dan

It’s been two years since a War of the Roses game was conducted using *DBWR* rules. I’ve been hosting an annual War of the Roses “tournament” since 1999, and prior to that event, I usually host a War of the Roses “primer” for Dave’s “First Friday of the Month” club to allow the players to re-acquaint themselves with the rules prior to the big event.

Initial advances. The Yorkists secure the walled field.
Photo by Dan.

So the Lancastrians (Michael, Rich, Chris, Russ) faced off against the Yorkists (Phil, Jay, Dave, Sam) across a fairly open field of battle, where a field surrounded by a stone wall became the “anchor” of the Yorkist battleline (probably a graveyard now).

The players were sent the latest version of *DBWR* (2/2018) prior to the game, so when I asked if we needed to go over the rules, they were ready to start the game.

The Yorkist commanders Jay and Dave (blue shirt) create confer about which unit gets the honor of holding the dead center of the line. And such a nice line it is while awaiting the Lancastrians.
Photo by Dan.

What’s The Plan, Man?

The Yorkists had the table first to figure out a battle plan. I told them they could switch their commands around as they wished, but they were content with the random placement of commands I had placed on the table. They tried to figure out a way to get a local superiority, but accepted the probability that with as open a battlefield as this, this was unlikely – but they would try to delay the Lancastrian left to gang-up in the center. Their starting deployment was draped



to prevent the Lancastrians from seeing their starting set-up (the “Fog of War”).

The Lancastrians then had the table to determine their strategy. Like the Yorkists, they were content with the initial placement of commands. Their plan was simple: Go forward and kill them.

Umpire Dan (hat) considers Phil's request about wall etiquette.

Deployment was 600 paces from the table edges. It took 3 turns for all of the commands to get within 300 paces of each other, so the shooting started by Turn 4. The Lancastrians won initiative, so they were able to claim the field surrounded by stone walls, manning it with skirmishers and some auxilia, since these troops were not hindered by the rough going terrain.

For the most part, the opposing commands paired off: Russ vs Phil, Chris vs Jay, Rich vs Dave, and Michael vs Sam.

The Lancastrians on the right edge closer to the Yorkist line on the left.
Photo by Dan.

Battle Begins

Phil sent is lone cavalry unit way out in front on Turn 1 to stymie Russ' command, while shifting most of his command to join Jay's command. Russ countered by sending some units to threaten Phil's open flank, forcing Phil to commit troops to contest the maneuver. This caused both battlelines to detach several units, which caused both commands to hope for higher pip rolls to maintain control of these detachments. Eventually, Russ re-established his battleline before closing after seeing his flanking maneuver thwarted.

My notes say this is Turn 9 as both forces are fully engaged.

Jay manned the stone wall and anchored his battleline to the left of it as Chris advanced. While the opposing archers were similar in



number, the dice rolls were not, and Chris got the worst of the shooting contest, prompting him to commit the billmen and knights to the fight. The knights put up a menacing threat for a turn, but once committed to the fight, both fell to longbowmen.

Phil cuts off Russ' push down the left flank and deals with those pesky cavalry.

The billmen fared better and his skirmishers and Auxilia cleared most of the stone wall, but Chris' command was taking more casualties than they were dealing.

Rich and Dave closed and had their own shooting war, with Dave fairing the worst of it, prompting him to commit his billmen and knights for close combat. Dave's knights made a bold move into the gap between Rich and Michael's commands, running down some of Rich's skirmishers. This prompted a response from both, as rear rank archers turned to face the sudden threat. Dave's knights survived the first volley, but the second put an end to the valiant knights.

As Michael and Sam, each side's archers were facing billmen and pikemen, respectively, so there was no "archery duel". Sam had artillery, which took out the Danish hand gunners, but then the artillery was taken out by the archers. Michael chose to close, rather than shoot, so in they went. Sam's Welshmen did well, standing up to archery fire while the Welsh archers drove back the pikemen, but contact was finally made as Michael made a bid to turn Sam's flank with his cavalry and knights. Promising positioning was undone by dice-rolling and the contest at the flank went back and forth. Michael spent every pip he could find to spur all his troops forward, but the impetuous advances crowded the combatants, and led to an untimely demise of his best mounted troops. Sam's success on the flank was followed by defeats in the main battleline, as the pikemen torn into some of Sam's archers.

At 10:45pm, players were looking for resolution, as some wanted to leave. Chris' command reached "break point," but had not failed and his battleline had not fragmented. Nowhere along the battlefield was there a clear breakthrough or victory. There was too much fight left in both sides, so I had to declare a draw.

That's a lot of Lancastrian muscle...er, I'm referring to the troops of lead, not Mike striking up a Superman pose.



War of the Roses: Tune-Up 2

by Russ Lockwood

The day before Dan's big *DB War of Roses* (*DBWR*) Battle Royale, I dropped by On Military Matters for a quick refresher game with Dennis. As I had discarded most of my rules rust at Dave's house a couple weeks earlier, I was in fairly good shape. Of course, I couldn't remember my exact units, but I got close, while Dennis tried out his exact command.

As this was a learning game, we didn't worry much about tactics other than posing what-if ideas when the battlelines collided. Dennis, a veteran of the *L'Art de Guerre* (*LADG*) tournament scene, needed to "unlearn" *LADG* as the two systems treated combat differently. Here are the main differences.

At start.

***DBWR* vs *LADG*: Command**

Both use d6 pips, although *LADG* adds in the commander rating (from zero to three) and then makes you divide by two and round up for the total number of pips. That's fairly typical of *LADG* -- it's fiddly. The result is the same, but you get to go through mathematical gyrations to get there. But I get ahead of myself.

***DBWR* vs *LADG*: Movement**

The two systems are pretty close in terms of movement, although *LADG* has a tricky "slide" move that allows a unit to move sideways one base width and then advance. It's kind of like an oblique in effect, but you can clear any unit or anything in front of you by moving sideways. You don't need room, you just move sideways.

DBWR has something similar: a column move where a column behind a front unit can "slide" a base width left or right and then align with that front unit or a distance equal to the movement rate of the new column (whichever is shorter).

DBWR has a more liberal interpretation of single-stand moves than *LADG*, but you will pay a pip per stand.

LADG movement rate is the same as *DBWR*, but the movement units are longer by about 33%? 50%? The result here is less ability to alter your initial positioning of stands as you close with the enemy.

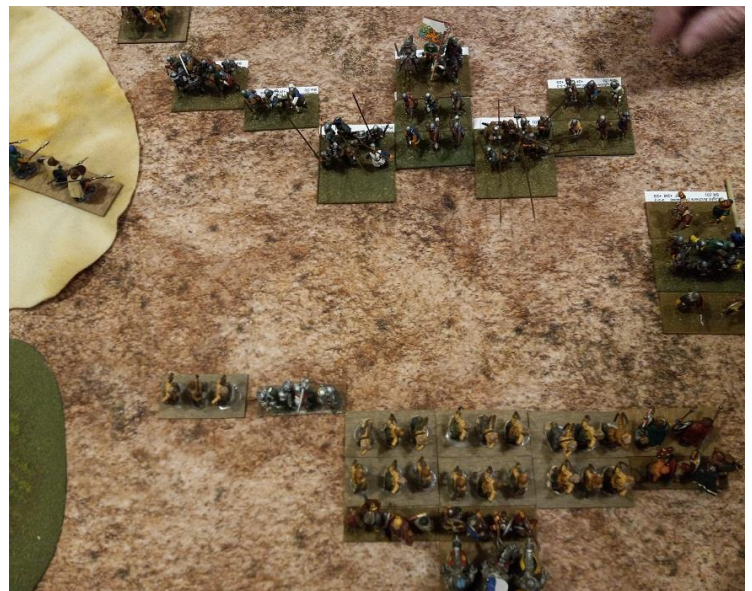
Turn 4. My skirmishers grab the sandy brush terrain in upper left corner while Dennis' column sees an opening around my right flank.

***DBWR* vs *LADG*: Missiles**

Dennis set up with *LADG* sensibilities, alternating bow and pike in his main line, while I set up in *DBWR* fashion with a solid line of bow in front. The differences between the two systems couldn't be clearer when it came to target priority.

In *LADG*, my bow would shoot directly, exactly, to the front, which meant I would shoot equally against pike and bow. In *DBWR*, target priority is also to the front, but first at units that could shoot back at you: i.e. the other bow.

In *LADG*, the maximum number of hits you



can place on an enemy bow during shooting is exactly 1. In *DBWR*, you can eliminate a stand during shooting if one unit's combat result (d6 plus combat value and modifiers) is twice that of the other.

In *DBWR*, one die opposing roll creates a result. In *LADG*, one side rolls dice and applies a hit or not. And then the other side rolls a die to apply a hit or not.

Dennis' pikes are carving up my units in the center as he chops up my right flank.

DBWR vs LADG: Melee

As Dennis remarked (I'll paraphrase), he loads that page of small type with combat values, modifications, and results into brain RAM. It is specific to types and situations. It is fiddly. Dennis objects to that depiction, but he's had a dozen years and mucho tournaments to sort out all of it -- and that's what it will take you become proficient in *LADG*. I play Dennis a few times a year to help him work out new army lists. While I get the basics, the basics don't get you far enough to understand the full rules.

With *DBWR*, you certainly have some die modifiers based on terrain, supporting stands, and overlaps and such, but you can sit down and play and be fairly confident you understand most things. It also helps that Dan puts tags with movement rate and combat value on the bases.

LADG uses the difference in combat results to apply hits to units, so melee losers suffer being chipping away as the stands stay locked, unmoving, in melee. *DBWR* is more binary, with units either alive or dead. If you score greater than the enemy stand, the enemy stand recoils the unit a base width. Scoring double the results eliminates the lower scoring unit.

To understand the difference, understand that *LADG* is a tournament system designed to play to a conclusion in two hours. In one-on-one games, *DBWR* can play in two hours, but multiplayer games can take a long afternoon of the ebb and flow of combat. You always feel you have a chance in *DBWR*.

DBWR vs LADG: Morale

In the basic *DB*, when you lose 33% of your stands you lose. In *DBWR*, Dan modified it slightly so that you have a die roll after hitting the 33% mark to see if you stay in the game or become demoralized. Being demoralized is really ugly, but when playing multiple players on a side, it is possible to delay the enemy rushing through that hole that used to contain your army. Note: each lost skirmisher counts only a half stand, but your commander counts as three stands. Other stands count as one stand.

In *LADG*, each stand you lose is 2 points and each unit with one of more hits is 1 point. When points equal you starting number of units, you lose. Why a miserable skirmisher unit counts the same as mounted knights in *LADG* is beyond me, other than they want tournament games to end quick.

Game end. It was carnage on both sides, but my last gasp melees failed in the face of pike.

Dennis' DBWR Tune Up Game

This is exactly what Dennis wanted to figure out. He learned more on the tabletop. I shot him up early because of his initial deployment, but he hung in there until his die rolls scored considerably better than mine during one stretch where I saw unit after unit die from being doubled. That's frustrating in any game, but you can't really do much if you roll 1s in combat. Such are the fortunes of tabletop wargaming.



War of the Roses: For Want of an Hour

by Russ Lockwood

Ah, April, and a middle-aged man's fancy turns to...War of the Roses. Although skipped for the last couple years due to the coronavirus pandemic, Dan's hosted a War of the Roses battle for 19 years -- 2022 would be the 20th. For rules, we use his *DBWR* variation specifically modified for War of the Roses. By vote, we also altered the usual format this year.



All smiles at start. Center table, the fog of war has yet to lift. Left to right: Mike, Keith, Dennis, Dave, and Dan.

Usually, we'd have one on one games, with the winner absorbing the loser and casualties carrying forward to the next battle -- a two on two battle. If a stand was eliminated, it would reappear in the next battle, but with a casualty cap on it that generated a -1 die modifier. In between games, the players would roll to try and remove a casualty cap.

In the two on two game, again, the winner would absorb the losers and carry forward casualties for the third and final game with a four on four battle to determine the king for the year.

As the years passed, gamers' obligations pulled them away from the tabletop as afternoon slipped into evening. In the 19th running of the nobles (see my Apr. 20, 2019 AAR), Michael the Bald and Philip the Hairy battled to a draw.

For the 20th battle royale, we dispensed with the preliminary bouts and the two would line up anew to settle the kingship claim. Alas, Philip the Hairy could not attend, but six of us randomly lined up to contest the crown: Mike (Michael the Bald of Burgundy), Keith (Richard of York), and Dennis (Dennis of Shorthaus) on one side facing Dan (Stafford the Duke of Buckingham as well as our host and umpire), Dave (William Burkeley), and Russ (Lord Fauconberg, the 'Lion of Stockton').

The Lion of Stockton, aka Fauconberg, commanded: Dismounted knights (BD = Blade, S = Superior), four billmen (O = Ordinary), eight Bow (Longbow, S), two Spear (O), and one Skirmisher (O). We were using the 33% breakpoint. If I lose six stands (note the SK = 0.5 and my commander Fauconberg = 3), I start rolling for demoralization.

And my command, deployed.

The Fog of War

A well-used ploy was the raising of the game boards. We split the table down the middle so that each side could set up in secret. The good news is that it heightens the anticipation about what the opponent will do. The bad news is that, at least

Command	Cost	Break Value
Fauconberg: Bd (S)	25	3
Bd (S)	9	1
Bd (O)	7	1
Bd (O)	7	1
Bd (O)	7	1
Bd (O)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Bw (S)	7	1
Sp (O)	5	1
Sp (O)	5	1
SK (O)	3	0.5
Command Total	131	18.5
Break Point (20%)		4
Break Point (25%)		5
Break Point (33%)		6
Break Point (40%)		7



for me, the memory of what terrain is on the other side is rather too short-lived. Out of sight, out of mind? Sadly, yes indeed!

When all are ready, down come the boards, the fog lifts, and we see what we are up against.

The Lion of Stockton (right), in full heraldic livery, moves forward to get to grips with Michael the Bald's Burgundian forces (bottom of photo). That stream would help the Burgundians. Dan (The Duke of Buckingham) confronts the reality of a woods dead ahead. And yes, Footie fans unite. Photo by Mike.

Fauconberg vs. Michael the Bald

As I never quite know what I'll face, I tend to set up in a compact formation, ready to shift where necessary and expand as needed. My command comes without any mounted, which puts me at a slight disadvantage if the enemy has lots of mounted. The saving grace is that I'm also smart enough to spend the points for eight Superior Longbow stands, which are twice as effective against mounted as against infantry. Each pair of longbow are backed up with a unit of billmen that can move through the bow should bigger, badder, better armored fellows bar their way.

A unit of dismounted knights adds some heft to a flank, while a pair of spear form a reserve along with the Lion himself. I am short of troops who can fight in crappy terrain -- only a single skirmisher.

The lines close...Photo by Mike.

The command can be frustratingly fragile. A few bad die rolls with the shooting and my elite archers melt away. I've seen it happen over the years, and yet, with reasonable rolls, the superior longbowmen can do some damage and also force back those bigger, badder, better armored fellows long enough to get my own bigger, badder, better armored fellows into play. Then it's a race to the flanks...and that's dependent on rolling pips.

Michael the Bald's command contains a cannon -- a troop type that I consistently see get slaughtered with little effect. He does group his own four superior bowmen next to it as well as four ordinary bow. Some billmen back the bow. I can see I have a slight deficit in missileery when facing the Burgundians.

But what the points give, they also take, for Mike fields a pair of pike. They are very tough to kill and can anchor a line. Like me, Mike has a single skirmisher for the crappy terrain. Unlike me, he has a light horse to delay an enemy and a cavalry unit to run down skirmishers and possibly bigger, badder, better armored fellows.

Getting closer, although that stream will impact my future movement.



It's a pretty even fight, except the Bald has a cannon, which gives me a double edge...at least in my own mind. If I can kill this pretender to the throne... perhaps the kingship will be mine...

As I edge away from the stream, my skirmishers take a big hit from Mike's cannon and rout to the rear (lower right corner). Dan's skirmishers face off against Mike's skirmishers in the woods (upper right corner). I had shot up and routed Mike's light horse, but he had rallied it and brought it back with a casualty cap helmet (upper left corner).

The Lion of Stockton Roars

The way the commands and terrain fell, the Lion of Stockton and Michael the Bald were slightly isolated from the center commands. While Dave and Dan could form a combined line, a patch of woods separated the Lion from Dan just the same as separating Mike from Keith.

With initiative in my pocket and a die roll for pips enough to get me most of the way across the intervening open space, the battle began. Mike tried the ploy of sending his light horse wide to my left. My longbowmen put enough arrows into enough bodies to rout it away.

"Take that, thou foul vagabond!" the Lion roared.

That pretentious pretender to the throne Michael the Bald paid his pip to stop the routing, but for the moment, my left flank was clear.

Sadly, a stream crowded me, so I had to spend a few precious pips over a couple turns to shuffle a bit to the right. When bow are in the stream, they cannot shoot and I suffered at least one turn of a couple stands being unable to fire. It could have been worse, but I rolled well enough when needed.

The exchange of arrows began favorably enough, but soon turned fatal for me and my longbowmen. Mike started to outroll me. Remember what I said about the fragility of my command? Uh-huh!

"And back at you, thy pox of England," Michael screamed back.

My entire line except for the left recoils from Mike's missilery. I should have taken that as an omen. Meanwhile, his light horse dash across the stream and start to threaten my left flank. Up top, Dave dances in the plowed field and wished he hadn't taken up gardening. Photo by Mike.

Go Away or I Shall Taunt You Some More

Nowhere was that distinctive lack of die rolling more evident than on my left flank against a single stand of Burgundian crossbowmen. Make that ordinary Burgundian crossbowmen. My so-called superior longbow could not kill that bunch of Lucky



Pierres. I barely even forced them to recoil. I even lost the d6 rolls when I had a +2 advantage. Again and again, firing phase after firing phase, the die rolls told a tale of taunting in a bad French accent:

"You silly English bow-boys, we are much better than you, you piggy bottom biters. Your mothers were gophers and your fathers stank of boisonberries. We wave our private parts at you and pass gas in your general direction!"

Oooh, are those vertical cracks too much? I can never tell...

Losses mount on both sides from missilery, and I nail the light horse to my left flank.

About the only good that came out this repeated taunting was that Mike sent his rallied light horse again around my left flank.

Mike troops, with his two pike units, longbow, dismounted knights, and those cursed miscreant crossbowmen (lower left corner) who caused me so much pain and suffering. They may have been rated Ordinary, but they fought like double secret Superior!

I turned a couple longbowmen to deal with them. Saddles were emptied and one light horse unit disappeared from the battle. Meanwhile, the Burgundian taunting continued.

Mike's troops steadily fall back, but I am fragmented from casualties. Keith and Dennis keep up the pressure in the center and my right, as Dave maneuvers his troops in some of the most freewheeling melees ever to grace a tabletop.

On the Right

Dennis and Dave hammered at each other over on the right flank, although I did not see much of it, consumed with my own predicaments. The biggest problem is that Dennis took two pike units, but completely forgot about the plowed field (rough ground) on the other side of the



fog of war boards. When the boards came down and the fog lifted, he was a bit stuck because pike in rough going is particularly bad for combat.

Dennis' light horse circled around the flank to threaten Dave's troops (light blue tags) and sheep. to frighten Dennis' troops (right, white tags). The plowed field stymied Dennis' pike more than battle.

So, with his pike stuck, Dennis tried an end around the flank. Indeed, he managed to get a cavalry unit fully around the end of Dave's line.

Nonplussed, Dave sent his personal bodyguard to chase Dennis' horse away, which it eventually did, and the battle continued in the plowed fields.

Meanwhile, arrows flew and other units clashed as Dave held off the Shorthaus tide, even as both sides' once neat lines fragmented, forcing the use of many pips to jockey for position.

In the Center

Dan and Keith clashed in the center in a swirl of carnage. First one, then the other seemed to get the upper hand as gaps appeared in their lines and reserves plugged them.

Dan's troops (yellow tags) hold the center and start creating gaps in Keith's line of black-tagged troops. Dave holds our right flank. Photo by Mike.

Of import to me, their skirmishers clashed in the woods, descending into a stalemate just as their personal command stands charged head-on into each other.

When your personal command stand is locked in melee, all your commands cost two pips instead of one. When rolling an average die, the most you can roll is a 5, which means two commands maximum. As losing your commander is really bad, both used their one or two pips to reinforce this personal melee.



Danger in the Woods

That meant the skirmisher units in the woods were ignored, although they were certainly a concern of mine. As the turns progressed, I moved slower and closer to Mike's line and his vulnerable cannon on its end. True, the cannon shot at my dismounted knights and occasionally forced them back, but it was that stupid skirmisher that caused me angst. It had already eliminated my skirmisher. Obviously, they were made of sterner stuff than my skirmishers.

Lined up and advancing. Note Mike's crossbowmen still survive despite my superiority in troop quality and quantity. My flank is hanging a little in the woods, but I'm expecting my skirmishers to cover and Dan to advance. I did not realize that the command stands of Dan and Keith are locked in melee, limiting pip usage. Photo by Mike.

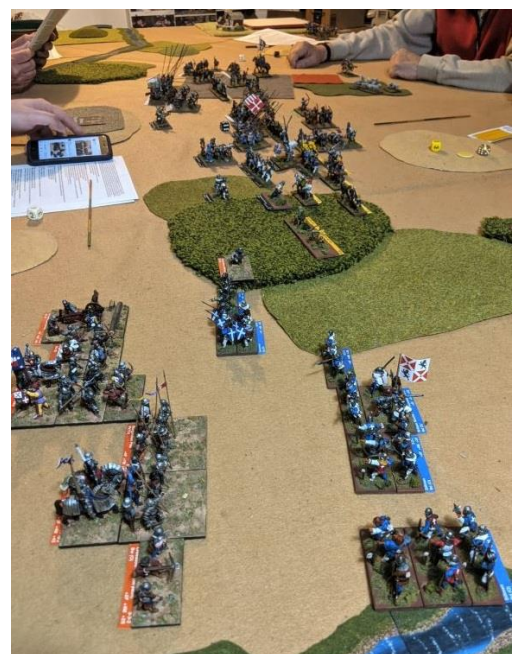
Now here's why:
If I ignored it, Mike could pop it out of the woods to hook around my dismounted knights while simultaneously firing at the knights with skirmisher and cannon. If my retreat was blocked, any backwards movement would eliminate my knights. A solid flank is a glorious thing. A porous flank is a nightmare in the making.

So, the knights took an immediate right turn and were sent in against Burgundian skirmishers. I even turned a billman to support the attack by the knights.

I was hoping to rout the skirmishers to never never land, but all I got was a lousy pushback and no T-shirt. The skirmishers still posed a threat, although I could use the billmen to block the skirmishers and thus free up my knights to go after the cannon.

The Lion of Stockton's plan, however ugly its execution, was starting to come together as I cleared the flanks.

See the danger my dismounted knights are in? My skirmishers are eliminated and there's a cannon that's been sighting on me all advance. If the skirmishers hook around and the cannon fire forces me to recoil, I'm eliminated.



Back At My Main Line

Those fetid Lucky Pierre crossbowmen stayed alive and taunted me again. Then, my firepower advantage dwindled as Mike consistently rolled better when he had to and I didn't.

Mike's skirmisher forced me to turn, but all I did was recoil it, while the cannon fire forced me to recoil. At least I got rid of those miscreant crossbowmen! Now my longbowmen curled around the flank and looking for gooey cavalry to shoot up.



Mike's bow and cannon even picked off a billman. Again, remember what I said about fragility of command? Double Uh-oh!

Finally, although it took all game, I shot up the Lucky Pierres into crunchy oblivion. The flank was open and I surged the line of billmen forward to engage the pikes as my bowmen raced alongside, searching for the gooey Burgundian cavalry lurking behind the pike. He had few melee troops and I had the matchups I originally sought, even if my army was a bit battered getting to this point.

One more turn and I could shoot up the cavalry. The next would see the pike surrounded, forced back, and eliminated. The next would see the second pike surrounded, forced back, and eliminated. Of course, the die would have to reasonably cooperate better than it had been...and therein would feature a future tale.

Game Called

Alas, we ended the game right then, as Michael the Bald turned into a white rabbit, muttered "I'm late, I'm late! For a very important date! No time to say 'hello, goodbye,' I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!" He traveled back to France.

I'm not sure how the other commands fared, but mine was damaged enough that another loss would start me rolling for demoralization. I'll let Dan tell that tale.

End game positions. Oh, for want of an hour more to turn Mike's pike!

Clever Cannon

This was the first game that I can say the cannon proved valuable. Mike slowly withdrew it, preserving it while continuing to either bring direct fire or bring supporting fire. It's the cleverest use of cannon I've ever seen in two decades.



Pips played a role, as Mike shot away the stands in between the knights and the main line of archers/billmen. Besides the loss, it also forced me to spend pips to redress my line and chase away that pesky skirmisher with the power to cut off my knight's retreat. You can also add in more pips to deal with the light cavalry on my left. This was not my finest hour of pip control.

It all added up to delays that allowed Mike to make a fighting/shooting withdrawal and keep firing at me with the effect I was trying to create.

But the star of the Burgundian defense was the Lucky Pierres crossbowmen stand. It defied all my efforts for all the turns except the last one. And remember that shooting occurs twice per turn. If they had lived, I would promote those Ordinary fellows into Superior -- no points charge. I'm sure there's a cadre left to plague me in future games and train up the raw recruits to ordinary status.

And there you have it -- another tight battle where each side, and indeed, each command, has a chance for victory. Good job, Mike, and thanks, Dan, for hosting another War of the Roses event.

A Rose-Colored View: Burgundian Prowess

by Mike

The English crown still rests on nobody's head.

The trumpets blared as the church bells rang 12 noon and the combatants decided to call "early tea" by 3:30-ish. All very civilized. Nobody dead. Well, at least none of the nobles present.

Those on my side -- Dennis, Keith and me -- concocted a grand plan: Concentrate their three divisions "between the two rivers" on the left 2/3rds of the table; Dennis on the left (flank) and Keith in the center would quickly kill everybody they confronted on the other side of the table. My command on the right would protect that flank and exploit any opportunities that might emerge, if any (probably not). Brilliant. Simple. What could go wrong?

When the curtain (boards, that is) went up, it was evident that those on the other side: Dave, Daniel and Russ, had concocted a very similar plan. At least that is what it looked like from our side of the table.

About 210 minutes later, Dennis had killed more of Dave's units than he had lost and Dan the same of Keith's command. I gained some advantage on Russ in what was almost entirely a shooting contest, but not to the point that Russ's melee units had suffered decisive losses. At least that was my take-away.

Well, one more:

I believe that if we hope to preserve the two qualifying rounds, then we need to sound the trumpets much earlier; limit the first round to no more than a "slap in the face" (i.e. first blood or a couple of units killed on one side), the second round not much more; and no "recruiting/recovery" of lost units going into the final round.

Editor Interjection

Well, we could opt for a 20% "Hard" Break Point for the first round, a 25% "Hard" Break Point for the second round, and a 33% "Usual" Break Point for the third and final round. By "Hard," I mean when you lose enough stands to reach the 20% level at the end of a half-turn, the round ends. In my case, the 20% level is 4. If I lose 4 Break Points worth of stands (most stands are 1 BP, but the skirmisher is 0.5 and the commander is 3) at the end of my half bound, the round ends in my loss, assuming I didn't also break the enemy. By "Usual," we use the formula $[d6 + \text{stands lost}]$ must be over the 33% BP number or else the command is demoralized. -- RL

A Burgundian Analysis

Playing against Russ' "The Lion of Stockton" command (Lord Fauconberg), I got to better appreciate the strengths and, in particular, weaknesses of my "Michael the Bald" command. I tried to create something that represented my understanding of what a Burgundian army would have looked like back then, so artillery, handgunners, some English longbow mercenaries, knights, lowland pikemen mercenaries, some crossbowmen, and some billmen.

I opted for a shooting contest although The Lion's eight longbow (Superior) are scary -- and in particular to my two units of knights. I did well in that shooting contest, rolling decently while Russ rolled poorly.

However, as I was studying what might be the right time for me to seek a conclusion by way of melee combat, I drew the conclusion that I would need to shoot up some of Russ' billmen and hopefully even that dismounted knight first -- otherwise I would be outnumbered and flanked. I had five melee units: my two pikes (Ordinary) were good, and my one double blades (Ordinary) would be capable, but the two mounted knights gave me considerable pause.

The 20th Annual War of the Roses Event: April 16th 2022

by Daniel

After a 3-year hiatus, this event was scheduled for one round for anyone that wished to attend. I was going to try to re-fight the 2019 final round, but most of those participants (including a contender) were not present. By random draw, our two sides were:

Michael, as Michael the Bald of Burgundy

Keith, as Richard of York

Dennis, as “Dennis of Shorthaus”

Russ Lockwood (the “Lion of Stockton”), as William Neville, Lord Fauçonberg

Dave, as William Berkeley

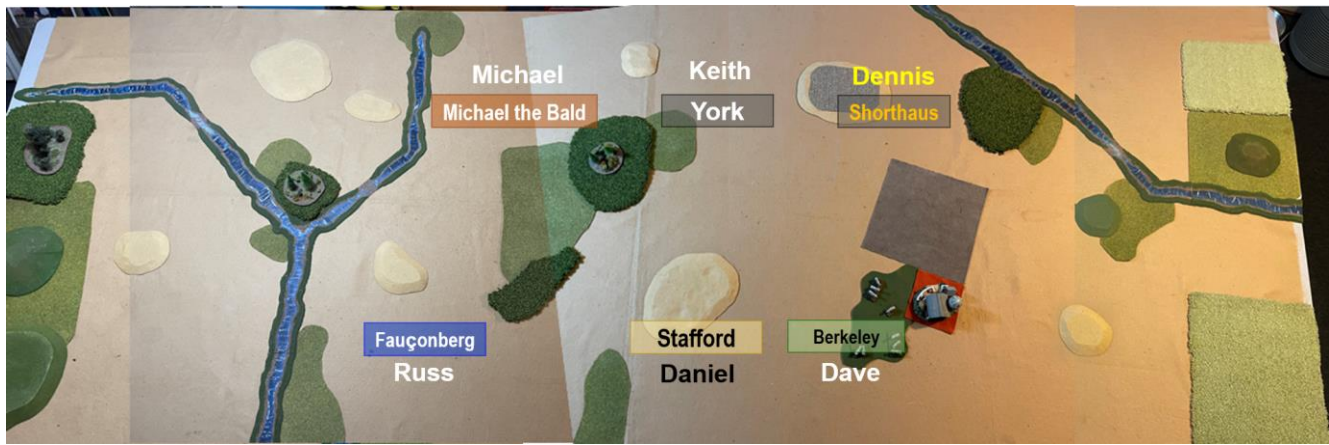
Daniel, as Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham

This game was one round, 3-on-3 with 130-point commands using DBWRv18, ending as soon as one side becomes demoralized. We met at 11am, probably starting in earnest by noon after the pre-game salutations, snacking on bagels and donuts, and catching up on each other's business. Three players brought their own commands and three players chose a command from among 17 available. As it turned out, the three commands with pikemen ended up all being on the same side.

Both sides had time to review the table after describing the terrain features. The center 7 feet of the 10-foot wide table was available to deploy the commands, up to 600 paces from the table edge. A screen was set up along the centerline to allow hidden deployment, which was removed once both sides completed their starting set-up. Predictably, both sides deployed where the terrain had the most open ground.



All set and ready to go. Photo by Michael.



Starting set-up after the “fog or war” was lifted.

No significant mis-matches after deployments were revealed, so no situations where two commands could overwhelm one. Each side had one command separated by the large woods at the center of the table, but that did not stop either side from slipping in some troops to try and turn a flank.



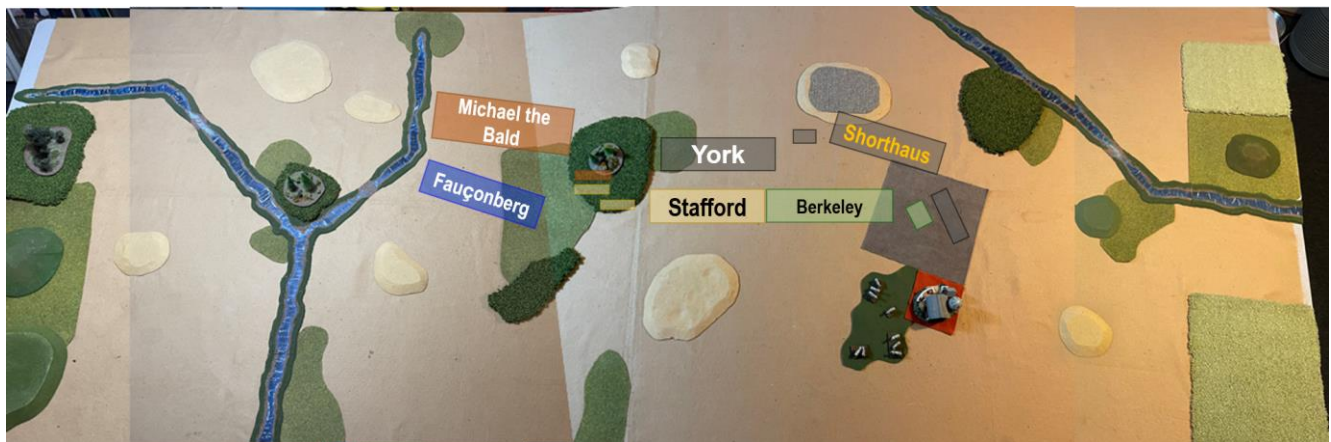
Here we come...

Lord Fauçonberg (the self-proclaimed “Lion of Stockton”) rapidly claims the center of the table as Lord Stafford’s center command advances somewhat reluctantly off the hill. On the far right Lord Berkeley has to deal with a number of enemy light troops trying to turn his flank, prompting him to hold his battleline a little behind that of Stafford.



... and there they go.

Michael the Bald (Michael, left) is content to anchor his battleline between the woods and stream, stopping short of the brush that covers a third of his frontage and lets his archers and cannon engage the foe at distance. Keith (Duke of York, center) advances his handgunners to exchange volleys with Staffords archers and cannon, while Dennis (Shorthaus) detaches a number of skirmishers on a wide flanking maneuver, prompting Dave to respond with his knights.



Once in missile range, all commands were content to fire away at each other. Both sides suffered casualties, but finally York's pikemen started the final march across the field of battle to close for melee.



York closes to contact while the wings continue shooting away.



Closer..., closer...



Oh, let me have a little peril...

Michael the Bald and the “Lion of Stockton” had quite a shoot-out, with the “Lion” losing 5 of 8 archer units, but giving as good as he got. With the dwindling number of shooters, the melee troops had little reason not to close, but only a few would.

York pushed his pikemen forward, and his billmen as well to keep an even battleline. Stafford fared better in the shooting contest, but now he had to pull back most of his archers and artillery and exchange them with his billmen and dismounted knights. Some were out of place and artillery had to hold the line until billmen could reach them, but York saw the predicament and shoved a column of billmen to take out the artillery.

Stafford responded by ganging up on the column, cutting down the lead billmen. York doubled down by bringing his leader into the salient to flank some of Stafford’s billmen, but they held firm – for now. This prompted Stafford to commit his command stand against York’s dismounted knights covering York’s command stand. Stafford crashed through them and contacted York.

The rest of the combat seemed to go in slow-motion as the two nobles went at it, back and forth. Because both leaders were in combat, each order given from them cost an extra pip, contributing to the lull in the battle as troops from both sides saw their leaders in personal combat and stopped to watch.

But when an order was given, it was to assist their leader. York was in more trouble than Stafford, because he was still in the salient with Stafford’s troops on either side. Losing his last loyal billmen fighting by his side, York’s command reached Break Point and York suddenly felt alone – but his dice fought well for him. Again and again, York would be in peril and his better dice postponed his fate – right up to the dinner bell.



Berkeley and Shorthaus commands break down into separate units fighting in the fields.

On Stafford's right, Lord Berkeley scrambled to hold his right flank together. Shorthaus' skirmishers were reinforced with some archers and eventually some halberdiers as the main battleline halted at the edge of the plowed field while bit by bit, separate units were committed to the flanks. Berkeley's battleline held firm in the field, but also send individual units to handle the threats to the flanks.

The skirmishers were in their element in the broken ground, but they had more "bark" than "bite". Berkeley did suffer some casualties, but did not reach Break Point. Both sides were desperate for command pips to bring the separate units into a coordinated attack.

On the far end, the Burgundians accept close combat, but the combats are few as the game comes to a close for dinner. Losses on both sides are significant, but neither has reached Break Point. The remaining Burgundian skirmishers in the woods pester Fauçonberg's flank as the battleline advances to close with the Burgundian battleline, such that the "Lion" felt compelled to deal with them.

After about 3 hours of social play (and more than a few rules questions), we broke for dinner and allow players to leave for their other commitments. There was too much "game" left to determine a winning side, but plenty to argue about. With one command at Break point and three others near Break Point, the battle would probably have been decided had play continued for another 30-60 minutes.



The shoving begins, but not for long.

Considering that 4 players had played once in the last 3 years and 2 had not played since 2019, the game moved along at an acceptable pace and all rules questions were addressed without arguments.

A well-contested battle among good friends with a lot of fun had by all. A great start to resuming social wargaming!

Spanish Civil War Card Game: Three Players

By Russ Lockwood

As we had time after the great War of the Roses game, Dan, Keith, and I settled in for another three-player playtest of Dan's Spanish Civil War Card Game.

I proved easy enough to pick up for Keith, and play proceeded smoothly as each of us draw cards, weighed the need for more resources versus spending resources, and tried to optimize our strategies.

In the end, it was a very close game: Keith had 49 points, Dan had 50 points, and I had 51 points! Can't get closer than that!



GDW Traveller: Return of a Classic

By Russ Lockwood

Sean wanted to start a *Traveller* sci-fi RPG campaign using the new *Traveller* version, or should I say, a new *Traveller* version. It's been decades since my buddy Abe ran a *Traveller* campaign based on the *Star Wars* universe circa 1980.

I have no idea which version Sean's using, but I can say that it seems an awful lot like the old version. I'm going to call it *New Traveller* (NT). We eight players met over Zoom to generate our characters and sort out some preliminaries.

My version was the original, not Deluxe Edition, but it's been so long since I've seen it. It's probably buried in the closet somewhere.

Character Generation

NT uses the same 2d6 mechanic for just about all things. Unlike my buddy Abe, Sean did not allow a mulligan on the initial rolls. I wish he had. My education was only a 4, as was my social standing. While that makes for good story development for living on the proverbial wrong side of the tracks, I also see the limits such a pair of bad die rolls will cause. At least I rolled 8s for Endurance and Strength, a 9 for Dexterity, but only a 6 for Intelligence. Definitely below average rolls in total.

Being handicapped, I chose to enter directly into the Army. As with the original, you go through a series of 2d6 rolls for survival, advancement, and so on, along with d6 rolls for picking up skills. When all said and done, I had rolled up a couple of points for Endurance and Intelligence.

This gave me a variety of skills to choose from, so I picked a variety of shooting, flying, driving, and melee skills. I also generated double recon (Skill level 2 in game vernacular) and Stealth 1. I guess I'll be good at sneaking and scouting around. I also made a double unarmed combat melee (Unarmed 2). Now I can scout, sneak, and subdue.

Not knowing the ins and outs of the game system, I probably could have allocated my extra points a little better, but that's what happened. I came out with 22,000 credits (of which you could spend only 10,000 for armor, guns, and equipment), a "contact" (ally), and two cybernetic implants: Wafer Jack (computer port for your head) and Enhanced Vision.

I also rolled badly for survival and ended up on some table for getting kicked out of the Army with an "enemy."

Great. So, what are these contacts and enemies? Dunno. You make them up.

Make them up?

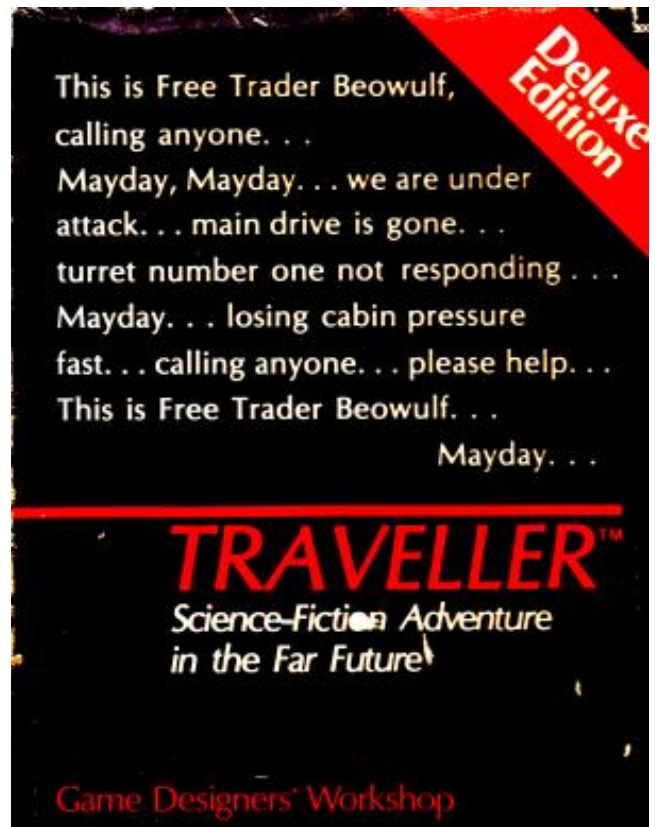
Yep. The GM will figure out how to weave them into the campaign.

Equipment

As for equipping, I could choose lots of things from a long list. I chose a Laser Rifle with one heckuva scope, a number of four types of grenades, plain knife (you always need a knife), and a fingerless glove with knuckle guns that take four shotgun shells. It packs a heckuva punch if my subdue rolls prove too low.

Besides reloads, I took a combat environment suit with minimal armor because that's all I can afford, Alien Cosplay Kit (aka a disguise kit), Advanced Water Purification kit (10 pk), 1 Field Kit (like an archeologists panpoly of clothes and equipment), 1 Mobile Comm, 2 Commdots (ear bugs to connect with mobile comm or other comm), 2 Cold Light Lanterns (flashlight by any other name), 1 Pocket Saw (serrated knife for those tough vines when on an archeological expedition), 1 Ring Laser (a cutesy James Bond device that gives you 10 minutes of laser cutting -- eat your heart out Roger Moore), 1 Intelligent (computer) Interface (presumably for the jack in my head), and 1 compass (I guess a compass is not part of a field kit).

So, now all I needed was a background.



Who Am I?

No, I'm not in a Jackie Chan movie... Aw, c'mon... Google such martial arts sweetness.

I'm Brax Ruttles, adventurer extraordinaire. At least in my own mind.

The newer, fancier version of Traveller.

Brax Ruttles

Born on the wrong side of the anti-grav tracks and destined never to cross them as a teenager, Brax oozed trouble even when asleep. When awake, mayhem followed him wherever he went. He never thought much of rules and rules never thought much of him.

A Contact

As thefts turned to assaults, stints in juvenile corrective facilities only served to give him an education greater than the classroom. He proved to be as fearless as he was reckless, at least until a shake down by a gang called The Marauders triggered his one-teen attack. That netted him a stay in a hospital bed.

With little to do for a day, he considered that discretion might have been the better part of valor. Then he tossed such a consideration away. Not 20 minutes after his release, he ambushed two of the gangers. The resulting melee sent him into minor surgery, but not before he took a few more Marauders with him.

A week later, he emerged back into the general population. Sitting down for lunch, Tor Ninn, the boss of the Marauders, slid opposite him. "Truce," Tor suggested. Brax nodded.

"You cracked some of my boys' heads."

"Squeeze me and I hit back."

"I get that. You join the Marauders, nothing like that ever happens again."

"Nah," Brax said. "Too much attention."

"Pity. You're making me look bad."

Brax focused at a point just above Tor's head. "Not as bad as him." Brax picked up his plate and skimmed it inches over Tor's head. The move was so unexpected, the boss didn't even have time to flinch.

The plate sailed under the chin and into the throat of an attacker sneaking up behind Tor. The brute chirped a strangled cry and reached for his throat. As Tor turned around, the brute dropped a shiv and sank to his knees, gasping for air.

Brax remained seated, shrugging off Tor's bemused glare. Guards surrounded the trio, dragging the brute gangster off to medical and frog marching Tor and Brax into detention cells.

Through the bars, Tor asked, "Why the plate against the Rattler?"

"All you gangers are the same, but at least you had the balls to face me alone."

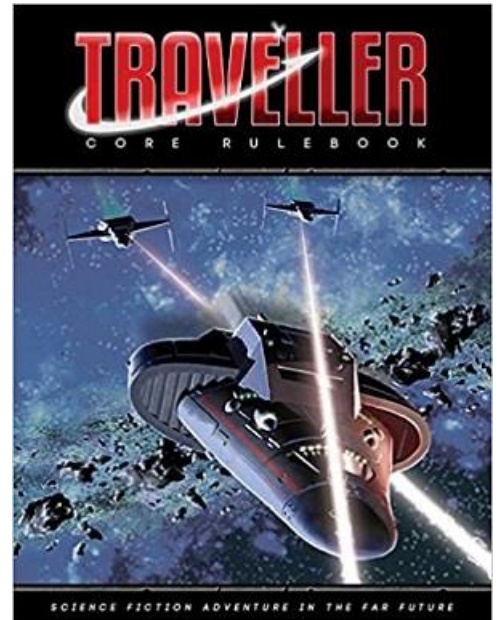
Tor grinned. "Well, I'm making you an honorary Marauder anyway."

"What an honor," Brax snorted. "But I accept."

The two formed an alliance that bordered on friendship. Brax became an almost model detainee, if for no other reason that no one was willing to confront him.

After release, the two kept in touch, developing an understanding through young adulthood. Brax entered the Army. Tor entered the criminal underworld. Brax learned the skills needed to kill lots of enemies of the state. Tor learned how to skirt the state and navigate the ganglands to rise through the hierarchy long enough to form his own Marauder Syndicate -- an honest assortment of business organizations that concealed darker enterprises.

As Brax merited promotion to Lance Sergeant, he also transitioned from front-line soldier to support-line driver, he gained access to a wide-ranging array of equipment sent off to one of the many Imperial fronts. Every piece of equipment he was responsible for got to where it was going, all properly signed and countersigned. It wasn't his fault that equipment subsequently wasn't to be found. Of course, somehow, Tor-controlled companies scooped up such "used" equipment for resale elsewhere among the stars. It was all legitimate -- the electronic paperwork said so.



An Enemy

It was working all so smoothly until Imperial Army Captain Blaster St. John-Smythe ran into the motor pool in a panic, demanding an anti-grav speeder to escape the oncoming Trogum guerrillas.

Brax's first thought was, "Who the hell names their kid Blaster?" And then he remembered that the Captain was part of the old order family sent out into the frontier to get his command ticket punched for higher postings.

Brax's next thought was "What guerrillas?"

The bullets whining over his head convinced him that the locals were apparently as fed up with the Imperium as he was. Still, if he could loop under St. John-Smythe, that could only go well for him.

"Run? Hell no, Captain. We have enough to fight the Trogs right here," Brax replied, propelling the officer towards the gun locker.

Brax pulled out his favorite laser rifle -- a two-fisted harbinger of death with no recoil, superior sights, and a pseudo-fusion energy pack that could "shoot all year."

"C'mon Cap. You rally the men, we crush the Trogs, and you get all the glory," Brax urged.

"No, no! I'm leaving!" St. John-Smythe shouted and climbed into a hoverhummer half disassembled for maintenance. He pummeled the start panel to no effect.

"Leave it!" Brax yelled and tossed a standard laser rifle up to St. John-Smythe. It bounced off the petrified officer and clattered to the floor of the hoverhummer.

Two soldiers skidded around the corner into the garage, also looking for transport. Brax leveled his laser rifle in their direction. Both put their hands up.

"Don't shoot!" screamed one.

"The Trogs are coming!" screamed the other.

Then they spied St. John-Smythe. Both pointed. "He's the one who caused this SNAFU!"

"He ignored the reports of Trogs in the wire. He froze! Then he ran! No orders. No deployments. Nothing!"

Their heated condemnations drew others.

Brax shrugged and tried again. "Sinjin-Smythe! You have to lead the counterattack."

St. John-Smythe ignored him and climbed out. "I'm going for reinforcements!" With that, he ran from the garage and headed toward the rear.

Brax cursed, then faced the handful of soldiers and mechanics. "Screw him! Grab guns. Auto rifles, shotguns, laser pistols...whatever you need. It's killin' time!"

The battle proved short and sweet amidst a slaughter of guerrillas and minor Imperial casualties.

Unfortunately, a debrief of the action found both St. John-Smythe and Brax up for a court martial: the former on charges of cowardice and later on charges of insubordination.

The results were predictable. Well-connected St. John-Smythe received an recommendation for additional training in his file and a posting to the edge of Imperial space. Brax was kicked out of the military without a pension. St. John-Smythe blamed Brax, who returned the sentiment.

Connections

Brax only knows one connection by his last name, Gaines, a retired Marine gunny, known from the court martial. His other connection, Wendell Marlowe, was the pilot who flew Brax and Gaines around through all the proceedings.

An Opportunity

Tor was sympathetic to Brax's plight. He also made the connections and paid for Brax's passage to the edge of Imperial space and a meeting with a King in search of his kingdom.

A company of mercenaries formed. When it came time to name it, Brax suggested the Crimson Permanent Assurance Company.

Then again, given his low education, Brax sometimes forgets details.

The Crimson Permanent Assurance Company Goes Adventuring

Brax found himself sitting in a throne room in front of Drinax King Oleb, or as Brax Ruttles calls him (but not to his face), "King Oh-blah-di, Oh-blah-da, life goes on-on, shoot first to make life go on..."

Hey, they don't call him "Ruttles" for nothing.

The deal was the group of well-connected mercenaries at loose ends get a 200-ton warship in some sad need of repair, a letter of marque, and a vague plan to disrupt trade into Alsam, the next empire over that wasted Drinax and hastened the end of its mini-empire. King Oh-blah-di Oh-blah-da has one wasteland world and one intact agriculture world under his control and wants more. He gets a 10% cut of whatever we get (after expenses, of course), but we have to repair the ship using either cash or something called “ship shares” (rolled up in character generation).

As retired Army, I had no ship shares...or any ship experience for that matter. But other members of the CPA Co. did and they argued for more shares if they tossed ‘em in. Fair enough.

So, we patched up the hull from 48% to 64%, repaired the missile turret, and improved the crew quarters and the bridge with spiffy fixtures worthy of *StarShip Digest* magazine. Then we set out with a royal guide, the Lady Margaret, to intercept a free trader starship that had contraband. It was a bloodless bounty of illegal pharmaceuticals. We ignored the regular legitimate cargo and sold the illicit haul to a fence named Linuri – again, provided by our royal guide. She left us at this point.

We picked up a rumor of a two-ship raid on a nearby system, went to investigate, and found a system still reeling from the loss of a considerable stock of starship parts used by their repair facility. Here, we convinced the authorities to show us the public records of the various logs that captured info, including an errant file that served as the malware for the sensors and defense systems. We tried to crack it, which needed two 2d6 die rolls. Our computer expert did his part, but the other, our pilot, failed so bad, he unleashed the malware in the ship systems. It took hours for it to be found and expunged.

That left the two raiding ships. A fortunate roll with an Investigate skill discovered that a third, a scout ship, dropped into the starport a couple days before the raid and left just before. We investigated as much as we could about the scout pilot. The trail went cold until another royal benefactor dropped a hint about a nearby system. I have this uneasy feeling we’re being led by the nose.

Off we went to grab the scout, which had apparently docked at a disused space station with an active SOS beacon. Alas, it was nothing but a floating pile of debris. The space station beckoned and in four of us went, to be confronted by an acid-spitting spidery thingamabobby. It took three shots to turn it into a smoking ball of fuzz, but we got the pilot out...although his mind seemed a bit fried by the spidery thingamabobby ...we thinkamabobby.

We left and that’s where we left it.

The Page Turner

I am guessing this is an adventure module, as Sean read text from time to time. If it is, don’t tell me anything. I prefer to let my ignorance contribute to the unfolding story. I expect he’ll add twists and turns beyond the printed text.

But I will say that this seems like old *Traveller*. Then again, it’s been a few decades... A bit too much accounting about ship maintenance costs for my taste, but Eric’s taking care of that, so I’m good.

We did the actual adventure part half in Zoom and half live. I was in Zoom with three others. The other four were live at Sean’s place. It’s a little odd doing a Zoom RPG, in that you lose body language cues – we often talked over each other in the beginning, but we got better. It’s a little slower -- you need to fiddle with the software to display a map and where our characters stood, but Sean did a fine job with screen sharing and markup icons in place of the usual map and miniatures.

We’ll see where this takes us. Looking forward to the next installment of our adventure, or, “All you need are guns. All you need are guns. Guns are all you need. (All together now). All you need are guns. All you need are guns, guns. Guns are all you need. Guns are all you need. I shoots it yeah, yeah, yeah...”

1942Plus: Spring Into Action 1942

by Russ Lockwood

My grand experiment *1942Plus* started with a special, fog of war "Turn 0" part production and two-unit movement that would not be subject to any recon or intelligence operations. All took advantage of it, of course...

To recap, all movement would be simultaneous. Each unit possessed a "Kick or Stick" (KoS) rating -- if two forces crossed the same border in opposite directions, I'd compare the total KoS and the higher would prevail in determining where the battle took place. It is possible that attacks from multiple adjacent land areas and sea zones might be thwarted from joining up to attack one enemy area/zone. We'll see if it makes a gaming difference.

It does require more attention by me as GM. With some units having multiple area/zone movements, it can get to be a swirling movement of units. Hence the need for a KoS mechanic.

I did find a couple wobbles here and there in set up that were fixed before Turn 0. It's a good thing I included the initial set up in the rules. Copying and pasting in spreadsheets can be hazardous to an OOB.

Fair warning: Since the game is ongoing, and fog of war is part of it, I'm going to be vague. My sense is that the players will share info anyway, but I'll leave that decision up to them. The main 'public' news will be which land areas changed hands.

Turn 1: Spring 1942

The proper start to the game saw a flurry of moves and combats by all countries. Some wobbles and need for clarifications, but nothing fatal.

The Japanese proved masters of amphibious assault, along with a little air force aid, and attacked the lightly defended Chinese province of Fukien. The Japanese now controlled the entire coast of China.

Across the globe, the US launched Operation Torch, an amphibious assault that landed troops in Morocco-Algeria and defeated the minimal German garrison. As the British wisely refrained from joining in the attack, the US reaped the ardor of the French, who rebelled against Vichy authority and styled themselves Free French.

Inside the Mediterranean Sea, the Italians stirred with an amphibious assault of their own -- into an empty Trans-Jordan. The end-around worked and now the Italians held half of the Suez Canal and the British the other half. The Canal was closed to traffic -- the Med was an Italian lake.

But the big show was between the Germans and the Soviets. The Germans launched Case Blue that drove eastward and captured Stalingrad and the Caucasus against no opposition. That was the good news for the Germans. Where did the Soviet defenders go?

Aha! The good news for the Soviets was a pair of offensives, Operation Tormasov that drove into North Ukraine and Operation Kutusov into Belorus. The former ran into a minimal garrison while the latter ran into a more extensive garrison. Both areas fell to the Soviets.

Unknown to all but FDR, the USA spent Turn 0 rallying Brazil to the Allied side and spent Turn 1 rallying Mexico to the Allied side.

Recon and Intelligence Operations

Both of these mechanics use die rolls to determine their accuracy per area/zone. The players do not know the chart I use, but they do know that empty areas/zones are actually empty and that unit types are accurate. Remember that Turn 0 had special production and movement actions that were not subject to R&IO.

I don't know if any of the players were surprised or not, but I suspect I'll hear about it! I know when I was playing in a fog of war-style game, I couldn't figure out how some things occurred, but the GM assured me it was correct. As it turned out, I had to adjust some recon results because I forgot to include them. Doh!



End of Turn 1

Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Battle in the Baltic. by Steve R Dunn. Softback (6.1x9.2 inches). 304 pages. 2020.

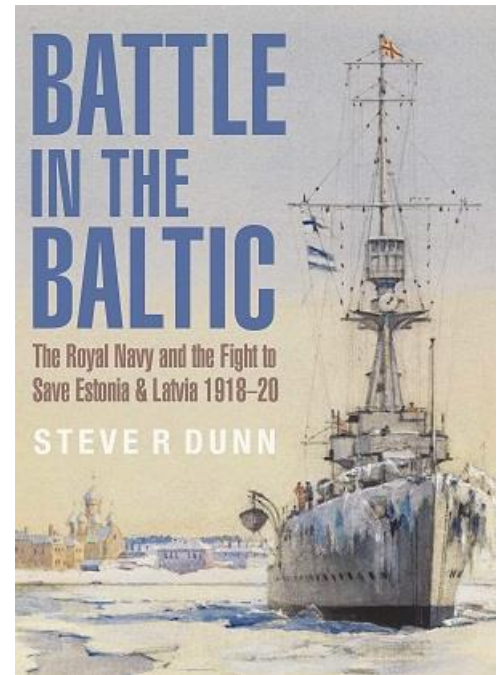
Subtitle: *The Royal Navy and the Fight to Save Estonia and Latvia 1918-20*

After WWI, Estonia and Latvia declared independence, but the Soviet Union and Germany had other ideas. The USSR wanted to regain the territory while Germany wanted to keep something from its win over Tsarist Russia and create a Greater Baltic region under its control. Meanwhile, the White Russians also wanted the territories back in Russia. With the Versailles Treaty not yet a done deal, Britain sent Royal Navy light cruisers, destroyers, and support ships into this five-ring circus to help Estonia and Latvia.

In this gripping account of the maelstrom of political will and haphazard forces, the British Royal Navy fought against the Red Navy, supported land battles with naval bombardments, and defending itself in ports from German artillery and MG fire. It's as if WWI had not ended.

Add in abysmal weather conditions, post-war penny-pinching, war-time minefields, and hot-and-cold political maneuverings and you have one interesting account of an obscure, or at least obscure to me, mini-war. And lest you think this was some show the flag operation, the Royal Navy deployed a total of 238 ships, of which 19 were sunk (including a submarine, two destroyers, and two light cruisers) and 61 ships damaged. Imagine deploying such a force to Ukraine today.

It includes 41 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, and two black and white maps. Enjoyed it.



British Gunboats of Victoria's Empire (New Vanguard 304). by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2022.

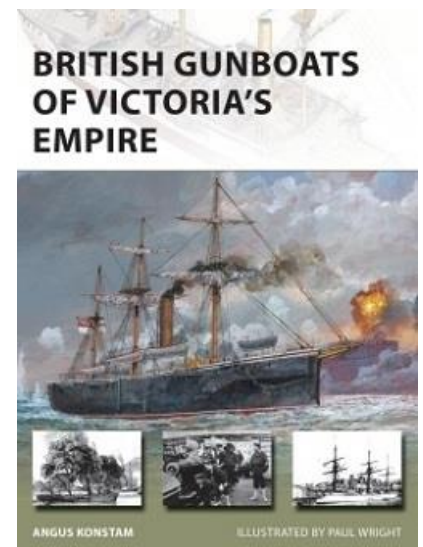
This specification-driven overview of British gunboats covers 36 classes, starting with Crimean War-era beginnings through 1870s heyday to late 19th Century decline. Development and modifications based on operations take you through the evolution of Britain's extensions of sea power.

Originally designed as a shallow-draft shore bombardment ship, its missions covered the globe with greater and lesser results depending on the decade. Its steam and sail configuration underwent changes as construction morphed from wood to steel and from gunboats into sloops.

While the end of the 19th Century brought an end to most of its action, at least one, the HMS Dwarf, tackled the Germans in Cameroon at the outbreak of WWI with some success (p46).

The booklet contains 29 black and white photos, seven black and white illustrations, four color illustrations, eight color ship profiles, two full-page color action illustrations, and one two-page color illustration of ship equipment.

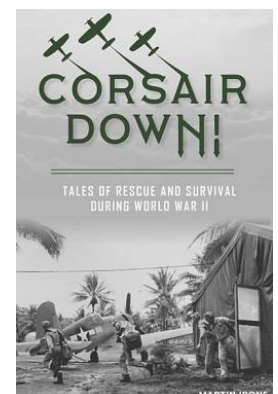
Enjoyed it.



Corsair Down: Tales of Rescue and Survival During World War II. by Martin Irons. Hardback (6.4x9.3 inches). 304 pages. 2021.

This collection of short first-person accounts of Vought F4U Corsair combat offers the usual bell-shaped curve of interest, from absolutely fascinating and riveting to just another combat experience. The latter is not meant to belittle the pilots' efforts, only that reading books like these can get repetitious.

Overall, the stories present evasion details that are sometimes too amazing to believe -- Vichy French hiding a half dozen US pilots in a Saigon prison from the Japanese and one idiot pilot firing a Very pistol flare inside that hit a nearby house where the local Japanese commander lived -- and not being found out. Or bundling the pilots northward via truck to



Hanoi for escape under the noses of the Japanese. Or Japanese soldiers searching the back of the truck and ignoring the pilots (in civilian garb) sitting in plain sight and completely ignoring them. Or getting them out of Indochina on a C-47 operation run by the OSS (p137-149). There's a TV movie in there that no one would believe.

Sure, that's the most dramatic escapade, but others are more sobering, especially losses due to weather where multiple pilots ditched and some were never found. Or the transfer of Major 'Pappy' Boyington and Major Boyle to Japan while the other pilots were executed.

The book contains 83 black and white photos, five black and white illustrations, and eight black and white maps.

Enjoyed it.

F4U Corsair vs A6M Zero-Sen (Duel 119). by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Rabaul and the Solomons 1943-1944*

Claringbould has written a number of superlative WWII air war books covering Japanese and Allied operations in the Pacific during these same years. Consider this Osprey a distillation of multiple books into a single introductory volume.

This follows the usual format of weapon development, tech and specs, strategic situation, tactics, combats, and a nice section on statistics. As the author has explored the area, including finding downed aircraft decades later, and always cross-checked Allied records with Japanese records, you get a full sense of the air war -- including the outrageous kill claims on both sides. You also learn that the moniker "Whistling Death" was a company public relations ploy, not a name bestowed on the plane by the Japanese (p7).

One wobble in the book concerns the F4U, and is most likely semantic. The initial developmental contract was issued in February 1938, with full production contract in February 1941, with the first production aircraft's maiden flight was June 24, 1942 (p12). A caption notes the first plane was delivered to the USN October 24, 1942 (p8) while another section notes the first plane was received by the USN on July 31, 1942 (p12). It's a slight 'first' disconnect, which may be that the plane was delivered to the USN July 31 and then the Navy delivered it to a front-line unit on October 24. Or maybe not. It's unclear to me, but in any case, the F4Us started to appear in late 1942 in USN inventory and after training and shipment, appeared in the Solomons in early 1943.

The book contains 57 black and white photos, three color photos, six color aircraft profiles, two color gun placement illustrations, two color cockpit illustrations, two color maps, three color formation illustrations, and one two-page color combat illustration.

Hopefully, interest in *Duel 119* will stimulate you to investigate the other Claringbould books. You can pull air scenarios from this book with ease.

Enjoyed it.

Brigate Rosse (Europe at War 15). by David Francois. Softcover (8.2x11.8 inches). 80 pages. 2021.

Subtitle: *Far-Left Guerrillas in Italy 1970-1988*

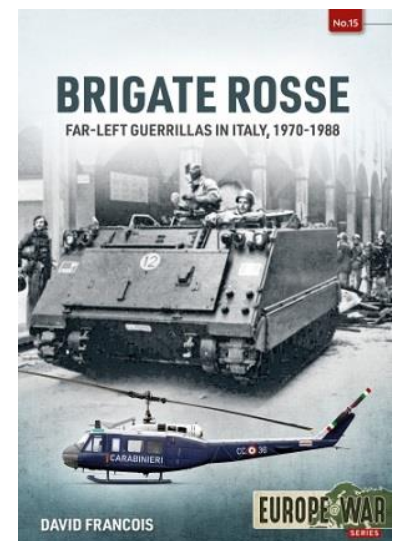
The sub-title can call them guerrillas, but they're terrorists by any other name. They carried out a campaign of bombing, bank robberies, kidnappings, assassinations, and other violent attacks in an effort to overthrow the government and install a Communist government.

It didn't work and eventually, they were tracked down. Those that weren't killed were imprisoned. It's not a pleasant story and certainly a black mark of Italian history, but a battle that successfully defeated the terrorists at some cost.

This booklet contains 102 black and white photos, three color photos, and two black and white maps.

Brigate Rosse sounds more impressive than Terrorist Group Rosse and it's a well-documented story about communists who wanted to replace a democracy with an authoritarian system -- only without the support of the public.

'Enjoyed' would be misleading, but I appreciated the detailed information and analysis.



C-17 Globemaster III (Legends of Warfare). by Ken Neubeck. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 128 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *McDonnell Douglas / Boeing's Military Transport*

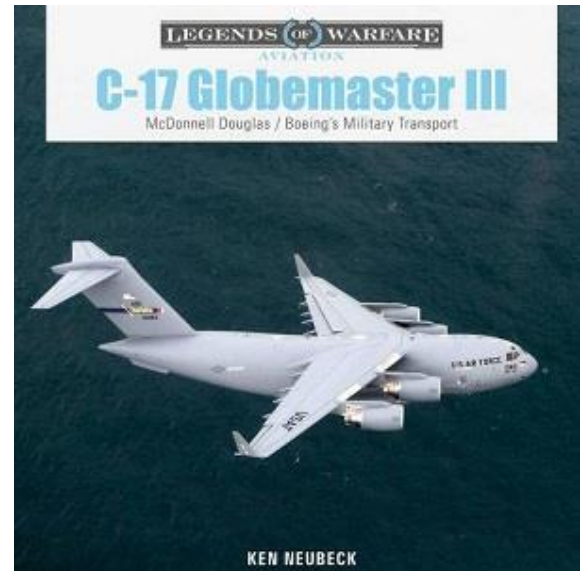
Another high-quality photo resource delivers 228 color photos, 19 black and white illustrations, nine color illustrations showing the various configurations of cargo and passengers, and 36 color unit patches of this US Air Force transport aircraft.

For modelers, the invasive photos show all sorts of details. The color paint jobs are usually gray or blue, but the markings change, so they can customize their models for display.

One photo shows a M1A2 tank driving out of the C-17 cargo area (p109), which would make a nice model diorama.

The C-17 filled a gap between the C-130 Hercules and the C-5 aircraft. A total of 279 were produced before production ended in 2015.

Enjoyed it.



Operation Cactus (Asia at War 26). by Sanjay Badri-Maharaj. Softcover (8.2x11.8 inches). 66 pages. 2021.

Subtitle: *Indian Military Intervention in the Maldives 1988*

An excellent overview of a military intervention by India against a coup attempt in the Maldives -- an island chain roughly situated off the southwest tip of India.

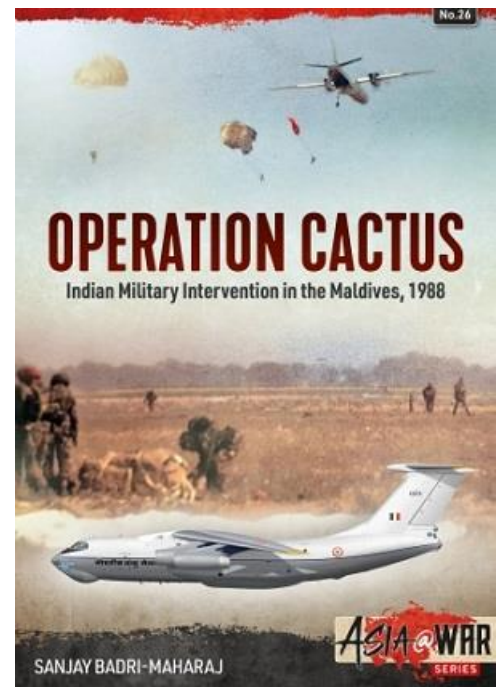
It's a case of just another despot trying to overthrow a small-country government, but foiled by a reaction force from a larger country. In this case, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) managed to grab a ship and land a few members to take over various key buildings. It was effective enough to rout the local cops, but when the government called for help, India was the only one in the area that could respond. Reaction Force might be a bit overstating the task force, but the Indian military cobbled together a battalion of paratroopers and other troops, which dropped on one island, and commandeered boats to attack the terrorists on the main island.

One typo: "wit vessel" should be "with vessel" (p51), but otherwise clean.

The booklet includes 60 black and white photos, one color map, five black and white maps, and color profiles of six aircraft, three helicopters, two vehicles, one artillery gun, and three uniforms. Per usual, I will harp on the lack of color photos in a modern-era action where color photos had to be part of the action.

Still, it's all marvelously laid out and would make for a nifty scenario of a relatively obscure action.

Enjoyed it.



B-36 Peacemaker Units of the Cold War (Combat Aircraft 144). by Peter E. Davies. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

This six-engined Cold War bomber is an iconic aircraft, with its pusher configuration and elongated fuselage. What I didn't know was that development started in 1941 to create a heavy bomber that could fly 10,000 miles and deliver a massive bombload.

The necessities of WWII production slowed its development, so the prototype for 1944 turned out to be 18 months behind schedule (p23). The first production version appeared on August 28, 1947.

The development of such a bomber is filled with tech problems that led to a number of failures and aircraft losses. Even when flying, it was a maintenance nightmare, although modifications reduced the original 60 hours of maintenance per hour of flying time down to 40:1 ratio (p57). It was eventually replaced by the B-52,



with the last B-36 rolling off the production line in 1959.

As usual, Osprey's booklets are visual delights, with this including 44 black and white photos, nine color photos, and 30 color aircraft profiles -- although just about all of them are silver gray in color, with one red-tail a decided exception. The tail markings are different.

As it turned out, the B-29 sufficed as a WWII long-range heavy bomber to hit far away Japan, but in an alternate, longer-lasting WWII scenario, the B-36 could appear over Japan.

Enjoyed it.

The Eagle and the Dragon. by Lewis F. McIntyre. Softcover (6x9 inches). 544 pages. 2015.

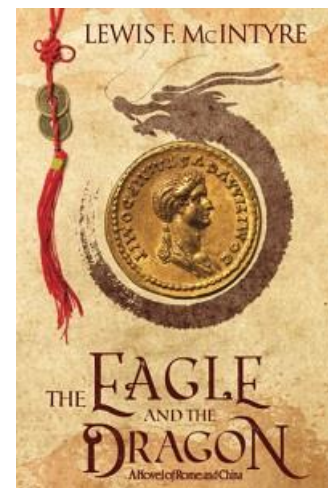
Historical fiction that supposes a Roman trading mission from Egypt to India and through to China in response to a Chinese diplomatic mission that reached Rome.

The historical details are marvelous and the prose floats you along throughout the journey. Our band of heroes battle one challenge after another, from double-crossing pirates to storms to more pirates to double-crossing Chinese officials.

The bad news is a lack of tension. I never felt the main characters were ever in danger from whatever assault they faced. Oh, they got a few scrapes and bruises here and there, but ancient medicine saved them. The author missed a chance to kill off the centurion during a bout with bandits, but nope, remove the arrow from the stomach, apply a paste, and he's right as rain within no time. The characters are well developed, but maybe the author got too close to them to want to off any of them -- save one at the end. I mean, you don't have to make it Game of Thrones-like where just about all your main characters die, but one or two here or there would heighten the tension.

The good news is that it's just a pleasant book to read, like an ancient travelogue with style. You feel you're there with them and that's a great feeling.

Enjoyed it.



The Last of the Romans: Fight or Die. by Derek Birks. Paperback (5.1x7.8 inches). 311 pages.

Historical fiction set in 454AD that follows a band of Emperor Aetius' assassins, or make that a band of assassins of the former, now murdered, emperor. Alas, Ambrosius and his band now face powerful enemies as they flee into Gaul.

The prose flows smoothly as escape seems ever closer to failure and the settings offer a glimpse into the ancient world. The characters are well defined, and unlike The Eagle and the Dragon, the band of assassin brothers suffers losses in their flight. That's tension, even if the Greek medic can work surgical miracles.

I'm looking forward to the sequel.

Enjoyed it.



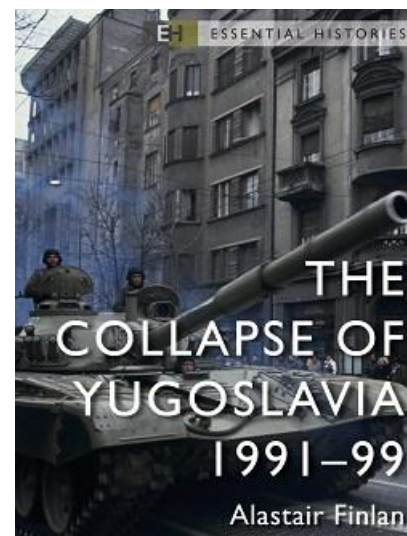
The Collapse of Yugoslavia: Essential Histories. by Alastair Finlan. Softcover (5.9x8.3 inches). 144 pages. 2004, reprint 2022.

The last chapter of this well-written and succinct account of the 1991-1999 civil war that engulfed and split apart Yugoslavia indicates the text was updated in 2022. As the Serbian dictator Milosevic tried to reform the country, the breakaway republics resisted. Ultimately, NATO intervened, although it took a few years of ethnic cleansing and other genocide to convince NATO of need for military action against Serb forces.

There may be a lesson covering Ukraine here for current the NATO ministers -- decisive military action achieved results quickly in smashing the Serbian military and overthrowing the government enough to bring Milosevic and other Serbian leaders up on genocide charges. Diplomacy with dictators did very little to diffuse the situation, but did allow massacres to occur.

Includes 53 color photos, one black and white photo, and five color maps.

Enjoyed it.



Focke-Wulf Fw190: Eagles of Luftwaffe 1. by Dan Sharp. Softcover (7.5x9.8 inches). 104 pages. 2021.

Well-written account of the development of the FW-190, with overviews of all the variations, plus the usual short snippets of combats and other operational history.

New to me is that in 1931, Focke-Wulf bought the near bankrupt Albatros company of WWI fame (p6). That expanded the engineering staff, which gave FW aircraft designer Kurt Tank better support to work out the problems found in prototype aircraft.

The booklet contains 87 black and white photos, eight color photos, four line drawings, and 15 color profiles of FW-190s in WWII camouflage.

The FW-190 became a mainstay of the Luftwaffe, eventually exporting planes to Hungary, Romania, Turkey, and even one to Japan. Yugoslavian partisans captured one and later flew it at the end of WWII (p67-68).

Enjoyed it.



Gotha Aircraft: From the London Bomber to the Flying Wing Jet Fighter. by Andreas Metzmacher. Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 159 pages. 2021.

Gotha may be better known for its biplane bombers than flying wing jet fighters, but I'm not sure if there are any left of the WWI aircraft, but the US captured the WWII jet and put it on display at the Smithsonian's Udvar-Hazy museum outside Washington DC. The colorized photo of the jet is on the cover.

The book covers aircraft development of both wars and in between, offering short profiles of all the plane variants, including experimental versions, as well as designers and pilots. Some combat actions are mentioned in passing, but otherwise, it's all about the aircraft.

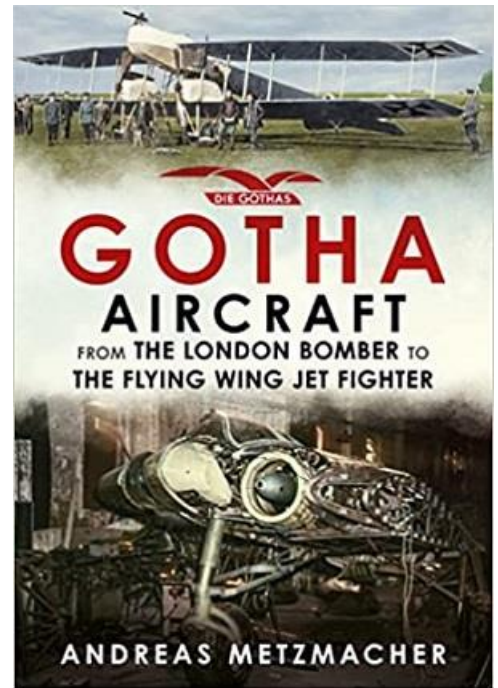
Pre-WWI, Gotha started as a railroad car and tram manufacturer whose CEO became infatuated with Zeppelins. After building a hanger and flight school, the company switched to aircraft design and construction -- even if their first plane in 1912 was rejected by the military.

The first aircraft bombing of England occurred on October 26, 1914, when a Gotha Taube LE2 dropped two bombs on Dover (p16). More were to come as aircraft supplanted zeppelins. The company struggled between the wars, but survived and was revived in the late 1930s. During WWII, they were mostly a contract manufacturer, especially ME-110s, but designed and built their own trainers and large gliders. The war ended before Gothas became part of the jet age.

The book contains 130 black and white photos, six black and white illustrations, and three pages of small type listing specifications for all Gotha aircraft.

It's all an impressive bit of research, especially as records and drawings were scattered all over the place, if not outright destroyed.

Enjoyed it.

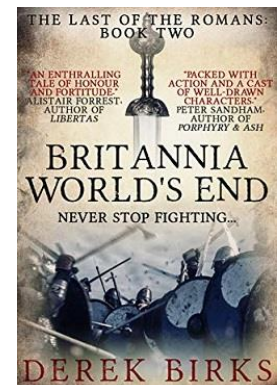


Britannia World's End: Last of the Romans (Book 2). by Derek Birks. Softcover (5.1x7.8 inches). 352 pages. 2020.

Historical novel follows hero Dux Ambrosius Aurelianus and the remnants of his command and family across the English Channel to Britannia, where he runs into the local warlord and slaver, Vertigern. Add in his traitorous sister and he needs all his cleverness to infiltrate Vertigern's stronghold, kill off the garrison, and rescue his women.

The details seem right for 454AD, the action moves right along, and like a good plot should, casualties mount with associated twists and turns. Any more and I'd ruin the book for you.

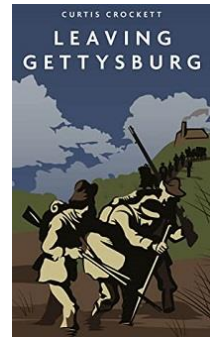
Enjoyed it.



Leaving Gettysburg. by Curtis Crockett. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 218 pages. 2022.

This novel about the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, with Confederate and Union viewpoints, paints a vivid image of an ACW army in retreat and a victorious army slowly reorganizing to pursue.

The research is impeccable, but around a third of the way through, I started to skip around, searching for something new other than more vignettes of retreat and pursuit. Nothing wrong with the plot, per se, but I already understood the numerous marching scenes and patrol scenes and foraging scenes. I found a skirmish here and there, and that seems indeed historical, but not much else to capture my interest.



The Last One Out: Yates McDaniel - World War II's Most Daring Reporter. by Jack Torry. Hardback (6.4x9.3 inches). 256 pages. 2021.

C. Yates McDaniel, reporter for AP wire service, was famous at the start of WWII due to his graphic descriptions and front-line reporting of the Japanese invasion of China and his narrow escape from Singapore the night before it fell. The book offers a complete bio of the reporter and editor as he escaped time and time again from capture by the thinnest of margins.

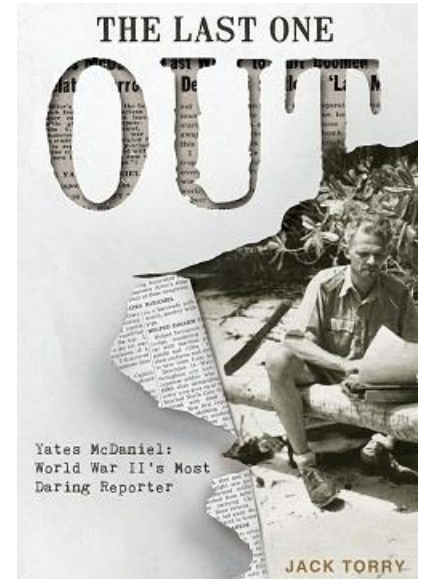
In one scene, he was with a group on a 'cattle boat' fleeing the Japanese when some of the passengers played a game called Battleship, "marked by loud cries of a direct hit by a torpedo." (p122). I'm not sure what that game is, whether it was something very well known or just something a passenger invented on the spot.

Of historical note, after the surrender of Bataan, US B-25s and B-17s from Australia flew to airfield in Mindanao (Philippines), refueled, and then bombed the Japanese around Manila. It would have made bigger news except two days later, Doolittle's bomber group flew off an aircraft carrier and bombed Japan (p134).

He eventually made his way to Australia, covered MacArthur's slow reconquest of the Pacific, and then was transferred to an editor slot. After the war, he was sent to Detroit, New York, and then Washington DC. Each transfer seemed to be lower in status than the last as WWII faded from the front page.

Well written and admirably organized, here's a slice of WWII out of the ordinary about a fellow with a nose for front-line news and the luck to keep his nose out of a Japanese prison or a grave.

Enjoyed it.

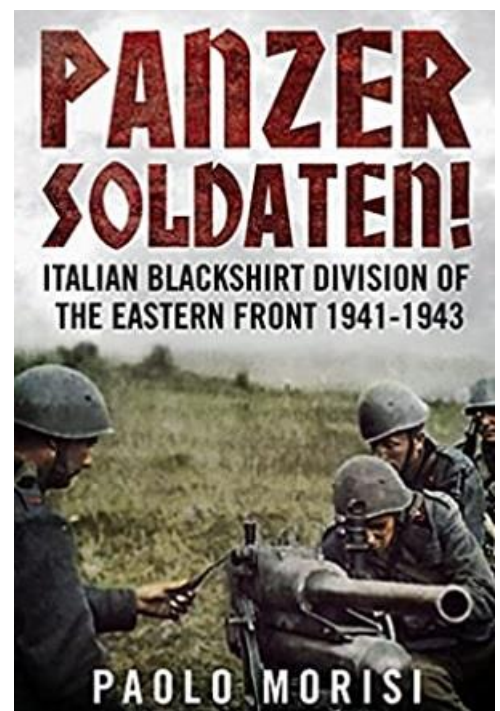


Panzer Soldaten: Italian Blackshirt Division of the Eastern Front 1941-1943. by Paolo Morisi. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 288 pages. 2021.

I was certainly confused by the title. As far as I knew, the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale (MVSN), more popularly known as Blackshirts from the color of their shirts, were not troops in an armored division or even a mechanized division. Indeed, my impression was that of a bunch of foot sloggers of no particular combat ability.

For much of Italy's war, that was true. Poorly trained and equipped, infantry with small arms proved impotent to stop British armor in the deserts of North Africa. As I was to learn, that started to change in 1942, especially in the M battalions (the M stood for Mussolini) as the Italian Army realized that these politically-motivated troops needed more and better equipment and training. The interesting part was that the Blackshirts were not part of the Army organization – assigned to and fought with them, yes, but the Blackshirts were paid less and had fewer benefits than regular Army. Since they were political, however, they were assured of preferential treatment and government jobs and benefits after their term of service was up.

The turnaround proved successful on the Eastern Front as these M battalions served as competent, even brilliant, assault troops that attacked with minimal artillery support, but lots of dash, daring, and grenades. Apparently, grenades were their favorite weapon.



As for the title, a German Panzergrenadier major who witnessed an assault by the Tagliamento unit to plug a gap in the line and capture the Soviet town of Warosilawa remarked they fought as good as German "panzer soldaten" (p140). I'm guessing a title like "Footslogger" probably wouldn't sell as well.

M Battalion soldier. Image from web.

I'm thinking this is a translation from Italian. It's generally pretty good, although you will find hiccups in the English from time to time, but nothing that a reread of a sentence won't sure. The information is spectacular and that's what counts. One quirk of the text: Italy sent two battalions of "forestry service troops" to Ethiopia (p43). I'm not sure what those are -- Lumberjacks?

That said, typos plague the book: USSR introduced the MiG 3 "fighter jet" (p22), "clime the economic ladder" should be "climb" (p75), "one the other hand" should be "on the" (p88), the final plan, "which was trashed out" should be "thrashed" (p127), "padding us on the back" should be "patting" (p194), suddenly "irrupted into" should be "erupted" (p208), a "post humorous award" should be "posthumous" (p212), and when "Thor tanks came" likely should be "their" (p215). It's sloppy, not fatal, but sloppy nonetheless.

There was an armored division created with the M battalions in 1943 with German equipment and German training. It was supposedly ready June 25, 1943 and Mussolini wanted to send it to Sicily in July, but politics intervened and on July 24, Mussolini was ousted from power. The unit stayed in barracks until the Italian surrender in September. A full TO&E is included and would make for a great what-if addition to a Sicily scenario. Imagine the M armored division, the Herman Goering division, and a panzergrenadier division counterattacking at Gela.

In any case, plenty of battalion-level scenarios can be pulled from the pages, although the couple of rudimentary maps are of minimal help. The book also contains 85 black and white photos.

This gem of a book offers a look at the M battalions that did yeoman's work on the Eastern Front. There weren't many of them, but élan and grenades served when numbers fell short.

Enjoyed it.

Forgotten Tanks and Guns: 1920s, 1930s, 1940s. by David Lister. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 130 pages. 2018, reprint 2022.

For those who like back of beyond gaming, here's a nice compilation of weaponry that didn't get much beyond the prototype stage, if that. Armored tractors, amphibious tanks, airborne tanks, a wide variety of guns, and lots and lots of dead-end designs populate the pages as countries figured out what their tanks and other armored vehicles should look like.

It's all accompanied by 69 black and white photos and 25 black and white illustrations. You'd need to scratch-build a lot of these, or at the very least kitbash your way to a tabletop miniature, but that'd be a great way to extend your scenarios.

One typo: "an design" should be "a design." (p77)

What a fascinating little book.

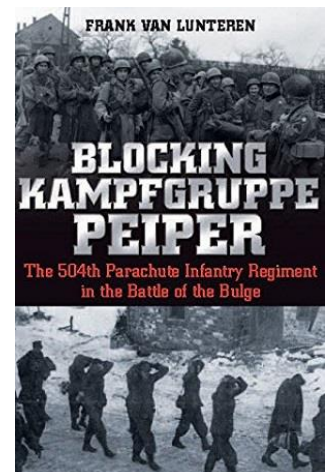
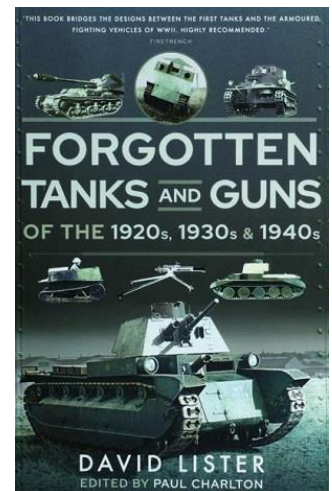
Enjoyed it.

Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper: 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge. by Frank van Lunteran. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 332 pages. 2015, reprint 2022.

This is the fourth of five books profiling the US 504th PIR. It is an incredibly hyper-detailed examination of the regiment, down to an individual man for man basis. Exemplary research highlights anecdotes galore and even includes 12 black and white maps that you can use to create small platoon on platoon, or two platoons on one platoon, skirmish scenarios.

So, what's not to love?

The prose. For such inspiring action, this offers such uninspiring prose that not only never grabbed me, but I only made it to page 119 and closed up the book for good. I don't know why, but every time I opened the book, I would force myself to plow through the text. Just one of those disconnects between author and reader.



Waffen-SS at Arnhem: Images of War. by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 112 pages. 2022.

If you know the series, you know the drill -- the author picks and chooses photos from archives with minimal text and maximal captions. You don't buy the books for the overview of the 9th SS and 10th SS divisions that were recuperating at Arnhem when the paratroopers started to drop.

The 146 black and white photos illustrate the SS troops, delighting uniform buffs and dioramists. The troops digging into a treeline (p48) and the helmet cover with the unusual pattern (p65) proved to be the most interesting to me. Lots of town photos for those with a penchant for refigiting the an urban area.

A couple typos: "crewman (17)" -- I have no idea what the 17 refers to as it's a plain portrait shot (p33). It's almost as if the caption was taken from another book where the photos were numbered. Also a reference to "Field Marshal Mode" which should be "Model" (p41).

Enjoyed it.

Waffen-SS in Normandy 1944: Images of War. by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 127 pages. 2022.

More photos of SS troops and vehicles in Normandy. The text races through operations from D-Day through Falaise Pocket, but you're not really looking at the text.

The 154 black and white photos and seven black and white unit symbols illustrate the various troops and units defending the Normandy countryside. From pristine portraits to ragged combat veterans to vehicle destruction, dioramists and uniform fans will find much to appreciate.

The camouflage photos of a HMG team (p47), bunker (p54), and tank (p81) were especially interesting. The array of photos showing the aftereffects of US air strikes on retreating German columns (p117-120) show what unhindered airpower can accomplish.

Enjoyed it.

When the Shooting Stopped: August 1945. by Barrett Tillman. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 304 pages. 2022.

The title's slightly off, or at least for me, since it covers activity throughout all of August, with half the book before Japan surrendered and half the book after. No matter, the interesting interleaving of information makes for fascinating reading.

The text pumps out the details of what you probably know at least in outline form, including the atom bomb, an unprepped Harry Truman, Soviet attacks, and assorted events.

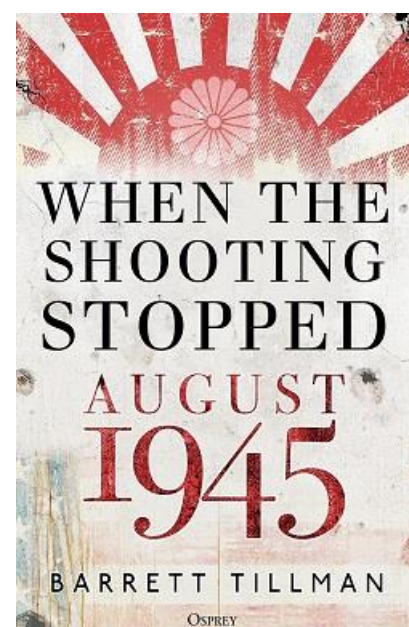
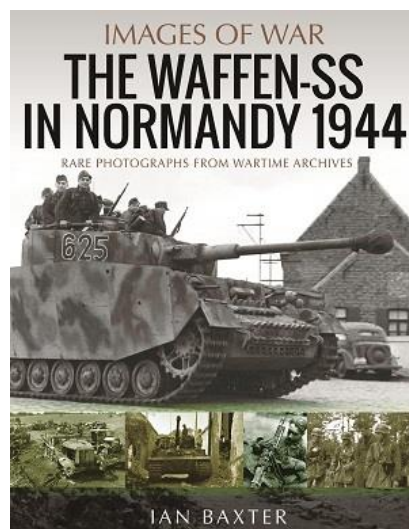
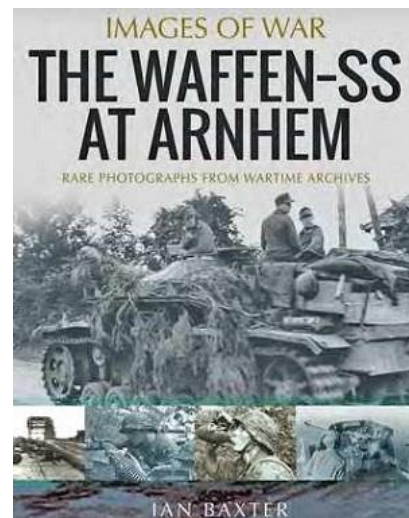
For example, on the second atom bomb bombing mission, the A-bomb started to arm itself mid-flight, which understandably freaked the crew out. Quick thinking and a check of the manuals found that a switch was installed backwards. It was hastily fixed in flight and Bockscar went on to successfully drop the second atomic bomb (p39).

During the eight months of kamikaze attacks, the kamikazes recorded a 12% to 20% success rate (p98). Think about that on the wargame table.

The 33 black and white photos are nothing special, with mostly portrait head shots and static shots.

It's a good read, especially after the surrender when trigger-happy US troops began to occupy Japan.

Enjoyed it.



Waking the Bear: A Guide to Wargaming the Great Northern War and Turkish Campaigns 1700-1721. By Mark Shearwood. Softcover (8.3x11.6 inches). 119 pages. 2021.

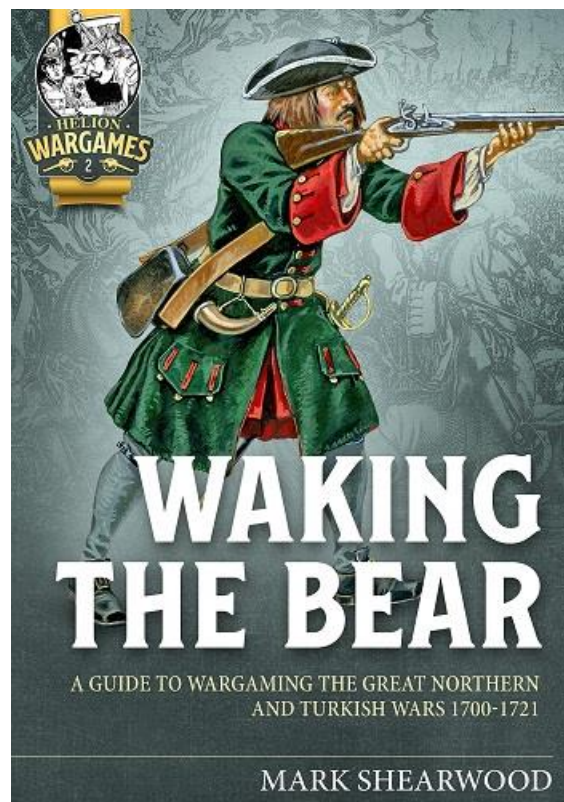
Well-produced, high-quality overview of the Great Northern War provides considerable wargaming advice, including procuring figures, painting instructions, organizing and basing them, and playing scenarios. The only thing missing are rules, but the bibliography in back offers several suggestions.

The 95 color photos are sharp, in focus, and oozing with inspiration. From formed units to vignettes offering a historical color, the figures pop off the pages. You just want to go out and grab up a box of flintlock-armed troops and try out the scenario in the back or maybe set up your own scenario based on one of the eight black and white battle maps. A further 18 black and white illustrations pick out uniform details.

One typo: "route" is likely "rout" (p13) and one head scratcher for those of us on this side of the pond: "powdered wall filler" (p96). I don't know what that is, but the photos showing the results of using it are gorgeous.

Charles XII of Sweden is probably the best-known commander of the era, but the GNW offers more than just one commander's campaign. This wargame guide will help you bring them all to life on the tabletop.

Enjoyed it.



Coming Soon...



Looks like another great convention coming up this summer.
For more details, visit www.HMGS.org