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Books I've Read

Alexander the Great: Ancient Sources
The Italian Wars: Volume 3 Battle of Pavia 1525
The Aviation Pioneers of McCook Field
The Darkest Hour: Vol 1 1942 Asia at War 31
Salamanca Campaign: 1812
Rebellion in the Middle Ages: Against the Crown
The Battles of El Alamein: BattleCraft 1
Landing Craft and Amphibians: LandCraft 10
M60 Main Battle Tank: TankCraft 37
Nations & Cannons: Core Rules (AWI)
Rogue Elements: Star Trek Picard (sci-fi)
Gladiators: 4th - 1st Centuries BC - Elite 246
Castles in the Sky: Wargame of Flying Battleships
Nations in the Balance: India-Burma 1943-1944
The Second World War Illustrated: The Third Year
PZL TS-11 Iskra bis DF: Single 39
McDonnell F-4B Phantom II: Single 40
Schwerer Personenkraftwagen: Camera On 27
Athenium Trireme vs Persian Trireme: Duel 122
Run Run Cricket Run (Vietnam War novel)
Lost Fleet Beyond Frontier: Dreadnought (sci fi)
Lost Fleet Beyond Frontier: Invincible (sci fi)
Lost Fleet Beyond Frontier: Guardian (sci fi)
Lost Fleet Beyond Frontier: Steadfast (sci fi)
Lost Fleet Beyond Frontier: Leviathan (sci fi)
Lost Fleet Outlands: Boundless (sci fi)
Gloster Javelin: Flying Flatiron
M107/M110: Self-Propelled Artillery 1956-1991
Lt Gen James Longstreet: Innovative Military Strategist
Battle of Malta 1942: Campaign 381
Carrhae 53 BC: Campaign 382
D-Day 1944: Air Campaign 28
The Red Army 1922-41: Men at Arms 546
F2H Banshee Units: Combat Aircraft 141
Hawk Air Defense Missile System: New Vanguard 309
Bf 109D/E: Blitzkrieg 1939-40: Dogfight 3
PZL P.11c: Famous Airplanes Volume 14
Zeppelin Inferno: Forgotten Blitz 1916
Durer's Fight Book: Renaissance Combat Treatise
Roman Britain's Pirate King: 286-293 AD
Byzantine Fortifications: Protecting Roman Empire
Life and Death on the Eastern Front: WWII
How to Kill a Tiger Tank: Unpublished Scientific Reports
American Aircraft Development: World War Two Legacy
The Templars at War



A Bolshevik Bludgeon: *Chain of Command*

by Russ Lockwood

We returned to the defense of the worker's paradise currently being invaded by German fascists. *Chain of Command* (CoC) was the rule set, Keith and I were Soviets, and Fred and Mike were Germans. Umpire Dan presided.

From l to r: German Mike, Umpire Dan, and German Fred showing how the pincer attack will work.

The skirmish game centered on control of a three-building village, with both sides seeking to take and hold at least two of the three unoccupied buildings. Sides were roughly equal, with Soviet squads slightly larger than German squads. The Germans had an 'extra' 75mm infantry gun and MMG, but the Soviets had a T-26S tank.

Up went the boards that hid half the table from the other side and down went the jump-off markers. We ignored the patrol phase, which governs the movement of jump off points. The only requirement Umpire Dan placed on jump off point locations was that they had to be hidden behind concealing terrain. Each player placed two, but could use any of his teammate's points. I placed one center left behind a woods and the other behind a hill in the center.

Soviets Keith (left) and Russ in mid game as the Hill of Death (lower right) accumulates more Germans than Oktoberfest. Photo by Dan.

Command and Uncontrol

Players roll 5d6 to represent command points, with specific rolls allowing specific activations. For example, if you want the platoon lieutenant activated, who could activate squads within range, you need a die roll of 4. You can either roll a natural four or add two or more dice together to "make" a 4.

A roll of 1, on the other hand, allows you to only activate a team (like a mortar or MG). Dan made a helpful QRS with the gist of what rolls allow what activations and what a team or squad can do in an activation. Very helpful.

A roll of 5 gets you one point towards a big Command Chip -- when you get six such points, the big chip allows for special activations and actions.

A roll of 6 is wasted. No effect...except if you roll two of them, you get a free turn right after you finish this one. A double turn, to be sure. However, you only roll 4d6, not 5d6, on that free turn.

A roll of three 6s ends the turn after you complete your activations.

Sure, it seems like we're playing a dice version of *Fizzbin*, but I can assure you the command system works like a charm. You will find that you sometimes can do everything you want and sometimes little of what you want. It is quite clever, if quite random, but unless you Yahtzee on 5s, you'll always be able to do something.



Movement and Combat

Movement is by random die roll. This is not the clever bit. Sometimes, and in this game, Keith did it multiple times, your units don't move. They were heading somewhere, did not take any fire, were in full vigor and in command range, and they sat down in some worker's strike. My troops were not immune, either.

Russ' initial deployment in the rough. The red star indicates the jump off point.

Russ' Rule: If you have no movement, you have no game. And I came here to game, not sit.

A solution: Add an extra die. Russ' better solution: Infantry move 12 inches and reduce by half in difficult terrain like woods and buildings.

Combat is a bucketful of dice at times. For example, a MMG fires 10d6. Add in a squad of eight figures for 8d6 more dice. If they fire at the same target, they combine for 18d6.

You roll a lot of firepower dice in this game looking for 5s and 6s (or 4s, 5s, and 6s if in close range). If a hit is scored, the enemy rolls 1d6 for each hit, with results: no effect, add a shock and awe (disorder) point, or kill a figure. The heavier the cover, the harder to do damage.

A lot of Keith's Soviet troops seem poised to grab the building, but dice say noooo.

Morale

When certain events occur, like loss of a leader, or a unit routs because the shock and awe point total doubles (or more) the number of surviving figures in the team or squad, your command morale drops. If it drops enough, bad things start to happen, like losing command dice.

We started at 8 Morale. When I had a NCO (leader) winged with a wound and removed from the game, I rolled a d6 and the chart said lose two of these Morale points. Nothing bad happens until you drop to 4, when you lose 1d6 -- from 5d6 down to 4d6 -- for the command roll.

There are more nuances, but that's the gist.

Mike (right) moves down the lane and enters a building under Umpire Dan's watchful eye.

Deployment

The Soviets went first. My rolls allowed my lieutenant and one squad to deploy in the center of the table and a second squad on the left to hold the flank.

The Germans deployed a squad on the flank opposite me to keep my honest and then most of the rest came in the middle. Fred loaded up a



brush-covered hilltop (light cover) with a LMG and squad, later adding a MMG and another squad. It was all tightly packed.

I saw that and brought on my mortar on top of another hill. I left fly and the barrage template (house rule) drifted off the entire hill. The returning gunfire slaughtered my mortar team.

I inch my troops forward, trying to keep out of line of sight of the Germans. Mike (left) looks concerned, but he needn't be – I hugged the terrain for all it was worth. Photo by Dan.

Keith sent a few squads through the woods and promptly rolled snake-eye at least twice for movement -- and woods reduces each die result by 1. So, they stayed still. His other rolls to move weren't that hot, either.

Infiltrating a MMG team into the building did a bit of damage to the Germans, but the return barrage slaughtered the team.

Digression: CoC Tactic

After playing this a number of times, I've found that movement is so limited as to be fairly useless given even numbers. As soon as you step into the clear, casualties go up -- logical, but it leads to static games. As Fred noted, the smart gameplay is to find some terrain and open fire.

As Mike noted, adding more terrain would help. Ours is a fairly open battlefield in places, but something typical for small-unit action. If you have at least a 2:1 advantage, you can have one squad use covering fire while the other advances.

Early game. Keith's Soviets in the woods can't get going while my troops face the building and the Hill of Death.

The caveat is that newly deployed units arrive within 6 inches of a jump-off point, can't move, but can fire. It's a nice way to use an ambush.

Still, it takes a while for a unit to be whittled down enough to pin, giving you a chance to advance in the open towards an objective.



Back to Battle

I held one squad back. My idea was for my left flank squad to shoot up Mike's squad and LMG opposite, or at least pin it, then use my Command chip to advance my jump-off point to the next woods so I could deploy my reserve squad into the woods next to one of the buildings. The original squad would keep the other squad busy and tucked away in its farmhouse while I swept in from the flank.

Alas, it was not to be. I could never do enough damage.

Part of the reason was that I had a propensity to roll three 6s (end turn) as part of my 5d6 command roll while Mike had the propensity to roll two 6s (free turn). My Soviets stood paralyzed as the German rolled up on the flank with reserve squad and shot out my initial squad in the woods.

It was ugly rolling.

Sure, I tried to reach the objective, but a German squad lined a wall and the German Hill of Death chipped away at Soviet forces. Photo by Dan.



Big German Victory

The Germans took all three buildings. Keith was stuck in the woods. Mike hammered me in doubletime. It was ugly-fugly for the Soviets.

One thing we figured, and the rules are unclear, but Dan saw house rules in effect at conventions, is to treat the triple 6 roll as both a free move and an end turn. That way, the player who keeps rolling such triple sixes isn't frozen in place.

Did someone call for a T-26 tank (lower left corner)? The Germans were mostly unimpressed.



I still like the system, except for the die-roll movement, and I think Mike and Fred played a smart game with the Germans. It wasn't so much the Soviets were inept, although we did fritter away our mortar and MMG teams, but the fates were against us and staying on defense in terrain works better than moving into attack -- as it probably should. There's a reason for the 3:1 rule of thumb for a successful attack...

Thanks, Dan, for hosting.

All in all, it's just a, German-lined wall. Shoot the Krauts. Shoot the Krauts. You can't have any borscht if you don't shoot the Krauts.



Enjoyable *Chain of Command*: Learning the System

by Mike

I really enjoyed the *CoC* rules and look forward to playing them again. I have much to learn, but the game really helps my understanding when I read and hear commentaries that stress plenty of terrain for these rules.

It fits my layman's understanding of why WWII soldiers shouldn't march across open fields in the attack with the enemy shooting HMGs, MMGs, LMGs, rifles, SMGs, rifles, mortars, and whatever else they have, including tossing grenades.

Mike captures a building. Photo by Dan.

East Front Scenario: *Chain of Command*

by Dan

Today's *Chain of Command* (*CoC*) game featured a lot of new terrain featured recently completed by Michael, who came a half hour early to bring his terrain and help incorporate it in the existing table set-up. Mike also brought over his 28mm Germans, which I divided into a three-squad platoon.

Three bombed-out buildings that crossed the centerline represented a small village that would be the objective of both sides.

Mike preps his troops to enter the building as Germans line the wall. Mid game.

Order of Battle: Soviet

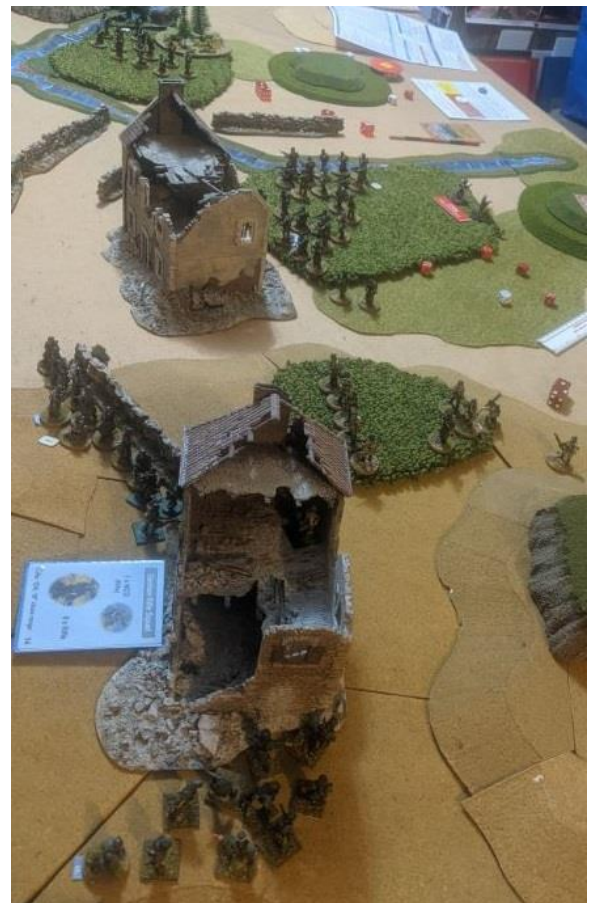
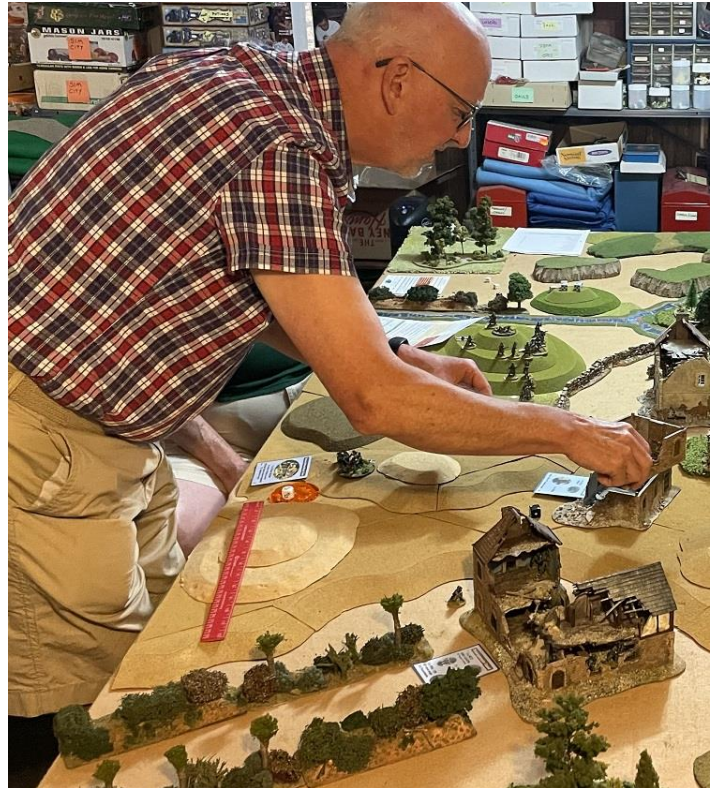
The Soviets (Keith and Russ):

- 6 x 10-12 men Rifle Squads
- 1 x 9 men well-armed Partisan Squad (5 SMG, 1 ATR, 3 Rifles)
- 1 x LMG Team
- 1 x MMG Team
- 1 x 50mm Mortar Team
- 1 x T-26S Tank
- 1 x Platoon HQ (2 Senior Leaders & 2 Bodyguard SMGs)

Order of Battle: German

The Germans (Michael and Fred):

- 3 x 9-10 men Rifle Squads
- 2 x 9 men Rifle Squad w/LMG
- 1 x 10 men Panzergrenadier Squad (6 SMG, 1 ATR, 3 Rifles)
- 2 x MMG Team
- 1 x 81mm Mortar Team
- 1 x 75mm Infantry Gun
- 1 x Platoon HQ (2 Senior Leaders)



The Germans chose the table side and chose the side closest to the buildings. Clever Hans!

We placed partition boards across the table to hide the setting up of jump-off points. German Jump-Off Points had to be within 12" of table edge. Soviet Jump-Off Points had to be within 15" of table edge.

The Soviets went first.

Soviet swansong in the mid game.

Umpire's Account

Fred deployed his Germans on a brush-covered hill to prepare for his advance, but tended to stay put and fire at any advancing Soviets, which showed up piecemeal.

The first was a Soviet 50mm Mortar team, which got off one shot before taking damaging fire from the Germans on the hill, breaking them. Russ' morale dropped.

Keith tried to exhort his Soviet Rifle Squads to take a building, but his men dawdled in the woods not once, but twice, rolling snake-eyes on each movement roll.

Keith managed to get the first Chain of Command chip and used it to move his Jump-Off Point adjacent to the building and deployed his LMG team into it.

For as bold a move as this was, Fred laid down a withering fire from the hill that killed off the LMG team immediately.

The Flank

On the other flank, Michael deployed two squads to take the other two buildings and one squad on his right to counter a potential flanking move by a Soviet squad deployed by Russ.

These two flanking forces would exchange fire the entire game, slowly killing each other off. Russ deployed a squad to support Keith, managing to avoid contact with one of Michael's squads for quite some time while engaged with the last of Michael's squads that had snuck into a center building.

Keith deployed some well-armed Partisans in the building, which unleashed their firepower against the Germans on the hill, killing a few. Then Keith deployed the T-26S and got it to the front quickly, but his infantry were still largely inactive in the woods.

Without infantry support, Fred responded by deploying the 75mm Infantry gun which started a duel between the T-26S and the gun. Fred's infantry fired back upon the Partisans, giving as good as they got. For the Partisans, this was too much and they broke, prompting some of Fred's Germans to advance off the hill towards the building. These lined up at a stone wall.

Michael captured one building, but it did not offer much opportunity to shoot at any enemies, so Michael left it to advance to the center and threaten the Soviets Russ had deployed in the woods to challenge the center building. By the time Fred's Germans advanced, Russ was heavily outnumbered in the center and taking more casualties than he could return.

Morale Drop

Between the eliminated LMG team and broken Partisan squad, Keith's Force Morale had plummeted to 4, which meant he lost a Command Die.



Russ lost a Junior Leader in the center, dropping his Force Morale to 5, and his two squads were pinned. Fred and Michael had not suffered any eliminated, routs, or Leader loss, yet, although one of Michael's squads was down to five men. At 3:10pm, after three hours of combat, the Soviets conceded the village to the Germans.

Significant Turning Points

1. Fred choosing to deploy on the hill that gave him a good field of fire against Keith's side of the table.

2. Keith's two bad rolls to move his infantry through the woods to the building kept most of his Rifle Squads out of the battle. This left the LMG team and the Partisans that did get into the building out-matched and unable to stand up to the Germans squads and MGs present.

End of game: The Germans are well situated in and around the buildings.



3. Michael's flank squad was enough to counter Russ' flank squad and MMG team that came in later. That prevented the Soviets from moving against the 3rd building.

4. Michael getting four "bonus" phases during the game by rolling two "6s" helped keep that flank squad in the game by removing Shock points and firing away. Russ managed to roll three "6s" on three occasions that only ended the turn, robbing him of potential Command Dice he needed to keep his own troops active.

5. While both sides had plenty of "feeble fire" rolls, Michael and Fred got some heavy "lethal" rolls (7 hits out of 10 for Michael and 8 hits out of 10 for Fred) at opportune times in the same turn.

Hill of Death

Fred pointed out that the Hill of Death contained two German squads, one MMG, one LMG, one 75mm Infantry Gun, and Lieutenant Hans.

End of Game: Keith's Soviets hold one building out of three. Me? I'm pinned (pink marker bottom left corner). A German victory.



This is just as intimidating in *CoC* as it is in *Squad Leader*: two squads with a LMG & MMG and a crew with a 75mm Infantry Gun with Lt Stahler at point-blank range...

That's too much firepower to face, unless I could bring two squads and support to face it all at once. When Keith moved up the Jump-off Point, if he could have deployed the Partisans with LMG and moved a squad into the bottom floor all in the same phase, he might have a chance against the Hill of Death, since the deployed Partisans and LMG would get to shoot first. He would still need to get his second squad in a position to fire at the hill as well in the next phase (perhaps with the mortar team).

If I was a Soviet and saw that concentration of firepower, I would get out of its LOS (like behind the building) and just occupy the back half of the building with part of a squad and see what I could bring to bear against the center building.

Movement Ideas

While much of the game is shooting, moving to get into position to help in a firefight or to grab important terrain is still important - but there may be room to make movement a little more reliable than 1D6, 2D6, or 3D6, as Keith's experience demonstrated. I'm thinking of allowing 1D6 result to be turned into a "3" result on a 2D6 movement roll, and allowing 1D6 to be turned into a "4" on a 3D6 movement roll to minimize getting screwed on a snake-eyes roll.

I don't see why 15mm scale wouldn't work (but would need rings or caps for casualties for figures mounted on a common base, such as *Flames of War*). You might have to simplify Squad cards if figures are based that way (looks like 3-5 figures per base from what I've seen), but that can be customized per army. Next time I happen to be at Fred's I'll have to look over what he has in 15mm WWII stuff.



Fred's view of the Hill of Death with two squads, a 75mm Infantry Gun, a LMG, and a MMG.

WarChest: Abstract Wargame with War of the Roses Troops

by Dan

I had a chance to try this out with Russ last night.

We played three quick games. I would say about 20-25 minutes, each -- even with going through the rules and Russ bested me each time with the first game probably the closest.

While *WarChest* can look like a miniatures game, it plays more like a chess game, as control of the objectives wins the game, not eliminating pieces, although that can be important element in the competition for those objective hexes.

My blues are everywhere, especially panzer archers.

I chose to field two War of the Roses armies and after three plays, mine was simply too diverse with a lot on single units types. With

the card-driven mechanic, having an army with two to three types is easier to deploy, move, and attack than an army that has more than four troop types in its deck.

Indeed, when I went back to the original rules, I saw they set the starting armies at four types of units and no more than four cards for any one type of unit - which helps explain why Russ had an easier time activating his troop with an army that had six archers, four billmen and two spearmen versus two crossbowmen, three billmen, four archers and one each of artillery, cavalry, and dismounted knight.

Despite the apparent mis-match, the game moves quickly. The three-card rounds don't require much time to ponder options, but it's clear that keeping the opposing armies at equivalent numbers of types is important to this particular game's balance.

WarChest: Quick and Abstract

by Russ Lockwood

The game *WarChest* comes in a cardboard chest with a hex map and icon-topped poker chips. It games with two or four players and the goal is to grab eight spots on the map and each player controlling two at start.

Cards allow activation of a specific icon, which can perform one action: deploy, support, move, attack, and so on. One card is a wild card.

Attacking is like chess. It doesn't matter what unit attacks, the enemy unit is removed from the board. Silly me, the first time Dan shot arrows into one of my billmen, I went looking for the dice. No dice, just one dead billman stand.

One difference is that you can stack more poker chips than the two figure stands per hex we used with Dan's 28mm War of the Roses adaptation.



I figured out the game had less to do with eliminating enemy units, although that was sometimes important, than moving and capturing the victory hexes.

To that end, I loaded up on archer and billman cards, plus the skirmisher. I never deployed the spearmen or dismounted knights and only deployed the C-in-C once. Like *Dominion*, you want your deck to turn over quickly, so the fewer cards in the deck, the faster the same cards show up allowing multiple activations.

Indeed, in the third game, Dan deployed lots of units, which I thought was going to be a tough fight as I had few units. However, with fewer cards and fewer types, I could activate archers and billmen multiple times, even in one three-card hand. That proved to be a panzer-level blitzkrieg across the board. I didn't have many stands on the board, but I had just enough to snag the eighth victory hex ahead of the tidal wave of Dan's troops.

So, cute and quick, but needs the original limits for balance. And yes, we did three games at about a half hour or so each.

Out comes one of our favorite games: Dominion.

Dominion: Split

by Russ Lockwood

Dan pulled out his list of 500+ set-ups, including the new GenCon 2022 tournament lists. Per usual, we randomly rolled for a set-up and eased into the first game. Per usual, Dan thrashed me pretty good as my card choices failed to turn over. Usually, we're about a VP card or two apart, but this one was more like a half dozen cards in Dan's favor.

For the second game, rather than a random roll, we randomly chose from the half-dozen 2022 GenCon lists. We didn't have two cards, so we substituted two from the list below. I'm sure whomever created the lists would complain about the swaps, but for fun play, close enough.

I had a slow start, but then the card combos, for one glorious run through the deck, fell into a golden order that allowed me to catch up. I still thought I was behind as I bought the last Province VP card, but lo and behold, I thought we had tied...until Dan noticed I had failed to count one extra point, allowing me to squeak by for the rare win.

Win or lose, this is still a clever card game.

Dan helps Dennis understand some of the rules,

More WarChest: Into the Breach

by Russ Lockwood

Dan tweaked the rules again, so he brought his setup over to our FLGS On Military Matters and we gave it a whirl. He also tweaked the starting forces for each side and added a common pool of cards/units.

I played Dennis, who also reached for dice the first time combat occurred. We wargamers are conditioned, no?

The tabletop dance continued and we learned more about the troop type limitations. For example, the lancers, which I moved (illegally) two hexes only move one hex. They charge and attack two hexes. Oops. Worse, they cannot attack any unit that starts adjacent.

This time, we needed an extra activation to capture a victory hex -- just landing on it did no good. I would argue that the extra activation slows the game down to no particular end.

Dan had mentioned something about returning cards from a player's deck to the reserve when a unit was lost, but we forgot about that in the game.



I will say that deciding when to steal the initiative by burning a card becomes an important part of the end game. It's always a gamble, and it does burn a card, but I discovered a good steal helps grab victory hexes.

Again, a cute little game, although the opposing sides need a bit more balancing. Some units are quite powerful, but then again, some units in Chess are more powerful than others.

WarChest Boogie: Dan v. Dennis

by Dan

The game went fairly quick in that Dennis conceded after seeing a supported Lancer unit take out one Dismounted Knights stand, pull away before a second Dismounted Knights stand that had moved adjacent could attack, captured an Objective Location, and remained in a position to attack two other units. Dennis had seen enough at that point.

Dennis learns the mechanics.

Things we did right this time:

1. Starting set-up.
2. The functions of the different units.
3. Playing the card to control an occupied Objective Location (instead of "instant" control when you move in).
4. Removing an attacked single (unsupported) stand unit from the game.

Dennis' first moves of the game.

Things we did wrong this time:

1. After a deploy or support action, placing the played card back in your Supply.
 2. Not removing the Unit Card in addition to a single stand that is attacked and removed from the game.
 3. Played the Reserve wrong as well:
- There are no "shared" units. Each side has their own units, but the same number of stands (4 of each of the 4 different Unit Cards, one Lord Commander, and a support stand).

Original Game

In the original game, the chip functions as the "card" and the unit, so when it is placed on the board, it's no longer in your "deck".

For the conversion to miniatures, the chip is replaced by a card (for your deck and hand) and a miniatures stand (for the board).

The original game has a restriction in that only ONE unit of each type can ever be on the board (but it can be supported more than once).

Also, each player's units for any given game are unique to that player (ie: Two or more players cannot have the same unit).

I'm not sure if I want to carry those two restrictions over to the miniatures conversion, yet.

As Dennis noted, some units appear more powerful than others. The game designer admitted that some units pair well with others, depending on which eight units are in play for the game. The expansions introduce some "specialty" pieces (similar to the Lord Commander), which I will limit to only one unit in play at a time.



News, Views, and Breakthroughs

Snappy Nappy: Marengo Campaign in a Day from Down Under

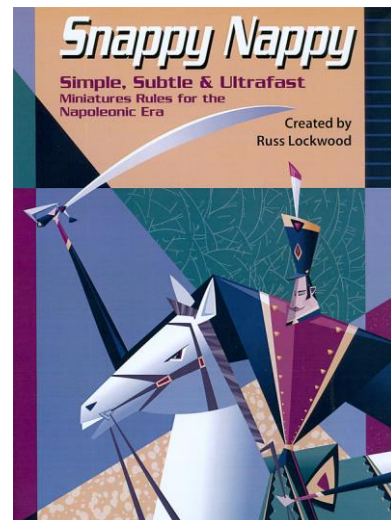
A gaming group in Australia used *Snappy Nappy* as the basis for a Campaign in a Day "battle" of Marengo. They made a video of the event, so, apparently, I can still show my face among miniatures gamers in Perth.

From Darren Tompsett:

Following in the footsteps of the "Little Wars TV" episode (I used their maps but modified most everything else) we replayed the Marengo Campaign here in Perth, Australia. It was a great day with very different experiences for every player involved. Here is a 9-minute After Action video of the gaming.

Down Under SN You Tube Video: <https://youtu.be/UxUMrXIjNqM>

Plug: In case this inspires you, Snappy Nappy is available from On Military Matters (USA) and Caliver Books (UK). OMM also sells a PDF version. Full disclosure: I created Snappy Nappy. --RL



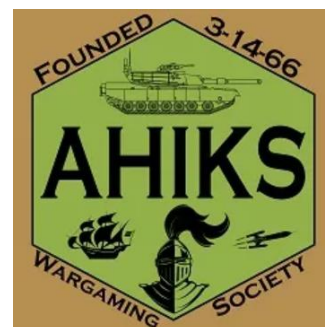
AHIKS: Wargaming Group Since 1966

Originally, this wargame organization was called the Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegspiel Society to promote AH board wargaming. As the website noted: founded March 14, 1966, by Fred Webster, Henry Bodendstedt, Ken Norris, and Chris Wagner. Its initial purpose was (1) to provide a forum within which an internationally useable play by mail system could be utilized, (2) to encourage the spread of wargaming outside the USA, and (3) to provide members with mature opponents who would complete games promptly and fairly. In later years the "I" in AHIKS was changed from "Intercontinental" to "International."

Membership is free and offers pdf downloads of *The Kommandeur*, the newsletter with all sorts of interesting news about board wargaming as well as after action reports, opponent finding, and news relating to club Play By eMail games. They'll even help you set up Cyberboard or Vassal and maintain a "counter pool" that can help you replace that missing counter.

According to the downloadable PDF June 2022 issue, the latest membership number is 2,274.

See www.AHIKS.com for the newsletters -- worth the visit for hex-based wargaming gamers.



Potomac Wargamers: WNPg Con

The Wednesday Night Painting Group (WNPg) Con is officially a go for September 24-25, 2022. Different month, but same venue: 14288 Independent Hill Drive, Manassas VA. Saturday will have 9:00 am, 1:30 pm, and 6:00 pm time slots. Sunday will have 9:00 am and 1:30 pm time slots. It's a fun weekend.

If you are interested in GMing please let me know. Dennis Jensen djensen1461@gmail.com

Gundam Kitchen: South Jersey Battletech Society

HMGS conventions usually offer a Battletech game or three. If you are interested in the Battletech system, you might try visiting Gundam Kitchen's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/thegundamkitchen/>

The group hosted a series of games in August called the Battle of Towne 2785 at a Blackwood, NJ, location. You can also directly contact: Vic Magazzeni vicmagpa@comcast.net or Mark Gallicchio magall@comcast.net

Card Mania

CrossTalk: Variation of Password

by Russ Lockwood

At a 4th of July picnic, Mike cracked the shrinkwrap on a game called *CrossTalk* that he had enjoyed at a convention. Nine of us played with two teams, four guys vs. five gals.

Fundamentally, it's like the old gameshow *Password*: each team takes a turn trying to guess a secret word or phrase with a couple convoluted twists.

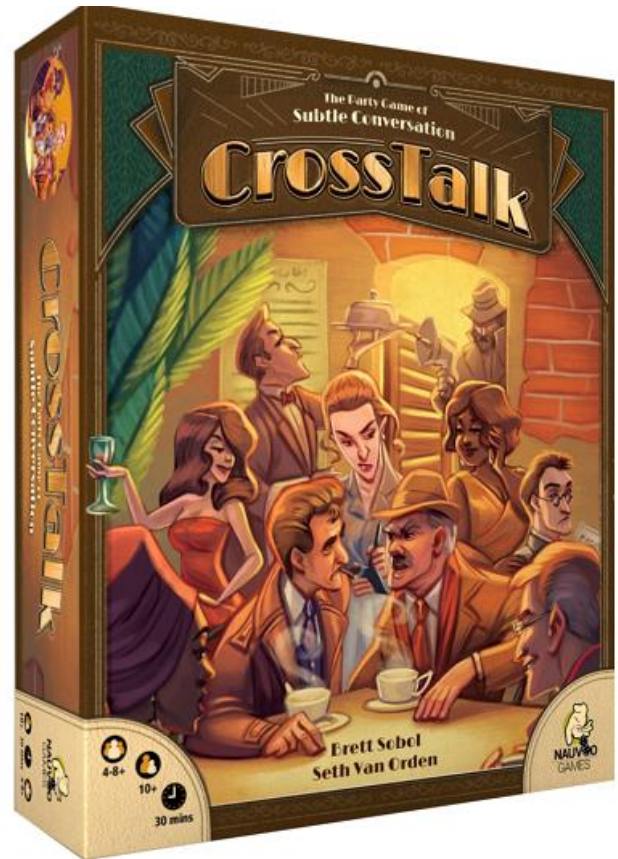
There's only one secret word -- both teams are trying to guess the same word. A member of each team (we switched clue givers with each word) writes down a clue and passes it in secret to his or her team.

Then, the member gives a clue word out loud, but the other team guesses first. For example, when I was the clue giver, the secret phrase was "Hole in One." The one-word clue I passed to my teammates was "Golf." At the time, I didn't know what Jane passed to the gals team. It turned out to be "Cart," which the gals figured out meant golf cart.

I gave the public clue: "Miracle." Since I gave the clue, the gals had first shot. The word kind of threw them, but they guessed "Golf." That was incorrect, as the secret phrase was "Hole in One."

Jane gave the public clue "sport." The guys team had my clues: "Golf" and "Miracle." They came up with "Hole in One." One point for the good guys.

And so it went, back and forth, some words/phrases easier to guess than others. We got the hang of it. It was an enjoyable brain teaser.



Cards Against Humanity: R Rated

by Russ Lockwood

We're big fans of *Apples to Apples*, a card game of matching answers to phrases. Most are humorous in a G-rated way, although some stray into PG-13 territory.

Cards Against Humanity is the R-rated version put out by a different company, but for those who don't mind blue language and bluer juxtapositions of statements and answers, it has a "charm" all its own. Apparently, a new "Green box" came out, so out came the new cards.

One player reads the statement containing a strategically-placed blank. All the other players consult their hand of seven answer cards and select one to plug into that blank. The cards are passed in secret to the player who read the statement, and now reads all the answers aloud and picks the one that tickles his or her fancy.

The cards contain a bell curve of answers, from relatively G-rated and mundane (like names of famous people) to hard R-rated shock-value answers (not a chance I'll retype any of them here).

Reactions vary by person, from cringe-worthy groans to peals of laughter. Half the trick is matching the answer to the person, not necessarily the statement. It's the same sort of interaction as *Apples to Apples*, just far, far bluer and raunchier.

We found it an enjoyable game, in part because we hadn't played it for a couple years. I think it might lose its effect if played too often.



Dominion: Allies

by Russ Lockwood

It's been a while since we played this clever card game that's spawned a dozen or more expansions. The latest expansion, which needs the original game to play, to hit Dan's table is Allies.

For those unfamiliar with *Dominion*, this card game is a resource management game where each card offers a specific action or coin or something that let you (eventually) buy victory point cards. As the original game and each expansion have 25 or so action card types, plus cards that support some new mechanic, you get a lot of variety.

Shuffling the cards in your hand gives you different five-card starting hands each turn. As you buy more and more cards, your deck becomes larger, which means you have to think about the mechanic offered on a card versus the size of your deck -- the larger the deck, the longer it takes to cycle through the cards. Of course, you're always on the prowl to buy action cards that help you cycle through the deck faster: like draw a number of new cards, or look through your discard pile and put a card on the top of your draw deck. The interactions are very clever.

Better yet, players start with identical cards and draw from a common area. So, you have just as much opportunity to build your fast-acting deck as the other player.

Dan ponders the potential benefit of a card.

Best of all -- this is NOT a collectible card game with uncommon cards, rare cards, super-rare cards, or I just spent a ton of money to buy a killer-rare card. Your ability, not wallet, and a little shuffle luck rules *Dominion*.

The Rio Grande Games website says that Allies is "the 14th expansion to *Dominion*. It has 400 cards..."

Anyway, we picked a scenario that used only the cards from the new box. Play proceeded just like any other *Dominion* game, with the main effort to understand how certain card combos generate the actions and cash needed to buy victory point cards. When a deck starts to turn over, you can go on a shopping spree. Of course, the opponent is doing the same.

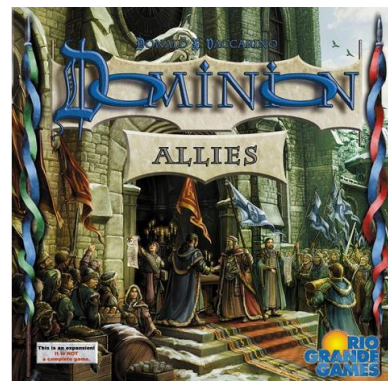
We split the first two games. The "Favors" mechanic, which ties into a "Liaisons" card mechanic, offers a little extra benefit from time to time. What I remember is the Secret Cave card -- you stuff three cards in the cave and next turn, you trade it in for three gold coins. Now, as someone who always seems to have accumulated less than useful cards, this was of great benefit. Sure, you have to wait a turn to cash in, but three Copper coin is 3/8 of the cost of a Province victory card and 3/6 of a Gold card (itself worth three coin). It proved a great way to put those less than useful cards to work.

Gee, thanks, buddy! Russ gets a Hex card from Dan. Photo by Dan.

Then we played two scenarios mixing in cards from the other expansions. Online sites contain several hundred such scenarios. We roll a die for a random one.

We split the wins here as well. In one, I bought a Leprechaun card that gives you a free Gold card (yay!)...and a Hex (boo!). Dan also had a card that tossed Hex cards at me about every fourth or fifth turn. The only reason I could persevere was that one of the Hex cards, which basically wiped out my hand for a couple turns, also gave me Lost in the Woods card. This Lost card gave me a Boon card (yay!) every turn. By the end of the game, I must have gone through half the Hex and Boon decks. I squeaked out a win in that game. Boon, Boon, out go the lights!

And that's the other positive attribute about the game: wins are often down to the last Province card. Sure, there are blowouts, and you can see when your strategy of card buying failed and the opponent is racking up VPs. It is almost impossible to catch up in those situations. But when everything is roughly even, the games go down to the wire, decided by a single victory point card, as three of our four games did.



Saboteur: Online Version at Boardgame Arena

by Russ Lockwood

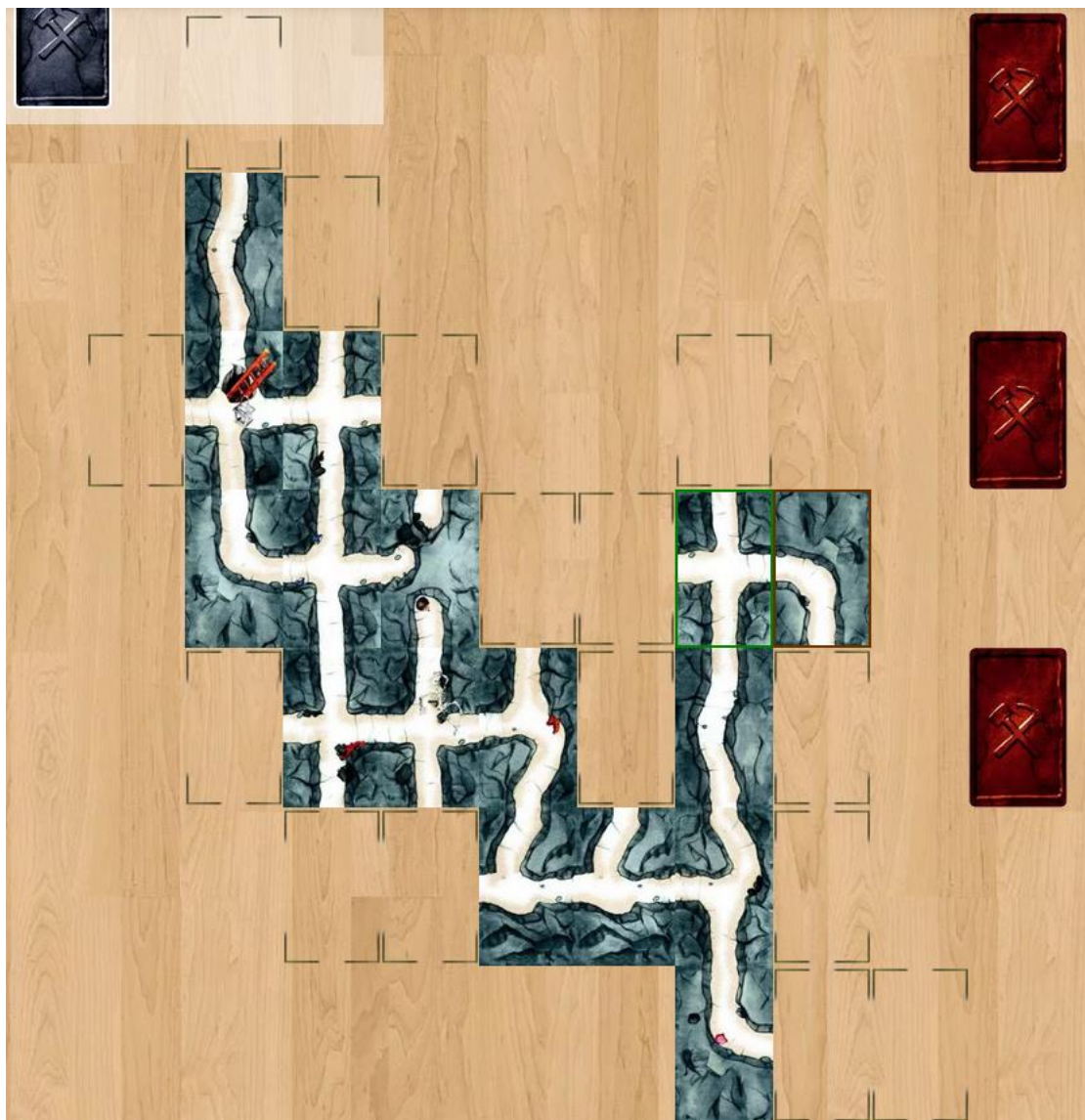
I sat in to watch the last 15 minutes of this half-hour online adaptation of a card game. The idea is for each player to use tool cards to place tunnel cards to connect a tunnel from a mine entrance to gold (card).

However, one of the players, or two if there are a certain number, are saboteurs who use their cards to frustrate and prevent the completion of the tunnel. For example, instead of placing a tunnel card that extends the tunnel, the saboteur can place a dead-end tunnel section, or replace a section with a rock fall, or extend the tunnel in the wrong direction, or smash a tool. As the saboteur is unknown at the start of the game, playing along can work wonders when a tweak will foil a tunnel plan instead of placing a catastrophic dead end. Once you start destroying tools, the others can figure out to coordinate to complete the tunnel.

Tunnel to the gold is a win for all but the saboteur. Preventing the tunnel from reaching the gold by the time the card deck is empty is a win for the saboteur. Three runs through the deck is a game.

Easy to learn, easy to play, and fun to watch the saboteurs try and twist out of being labeled the saboteur.

Mid round tunnel complex. The red cards represent potential gold.



Skirmish Action II: The Streamlining

by Russ Lockwood

Lee brought over the draft version of *Skirmish Action II*, his upgraded WWII skirmish rules for miniatures. The original playtest was back in 2016, if not a bit earlier and we had been playtesting the upgunned version on and off for a year or so.

The main difference is that version *II* jettisoned the cards that determined unit activation order. Now, it's a roll off for initiative and the determination of whether the winner wants to go first or last. That sped up the game.

As before, each figure got an automatic first action -- move, fire, CAC (a Combat Action Command -- basically, hold off performing an action until a future time), etc. and then had to roll a Quality Check (QC) to gain a second action. We kept things simple in this playtest: all figures were 4+ on a d6 to pass the QC.

Just a Squad

Phil (US) and I (German) controlled nine figures each. The first lesson we learned as we each tried to grab two of the three victory buildings was that unlimited grenades were a wonderful thing. You can only toss them 4 inches (rifle fire is about 28 inches or so), and you need to pass a QC, but if you do, the grenade affects everyone in a building. Lee treats a building as a single area.

US Phil starts out close to one building.

Of course, the two buildings near each other were 4 inches away. We quickly discovered that grenades are very effective when you have a 50-50 chance of making one work. My rifle guy tossed 'em. My LMG gunner tossed 'em. Even my Sniper discovered that grenades were far superior to any skilled scopesman's shot into a building.

We later changed the grenade blast radius to only attack 1 to 3 troops (d6/2, or a d3 if you prefer that terminology).

On the plus side, the game went quick. Four turns in under an hour. On the negative side, we needed to do something about those grenades.

Hey, it's a playtest. That's why we're here.

My Germans (bottom of the photo) infiltrate the building as supporting troops advance through the woods. US troops (top left corner) head into the building. Note the colored "gems" (not dots) that correspond to stats on a quick reference card (not shown).

Reset the Grenades

We reset with the proviso that each figure only had one grenade. Now you had to figure out when to use the precious grenade. Use it or save it.

And you needed to pass a QC test to use it.

The other thing was using a 1/16 of a page as a grenade blast template. What page? Get an 8.5x11 inch piece of paper. Fold it in half: That's a half page. Fold in half again and it's a quarter page. Fold again for an eighth page and again for a 1/16th page. If you have a sheet of paper, you'll never have to worry about templates again.

FYI: Different weapons use different sized templates. So, a 60mm mortar, 81mm mortar, and 120mm mortar all use different sized templates. Clever bit, that.



We also gave a cover bonus to the defender, who could be behind a wall, up the stairs, etc. That proved a smart benefit.

Oh yeah, we also moved the houses more than 4 inches apart.

Suppression Fire

Lee also added an option for suppressive fire -- you get a number of your troops to fire at an area where enemy are hiding and roll a die. If you make it, all enemy inside the area (building, woods, etc.) are suppressed: half move and half fire.

This teaches you not to put all your troops in one terrain basket.

In the second playtest, Phil (left) and Dennis confront the reality that grenades have been made mortal.

Second Playtest

This game turned out far better and far closer. It's still tough to dig out defenders in a building and firing is not as effective as it is in *Chain of Command*. At least the grenades are tamped down a bit.

I moved into the nearest house and sent a fire team towards the house on the far right and infiltrated a fire team through the woods on the left. Phil's troops entered the house opposite him and also sent a fire team towards the far right house. It was a race.

Grabbing initiative, I sent out one fellow into no man's alley between the houses and tossed a grenade into the house occupied by Phil's troops. Success, but I only caught one US trooper with the blast, wounding him.

Another soldaten moved up and used the LMG to try and take out a second US trooper in the house. He missed. Both my troops failed their roll for a second action. Uh-oh!

Other soldaten reached the far right house, but one lad had a BAR man use his CAC and ripple a few rounds his way. That chased my soldaten back into cover.

My sniper took refuge in some trees, but accurate fire wounded him, too. Another LMG sighted a US soldier with a SMG sneaking up among the trees and bapata, bapata, bapata... Sgt Saunders was dead.

Back and Forth

Back and forth went our actions as we tried to weasel our way into buildings and lay down fire. Phil was far more active with CACs. I used them sparingly after I discovered that CACs do not interrupt enemy fire upon the soldier using the CAC. CACs do wonders against enemy troops trying to cross in front of one of your soldiers. Both of us picked off guys in the open.

Much Smoother

SA II plays smoother, with the proviso that Phil and I played 1 on 1, with each of us controlling nine figures.

The markers can get heavy on a figure depending on what it does and how effective enemy fire is, as losses are incremental. You could do the same thing with a roster sheet, but whether you like to use one or not is a personal taste.

The second game was still in contention after one hour, with each of us still controlling six or seven perfectly healthy soldiers.

Now, that was a good playtest that banged the kinks out of some rules. Lee plans to run *SA II* at conventions with one-on-one games.



Stellar Dominions: Playtest

by Russ Lockwood

Marc is a fan of GDW's *Imperium* system, only he's not as big a fan of its scenario and two-path map. We played the game earlier this year (see my April 2, 2022 AAR for the recap) and since then, he's been tinkering with his own variation.

Marc considers tweaking a mechanic.

The Turn

One side moves, the other moves, and ships in the same hex have combat. After each round, either side may break off and retreat.

After three rounds, both sides tally up build points of their empire and build units for the next turn.

One big change is that instead of *Imperium*'s infinite warp lines, he's opted for a point-to-point hyperspace movement system. The lighter (escort, frigate, and destroyer) ships move five hexes, the cruiser classes move four, and the larger battleship classes move three. We played without the battleships. As you are in hyperspace during movement, you can move "through" enemy ships.

Combat

Combat is the same use of long range and short range, with a die roll determining the distance you pop out from enemy ships. Firing is simultaneous. Multiple ships may combine factors against one enemy ship, which we did a lot. Shades of my *Hyperspace Hack* system!

Unlike *Imperium*'s alive or dead status, hits flip the counter over to a damaged side (or eliminate a damaged counter), but at the higher die rolls of more massive firepower, two hits are possible. We did a bit of that, too.

Ground troops need a transport to move them and then they land on a planet. Orbiting ships bombard while planetary defense (infrastructure) units get a shot back. Ground combat is unit on unit, but with excess units getting "free" shots.

The Battle

Marc gave me three extra ships but he had more build points among his systems. It came out to about three turns and then we're even and after that, unless I took or destroyed systems, his economic base would slowly give him the advantage.

So, I tried to move quickly with a broad front advance. Marc used a reserve force to jump one of the prongs of my advance and give it a beating. I tried to lock up his scattered forces and bring superior firepower. It was kind of working, but he was gaining the upper hand.

I managed to destroy an outpost and then another, landing troops at the second one to see how combat worked against the garrison. My orbital bombardment did well, but I took some hits.

After I escaped his reserve force, Marc moved it closer to my leading prong.

Pounce!

That's when I saw a golden opportunity to combine prongs for a temporary advantage on his main reserve fleet. Of course, die rolls would show if I was a genius or moron.

The dice rolled and I got a little luckier than Marc. He fled, but my fleet was ready to follow up. We called the game then as I was next to his capital with a good advantage.

Then we chatted about the game as a whole and rules in specific.



My Suggestions

Keeping with my philosophy of a quick standard game and then add in optional rules, I suggested ditching the ground troops. When you have a ship in orbit, the system is yours. You can build an Outpost direct on such a system and not worry about building in on an Outpost and then transporting such infrastructure to the newly conquered system.

The rest played pretty quick, although as the game went on, we tended to clump ships together because the player going second can pick off an awful lot of small one, two, or three ship task forces.

I suggested some sort of leaders that can take only x number of ships (Commodore up to three, Rear Admiral up to six and so on) and not be able to stack them. Arbitrary, to be sure, but as I pointed out, the economic value of ships exceeds that of systems.

Thinking anew, you might assign some sort of Victory Point tally per turn per system to encourage occupation and defense. Right now, you only get VPs for destroying enemy infrastructure (like an Outpost).

Marc had a VP "War Weariness" chart that needed attention from both players, although this clock mechanism didn't come into play during our three-turn game.

In any case, the system showed promise and is worth another go in the future.

On My Mind: Editing a Better Game

by Russ Lockwood

A great game developer is like a great book editor: make content flow, leave no fingerprints, and let the reader revel in the paper world created by the game author.

That means working through the rules, translating mechanics ideas into understandable prose, and ensuring the quality and replayability of the end product. It's a challenge to open a rule set, lay out troops or maps/counters, and take the time to learn the system. If you're fortunate, you have a gaming buddy or club to help. If you're really lucky, they'll also learn and play the system.

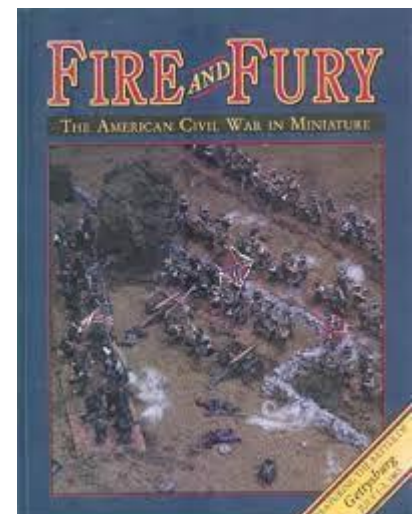
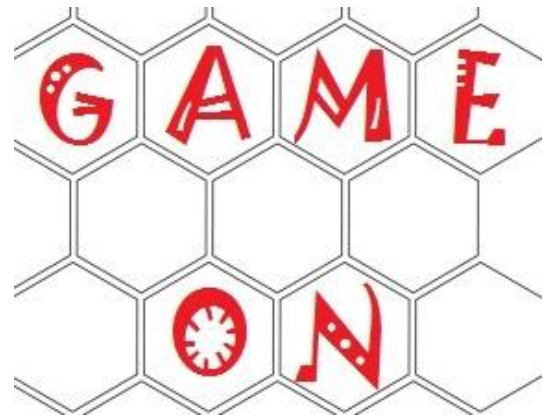
The key to gaming entertainment lies in the step between design and publication -- development. Each wargame or historical miniatures rule set takes about the same amount of time as a generic eurogame, but as we know, wargaming is a niche market. More and more wargames go the Kickstarter route. Rule sets are more print on demand than print runs.

It makes sense. We have so many options for entertainment, that the longer and more involved the rules, the harder it is to peel away folks from TV binge watching and graphically-rich video games to paint figures and play a wargame.

I always thought we can adapt some of the mass-market appeal to our own hobby games. So it might be interesting to traipse through the internet and see just how popular some of these games can be. They must playtest a game until it's perfect, right?

Diversion: Some Sales Figures

Let's face it, sales figures from the big companies are hard to come by, but you can poke around the web for some numbers. The *Total War* series, which mimics a miniatures game on a PC, sold 36 million copies, sez PC Gamer in an April 2021 article. The first-person shoot 'em up *Halo* series sold 81 million copies while the *Lego*-like *MineCraft* sold 238 million games, sez Wikipedia.



238 million?! Sheesh. The typical new historical miniatures rules set is lucky to sell 238 copies. The best sellers will push a thousand to two thousand copies. I have heard, but have no proof, that *Fire & Fury* is the best-selling paper historical miniatures rules set at about 30,000 or so sold, with a couple web sites reporting that *Bolt Action* sold 23,000 first edition copies and an unknown number of 2nd edition sets. *Napoleon's Battles* comes in at around 20,000 copies or so.

Field of Glory sold over 200,000 computer game units, based on the paper rules set, but that's a 2009 number and I didn't find anything newer not sales for the paper series.

S&T used to publish its subscription numbers -- about 30,000 or so in the 1970s as I recall. According to a *C3i* interview of Jack Greene, the Avalon Hill print run for a game in the 1970s was 25,000 copies.

On the other hand, thehistoryreader.com sez, *Risk* sold more than 100,000 copies in its launch year (1957). By 1979, more than a quarter million *Dungeons & Dragons* rulebooks had been sold. Axis and Allies printed 2 million units in all variations, so sales must be fairly close to that, sez a Boardgamegeek sales list. You'll find numerical nuggets if you peruse BGG's A to Z list.

A February 2021 Newsweek article noted that *Settlers of Catan* sold 32 million copies, with *Stratego* at 20 million copies. A 2019 Moneyinc article noted *Battleship* passed 100 million copies.

I don't want to equate sales with quality, but with numbers like these, you can understand how you can have a considerable number of playtests compared to historical boardgames and miniatures rule sets. I mean video game companies actually pay playtesters ... and as I recall some of those playtesters are trying to form a union to get benefits and better pay. It's a lot of code to torture test.

Alas, playtesting is a Herculean labor of love in our niche of the gaming world.

Development Philosophy

Historical miniatures rules, and boardgames too, rely on volunteer playtesters. Finding playtesters is a Herculean task in itself. That shifts the onus back on the developer to anticipate what situations wargamers can create when playing.

So while ruminating about game development, I ran across a couple articles: one recapping the wisdom of designer Frank Chadwick and the other offering advice by publisher Alan Emrich.

Frank in the middle of a playtest session. Image from web.

Frank Chadwick

The philosophy that drives game designer Frank Chadwick:

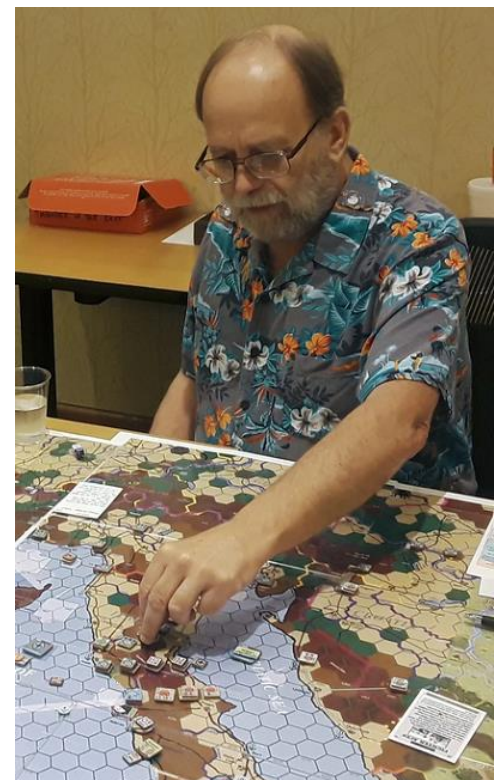
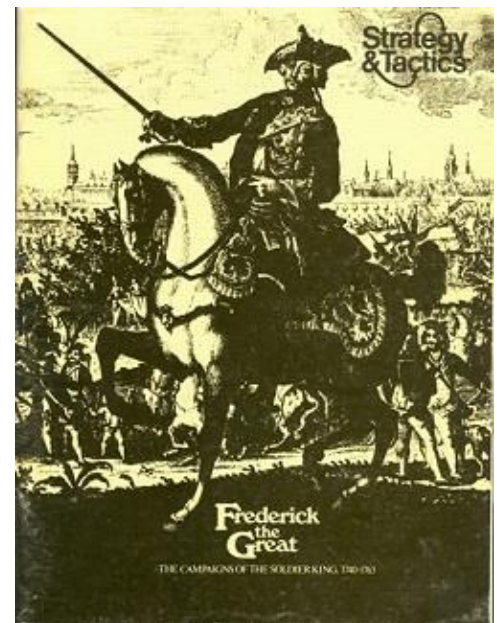
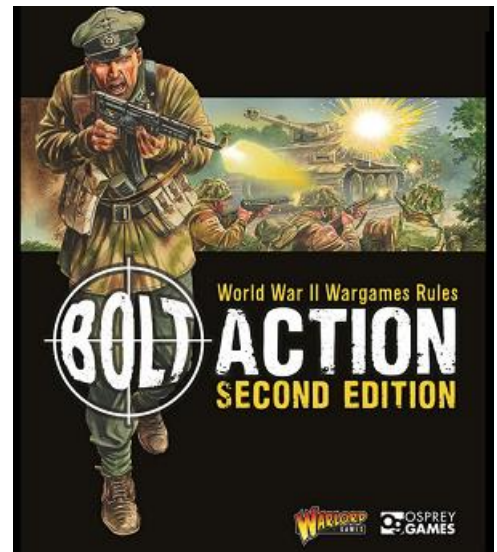
Historical accuracy is the departure point for everything...

Which must yield to the interpretations of a wargame at its defined scope and scale...

And to try to keep things as simple as possible.

Great game development is the art of subtracting, not adding.

Constantly expunge rules exceptions and overwrought mechanics to maintain the game's simplicity.



The developers should do all the work (with graphics, ergonomics, balance, narrative, etc.) so that the player has all the fun with a polished, streamlined gameplay experience.

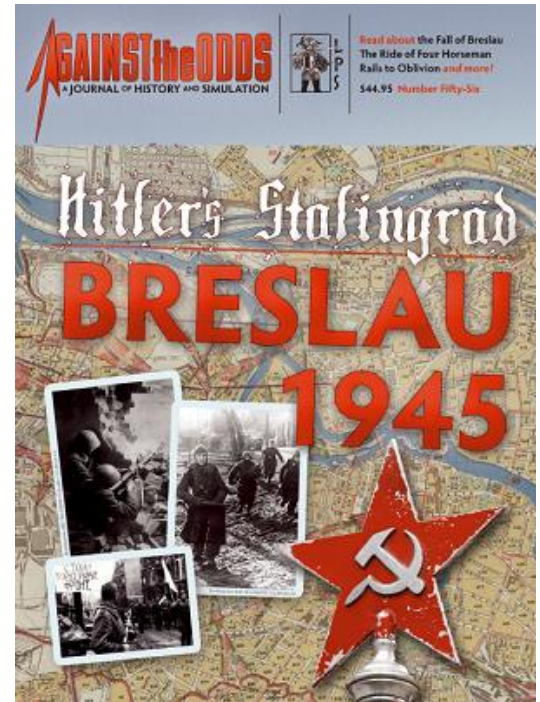
<https://insidegmt.com/eto-series-august-2021-update/>

Believe you me, and in full disclosure mode I'm a game developer for *Against the Odds* (ATO) magazine, the developer does all the rules editing and tweaking work -- assuming the designer agrees to the changes. Some do. Some are adamant against touching their baby. Fair enough, but the developer brings new eyeballs to something the designer has been working on for months if not years. It's often a forest and trees situation.

My philosophy is to keep as much historical flavor and associated mechanics to get the game on the table and get players moving units and tossing dice. Additional historical detail -- and complexity -- are optional rules. If you like the standard game, you'll take the time to add in the optional rules.

For example, in ATO's recently released hex wargame *Breslau 1945*, I moved the supply points mechanic into the optional rules section. Now, supply points were part of the siege. Tracking the ebbs of supply use with the flow of Luftwaffe supply runs is important, but let's start exploring the basic move and combat mechanics first. That wonderful mechanic of tactical ambushes and surprises should be the star of the show before requiring players to track supply points.

It also makes the game playable in three to four hours and that's an important aspect for us gamers with a free Friday night. --RL



Alan Emrich: Game Development - A Test of Systems and Quest for Balance

What is a designer to do when the players are breaking history with rigid, disciplined gameplay instead of breaking bad (as their historical counterparts did)?

There is only so much the designer CAN do:

First, make sure the model is right: units, values, terrain, and core systems. They all need to have the backing of real historical research and also yield plausible interactions and outcomes. The game model requires verisimilitude (the appearance of being true) to lend it credibility and perceived realism.

Second, validate the simulation to make sure that reasonably historical play yields reasonably historical results. While players are never forced to duplicate history, the proof of a simulation is that duplication can occur if the players stick to history's script. That is another important yardstick by which to measure a historical simulation's veracity -- can it duplicate history's lessons when "following the script?"

Third, find the pressure points in the system and make sure none of them intrinsically break the game or unbalance things between two fairly-matched opponents. In particular, look for "gamey" things that players will always do but their historical counterparts would not or could not do. Then try to remove them -- or at least smooth them out to minimize their impact on the game's flow and balance.

Finally, check the narrative. When players take things "off script" from history (as they always will), make sure that whatever new game state it leads them to is plausible and that they clearly understand how they reached it.



Having players create an alternate history on their game table is one thing, but it won't matter much if they lose track of the plot and miss the lessons of their experience playing it. Players need to walk away able to recall the highlights of their story and which key developments lead them to its perceptibly proper conclusion.

<https://www.watchword.biz/post/thank-a-playtester>

Wise Words from Both

To achieve those goals, you need playtesters.

Playtesters are great for the first playing, but can rapidly lose effectiveness with every game. Why? Because they learned how to do it once and then the assumptions come in that everyone knows this rule or that rule.

I playtested *Breslau 1945* about 35 times, with half of those games ending halfway in a 9-turn game and the other half going the distance. Short games were for the usual reason: this mechanic needs help, this one doesn't work, a new mechanic is needed to augment the rules, and so on. You fix, change, or eliminate mechanics or move aspects into the optional rules section and playtest again, preferably with no memory of the previous mechanics. That's hard.

Once at a certain point, playtesting with live gamers shows up all the things you as developer missed.

How Could You Miss?

I often wondered how a published rule set could miss something. Flip, flip, flip through the rules. Surely, sez I, I can't be the first person in the gaming world to run across this basic rule question. If gaming with others, surely, sez we, we can't be the only gamers to find this hole.

Wait for it...

In the development and production process, shirley happens. Play a game often enough and you *THINK* you've addressed some issue, only to discover questions about this, that, and the other thing. Edit rules often enough and you *THINK* you've addressed all issues.

The more complex the rules, the greater the likelihood of errors creeping in. And wargames sport complex rules.

Developers always have a fall-back position. It's called errata. It's an ugly position no developer wants to take. The goal is none, but it's almost inevitable.

But when it all comes together -- the topic, the graphics, and the rules -- magic! And if gamers remember the storyline as well as their success or failure in a game without thinking too much about the mechanics, the designer -- and developer -- did their jobs.

Important Dates for Fall-In 2022

Fall In!® 2022 will be held at the Wyndham Lancaster Resort and Convention Center, aka, the Lancaster Host.

9/5/2022	Deadline to have game listed in PEL
9/23/2022	PEL Published
9/26/2022	Online/Mail In Attendee Registration Opens
11/2/2022	Online Event Selection Closes - Tickets available onsite
11/3/2022	Onsite Registration Opens 4 pm
11/4/2022	Fall In! 2022 Convention
11/5/2022	Fall In! 2022 Convention
11/6/2022	Fall In! 2022 Convention

Admiral in Waiting: WWII Global Naval War

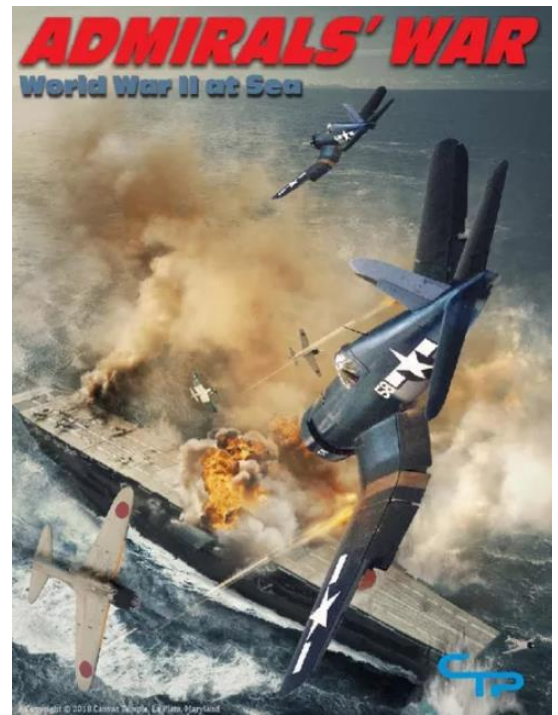
by Russ Lockwood

Fred had picked up *Admiral's War* (AW) on Kickstarter back before the pandemic, which curtailed plans to actually play the WWII global naval game. Marc had been enthusiastic about giving it a go. So we all met at Dan's to take the game for a spin.

By random draw, I was Japan, Dan was Germany and Italy, Marc was the US, and Fred was Britain, France, and the Dutch.

Components: A+

I was quite impressed with the AW components. The Kickstarter came with mounted mapboards. The regular game map is paper. Fred had the Kickstarter. The counters are nice and thick, the images sharp, and the numbers large enough for even my grognard eyes. Set up sheets made sorting the counters relatively simple and showed which ships were at start and the turns the reinforcements came in.



Rules: Could Use Some Help

As Dan noted, "Well, even with reading the rules several times among us all, we 'succeeded' in playing this game wrong on several occasions."

Pre-game: Fred (left) lays out the Axis ships while Dan (center) and Marc await his completion. The four upside down red cards next to the dice tray represent random assignment of sides.



That's the short version. The longer version saw us flipping and a flipping and a flipping back and forth through the rules seeking one thing or another. The main consternation was that the rules were defined by topic and not actual sequence of play.

Remembering the little rules caused the most problems. For example, one I found by accident concerns the French navy. France is automatically conquered by the Germans. Remember, this is a naval game, not a land one. A few land units are US Marines and Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces, and the Germans have one Fallschirmjager unit. That's it for land units.

Gray German units and Red Japanese units at start.



At the end of Turn 1, each French ship gets a roll to see if it scuttles, joins the Allies, or joins the Axis. Fred rolled pretty horribly for the French, causing a number of French ships to join the Axis. Dan used the Axis French (er, Vichy French) in the Mediterranean to good effect on turn 2.

Fred (left) and Dan battle for the Atlantic.

So, I'm poking through the rules and it turns out it was the end of Turn 2. I find a sentence about captured French ships cannot be used on Turn 2 because they are being refitted. Turn 2 is over and done, so we let the game continue. But it's this one small sentence that was overlooked among all the rules. We discovered a number of omissions after the fact. I performed illegal peacetime maneuvers to control areas we later found I shouldn't have even moved into, much less control.

Another is what happens to Land Based Aircraft when they are 'crippled' (hits taken that equal their strength). We used the ship rule, but found out not so -- they still fight at full strength. We kinda wondered about that.

Digression About Duplication

I'm a fan of duplication of rules within the text. To me, I want to find a rule as quickly as possible and I may not use the same logic as the designer, not to mention trying to locate and remember one sentence that may have a huge impact on the game -- like the French ships.

Many is the time in many of the rules over the last few decades I wondered why a particular rule wasn't in the spot I was looking at, but was indeed located in another section that seemed an odd place to tuck it away. Like I said, my logical spot may differ from the designer's spot. I suspect logic is in the mind of the rules beholder.

Marc is of the mind that you mention a rule once and use "see also rule x.xx" to point people there. To me, that means constantly flipping around the rules, often made worse when the rule you look for also points to another x.xx section. For one thing, if it's important enough to send you to another section, it's important enough to place it there. It also assumes that's where you first look, only to discover a "link" to the other section. I would argue to place the rule in both places.

We both agree that Sequence of Play is the framework to be followed. It solves a lot more problems than it causes.

All that said, we generally thought we followed the AW rules, even as we flipped and flipped through the rulebook.

Russ (left) and Marc wait for turn 3 while Fred (right) figures out how to react to all those Germans hanging around the Atlantic. Photo by Dan.

Japan and USA

AW is a two-player game. It may be billed as a four-player game, but Japan and USA do not enter the game until Turn 3.

Well, technically, Japan could stage a Pearl Harbor sneak attack on Turn 1, but they don't get the aircraft carrier Zuikaku



until Turn 2, and they don't control the important air base of Saigon until the start of Turn 3. The British have two battleships in the area (i.e. at Singapore) that sure need sinking and use of land based aircraft can sure help with die rolls.

As the US for the most part stays put in Pearl and most other ships are frozen in an off-map spot, the game really steers the Japanese to attack on Turn 3.

So, if you're the US and Japan, you basically sit for two turns, or about three to four hours, waiting for the Germans and British to duke it out in the Atlantic. And the first two turns are critically important for both players. Of course, we were all flipping through the rules to find something or another.

Historically, Yamamoto said he would run wild in the Pacific for six months. Little did I know Japan and USA would sit still for almost six hours...OK, really only about three-four hours. Seriously, if you come to play as the US or Japan, come about three-four hours later. You won't miss a thing. On the plus side, you get time to flip through the rules...

Atlantic Turns 1, 2, and 3

Axis and Allies hammered each other in the Atlantic. Dan formed his forces into the trifecta of with U-boat, Hilfskreuzer, and oiler in several areas along with tactical attacks by capital ships and land based aircraft.

The key here is the order of movement. The British/French move first, then the Germans. This allows the Germans to see the weakly held areas and pounce.

The other key is learning that the "raid" side of ship counters do not perform anti-submarine warfare. Only the "patrol" side of the counter can perform ASW attacks. That's very important.

Also important: rolling at least average. Dan defied the average on many a roll, including the Victory Point producing U-boat attacks on (implied) merchantmen. U-boats need a 6 on a d6 for a VP. Dan defied the odds a few more times than average.

Furthermore, Dan's surface and air attacks were just as lethal (6s cause a hit) while Fred, Fred, Fred...he defied the odds the other way: something's wrong with his bloody ships today.

Sea or Air Battle?

When enemy are in the same area, each declares whether they want to fight a sea battle or an air battle. If the same choice, that's the type of tactical battle. If not, high die roll gets to choose.

The difference is only air units fight in an air battle while only ships fight in a sea battle. The mechanics are the same: pick a firer, pick a target, and roll dice equal to the attack factor looking for 6s for a hit and 5s for a forced retreat. Some ships and aircraft get a +1 to the die rolls.

When hits exceed the defense factor, a ship sinks or a land based air unit is destroyed. If hits equal the factor, the ship is "crippled" (mostly useless), but can be repaired at a port with a repair factor (like Pearl). Forced retreats are sent back to a friendly base. Remaining units can voluntarily retreat or they can stick around for another round of combat. The air or sea die roll is done anew.

One odd point: Air units do not attack other air units. In other words, no CAP. And there's no AA either. Perhaps in some optional rule?

Pacific Turn 3: Operation Hi-Ho

OK, first things first: I had gotten a few victory points from the Bismarck Sea based on not finding the sentence about staying out of the Bismarck Sea until Japan goes to war. I also wandered up to the Aleutian Islands and Midway (Central Pacific) -- another no-no during peacetime, sez the rules.

The sneak attack at Pearl allows the Japanese to send up to 10 ships, all of which must be a certain tactical speed factor. I sent four carriers, four battleships, and two cruisers.

The Japanese get two automatic air strikes. After that, they can stay in the area for a surface or air battle (die roll) or automatically retreat back to Japan.

On the flip side, the Japanese need double the usual hits to actually sink (remove from the game) US ships at Pearl. Historically, the US refloated, repaired, and re-used several battleships.

Also, the US carriers are never at Pearl or anywhere on the map. They show up randomly after the Japanese move on the US turn.

I selected four carriers, not six, because I saw a British carrier task force near Samoa (French Polynesia), and I didn't know how tough it would be to sink British battleships near Singapore. I sent a Zuikaku and Ryuku task force to Samoa and the remaining carriers to Singapore -- along with land based air units to Saigon.

Middle of Turn 3: The Japanese spread out. The entry of US units in the box (top left corner) is randomly determined.



Japanese Attacks

In retrospect, I overkilled the British at Singapore and probably could have used a fifth carrier at Pearl. Both British BBs and the Dutch cruiser were sent to the bottom. I also hammered the USS Houston in Manila.

My Pearl Harbor air attacks were good: I sunk two battleships and put 10 hits on a third (juuuust missed the 11 needed to sink). I scattered some other hits around the other battleships. A fifth carrier would have helped here.

As for the attack in Samoa, I had thought there was a British carrier there, but was disappointed to see none there... Actually, there was one there, just misidentified. I switched from surface to air attacks, which was a mistake. In a surface attack, I could have screened the Zuikaku. In the air, the Swordfish targeted my carrier and managed to toss a 6 on 2d6. When you hit, you toss a d6 for damage.

You got it, the British biplanes sunk the carrier. Sure, I nailed the HMG Glorious, but it was not an even trade. My surface units mopped up the rest of the US force.

I almost got the USS Enterprise with a task force around Midway. The three US carriers and escorts come in via random d6 die roll -- 1 at Midway, 2-3 at Pearl, and 4-6 in Caribbean. Marc rolled a 1 for the Enterprise, meeting one of my battleships and a couple cruisers I sent to grab the area.

Alas, I could not roll for a surface action and the Enterprise planes pounded me into scrap metal until Marc realized one blown roll would nail a third of his carriers. The Big E high-tailed it back to Pearl. I kept the area with a cruiser, but that was about it. I took the Aleutians, too.

US Turn 3

The US struck my exposed task force, and I took losses, but managed to escape without too much damage. A US carrier force went through the Panama Canal to chase me out of Samoa.

At the end of the turn, the Japanese controlled the Bismarck Sea to the Aleutians.

Turn 4: Indian Ocean

While the Axis took the Med and battled in the Atlantic, I went after the Brits in the Indian Ocean and down in Australia.

Alas, I learned that players cannot capture red-colored ports -- and Australia was all red. Oh, I took the Coral Sea area, but had to settle for capturing Port Moresby, giving my land based air access to the Indian Ocean. If I was cleverer, I would have invaded and taken Noumea, which would have given me access to Samoa -- where the US can exit the Panama Canal -- and the Coral Sea.

My attacks in the Indian Ocean sunk some British and chased the rest back to Africa. Having a carrier where the other player doesn't is a big advantage...if you can roll for an air attack.

Land Based Air

It took me a few turns to understand that land based air counters do not have to be placed on the map. They can appear at any airbase under your control. Yes, Scotty, they beam in to any air base you control.

The amphibious forces, however, must be at a specific base. They move like a ship and can be attacked like any other ship. That is an important distinction.

Turn 5: Dancing With the US

As the Japanese, I discovered a rather unwelcome truth. The US moves after the Japanese. Like the Germans in the Atlantic, the US can pick a weak area and pounce. I lost a small task force that way.

With the US concentrated at Pearl, it's too much of a tough nut to crack (especially after I lost the Zuikaku). I kept losing VPs in the east, offset by the VPs I picked up from the British in the west. I was still sitting pretty with VPs, thanks to big VP areas next to the Home Islands and Singapore and the Indian Ocean isn't too shabby.

As the US will eventually repair the Pearl hits and expand with replacement ships, the Japanese face a long, slow decline.

End Game

We only got to Turn 5 of a 10-turn game, but that was enough to learn the system, albeit with a considerable number of errors on all our parts.

In other words, a typical learning game for us.

The Germans maxed out at 29 VPs and the Japanese were right behind with 25 or so.

The US would have to devote forces to the Atlantic, which will slow the expansion in the Pacific. Plenty of game left, but I think the Axis can hang on for another five turns, doing enough damage to keep the Allies at arms length. But that's only a guess. If the Atlantic die rolls had been closer, the game would have been closer. And don't forget I got four extra VPs from my illegal entry into the Bismarck Sea, plus a couple more for Central Pacific (Midway). The Aleutians denied the US VPs.

Play It Again, Fred?

Sure thing, now that we sorted out the rules a little better and obtained some clarifications from the designer on BoardgameGeek. But If I'm Japan or the US, I'll be there three hours after you start...or I'll bring another game to play with the US player while we wait.

Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Alexander the Great: Ancient Sources. by David Grant. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 319 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *A Battle for Truth and Fiction*

Sub-Subtitle: *The Ancient Sources and Why They Can't Be Trusted*

The sub-subtitle represents an accurate description of this book.

Grant did a magnificent job of analyzing ancient texts and presenting his interpretations of various writers' influences, motivations, and intents when it came to biographical material on Alexander the Great.

Compared to what was written in the ancient Greek era, so little survives. The great Library of Alexandria, which collected and copied scrolls from all over the Mediterranean Sea and stored them in two buildings, suffered disasters several times: accidental fire under Julius Caesar (48BC), fire under Aurelian (270AD), storm (365AD), fire ordered by Bishop Theophilus (390/391AD), and fire ordered by Caliph Omar (641AD) (p155).

Add in the Roman burning of the library of Carthage with 500,000 "volumes" (p156) and volumes of human knowledge and observations in the ancient era were destroyed primarily by cultural morons. Still happens today: Nazi book burnings in the 1930s are the same as Islamic militants trying to torch a collection of 30,000 medieval manuscripts in Timbuktu (Mali) in 2013.

Soapbox: Any society that fears the words of the past has no future. It can neither learn from previous mistakes nor warn the future of its own mistakes.

Off Soapbox: An interesting point made is that scrolls of papyrus averaged about 15 to 20 feet in length, were of three general qualities: Augustan (best), Livian (second best), and Heiratic (general administration quality), and had one side that took the ink well and the other side that took it less so (p152).

I mention this because scrolls eventually gave way to what Grant calls codexes, or bound copies that looked more or less like modern books. The key was that when scribes copied the text of the scrolls onto the pages of the codexes, they quite often abridged the original text (p153).

This is important as we tabletop history buffs delve into modern translations. You get the feeling that we're playing a eon-level game of Telephone -- where one person whispers a sentence into the next person's ear once, and that person repeats to the next person in line and so on until the last person tells all the sentence heard -- and all get to compare it to the original sentence.

Speaking of such, one typo: "life of death" (p106) should be "life or death."

I may quibble here and there with some interpretations and reasonings of his conclusions. Yet I was absolutely captivated by Grant's analysis of the truth or fiction of ancient sources surrounding Alexander the Great. Here, in one volume, you get to sample and extrapolate sources beyond Arrian or Plutarch. If you've read translations of original sources, this book will make you think. I can offer no higher praise.

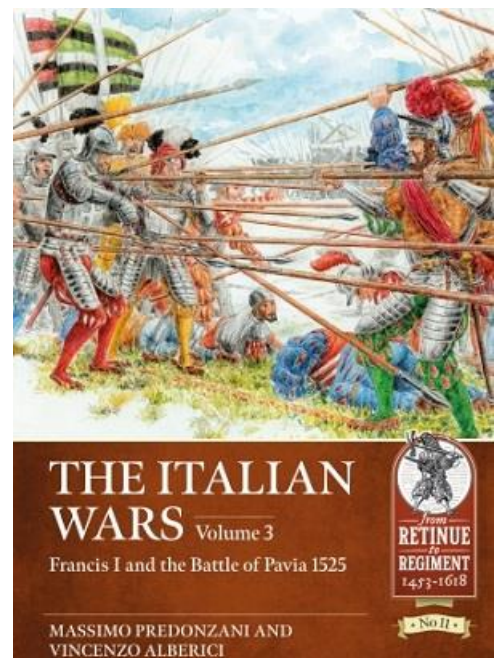
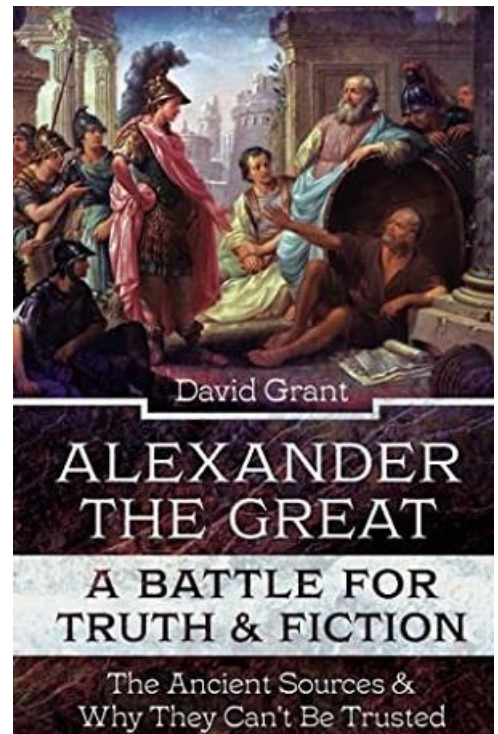
Enjoyed it.

The Italian Wars: Volume 3 Battle of Pavia. by Massimo Predonzani and Vincenzo Alberici. Translated by Rachele Tiso. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 130 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Francis I and the Battle of Pavia 1525*

Number 11 in the *From Retinue to Regiment 1453-1618* series covers the Battle of Pavis 1525 between the French and Imperial armies. A succinct account of maneuver and siege events leading up to the battle follows with an OOB-intensive look at the battle -- perfect for setting up a tabletop scenario. Indeed, the authors deserve praise for sorting through conflicting OOB and numerical information from multiple sources.

Uniforms get a look with a central section with 36 color illustrations (28 uniforms and eight flags/standards). Note that the



illustrations are bit more impressionistic than Osprey uniform illustrations. See the front cover for an example of Predonzani's work.

I would have liked the rest of the book to be in color, as many of the 22 black and white illustrations in the book come from the Battle of Pavia tapestries. The one black and white map shows Northern Italy, while seven pretty basic black and white maps show the progress of the battle. I'd like to see larger, more terrain-filled maps, but my eye is on translating the battle to wargaming. Five black and white photos show various buildings.

Tiso deserves praise for a clean translation. I have always found the swirl of Renaissance politics confusing and fascinating at the same time. The period is colorful and full of personalities. I haven't read the first two volumes, but I expect the same excellence in them as in this third volume.

Enjoyed it.

The Aviation Pioneers of McCook Field. by Jerry Koszyk. Hardback (6.3x9.25 inches). 192 pages. 2022.

McCook Field sat outside Dayton, Ohio, and from post-WWI to the mid-1920s, it was the center for US military aviation design, development, construction, and testing. Over the course of 21 interviews, mostly done in the 1960s and 1970s, you'll learn about the little bits of progress made by these and other US aviation pioneers. From the evolution of instruments showing banking and rate of altitude loss or gain to pressurized cabins to record breaking flights to abject failures, the march of aviation progress in the early days ran through McCook.

You probably never heard of most of these engineers, pilots, and commanders, with the exception of James Doolittle, who gained immortality for leading the first US WWII bombing raid of Japan. Yet you'll find a bell curve of fascinating anecdotes within the Q & A format of each interview.

For aviation buffs, you probably recognize the CyclePlane, a seven-wing human-powered airplane that often appears in documentaries as a collapsing failure. And it was, but in the days leading up to the filmed failure, it was towed around the field (with Doolittle at the wheel of a car) and lifted off the ground. A pedal test managed to get airborne a few inches off the ground for about 20 feet (p176). But when they brought in the cameras, crunch!

So designer Gerhardt built a second CyclePlane, this time with four wings. It was shipped to Detroit, but when wing repairs were made, a student flicked a cigarette that landed on the varnish on the wing and the entire plane burned (p83).

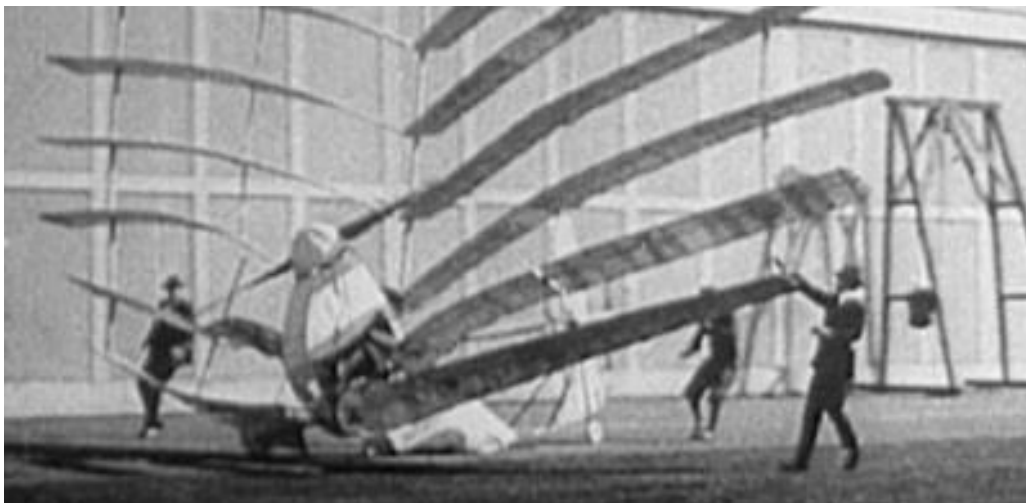
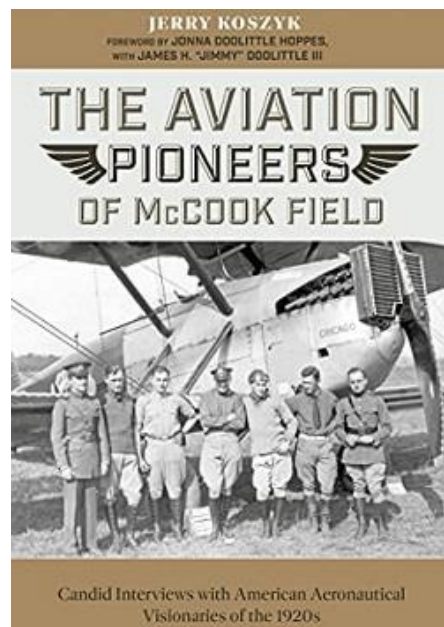
First CyclePlane. Image from web.

Then there was the four-engine de Bothezar helicopter that either got 6 to 8 inches off the ground (p55) or 2 to 6 feet off the ground for one minute 42 seconds (p179) depending on who was remembering what. The height was never more than ground effect and it wasn't until Sikorsky added rotational twisting of the blades that the helicopter became an operational reality (p55).

Slight differences exist within the interviews, which is understandable considering the 40 and 50 years that passed since McCook closed and the interviews. Yet, many remembrances are confirmed within multiple interviews.

The book contains 35 black and white photos and ends with evaluations of 18 aircraft. The Qs and As proved fascinating about the old days.

Enjoyed it.



The Darkest Hour: Volume 1 (Asia at War 31). by Michal A. Piegzik. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 84 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Japanese Naval Offensive in the Indian Ocean 1942 - The Opening Moves*

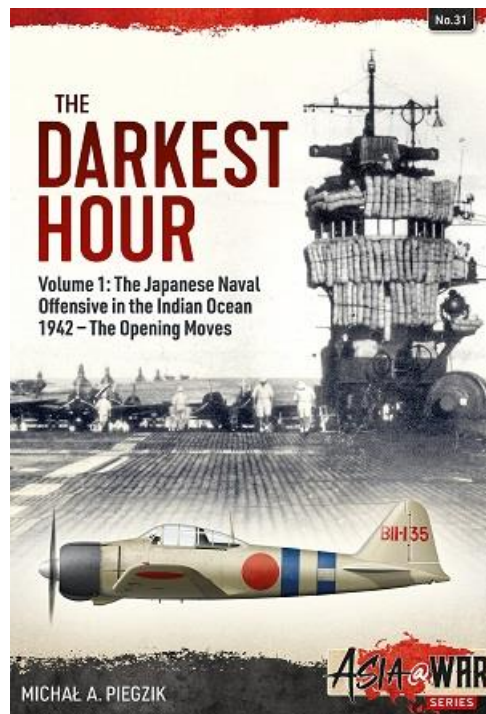
The Japanese sent their carrier strike force west into the Indian Ocean to protect their strategic flank and disrupt commerce in and around India and Ceylon. Carrier profiles, aircraft profiles, carrier and air tactics, and a number of operations are covered, including landings at Christmas, Andaman, and Nicobar Islands.

The key to this volume is the author lives in Japan, so the bibliography is filled with Japanese sources. I applaud the trend that Pacific War histories dive into Japanese archives. This book uses extensive accounts from the Japanese and offers considerable balance to the usual books that center on English-language accounts.

The booklet contains 71 black and white photos, four black and white maps, nine black and white illustrations, four color ship profiles, 20 color aircraft profiles, three color uniform illustrations, one color map, and overhead color illustrations of five Japanese carrier deck markings.

It's an exemplary account of the early operations and the forces involved. I can't wait for *Volume 2* and more extensive coverage of carrier strikes.

Enjoyed it.



Salamanca Campaign: 1812. by Tim Saunders. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 262 pages. 2022.

The good news is that a multitude of maps, many of them sporting scales, showcase British and French maneuvers during the 1812 Salamanca Campaign in Spain. The better news is the battle gets a nice write-up across multiple chapters that each concern specific areas of the battlefield. You'll be able to sort through the text, maps, and appendix OOB (although the OOB lacks aggregate or individual numbers) for a sweet tabletop battle.

However...I wouldn't call it bad news, more like less-than-good news, but the first-person excerpts from diaries can become overwhelming. Better would be the info summarized within the text so as not to break the battle narrative.

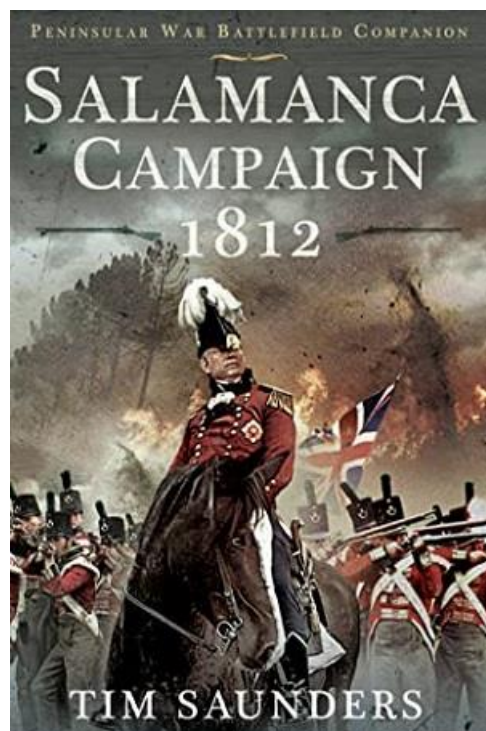
Yes, the author did his research -- and now we'll be subjected to reading all of it in a hard stop of the narrative. Sure, recounting heavy fire and losses can be illuminating. I find a few of them in just the right spots to be superb adjuncts to recap and analysis of a battle.

Yet, add in too many, and I admit "how many is too many?" is a subjective opinion on my part, and then I find them intrusive and disruptive to the flow of the narrative. Then again, you may revel in first-person accounts, in which case you'll find much revelry here.

The book contains 67 black and white illustrations, 76 black and white photos, and 44 black and white maps.

Overall, the insight within outshines the plethora of first-person interruptions, making for a nice reference for a tabletop battle.

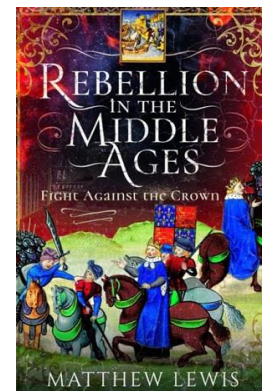
Enjoyed it.



Rebellion in the Middle Ages: Fight Against the Crown. by Matthew Lewis. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 269 pages. 2021.

It's great to be king until nobles think they know better and revolt. In most cases, it's about money, power, and trying to get a better deal. Sometimes, even the serfs revolt, but the book covers mostly nobles fed up with royal over-reaches or lack of royal attentions.

While chapter 1 seemed weak, the chapters that followed, and especially The Anarchy



(Stephen vs. Maud), were particularly fascinating and proved well told, well analyzed, and well researched. The final chapter on the War of the Roses drifted a bit for me in the last half-dozen pages, but the lead-up and beginning maneuvers were fascinating.

The book concentrates on the political element, with double- and triple-dealing nobles scheming to support or revolt against the crown with equal vehemence. Battles are mentioned, of course, but lack the tactical details to create a tabletop battle. You'll learn why they occurred, who won, and the consequences for the winners and losers, but not so much about terrain and OOBs. The focus remains squarely on the politics, not the battles.

One typo (p51): "he unsurprisingly marched directly to Lincoln was a large force" is more likely "with a large force."

One shock that's never mentioned in Robin Hood movies, and we all know how accurate those are, is that King John transferred his kingdom to the Pope and made England into a papal state. It was an act of desperation by John to place his realm beyond the threat of invasion by King Philip of France (p114). John's always been portrayed as a lousy king, but here's some historical references for his ineptitude.

The book contains 22 black and white illustrations and 11 black and white photos in a center section. The illuminated manuscripts would be far better in color.

Overall, this offers a strong encapsulation of medieval revolts against the King, from 1066 through the end of the War of the Roses in the 1480s.

Enjoyed it.

At the Gates of Rome. by Don Hollway. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 368 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Fall of the Eternal City AD 410*

While the book certainly covers the fall of the city of Rome, it would be more accurate to call this a compilation of history of the late Roman Empire from 378 to 410 AD (CE). It is not a hard-core military history per se, but more a general history that covers military campaigns with all the personalities, motivations, double-dealings, and outcomes.

The waves of 'barbarian' invasions, often no different than the Roman armies sent to stop them, is particularly well defined and described. Roman efforts to buy them off, assimilate them, or annihilate them receive all-important context inside and outside the East and West halves of the Roman Empire.

The book contains 13 color photos, seven color illustrations, two black and white illustrations, and one black and white map.

You won't find detailed orders of battle or much else to create tactical battles upon the tabletop, but you will find political events and ego-driven aspirations aplenty for those seeking a strategic look of the period.

Enjoyed it.

The Battles of El Alamein: BattleCraft 1. by Ben Skipper. Softcover (8.5x11.75 inches). 64 pages. 2022.

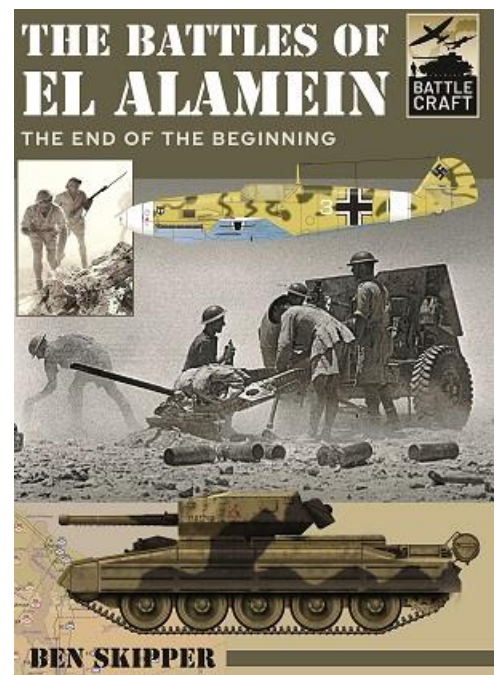
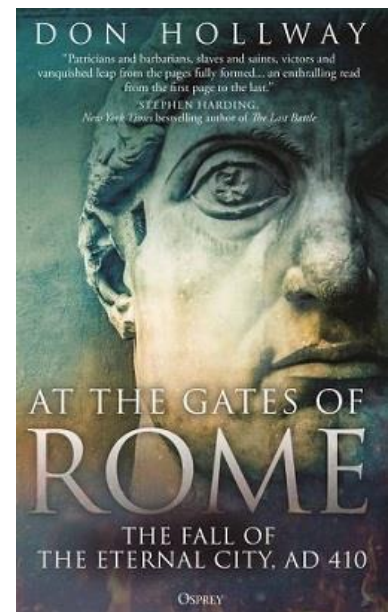
Subtitle: *The End of the Beginning*

I'm a fan of the *Craft* series of booklets with its emphasis on history and modeling. Each one takes a focused approach to one vehicle, ship, or aircraft. They are truly inspirational for a history buff like me with delusions that I could ever be as excellent as the modelmakers' efforts within.

Battlecraft takes a slightly different approach. The overview of campaign and battle history is there, in this case El Alamein, but the modeling section covers multiple models.

The historical overview, talented efforts, and the inspirational model photos are the same, but, instead of a focus on one model, the booklet covers four: Crusader tank, Panzer III tank, bf 109E-4 fighter, and P-40 fighter.

The concern stems from the modeling section for four constructions occupies the same space as that for one vehicle, ship, or plane in other *Craft* volumes. You don't get the same insightful information



about differences between kits, what technique to use to get this effect, and how to overcome challenges posed in a kit. To make this work as well as the other volumes, you need to at least double the number of modeling pages to bring back the detailed expertise. It just seems a bit rushed.

By the numbers: History of campaign and battle (p1 to p32), design and development history of Crusader tank (p33-37), modeling the Crusader tank (p38-41), design and development history of PzIII tank (p42-48), design and development history of bf 109E-4 fighter (p49-56), and design and development history of P-40 fighter (p57-64).

The booklet contains 110 black and white photos and 16 color photos of the history, 114 color photos and four black and white photos of models, three color maps, and eight color profiles (two each).

A typo of perhaps a fatal kind: the back cover blurb references a bf-109F-7 Trop version, but the inside lists it as a bf-109E-4/N Trop version, and the model showcase list the kit as a bf-109E-4/7 Trop. If you're a serious modeler, this may be cause for confusion and I'm not knowledgeable enough to know the differences.

A couple of interesting black and white photos: British infantry advancing across the desert in an open formation (p22) -- you won't see that on the tabletop too often; and a shot of Mersa Matruh from a ridge outside town -- really adds meaning to a dot on a hex map and offers an idea of size for tabletop terrain.

This is the first volume in a new series. In my opinion volume 2 needs to be slightly tweaked on the model end, but it's still a fine first effort.

Enjoyed it.

Landing Craft and Amphibians: LandCraft 10. by Ben Skipper.

Softcover (8.25x11.7 inches). 64 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Seaborne Vessels in the 20th Century*

You know of my fondness for the *Craft* series of booklets that split between design, development, and operational history and model making. *LandCraft 10's* another winner.

The history (p1 to p35) covers a variety of boats before being followed by camouflage and markings (p36 to p42). Modeling takes up much of the rest (p43 to p56) with picture-heavy showcases for three 1/35 scale landing craft models and one Ford GPA 'Seep' model. The last part (p57 to p64) explains and opines on model kits and aftermarket add-on products.

All totaled, it's 48 black and white photos and 28 color photos for history and 111 color photos and 31 color camouflage profiles for modeling.

US, UK, Soviet, German, Italian, and Japanese types are profiled, including a bit of a mention about barges and ferries, light amphibious tanks, DUKWs, Schwimmwagens, and more. The booklet even touches on post-WWII hovercraft. Nice range for an overview and especially quick at explaining the different LCx types.

Enjoyed it.

M60 Main Battle Tank: TankCraft 37. by David Grummitt. Softcover (8.25x11.7 inches). 64 pages. 2022.

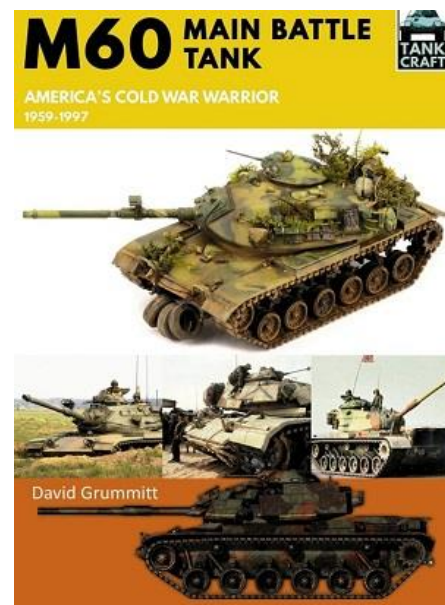
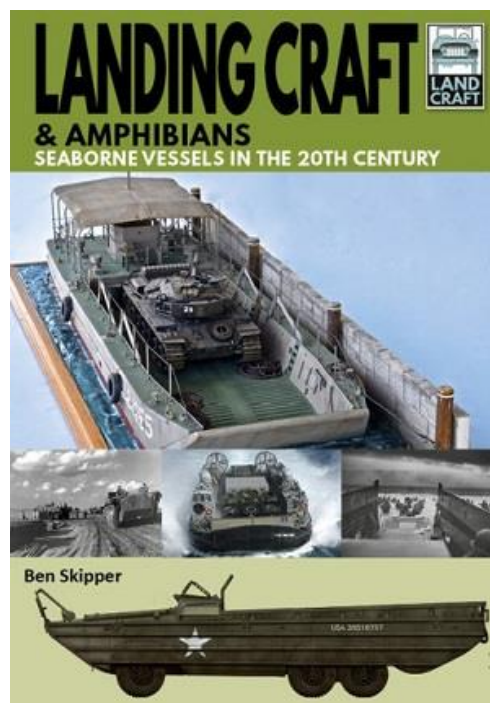
Subtitle: *America's Cold War Warrior 1959-1997*

Another marvelous *Craft* series profile -- this time on the M-60. For all you gamers getting into 'WWIII,' here's the tank that was a US mainstay during the Cold War. Indeed, it's still in service in a lot of places, including Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, to the tune of 3,600 M-60A1 and A-3 versions in 17 countries (p50).

A nice discussion of camouflage colors (p51 - p53) helps understand the evolution of colors and patterns. History and use (p1 - p15 and then p44 - p64) help understand the tank's strengths and weaknesses, while color profiles (p16 - p24) help visualize a paint scheme. Model kits and aftermarket detail kits get a nice overview and advice section (p25 - p43).

One typo: On page 15, the history says continued on page 45, but it's really continued on page 44. Not fatal at all.

The model showcase holds six 1/35-scale models and one 1/72-scale



model, with tips for construction.

All totaled, it contains 13 black and white photos and 51 color photos for history and 92 color photos, three color illustrations, and 13 color camouflage profiles for modeling. Another nice outing for the *TankCraft* series.

Enjoyed it.

Nations & Cannons: Core Rules. by Mooney, Messier, Devorak, and Cohen. Softcover (8.5x11 inches), 110 pages. 2022

Subtitle: *A Revolutionary Campaign Setting for 5e*

You're got to give Flagbearer Games credit for trying to convert *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) version 5e fantasy rules to the American Revolution. Let me be clear: this is NOT a fantasy version like *Flintloque*. *Nations & Cannons* (N&C) has only humans in it and there is no magic, although it uses many of the terms from D&D to ease fantasy players into the historical realm.

That said, "Core Rules" has a different meaning to me than perhaps D&D players. To me, "core rules" indicates I don't need anything else. N&C uses the term, but this is really an American Revolution supplement to D&D. There are no rules for movement, combat, and so on in N&C. You need the D&D rule books, presumably the 5e version mentioned in the subtitle, for all those basics.

Remember, the goal is to convert D&D players from a fantasy setting to an AmerRev setting -- although you can extrapolate N&C to most any horse and musket era.

Now, I don't ever recall playing 5th edition D&D. A little 3.5, but I don't have any idea how 3.5 differs from 5.0. For N&C, it seems similar: players pick a character class or subclass, gain skills, and select gambits (seems like spells by another name). Sections on traits, armor, and weapons harken to the black powder-ish era.

You can be a Soldier, Pioneer, Renegade, and so on. It's a little weird to call British Grenadiers "Barbarians," but again, the idea is to convince D&Ders to be historical RPGers using the context of what's familiar. I find it all exceedingly clever, but I'm a historical gamer.

Personally, I'd choose Firebrand -- at 5th level, you gain the Pamphleteer skill to add rhetorical wit to writings. As long-time readers of this AAR know, I can certainly use such a skill. In an N&C game, perhaps I'd create the All-American Revolution (AAR) broadsheet and have it printed by Benjamin Franklin. Just remember to take some combat skills to defend the printing press from angry lobster backs.

You also have healing gambits, which means a cure wound spell is now like a basic medic skill and higher healing gambits morph into being a doctor and surgeon. I think you get the gist.

The booklet comes with black & white illustrations aplenty, probably a cost thing in an RPG world of colorful fantasy, but it's complete enough to start D&Ders out if you have access to the D&D 5.0 system or perhaps some other equivalent RPG system.

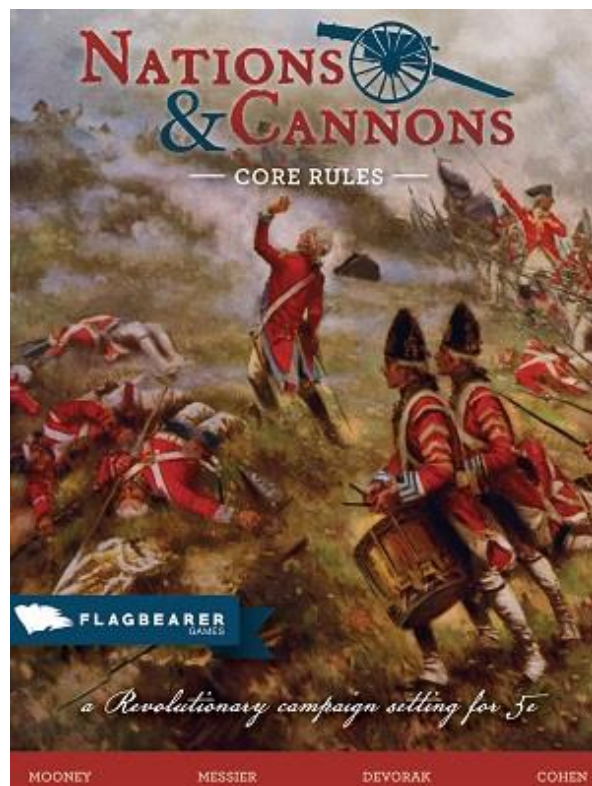
Historical gamers can use the info within to flesh out an AmerRev campaign with a RPG element. As I had to keep reminding myself, this is to convert D&Ders to historical RPGs...and maybe be a gateway to skirmish gaming with miniatures?

The book includes three small-scale skirmish scenarios as you'd expect in a RPG. Additional supplements (scenario books) are coming. I look forward to seeing them.

Now, I didn't play N&C. Since my original D&D GM days are 40 years out of date, I'm unlikely to host a game in the near future. But considering I'm playing in a *Traveller* RPG and my original *Traveller* days are also 40 years behind me, never say unlikely. All I need is a sense of history and a kindly GM to tell me when I'm screwing up some RPG mechanic. I'd play in N&C, if for no other reason to compare it to miniatures skirmish games.

That said, if you know of a clever lad or lass who plays D&D but exhibits at least a modicum of interest in American history, this might be just the booklet to spur additional interest in history.

Enjoyed it.



Rogue Elements: Star Trek Picard. by John Jackson Miller. Hardback. (6.4x9.4 inches). 406 pages. 2021.

I haven't watched the TV show Star Trek Picard, so I have no idea who Rios, Fajo, Ledger, or anyone else is, save Picard and a brief mention of Vosh and Q. The book offers a tie-in to the show and for the first half, I was a bit at sea, er, at space about the goings on. Indeed, it's been a while since I last read a Star Trek novel. They seem to have disappeared from the two or three to the dollar discount bins I frequented. Most were worth about that. Rogue Elements was leant to me.

I was about to give up on the first half of the novel, filled with overly padded woe-is-me Rios wanderings, but I kept on because *A Piece of the Action* is my favorite Star Trek episode and this book features Iotians. Around the second half of the novel, the woe-is-me faded and the plot about relic collecting began to pick up. So did my interest.

The rest of the book played out fine amidst double- and triple-crossing, which is a plus. Some of the gimmicks seemed a bit forced, but not too much. The use of a plethora of emergency holograms threw me for a bit. I knew something would happen with all of them. When finally triggered as part of a ploy, I was pleasantly surprised. Nicely foreshadowed. Ditto for the 'Klingon bar.'

Half the book was uninspiring and half exciting. Ties go to the author. Enjoyed it.

Gladiators: 4th - 1st Centuries BC: Elite 246. by Francois Gilbert. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2022.

What started as exhibitions at funeral games ended up a regulated activity with volunteers in the years after the Spartacus revolt. The volunteers took an oath to be a slave and referees were part of the games (p10).

Referees?

Referees. It seemed to be about payment. If you killed a gladiator in the arena, the owner was owed cash, but if the losing gladiator lived, the owner was owed rent -- a far less amount.

You don't see that in cinematic efforts. Sure, real slaves and prisoners were sent to the arena, but the Romans were no fools -- don't train those who have nothing to lose.

Apparently, there must have been some sort of rules, otherwise, you don't need referees. Anyway, like modern soccer or hockey games, fans fought in the stands over such important topics like categorizing shield sizes.

Not to worry, every type of gladiator, and there were plenty of categories, and specific equipment gets coverage. It's all quite well assembled and covered.

The booklet contains nine black and white photos, 53 color photos, seven black and white illustrations, and 31 color uniform illustrations. Paint 'em up!

Enjoyed it.

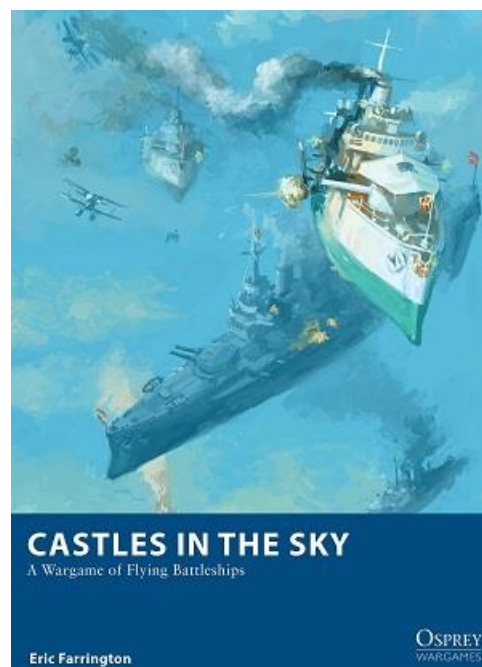
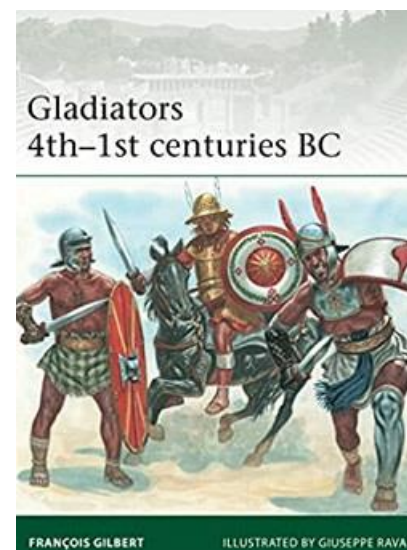
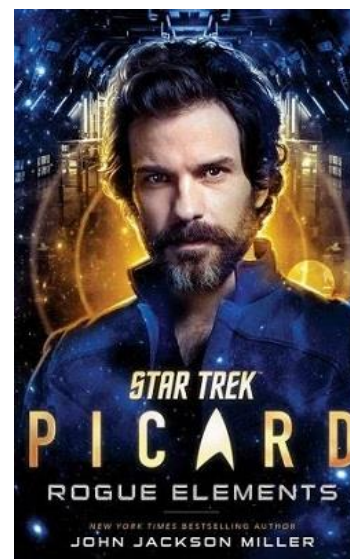
Castles in the Sky: A Wargame of Flying Battleships. by Eric Farrington. Softcover (7.25 x 9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

Osprey Wargames 30.

Consider this a First Look as I have not gamed with these rules.

In the post-Martian invasion world of 1872, humans reverse engineer Martian technology and learned how to mix new chemicals with lighter metals and add steam power to create lighter-than-air warships. The old GDW Space 1889 used kinda the same setting. Yeah, it's a steam-punk speculation of John Carter of Mars.

Brigade Models makes small aerial ships and apparently here's the Osprey rules for them. Think of this as WWI naval warfare, but with elevations.



The rules uses three ship classes: escorts, cruisers, and battleships. Individual ships use a series of firepower, movement, and special characteristics to differentiate, with a number of d6s rolled for firing and also adding and subtracting dice for various sky terrain and ship attributes.

One quirk is that a lot of specialty "Command" actions use 1d6 rolls with a 4+ for success. Otherwise, it's move and roll to hit (4+ base), with 2d6 damage table for successful hits. Boarding (rolling a number of Command Dice -- again 4+ base to hit), entangling, air torpedoes, airplanes, and sky mines add spice to direct fire.

A number of scenarios along with a campaign game are included. Ship specs for nine countries' aerial navies are included. The usual array of Osprey illustrations populate the booklet.

As I noted, I don't know how this plays, but it is encouraging me to break out some of my Avalanche Press games and loot the counters for a test drive. And you never know. Alas, I failed to find flying ironclad miniatures at Historicon. I imagine you can use regular 1880-1890s ironclads just fine.

Enjoyed reading the rules for its possibilities.

The Aircraft Carrier Hiryu: Anatomy of a Ship. by Stefan Draminski. Hardback (horizontal 10.25x9.75 inches). 334 pages. 2022.

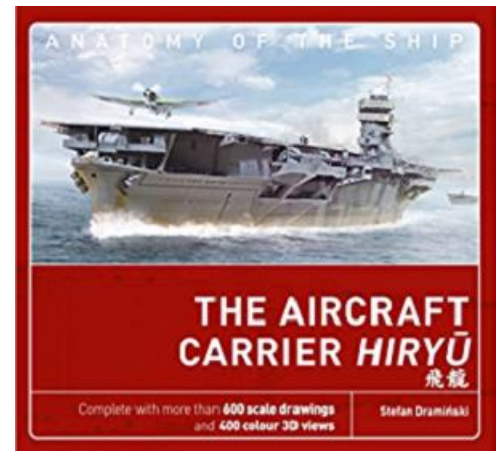
This magnificent collection of black and white photos and 3D color illustrations probes every nook, cranny, and subsystem of the WWII Japanese aircraft carrier Hiryu. I normally count them all, but I admit to being overwhelmed, so let me quote the cover: "More than 600 scale drawings and 400 colour 3D views." And I'll just say, "Yup."

The scale drawings range from 1/125 to 1/500 scale, with the aircraft at 1/75 scale. I'm not sure if that's a typo or not and they are really 1/72 scale. Note that some 3D color illustrations stretch across two pages.

The design and development history of the ship and its actions during the war (p8-p41) contain 23 black and white photos and one color photo. I especially enjoyed the succinct Aircraft Facilities section that explained plane handling. As the ship was started in 1936, launched in 1937, and commissioned in 1939, it was the newest aircraft carrier in the Japanese fleet and benefitted from experience from previous carriers.

Hiryu (translates as Flying Dragon) participated in Pearl Harbor, East Indies, and Indian Ocean operations. It was sunk during the Battle of Midway. In October 2019, researchers found and filmed the wreck of the aircraft carriers Akagi and Kaga near Midway Island, but the Hiryu and Soryu carriers have yet to be located (p41).

Enjoyed it.



Nations in the Balance. by Christopher L. Kolakowski. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 219 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The India-Burma Campaigns December 1943- August 1944*

It's good to see books covering the forgotten WWII front of India and Burma, such as *A War of Empires: Burma 1941-45* (see my review in the Oct 3, 2021 AAR or up on HMGS.org) and *The Tenth Air Force in World War II* (Nov 2, 2020 AAR).

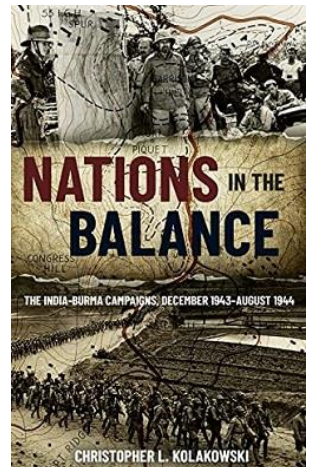
This one's a nice, compact look at part of the Burma-Indian campaigns, when the Chindits and Merrill's Marauders, in concert with Chinese and British Commonwealth troops, raced towards Myitkyina (Burma) as the Japanese launched an attack against Kohima and Imphal. The narrative sways back and forth between these two offensives, keeping the left-hand attack abreast of the right-hand defense.

It's got a nice mix of overview, command, terrain pressures, analysis, and operational and tactical examples to capture the hardships, opportunities, successes, and failures of both major offensives.

The book contains 58 black and white photos, which is nice, but I really want to shake the collective hands of Kolakowski and Casemate Publishing for inserting 25 black and white maps -- including operational and tactical maps from the US Army than can be converted to tabletops. Let's not forget the OOB down to battalion level plus some companies. You can parse the text for morale ratings of various units. Well done!

One typo: "14th Army would more cargo aircraft," which seems to need the word "need" between would and more (p54).

One spot that could be improved is use of Japanese and Chinese sources. It's perfectly understandable when creating an English-language book to rely on English-language primary and secondary works. I get it: language-



barrier problem and distance. I suspect some secondary books he used consulted such sources. But Claringbould really struck a note with me by including Japanese source material in his books about WWII air and naval operations in the Solomons. I like that Kolakowski consulted the official Indian Army history. At least you know there's more to the research than US and UK WWII histories, extensive as it is.

Short, sweet, and hits all the right tabletop points.

Enjoyed it.

The Second World War Illustrated: The Third Year. by Jack Holroyd.

Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 219 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Archive and Colour Photographs of WW2*

The third in the series covers from winter of 1941, with Pearl Harbor and Soviet attacks pushing back German troops at the edge of Moscow to late summer 1942 with the Canadian attack on Dieppe. North Africa, Battles of Coral Sea and Midway, German push towards Stalingrad, and more carry the 772 black and white photos, 35 black and white maps, six black and white illustrations, 84 colorized photos, three color maps, and four color illustrations.

The photos are generally good quality and a step up from the typical reproduced photos. I don't know if that's just the quality of the original photos or any Photoshop tweaks, but good job -- especially because photos (especially commander head shots) sometimes are postage-stamp sized.

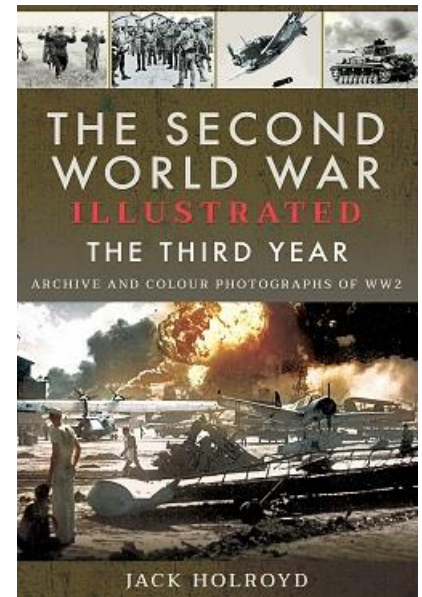
The color photos in the center deserve praise. I know some of them, if not all of them, are colorized black and white photos -- I've seen the black and white versions (including some in this book). That's why I suspect the black and white photos have been tweaked for clarity.

Some favorites of mine: Photo shot from the cockpit of a Stuka as it dives almost vertical towards a Sevastopol-area fort and you can see explosions of the previous Stuka's bomb run (p45). A nice aerial view over Pearl Harbor on Oct 30, 1941 offers a neat perspective from maps (p77). A series of seven photos show individual crewmen of a RAF Lancaster in their flight positions. Great uniform details on those (p224-227).

If you 'read' WWII photo books, you're bound to see some of the same photos like I did. Yet, there are plenty of them in here I have never seen that would make good uniform studies or diorama inspirations.

Enjoyed it.

FYI: *The Second World War Illustrated: The First Year* was reviewed in my 11/20/2019 AAR. *The Second World War Illustrated: The Second Year* was reviewed in my 12/21/2020 AAR. Both reviews are also up on HMGS.org.



PZL TS-11 Iskra bis DF: Single 39. by Dariusz Karnas and Artur Juszcak. Softcover (8.5x11.75 inches). 24 pages. 2021.

The *Single* series has very little to no text except for photo captions. It does contain scale drawings of the featured aircraft. In this case, it's a Polish jet.

The booklet contains six 1/72 black and white drawings, six 1/48 black and white drawings, 11 other drawings (no scales listed), 34 black and white photos, nine color photos, and four color aircraft profiles.

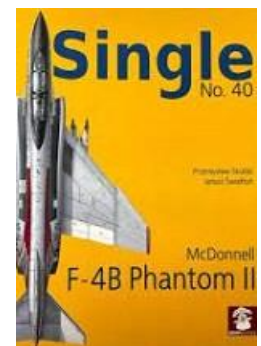
If you need scale drawings, here's your booklet.



McDonnell F-4B Phantom II: Single 40. by Przemyslaw Skulski and Panusz Swiatlon. Softcover (8.5x11.75 inches). 24 pages. 2022.

The next volume in the *Single* series contains six 1/72 black and white drawings, 54 black and white photos, 14 color photos, and three color aircraft profiles.

As before, if you need scale drawings, here's your booklet.



Schwerer Geländegängiger Personenkraftwagen and Successors: Camera On 27. by Alan Ranger. Softcover (8.5x11.75 inches). 80 pages. 2021.

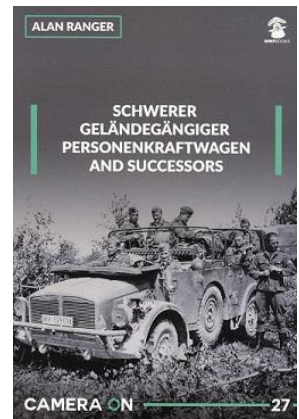
Another in the photo-intensive Camera On series helps you with vehicle details as well as uniform details for WWII German "heavy passenger cars" -- although cars is a bit of a misnomer. It's like calling a US Jeep a "car." These are four and six-wheeled vehicles that

carry soldiers and were adapted as ambulances, telephone repair vehicles, and other transportation.

Three types are included: Horch/Ford 108, Steyr 1500, and Mercedes Benz L1500. Horch and Ford were virtually indistinguishable from each other. The booklet contains 105 Horch/Ford, 16 Steyr, and 13 Mercedes Benz black and white photos.

Some are quite clear and of excellent quality, while others not so much. Call it a bell-shaped curve of quality. A number of my favorites: Horch carrying nine soldiers and one standing next to vehicle (p22), Medic carrying his supplies next to a Horch ambulance version (p32), a Mercedes Benz towing a 50mm AT gun in Ukraine 1943 (p68), and a Steyr with an Italian 37mm AA gun on a modified back deck (p76) which would make a lovely conversion model.

Enjoyed it.



Athenium Trireme vs Persian Trireme: Duel 122. by Nic Fields. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Graeco-Persian Wars 499 - 449 BC*

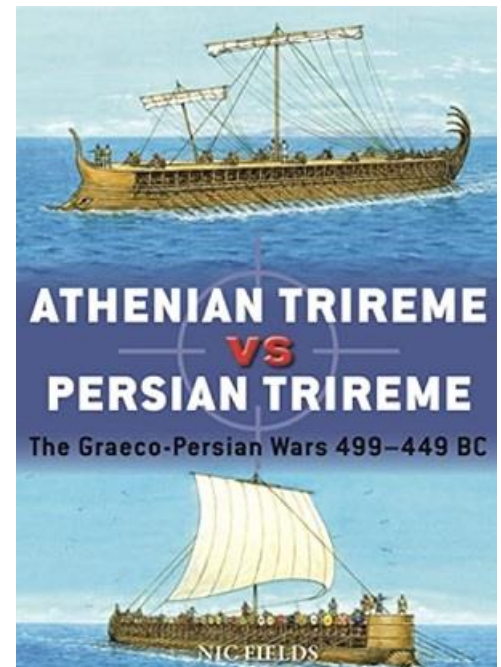
The Battle of Salamis comes to mind when discussing trireme clashes between Athens and Persia and that is one of the battles within. First comes the usual *Duel* format of technical specs, development, personnel, and tactics. Short bios of commanders are also included.

The battles of Lade, Salamis, Artemision, and others are discussed as best as can be reconstructed from the paucity of ancient sources, archeological evidence, and modern reconstructions.

The usual Osprey abundance of illustrations populate the pages: 57 color photos, two color ship profiles (Athenian and Persian / Phoenician), one two-page color action illustration of ramming, two color maps, four color illustrations of rams, three color illustrations of uniforms, and five color illustrations of tactical maneuvers.

You'll need more terrain research to create a tabletop with land areas' positioning to recreate the battles. Yes, I know it's a sea battle, but as they were near coastlines, your tabletop likely needs to include such confines. As for background information, it's another excellent *Duel* effort.

Enjoyed it.



Run Run Cricket Run (Vietnam War novel). by Tom Thompson. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 280 pages. 2021.

Subtitle: *America's Secret Wars in Laos*

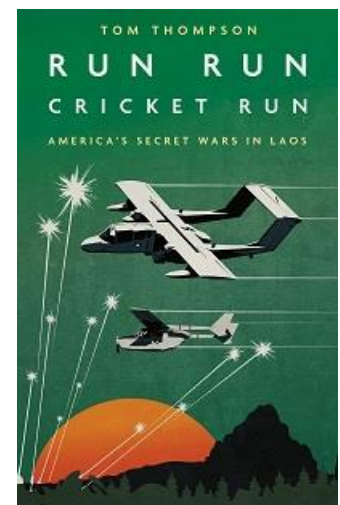
The author flew 194 missions in Laos vectoring in air strikes on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other targets, so the technical accuracy of the story is never in doubt. Indeed, and especially in the beginning couple of chapters, the author confuses fiction and non-fiction, attributing knowledge of the far future or analysis of the near future to a character. It's a bit disconcerting and you'll find it on occasion through the book.

For example, towards the end of the book, as you accompany Ted Thatcher on mission after mission and learn the ways of being a 'Nail' (forward air controller), you come to a scene where a NVA 37mm AA gun shoots down an O-2 aircraft and then read about total losses of O-2 and OV-10 aircraft during the Vietnam War (p217). Er, the war's not yet over.

Breaks in the narrative like this don't do the reader any favors. The editor should have caught most, if not all, of these because they pop out on the page.

Indeed, I was about to toss the book after a couple chapters of this back and forth when the plot drew me back in. I'm glad I kept reading.

The characters reflect the feelings of real personnel at the time, with the main character suffering from war weariness like just about all the Casemate fiction books. Competent, yes, but just putting in time as the futility factor increases. You gain an inkling of what it was like to pull yourself into a cockpit day after day, or night after night, trying to stem the flow of men and material from north to south.



While uneven, ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

FYI: If you're interested in North Vietnamese logistics of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, see the last AAR (06/29/2022) or up on HMGS.org for a review of *Logistics in the Vietnam Wars: 1945-1975*. Fascinating numerical analysis of the NVA supply runs.

The Lost Fleet Beyond the Frontier: Dreadnought. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 356 pages. 2011.

I'm continuing my re-reading of the *Lost Fleet* series. The seventh in the sci-fi series sends Alliance Admiral John Geary back to the frontier to figure out the extent of Enigma-controlled space and liberate some Alliance POWs in the process. All the members of the band remain with him to face the peril of Syndic civil war on the way to the frontier.

Obviously, I bought into the premise of the original six novels and this one is just as good as any of them.

One amusing point: the cover. Just about every cover illustration has (presumably) Geary in space armor with laser rifle, including this book. I don't recall him being fitted for armor, much less wearing such a suit.

Enjoyed it.

The Lost Fleet Beyond the Frontier: Invincible. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 356 pages. 2012.

The eighth novel in the sci-fi series tumbles the Alliance fleet under Admiral John Geary beyond Enigma space and into another alien-controlled empire. And these teddy bears is just as aggressive and uncommunicative as the Enigmas.

Follow up amusing point: Captain and now wife Desjani, who apparently kept her last name, joke about Desjani writing a book with 'Black Jack' in armor on the cover. My guess is Henry's buddies needle him about the covers because the main character never wore armor in any of the books, and never carried a laser rifle.

Tiresome point: As Geary and Desjani are married, it is odd they are not only in direct chain of command, but on the same ship. While a cute personal attraction trope in the first six novels, if it is an administrative taboo, then she should have been transferred to another position in another fleet or station. If not, then all this 'can't be seen together in private' is complete nonsense.

Still, the admiral-eye view of spaceship action and internal and external politics continues to impress, even on re-reading.

Enjoyed it.

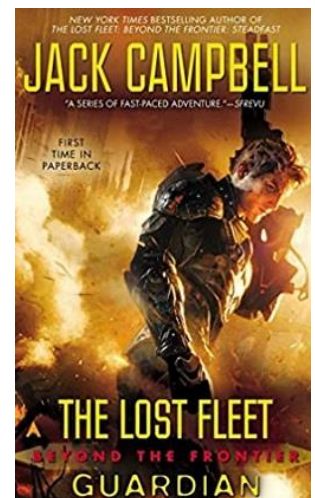
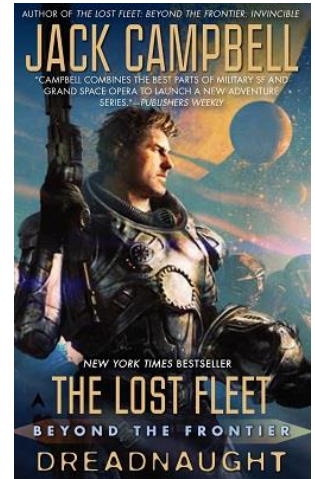
The Lost Fleet Beyond the Frontier: Guardian. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 401 pages. 2013.

Admiral John 'Black Jack' Geary leads the fleet home with the alien 'Dancers' accompanying the humans. The Syndic Empire is not done with the Alliance fleet yet and lays ambush after ambush. On the plus side, the Alliance fleet is towing an alien 'bear-cow' superdreadnought home for reverse engineering -- something the Syndics want as well.

If you bought into the series (this makes nine books) so far, you're going to buy into the strategic and tactical issues of running the Alliance fleet, not to mention the mixed reception awaiting our hero on return to Alliance space. The Dancers are tight-lipped (if the spider wolves have lips) about why they are accompanying the fleet until they request access to the most sacred of demilitarized human sites in the galaxy.

I wonder why there hasn't been a movie, series, or space game by now. You'd think someone would want an alternative to Star Wars and Star Trek. For a while, Babylon 5 was hot...

Enjoyed it.



The Lost Fleet Beyond the Frontier: Steadfast. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 386 pages. 2014.

Admiral John 'Black Jack' Geary draws some odd assignments, including a trip back to Old Earth, apparently now populated mostly by lawyers. Along the way, he confronts the equivalent of a third-world navy, a plague moon, an assassination attempt, and an artificial intelligence version of himself.

These books are never boring, but then again, I've bought into the setting.
Enjoyed it.



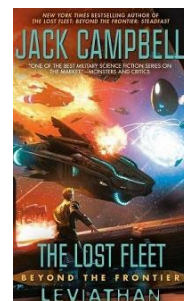
The Lost Fleet Beyond the Frontier: Leviathan. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 323 pages. 2015.

Admiral John 'Black Jack' Geary faces his most difficult opponent: an AI version of himself loaded with all his tactics from all his past battles. Yet help dealing with the 'cold mind' comes from an unexpected source to make the pattern whole again.

Another fine effort with a man vs. machine focus. Maybe the geniuses behind Defense Dept. research programs using AI tanks, aircraft, drones, ships, and dog-like robots armed with guns give this a read...because users never, ever, ever suffer from programmers' bugs and end up with blue screens of death. Or being chased by Terminators. Right? Right?

This ends the *Beyond the Frontier* cycle of books. Yep. After 11 books, I still buy into *Lost Fleet* series.

Enjoyed it.

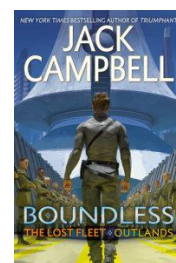


Lost Fleet Outlands: Boundless. by Jack Campbell. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 387 pages. 2021.

The start of a new trilogy follows Admiral John 'Black Jack' Geary back into space...after a few assassination attempts. Then it's onward to Midway and beyond. Binge reading keeps all the little details in mind that make the novels worth reading.

Yep. Vintage Hemry. At least the cover ditched the armor. Hemry's buddies can now needle him about why the hero has not armor.

Enjoyed it.



Gloster Javelin: Flying Flatiron. by Alex Crawford. Softcover (8.25x11.7 inches). 208 pages. 2021.

This British delta-wing fighter served from 1955 to the mid-60s in frontline squadrons, then mostly relegated to ground instruction with the occasional transfer to other countries. The last British flying Javelin retired in 1975 (and now is in the Imperial War Museum).

The *Orange* series books cover complete design and development along with a squadron by squadron accounting of sorties and accidents.

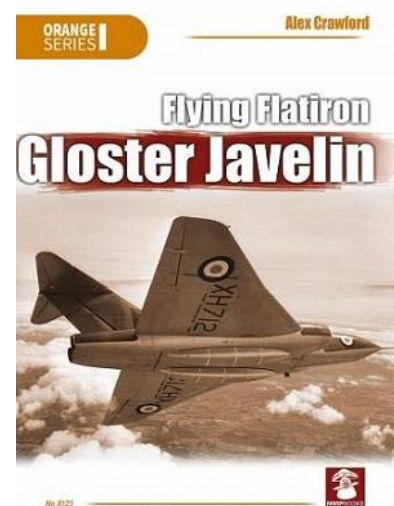
The latter were quite frequent and often fatal -- split external fuel tanks, failed ejection parachutes, explosions, fires, and general service problems populate the pages. Those squadron histories make for some hair-raising reading. Of the six prototypes and 436 production jets (of all variants), 108 were lost (p159). Charts at the end of the book detail each aircraft lost. As it was the Cold War, no losses were directly attributed to enemy planes or AA shooting down the Javelins, but fatal scrambles did occur.

I always enjoy the section on where to see preserved aircraft in various museums (p186-191). Of note, a Javelin crash-landed in 1966 and was put on display in a playground until the Ndola Fire Department chopped it to pieces with axes in 1972 (p135).

For modelers, the book contains 124 black and white photos, 72 color photos, 24 black and white illustrations, 20 1/72 scale black and white drawings, and 28 color camouflage profiles. Of note are the black and white photos of versions' cockpits, with every gauge and switch numbered and labeled (p55-p64).

Not being a modern-era buff, this was all new to me, but I have enjoyed the Orange series in the past and this is no different: Well explained, well illustrated, and well presented.

Enjoyed it.



M107/M110: Family of Self-Propelled Artillery 1956-1991. by David Doyle. Softcover (8.25x11.7 inches). 123 pages. 2022.

What's this? A David Doyle book not in a *Legends*-series publication? Cornwallis, strike up *The World Turned Upside Down*.

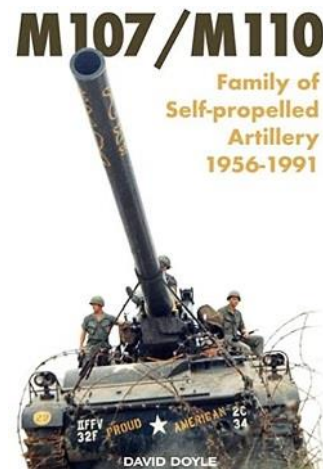
Seriously, the book measures up to Doyle's usual pictorial research and caption explanations. Units that used the guns in combat are listed, mostly in Vietnam, but also including those in Israel and Iran.

The book contains 89 black and white photos, 155 color photos, and one black and white illustrations. Some interesting shots for dioramists include gun tube replacement (p82-p83 in black and white and p95-p104 in color).

Lots of close ups for modelers seeking various subsystem details, especially from museum-preserved guns. Interesting notes about removable items, for example, storage boxes.

Aside from a spec chart (p112), there's not much on performance. It makes sense since this is published by AFV Modeller Publications. They know their audience and the book delivers on the modeling details.

Enjoyed it.



Lieutenant General James Longstreet: Innovative Military Strategist. by F Gregory Toretta. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 241 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Most Misunderstood Civil War General*

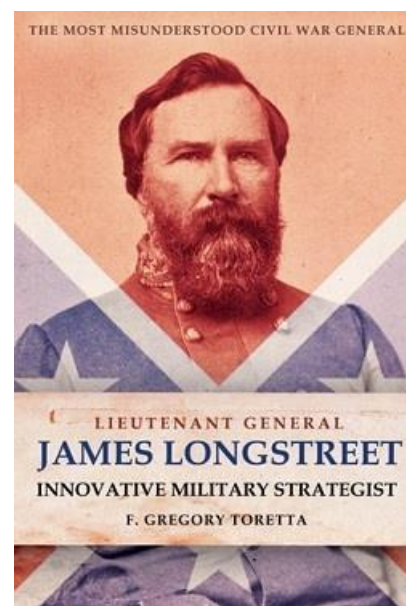
I expected insight into Longstreet's strategy and tactics. What I got was a cut and paste job of multiple memoir excerpts, including a significant amount of Longstreet's memoirs. And not just a paragraph or two, but often a half a page, per page, in small, smaller, smallest type than the main text.

I read to page 105, which ends after the Gettysburg campaign, and could read no further. The first few excerpts are fine, but after a while, they become so frequent and annoying that you might as well read the actual memoir.

Nor did I find much insight about Longstreet at Gettysburg beyond what I've read before: Longstreet wanted a defensive battle to weaken any Union attack and then follow-up with a counterattack. Overruled by Lee. He opposed a frontal assault and wanted to swing around a flank and set up a defensive line along the same creek Meade wanted to use. Overruled by Lee. Pickett's charge goes in. The rest is history.

Yes, that's simplistic uber-overview. Yes, Toretta knows his memoirs. Yes, this might be new material to an individual reader. But to me, and this may or may not be only me, excerpts need to be restrained.

I trust an author to know, process, and help me understand the topic. To me, the overuse of excerpts diminished whatever points Toretta is trying to make.



Battle of Malta (Campaign 382). by Anthony Rogers. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *June 1940-November 1942*

How appropriate to read this right after Historicon where there were two, count 'em, two games about WWII Malta at Historicon 2022 -- both using what looked like photoshopped Google Earth photos as the basis for the map. The first was an air game with individual planes dogfighting above Grand Harbor and the other was an exquisite what-if scenario involving the Axis conducting Operation Hercules/Operation C invasion in 1942.

The well-honed Osprey Campaign format includes pre-campaign set up, chronology, commander bios, OOBs, plans, and the unfolding of the campaign. Packed into 96 pages and supported by illustrations and photos, these overviews generally read well, introduce or re-introduce the campaign, and roil tabletop minds with wargaming possibilities. All of this applies to Campaign 382.

Malta proved to be as painful as a kidney stone to Axis supply efforts



between Italy and North Africa. Air, naval, and submarine forces used the island as a base. While these never stopped the flow of supplies, they certainly caused enough attrition to draw significant Axis attention from time to time. As soon as they ignored the place, the Allies went hunting, especially as the war wore on.

This booklet contains 65 black and white photos, four color photos, 11 color maps, and three two-page color action illustrations. The OOB for the British garrison is for January 1942.

The game at Historicon featured a 1942 Operation Hercules/Operation C what-if scenario, but you can draw information (although you'd need other sources) for what-if scenarios such as Italy invades Malta instead of Greece and the Germans invade Malta instead of Crete.

Enjoyed it.

So...Whatcha say, Bruce? Another alternative scenario for next Historicon?

Carrhae 53 BC (Campaign 381). by Nic Fields. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Rome's Disaster in the Desert*

The well-honed Osprey Campaign format includes pre-campaign set up, chronology, commander bios, OOBs, plans, and the unfolding of the campaign. Packed into 96 pages and supported by illustrations and photos, these overviews generally read well, introduce or re-introduce the campaign, and roil tabletop minds with wargaming possibilities. All of this applies to Campaign 382.

Yep. I just duplicated the paragraph from the Campaign 381 review. As it was pointed out to me at Historicon, not everybody reads my reviews in sequence and not everybody is familiar with the Campaign format. This is especially true when using a search engine that pulls up an individual review on the hmgs.org site.

With that, Crassus' big defeat at the hands of the Persians gets the Campaign treatment. Of note, only two main sources survive from history: Plutarch and Cassius Dio, with the former being the main account of the battle.

Crassus led seven less-than-full-strength legions, or about 25,000 men, plus 4,000 light troops and 4,000 cavalry (p47), into the desert. Parthian commander Surena intercepted them with 1,000 fully armored cataphract cavalry, 9,000 unarmored horse archers, and 1,000 camels serving as arrow resupply bearers (p54).

The battle (p45-p72) receives as much detail as can be milked from the ancient sources, but speculation is extracted from those aspects only briefly mentioned -- including Roman prisoners sent to the eastern border of Parthia and subsequently captured by Chinese forces. Of the 33,000 or so Romans, 5,000 escaped back to Roman territory, 10,000 were taken prisoner, and the rest were killed (p70).

This booklet contains one black and white photo, one black and white illustration, 57 color photos, eight color maps, one color illustration, and three two-page color action illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

D-Day 1944: Air Campaign 28. by Stephen A Bourque. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Deadly Failure of Allied Heavy Bombing on June 6*

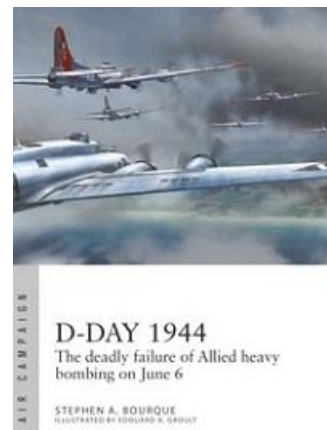
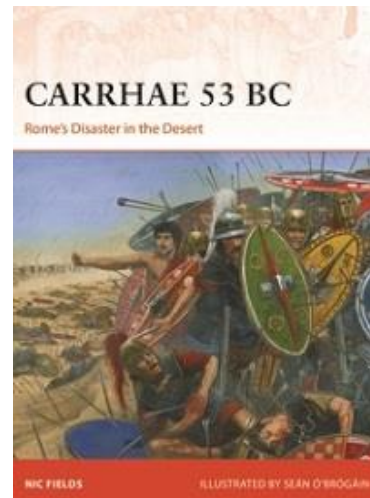
Here's an analysis of US and British bombing results versus German defensive installations and batteries just prior to D-Day landings on night and morning of June 6.

The look at mission goals and bombing results, supported by aerial photos and post-mission descriptions, reveals an interesting re-interpretation of air support of the landings. Most targets were missed due to a last minute revision of bombing procedure that hesitated between 5 and 30 seconds in order not to hit soldiers on the beaches. The result missed the Allied soldiers, but also missed most of the German defenders (p44-45).

The one shining example of air support that delivered positive results was the IX Bomber Command at Utah Beach, but it used 542 A-20 and B-26 twin-engine bombers and flew low at about 4,000 feet instead of 14,000 feet of the heavy bombers.

According to Bourque's analysis, 1,300 Lancasters and Halifaxes were unable to neutralize their 10 targets, while 1,400 B-17 and B-24 bombers were unable to neutralize 45 targets (p90). German artillery positions continued to fire throughout the day and some held out for a couple weeks.

On the US side, some bombers used the new H2X ground radar to find targets. It proved ineffective, but the technology for the time was impressive.



One text conundrum: US heavy bombers used in attacks are listed as 1,400 (p90), but earlier as only 1,350 (p88). Not fatal, just curious.

The booklet contains 60 black and white photos, one black and white diagram, one black and white map, eight color photos, seven color maps, two color illustrations, and three two-page color action illustrations.

This bomb damage assessment paints a dim view of Allied four-engine tactical bombing efforts. The same effort was used to better effect at the opening of Operation Cobra, although short bombing US troops also occurred.

Obviously, the invasion was a success, albeit with heavy casualties on Omaha Beach. I suspect this had more to do with US intel failing to identify a full German division moved onto the coast. So, it's a little 20-20 saying more accurate bombing would cause fewer casualties among Allied troops and French civilians. Still, that's what we do when we study history in a book or on a tabletop.

The bibliography is filled with primary sources, which provides considerable authenticity to his conclusions. Good history books recap the battle. Great history books make you think about some aspect of a battle. This one made me think about four-engine tactical bombing at D-Day.

Enjoyed it.

The Red Army 1922-41: Men at Arms 546. by Philip Jowett. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *From Civil War to Barbarossa*

After the Russian Civil War, the Soviet Union conducted a number of small campaigns in Central Asia and the Far East, including against China and Afghanistan in 1929.

Yet whatever their worth, Stalin's purges not only gutted the officer corps, but the NKVD, too. During the Great Terror (1936-1938), 1.4 million arrests took place with 724,000 executions. Of the 80,000 officers arrested, 41,000 were executed (p24) and 15,000 released (p15).

At the same time, 200,000 Communist Party members were expelled from the Party and 20,000 NKVD agents were arrested, including two heads of the NKVD that were later executed (p13). Tough boss.

All the uniform information you need to paint up an interwar Soviet army seems well covered. The booklet contains 38 black and white photos and 26 color uniform illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

F2H Banshee Units: Combat Aircraft 141. by Richard R Burgess. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

McDonnell F2H Banshees grew out of the FD-1 Phantom program, which started in response to a US Navy request in 1942. Yes, 1942. The Navy awarded a contract to McDonnell in January 1943, and after delays with the prototype engine, the jet took its first flight in January 1945. The first production aircraft (renamed FH-1) was delivered in January 1947 and the jet started test flights on and off aircraft carriers in July 1946. The first squadron deployed on CVL-48 USS Saipan in May 1948 (p9-10). Interesting timeline, huh?

A squadron by squadron recap of air operations during the Korean War provides tabletop scenario after scenario. Granted, after a while, the missions all tended to read the same, so I skipped around the text.

The last carrier deployment was in 1959 (p84) and the US retired the jet from Naval Reserves in 1961. The Canadians retired the jet in 1962 (p87-88).

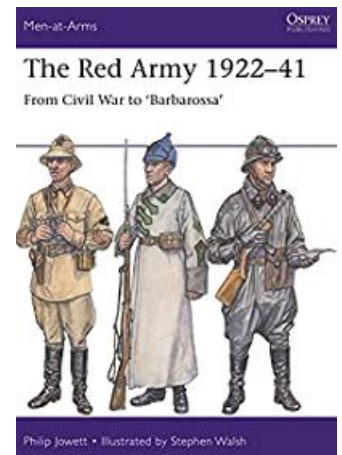
The booklet contains 43 black and white photos, 13 color photos, and 30 color aircraft illustrations.

You can always find some new wiggle of history in an Osprey booklet, like I did with this one.

Enjoyed it.

The Hawk Air Defense Missile System: New Vanguard 309 by Marc Romanych and Jacqueline Scott. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2022.

I remember building a model of a HAWK missile launcher as a kid. Although my modeling days are long past, wargamers with an interest in Cold War, Middle East,



and Third World War gaming might find this booklet enlightening. The air defense system shot down more than 100 aircraft during Middle East wars.

The US deployed the system around the globe between 1959 and 1997. It's still in use today in Romania, Greece, Sweden, Spain, and other countries.

For you HAWK buffs, a battery of six launchers (three missiles each) plus associated radar, communications, and support vehicles took up an area of about 200m by 400m (p24). That would make a nice diorama to drop on the tabletop!

As the launchers were trailers, it could be packed up and moved. You can play a little peek-a-boo in a tabletop scenario with enemy aircraft.

The booklet contains 24 black and white photos, 16 color photos, and eight color illustrations of various aspects of a HAWK battery.

For you skirmish gamers, a Viet Cong attack on A battery of 1st LAAM battalion guarded by Marines during the 1968 Tet offensive (p35) seems like an interesting skirmish scenario. You'll need more info as the text fails to give any numbers of attackers or defenders.

Enjoyed it.

Bf 109D/E: Blitzkrieg 1939-40: Dogfight 3. by Malcolm V. Lowe. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

This is the third in the new series and follows *Dogfight 1 FW-190D-9: Defense of the Reich 1944-1945* (see my 03/03/2022 AAR or up here on HMGS.org) and *Dogfight 2 P-51B/C Mustang: Northwest Europe 1943-44* (see my 04/02/2022 AAR). The format remains the same, with WWII background, technical development and analysis of the 109D/E, and lots and lots of dogfights.

The development of fighter pilot and the tactics they used stand front and center, with a considerable number of first-person accounts that can be turned into tabletop scenarios.

The three two-page ribbon illustrations help explain aerial combat. Give Osprey credit for using this technique. Anyone who has flown flight simulators knows how swirling dogfights can get. Ribbons are by no means perfect, but they're the best printed process I have seen.

The booklet contains 52 black and white photos, one color map, one two-page color action illustration, two color illustrations, and three two-page color ribbon illustrations of particular dogfights.

Enjoyed it.



PZL P.11c: PZL P.11c: Famous Airplanes Volume 14. by Grzegorz Szymanowski et al. Softcover (8.2x11.7 inches). 204 pages. 2021.

This eight-chapter book sports a different author per chapter in a two-column format with one column with English text and the other column in Polish text.

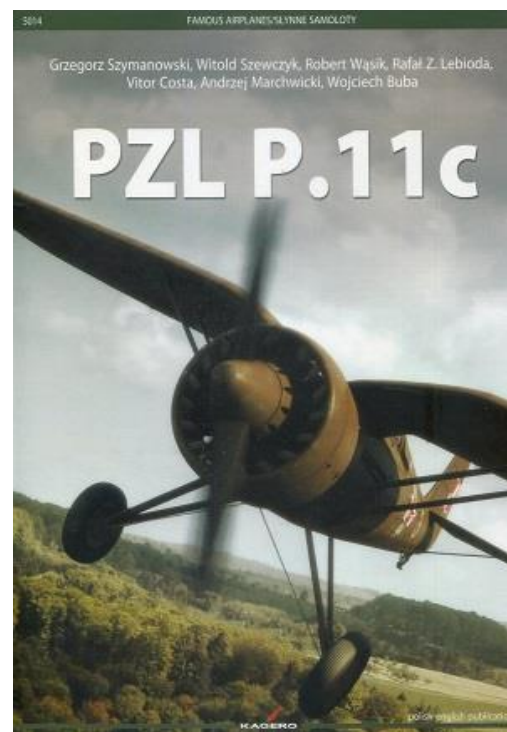
Chapter 1: History and technical aspects of the plane. Includes a squadron by squadron account of operations at the beginning of WWII, with surviving planes and pilots heading into Romania after Soviets stabbed Poland in the back. Interesting tidbit: the plane had ejectable fuel tanks.

One non-fatal typo: "od" should be "of" (p30). Chapter has five black and white photos and 18 color camouflage aircraft profiles. Two more color profiles are on the back cover.

Chapter 2 features a photo gallery showcasing walkarounds of museum aircraft, including one under renovations. Lots of closeups among the 170 color photos.

Chapter 3: For modelers, a complete sprue to finished model assembly of an Arma Hobby 1/72 scale PZL 11c kit. 40 color photos detail the work and showcase tips and techniques.

Chapter 4: For modelers, a complete sprue to finished model assembly of an IBG Models 1/72 scale PZL 11a kit. 38 color photos



detail the work and showcase tips and techniques.

Chapter 5: For modelers, a complete sprue to finished model assembly of a Mirage Hobby 1/48 scale PZL 11c kit. 83 color photos detail the work and showcase tips and techniques.

Chapter 6: For modelers, a complete sprue to finished model assembly of an Arma Hobby 1/48 scale PZL 11c kit. 65 color photos detail the work and showcase tips and techniques.

Chapter 7: For modelers, a complete sprue to finished model assembly of an IBG Models 1/32 scale PZL 11c kit. 138 color photos detail the work and showcase tips and techniques.

Chapter 8: Contains 24 1/48 scale and 25 1/72 scale black and white drawings of a PZL 11c.

The book also comes with one 15.5x23-inch separate sheet with 10 1/32 scale black and white drawings of a PZL 11c and one 18x27.5-inch separate sheet with 10 1/24 scale black and white drawings of a PZL 11c.

Such extensive coverage merits hearty praise, especially if you're a modeler.

Enjoyed it.

Zeppelin Inferno: The Forgotten Blitz 1916. by Ian Castle. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 382 pages. 2022.

This follow-up book to his *Zeppelin Onslaught* covers every WWI Zeppelin raid on Britain and Scotland in 1916 with hyper-detailed accounts almost down to each bomb and each casualty. Seriously, every bomb or release of several bombs by individual zeppelins over targets gets accounted for as well as their damage.

It's a heroic research effort to pour through newspaper and military archives, especially because German and British sources are consulted. One aspect I did not know was that zeppelins dropped bombs on multiple targets as they motored their way across Britain. Hence, they drop a bomb here, several bombs at the next town, a few more over the next town, and some over a port as they leave. That's how individual bombs and effects can be tracked, unlike the massed formations of WWII dropping all bombs against one target.

That said, you really have to be a zeppelin buff to read the book cover to cover. The bomb-by-bomb descriptions tend to all read the same after a while. The zeppelin commander mis-navigates somewhere, drops a bomb or two or 10 on a cluster of lights, even if it's only a rural farm, and motors on to drop a few bombs on the next cluster of lights. Rinse and repeat. Every once in a while, German seaplanes bomb a British port.

British use of searchlights, AA guns, and aircraft do start to take shape towards the end. The discussion about the multiple efforts to get an incendiary bullet and other defensive efforts adopted by Britain breaks up an otherwise repetitious text.

The book contains 43 black and white photos and illustrations and seven black and white maps.

I read through about a third of the book and skipped around after that. A third book covering 1917 seems likely. If you're a general reader, these books are likely not for you, but if you're a zeppelin buff interested in all the grainy details: jackpot.



Durer's Fight Book. by Dierk Hagedorn and Daniel Jaquet. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 320 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Genius of German Renaissance and His Combat Treatise*

Performs two vital functions: full-color replication of the actual book and full English translation of original German text -- displayed in two columns, German on the left and English on the right.

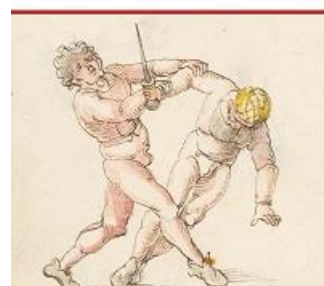
Albrecht Durer did not author the book -- it seems to be a compilation effort by several individuals using Durer's illustrations, or at least 175 of the 202, with the remainder from co-workers in his workshop (p289). The translated text appears to be written by several individuals, including deviations or 'deformed versions' of other fighting manuscripts (p158).

The book includes both armed and unarmed one-on-one combat illustrations and explanations. The numbered illustrations for unarmed combat (wrestling in the book's vernacular) are easy to match with the numbered text descriptions. The dagger and sword illustrations are numbered, but the text lacks numbers and is harder to follow. Assuming that you want to learn how Germans fought hand to hand combat in 1522 (manuscript date, although not all historians agree on that specific year).

DÜRER'S FIGHT BOOK

*The Genius of the German Renaissance
and His Combat Treatise*

DIERK HAGEDORN & DANIEL JAQUET



The bibliography is packed with primary and secondary sources on fighting techniques. I can see a designer using this book as a source for a dueling game.

I can't say I read all the descriptions in all their entirety, but I appreciate the effort that went into reproducing the 1522 book.

Enjoyed it.

Roman Britain's Pirate King. by Simon Elliott. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 174 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Carausias, Constantius Chlorus and the Fourth Roman Invasion of Britain*

I'm not particularly familiar with the Roman Empire in 286-293 AD when the "Pirate King" reigned over the "North Sea Empire." I hadn't heard of either term as Diocletian started to reform the Roman Empire after the decades-long troubles caused by too many wanna-be emperors and a growing Parthian Empire in the east.

The background story to this North Sea Empire evolves from appointed Caesar Carausias being really good at his job of clearing out German pirates that behaved like pre-Vikings: disrupting trade between Gaul and Britain and launching attacks on land, and beating up barbarian tribes that crossed the Rhine.

Carausias' success generated court intrigue that gave Western emperor Maximian the idea that Carausias was in cahoots with the pirates and not sharing booty. Maximian ordered the execution of his once right-hand man, but Carausias declared himself independent, pulling Britain and western parts of Gaul out of the Roman Empire. I'm not sure a couple provinces an empire make, but it's good marketing.

Hence, the book covers Carausias' seven years of successfully fending off a Maximian counter-attack and then failing to fend off a Constantius Chlorus counter-attack.

Carausias' coin. Image from web.

The book is well-written, but based on the fragmentary ancient sources, making a book-length book requires a lot of stretching. I'm not sure you need such a long refresher course in Roman history, but I did enjoy the speculation and analysis of why Roman legions were reduced from 5,500 men during the heyday of the Empire to about 1,200 paper strength men by the time Carausias rolls around (p51). Less secure in historical sources is the disbandment of the Brittan naval fleet, which had previously swept the local seas of pirates with a fleet of 900 ships and 7,000 crew (p45).

Indeed, the first 82 pages stretches back to Republican Rome. It's all a nice recap, and the discussion on coinage (p79-83) proved surprisingly fascinating to me, but the discussion and analysis of Carausias and his efforts runs about 70 pages (p83-p152).

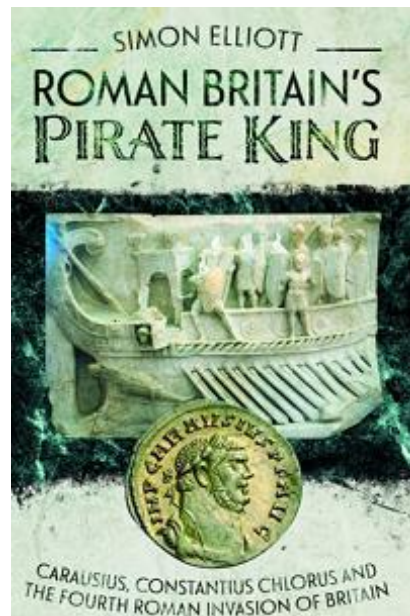
Give a +1 for use of archeological discoveries to augment the fragmentary literary evidence, and other +1 for deducing likely triggers and events during those 10 years. A map would be nice and maps of some of the battles would be better, but I guess you can't have it all anymore.

The book contains 13 color photos of coins, 21 color photos, four color photos of miniatures, and one color photo of a liburnian built by the author. You read that right, Elliott paints miniatures. I don't know if he pushes them around a tabletop, but he paints.

Enjoyed it.

Byzantine Fortifications: Protecting the Roman Empire in the East. by Nikos D Kontogiannis. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 271 pages. 2022.

Covers three periods: Early (3rd to 6th centuries), Middle (7th to 12th centuries), and Late (13th to 15th centuries) Byzantine fortifications from city to city explaining the physical layout of the various forts and walls --



including height, width, and length numbers, plus distances between towers and other attributes of such fortifications. That's a big help for those wishing to recreate them in scale on the tabletop.

Each period gets a cursory look at army organization, but nothing resembling battle or siege descriptions beyond some occasional basics. It gets a little repetitious as the paragraphs repeat such details of different forts, so I skipped around. Then I'd hit a photo of a ruin and dive back into the text.

A history of construction explains when each fortification took shape or was expanded and upgraded. Three black and white maps pinpoint the location of each of the fortifications mentioned in the text.

The book also contains 49 color photos of ruins that sure make me want to take a vacation to some of these places, seven black and white overhead plans showing what the intact fortification would cover, and one color overhead plan showing what the intact fortification would cover.

It's a magnificent and inspirational survey.

Enjoyed it.

Life and Death on the Eastern Front. by Anthony Tucker-Jones and Ian Stewart Spring. Hardback (7.2x9.9 inches). 288 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Rare Colour Photographs from the Second World War*
Wow.

A total of 254 color photos taken by German soldiers and mostly from private albums and part of the PixPast archive of 32,000 color photos taken from 1936 to 1946.

Yes, color, not colorized, photos taken with Afgacolor film that was less expensive than Kodak's Kodachrome film (p13).

Wow.

The photos are generally sharp, too. I'm not sure if they have been photoshopped or simply the best were selected for the book, but they show all sorts of locations, weather, and scenarios. Sure, some are similar to black and white photos, but the color helps you pop out some details that might be lost in black and white.

The captions identify equipment, vehicles, and sometimes dates as best as can be determined -- private albums with photos often lack such details.

A few highlights from my perspective: 20 Schwimmwagens of the 22nd Panzer Division cross a river (p148-149), a truck column bogged down across multiple "lanes" of a "road" (p125), and a gruesome use of a couple frozen horses with the hindquarters plopped on the ground and the head and limbs in the air (sorta like a rearing horse) and used as telephone poles to string lines across (p273). Plenty more can be used for dioramas.

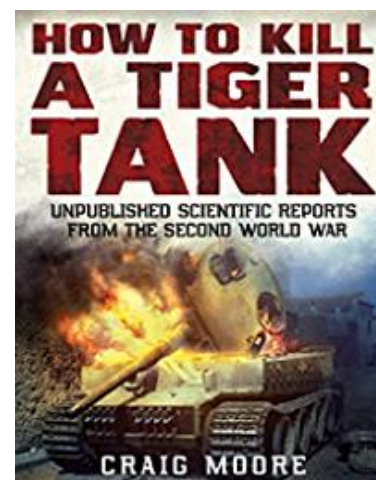
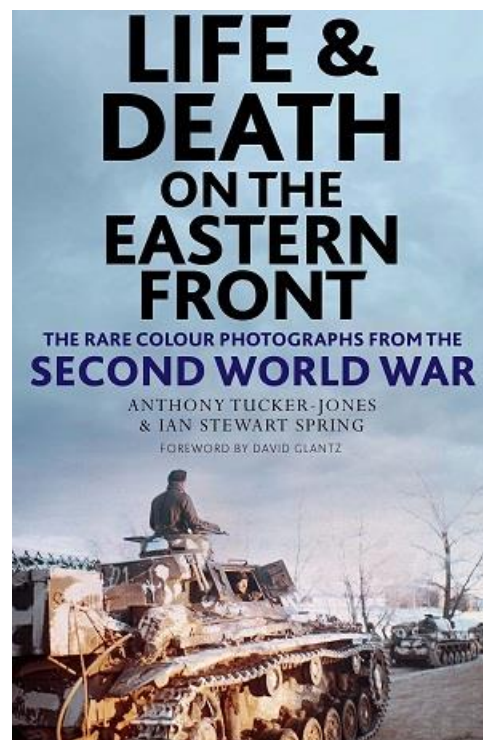
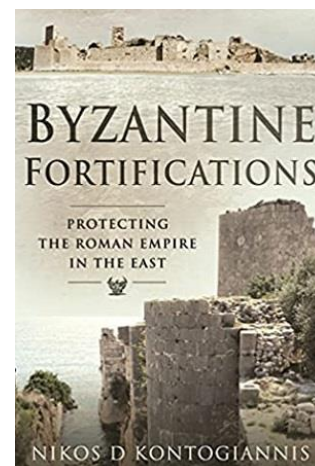
Enjoyed it.

How to Kill a Tiger Tank: Unpublished Scientific Reports. by Craig Moore. Softcover (8.5x10.9 inches). 250 pages. 2021.

If you're a skirmish-level game designer, this book will aid you in figuring out how to model Tiger tank survivability rates. The information within comes from official war-time ballistics and other testing reports, pinpointing strengths and weaknesses of the Pz VI.

Charts and charts and charts populate the pages along with explanatory photos -- 233 black and white photos, 80 color photos, 67 black and white illustrations, and five color virtual TO&Es. Lots of photos of how shells did upon impact on captured Tigers.

One interesting tidbit: 25% of PIAT fuses failed to detonate the round upon impact (p220). There's a heckuva die roll for a game -- even when you hit, you may get the dud round.



I didn't exactly read this cover to cover. It's literally life and death data analysis by the US, UK, and USSR technical units. Chapter 7 with diagrams and charts explaining lethality distances and shots are various angles are particularly enlightening.

I also like the end section on where to see Tiger tanks in museums and in private hands -- although some Tigers are amalgamations of parts from many different sources.

If you're a Tiger tank enthusiast with a hunger for destruction data, here's your book. If not, pass it by.

American Aircraft Development: World War Two Legacy. by Bill Norton. Hardback (7.2x10.0 inches). 512 pages. 2021.

Subtitle: *1945-1953 and the Korean War*

The bulk of the book (p133-446) consists of aircraft by aircraft descriptions with specifications and short histories. Chapters cover one type at a time, such as fighters, bombers, experimentals, and so on. I can't say I read every entry, as the info-packed text wasn't exactly a page turner, but it's a great compilation of extensive information on propeller aircraft, jets, hybrids, helicopters, seaplanes, gliders, and dirigibles.

The book contains 381 black and white photos and 41 black and white illustrations.

I did find the explanation of the transition from propeller to jet aircraft fascinating. It explained speed, landing space, and the detailed flight testing that went into aircraft during the transition era. Indeed, an excellent description of a 1947 Douglas XB-42A (p76) shows a nose like a P-80 with jet engines under each wing while also sporting a DO-335 tail with a pusher-type propeller engine.

One point caught my eye: The switch on aircraft carriers from props to jets accelerated the accident rate to 54 accidents per 100,000 flight hours -- 776 aircraft destroyed (p33). Once they adapted carriers to angled flight decks, the rate declined.

Meanwhile, engineers pushed propeller aircraft to the limit. A 1950 test apparently shows a B-17G in flight with all four engines idle and a huge nose containing one Pratt & Whitney XT34 turboprop engine (p74).

For all you V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft lovers, the first experimental tilt-rotors appeared in 1952 with McDonnell starting with the XL-25 in 1950 (p93), but Bell paving the way in their Buffalo, NY, with prototype that looked and worked like an Osprey. Alas, while it ultimately lifted and transitioned during its 1952-1958 development, it proved underpowered and was shelved (p96).

The more you want a reference of the post-WWII transition, the more this should be on your shelf.

Enjoyed it.

The Templars at War. by Zvonimir Grbasic. Hardback (8.8x11.4 inches). 171 pages. 2022.

This chapter by chapter overview of the Templar knights covers equipment, horses, training, discipline, hierarchy, politics, and combat in and around the Middle East. Started as a group tasked with protecting pilgrims to Jerusalem, it grew in military and financial power throughout the crusader period until its 'heretical' gutting in the early 1300s.

The detailed art of Grbasic is absolutely fantastic, with 30 color uniform figures, 11 black and white uniform figures, five color maps, two black and white maps, and eight color shield patterns. A few of the combat scenes include opponents.

One text typo: "prey upon the Holy Rock" should be "pray" (p131).

One map typo: Battle of Yarmouk map (p ix) lists Vardan as commander, but text (p xvi) says Varhan. Not sure which it should be or if there were two commanders with close names.

Another map (p80) typo refers to the "Holly Land," likely "Holy Land." Also, maps (p80 and p xvi) use "County of Tripoly" but city of "Tripoli" -- I figure perhaps one or the other.

No mention of whether their treasure was deposited on Oak Island or not. If you want to know about that, see my review of *The Curse of Oak Island* (10/24/2019 AAR or here on hmgs.org). Of course I was going to mention that.

Back to reality, this well-written overview offers a solid account of Templar activity flavored with fantastic illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

