

December 2022

Medieval Melee: The Lion of Stockton's Tale

Battle Among Legends: Umpire Set Up and Summary

Rollo's Saga: Raiders of the Norse

Mountain Goats: Butting Butts

Dominion: Two Games

Ensign's War: No Allied Admirals Here

Admirals' War Analysis: After a Second Game

Bulge Time: *Panzer Grenadier*

NJ Game Day and Flea Market: Feb. 4, 2023

Cold Wars 2023: Mar. 9-12, 2023

Books I've Read

Darkest Christmas: December 1942

Vampir: Teen Night Fighting MG WWII

The Perdiccas Years: 323-320 BC

Super-Battleships of WWII: New Vangd 314

How to Build a Model Railway

The Rise of the Sikh Soldier: MM 22

The Capture of U-505: Raid 58

Sanctuary Lost: Portugal Air War v1

Teutonic Knight vs. Lithuanian Warrior

Vickers: 1911-1977 (Aviation Indus 4)

Airliners of South and Southeast Asia

ME-262: Development and Politics

ME-262 Northwest Europe: Dogfight 6

Light of Impossible Stars (sci-fi)

Blind Obedience and Denial: Nuremberg

Stalingrad 1942-43 (3): Campaign 385

Hard City: Noir RPG Rules

Bloody Verrieres: Volume II Jul-Aug 1944

The Korean War 1950-53: Essential Histories

Wings of Iraq: Vol 2: 1970-1980 (ME War 43)

Tannenberg 1914: Campaign 386



Here's hoping you all get your gamer strut on during this holiday season. See you in 2023. -- RL

Medieval Melee: The Lion of Stockton's Tale

by Russ Lockwood

For the big annual day after Thanksgiving game, Dan resurrected a favorite from a decade ago. To be strictly accurate, he e-mailed a list of potential games and had us vote for our favorites. I originally voted for his pirate ships game as number one, but when he later added Medieval Melee, I made MM a tie with number one. Apparently, lots of us in our band of wargamers agreed and the Battle Among Legends became the game of the day. Ultimately, we had 11 cutthroat commanders plus umpire-controlled NPCs around two tabletops.

The Main Table. The Village Table is off to the right. Clockwise from left: Steve (cap), Ed, Mike, Jared, Umpire Dan (checked shirt), and Erik.



Mechanics For Mayhem

Each of us was a leader and commanded a small retinue of about a half dozen or so men-at-arms, skirmishers, or other warriors. Each of us had about a third of a page of background/goals to give some context for our characters. In a sense, it was a little role-playing game-ish because you had 11 different sets of goals that could lead to some negotiations and temporary alliances.

Yet the core mechanic was a melee system based on percentages (d100) to hit and to save. All characters sported different percentages and each figure could move and strike. An archer could stand still, fire, and have a 45% chance of firing again.

Each figure used its percentage chance to hit, with a smaller percentage chance for the hit to be a "critical" hit. If hit, a target had a percentage chance to block (use a shield) or dodge (if no shield). If the block/dodge was successful, no hit. If the save failed, a hit occurred that resulted in a damage roll (mostly 1d8 for swords, although other weapons rolled a different die, from 1d6 to 1d12). Dan created stat cards to speed the melees.

The Lion of Stockton card with all his stats. The Morning Star percentage to the left is to hit (d100 roll of 01 to 42) and to get a critical hit (if that roll is 01 to 18). HTK is hits to kill. The photo is the figure on the tabletop used for the Lion of Stockton. Photo by Keith.



Damage minus the armor value of the target equaled a number of hits on the target. Each target had a hit point (HP) value. If attackers eventually inflicted a total of hits equal to half or more of the HP, the target was now slowed to half move and half percentages. If hits eventually equaled HP, the character was unconscious. If hits eventually exceeded HP, the target was killed.

The wobble in all this was the critical hit. If you rolled low enough to inflict one of those, the target did NOT subtract the armor value from the damage.

Now, if all attackers of a target missed, that target gets one counterattack at half percentages (round up).

The system is simple to understand, easy to implement because it involves only a few figures per person, and makes for more die rolling and less modifier wrangling.

Each turn, Umpire Dan drew a card from the randomized deck of commanders and that player activated. As players were often well separated on the tables, quite often multiple players could move and melee at once.

The Lion of Stockton

As a seasoned knight, the Lion of Stockton, clad in his well-known livery adapted from battles in the faraway down under land of Brisbane, led a small band of fighters onto the land of his neighbor, Deveraux.

While a good neighbor, Deveraux proved lax about his fiefdom and the Lion's own serfs complained about bandits sneaking across the border to raid their farmsteads. Rumor had it that a band of bandits, or Norsemen, or some other pagan gang, was already looting Deveraux's land.

While that would more or less be his neighbor's problem, the lawlessness concerned the Lion, as Deveraux's land contained the shrine of St. Gregory, a monument dedicated to an ancestor well-known for compassion, tact, and powers to heal.

The Lion envisioned the inscription over the entrance to the shrine reflected in a famous Gregorian chant: *Non enim pro locis res, sed pro bonis rebus loca amanda sunt*. "Things are not to be loved for the sake of a place, but places are to be loved for the sake of their good things."

Just the thought of pagans desecrating the shrine fueled the Lion's anger. It was time to leave his castle, reassure his serfs with a tour of their farms, and then visit the shrine to see if the rumors were true or not.

Then the Lion would decide if he would have to apply St. Gregory's other well-known adage: "Compassion should be shown first to the faithful and afterwards to enemies."

Umpire Dan's Background for The Lion

The Lion of Stockton (Russ) is a seasoned knight (and considered a war hero by some) with a well-known reputation of being a fierce fighter, but Sir Nigel Loring and Count Fabreezi are also well known for their valor (Nigel to the point of recklessness and Fabreezi for his amazing feats). The Lion of Stockton owns a fiefdom next to the largest land-owner in the area, Lord Deveraux, who has been a good neighbor, but does not manage his estates well. There is a shrine on his land dedicated to your great uncle, St. Gregory, which you have visited on occasion. You hold a very dim view of anyone entertaining the idea of desecrating or looting the shrine. You have assisted Deveraux in the past dealing with some unrest (and making sure it doesn't spill over onto your domain).

The other Feudal Lords nearby, Baron Bender, and Marquis D'Enghien, appear to be honorable men, but Baron Bender you know the least, since he recently acquired his land through an inheritance.

Lockwood the Lionhearted in his Lion of Stockton livery. Photo by Keith.

There have been some disturbing gossip and stories going around:

- * Your serfs have been complaining about bandits. A gang led by Rannon may be responsible and he may have a hideout within Deveraux's fiefdom. You would like to catch him and get back what he took from your serfs.

- * Some Norsemen led by Rollo the Ravager have been plundering some villages and might be heading to your area. If they wander into Deveraux's fiefdom, pillaging the hamlets along the way, Deveraux will probably ask for help – and it might do well to help get rid of them before they find their way to your lands.



* Some mysterious activity reminiscent of an age when Druids were the local religion have been noticed by the common folk, but few are willing to speak openly about it. One story has it that there is some "Stag Lord" enforcing the "Old Ways".

You may take the Roman Road to visit the shrine, or take Daisy-Chain Way or follow the Fecking Run through Deveraux's land if you want to travel more discreetly.

The Lion of Stockton's Retinue

The Lion brought five men with him: Fenmore the Sword, Cirdan the Axe, Vernon of the Short Pointy Stick, Grant of the Long Pointy Stick, and the Unknown Bowman.

Forgot to include the Bowman's card.

The key stat for the Lion was his relatively vast critical hit range -- 18% -- that would ignore armor. The rest were a mix, presumably about equal to the other retainers.

The group set out along the old Roman Road, still one of the better paths in the county.

As the Lion interpreted the situation, he would -- in order of importance -- seek to protect the shrine from vandalism, kill or drive off any bandits, kill or drive off any Norsemen, and kill the Stag Lord and his band of druidic pagans. Anything else was a bonus.

The Horned Ones

Sure enough, the Lion rounded a bend in the Roman Road and spotted Norsemen. Those pagan pillagers clustered around Rollo the Ravager and headed towards a farm.

Clash of Lion vs. Rollo on Turn 1! Rollo is sideways Norseman in upper right -- obviously why Grant critically stuck him. Notice that Fred used my own green-cloaked man (Fenmore) against me. Confusion in the melee!



Rage burned within the Lion. "Slay the Norsemen!" he shouted and charged his group into battle. Blades rang with intensity as most swings struck shields or missed, but enough struck flesh to elicit grunts and screams.

Vernon of the Short Pointy Stick fell to the ground in agony, the victim of a drunken berserker, and soon passed from this mortal plane. Yet, the rest of the Lion's retinue did wonders, including Grant of the Long Pointy Stick, who drove his spear past the armor of Rollo himself and inflicted a grievous wound. It was not quite enough to slow the hulking Viking, but it gave Rollo pause as slices and cuts registered on other Norsemen. The Norseman managed to inflict pain on Grant, but another good sticking might find Rollo meeting Odin in Valhalla.

Indeed, Rollo, towering above all others and topped with a horned helmet, was partially flabbergasted at the ferocity of the Lion's attack. Rollo had no direct cause for opposing the Lion, and complained about the ambush. He complained even more with a stab wound leaking blood and the realization that his ravagers had become prey.

It was at a separation of forces that the Lion heard the sounds of battle on the wind coming from the direction of the shrine. His concern spiked with the ever increasing uproar of distant melee, so he made an offer to Rollo.

"Horned one! I will spare you and your men if you join me to defend the shrine."

Rollo could care less about these Christian monuments, but he did know he and his men were more wounded than his opponents, even if the Norse outnumbered the locals. He also learned that a combatant he thought his own was really one of Stockton's men. "Let us go and I'll let you go," he countered.

"NO!" roared an indignant Lion. "We go to protect the shrine against all comers or we battle to the death!"

"There's no reason for us to fight," Rollo insisted.



The Lion searched his memory. In a sense, the heretic was right, Deveraux had not actually called for him to repel the Norsemen. It was in his self-interest to rid the land of these pagans, especially because raiding Deveraux's farms was a likely stepping stone to raiding the fiefdom of Stockton. Dead Norsemen were always a good idea. Yet, the shrine was central to his efforts. "To the Shrine or to the death!"

Rollo thought for a moment and relented. "To the shrine."



The Lion and his men climb the ridge, watching Rollo (right) head to the shrine and an unknown band (left) defend against a Wolf attack in the woods. The Lion thought he glimpsed a woman in the woods.

The two sides regrouped and bound their wounds. Then they headed to the shrine....separately.

Along the way, Rollo could not help himself. He wanted to loot a farm. "My men want sheep."

The Lion muttered, "Of course they do." Then he lifted his voice so Rollo and his Norsemen could hear.

"They're not my sheep. But the shrine first! Then you can shop for sheep."

One of Rollo's men deviated to the farm, but the peasants had locked and braced the door. Rollo agreed to the Lion's terms. His man returned to the group as they made their way to the shrine, far enough apart to guard against any chance of duplicitous attack. Rollo led his men along the road to the bridge over the Fecking Run. The Lion's men climbed a low ridge for a better look around and headed for the Daisy Chain path and ford over the Fecking Run.

Hungry Like The Wolf

Topping a ridge, the Lion of Stockton and his men witnessed a giant wolf attack an armored man at the edge of a nearby woods. In the battle of claw and tooth versus sword and armor, the wolf was getting the better of it until more men filtered through the woods to join the struggle. The wolf, with more fury than wit, stayed and chomped, but a rain of blows felled it.

The men faded back into the woods, although the Lion swore he saw a woman among the trees. It mattered little as he could just begin to observe the battle at the shrine.

Steve (Smokey) maneuvers his troops to attack the pagans who were attacking the Shrine of St. Gregory. Ed (Sir Nigel) is also helping defend the Shrine from the Erik (Stag Lord). In the background, Mike (D'Enghien) awaits the outcome.

At the Shrine of St. Gregory

By the time the Lion passed around a small woods, the battle at the shrine was almost over. He squinted into the distance and saw a man with a giant stag horn helmet reel from the shrine. The monk defenders, far from meek, fought with savage determination against the pagan onslaught.

Help had arrived as Sir Nigel Loring and Smokey the Ranger flocked to



the battle of the Shrine. At that distance, it was hard for the Lion to see what was going on. A knight drove a lance through one of the pagans, skewering him into the ground while another pagan fell. The Stag Lord looked at the odds and fled with what remained of his raiding group. The shire's Reeve (sheriff) and his deputy finally showed up, but instead of blocking the Stag Lord's escape, they let them pass, content with a story of simple pilgrims brazenly attacked at the shrine.

By the time the knights told the real story of pagans trying to steal a stone from the shrine, the Stag Lord had a head start.

Ed launches a surprise attack on the Stag Lord.

Rollo the Retreater

While the Lion marched as quickly as possible towards the shrine, Rollo decided that the shrine was intact and thus his agreement had been fulfilled. He led his men away from the shrine and towards Deveraux's village.

Sir Nigel Loring and Smokey the Ranger headed after Rollo, driven by their own needs for glory.

The fight at the Shrine of St. Gregory.

The Band of the Stag Lord

While at the shrine, the Lion questioned the Reeve and deputy, but they knew little of the fight, arriving too late for swordplay. As for the monks, they were slightly more helpful, for they knew of the Lion and his generosity in helping maintain the shrine.

"The leader with the Stag Horn helmet demanded we turn over the stone," he explained.

Almost got everyone in. Erik the Stag Lord (red hoodie) disengages from the fight at the Shrine. Clockwise from left: Umpire Dan, John, Erik, the arm of Fred, Keith (blue checked shirt), Dennis, Sean, Steve (cap), and the front half of Ed. Off camera right: Mike. Off camera left: Jared.

The Lion of Stockton gazed at the massive, intricately carved stone in the center of the shrine. "Madness," the Lion said. "They would need twice their number to even think about lifting it."

"That is what we told them, but they were insistent in trying," the monk replied. "We were just as insistent they leave."



The Lion glanced behind him. Two dead pagans lay in the dirt. "Mayhaps, monk, these two may have an offering for St. Gregory."

The Reeve piped up, "You have no sway over these two. It is Lord Deveraux who shall decide."

The Lion leveled a hard look at the Reeve. "If Deveraux complains, I shall make recompense to him."

The Reeve nodded. The monk moved to examine the bodies, then stopped. "One other point, lord. The Stag Lord had a druid with him."

"Pagan parasite!" the Lion erupted, then calmed. "I will slaughter that wicked spawn of a serpent who dared defile my ancestor's shrine."

The Lion turned to his men. "After that pagan band. They must not cross into Stockton."



The Lion in pursuit arrives at the edge of the field in a nearby farm, confronting what appeared to be a band of bandits run by Dennis, but they had made a side deal to be in the employ of Deveraux. Meanwhile, Jared's "friend" band (lower left corner) passes the Shrine. D'Enghien's band (Mike) skirt the farm field in upper middle. Count Fabreezi (Keith) and his men follow the stream in search of his daughter. The Stag Lord (Erik) is already atop the hill, meeting up with Sean's band, which may or may not include a woman.

It wasn't much of a cheer that his men mustered, but it was enough. They headed back the way they went.

A Band Upon the Road

As the Lion turned to go, one of his men pointed into the distance. "Another party of men heads down the road."

The Lion shaded his eyes with a hand. In a neat row, the newcomers marched down the Roman Road but made no move to veer towards the shrine. He could see no livery he recognized and called to them. "Hail! Who marches across Deveraux's land?"

A reply drifted across the distance. "A friend."

Whether he was a friend or not was another question, but the Lion was convinced they meant no ill will towards the shrine as long as they stayed on the road. He bellowed, "Where are you heading?"

"To Deveraux."

"Will you be stopping at the Shrine of St. Gregory?"

"No. Perhaps another time."

Good enough for the Lion. He had pagans and druids to slay.

"Fare thee well."

With that, the Lion watched the newcomers continue down the road. He bemoaned the loss of time, but as he started off in pursuit of the Stag Lord, he spied the livery of the Marquis d'Enghien in a nearby glen. He had limited contact with the Marquis, but heard of him as an honorable knight with lands just on the other side of Deveraux's land. He thought he had spied the Marquis at the shrine, but this was the first chance he had to query him.

"Hail, Marquis d'Enghien and well met!"

"Hail, Lion of Stockton."

"How went the battle at the shrine?"

"Success, I see, but only in part, as the pagans are heading away. I only wish I had been closer to help slay them, for perhaps more would be on the ground."

"Well spoken! I, too, seek their blood for desecrating my ancestor's shrine," the Lion yelled. "Do you know about this other band of men who came from your lands along the Roman Road?"

"No. I do not," the Marquis answered. "But I must be off. I am fresh enough to run the Stag Lord to ground and he flees ever faster."

Atop the hill, the Lion could barely make out the Stag Lord and his horse in the fields beyond a nearby farm. "I will chase him as well. With him is a druid that needs slaying!"

D'Enghien gave a half wave and marched off.

Count Fabreezi in his yellow and white livery urges his band onward.

The Lion judged that the Stag Lord's direction of travel would eventually bring his band into Stockton, and urged his men into a chase, retracing their steps to go back across the ford at the Fecking Run.

Part way back, they ran across what seemed to be a band of bandits, but they were not ransacking the intervening farm. Questioning them, the Lion learned they were in the employ of Deveraux. What they were looking for, he had no idea, but as they were on a mission away from the shrine, he bade them to fare well. If they weren't looting, then all was well with travelers, no matter how dodgy they appeared.

Band on the Run

From time to time, among the rises and dips, the Lion caught glimpses of the pagans. They seemed to be heading towards a forested hill. He needed to hurry, yet the distance was the distance.

They forded the stream and came across the dead wolf. Scavengers had yet to make a dent in the meat. The Lion glanced at the ridge. On the other side, Vernon of the Short Pointy Stick remained dead, but detouring now would not bring him back. He hoped his man's body would remain intact for a little while more as he finished with the pagans.

The Lion (bottom center) passes the Wolf carcass and will soon meet Count Fabreezi on the way to the hill. The band of ruffians and d'Enghien have yet to cross the stream. The Stag Lord is atop the wooded hill while the unknown band fades away from the hill edge and become shadows as they climb.

As the Lion's band skirted the woods and caught sight of the hill, he noticed a thin trail of smoke reaching into the sky. "Hurry, men," he exhorted. "The pagans stopped. We can catch them before they reach Stockton."

They watched another band of warriors emerge from around the other side of the woods. The Lion knew that livery anywhere.

"Fabreezi! Hail Count Fabreezi!" he yelled.



"Lion!" came the replay. "Well met!"

"What brings you here? Did the pagans defile your lands?"

"No. I seek my daughter, Ariel, whom I believe has been kidnapped. Have you seen her?" Fabreezi asked.

"Daughter? The woman that many seek is your daughter?"

"The same."

"Your daughter is Ariel," the Lion blurted as much a statement as a question.

"Yes. She was kidnapped."

Fabreezi's men believe they spied golden-haired Ariel entering the wooded hill... Photo by Keith.

The Lion was so confused. Was she the woman? Did her kidnappers flee the woods of the wolf back to this hill? Did the Stag Lord believe he could capture Ariel from the kidnappers and buy his freedom? And just how did the Stag Lord and druid know to come to this hill?

"Vile news! Especially with dark druid practices," the Lion said. "No, I haven't seen her, although I thought we had seen a woman in the woods between us."

"I heard tell of a woman on this hill. I can only hope it is my daughter."

"I see the Marquis d'Enghien coming up. Is he with you?"

"Yes. He says he is on a quest, but will help us search for Ariel," Fabreezi said. "D'Enghien brought additional men in the employ of Deveraux."

"Good. He is, like me, chasing pagans," the Lion explained. "I am not sure about the additional men. They have a look of ruffians about them, but say they are looking for something. They avoided the shrine and were not looting the farms, so I have nothing but an uneasy feeling. I would take heed of their whereabouts."

"Perhaps we are all searching for Ariel. I will not begrudge the help."

"Let us make haste into the woods of the hill. The Stag Lord and a druid fled from the Shrine of St. Gregory and I think they have fled to this hill. See the smoke?"

"I have," Fabreezi noted, glancing up at the hill.

"I pray Ariel is safe," the Lion consoled. "I think we will all be safer without the pagans and druids around."

Ariel makes a fantastic odds-defying effort and hides from all.

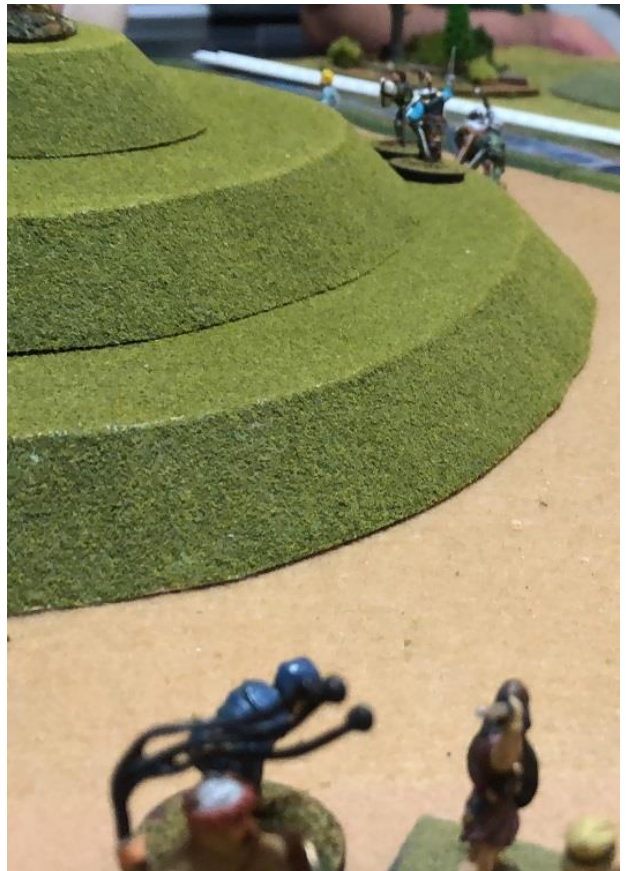
Hill of Battle

Fabreezi and his men spotted others on the hill and entered the wooded slope. His trumpeter blared a call with the hope that Ariel would recognize the notes. The going proved slow as they chased shadows among the trees.

The Lion and his men joined them to the left, while d'Enghien and Deveraux's band joined on the right. As all made their way up the hill, a growl emerged from the underbrush and a massive bear attacked Fabreezi's trumpeter. Claws and teeth soon slew the musician, who barely had time to draw his sword before falling to ursine fury.

The Lion had no time for this. He ordered his men to ignore the bear and headed across the slope to the other side of the hill. He heard the neighing of a horse and urged his men onward.

As he dodged around yet another vine-plagued tree and out through the underbrush, he spied the Stag Lord and the druid. "At them!" he raged and spun his hand flail into an attack upon the Stag Lord, who blocked it with



surprising ease. Grant of the Long Pointy Stick and Fenmore the Sword fanned out and also attacked the Stag Lord, but to no effect.

The Lion and his men (lower left corner) climb the hill as Yogi bear attacks Fabreezi's trumpeter. Bandits and d'Enghien climb the hill to get at the Stag Lord and the unknown band.

The pagan lord screamed, "What are you doing? I have no quarrel with you!"

"Pagan filth!" the Lion of Stockton roared as he swung his flail. "Defiler of shrines!"

"You are not following chivalry. These men should not be attacking me. I am a knight!"

"Chivalry doesn't apply to pagans!" the Lion retorted. "You are no knight! Faithless heretic!" The Lion bashed another attack while evading a riposte from the Stag Lord.

Meanwhile, the Unknown Bowman, now armed with a sword, and Cirdan the Axe closed in on the druid, who proved inept with weaponry and shield. He was quickly slaughtered, even as another pagan henchman closed upon them.

The Lion attacks the Stag Lord and Druid while another melee takes place on the hill.

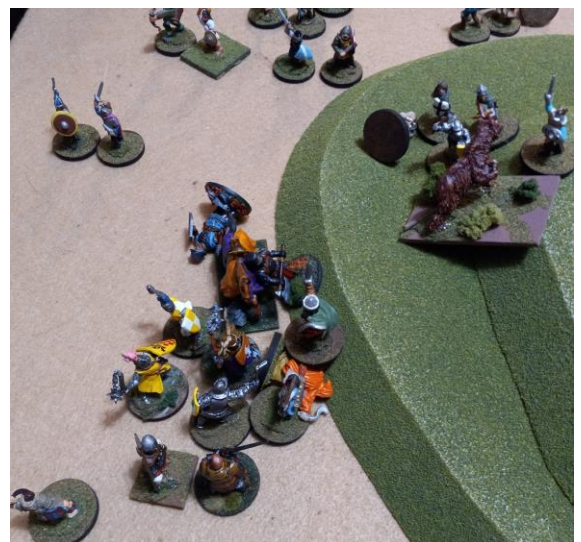
As the melee continued, the bear attacked anew, although whose men were targeted remained unknown. The Lion became aware of yet another band of armed men, separate from everyone else, and wondered how many bands of armed men were there? Sheesh. If Deveraux could charge a toll for each man, he'd haul in a fortune.

At one point, Fabreezi also battled the Stag Lord while men from one band or another attacked the Lion's men. It was all so confusing.

Two things were certain: the bear died under a hail of sword strikes and the druid died with an axe buried in his head. Someone would have a large rug. The Lion would have a druid's head on a pike.

The Lion briefly thought about grabbing the reins of the Stag Lord's horse to prevent the pagan's escape, but he was in full-on battle mode and engaged with the enemy. He should have listened to his inner voice.

The druid falls and Fabreezi joins the melee against the Stag Lord. Meanwhile, the Bear charges into battle anew looking for pick-a-nic baskets.



The Duel of Honor

The Stag Lord broke contact and leapt upon his horse. At this same point, a woman appeared and hopped on the horse with him. They raced away, but the Marquis d'Enghien was perfectly positioned to intercept. The Stag Lord reined in and the woman alit and ran into d'Enghien's arms.

"ARIEL!" Count Fabreezi yelled. If her face might launch a thousand knights, that one name could pause a thousand melees.

The Stag Lord's men took that opportunity to withdraw. The Unknown Bowman put an arrow square into one underling's back, but the armor turned it aside. Otherwise, all battle ceased upon and around the hill.

"Father! I wish to marry the Marquis d'Enghien!" Ariel implored.

"D'Enghien, return my daughter this instant!" Fabreezi demanded.

"No, father. I will not come back," Ariel insisted.

"D'Enghien." Count Fabreezi let the threat percolate through the name.

"I am sorry, Count. Ariel and I plan to marry, with or without your permission," d'Enghien answered.

"I challenge you to a duel!" Fabreezi screamed.

"You what?"

"I challenge you to a duel for the hand of my daughter. If I win, you leave and never come back. If you win, I will agree to let you two marry."

"I have no wish to injure my future father-in-law."

"I don't mind injuring a kidnapper."

"I was not kidnapped," Ariel protested. "I escaped to be with him. And you will not harm him!"

The realization that young love had turned Ariel's head grated on the Count. Yet he also knew killing the Marquis would lose him his daughter forever. "Very well, daughter," Fabreezi relented. "We will duel for honor's sake, not blood's sake."

"I accept," d'Enghien stated.

The two squared off, all others providing them room. The clang of battle began at once.

The Marquis d'Enghien (top) faces off against Count Fabreezi.

What's a Lion To Do?

The Lion surveyed the field. Too many bodies were between him and the Stag Lord. Worse, the Stag Lord was in the pay of the Marquis. A small band had spirited Ariel away and were likewise beholden to the Marquis.

Then there were the ruffians, who tried to sneak attack and rob some of the fighters, but they were soundly thrashed. Only one bandit managed to escape the hill that the Lion could see.

The Lion of Stockton tallied the situation in his head and found little left to do. The all-important shrine was intact and unlooted. The bandit band had been slaughtered. The Norse had



been driven away and not a sheep touched on Deveraux's land by any faction. Half the pagans were dead, including the druid.

Alas, the Stag Lord was untouchable at the moment, with a solid wall of men between the Lion and the Stag.

The battle between Fabreezi and d'Enghien over the daughter was no quarrel of his. However they settled it, and it looked like a long battle between high-quality knights, would also be of no interest to him.

He could still try and find the Norsemen, who had been injured a bit but were still dangerous. That seemed like a plan, but first, back to the all-important shrine. He and his men left the personal battle behind and headed back to the shrine.

All was as he had left it. The other band of so-called friends was nowhere to be seen. The Lion gave himself a mental kick. "A friend" had been such a nebulous reply, yet such were the pressing matters of shrine and pagans that he took it as truth. From his perch on the shrine's hilltop, he could see no sign of that band, but it could be anywhere.

The Village battle begins...

He said a quick prayer for Vernon of the Short Pointy Stick. Later, he would make a lengthier prayer and see to his family.

The Lion exited, but stopped just outside. "Grant."

The spearman dragged himself forward. "Yes, m'lord."

"You have fought well today, but I see you are sore wounded from the Norse fight and the fight at the hill. Stay here and help guard the shrine."

"Yes, m'lord."

"Monk! I would appreciate it if you could tend my man's wounds."

"Of course," the monk answered. "Put your mind at rest."

"My thanks, monk."

The Lion led his men back to the Roman Road and off to Deveraux's village.

The Village People

The nearer the village, the more they heard the din of battle. Their arrival heralded all sorts of confusion.

The four tower levels and the battle outside.

The Lion could only marvel at the ingenuity of the Norsemen. How Rollo had managed to crash through the door and capture the keep was beyond him. The remains of boiling oil were around the base, as were a multitude of javelins obviously tossed



from the tower. Warriors battled among the buildings with some fighters slumped in death.

The Unknown Bowman loosed an arrow at Rollo, who stood at the top of the tower along the parapet. It glanced off the stone.

The melee in the Village. From left clockwise: Part of Jared, Keith, Umpire Dan, Fred the Norseman, John, Steve (cap), and Ed.

The Lion led his men among the buildings. "Keep close," he ordered as they slowly pressed forward. Within a small grove of trees, they saw Deveraux on the ground, his body fought over by friends and foes alike. His friends won and dragged him to safety inside one of the buildings.

Meanwhile, some men tore the doors from the houses to use as large-size shields. The Lion maneuvered to give his archer another shot at the big Norse leader. That, too, pinged off the stone.

It seemed a stalemate. The Norse in the tower couldn't get out, but the cost to get in would be expensive. Rollo had concealed a couple of his men in the house across from the tower, ready to spring an ambush when needed.

At this point, the sun was beginning to sink into the horizon.

Game Called

We called the game. Who won?

One character that lost – the Bear takes out Fabreezi's trumpeter. Photo by Keith.

We all did because it was a fantastic game with twists, turns, and utter chaos at times -- just the way you want an 11-way game to go. Battles were plentiful, dice were as fickle as ever, and players tried to accomplish their goals, cooperating and opposing when needed. Fantastic!

As for which character accomplished all his goals...I don't know. That I leave up to Umpire Dan because I only knew my own goals, not any of the others. It is quite possible multiple players "won" and accomplished all or most of what was asked of them. But each of us only knew part of the whole. Umpire Dan will explain all.

For my part, the shrine was intact and unlooted. Deveraux's lands still had the same number of sheep as they started with while the bandit band was slaughtered, the Norse driven away from the farms, and the pagan band half slaughtered, although that wasn't by my hand. The Last Druid of Wales was dead.

Alas, the Norse were in Deveraux's keep. The hill had some sort of a pagan shrine of its own, but without the pagans about, I could demolish it and also take Vernon's body back home on the way back to my lands. And maybe even a bear and wolf's pelt, too. The Stag Lord led a charmed life in combat and still survived, albeit under the Marquis' protection. I certainly had my chances! If there was a bandit lair, I didn't find it or anything looted by them.

So, a mixed bag for the Lion of Stockton.

All in all, a great day's battle!

Thanks, Dan, for creating/running the scenario and hosting.



The Battle Among Legends: Umpire Set Up and Summary





By Daniel



Using *The Medieval Skirmish System* (Man-to-Man Combat)

It's been more than 20 years since the last game played using this relatively simple man-to-man combat system. Each player runs a faction of 3-8 figures, armed with background information, recent history, goals and objectives, and who they know. Each player (except for two) randomly chose a "kit" with their figures, customized reference cards, and the dice they would need.

Players were welcome to bring their own band of figures, which one player took me up and provided images so I could customize their reference cards. I had 13 separate factions for attendees, of which 12 were played. Each faction has their own goal(s) and many would face the challenge of running across other factions that may or may not complicate their missions.

| The Lion of Stockton | Sir Nigel Loring | "Rooster" Hugubert | Ariel |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Armor: 5 Move: 4" HTK: 14 Morning Star: 42% / 18% - Damage: 1D6+1 Dodge (Missile): 30% Shield (Melee): 42% | Armor: 6 Move: 0-30" HTK: 14 Horse: 1 Move: 0-30" HTK: 10 Charge: 55% / 16% - Damage: 2D6 Sword: 45% / 12% - Damage: 1D8+1 Dodge (Missile): 25% Parry (Melee): 45% | Armor: 4 Move: 5" HTK: 8 Pick: 32% / 12% - Damage: 1D6+1 Dodge (Missile): 25% Shield (Melee): 40% | Armor: 1 Move: 6" HTK: 8 Knife: 19% / 5% - Damage: 1D4 Dodge (Missile): 20% Parry (Melee): 20% |

As the title suggests, many main characters were “legendary” from past performances on the tabletop. There is a lot to describe, so I’ll provide the **character description** of each faction and the player who controlled it. Then I’ll describe how the game unfolded, starting with the “Village Table”, then the “Big Table”, and back to the “Village Table”. *Players’ perspectives that they shared with me in will be in blue.*

Character Descriptions and Background Histories

Marquis D’Enghien (Michael) is a Feudal Lord whose land is adjacent to **Baron Bender**, **Lord Deveraux**, **Sir Nigel Loring**, and **The Lion of Stockton**. You have good relations with all of them. **Deveraux’s** lands are larger than yours, but his control over what happens on them is lax. This has been a benefit to you, as you have been courting the **Lady Ariel** (daughter of **Count Fabreezi**) and meeting her on Deveraux’s land. (Count Fabreezi’s lands are beyond Deveraux’s.)

When you approached **Count Fabreezi** to ask for the hand of **Lady Ariel** in marriage, he refused outright and stopped short of throwing you out. Consequently, you’ve been forced to see Lady Ariel by stealth, meeting her secretly on Deveraux’s land. You have made plans with her to meet at **Pont-au-Regarde** and together, you will run off and get married (and good riddance to her father). You have sent your trusted lieutenant, Sir Clifford, and a few men-at-arms to meet and escort the Lady Ariel to **Pont-au-Regarde** and to follow Lady Ariel’s every command.

After your plans are set into motion, you hear disturbing news: A group of barbarian Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** have been plundering some of the villages near Deveraux’s lands. Deveraux’s laziness prompted you to use his lands for your own purposes – but can he be expected to keep Rollo riff-raff out? While your own lands are not in immediate peril to the barbarians, you fear for Lady Ariel’s safety (especially before Sir Clifford’s force meets with her). You have resolved to muster a force to follow-up Sir Clifford’s mission to ensure safe conduct of the Lady Ariel to your own lands.

As you set off to meet Lady Ariel, you hope her father hasn’t gotten wind of what’s going on. You dread the thought of having to fight your future father-in-law. You also hope that Deveraux doesn’t spot you and ask for your help to deal with the barbarians (or any other problems he may have).

Your force starts at the watchtower on your side of the stream where the **Old Post Road** meets the **Roman Road**. (Starts on the “Big Table”).

Count Fabreezi (Keith) is nick-named “The Amazing Yellow Knight” for his past feats of valor, rivaled only by **Sir Nigel Loring**. Your daughter, the **Lady Ariel**, has gone missing and you fear she has been kidnapped. You want her back, safe and sound, and see that those responsible are put to death (or a suitable restitution for their heinous crime). The trail is hot and leads into **Lord Deveraux’s** lands that are adjacent to yours. You have dismounted to pursue on foot, since the kidnappers are on foot (as is your posse). The **Roman Road** is the most direct path through Deveraux’s lands to D’Enghien’s land. You may choose either **Green Hill Way** to get to the **Roman Road**, or follow the **Roman Road** directly through Deveraux’s village & Keep (Enters on the “Village Table”).

Recently **Marquis D’Enghien** approached you to ask for the Lady Ariel’s hand in marriage. You refused him outright (stopping short of throwing him off your land). Ariel seems to really like him, though it’s beyond you as to why – but you believe D’Enghien covets your lands and seeks to gain them through her. You found out that they met on one occasion in Deveraux’s land. Is D’Enghien behind the kidnapping?

You also know of a bandit gang using one of the hamlets on Deveraux’s land as a hideout. It could very well be led by an old hired hand of your, **Rannon**. He left and leads a looser life outside any authority because he thought he could do better. He saved your daughter’s life years ago (which you wish to remain secret), so you owe him a boon. You might ignore him if you cross paths – but he damn well better NOT have anything to do with this kidnapping! On the other hand, he *might* know who is responsible. You don’t believe he could be that stupid to pull something like this on you.

There is also some noise about some marauding Norsemen led by someone named **Rollo the Ravager** that pillaged a village near Deveraux’s land. If true, there *must* be some organized resistance being mustered to get rid of this threat. You shudder to think what would happen to your daughter if she fell in their hands...

Deveraux is a neighboring Feudal Lord, owning the largest tract of land in the area. He appears honorable, but is rather lazy in keeping his lands in order. You have not asked for any help, since you don’t know for sure who has been involved with your daughter’s disappearance.

Aside from Deveraux and Marquis D'Enghien, other neighboring fiefs are owned by **Baron Bender** and the **Lion of Stockton**. Marquis D'Enghien's and Stockton's lands are not adjacent to yours. All seem to be honorable men, but you have your doubts about Marquis D'Enghien and don't like him.

Lord Deveraux (John) owns the largest tract of land in these parts, but there is a lot to deal with – so you usually delegate most of it to subordinates.

Recently, there has been some stories going around about some unrest:

The thief, **Raven**, has a gang that has caused some trouble among the serfs. He may be using one of the hamlets as a hideout.

A **Druid** has drifted in, practicing heathen ways on your land.

Your neighbor, **Marquis D'Enghien**, has been seen on your land a couple of times, but never stopped to see you. He may have been going to see **Count Fabreezi**, whose fief is on the other side of your lands – but you hope he's not bringing any trouble with him...

Some Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** have been plundering villages and their past events suggest they are heading your way next.

Marquis D'Enghien, **The Lion of Stockton** and **Count Fabreezi** are neighbors of yours. They all seem like honorable men. The Lion of Stockton is a war hero and has helped you in the past with some local issues and seems to be the best of your neighbors. There is a shrine in honor of Stockton's great uncle, St. Gregory, that's within your lands. Count Fabreezi is also known as "The Amazing Yellow Knight", whose feats of valor are almost as famous as the Legendary **Sir Nigel Loring**.

Baron Bender is a pompous idiot who seems slighted by even his own fantasies: During the last war where both of you served together, he *claims* you dishonored him by refusing a bet. He forced you into it and you won, but he stiffed you – claiming you cheated and that this dishonor can only be settled by a duel. The last time you two met, you jousting. He knocked you off your horse but could not finish you off because of your magnificent armor. Bender tied himself out and collapsed, but you just got up and walked away (which *really* angered him). You haven't seen him in months, but he recently inherited some land close by.

Your force starts in the Keep near the village by the **Roman Road**. (Starts on the "Village Table".)

The Lion of Stockton (Russ) is a seasoned knight (and considered a war hero by some) with a well-known reputation of being a fierce fighter, but **Sir Nigel Loring** and **Count Fabreezi** are also well known for their valor (Nigel to the point of recklessness and Fabreezi for his amazing feats). The Lion of Stockton owns a fiefdom next to the largest land-owner in the area, **Deveraux**. He has been a good neighbor, but does not manage his estates well. There is a shrine on his land dedicated to your great uncle, St. Gregory, which you have visited on occasion. You hold a very dim view of anyone entertaining the idea of desecrating or looting the shrine. You have assisted Deveraux in the past dealing with some unrest (and making sure it doesn't spill over onto your domain).

The other Feudal Lords nearby, **Baron Bender**, and **Marquis D'Enghien**, appear to be honorable men, but Baron Bender you know the least, since he recently acquired his land through an inheritance.

There have been some disturbing gossip and stories going around:

- Your serfs have been complaining about bandits. A gang led by **Rannon** may be responsible and he may have a hideout within Deveraux's fiefdom. You would like to catch him and get back what he took from your serfs.
- Some Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** have been plundering some villages and might be heading to your area. If they wander into Deveraux's fiefdom, pillaging the hamlets along the way, Deveraux will probably ask for help – and it might do well to help get rid of them before they find their way to your lands.
- Some mysterious activity reminiscent of an age when Druids were the local religion have been noticed by the common folk, but few are willing to speak openly about it. One story has it that there is some "Stag Lord" enforcing the "Old Ways".

You may take the **Roman Road** to visit the shrine, or take **Daisy-Chain Way** or follow the **Fecking Run** through Deveraux's land if you want to travel more discreetly. (Enters on the "Big Table".)

Baron Bender (Jared) is the newest land-owner in these parts, due to a recent inheritance a month ago. You recently learned 2 weeks ago that **Lord Deveraux** lives nearby on the opposite side of **Marquis D'Enghien's** fiefdom. You hired a spy, **Reshef**, to spy on him and a contract to kill him if the opportunity presents itself. Reshef has informed you that Deveraux is mustering a force to deal with the unrest brewing in his fiefdom. This may be the best time to try and find him to settle *your* "unrest" with him.

Years ago, during the wars that you and **Deveraux** served together, Deveraux soiled your honor by challenging your abilities and then refusing to accept your bet. You eventually forced him to joust and you knocked him off his horse. When you dismounted and beat him further into the ground, his armor protected him well. As you took a breather, he got up and ran away – the dog!

Reshef also told you about some of the unrest in Deveraux's fiefdom:

- Some bandits led by **Raven** have been active and may have a hideout in a hamlet.
- A bunch of Norsemen have been pillaging villages on the far side of Deveraux's fiefdom and may wander into Deveraux's fiefdom for more.
- Druidic rituals may be taking place (which hasn't happened in this area for almost 100 years), but not discussed openly. Lord Deveraux may be oblivious to it. Stories suggest the "**Stag Lord**" is involved with it.

You don't care about the bandits or the Norsemen, other than they might be a distraction to Deveraux, but you do wonder if Reshef has anything to do with the bandits that might allow an opportunity to use them as a resource...

Count Fabreezi is also known as "The Amazing Yellow Knight", due to his feats of endurance and valor. Otherwise, you don't know much about him or how he feels about Deveraux.

You have brought a small force with you, sneaking through the **Marquis D'Enghien's** land (which has been rather easy without being spotted) and are actively seeking Deveraux. You know **Reshef** is also about, but do not know where he is at present. You may follow the **Roman Road**, or go off-road using the **Beaten Path** through the north woods or **Sly's Path** through the south woods. The **Roman Road** does pass by a watchtower near the border of Deveraux's and D'Enghien's lands. (Enters the "Big Table".)

Lady Ariel (Sean) is on her way to meet her lover, **The Marquis D'Enghien**, and run off with him to get married. Marquis D'Enghien has been courting you in secret for months within **Lord Deveraux's** fiefdom secretly. (D'Enghien's lands are not adjacent to your family's lands, so you've conveniently met within Deveraux's lands that are in between – considering Deveraux is rather lazy about managing his own lands.) Marquis D'Enghien was finally man enough to ask your father for your hand – however, your father, **Count Fabreezi**, flatly put his mailed foot down and refused Marquis D'Enghien and is against the marriage.

Injured in pride, but not in spirit, **Marquis D'Enghien** ask your permission to steal away with him to marry and you agreed. You now are passing through Deveraux's land in secret to hopefully embark on a new life with your lover (a bit more familiar now from your secret courtship meetings). Marquis D'Enghien has sent a small force to escort you, led by **Sir Clifford**. He has been tasked to follow your every command until he gets you safely to the rendezvous at **Pont-au-Regarde**. **Sir Clifford** is courteous, but unsettled. He has heard disturbing news: *"Tis not the right time or place to be taking the Lady. Not with all these bandits, brigands and pagans roamin' about. I'd keep in cover, but that's where the greatest danger probably lurks."*

You believe all the Feudal Lords are honorable men. Should you run across any riff-raff and any Lord was nearby, you're convinced they would not refuse a damsel in distress. Still, you hope Count Fabreezi will not find that you've gone 'til tomorrow. You need to cross this land and exit down the pathway to **Pont-au-Regarde**.

You have exited the "Village Table", but have multiple options on how to enter the "Big Table". You may indicate how you want to reach the rendezvous point, using either the **Roman Road**, **Daisy-Chain Way**, the **Winding Way** or cross-country. I'll have you roll 1D6 turns of movement before the game starts. (Enters on the "Big Table".)

Raven (Dennis) leads a bandit gang that has worn-out its welcome, attracting vengeful pursuers **Sir Nigel Loring** and **Smokey the Ranger**. You gave Loring and Smokey the slip and found your way here and

have chosen a hamlet within the Lord Deveraux's fiefdom as a new hideout (on the "Village table"). Your men are mostly disenchanting peasants and serfs that have left serving their Lords looking for a better life. It seems that this Lord Deveraux, is a bit lax about what goes on in his domain. It would be nice if that stayed that way for a while.

After laying low for a couple of days, you have selected three sites to hide your loot and figured out an "exit plan" if you believe your gang is in real danger. (You will need to choose three locations within 8" of the hamlet you're using as a hideout and let me know where they are). If things get too "hot", you will want to grab as much as you can and exit down the **Winding Way**, **Green Hill Way**, or **Sly's Way** (along with any new-found fortunes you come across). Other exits may be used, but may not be as safe. You have also found out that there is a shrine on Deveraux's land dedicated to St. Gregory. That might be worth a visit, but you figure if you loot it, that might startle the lazy Deveraux into action, adding some risk to staying.

You hear about a rogue named **Rannon** that leads a few brigands. Seems that they came from **Count Fabreezi's** estates, but you don't know if "The Amazing Yellow Knight" is after them or not. Is their honor among thieves? Perhaps their loot is too heavy for them to carry...

There's been more gossip about a Norse warband led by **Rollo the Ravager**, pillaging towns and stealing women as if it was 100 years ago. That kind of stuff is sure to get the Lords worked up and send a small army to wipe them out. That might leave some other areas open for "opportunities". If this is the same **Rollo** you knew as a kid, you would rather not cross paths: He liked chopping up people too much – but he might be the closest thing to a friend in this environment...

Though you normally don't seek out Lords, Nobles, or Knights, they can bring in some big ransom money. You may select a hamlet on the "Village Board" as your hideout and start there, or exit the table to enter on the "Big Table" on the **Roman Road** or along **Fecking Run**.

Reshef (Daniel) known locally as "Ralph", has been hired by **Baron Bender** to spy on **Lord Deveraux** and kill him (under the right circumstances, of course). Your current mission is to find him and let Bender know, as he wants a crack at him as well. You've been a mercenary in the past, but have gone down a hard road and now hire yourself out as a man who can get information. What few mercenary friends you have are with you to help with the tougher assignments.

Baron Bender is a relatively new Lord in this area, having inherited his land here (but that might be a cover story). Bender has it in for Deveraux. Really seems to hate him. Claims Deveraux "soiled" his honor some time ago.

You have been in **Deveraux's** lands for 10 days, and this Lord seems a bit lazy about what goes on in his fiefdom. You know of two separate gangs of bandits camped in his fiefdom, another Lord that been crossing Deveraux's land in secret without paying him a visit, stories about a **Druid** practicing heathen ways, and now there is talk of barbarians coming to pillage the hamlets. This Lord Deveraux has got to be a lazy oaf, paralyzed, or maybe just plain scared not to get up and clean up all the unrest brewing in his own domain, so you've told Bender that NOW might be a good time to come and hunt down his "old friend".

You don't know if the two bandit gangs work together, or if they are even aware of each other. What you *do* surmise is that they must have loot if they've been making themselves at home here. Possibly hidden, if not on them directly.

The "mysterious" Lord that's been crossing Deveraux's lands seems to head towards Count Fabreezi's estates (west down the **Roman Road** and either past the Deveraux's Keep or down **Green Hill Way** past the village. The why and wherefor you haven't pieced together, yet.

You may start anywhere on either table.

Rollo the Ravager (Fred) leads a fearsome force of Norsemen "living the dream" of fun through pillaging, stealing, killing, and burning through these relative rich lands. Plunder has been good and the wenches fine (if a little unwilling) and the resistance has been futile. Your path of destruction has been through the lands of weaker Lords and word has it that **Deveraux's** fiefdom is among the largest while Deveraux himself is a sot, lazy, and without motivation to protect what is his. One of Deveraux's neighbors is **Count Fabreezi** (allegedly known as "The Amazing Yellow Knight") with a past history that suggests he might be as tough as he sounds. As big and as bad as you are, the feats of the Yellow Knight give you pause.

Another knight you would rather not face is the legendary **Sir Nigel Loring**. He always seems to attract followers, but none of them ever seem to measure up to “The Legend”. This guy goes out of his way to look for trouble and uphold chivalry.

You haven’t met any sort of organized resistance, not even a local fyrd. There appear to be several farms and local villages, ripe for raiding, plundering, and torching when done.

You have some memory of this area from when you were a kid, just starting on your rather violent life. A local scoundrel named **Raven** worked with you robbing hamlets, but beat feet when you single-handedly hacked up a family returning home before you finished looting the place. Apparently, he didn’t like making money the “hard way”. Wonder if he’s still around? Another former member of your warband, **Fenris the Red**, was a good fighter and parted ways to join another warband led by **Gwydyr**, who follows a Druidic order.

Your men have the means to create makeshift torches (roll D6: 1-5 success). Pick a number from 1 to 6: That will determine where you enter on the “Big Table”.

Rannon (not played) used to be an Overseer working for **Count Fabreezi** (“The Amazing Yellow Knight”), but left his service for easier money, and now leads a gang of thieves that have been working over the serfs in the neighboring feudal lands. You’ve been hiding out in **Lord Deveraux’s** lands and been careful to NOT loot or raid anything in those lands to avoid any response from Deveraux’s men-at-arms. Deveraux has a reputation of being a bit lax when it comes to managing his estates, which was a primary reason for coming here. Fabreezi owes you a boon for saving his daughter’s (**Lady Ariel**) life years ago. You still have a lot of respect for Count Fabreezi, but his reputation encourages too much imitation by those that follow him, often leading to unfortunate results when their abilities fall short of their valor.

Unfortunately, Deveraux’s laziness appears to attract other “undesireables”: There seems to be unrest within Deveraux’s lands anyway from another group of brigands led by a man named **Raven**. That could attract attention from chivalrous souls like **Sir Nigel Loring** and **Smoke the Ranger**.

There is another unsavory fellow skulking about, but you don’t know what his business is here.

You are also aware of a Lord that has been crossing Deveraux’s lands towards where **Count Fabreezi’s** estates are, but never seems to visit **Lord Deveraux**. The Lord has an escort, but doesn’t travel openly and their livery is concealed, so it’s clear that they wish to avoid contact or having their identity revealed.

Another concern is a rumor that a warband of Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** that have been marauding and pillaging villages and could be heading this way. That kind of chaos and destruction is sure to startle the lax Deveraux into action, but it could also keep Deveraux so busy that you could take advantage of that. They might be useful getting rid of some of the authoritative figures, so it may be worthwhile to be open-minded about some opportunistic situations that might develop.

You may choose a hamlet on the “Village Table” as your hideout (but may start on either table). You have three sites within 6” of your hideout that you have buried loot. If things get too “hot” in these parts, you will want to retrieve that loot before you move on the “greener pastures”. From what you hear, the safest “exit strategy” will be to head down **Green Hill Way** (towards **Count Fabreezi’s** lands).

Sir Nigel Loring (Ed) is a chivalrous knight leading a posse of inspired followers to catch a bandit gang led by **Raven** that has been causing much trouble. While the bandits have not directly wronged you, you feel responsible to bring them to justice for honor and glory. You thought you were hot on the trail, but it turned out to be one disaffected serf that had recently joined the gang and fled at the first sign of trouble. He knows nothing of where the rest of the gang has gone.

Back-tracking, you find another “posse” responding to the unrest, led by **Smokey the Ranger**. After sharing stories, Smokey’s tracking skills lead to a fork in the road: One leads to **Lord Deveraux’s** estates, while the other leads to the **Marquis D’Enghien’s** estates.

Of the Lords in these lands, **Count Fabreezi** (The “Amazing Yellow Knight”) has a respectable reputation and a proven fighter. **The Lion of Stockton** is a war hero. **Lord Deveraux** and **Marquis D’Enghien** are not well known to you, but you expect them to be noble men.

There have been rumors of a group of Norsemen running amok, looting, stealing, and pillaging. This **must** be stopped, if true.

You may enter the table using **Daisy-chain Way** or **Old Post Road**.

Smokey the Ranger (Steve) heads a group of avengers hunting down a bandit gang led by **Raven**. The bandits raided a sacred grove and nearly killed **Yeigelmeister the Druid** (a very rare sight to find a Druid these days). The bandits fled as soon as they saw you, but you made sure the Druid was safe before going after them. They travel light and fast and have not been easy to keep up with – and it seems they have others pursuing them as well. You met a posse led by the legendary **Sir Nigel Loring** that have also been looking for Raven's bandits. They thought they were hot on the trail - but ended up capturing a disaffected serf that recently joined Raven's gang but fled as soon as trouble started (and he has no idea where Raven's bandits have gone).

You believe the gang has split up into two groups and you may share this information with Sir Nigel Loring, if you wish. One path leads to **Lord Deveraux's** estates, while the other leads to the **Marquis D'Enghien's** estates. You may consult with Sir Nigel and decide if you want to choose separate routes or join forces.

Of the Lords in these lands, **Count Fabreezi** (The "Amazing Yellow Knight") has a respectable reputation and a proven fighter. **The Lion of Stockton** is a war hero. **Lord Deveraux** and **Marquis D'Enghien** are not well known to you, but you expect them to be noble men.

There have been rumors of a group of Norsemen running amok, looting, stealing, and pillaging. You suspect they are led by **Rollo the Ravager**, a particularly nasty man of great size. These are bad men that must be stopped, but you are concerned that your force alone may not be enough to stop them.

You may enter the table using **Daisy-chain Way** or **Old Post Road**. If you decide to part ways with Sir Nigel Loring and choose separate routes, consult the GM after you have made this decision. There is a third winding path that you know your group can travel to get to Deveraux's lands, but would be treacherous for Loring's men.

The Stag of Gwydyr (Erik) escorts **Yeigelmeister**, the last Druid in Wales, in his fateful mission to reclaim and restore the Sacred Grove at **Pont-au-Regarde**. Many years ago, the stone Plynth at Pont-au-Regard was taken and re-fashioned into a dais or platform for the statue of St. Gregory at the shrine that bears his name. **Yeigelmeister's** mission is to take back the stone to use as an altar at Pont-au-Regard to restore the ancient Grove.

Yeigelmeister bestowed upon you the title of **The Stag of Gwydyr** for your unwavering courage and fortitude defending the "Old Ways" against the Christians, who's false faith has been spreading like wildfire, turning your Order and followers into fugitives. You lead a hardened group of the faithful to take on this daunting mission. There are still quite a few people that have not embraced Christianity, so the mission is not a hopeless one.

Pont-au-Regard lies within the estates of **Lord Deveraux**, which is the largest among several lords in the area. He is said to be rather lax in his administration over his lands. One of Deveraux's neighbors is **The Lion of Stockton**, who is a war hero and a descendant of St. Gregory – so he might view your mission as a desecration of St. Gregory's Shrine.

Other Lords neighboring Deveraux include:

Marquis D'Enghien

Count Fabreezi also known as "The Amazing Yellow Knight".

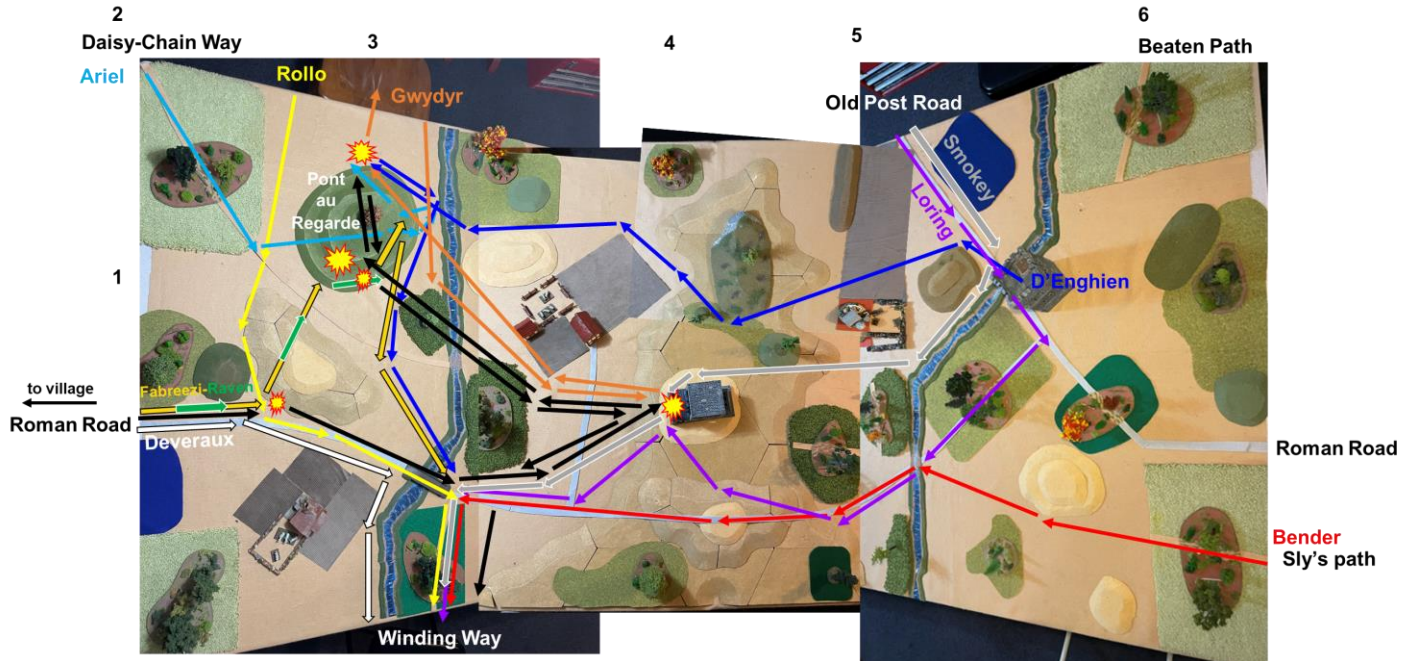
You have no clue if any of these neighbors are friendly or hostile to Deveraux.

As you make your way to Deveraux's lands, you hear of these recent events:

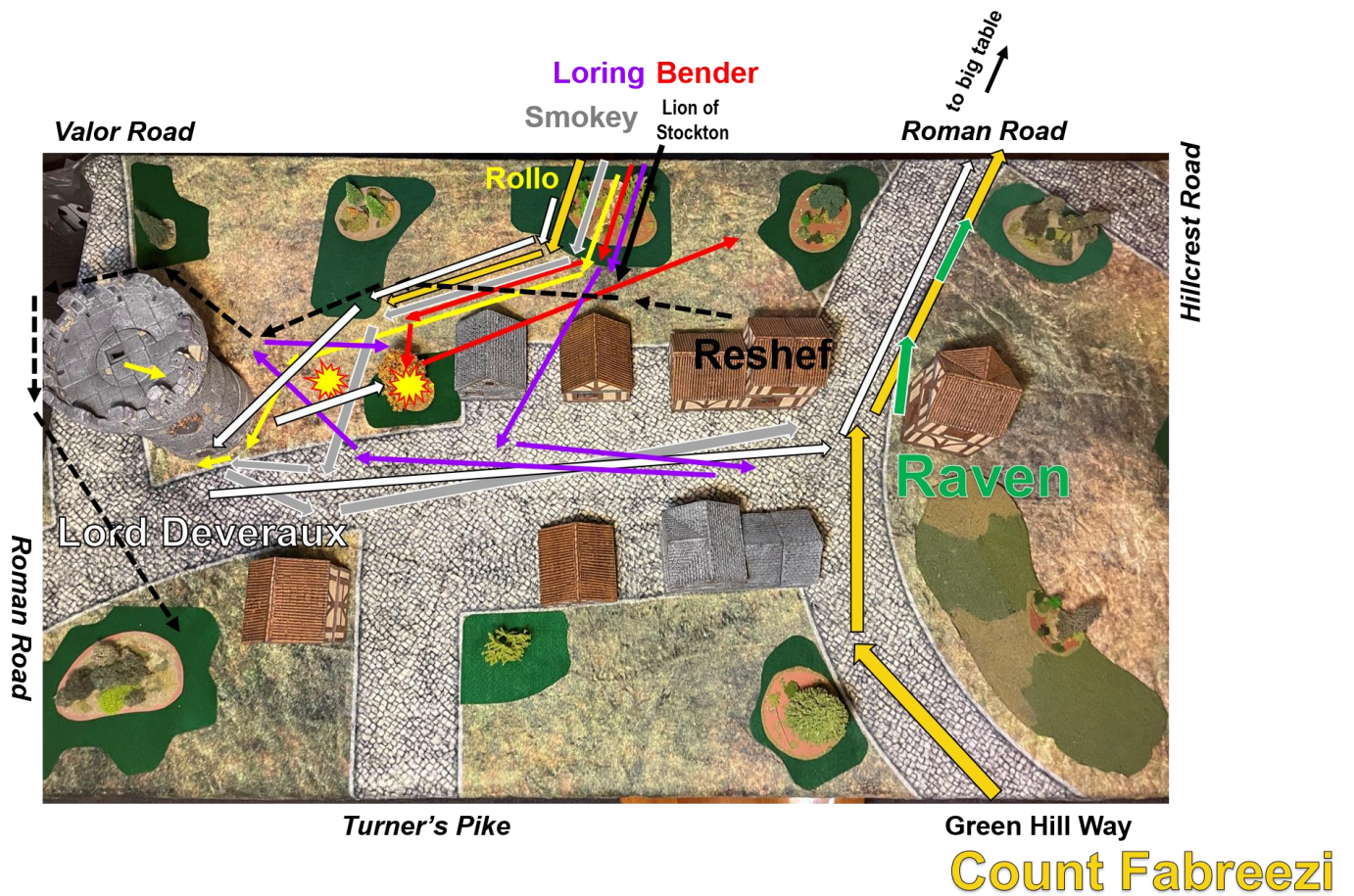
- The bandit gang led by **Raven** have been active and may have a hideout in a hamlet. **Yeigelmeister** was nearly killed when the bandits snuck up on him while he was by himself (or they happened upon him by accident), but they broke and ran off when a group of Rangers showed up. Yeigelmeister said the Rangers were led by a man named Smokey and that they have been trying to capture these bandits for a while.
- Some Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** have been plundering some villages in the area. If they wander into Deveraux's fiefdom, pillaging the hamlets along the way, that may prove to be enough of a distraction to allow you to accomplish your goals with minimal interference. **Fenris the Red** used to be a part of Rollo's warband and parted ways on good terms to join **Gwydyr**.

You have chosen to discreetly use the **Winding Way** to enter Deveraux's lands.

The "Big Table"



The "Village Table"



How the Game Played Out and **Players' Perspectives**

Each Faction name is color-coded to match with the map movements shown above.

Sir Nigel Loring (Ed) and **Smokey the Ranger (Steve)**

Sir Nigel Loring led his troop through the morning mists down the Old Post Road. **Smokey the Ranger** led his men nearby. The bandit known as **Raven** had perhaps split his bandits into two groups, **Smokey** had said. Perhaps this day would bring them to justice, they and the Norse reavers said to be loose in the lands nearby. Ahead he saw a watch tower, that of the **Marquis D'Enghien**. The good **Lord Deveraux's** lands stretched off to the right. He spurred ahead to converse with the Marquis, as it seemed many were out today looking for bandits. But he had seen nor heard nothing of bandits or reavers.

Scouting beyond brought contact to another lord's band, **Baron Bender**, who averred he too hunted bandits this day. Communicating all this to Smokey, Sir Loring turned his mounted group toward Lord Deveraux's lands and crossed a stream and surmounted a hill.

There he beheld a shrine, from which came the sounds of combat! "The pagans attack!" came the plea for succor. Sir Nigel charged into the fray, finding a motley group of warriors, including one with a set of antlers affixed to his helm (**Gwydyr the Stag**).

As **Smokey's** men joined the fray, the Druid was recognized. **Yeigelmeister the Druid** had been rescued recently from a bandit attack led by **Raven**. Now the Druid was attacking a shrine? The explanations given for attacking the shrine sounded crazy, so despite saving the Druid a few days ago, he was determined to be an enemy now.

This image pretty much describes the fighting inside and outside the Shrine of St. Gregory...Image from web.



The defenders were hard pressed, but soon the interlopers questioned whether they might be allowed mercy. "We are here to recover a stone from our great-grandfather's time!" they said, but Sir Nigel did not stay his blade until a local Sheriff appeared.

Peace established, Sir Nigel rode on to meet the **Lion of Stockton**, coming across some plowed fields nearby. Conferring with him and **Count Fabreezi** revealed the bandit **Raven** had been hired by the Count to accomplish the finding of his daughter. As it would not be chivalrous to bring the bandits to justice at this time, all that remained was to ask of the rumored Norse.

Indeed, said the Count, they were spotted fleeing down a path through some woods. Passing this word to **Smokey**, Sir Nigel spurred his horse in pursuit. After being lost in the woods for some time, they appeared in a silent village. After casting about for signs of the foe, he yelled for word of the enemy. A local serf said the bell of the guard tower had been ringing, but had since fallen silent. Riding to the door they found it stove in and guarded by two Norse reavers, behind a barricade of stout furniture. Soon the sound of fighting from inside fell away and they tried to force the entry. Soon other leaders and their retinues arrived: **Lord Deveraux**, **Smokey the Ranger**, and **Count Fabreezi** first among them, there having been much to do atop a hill near the shrine.

But the Norse defenders were not idle. They found and used a store of oil and threw it upon those assaulting to force entry below, but with luck the torch they tossed went awry and none were burned. Then the tall Norse leader in a horned helm found the store of javelins and threw them to great effect, slaying several archers and injuring others. The tower would have been retaken ere long, save that **Baron Bender** carried ill intent in his heart, for he believed **Lord Deveraux** had dishonored him at some earlier meeting,

and upon arriving in the village, promptly attacked the good Lord and all who stood with him, despite the ravening wolf penned but still dangerous in the nearby tower.

While **Lord Deveraux** and **Baron Bender** dueled, **Smokey and Ranger** and his men attempted to take the Keep. Smokey first attempted to gain ingress through the damaged door, assisted by one of his archers, but the defenders effectively stymied the rangers. The presence of unlit oil and **Rollo the Ravager** hurling spears from the Keep's ramparts prompted Smokey to break-off his attack. Two of Smokey's rangers were not so fortunate, as Rollo's "spearmanship" proved better than the rangers' archery skills.

During this affray those who modeled themselves simple peasants appeared to slink toward the tower entry (**Reshef**). When Sir Loring challenged them, they replied with brazen cheek. When he tried to bring them to their senses at the point of his sword, they fought well, belying their guise, and injured Sir Loring's horse, the curs. "*A Loring! A Loring!*" he called (in imitation of S. M. Stirling's *Dies the Fire* novel *The Protector's War*), and most of his troop rallied to his cause. Sir Loring called on the lowborn scum to surrender, but they demurred, claiming only **Lord Deveraux** commanded their loyalty. "*Lord Deveraux, call off your serfs, they are revolting!*" Sir Loring shouted. "Fight not!" the good Lord ordered them from the press of battle, and they melted away, done with the fight.

With the tower requiring a patient approach to retake, the only matter left to resolve was **Baron Bender's** feud with **Lord Deveraux**. The Baron's forces were hard pressed on all sides, but still fought to bring Deveraux down, which they finally did, striking through a gap in the Lord's armor. Declaring his thirst for vengeance slaked, the Baron took himself and his remaining retainers away. Sir Loring ordered the construction of simple siege tools, such as pavises, and our story ends here. With the foe well secured on the one hand and outnumbered by three or four to one on the other, it seemed to be only a matter of time before the Norse reavers would be brought to heel.

The Stag of Gwydyr (Erik)

Escorting **Yeigelmeister**, the last Druid in Wales, **Gwydyr the Stag** enters the "Big Table" close to **Pont-au-Regarde**. **Yeigelmeister** remembers the present wooded hill as a sacred grove and ritual site. Back then, there was the sacred Plynth at the summit – but the Christians took the Plynth and shaped it into the stone dais that the statue of St. Gregory now stands upon. **Yeigelmeister** wants the stone returned to the summit of **Pont-au-Regarde**, so **Gwydyr the Stag** leads his men to fulfill this mission.

At **Pont-au-Regarde** were a few men-at-arms. Engaging these men in conversation, these men-at-arms were led by **Sir Clifford**, who serves the **Marquis D'Enghien**. Asking what their business was, Sir Clifford replied that they were heading back to their Lord's estates. While suspicious, **Gwydyr** pressed on to the Shrine of St. Gregory, now in view on the large hill behind a nearby farm.

As they approach the shrine, they saw a single attendant present. He greeted the men, introducing himself as **Sejanus**. The "visitors" replied with violence, striking down the attendant as they declared they had come to reclaim "The Stone" stolen from their ancestors.

While confused by their reasoning, their malevolent intent was clear. By chance, a visiting knight was present to defend the outnumbered and ill-equipped attendants. **Sir Gerio** intercepted **Gwydyr's** men near the front of the shrine, while the attendants dragged **Sejanus** to the back of the shrine. Although outnumbered, **Sir Gerio** held his own. As **Gwydyr the Stag** pressed the attack, the sounds of battle rang across the large hill the shrine stood upon.

Sir Nigel Loring and his riders heard the "music" of swordplay and drawn to it like a moth to a flame. Hunting for bandits, **Gwydyr's** men fit the description. Seeing these men as attempting to pillage the shrine, **Loring's** men engaged the pagan raiders, changing the odds significantly.

Now it is **Gwydyr's** men that are starting to take damage. Alarmed at the skill of the two knights they are now engaged with, **Gwydyr the Stag** starts to consider an "exit strategy". Labeled as "pagans", any dialogue with the Christians had become too polarized to find any peaceful resolution.

More men approach, which the Druid recognizes. It's **Smokey the Ranger**, who saved the Druid's life recently. Maybe he will help them against the knights? While a savior a couple of days ago, **Smokey** pauses to determine the reasons for the melee. Unfortunately, the former savior now becomes an enemy.

The weight of numbers prompted **Gwydyr the Stag** to consider a retreat, when the local Sheriff arrived in response to the bedlam at and around the shrine. **Gwydyr's** diplomatic tongue appealed to the Sheriff more than **Sir Nigel Loring's** initial absence of respect. So zealous was the Legendary Knight to defeat his foes that he failed to recognize the Sheriff's seal of authority on his armor.

The Sheriff was able to stop further bloodshed. **Gwydyr's** men lost no time separating themselves from their foes during the parlay. The rangers helped the attendants move the wounded to the back of the shrine, while Sir Nigel sought out new foes to smite.

Just as **Gwydyr the Stag** and his men quit the shrine, the **Lion of Stockton** arrived. Alarmed by the sounds of battle and fearing the shrine was being sacked, the Lion raced to the shrine. After being appraised of the recent events, the **Lion of Stockton** sought out **Gwydyr the Stag** and the Druid and set off to pursue them.

Gwydyr the Stag soon found out he was being pursued, but not by his recent opponents. *"Who are these people? Why are they after us?"* The pursuers announced themselves as the **Lion of Stockton** and his men-at-arms.

Gwydyr led his men towards **Pont-au-Regarde**. The wooded hill looked more "alive" than usual. As they got closer, they could see many men among the trees and the sounds of melee could be heard. *"Wow! From one fight into another. Maybe we should by-pass this."*

Seeing **Sir Clifford**, yet again, Gwydyr had little time for talk and passed him by. *"To the back of the hill, men."*

It sounded like 30 men were in melee. While most were at the front of the hill, the melee was drifting to the back of the hill. If **Gwydyr** hoped to hide out back here, the gods were not with him. *"Oh! What's this?"* Gwydyr had found a frightened young woman hiding at the back edge of the woods. It was the **Lady Ariel**. Gwydyr allowed the lady to remain hidden and did not betray her location.

The Lion of Stockton and his men had caught up with Gwydyr's men and immediately engaged them. Gwydyr protested the attack, claiming he was a knight himself and that this was an affront to chivalry itself, but the Lion paid little heed to these words. Gwydyr's men fell back into a small circle, protecting Gwydyr's steed and the **Lady Ariel**. It was apparent that this melee would put Lady Ariel in mortal danger.

Boldly mounting his horse, **Gwydyr the Stag** offered the **Lady Ariel** an opportunity to escape the danger, which she gratefully accepted. Now revealed to all around her, the sight of the **Lady Ariel** caused everyone to momentarily stop fighting and the wooded hill became silent.

"Ariel!"

Count Fabreezi had been searching for his missing daughter all day. Finally seeing her, he called out to her. The momentary pause from melee lasted longer, as all others were riveted by this new drama unfolding. *"I've found you at last. Now I can take you back home."*

"I will not go. I am betrothed to the Marquis D'Enghien", replied Ariel. The Marquis was present and approached, confirming that the two were running off to get married. They had hoped to do this in secret, but... that didn't quite work the way they had planned.

Having accomplished this feat of chivalry, **Gwydyr the Stag** recalled his men to beat a hasty retreat, while the crowd was still in awe of the love story played out before them (including a duel between the husband-to-be and his father-in-law-to be). **Yeigelmeister the Druid** had been slain by Stockton's men, so it was pointless to attempt to pursue the druid's mission any further. *"There won't be a better time to separate ourselves from these foes. Let's be off."*

Marquis D'Enghien (Michael), Sir Clifford and Lady Ariel (Sean)

"Tis not the right time or place to be taking the Lady. Not with all these bandits, brigands, and pagans roamin' about. I'd keep in cover, but that's where the greatest danger probably lurks." **Sir Clifford** was pensive, but determined to deliver **Lady Ariel** to his lord.

As arranged, Sir Clifford escorted the Lady Ariel from **Count Fabreezi's** estates through **Lord Deveraux's** land, reaching **Daisy-Chain Way**, a seldom used pathway that ended close to **Pont-au-Regard**, a wooded hill that served as the rendezvous point to meet with his lord, the **Marquis D'Enghien**. They made great time (random roll) and arrived ahead of time at Pont-au-Regarde.

Sir Clifford was just about to congratulate himself for a job well-done. *"Now all we have to do is wait."*

"Some men approaching from the north, sir." *That's not where I would expect our lord to come from*, thought Sir Clifford, and as they got closer, it was clear they were Norsemen. *"It's trouble. We're taking cover on the opposite side of the hill, lads, and hope they pass by."*

The newcomers were **Rollo the Ravager** and his Norsemen, but they stayed clear of the hill and passed by, heading south towards the **Roman Road**. *"Fortune smiles on us, my Lady,"* Sir Clifford whispered to Lady Ariel.

Marquis D'Enghien surveyed his neighbor's estates from his watchtower on the border. *"Lord Deveraux's lands look quiet and peaceful. Now's a good time to head off to meet Sir Clifford."* Leaving a steward to garrison the watchtower, the Marquis started off cross-country, avoiding the **Roman Road**.

He didn't get very far before some riders approached him from the **Old Post Road**. These were **Sir Nigel Loring** and his devout followers, looking for bandits (and any other trouble a knight likes getting into). Close behind was another group, led by **Smokey the Ranger** with similar goals in mind.

When queried about his business, the Marquis replied *"We're looking for bandits as well, but don't let us stop you. We'll be looking for them off-road."*

"Good hunting! We'll follow this road." Sir Nigel headed off down the road. Smokey's men followed the stream, but in the same general direction as Nigel's riders.

The Marquis then led his men towards Fraser's farm, a familiar sight from the watchtower. After passing by the farm, they ascended a large hill. On the other side of the hill was another farm not visible from the watchtower, and beyond that they could see the large wooded hill called **Pont-au-Regarde**. Excited to see the rendezvous point in the distance, the Marquis hastened his men down the slope.

When **Sir Clifford** moved his men on the opposite side of Pointe-au-Regarde to avoid being seen by the Norsemen, this movement was observed by another group of men who took interest and headed towards them. *"That's not the right direction either,"* murmured Sir Clifford. *"That's a rather large group of men."* As they got closer, it became clear that **Count Fabreezi** was among them, looking for his daughter, Ariel. *"My Lady, you need to hide. Go to the north edge of this wooded hill and keep out of sight. We'll come collect you after we convince your father that we haven't seen you."*

[GM Notes: Sean attempts to hide the Lady Ariel. "Roll dice for me, Sean. The lower the better." Sean rolls 03 on the percentage dice. I remove the Lady Ariel figure from the table, generating suspicious looks from several players. I remind most of them that they are out of line-of-sight to this part of the table, so let's not see any unjustifiable actions.]

Count Fabreezi continues to advance towards Sir Clifford's men, along with **Raven's** "mercenaries". The Count inquires if they have seen **the Lady Ariel** – or any women for that matter. After denying that Ariel was present and indicating they were heading east, the Count still has some suspicions, so Fabreezi's and Raven's men start to fan out and search the hill.

"We'll help you." Sir Clifford offered. At that moment, **Yeigelmester the Druid, Gwydyr the Stag** and his men arrived at the base of the hill, with **the Lion of Stockton** approaching behind them. After a quick conversation between **Gwydyr** and **Sir Clifford**, Gwydyr's men took off for the opposite end of Pont-au-Regarde. The **Lion of Stockton's** men arrived next in pursuit of Gwydyr's men, and then the **Marquis D'Enghien's** men arrived after descending the big hill and passing by the farm that lay in between.

The search party starts to ascend the hill, as the Count, the Lion, and the Marquis all parlay and agree to search for the Lady Ariel. Then someone recognizes **Raven** among Fabreezi's "mercenaries". Count Fabreezi's musician, Laertes, finds something and starts to blow his horn. It's a large brown bear, angry at being disturbed. Barely getting a note off the horn, Laertes is killed by the bear.

Reactions to this sudden act of violence varied. The chaos generated by the bear attack ignited the confusion among all the different factions present into one mass melee. While all could agree that the bear dealt the first blow, who swung next remains a bit of a mystery.

Gwydyr's men cross over to the opposite end of Pont-au-Regarde. Some of the **Lion of Stockton's** men pursue Gwydyr, while the rest melee **Raven's** "mercenaries". **Gwydyr** stops at the far end of the hill, accidentally finding **Lady Ariel**, but permits her to remain hidden.

In the mass melee that followed, **Count Fabreezi's** men with **Raven's** men fighting alongside engaged **Sir Clifford's**, **D'Enghien's** and some of **Stockton's** men while the rest attack **Gwydyr** and the Druid, curiously leaving the angry bear unengaged for the moment – but after killing another soldier from behind, the common threat the bear represented was fully recognized as the mob turned on the bear, slaying it swiftly.

Soon after, **Raven** fell, bringing a pause in the conflict. Sir Clifford and the Marquis disengaged to go to the far end of Pont-au-Regarde, where some of Stockton's men were fighting the Druid and Gwydyr's

men. **Yeigelmeister** was felled by **Stockton**, prompting **Gwydyr** to break-off the combat and mount his steed. At this moment, it was realized that the **Lady Ariel** was present, who joined **Gwydyr** to exit the immediate danger the melee presented. The mass melee ceased as it was realized the Lady Ariel was present.

“Ariel” yelled **Count Fabreezi**.

With all the melodrama of a soap opera, the Lady Ariel confessed to having left to meet with the Marquis to marry. While the Count was furious to the point of challenging D’Enghien to a duel, Ariel refused to have any more blood shed on her behalf. Seeing the resolve in her daughter’s eyes, the Count instead challenged the Marquis to a “dual of honor”. The Marquis accepts, winning the duel without any interference.

Despite the unplanned perils, the **Marquis D’Enghien** and **Lady Ariel** rendezvous successfully one last time at Pont-au-Regarde and fulfill their marriage plans. **Sir Clifford** fulfilled his mission faithfully under adversity, ensuring Lady Ariel’s safe journey.

Count Fabreezi (Keith) and Raven (Dennis)

Count Fabreezi enters the “Village Table” from **Green Hill Way** (bottom right on “Village Table”). He starts looking for clues as to the Lady Ariel’s whereabouts and encounters **Raven** and his gang. Raven agrees to join Count Fabreezi’s errand as mercenaries, and together, they exit off the **Roman Road**. **Lord Deveraux** sees them and follows. This leads the to the “Big Table”.

It’s Medieval Times, and Count Fabreezi is looking for his kidnapped daughter Ariel. We found Raven and his “Definitely Not Bandits” hanging around, but they’re willing to be mercenaries for today.

Entering the “Big Table” on the **Roman Road**, as they approach a farm on the right, a dead body lies by the side of the road and a group of men are seen further down the road. The dead body and these men turn out to be Norsemen led by **Rollo the Ravager** checking out the farm and the livestock on it. Further distant are the **Lion of Stockton**’s men.

Rollo the Ravager is spotted in the near distance, but the local hero, The Lion of Stockton, says there’s a truce on. However, someone is yelling about a woman in the woods, so time to check that out.

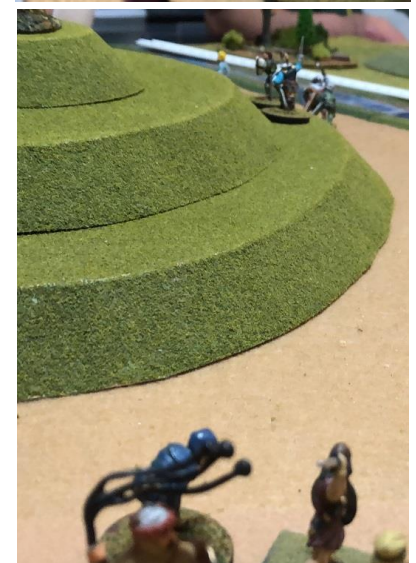
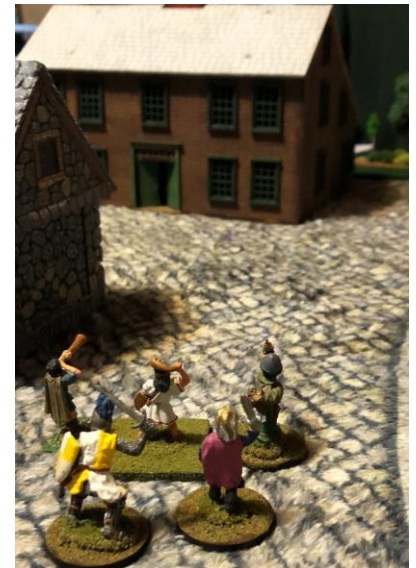
Count Fabreezi ignores the Norsemen and turns left, quitting the road. More men are seen on a wooded hill. Although not quite in line-of-sight, and how he interprets all the table-talk around the tabletop, Count Fabreezi responds to what he suspects may be the Lady Ariel.

As they approach the hill, they encounter a small number of men led by **Sir Clifford**, but no Lady Ariel. After some conversation, Count Fabreezi decides to search the wooded hill. By this time, more men show up at the base of the hill: **Gwydyr the Stag** and **Yeigelmeister the Druid** pursued by the **Lion of Stockton**’s men. The **Marquis D’Enghien** also arrives from a different direction. Sir Clifford’s and D’Enghien’s men join the search party. They do find something, but it’s not Ariel.

The only woman figure on the table is spotted! Bet it’s Ariel.

What they find is a large brown bear, which kills Count Fabreezi’s musician, Laertes. **Raven** is identified among the “mercenaries” – and that the “mercenaries” are his bandit gang.

With men from 7 different factions in close proximity, despite active queries to determine who is who and avoid unnecessary conflicts, the



brown bear is still angry and attacking anyone too close to it. Soon a huge melee ensues that envelopes everyone on Pont-au-Regarde.

The suspicious knights get bored and try to shank us for reasons unknown. The Marquis, a guy who's trying to elope with my missing daughter, also starts stabbing us. Also the bear is still mad.

Several men fall, including **Raven**. **Lady Ariel** appears on the far side of Pont-au-Regarde with **Gwydyr the Stag**. The melee stops as everyone realizes the Lady Ariel is present. **Count Fabreezi** releases Raven's men from their obligation as mercenaries and they disband. Most of the fighting dies down after this, except for the "duel of honor" that **Count Fabreezi** challenges the **Marquis D'Enghien** to. The Marquis wins the duel and a compromise is reached that allows Ariel to marry D'Enghien.

After finding the **Lady Ariel** safe, but committed to marrying D'Enghien, the count heads back to his fiefdom, exiting the "Big Table" by **Winding Way**, following a number of other factions heading that way. Entering the "Village Table", Count Fabreezi finds two large melees in progress, but one resolves itself shortly and the other becomes a stand-off, so the Count and his men head home.



Lord Deveraux (John), Baron Bender (Jared) and Reshef (Daniel)

Lord Deveraux starts outside his keep on the "Village Table" and there are apparently a lot of events erupting on his estates. Heading down the **Roman Road**, he checks out the village to see that no new troubles are brewing. As he reaches the fork of the **Roman Road**, he sees **Count Fabreezi**. After determining that "all is quiet" in the village, Deveraux follows them off the **Roman Road** to see what's going on with the rest of his estates.

Baron Bender elects to enter the "Big Table" using **Sly's Path** through the **Marquis D'Enghien's** land. Going cross-country, he heads for the ford where the **Roman Road** crosses. There are a lot of woods surrounding the clearing that Bender's men cross. He briefly sees **Sir Nigel Loring's** riders hustle across the ford and up a large hill on the **Roman Road** before losing sight of them. After crossing the ford, Bender follows the **Roman Road** and heads up the big hill as well.

Lord Deveraux enters the "Big Table" on the **Roman Road** behind **Count Fabreezi** and **Raven's** "mercenaries", there are a lot of people moving about here and there, but the farms are not being disturbed, so *that's* good news. **Count Fabreezi** and **Raven** quit the road to head towards a wooded hill called **Pont-au-Regarde**, meeting the **Lion of Stockton** on the way, but some other men that were eying the farm suspiciously had moved further down the road and out of sight as the **Roman Road** bends behind some trees. "What are *they* up to?"

As **Lord Deveraux** passed the peaceful farm, the **Roman Road** curved slightly to the right by some trees and continued towards a hill, but the men spotted earlier were not present on the road, although a small group of riders approached from the Shrine of St. Gregory on the large hill. As Deveraux passed the small woods, a trail through it was present, called **Winding Way** (which can lead back to the "Village Table", although not as direct as the **Roman Road**). The riders were led by **Sir Nigel Loring**, looking for bandits or raiders and were convinced the men Deveraux had spotted had gone down this pathway through the woods. Concluding himself that the "mystery men" had disappeared down this pathway, Deveraux followed it (as did a number of other factions).

As **Baron Bender** reached the top on the big hill where the **Roman Road** led, he took in the view it presented. A shrine was close by in the right where several men were present, but many others were heading away from it. **Sir Nigel Loring's** riders had apparently visited the shrine, as Bender could see them getting back on the **Roman Road** and heading away. Another group of men on foot were also heading in the same general direction, but following the **Fecking Run** stream. Other men were heading down the big hill and towards a large wooded hill in the distance (**Pont-au-Regarde**). But what caught most of Bender's attention was spotting **Lord Deveraux's** banner on the **Roman Road**.

"There's the bastard. He seems to be heading this way!"

Some of the men at the shrine called out to Bender: "Hail! Who marches across Deveraux's land?"

Baron Bender swiftly replied: "A friend."

These men were with **the Lion of Stockton**. "Where are you heading?"

"To Deveraux." That appeared to satisfy the Lion's men, who invited Bender to the shrine. *"Maybe another time."*

His attention returned to the road. The banner disappeared! **Lord Deveraux** must have turned off the **Roman Road** into or behind the woods while he was tied up in conversation – however brief it was. *"You won't get away that easily. Your day of reckoning has arrived. Come on men, we're going to follow them."*

Lord Deveraux followed Sir Nigel down the **Winding Way**, which ended north of the village. All seemed quiet until Sir Nigel yelled out: "Where is the enemy!" as he rode up and down the street. One villager risked opening his door, explaining that the Tower Bell had rung, but fell silent. Those "mystery men" were up to no good. These were **Rollo the Ravager** and his raiding Norsemen. They had forced their way into the Keep and overpowered the lone steward. The door was damaged, but barricaded closed by the new occupants. **Loring** headed for the keep, followed by **Lord Deveraux**. **Rollo** and a second raider were at the top of the keep, acting as if they owned the place. Sir Nigel dismounted and went to the door of the Keep, followed by Lord Deveraux.

Deveraux and Loring tried to force their way in, as archers from Deveraux and Smokey's retinues tried to shoot down the Norsemen at the top of the Keep.

Other groups who were chasing down the Norsemen, including **Smokey the Ranger**, **the Lion of Stockton**, and lastly, **Baron Bender**, showed up over time. Surprised, but grateful for all these sudden allies, Deveraux seemed to have a lot of support to recapture his keep.

The Norsemen proved more accurate with their spears, aided significantly by their height advantage and protection from the ramparts, as two archers went down, one by one. Deveraux, Loring and Smokey swapped positions at the door as they tried to force their way in, but once unlit oil was dropped around them and a poorly tossed torch landed 30 feet away, they all thought better of their situation and backed away from the door.

While this was going on **Baron Bender** arrived and called out **Lord Deveraux**: *"Come face me you coward!"* Deveraux accepted the challenge, and his men faced off against Bender's retinue, joined by some of Loring & Smokey's men.

Reshef had been waiting in the tavern, keeping an eye for **Baron Bender**. As soon as he spotted him, he gathered his two henchmen and left out the back door to meet with the Baron. The Baron gave the order to execute **Lord Deveraux**, but to swing around the crowd. By then a general melee ensued. **Reshef** by-passed most of the melee without participating, but **Sir Nigel Loring** spotted them and intercepted them himself after they refused his demands to disarm, and they became enveloped in the chaos of battle.

Bender and **Deveraux** traded blows and although outnumbered, Bender's fury carried the combat for him, knocking Deveraux to the ground, unconscious. Some of Bender's men were not as fortunate. After waiting for Deveraux to get up and realizing he was down and out, the Baron asked for the fighting to cease, now that he regained his honor by besting Deveraux, and called for his men to disengage. Deveraux's men stopped fighting to take their fallen Lord to the nearest house for treatment and remained there for the rest of the game.

His honor restored, **Baron Bender** recalled his men and headed back home. *"Someone should write a song about this..."*

While this was going on, **Reshef** fought Sir Nigel, claiming they were villagers under **Lord Deveraux**'s protection and that the zealous knight had no authority here. **Loring** would hear none of it and called in his men to engage the trio. **Reshef**, seeing Loring full of himself, threatened to gut his horse, which Loring ignored – until Reshef slashed the mount twice. **Reshef**'s companions also handled themselves quite well against Sir Nigel's followers.

Only after **Lord Deveraux** asked Sir Nigel to cease combat did this combat pause. **Reshef** and his companions backed off, circling around the far side of the keep. After moving out of sight, Reshef's party moved toward the door of the keep from the far side, stopping to survey the fallen archers from Rollo's spear-chuckers.

By this time, **Baron Bender** had defeated **Lord Deveraux** and called for the fighting to cease. His contract now void, **Reshef** saw another opportunity: *"I see the spoils of war."*

The trio darted out from behind the keep to a nearby woods where one of the archers had fallen, dragging the body into the woods and out of sight. Relieved of any valuables, the trio headed back to the

edge of the woods, darted out onto the street, and dragged back another fallen archer, repeating the same procedure.

Too concerned with how to deal with the Keep's "new owner" or distracted with Lord Deveraux's faction taking their fallen lord into the nearest house for treatment, none of the other factions noticed what **Reshef**'s little band of thieves were doing – or assumed they were "helping" the fallen.

Rollo the Ravager (Fred) - **Rollo's Saga: Raiders of the Norse** by Fred

These were good times, thought **Rollo the Ravager**. He and his warriors were on their way to a new stretch of unspoiled countryside and villages, ripe for plunder. Staying off the main road, the Norsemen went cross-country. By random roll, the Norsemen entered close to a large wooded hill called **Pont-au-Regarde**. A small group of men-at-arms were on the hill, but if Rollo noticed, he ignored them. Rollo's warband headed south, by-passing the hill and opening up into a clearing where a farm could be seen in the distance. *"I think I see where we'll be spending the rest of the day, men,"* mused Rollo.

As they approached, a well-maintained road separated them from the farm. Where the road went left, the countryside was open and they could see the road continued to a bridged stream and then between two woods, but on the right, the road was obscured by the woods that Rollo's men had been travelling alongside after they passed Pont-au-Regarde. As they reached the **Roman Road**, the **Lion of Stockton** and his retinue came into view, barely 30 paces away.

The chance encounter startled both parties at first. The Norsemen were ready to ignore them, but the Lion viewed the Norsemen as vile enemies and immediately attacked. The Lion's men fought well, but the Norsemen scored the first kill. Rollo parlayed with the Lion as he fought, successfully reaching a truce to discuss matters further.

Reaching a deal to join the Lion of Stockton to protect some shrine on a large hill to the east, both parties separated and headed down the **Roman Road**. After crossing the bridge, Rollo spied a pathway in the woods south of the road. Allowing the Lion's men to "lead the way", Rollo's warband ducked down the pathway: *I made a truce with the Lion of Stockton and appeared to assist him by moving toward the shrine, but then ran off the table down a road having no idea where it would take us.*

The pathway led off-table to the "Village Table".

[GM Notes: Depending on where a party exits to travel to the other table, several random rolls representing progress were required. Rollo's men made the best rolls of all parties that traveled between the tables, allowing him to arrive relatively quickly. He wasted little time after arriving, as we'll see.]

As Rollo's men exited the meandering pathway, the first thing they noticed was the village itself with a large Keep on the west end of the village overlooking the main street. On top of the keep was a sentry displaying Lord Deveraux's banner. *"Never mind the village. Head for the Keep,"* ordered Rollo.

It led us to Deveraux's tower that was only manned by the steward. Some very low numbers allowed us arrive quickly, followed successfully bashing in the door to the tower.

The sentry was alert and saw the Norsemen. Soon the bell was ringing, warning the village that danger was present.

The Norsemen reached the door, finding it locked. Undeterred, Rollo ordered it to be broken in, something his experienced raiders were used to doing. The doorway was unmanned, so after damaging the door enough, Rollo's warriors worked it open.

Rollo left two men to guard the door, another two in a nearby house that was empty, while the rest ascending the stairs. Before reaching the next level, the Steward of the Keep blocked the way forward at a convenient choke-point. *"Come at me, one at a time, barbarians,"* challenged the Steward.

Lord Deveraux's Steward was an experienced soldier, effectively blocking further ingress while preventing Rollo's numbers to count for anything. Aware of the delay this stalemate was causing, **Rollo** needed to press the issue. Rollo used himself as a battering ram and ploughed into the Steward. That enabled his men to skirt around and flank the Steward, wounding him severely.

A long battle ensued with the steward until Rollo shoved him out of the way, allowing Owen and another to get a three on one attack.

Rollo left one man with the Steward, while he and Owen went further up the Keep. *“What luck! There’s only one guard.”* Deveraux and the other men-at-arms must be out somewhere, thought Rollo. While the warning bell rang for a short time, who knows *who* may have heard it...

Capturing a keep was a *new* achievement for Rollo: Now **Rollo** is the new Lord. Time to defend it. Rollo took stock of his situation: He ordered his men to barricade the door and looked over how the keep was armed, such as oil, rocks, spears. It had all those.

The fractious factions of knights deduced where **Rollo** had gone, but by time they arrived at the tower, he held it and the damaged door reinforced with furniture from the first floor of the tower.

Rollo’s first visitors as the “new Lord” were not friendly. **Sir Nigel Loring** arrived and scattered his men about the village, yelling “Where is the enemy!”. A villager was brave enough to crack open a shutter and explain that the bell in the Keep had been rung, meaning the village was in danger, but that it stopped shortly after it started. That drew Loring’s attention to the Keep.

By then, **Lord Deveraux** showed up and the two moved to the door of the Keep to gain ingress. The door was damaged, but bolstered with a barricade of furniture and two armed men behind that – which proved enough to stymie both Deveraux and Loring. **Smokey the Ranger** arrived to join the fight.

Oil was dropped on them from above, but it was unlit. That prompted the archers from all three factions to start shooting at **Rollo the Ravager**, who started throwing spears from the top of the Keep. A badly thrown torch failed to light the oil, but convinced the lord, knight, and ranger that to continue the attack into the doorway was too risky.

Rollo was joined by Owen. Together they downed three archers with the stockpile of spears at the top of the Keep. Another melee started outside of the Keep. *They can all kill each other for all I care*, thought Rollo. The melee eventually ceased and at least one body was taken into a house. A trio darted about, dragging the fallen archers into a nearby woods. The “battle for the Keep” was over – for now.

I believe I won, having taken Deveraux’s tower and inciting the various knights to fight amongst themselves. Rollo still has plenty of javelins, plus plenty of oil, food, and water for a long siege. Plus, we had a secret reserve of men in one of the buildings nearby that nobody checked. Those Norse were sorely tempted a few times to leap out and murder someone, but stayed hidden throughout the game. A negotiated settlement is possible, if Rollo is provided lots of treasure and safe passage.

[GM: A convincing argument. The feat of capturing the Keep certainly adds to the Legend of **Rollo the Ravager**.]

Winners and Losers

With a game like this, there was a lot of room for several players to fulfill their missions and objectives and boast of their feats and accomplishments:

Sir Clifford delivered **Lady Ariel** to the rendezvous point and **D’Enghien** was able to marry the Lady Ariel, if a bit more perilous than intended.

Baron Bender restored his honor by smiting **Lord Deveraux** in a duel and lived to tell about it - but not all of his retinue made it back alive.

Rollo the Ravager upgraded from a raider to a “squatter” of a nice Keep, claiming to be the new lord of the land – but it’s unclear how he will keep his new subjects from revolting...

The **Lion of Stockton** owed the safety of the Shrine of St. Gregory to the feats of others, but did run down the offending party and prevented any bandits or raiders from threatening his estates. Sadly, he left a fallen comrade behind: **Vernon of the Pointy Stick** was never seen or heard of again, which might be just as well. Had there been a grave site, the headstone would have read *“Vernon of the Short Pointy Stick fell to the ground in agony, the victim of a drunken berserker”*.

Sir Nigel Loring and **Smokey the Ranger** found plenty of “evil-doers” to bring to justice, but how the tales will explain how **Rollo the Ravager** took **Lord Deveraux’s** Keep and *not* brought to justice by Sir Nigel may never be known... None of **Sir Nigel Loring’s** followers died trying to emulate their lord’s feats of bravery.

Count Fabreezi *did* find his daughter, but lost her (and a duel) to the **Marquis D’Enghien**, and his musician to a bear.

Gwydyr the Stag failed to fulfill **Yeigelmeister the Druid’s** quest. The Druid died as well. Personal honor was restored by saving **Lady Ariel** from mortal danger during a mass melee.

Lord Deveraux was bested by **Baron Bender** and left for dead, but was able to recover. The Keep is “under new management”.

Reshef wasn't able to collect on his contract, but was able to loot some of the dead.

Raven lost his life as a mercenary whose past caught up with him.

Rollo's Saga: Raiders of the Norse

by Fred

To me, it appeared that everyone was out to get the Norse.

I made a truce with the Lion of Stockton and appeared to assist him by moving toward the shrine, but then ran off the table down a road having no idea where it would take us.

It lead us to Deveraux's tower that was only manned by the steward. Some very low numbers allowed us arrive quickly, followed successfully bashing in the door to the tower. A long battle ensued with the steward until Rollo shoved him out of the way, allowing Owen and another to get a three on one attack.

During this time, the fractious factions of knights deduced where Rollo had gone, but by time they arrived at the tower, it was safely held and the damaged door reinforced with furniture from the first floor of the tower.

John heads back into the Village to try and retake his tower.

I believe I won, having taken Deveraux's tower and inciting the various knights to fight amongst themselves. Rollo still has 93 javelins (according to Umpire Dan, but he may not have been serious) plus plenty of oil, food, and water for a long siege. Plus, we had a secret reserve of men in one of the buildings nearby that nobody checked. Those Norse were sorely tempted a few times to leap out and murder someone, but stayed hidden throughout the game.

A negotiated settlement is possible, if Rollo is provided lots of treasure and safe passage.



Mountain Goats: Butting Butts

by Russ Lockwood

Steve brought a quick, little kids card and dice game called *Mountain Goats*. He set it up on a spare table, and me, Mike, and Steve gave it a go. The premise is simple: score the most points.

Ah, but how?

By getting your goats up the mountain trail and butting the other goats off to their deaths.

OK, I made up the death part because goats, like cats, always land on their feet at the bottom of the ravine.

OK, just kid-ding. I made up the landing on feet part, too, but your meeple goats will survive a fall from the mountain top to mountain bottom to climb again. Each goat is one tough hill-billy.

Trail Head

Essentially, the trails are numbered from 5 to 10. You roll 4d6 and use any combination to get a number or numbers. Each number advances a goat up the trail one spot towards the top of the mountain.



For example, if you roll 1-2-3-4, you can move one of your goats one space on the 10 trail, or two spaces on the 5 trail, or one space on the 6 trail, etc. If you roll 3-4-6-6, you can move your goat two spaces on the 6 trail and one on the 7 trail, or one on the 9 trail and one on the 10 trail, and so on.

The set up of numerical trails to the mountain top.



When you get to the top, you pick up a victory chit with VPs equal to the trail number. If you stay at the top and keep rolling that number, you keep picking up victory chits until the pile is gone. Three piles gone ends the game and you scream "Knock Knock!"

Knock Knock

Knock, Knock.

Who's there?

Cue Bee.

Cue Bee, who?

QB Tom Brady, who just threw for 100,000 yards and is considered the **G**reatest **O**f **A**ll **T**ime.

Please put down those torches and pitchforks...

The real G.O.A.T. quarterback is really Otto g**Rahm** of the Cleveland Browns. Took the Browns to the championship game in all 10 of his seasons (1946-1955) and won seven of them. I know, I know. Different era. But every season...

Oooo...*High hanging fruit*, my friends, high hanging fruit.

Steve (cap), Mike, and I play Mountain Goat.



Butting Heads

Rival goats can share a space on the way up, but like *Highlander*, there can be only one at the top. If you arrive at the top and another player's goat occupies it, your goat lowers head and charges, knocking the rival goat off the mountain top to its death.

Sorry, sorry. Not death. It's a euro-game. Just back to the bottom, where the inky-dinky goat can climb anew.

During the game, goats drop like bad *Helter Skelter* trips.

What? Not a Beatles fan?

Still no? Hint: It's all in the first verse...

Again, please put down those torches and pitchforks...

Anyway, it's a simple enough game to learn and quick to play.

With the rise and fall of the goat hordes, Mike came out on top, with me about one or two mountain top rolls behind, and Steve in third surveying his many carcasses in the ravine.



Mountain Goats is a cute enough game, but I probably won't play it again until Year 2027. Nope, not gonna tell you why. You'll have to dig deep or google shallow for that one... Hey! You'll never catch me, you angry mob of torchers and pitchforkers...

Dominion: Two Games

by Russ Lockwood

After all squared away the medieval melee troops and terrain, everyone left, except for me and Dan.

So, we broke out *Dominion* for a fast couple of games. The first game was the typical close one that Dan won by a victory card, but the second...oooo, I was hammered, blattered, and splattered all over the tabletop. Wow, did I choose the wrong card combos! It goes to show that while a finely balanced game, you can get a one-sided victory using the same Kingdom cards.

Still a clever game.

I forget which of the two games this one was ...

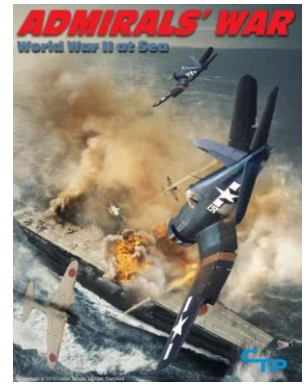


Ensign's War: No Allied Admirals Here

by Russ Lockwood

Fred wanted to give *Admirals' War* another go (see the 8/21/2022 AAR for my recap of our first game), so four of us sat down to a pre-holiday treat of a Wargame Wednesday.

As before, we randomly assigned the four commands (Britain / France / Russia; USA; Germany / Italy / Vichy; and Japan). Amazingly, Fred was Britain again. Keith drew Germany in his first time with the game. Dan, who had been Germany, drew Japan. And I drew the USA, having been Japan last game. WWII was on!



The Long Wait

Repeat after me. *Admirals' War* is a two-player game. *Admirals' War* is a two-player game. *Admirals' War* is a two-player game.

At the start of the game. Left to right: Fred, Keith, and Dan. Where's the flash function on my phone?

Sure, we play four, but ... Japan does not attack the US until turn 3. It could attack in the first two turns, but given the restrictions and mechanics, Japan loses more than it gains if it attacks earlier. So, we basically wait for turn 3.

Technically, Japan and the US do play the turns, but we've found that if you drop the Japanese 1 VP for each of the first two turns, and maybe a second VP if the US gets lucky firing up the engines of the Atlantic Fleet, that equals the results of doing very little.

Meanwhile, Germany and Britain get involved in heavy duty combat for control of the Atlantic areas. It takes some noodling to get it right, or at least close to right, for those two turns.

How long? In both games, about 2.5 hours or so. Japan and the US twiddle their fingers. Although I will say it was good for the first half hour or so to refresh our memory about the rules.

So, bring another game for the US and Japan.

Apparently, Dan knows how to use the flash. Left to right: Keith, Russ, and Fred. Photo by Dan.



Better Grasp of the Mechanics

The big improvement we learned from game one is the two movement types: Patrol and Raid. Patrol goes first and is an effort to place a control marker on the sea zone. Raids go second and only go for combat -- never control the sea zone. One ship on patrol can control a sea zone. Every raiding ship in the navy doesn't place a control marker.

What happens is you send a couple ships on patrol and keep everyone else on raid to kill anything that threatens the patrol ships. The player order (Britain, Japan, USA, Germany) determines who gets the last laugh.

In between patrol and raid, air units get placed. Oddly enough, an air unit by its lonesome can control a sea zone. An entire fleet on raid never can.

I didn't see any designer notes in the rules, so I don't know why the difference between patrol and raid. A pile of ships is a pile of ships to me. All of them have to return to a friendly port at the end of a turn.

Still, that's the rule and that's what propels your decision making, as only controlled sea zones gain Victory Points.



The Turn 1 battle in the eastern Med with 12 to 6 odds in favor of the Italians. The French Fleet proved to be overkill in the Western Med.

Another Wrinkle

Weirdly enough, two fleets can pass each other without stopping unless they enter an enemy sea zone control marker. Sea zones represent big areas, so you have to live with that. I kinda get it if one ship is passing a couple ships: think *Bismarck* sneaking around and breaking out into the Atlantic (and sinking *Hood* in the process) or maybe a carrier task force sailing in the Pacific to launch the Doolittle Raid, but two fleets with multiple carriers and lots of supporting ships?

If ships end the turn in the same sea area -- battle!

Genius Combat System

If I consign some illogical part of a design to the poop deck, then I must give full honors and a salute to some part of a design that deserves the flag cabin: the combat mechanic.

Brilliant adaptation. Simple to understand and resolve.

Each ship rolls a number of d6s against a ship looking for 6 (hit or 5 (disable and send back to base). Each hit generates another d6 of damage. If damage exceeds the factor on the counter, the ship is sunk. If not, the ship can be degraded. It can also be repaired at specific ports.

Air attacks (carrier or land-based) works the same way. Carriers have little airplane icons that tell you how many dice to roll.

Each side can request either and air battle or surface battle -- roll 1d6, add modifiers, and high roll decides. Ties get both, with air first.

Ships can retreat, but the speed factor decides whether they can get away. Ships (like carriers) can also be screened in surface battles, but not in air battles. Makes sense.

Two nifty die modifier: If the combat value is a red number instead of black, those dice get a +1 DM to hit. If the target has a red number for maximum damage (i.e. lots of armor), the damage die rolls get a -1 DM. Superb.

Ah, But Two Slight Hitches...

I don't know if these points are addressed in optional rules as we have enough of a learning curve with the standard rules.

Hitch the First: Anti-aircraft. There is none. Ships are completely defenseless against air. I suppose the attacking die rolls might bake in AA, but little pre-war cruisers or monster AA late-war battleships don't get any sort of defense die roll.

A ship counter can get a 1d6 ASW roll against a submarine, and a submarine counter can fire a 1d6 versus a ship, but a ship counter gets nothing versus air attacks.

Small ships like cruisers sink with alacrity when under air attack.

Hitch the Second: Aircraft quality never declines. As long as the Japanese and US carriers remain afloat, their "red plane icon" aircraft stay red. Pilots never get shot down. Plane technology is always even.

I get that for Britain vs Germany -- both sides brought out newer and better performing aircraft. Germany started to suffer pilot quality declines as the war went on, especially into 1944 and beyond.

US and Japan was a different story. The longer the war went on, the farther and farther Japan fell behind in aircraft technology and pilot training. Even as early as Coral Sea, Japan could repair carrier damage, but the pilot shortage kept at least one carrier home instead of sending it to Midway. By early 1944, US planes and pilot training outclassed the Japanese. Marianas Turkey Shoot anyone?

U-Boat vs. Merchant Ships

I like this mechanic. If a U-boat in Patrol mode survives an ASW attack, it fires a d6 at "merchant ships" (not displayed on the board, but assuming to ply all the sea zones). A 6 hits and generates 1 VP.

A surviving U-boat in Patrol mode also cancels any British control of a sea zone. Clever, that. Drives the Allied players nuts.

U-Boat vs. Warships

U-boats in Raid mode each get a d6 against a ship, with a 6 hitting and then generating d6 damage. No ASW or regular combat against them. This is a case of free attacks without consequence and that's not a great design idea. When the German puts six U-boats in a sea zone, that's 6d6 looking for a 6. You could have the entire US, British, and Free French fleet in the zone and it's like three blind mice.

Rules

Maybe that's not the precise rule, but that's how we interpreted it. Then again, there are a lot of little one-off special rules in this game that are important, but often buried in a section Fred's logic couldn't find.

We still can't figure out what happens to VPs when US and Japanese ships on Patrol share a sea zone during peacetime. We certainly looked enough.

Turn 3: Japan declares war with a lightning strike against the British ships defending Singapore (or properly, the VPs of the Indonesia Sea Zone). The Marianas zone is about to be Japanese, too. The numbers next to the small circular flags are the VPs. The large red and green circles represent ports.



I certainly understand the effort needed to organize rules. I am a proponent of duplicating rule text in different sections in order for players to find info fast. The other school of thought is put a rule in once and use "See #.#" to direct players. It can backfire.

One thing we finally figured out was the note on the map for the Japanese Pearl Harbor raid that said ships had to be a certain speed and the raid could be a maximum of 10 ships. The rules made no mention of the 10 ship limit...until you read the optional rules. Here's a case of needing a "See #.#" reference to clarify the mapboard note. Same thing with some other map note pointing to the wrong section. Map proofing needed some work here -- no doubt sections changed but the references didn't. Happens.

Striking a balance between these two approaches is the art of rules writing, but I'll err with duplication.

Two Different Styles of Play

To a certain extent, the game plays the same no matter which country you take, but give the designer credit for making the European and Pacific theaters feel different. That's a big plus for the game.

The Actual Game

The British and Germans went after each other per usual, with contested sea zones all across the Atlantic. U-boats did some damage, ASW did some damage, and Fred forgot the number one concern of the Brits on turn 1: keep the German VPs at zero. Why?

The French. Or, Vichy French if you prefer.

On turn 2, the Germans roll 2d6 for each ship in the French Navy, with a die modifier for every German VP point. In this case, it was 2 VP, hence -2 for every German roll. The Germans need a base 3 or less to welcome the French ship into the Axis navy while a base 10 or more turns the ship Allied. If you -2, then the Allies only get a ship on a 12 (boxcars) while the Germans get a ship on a 5 or less.

The Germans got four or five ships. The Allies got none. The rest are removed from play.

The Allies said Uh-Oh.

The Axis cleared the Med of Allied ships and sent the French out into the Atlantic. Gibraltar does not stop any transits, but does cost an extra movement point and essentially prevents heading back into the Med. I don't know why it's only a one-way restriction.

One For the Pre-War Dreadnought

Now, Keith was rolling a bit above average. Fred? Not so much.

The most entertaining combat was between a British battleship and a German dreadnought. A lucky German roll for a hit, a big damage roll, and British steel just created a new coral reef somewhere off Ireland. At least the British sunk the offending dreadnought, but what an uneven exchange. Some German captain got a big award.

I did a little below average waking up the US Atlantic Fleet to go after U-boats and claim sea areas during the peacetime turns. I woke up 1 out of 12 ships (odds said two ships) and then three of 11 (odds said four ships) on the next turn.

At least I got to air attack the *Scharnhorst* in a neutral South American port, but did no hits and no damage. Red plane icons my aft!

The *Scharnhorst* left soon after to be sunk.

Pearl Harbor

In the first game, I only sent four carriers to raid Pearl Harbor. Dan, learning from this, sent seven. The short version: The entire US fleet, except the aircraft carriers and a couple cruisers, was sunk.

The longer version: The game provides the Japanese with two surprise air strikes at the ships in the port. Dan has 24 red plane icons among the seven carriers. That's 48 dice looking for 5s and 6s for hits. He needed double the damage to sink ships in port. Battleships like the *Arizona* take five hits normally, so taking 10 while in port sinks her.

The Pearl Harbor attack (ignore the US ships in the Repair box – they are randomly placed after the PH attack). Look at all those red plane icons – 24 of 'em!

Do the math: One-third of 48 is 16 hits -- that's 16d6 damage dice and each die does 1d6 worth of damage.



After these two air attacks, and remember, air attacks on ships suffer no AA losses, the Japanese can stick around for two more attacks.

That's another 24 dice per attack (assuming all carriers survive) and the Japanese out roll the US for air attacks. Surface wise, Pearl Harbor survivors had 24 dice versus the Japanese 33 dice, but at least the Japanese ship dice were not red.

The US had three carriers and 12 red plane icons. A 1:2 attack...no thanks. You can add the single US air counter -- that's two non-red dice. So that's 14 vs 24. You feel lucky, punk?

I didn't. Dan out rolled me to force an air attack. Glug. Glug. Glug.

Turn 3 elsewhere in the Pacific. The Japanese on a roll.



I transferred one carrier and some ships from the Atlantic (that takes a full move, as it should) to join the US fleet at Samoa and Hawaii.

The Japanese took Singapore and pushed westward and southward, grabbing Ceylon and pushing to the gates of the Suez Canal. Guadalcanal fell and the Japanese took the sea area to the north of Australia. They even had the seas around Hawaii for a turn, but I stormed back when they split their carrier force, leaving a task force exposed (although my dice were no better than the Brits).

Turn 4: Return of the Japanese Carrier force. At least I got the US carriers away... Losing Hawaii is a huge no-no for the US because Land-Based Air units teleport to anywhere on the board where the player controls a port. And the Japanese have six of them. Alas, fighting for Hawaii proved fruitless in this case.

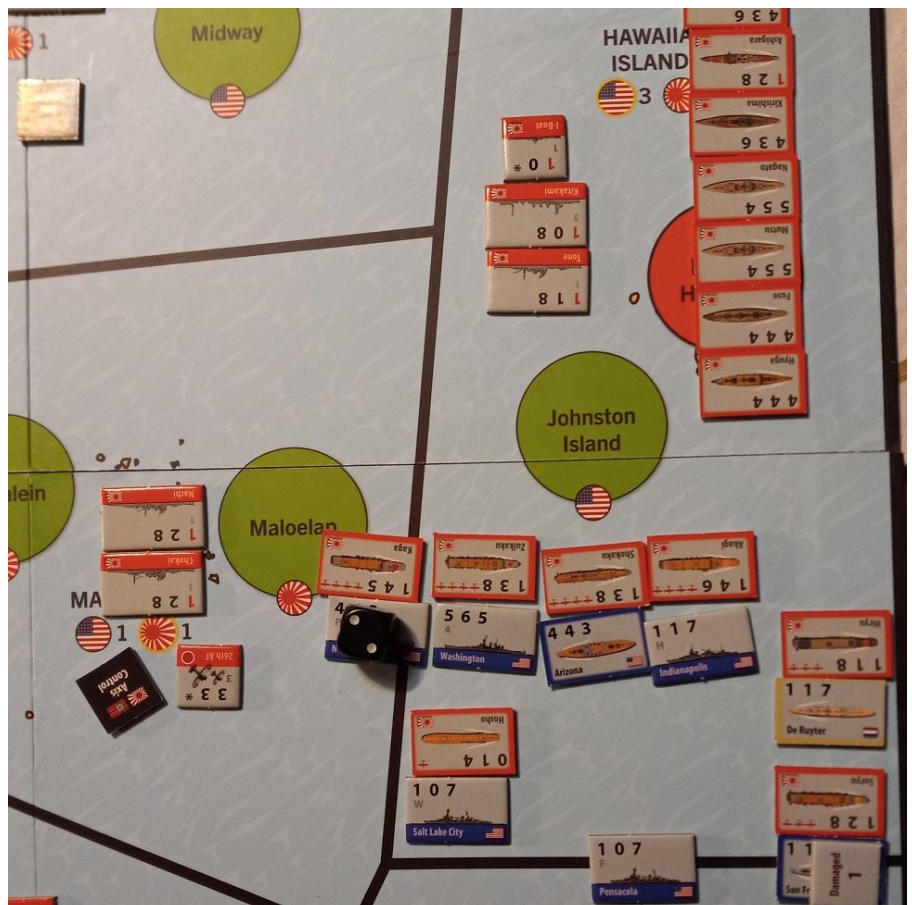
US Fleet in the Med

I aided the Brits by sending half the Atlantic fleet into the Western Med, scaring off the Vichy French and Italians for a turn. The Vichy French eventually moved past all that US and Brit steel, sailed past Gibraltar, mooned the Allied fleet and the garrison on the way, and fought a battle in the Bay of Biscay.

That left the Italian fleet on its own and trapped. It might takes a turn or two to run it down, but the Med would be British again.

The German surface fleet was sunk, but by Turn 5, six U-boats could put to sea. I'm not sure what each counter represents, number of hulls wise. He also possessed five Luftwaffe air counters to support or attack off the coasts.

Still, it was a stalemate with eventual British supremacy.



End of Game

We ended the game at the end of Turn 5. If you subtract out the hour or so for dinner and the hour or so to set up, it averages out to about an hour per turn. A game is 10 turns, so this is a real long day game.

The end of Turn 4. The Axis fleets have been humbled, but Germany has a stack of U-boat and Luftwaffe units.

The Japanese maxed out at 29 VPs. If the US captured the entire Pacific and the two Atlantic areas, they could gain 17 VPs. There was too much US steel at the bottom of the Pacific and substantial US reinforcements only come in on Turn 8 and 9. The Japanese get some, but not a lot, of reinforcements, but generally what they have by turn 5 is what they have for the rest of the game.

We looked and looked, but capturing the entire Pacific in three turns seemed like a sea area too far. I'd have to pick off three zones per turn -- and the Pacific contains 11 or 12 zones. I owned two (Hawaii and Samoa). Somewhere there'd be a massive battle.

The Germans had a good lead on the other side of the world, but the British were creeping up. It would take a lot more ships and air units than the British had to suppress the U-boats and Luftwaffe -- and they don't get the massive reinforcement influx, so the US would have to shunt units Europe-side.

It was, in toto, a massive Axis victory.

Analysis

After the second game, or should I say the second half-a-game, we're starting to notice patterns. Dan realized the massive benefit of the Japanese surprise attack and loaded up the Pearl Harbor force with carriers. Smart play. Then he stuck around for two more rounds of combat -- smarter play. Better than average die rolling, too, but the odds were with him. If the historical strike had been as effective, any Battle of Midway would have been off the US west coast and called the Battle of San Francisco.

The end of Turn 5 in the ATO and the end of the game.

Barring horrendous die rolls, I'm not sure how the US avoids such a fate: 44 unanswered hit dice is a lot. If the US tries for the immediate big battle and three carriers go down on each side, the US has essentially no answer to the Japanese for several turns. If the US sends both Atlantic carriers to the Pacific, that gets you up to 20



(+2 non-red icon dice for land-based air) vs 22 and that's a battle that may be worth fighting depending on the area at stake. Hard to say but at least it's just about even up die rolls.

Fred had below average die rolling, dooming a bit of the British fleet and giving Germany some all-important VPs. These helped welcome a good portion of the Vichy French fleet into German control on turn 2, which provided a significant boost to Axis success on turn 3 and convinced me to commit a good portion of the US fleet to the Atlantic.

Play Again?

If you're going to play four players, you should start the game on turn 3. That means ginning up a scenario that starts on Turn 3, using mid to late 1941 deployments (Pearl Harbor gets attacked on turn 3).

The end of Turn 5 in the PTO and the end of the game.

Otherwise, two players will sit around for three hours. They should bring another game to play or show up three hours after starting time. I'm serious. It's happened twice. Maybe if we played this extensively and often, that wait time could get down to 1.5 to 2 hours because the Germans and Brits would have figured out the important spaces and proper positioning of ships and aircraft for optimal results. Until then, you can watch a Hallmark Christmas movie and a half.

Sure, the US player can roll a few dice and hope for a 1 in 6 roll to raise steam on an Atlantic ship, but that's only to deploy them in the Eastern seaboard or Caribbean. It's a VP or two if they are successful.

I think an AA option of a d6 per ship, with 6s hitting and aborting d6 worth of planes attacking the ship, would be an interesting effect. This is the same basic mechanic as ASW, in which 6s hit and generate d6 worth of damage to oilers and supply ships.

It's worth playing a third time just to see if the Japanese can sock it to the US at Pearl like Dan did to me. If you get exceptionally lucky, the US might be able to wake up and send two Atlantic carriers to Hawaii on turn 3 to even up any air attack odds. Otherwise, it's rearrange the deck chairs on the *Arizona*.

Maybe there's something some other US player can think of, but losing half the US Navy strips away protections and options. With a half dozen Japanese land-based air units to swirl around the Pacific, recapturing sea areas becomes quite an attritional battle for the US.

Sorry to admit it, but I felt a tad more like an ensign than an admiral. As for Fred, despite ensign-ish dice, he attained flag rank in stuffing the Axis navy back into port. Konteradmiral Keith did well for a first game, aided by a plethora of sixes at times, while Dan stormed all around the Pacific like an Admiral should.

Admirals' War Analysis: After a Second Game

by Dan

Fred, Keith, Russ, and I had a second go at Admirals' War. Having played this twice now, I can see why the two theaters of war might be best treated as separate games (as they were originally released as War at Sea and Victory in the Pacific) - both by their game play and economy of time spent playing the games.

While I enjoyed both games (I ended up maxing out the VP chart in both games by Turn 5), I think the Atlantic (ATO) and Pacific (PTO) theaters are better off playing each at their own pace as two separate games. The



interactions between the ATO and PTO are fairly minimal (and non-existent with the Axis), and any VPs gained for the USA on the ATO board can always be corrected on the PTO victory point chart.

I would treat any Allied ships that move from one board to the other arrive "in real time." That might challenge the British player as to whether to commit two capital ships to the Pacific or not, as they opening turn in the ATO is a big one for them. That would help with the time it takes to play.

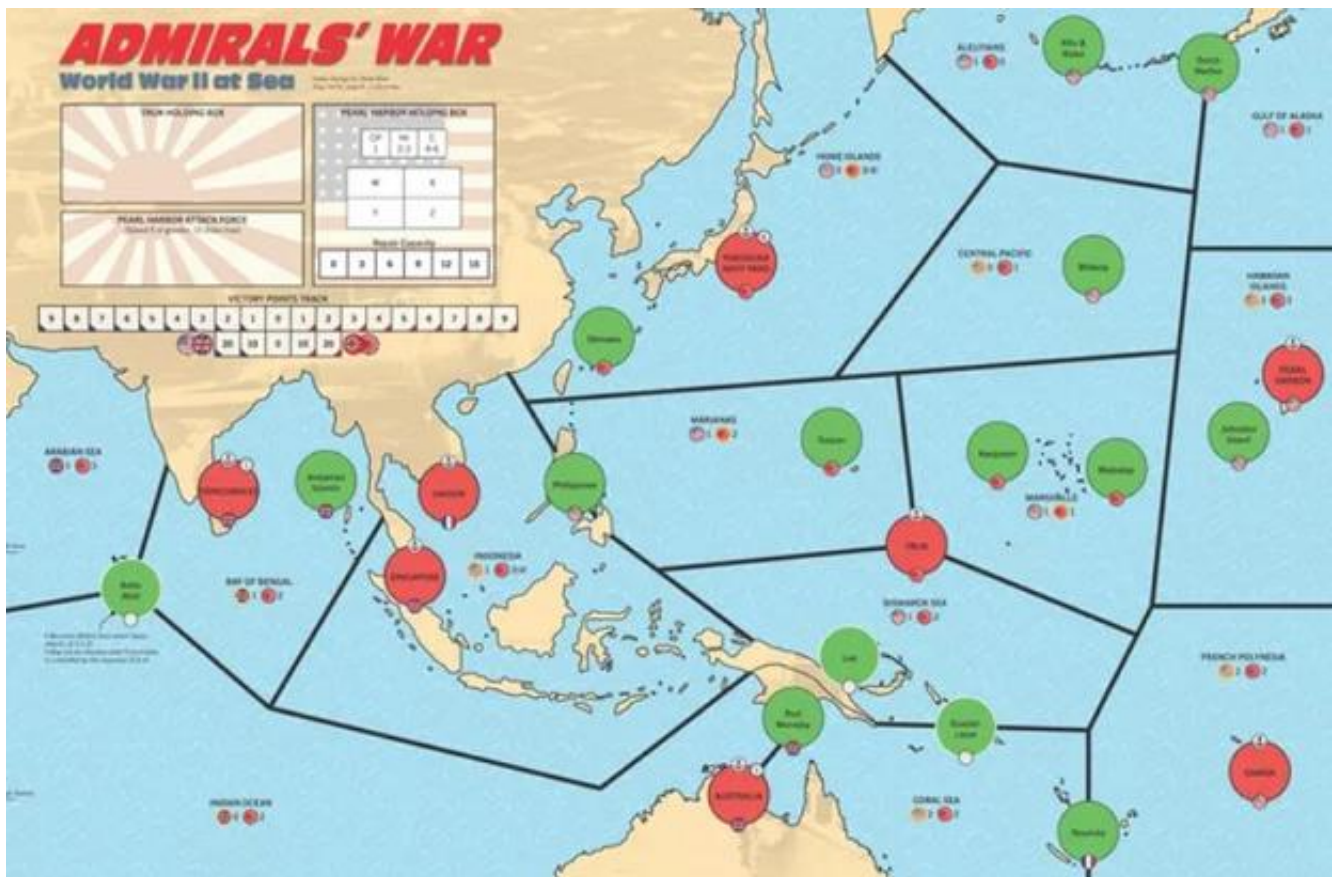
The pre-war PTO sequence of play is not well written (as many players cite on BGG). We basically house-ruled that sea zones with opposing US and IJN units cancel any control -- which seems to happen only in the Aleutians. Otherwise, Japan loses 1 to 2 VPs per "pre-war" turn (1 VP in PTO and 0-1 VP in ATO). You could basically start the game at Turn 3 with Japan at 5 VPs and by-pass the first two turns and the unclear pre-war rules.

ATO Excitement

The ATO is certainly more exciting than the original War at Sea. With 11 sea zones to worry about vs 6, the British will have a lot more to secure and they don't get any help from the USA on Turn 1, but can start to expect some help on Turns 2 and 3 and then the whole US fleet is available by Turn 4 and it's much bigger than in War at Sea. I could see a scenario where the US could send off some ships if the ATO starts to get under control.

There are a number of little detail rules that players can argue about: like why some ships fire differently on their Raiding side vs Patrolling side, or, whether some ships should be represented in the game, but these are details that can be decided by the players before sides are chosen.

Mastering the strategy takes some experience, but good dice-rolling can make even the worst strategic decisions look brilliant.



The Pacific map. Image from web.

Bulge Time: Panzer Grenadier

by Marc and Dan

An edited e-mail exchange between Marc and Dan. Sadly, I was unable to attend this game. The game scale is 200 meters per hex and 15 minutes per turn. Units are leaders, tank and infantry platoons, and heavy weapons batteries. --RL

A German Overview

by Marc

We played about 10 turns of a 30-turn game, from 8am until whatever time in the afternoon. Each turn equals 15 minutes of combat.

I put two platoons of grenadiers on the side of the woods that Dan would enter from. As the turns progressed, I could almost hear my commanding officer telling those soldiers to hold their positions, effectively telling them to stand and die there.

The plan was to stall for time, which was working but I started worrying since I wasn't getting the rest of my forces into the fight. I started wondering what would happen when Dan broke out of the woods and started heading for the towns. Most of that terrain was clear with very little cover.

Dan also had four times my off-board artillery and I really didn't want to eat that every turn. I thought I might be able to pick off a few units and keep Dan bottled up in the woods but that didn't work out as well as I had hoped.

The forces I had left after garrisoning the towns were mainly vehicles. And with so many vehicles knocked out at the cost of a single US infantry platoon, the writing was on the wall.

The best thing that could happen at this point would be for my forces to simply survive another 20 turns of pounding and hold enough towns to get a draw. At our stopping point, Dan was up 10 points on casualties but I still held 14+ points of towns.



Marc looks through the rulebook. Photo by Dan.

The American Overview

by Dan

We played *Panzer Grenadier* (3rd Edition). The scenario was an action along Elsenborn Ridge during the Battle of the Bulge.

I had the burden of attack with a company of the 30th Infantry reinforced by a scratch force of tanks. All totalled, that was nine Infantry platoons, three MG platoons, three 81mm Mortar sections, six Shermans (including one with a 105), four On Board Artillery (OBA) modules, and four Leaders.



The defenders were SS with between seven and nine platoons of Infantry, two or three MG platoons, two 81mm Mortar sections, three tanks (a mix of PzIVH and PzV), six halftracks of mixed weapon types from 20mm to 75mm, 1 OBA module, six Leaders, and plenty of trucks.

Marc placed a minefield string protecting the approach to the nearest town and two SS platoons on a hill in the midst of woods on the near corner of the board, where I could come on and engage swiftly - which I did to find out how the combat mechanics worked.

Considering that two SS platoons faced eight platoons and four tanks, it took a while to finally kill one off. As I pursued the other platoon, Marc semi-reluctantly moved his mobile assets to the woods, but still held back a reserve.

Friendly Fire

Using OBA in the woods entails significant risk, as the first time I tried it I bombed the guy that called it in! Fortunately, he survived the barrage that also proved effective against the enemy.

As I caught up with the other SS platoon, Marc moved up three halftracks. Next turn, he got off the first shots, which all bounced off my Shermans, but one Sherman blew up a halftrack.

The next turn I fired first and blew up the other two halftracks. I turned my attention back to the other SS platoon, disrupted it, and followed up with a close-assault. Alas, the SS survived and Marc added reinforcements. We both had the same Assault column to roll on. I damaged a unit, but he forced a morale check on me, which the Leader failed but the platoons all passed.

Next round, I had the better column and damaged him again, although I had to take another morale check. Despite the mixed results, I clearly had Marc on the ropes, drawing him into a decisive combat in the woods. We stopped after I eliminated about 12 steps of Germans while only losing one set of US troops, but there were many turns to go in the scenario - so I had time to actually reach the real objectives (the towns on the two boards).

I kept four platoons and two tanks in reserve in case he pulled out enough troops from the towns to take advantage of a weakened flank, but never had to bring them in. Still, they were instrumental in influencing Marc's response to the initial attack in the woods.

Doublechecking With the Rules

As I often do after playing a game for the first time, I look over the rules again to see if we did anything wrong. Sort of.

AFVs ignore Direct Fire results, but "X" results become "M" results. This we did correctly.

However, AFVs also ignore Bombardment results in the same manner. This we did NOT do correctly on a couple of occasions.

When assigning losses, the "brave" units take the hits first -- meaning if you have a good-order unit and a Disrupted or Demoralized unit, the good-order unit has to take the hit. The "cowards" get hit when there are no more "brave" units around - unless they are AFVs and can't be hurt by Direct Fire or Bombardment. If there are transports present, they also take the same damage as a kind of collateral damage, which prevents using transports as fodder or meat-shields. I find this to be one of the most interesting rules in the game.

Scale

The scale of this game is the same as *PanzerBlitz/Panzer Leader*, but is not an Igo-Ugo turn where Side A does their stuff and Side B does their stuff.

Instead, there is an Initiative Roll, and the two sides alternate actions, marking units that do their stuff - going back and forth until two consecutive passes, which then ends a turn.

Sample units. Image from web.

This adds a lot of table clutter. The board gets populated with information markers and extends playing time - but there is a chess-like decision making aspect as you keep an eye on the opponent's uncommitted



assets to determine if you should commit yours to push an agenda or keep them uncommitted so you have something to respond with.

Holding about 25-30% of my force off-table as permitted by the scenario rules prevented Marc from weakening his garrison force in the three town hexes. They couldn't intervene in the woods fight.

We both committed our mobile forces late in the turn, often thinking (and re-thinking) when to use them to counter the other side's mobile units or combine them with the infantry as a combined-arms close assault (which can give you a column shift). The Assault combat is where the AFVs can get mauled -- besides Anti-Tank fire, that is.

Two Players

This makes it basically a two-player game. Trying to expand it to four players doubles the time. A "small" game is manageable although a 30-turn game might well take the day.

Despite these flaws, I do like what the game attempts to do and would play it again. I think it could use some streamlining to simplify some aspects and some of Combat Charts could use more details -- like the Bombardment Chart repeating that targeted AFVs ignore results except "X" results, which become "M" results.

If this game grabbed me more, I would put the time into aligning players' opinions to make it a game everyone would like to play, but there are too many other games I would prefer to play or don't play enough.

This might play better as a miniatures game, versus a board game, but I still call it a good day of gaming.

Main Points in Agreement

by Marc

I agree with Dan's assessment. I also like *Panzer Grenadier* enough to play it again, but not enough to spend much more time or effort. I don't see it working as a multi-player game either, due to the points Dan already mentioned.

In fact, it reminds me of *Space Empires 4x* and why I quickly sold off that game. The game was good but took too long to play and had a lot of record keeping.

Counter Points

by Dan

My last critique is about the Panzer Grenadier counters. They are large enough, but the space available is not used optimally.

The font used is Impact, which is not a great font for reading unless outlined as done for units that bombard. There are far better fonts to use to display the numbers.

The NATO symbol is sometimes used on the upper left corner, which is OK.

The "identifier" is so small you need a magnifying glass -- which Marc brought with him -- to read.

The vehicle diagrams are top-down and actually take up too much space. An angled perspective may have been better, or illustrate the open-topped vehicles by using white in the open-top location like Squad Leader does on their vehicle counters. Facing is not important, so the orientation of the vehicle is not critical.

Transports are generic and they do use the angled perspective.

The color contrast used for Anti-Tank values and armor rating work well.

The background color for the SS were green and brown camouflage, which was kind of unique, but can get confusing if engaged with enemy that use similar colors. German Wehrmacht units were light gray.

Number Squinting

by Marc

Agreed. It is easy to mistake a 6, 8 or 9 on the counters. For me at least, I can still read the smallest text unless it is against the brown background. Then I have to pull out the magnifying glass -- is that a sk234/2 or a spw251/21 or an spw251/22? Against the lighter backgrounds it is not as bad.

NJ Game Day and Flea Market: Feb. 4, 2023

By Russ

Join OMM on Feb. 4, 2023 for a NJ Game Day and Wargame Flea Market at the Community Center in Whiting (Manchester) NJ.

The address is 92 Fairway Lane Whiting NJ 08759. If using GPS, this comes up as Manchester NJ.

This is a central location with easy access by major highways. It's 48 miles from Philadelphia (via NJ Rte 70), 50 miles from Atlantic City, and 80 miles from Morristown, NJ.

Admission is FREE.

A Flea Market table is \$10 USD – limited number available. First come, first served.

Games so far: *Art d' la Guerre* ('Jersey Boys'), *WWII Skirmish Action* (Sowers), and *Snappy Nappy* (Lockwood). GMs who wish to put on a game are welcome.

Contact: Dennis Shorthouse (OMM) for GM, Table, and more information.

E-mail: militarymatters@att.net

Come beat the winter blahs with a day of warm wargaming.

Cold Wars 2023: March 9-12

A little reminder to put on your 2023 calendar.



Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

Darkest Christmas: December 1942 and a World at War. by Peter Harmsen. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 230 pages. 2022.

Anecdote after anecdote describes Christmas 1942 around the globe from the front lines to the homefront and from the heartfelt to the horrific.

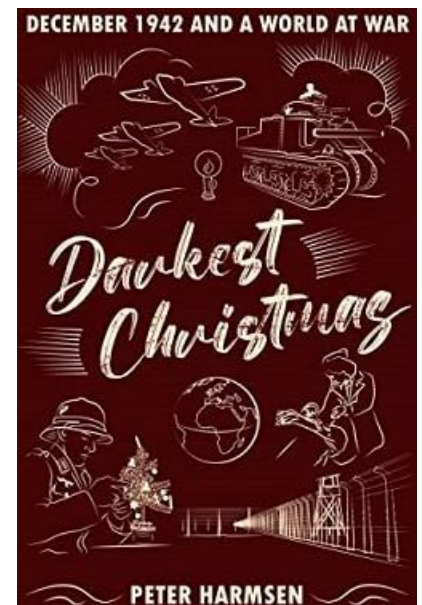
At first, I was a bit perplexed about spending so much time in Chapter 1 about the song *White Christmas*. Yet, I persevered and I'm glad I did, with chapter after chapter providing a tour de force of feelings about how soldiers, sailors, airmen, prisoners of war, internees, and civilians coped with wartime uncertainty on that one day in 1942.

The author scoured books, magazines, newspapers, and websites for these anecdotes. It's a heckuva bibliography.

The book contains 24 black and white photos, 10 black and white illustrations, and two black and white maps.

By the time you end the book, you'll have a greater understanding for the often conflicting emotions that surrounded Christmas Day 1942 and perhaps Christmas Day 2022. It's a great concept book well executed.

Enjoyed it.



Vampir: From Teenage Flak Auxilliary to Night Fighting Machine Gunner in WWII. by Rolf Fischer. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 230 pages. 2022.

This autobiographical account of a 15-year-old schoolboy conscripted to help fire a 105mm AA gun in defense of Germany proved a fast and fascinating read. Relentlessly positive in tone despite the hardships at the end of the war, this would be a fine introduction to AA soldiering...but then comes a twist: Rolf was transferred to a specialty night-fighting unit that used a primitive infrared sight on a machine gun.

He was sent to Denmark for training and then to the Western front under special orders of the 22nd Division general. They would flash their special orders again and again as MPs tried to corral them into front-line units. They once pulled guns on SS troopers who didn't think the orders applied.

His team would be sent to hot spots and only combat at night -- never in the daytime, and never to allow the IR Zielgerat ZG 1229 Vampir night sight to be captured intact. It was battery powered with the batteries recharged using a bicycle pedal gizmo.

He did luck out with his team, as one was a pre-war fireman medic and tailor to keep men and uniforms patched. Scrounging during a retreat, when supply officers allowed free run of a depot since they were going to have to blow it up anyway, provided relatively abundant food and equipment.

He received orders via radio and took his team with its hand-drawn cart in and out of danger. Apparently, the IR sight worked quite well and he recounts gunning down US and British troops in short night actions at particularly vulnerable areas of the front.

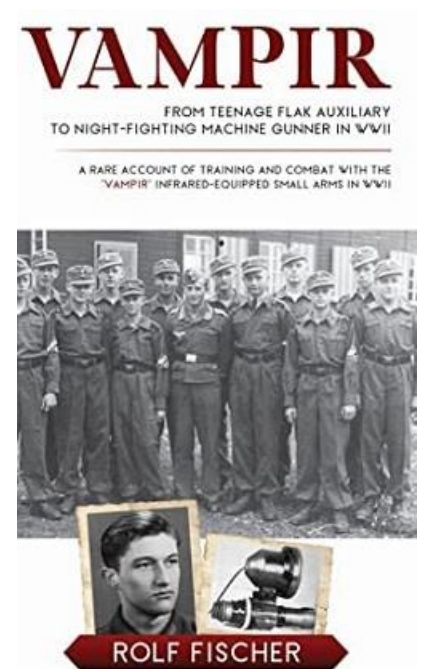
The book contains 16 black and white photos (mostly snapshots of Rolf at the AA gun) and four color photos.

This text seems to have been scanned, for there are plenty of spaces needed between two words as would occur with scanning. For example, "wascommotion" (p23) is the first, but you get more on p35, p37, p40, and p187 (man'slife"). Also "nonnal" is likely "normal" (p48) and a lad named "winter" needs a capital W (p180).

One conundrum: Rolf mentions that they placed tracer bullets in the ammo every 15th round (p79), but two pages earlier mentioned tracers every 13th round (p77) for the exact same reason. Later, he would reference tracers every 13th round (p111). He did vary the tracer positions as he got better firing the MG, as there seemed to be a difference between the sight and actual downrange bullet strikes, but it's a minor point.

It's a great read with just the right balance of technical know-how, combat action, and the inanity of war.

Enjoyed it.



The Perdikkas Years: 323-320 BC. by Tritan Hughes. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 382 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Alexander's Successors at War*

An exceptionally well-written account of the Successor Wars entered around Perdikkas, Ptolomy, and Antipater.

Thankfully, it starts with Alexander the Great dying and handing his signet ring to Perdikkas. Then came the 'political' power struggles among those three and several other generals of Alexander. Then came the factions, alliances, double-crosses, assassinations, revolts, and full-scale battles.

This is not an easy story to tell with a continuous cast of characters moving in and out of the narrative, but the clarity of text is refreshing. About 20-25 years ago, I played in a Successors War weekend using *Classical Hack* rules as the tactical rules system and an area paper wargame for the strategic aspect. This book reminded me of the scope and scale of a 25-player game and well you can use this book to gather a significant amount of information about the players and forces you'd need to pull something like that off.

The book contains 68 (sixty-eight!) black and white geographic (not battle) maps, three black and white photos, three black and white illustrations, 15 color photos, and eight color illustrations. You read that right, 68 maps and all next to the text where needed.

Alas, none of them have a scale. Seriously? They look like they come from one map, sliced and diced, and zoomed in and out to supplement the locales mentioned in the text. I have no idea how far away one city is from another, or one province from another. You'll need another source for tactical battle maps and detailed army compositions, but this expounds on how the armies were created, how they marched to a spot for battle, and why they were battling in the first place.

I was riveted by the accounts, with details of leaders, troops, and battles intermixed with all the political considerations and scheming. Commanders good and bad faced off with consequences major and minor with every victory or defeat. Fantastic.

Enjoyed it.

Super-Battleships of WWII: New Vanguard 314. by Mark Stille. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Montana-Class, Lion-Class, H-Class, A-150 and Sovetsky Soyuz-Class*

The subtitle notes the battleships covered, although none of them sailed in WWII or after. Two British Lion-class, two German H-class, and four Soyuz-class ships were laid down, but none were completed. The other two classes proved too ambitious for the resources available to even start cutting steel -- and aircraft carriers came to rule the waves as the era of the battleship ebbed.

The booklet contains 19 black and white photos, two color photos, three black and white illustrations, one color two-page cutaway illustration of the USS Montana, 10 color ship profiles, and two color action illustrations.

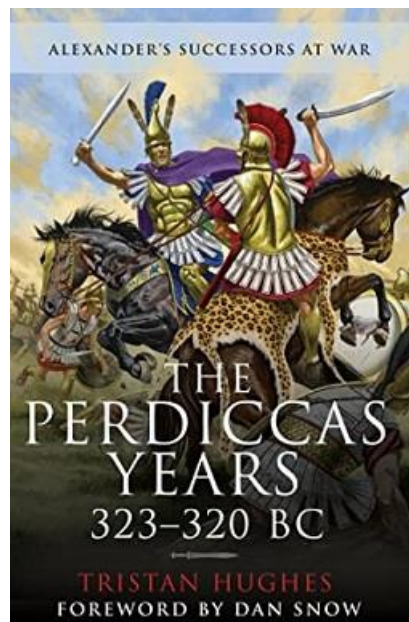
In the "what-if" world of wargaming, these would be interesting ships to sail, as they were pre-war designs for the most part. You get the full specs of each, plus all the design and development info that goes along with an analysis of how they might have performed in action.

Enjoyed it.

How to Build a Model Railway. by David Ashwood. Hardback (8.5x12.0 inches). 107 pages. 2022.

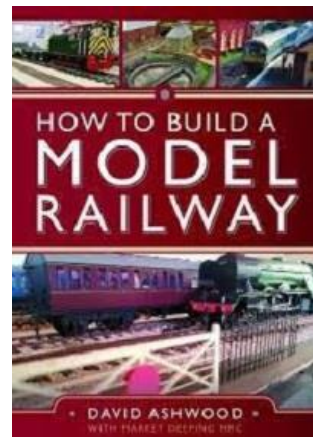
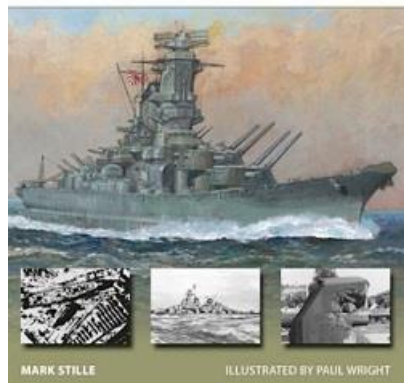
This offers tips, tricks, and techniques for building a model railroad layout, complete with lots of large photos of the layouts created by the Market Deeping Model Railroad Club (UK). The book contains 252 color photos, seven black and white photos, and two color illustrations. Some excellent camera work in there.

To 'fess up, I'm not a model RR guy, although I appreciate the artistry of layouts. Indeed, in nearby Flemington, NJ, Northlandz has an entire warehouse filled



SUPER-BATTLESHIPS OF WORLD WAR II

Montana-class, Lion-class, H-class, A-150 and Sovetsky Soyuz-class



with one heckuva layout that takes you through about a mile-long walkway that cuts back and forth in, around, and under the layout -- or should I say layouts as each room contains all sorts of trains on all sorts of elevations chugging between rooms and layouts. Sometimes, a train is quick to return, other times, it's a while before it reappears.

In the summer, last I knew, it operates a 1/6 scale steam train that takes you on a one or two mile ride around the wooded property. Haven't been inside since before the pandemic, but the building still has cars in the parking lot as I write this.

Anyway, the book will help you understand how to pick a scale, perform some woodworking, lay down track, do some wiring, and maintain everything once its up and running. These are the good points.

However, and I've spent decades of reading my father-in-law's model RR magazines during visits, someone like me would need far more information about how to wire a layout beyond a simple one-train, one-oval layout running around the Christmas tree.

This book is for the beginner who is thinking about creating a layout. The project planning aspect of a layout is quite good and the advice on selecting scale and type of track seems to be about half the battle. Wiring is not its strongpoint, especially when you see a photo (p75) of wiring notes with letters and numbers crossed out and reassigned.

A rank beginner will likely need more info...or videos. A good list of sources is at the end, but understand these are British sources, not US ones.

Enjoyed it.

The Rise of the Sikh Soldier: Musket to Maxim 22. by Gurinder Singh Mann.
Softcover (6.1x9.25 inches). 265 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Sikh Warrior Through the Ages C.1700-1900*

This history of Sikh warriors offers very dense prose, cramming a considerable amount of information within its pages. It tended to be a bit confusing to me as most of the main commanders tended to be named a variation of Singh and the geographical area contains places and place names equally unfamiliar. Of course, that's exactly why you read books in the *From Musket to Maxim 1815-1914* series -- expect to be introduced to 'new' military history.

Same need for just a tad more definition goes for the economics of war and the monetary system. While I can understand that a sword in the mid-19th century sold for 10 rupees and a matchlock for 20 rupees (p80), the monthly salaries amounts are a complete and unexplained mystery. Is the 60,172Rs monthly cost for infantry in aggregate for the force or per unit? And how do you read rupee commas in a number like 2,27,600 (p72-3)? Pounds, shillings, pence? A commander is paid 2,500Rs (p97), but is that per month or per year?

Fortunately, the explanation of troops and weaponry goes a lot smoother. The book even described Amazon warriors -- ladies dressed in military garb who apparently only danced on a portable dance floor (p86). So, I guess this was an early USO show?

I loosed a Trekkie chuckle when I ran across Ferengis, which translates as "foreigners."

You get bios of French commanders hired after the Napoleonic wars to bring European-style discipline and formations to the Indian soldiers. Some Sikh leaders and their successful actions receive attention as well.

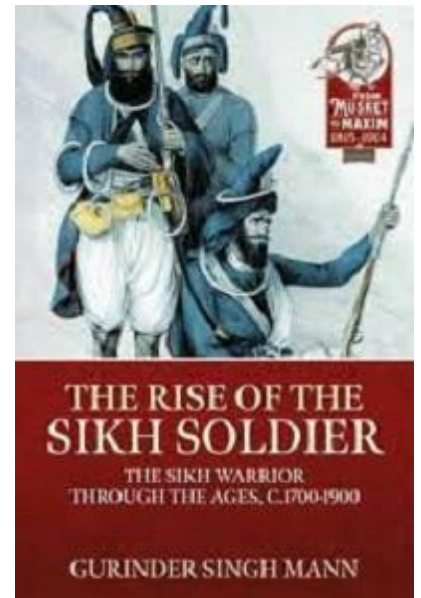
The big chapters cover the 1st and 2nd Anglo-Sikh Wars and analyze campaigns and battles. The tactical battle maps need scales in order to be truly useful for us tabletop gamers. All maps need scales, but tactical maps more so than strategic maps. You'll need to dig OOB info from the text.

I also chuckled to find a new British cavalry "division" (small d) commander named Lockwood (no rank or first name). He was paired with Hersey (labeled Hearsay on the battle map p.206) and both under a Capt. Whish at the Battle of Gujarat (p205). It's the only mention, so I guess some distant relation of mine didn't amount to much.

The book contains 23 black and white photos, 20 color photos, 33 black and white illustrations, 12 color illustrations, and 10 black and white maps.

It's another good volume in the series, although the workmanlike text needed a bit of thinning and some topics needed greater explanations. Still, the information within offers plenty to digest.

Enjoyed it.



The Capture of U-505: Raid 58. by Mark Lardas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The US Navy's Controversial Enigma Raid, Atlantic Ocean 1944*

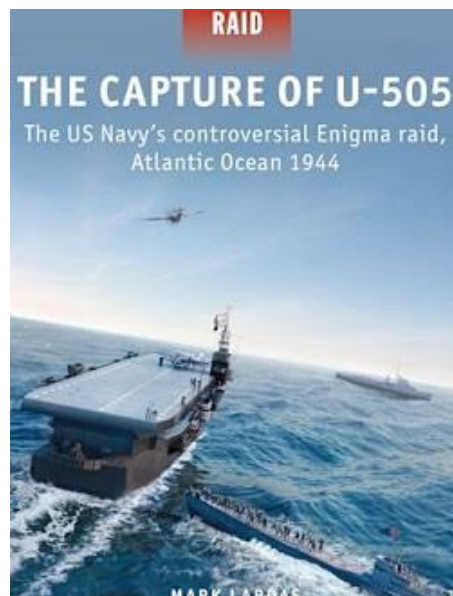
US Capt. Daniel Gallery came up with an idea to capture a U-Boat before it was scuttled, thereby gaining access to reverse-engineering the submarine and perhaps grabbing the signal information, too. Behind the scenes, the US Navy wanted to dissuade any attempts because, unbeknownst to most, the Allies already had Ultra and could read the German signals. Capture a U-Boat and its Enigma machine and the Germans would have to respond -- and there would end the most important weapon in the Allied arsenal of intelligence. But the plan carried such a low odds of success...

This contains full background of units and personalities, all wrapped in the Raid format. Mind you, the operation benefitted from some low odds good fortune, including one bad decision by experienced U-Boat Capt. Lange that changed the pace of the operation.

The booklet contains 44 black and white photos, three color photos, two black and white maps, two color maps, one color two-page U-505 cutaway illustration, and three two-page color action illustrations.

U-505 on display in Chicago shows that low odds doesn't mean no odds and the story how this notion jelled into an actual operation proves fascinating reading. Lardas shows a touch of a thriller in his prose as planning and practice becomes reality.

Enjoyed it.



Sanctuary Lost: Volume 1 (Africa at War 59). by Kevin Wright. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 91 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Portugal's Air War for Guinea 1961-1974*

Subtitle: *Volume 1: Outbreak and Escalation 1961-1966*

I wasn't aware Portugal had the colony of Guinea on the west coast of Africa, but as African independence movements gained strength, so too did this small colony come under pressure. Ultimately, Portugal decided to make a stand against indigenous independence and conducted counter-insurgency warfare starting in 1963. It relied on its air force due to the flood-prone and jungle-covered terrain that limited mechanized movement.

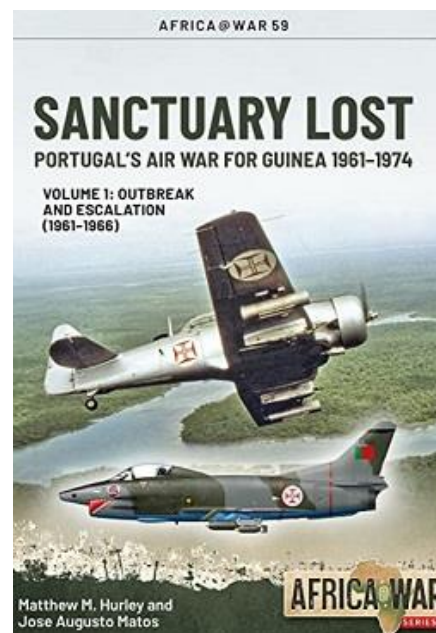
The air force was a hodge podge of WWII-era aircraft until NATO membership brought US F-84 and F-86 muscle to the country. The Portuguese government bent the rules a bit because such first-line fighters were for defense only and counter-insurgency against PAIGC wasn't exactly what the US had in mind. Eventually, the US and UK banned weapon sales, but other countries, including Germany and France, stepped in. The hodge podge of second-tier jets and prop planes, plus some helicopters, made for a logistical nightmare, but beggars and choosers, etc.

A multitude of air operations, all performing ground support and transport, receive detailed coverage. The Como Island invasion would make for a nifty tabletop battle or even campaign, but you'll need to pull the ground OOB from the text and adapt the somewhat general map to the tabletop. At least most maps, including the Como map, include a scale.

The booklet contains 72 black and white photos, five color photos, 18 black and white maps, one color map, 12 color aircraft profiles, three color helicopter profiles, and 23 tables. Impressive bibliography (p70-p75) and footnotes (p75-p90).

It's a fascinating account of a second-rate power with first-rate expectations trying to hold onto its distant colonies with minimal resources and assets.

Enjoyed it.



Teutonic Knight vs. Lithuanian Warrior: Combat 69. by Mark Galeotti. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Lithuanian Crusade 1283-1435*

Solid overview of the two warriors marks another volume in the Combat series. Armor, weaponry, organization, and actions provide the background to the crusade. With the Holy Land lost, pagans in Lithuania, Poland, and western Moscow were the next best thing.

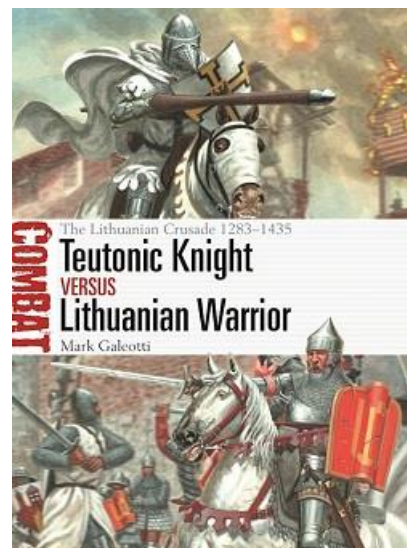
Indeed, the earlier part of the crusade was against Prussian pagans (p8). It wasn't until 1226 that a formal petition reached the Pope, who blessed the land grab of the Germanic Order. Indeed, at one point, the Order had conquered what we would call Prussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

The three main battles covered are Voplaukis (1311), Siege of Kaunas (1362) and Grunwald (1410). As a tabletop gamer, I'm a bit disappointed with the treatments -- the OOB needs a more detailed look and the Battle maps are operational, not tactical. The Siege has an operational map with a tactical inset map, but while all maps have scales, they lack the details I really want to see.

The booklet contains 26 color photos, 14 color illustrations, four color maps, four color uniform illustrations (knight and warrior, front and back), and three color action illustrations.

One nifty tidbit: The Order charged a fee for non-Order 'guest' knights to accompany them on crusade (p17). It helped the Order become wealthy. Clever Grand Masters, eh?

I prefer the OOB detail and tactical map treatments found in the other volumes of the series, but still a nice background and overview.



Vickers: 1911-1977 (Aviation Industry Series 4). Edited by Martyn Chorlton. Softcover (6.7x9.6 inches). 159 pages. 2022 reprint of 2012 book.

This compilation covers all the Vickers aircraft built by the company, including airships in 1911. Most were not successful designs and only a few prototypes or minimal production runs were achieved. The Vimy and the Wellington bombers proved the exceptions.

Most entries feature a left-hand page of text with design, development, and production info, with the facing right-hand page containing specs and a photo or two or three.

The most amusing entry concerned the 1920s Viget biplane, which had an equipment malfunction on the way back from a demonstration flight and landed about six miles short of the factory. It had folding wings, so the pilot folded the wings back and starting walking the aircraft back to the factory.

About halfway there, he stopped in a pub for a well-deserved beverage. When he came out, he noticed a small crowd of people sitting and standing around the plane. They asked when the next show was...apparently, with the wings folded back, they thought this was a traveling Punch and Judy show (p62).

The book contains 137 black and white photos.

You're going to discover a lot of aircraft that you never heard of, and even better, candidates for back of beyond scenarios in South America or the islands of the Pacific near Australia -- countries here bought small numbers of some of Vickers warplanes and civilian cargo/passenger planes.

Enjoyed it.

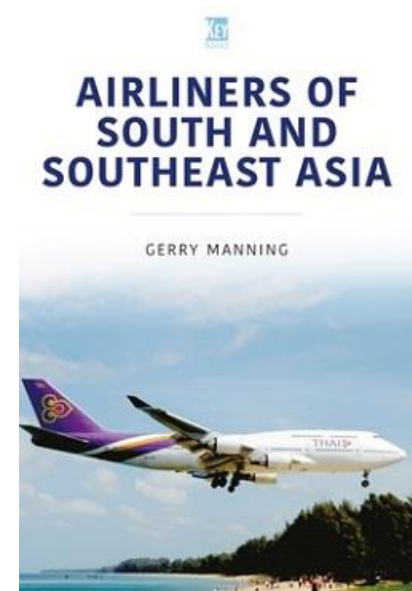


Airliners of South and Southeast Asia: Modern Commercial Aircraft Series 2. by Gerry Manning. Softcover (6.7x9.6 inches). 95 pages. 2022.

This is a photo book covering commercial passenger jets flown by Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and 14 other countries in the area.

The 182 color photos, usually two per page, cover Boeing 737s, 747s, and 767s; IL 62s; TU 134s, Airbus A320s, 330s, and 340s; and many others.

The captions are minimal with the aircraft type, airline, and a factoid or two. If you like to see the liveries of modern passenger jets, here's your photo book. Enjoyed it.



Messerschmitt ME-262: Development and Politics. by Dan Sharp. Hardcover (8.5x12.0 inches). 326 pages. 2022.

Somebody did a deep dive into the archives to come up with many original technical drawings and transcriptions of high-level meetings with a who's who of high-level management: Goering, Milch, Messerschmitt, and a lot of other behind-the-scenes boys in the band.

The discussions that went on about overall aircraft production, ME-262 design options, development challenges, successes, adaptations, failures, and outright snafus amid an Allied bombing offensive that gradually strangled German industry proved endlessly fascinating. The sheer number of design changes, prototype tweaks, troubleshootings, and bizarre optimism about suppliers and supplies will make your head spin -- especially when you consider the process officially started in 1938.

And that doesn't include the political interference. Sure, Hitler turned development on its head by demanding a jet bomber after all efforts had been to create a jet fighter, but Messerschmitt deserves considerable blame for gumming up the development with a maniacal devotion to the ME-209 and ME-210. At one point, Milch and Goering fired him as CEO to try and advance ME-262 designs. He was later re-instated.

The book contains 100 black and white photos, four color photos, and 237 black and white illustrations (mostly technical drawings, albeit some of them in such a deplorable state of preservation they can hardly be read).

A few non-fatal typos with a space missing between a period and the next letter are within. However, of more concern, my poor grognard eyes suffered through a font too small and too light and too skinny. Yes, I'm going to blame Jayne Clements, listed as the person who typeset the book. I really hate squinting. Look at an Osprey book for large enough, dark enough, fat enough, serified fonts. Overlay an Osprey page next to a ME 262 page and weep...actually, my eyes watered from the strain caused by a weak font.

If the information within wasn't so fantastic, I would have shut the book and called it a day. But damn, Sharp did a sharp job of corralling a detailed chronological history and analysis of a ground-breaking aviation program. Well done!

Enjoyed it.

ME-262 Northwest Europe: Dogfight 6. by Robert Forsyth. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2022.

The next volume in the *Dogfight* series tackles the jet fighter and proves a nice air combat complement to the tech and development genius of *Messerschmitt ME-262: Development and Politics*.

Using the same format as the other *Dogfight* volumes, the emphasis is on first-person accounts of piloting the jet and fighting against it. The usual ribbon drawings, as good a 2D illustration as you're going to get to follow 3D battles, illustrate individual combats.

One wobble: The caption to a photo with designer Willy Messerschmitt claims he had "almost obsessive enthusiasm" for the jet. The far more detailed *Messerschmitt ME-262: Development and Politics* shows that was far, far from the case, with development practically shelved for a couple years in favor of the ME-209 and ME-210.

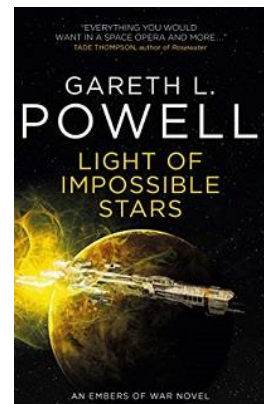
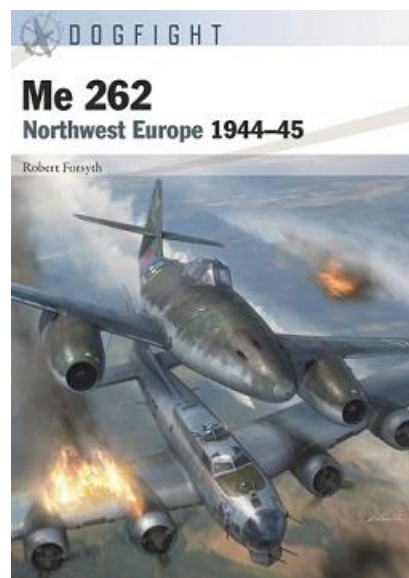
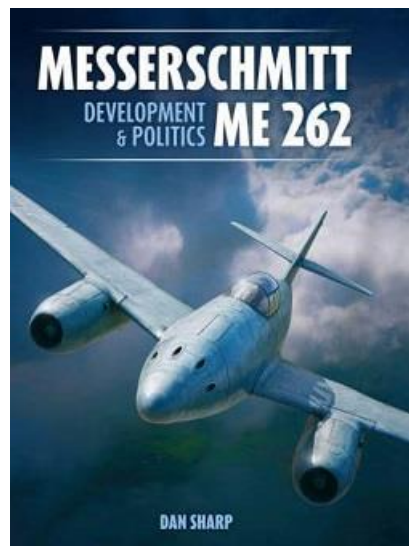
The booklet contains 52 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, one color map, four color illustrations, one two-page action illustration, and three color ribbon dogfight illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

Light of Impossible Stars: Embers of War Novel. by Gareth L. Powell. Paperback (6.1x8.0 inches). 364 pages. 2020.

This third book in the Embers of War trilogy follows up the so-so *Fleet of Knives* (see the 11/03/2022 AAR).

The AI-aware spaceship *Trouble Dog* falls in and out of trouble as Cordelia, one of the main characters, learns to use the Force...er, manipulation of universe-manipulating



something or other, to crush a Knife detachment and slaughter the even more numerous and badder Scourers. The Plates, and the humanity with them, are saved.

I suppose it's the journey that counts, but I can't say I warmed up to any of the characters or situations. I still don't get the Intrusion, which may or may not be a parallel universe. With Knives and Plates in this universe, maybe the other one contains Sporks. I don't need to find out.

Blind Obedience and Denial: The Nuremberg Defendants. by Andrew Sangster. Hardcover (6.3x9.3 inches). 284 pages. 2022.

Written by a historian who is also a lawyer, this tackles each of the 22 Nazi defendants prosecuted by the International Military Tribunal in post-WWII Nuremberg. Each had four major charges related to starting the war and genocide and each chapter uses the same format to run through background bio, reactions during the trial, specific evidence and testimony, summation, verdict, and final notes.

Interestingly enough, 900 Germans were tried after World War One (WWI), but only 13 were convicted (p.xv). These trials were carried out in Germany by Germans, not the Allies, amidst hatred over the Versailles Treaty.

Most of the 22 Nazis were executed, although two of them committed suicide before the hangman's rope got them. A couple were acquitted and a few got prison terms.

The book contains 25 black and white photos and one black and white illustration.

This is an excellent summary of the trials' main points and defenses -- following orders, amnesia, under the influence of others, blame others, and even protestations of innocence. Although at times repetitious, it is worth understanding and remembering what these Nazis did in order to prevent similar genocides from occurring again. In my mind, we should borrow a line from Abraham Lincoln and appeal to our better angels.

"Enjoyed" is not the right connotation, but of "interest" certainly fits.

Stalingrad 1942-43 (3): Campaign 385. by Robert Forczyk. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Catastrophe: The Death of the 6th Army*

The third volume in the trilogy completes the narrative of German defeat at the end of an outstretched offensive with weak flanking forces.

The winter arrives along with the Red Army, sweeping Italian, Romanian, Hungarian, and the few German units away, surrounding the city, and trapping the German 6th Army. The relief effort fails, the Luftwaffe finds supplying the trapped army too much for its limited assets, and the Germans eventually surrender.

The booklet contains 54 black and white photos, seven color photos, six color maps, three two-page action illustrations, and three color 3D battlefield illustrations.

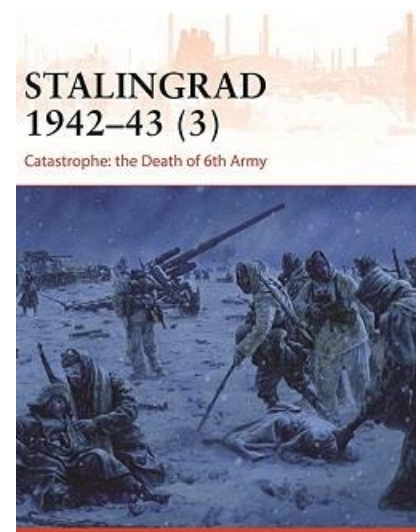
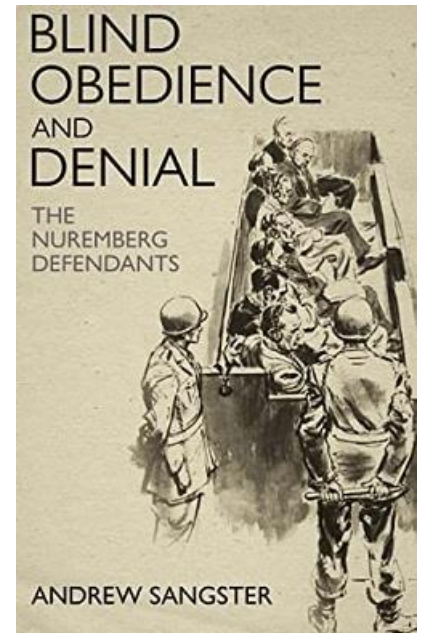
One snafu: the maps on page 66 and 77 are identical. Osprey included a half page explaining the problem along with a link to download the missing map.

It's all covered in overview mode for those who seek the highlights. The usual *Campaign* format proves to be a continued success. Well written.

Enjoyed it.

Hard City: Noir Roleplaying Rules. by Nathan Russell. Hardback (6.25x9.25 inches). 160 pages. 2022.

Noir as a genre centered on 1930s through 1950s cities with schemers, corruption, two-bit hustles, and plenty of murders, heists, and other capers.



Usually, some private eye with dubious morals and even more dubious contacts takes the cases the cops ignore, often butting heads with cops, detectives, and city bureaucrats as much as the hoodlums, gun molls, and other gangsters. Hollywood, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, released lots of these moody crime flicks. *The Maltese Falcon* is probably one of the best known noir films, but plenty others with big stars populated screens back then. Short stories and novels abounded with tales about Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, Mike Hammer, and others working the urban jungle.

Anyway, this ruleset covers the noir RPG genre, although this is the second Osprey RPG game that seems short on specifics and long on telling the GM to make it all up -- not quite as bad as the ClockPunk genre of *Gran Meccanismo* rules. That said, as I did not play in a session, so this is a first look, not a review.

The background captures the noir feeling, but the mechanics for everything are pretty much roll good d6s looking for 4+ while rolling bad d6s that knock out equal die results on the good dice. You get good dice for trademarks, edges, and tags (skills by any other name) plus situational and equipment bonuses. You get bad dice for whatever the GM applies in whatever situation, like Threats (bad guys or devices by any other name).

Something called Moxie seems like Mulligan points to do something interesting or outrageous. And I do like the idea of Mooks -- really incompetent goons that are complete fodder: the type where one punch and they're unconscious. Some 30 years ago, I lifted that idea from some RPG that the hero barbarian could slice multiple weak opponents with a single attack instead of attacking one per melee round. It's nice to see it represented again.

To a certain extent, you're tossing dice against yourself. It just seems wrong -- I'd make the GM roll the bad dice. Subtract bad dice from good and use the highest result of good dice: 6 is a success, 4-5 is a partial, and 3 or less is failure by degrees.

And that's about it for mechanics. You better really be into noir to be a GM.

I guess this makes a trend for Osprey rules -- a lot of style and little mechanics. Mind you, that seems better than the "Mathfinder" (*Pathfinder*) system of ultra-modifier applications that often make my head spin.

One criticism -- use the larger font found in your regular Osprey booklets. For rules, stop using such small fonts and leaving such large margins on every page. My grognard eyes say increase the font size!

Some sample cases (scenarios) are included, which helps provide some examples of how to apply the labels (skills) to the selection of good and bad dice.

If you want to drag your sci-fi RPGing friends into the noir world, tell 'em you're running *A Piece of the Action* (for the *Star Trek*: OS buffs) or a piece of Dixon Hill (for the *ST:TNG* buffs). I'm sure there are other noir rules -- I played in a terrific "campaign" using .45 *Adventure* miniature rules (skirmish level of one figure equal one person) that was terrific -- I admit I just don't know about them. So, for all of you wanting to do noir adventures, *Hard City* will set the mood and likely fire up your imagination.

Listen pally, I may not be dizzy with the mechanics, but the *Hard City* setting and background is sure ring-a-ding-ding.

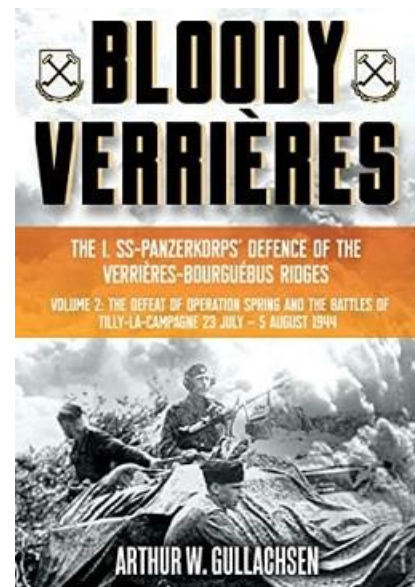
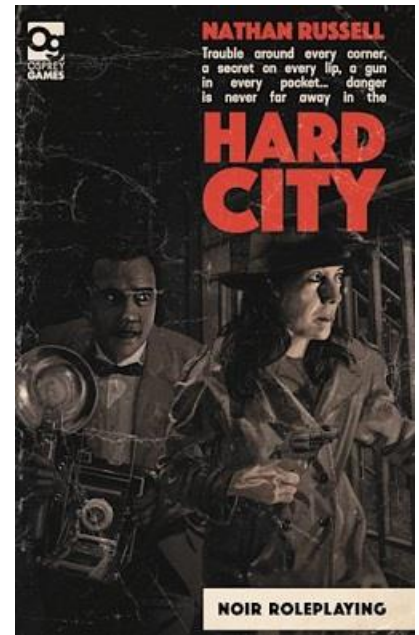
Bloody Verrieres: Volume II Jul-Aug 1944. by Arthur W. Gullachsen.
Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 272 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The I SS-Panzerkorps' Defence of Verrieres-Bourguebus Ridges*

Second Subtitle: *Volume II: The Defeat of Operation Spring and the Battles of Tilly La Campagne 23 July - 5 August 1944.*

An exceptionally well-researched follow up to Volume I (see my review in the 6/29/2022 AAR or up on HMGS.org) tackles the Canadian II Corps' attack on the ridge defended by 2nd Panzer, 272 Infantry, and a number of SS units. As Operation Spring commenced along with the US' Operation Cobra, Cobra also gets a look see, although in less detail than the Canadian and British efforts.

As with Volume I, you get a considerable number of numbers embedded in the text that tickles the heart of a wargamer. Most of the action goes down to company level, and often includes individual efforts. For both sides, that means individual zugs/troops of tanks and other armored vehicles plus down to the



platoon level where the action was the hottest. It still amazes me that units at 50% or less strength would launch attacks, often with success, which is often hard to do in wargame rules.

Some typos that made me snicker: "eastern fridges" (that's likely fringes, not a refrigerator, p63); "not given the proper supper" (that's likely support, not a seven-course meal, p75); and 'no intimate armored support' (that's likely innate or maybe inherent, not an all-metal cup, p78).

I always like the odd factoid inserted into text, like it takes 250,000 liters of fuel to move an armored division 100km (p119), one B-17 dropped 12,800 pounds of bombs, or the equivalent of 100 105mm guns, while a B-26 dropped 5,800 pounds of bombs (p123), and the Luftwaffe averaged 450 sorties per day in daylight and 250 sorties per night during the battle, but only 30 to 40 sorties penetrated Allied fighters (p150). During the battle, the Luftwaffe scored the occasional superb bombing raid, but nowhere as often or as effective as Allied fighter and bombers attacked German forces.

The book contains 51 black and white photos, one color photo, and eight black and white tactical maps. It's good enough to start creating the terrain for a scenario, in large part because they contain usable scales.

Written by a Canadian Army officer, the book not only offers the battle history, but an analysis of tactics and strategy on both sides that ultimately became a temporary Allied failure and Axis triumph. Canadian command receives a thorough examination of inept planning and execution. As the text notes, Operation Cobra blew the front wide open, in part due to German command's fixation on the British attacks.

Enjoyed it.

The Korean War 1950-53: Essential Histories. by Carter Malkasian. Softcover (5.9x8.25 inches). 144 pages. 2023 reprint of 2001 book.

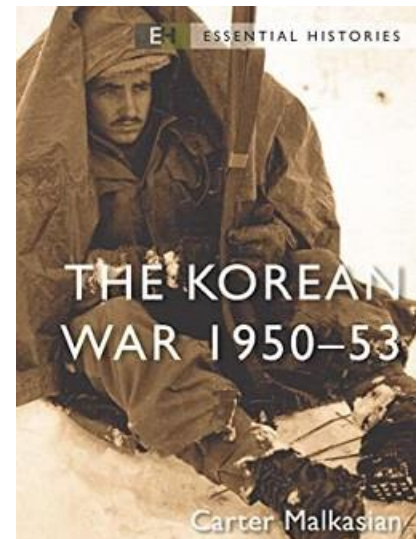
The 2023 date on the copyright page should read 2022. To give Osprey the benefit of the doubt, it may be a typo as opposed to a devious plot to fool buyers in the future that it is a 2023 book. Rest assured, this came out in 2022. It is the 'updated and revised' version of the 2001 book. What changed, I'm not sure as I don't have the 2001 book, but again, I'll take Osprey's word for it.

That said, it reads quite well as an overview of the Korean War, covering all the causes, changing strategies, large battles, and ultimate armistice.

The book contains 41 black and white photos, eight color photos, and 12 color maps.

Essential Histories books are all about concise overviews and big themes. This one's another good one.

Enjoyed it.



Wings of Iraq: Vol 2: 1970-1980 (Middle East at War 43). by Milos Sipos and Tom Cooper. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 88 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The Iraqi Air Force 1970-1980*

The follow up to *Volume I* (see my review in the 1/31/2021 AAR or up on HMGS.org) carries the Iraqi air force through the 1973 war and the war with Iran, with attacks on the Kurds in between.

One aspect I didn't realize was that the nationalization of the oil industry provided a huge amount of currency to buy Russian aircraft, although they were never as good as claimed and also proved somewhat of a maintenance problem.

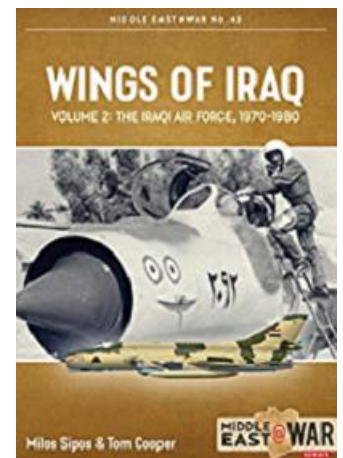
I also didn't realize that Iraqi aircraft flew against Israel from Egyptian bases. Iraq credited its pilots with five kills versus four lost aircraft (p20), although the text notes the loss of 12 pilots (p19) and 30 aircraft written off (p20), which likely includes losses from Israeli attacks on air bases.

Of amusement is the Russians delivering second-rate used aircraft to the Iraqis instead of the new ones ordered and new aircraft without the sophisticated electronics bought and paid for. It's no wonder Iraq turned to France and bought Mirage fighters.

The booklet contains 93 black and white photos, three color photos, six black and white maps, 15 color unit insignias (1931-2003), and 24 color aircraft profiles.

The air war against Iran should have given the Air Force some idea of just how outclassed it would be when faced with the Gulf War coalition. Maybe that'll be in volume 3?

Enjoyed it.



If you can't wait for the next volume, you can try *Operation Desert Storm: Volume 2 - Middle East at War 31* or (see my review in the 5/3/2021 AAR or up on HMGS.org) or *Desert Storm 1991: Air Campaign 25* (see my review in the 3/3/2022 AAR or up on HMGS.org) .

Tannenberg 1914: Campaign 386. by Michael McNally. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: Destruction of the Russian Second Army

Another volume in the superb Campaign series tackles the WWI operation that saw Germany pull out a victory despite being heavily outnumbered.

For those thinking WWI was nothing but trench warfare, think again. The wide-open spaces of the Eastern Front called for maneuver and the Germans proved to be masters at it during this initial clash. Granted, an obstinate corp commander nearly created a German defeat, but he learned from his initial mistake. With aid from reinforcements and effective command and control, the Germans slowly turned the tide and trapped the Russians

All the usual info in the format is included: OOB down to regiment level, commanders, strategies, overview of the operation, and so on. You'll find 40 black and white photos, one color photo, three black and white illustrations, six color illustrations, six color maps, three 2-page color action illustrations, and three of the canted, mediocre 3D maps.

The prose is excellent and will give you an excellent grasp of East Front maneuver in WWI. Enjoyed it.

