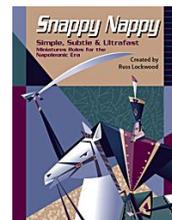


**Fall In 2023 Recap: Tabletop History**  
**Walkabout Wargames**  
**Gaming Again: WWI 1914**  
**Bill's Recap: Umpire's View of WWI**  
**Harry Potter and Valdemort**  
**Wandering Into The Dark Forest**



**News:**

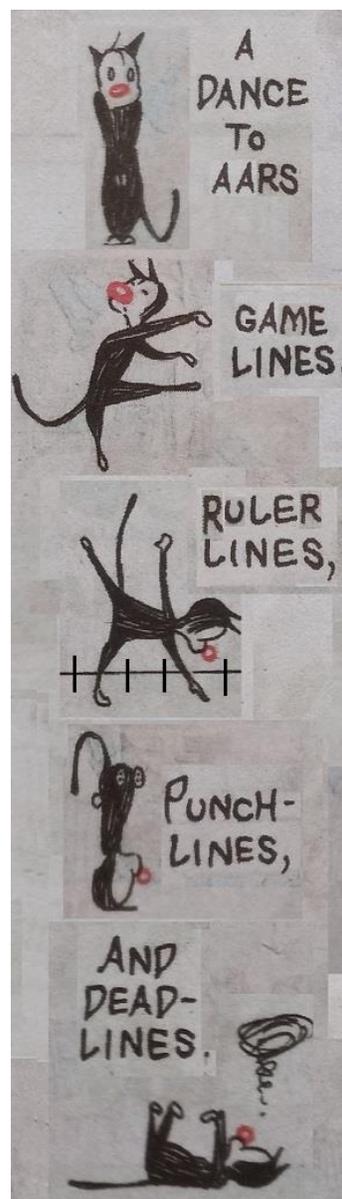
**Snappy Nappy in Australia:** The Campaign YouTube Video  
**Games as Journalism**  
**New Wargames:** Waters Unvexed and Muerte Desde Arriba  
**3D Printed Modern Armor:** 12mm and 15mm



**I'm Cuckoo for Kokoda: 1942 New Guinea**

**Books I've Read**

**The Battle of Pharsalus:** 48 BC  
**Anson:** Royal Navy Commander 1697-1762  
**F8F Bearcat:** Legends of Warfare  
**Siege Warfare:** During the Hundred Years War  
**SR-71 Blackbird:** Legends of Warfare  
**Luftwaffe Eagle:** WWII German Airman's Story  
**Forgotten War:** Brits vs Japan 1941-1945  
**Fighting From the Heavens:** USAAF Bombers  
**Frogman Stories:** Seal Team  
**Armour of Hitler's Allies:** Images of War  
**SS Dutch, Belgian and Danish:** Images of War  
**Medieval Indian Armies 2:** 7-16 Cent. MAA 552  
**P-39 Airacobra:** Legends of Warfare  
**F-15 Eagle:** Legends of Warfare  
**M-26 Pershing:** Legends of Warfare  
**Boeing YC-14:** Legends of Warfare  
**Luftwaffe Fighter Pilot:** Defending the Reich  
**Bletchley Park Codebreakers:** Their Own Words  
**The Western Dunkirk Corridor 1940:** Battleground  
**Allied Air Operations 1939-1940:** France BeNeLux  
**Valentine Tank vs. Panzer III:** N. Afr. Duel 132  
**F4F Wildcat:** S. Pacific 1942-43 Dogfight 9  
**A6M2/3 Zero:** New Guinea-Solomons 1942 Dogfight 10  
**Harrier GR 7/9 Units in Combat:** Combat Aircraft 151  
**Operation Pedestal 1942:** Malta Lifeline - Campaign 394  
**Federation World** (sci-fi novel)  
**Dykstra's War** (sci-fi novel)  
**On Eastern Front at 17:** Red Army Soldier Memoir  
**Alfa Romeo:** An Illustrated History 1910-2020  
**Inside Formula 1:** 1950-2022 Photography  
**Eyes on the Enemy:** WWII US Military Intel  
**Clearing the Way:** WWII US Engineers  
**The Battle of Castillon 1453:** Retinue to Regt 21  
**US Navy Fighting Ships:** Volume 3 -- 1883-2019 Cruisers



# Fall In 2023 Recap: Tabletop History

by Russ Lockwood

I rolled into the parking lot of the Lancaster Host -- ooops, Wyndham Resort -- at about noon on Friday. It was an uneventful trip on a nice day, just the way I like it.

Check in to the hotel was a breeze and check in for my HMGS convention badge was equally as speedy. I started immediately chatting with a variety of folks I've met over the years, catching up on projects planned and started, and -- GASP! -- completed.

*Friday: 12:56pm. Base of the stairs walking towards the main ballroom. Sailing ships in foreground. Toys for Tots in background. Gaming through the doors.*



My first stop was the Dealer Hall and I ended up chatting with dealers at many booths. Here, I must issue yet another convention mea culpa -- forgot to take photos. I get so involved saying hello I didn't pull out the phone.

*Friday: 1:00pm. Just inside the main ballroom. Pat of WAMP with his Vietnam game in foreground. Gaming is starting to pick up in background.*



Indeed, I might as well issue a blanket apology for not capturing every game event. I can only be in one spot at a time. Since I actually played games at the show, I was at a table for hours, not wandering like some random photo monster in a role-playing game. Hmmm. Maybe one of those hand-held autonomous drones the military uses. Yeah, that's it. I game, it takes photos, and we meet at the end of the game for me to download files.

On the other hand, it might annoy some gamer and he'd stand on a chair and swat it from the sky...

Anyway, I spent a fair amount of time at the *Against the Odds* booth. The latest issue on the Hussite Wars with the hex-based wargame *Blind Faith* was just out. Full disclosure: I was the developer for this Jason Juneau design. Now it gets torture tested by gamers.

*Just add catnip. Courtesy of Bill Gray.*



## PELA Award Judging

As I have the last few conventions, I've gone out on a judging team for the Pour Encourager Les Autres (PELA) Awards. I volunteered again this year, picking a late afternoon Friday time slot. Off we went with clipboard and forms in hand to recon the games on the list. Judging teams are assigned a time slot and look at specific events. There's a criteria to follow and we noodle it all out as we walk.

*Friday: 10:39pm. Just inside the main ballroom. Gaming is winding down, but still plentiful.*



Of course, you get your steps in because you're essentially walking all the entire convention areas once for the recon and twice to make sure we don't miss anything as well as noodle and doublecheck our picks. Then we present the award.

Sorry to stop the game, but it's important to recognize the GM, who gets a nice figure on a base to place on the table. Oh, and immortality. I did mention immortality at being mentioned in HMGS dispatches? Well, they do.

*Top: Peeking over the wall to watch 55 Days at Peking.*

*Bottom: Different day. Different angle. Different gamers.*



The other side of the recon is to make sure GMs are actually putting on games with gamers and record the number of players.

## Walkabout Wargames

*By Russ Lockwood*

Over the course of Friday and Saturday, I took photos of many games. We truly count some very talented folks among our number. Me? I'm lucky I don't injure myself with the scissors when I cut out woods from felt.

I hope my photos do them justice. You might need a vast imagination to get to that justice, but in no particular order:



## 55 Days at Peking

I recall seeing something like this at a show like 25 years ago, but what an effort to reconstruct a bit of Peking. The wall was about 2 feet tall or so along with a good 10-12 feet of city divided by a river. It was always packed when it was being run.

## Shako

I'm not sure what battle was being fought, but I came in as the fight was getting intense.

*The Shako battle gets to crunch time.*

## AWI: Grand Forage

What a nice looking American Revolution game that entranced onlookers and kept the attention of the gamers. The sign said 1778. The game included eye candy ships. It earned a PELA.



*Left: Circus Maximus.*

*Right: PELA Award (bottom right) to Grand Forage 1778.*

## Circus Maximus

That wooden track was a work of art. A quick word with the GM found that he spent about 200 hours on it. Someone's a wood-working genius.

I'm not sure if it was his home-grown rules or the original Avalon Hill boardgame rules, but it contained whipping and flipping, so not too far afield, me thinks.

He recorded winners and losers on his computer, so that you could earn experience points and be better if you play in a subsequent convention. Nice campaign idea, that.

## WWI Trench Attack

A nice board offered suitably shellhole and trench terrain. This was part of the HMGS Next Gen program to introduce and encourage wargaming for kids. I understand about 30 kids were at the Friday morning events, including this WWI trench attack game.

*Right: Although the trees look a wee bit too intact for WWI, the trench, barbed wire, and shellhole no man's land looks great.*

*Below: Improved Big Battle.*

*Below right: Papelotte.*



## Improved Big Battle

Jesse brought a four-player "Improved Big Battle" game. A deck of cards drove the game with phases and the units had a marker (some with two) they could spend to perform the action. At least one card was "player's choice action." Combat seemed pretty straightforward with die rolls looking for about a 1/3 chance to hit with missiles and 1/2 with melee -- but much depended on the troop type and quality.

## Waterloo: Papelotte

French and Prussians fought over the village of Papelotte during the Battle of Waterloo. Here's the 25mm/28mm tabletop version.

## Pearl Harbor

I didn't get to see this game in action, but was aware enough to snap a photo of the base terrain board. Very nice!

*Pearl Harbor in 1:1200 scale.*

## Star Wars Race

I have no idea of the rules, but the figures on the track are mounted, not pod racers. The middle of the terrain is well done to represent Tatooine.

*If you look closely, you can see the Millennium Falcon at the far end of the table.*

## Afghanistan

Martyn (seated left) GMs a battle between US and Taliban forces in Afghanistan. The Taliban player (standing) is trying to rally his dispirited forces. Shortly after this move, US artillery dropped with precision in the center of his unit. Ka-boom!

Big WAMP game!



*Left: Hueys ready to lift off in Pat's Vietnam game. What you don't see is Charlie in the jungle around the camp.*

*Right: Martyn (sitting) oversees the Force on Force game. Renaud ponders how to get his Taliban force to move out.*

## Vietnam

Pat (and WAMP) always show up with big games. Last convention was Vikings. Before that a number of WWII games. Today, it was Vietnam.

I don't know who won, but what a suitably Vietnam terrain overload!

## Quiet Martians

Somebody amassed a lot of *All Quiet on the Martian Front* figures. Wow. I've played the game a couple times, but nothing like this. Wow.

They were all excellently painted. The aircraft had flight stands. Little details. Fantastic! Then there are the adaptations – I swear I saw some Imperator Titans from *Space Marine* in and among the Martians.

I wasn't around when it was being played, but it sure looked impressive.

*Martians? Fantastic!*

## Culloden

This shot comes at the end of the game. The Scots did a mighty hurt on the Brits, whose line bowed but didn't quite break. The GM ruled the British would have to withdraw, leaving the field to the Scots, but the subsequent battle would be tougher for the Scots to win.

*GM Martin scrutinizes something at the end of the game of Culloden.*

## Epic Space Marine

Two 6mm Space Marine chapters fight over a ruined city. I'm not sure which version of the rules were being used. It's going to take a while for the two sides to meet at a base infantry movement rate of 10cm (20cm if charging).



*Epic Space Marine chapters fight over ruined city.*

## Hussites

Richard fields a Hussite army filled with War Wagons during the *Warrior* tournament. I'm not sure how the game ended, but Richard looks up a rule. Nice Hussite army.

## LADG

A tricky spot during a *La Art de l'Guerre* (LADG) tournament game. I don't know who won this game, but Dennis (right) won the 15mm tournament with a Bedoin



army, eking out a two-point victory. Using the international ranking system, he's number three in the world.

*Left: Richard and his Hussites.*

*Above: Dennis (right) looks on at a LADG game.*

## 28mm Napoleonics

A huge battle. I really should take notes...or at least write down the time so I can look in the convention book and see what event is in the photo.

*Right: Napoleonics in full swing.*



## Iraq

We had Afghanistan on one table and on this table, Iraq.

*Battle for the heart of an Iraqi city.*

## D-Day and Rommel

The map looks similar to *Axis and Allies' D-Day*, but it's been a while since I played that. The rules set was *Rommel*, or at least an adaptation of it. The landing just started, but airpower was on the prowl as I took this shot.

*All ashore who's coming ashore! D-Day with areas.*

## Command Decision: North Africa

Marc (left) GMs the Brits vs Germans in North Africa using *Command Decision* rules. The Brits would have a difficult time against the Germans in this game.

## Breakthrough

Frank Chadwick (yellow shirt) performs another playtest of *Breakthrough*,



*Left: GM Marc (brown plaid shirt) points to the Germans in WWII North Africa.*

*Above: Frank (yellow shirt) runs Breakthrough.*

his WWII rules with a battalion per stand scale. No firm date for its release as he fine tunes the rules but his thinking now is to just publish it rather than Kickstarter it.

## WWII Suicide Creek

An intense game based on a 1944 battle in New Britain. I recall a series of special movement delay rules for crossing the creek.



*Above: Suicide Creek in New Britain*



*GM Bill Gray at the head of the table. Belgians Kelly (cap) and Mark get ready. Germans on left. Belgians on right.*

## Gaming Again: WWI 1914

*By Russ Lockwood*

I signed up for Bill Gray's *Age of Valor* (*AoV*) game recreating the Battle of the Yser 1914. *AoV* is a WWI variation of his *Age of Eagles* (*AoE*) Napoleonic rules, which are an 'officially licensed' version of Rich's *Fire & Fury* (*F&F*) ACW rules.

*My German command in foreground. The Belgians up top.*



Having recently played Waterloo with *AoE* (see my recap in the 8/23/2023 AAR), and with a growing interest in WWI over the past decade while working on a *Snappy WWI* ruleset, I was interested in seeing what variations Bill made to the rules to represent WWI warfare as opposed to ACW or Napoleonic warfare.

I wish I can remember the string of puns Bill unleashed tableside. Most were groaners, of course, but some rang with wit. Alas, the only thing I can remember is after one particular groaner, he joked, "It's only going to get worse." It sure did, but I appreciated it.

*My Germans move up on Turn 2. Well, except for the Jager laggards at far left. Slowpokes.*

As with *F&F*, units were brigades made up of a number of stands with the usual Fresh - Spent - Worn differentiations as losses accumulated. At first glance, the *AoV* charts followed the same general idea of the "new" *F&F Brigade* (as opposed to the original 1980s version), but the game will tell if a first impression is correct.

*With Bill temporarily at the foot of the table, I take a photo of most of the gamers. This is the end of Turn 2. I'm pushing towards the village in a salient, but am uneasy about the several lines of Belgians forming to my front.*

*Clockwise from left: Kelly (cap), Mark, GM Bill, Peter (in red), Tanner, and Michael.*

## The Sides

I had sat down in front of German troops. Ergo, I was a German player. Across from me were Belgians Kelly and to an extent Mark and somewhere between them was a French division. Hedgerows and ditches, plus a village or two barred my way to polder (somewhat marshy) terrain and the promised land of victory. The Germans had to hop to it before the Belgians blew up the dykes and polder land became flooded land.

As for my specific division, I had a half dozen infantry, two of which were elite Jager light troops, a cavalry unit, and a trio of artillery batteries. As we had a massive corp-level artillery park, a couple more batteries were sent my way. The command post was allowed to move, but once it parked itself, it stayed there -- unless you asked the GM for permission to move it elsewhere.

*The end of Turn 3. My Jagers cross the open field (bottom) while Michael clears out the center with Tanner's help.*



Against me were Belgian infantry sheltering in ditches (relatively modest -1 die modifier) and in the village (-2 die modifier) plus a few artillery batteries and a couple cavalry units. It seemed I was outnumbered, but that's probably deceiving. I didn't know the enemy's units' statuses (er, statusi?), but being on defense is an advantage as it should be with first firing and terrain benefits.

*Turn 4: My cavalry charge the disordered (blue ring) Belgian brigade, but a supporting Belgian brigade also fires at me as I go in.*

### German Advance

Although the broad strategy was to hold back on my side, tie down as many Belgian troops as I could, and let our far stronger right side of the German force plow ahead, I deemed that if I wanted to do more than tie down troops, I needed to advance.

*My German cavalry obliterate the disordered Belgians and run the supporting brigade off, but the countercharging Belgian cavalry chases me off. The breakthrough charge just falls short of my brigade and Michael's two batteries defending the ditch/hedge.*

Well, the die was unkind at times when it came to movement. Each unit needs to roll to move -- a violation of Russ' Rule Number 1 -- and despite some stellar pluses, I managed to choke a couple of times on some units moving. One of the elite Jager units must have been doing Jagermeister shots because they rolled a pair of 1s for the first two turns and lagged behind. One of my units shot ahead with rolls of 10s to get in the face of the Belgians.

The artillery traded low-odds shots. I finally managed to figure out that I needed to concentrate all batteries on a single target, or maybe five of the six to bring the die modifier to "0" instead of a negative. That helped.

What helped more was adding in the infantry brigade gunfire factors, especially with the integral machine guns. Yes, it took me a while to figure that out, but once I did, it sure helped, even with the -1 and -2 for defensive terrain. The MGs really jacked up the fire factor as they got closer.

Of course, being on the offensive meant the defense fired first, so you really only wanted to get close when the enemy was disordered (1/2 fire factors). Even then, toss in some artillery and the fire can do a lot of damage.



## On My Right

To my immediate right, Michael, my German compatriot with the next infantry division over, moved up in the face of a stubborn defense, but numbers, especially with some help from Tanner the corp commander and his wunderbar artillery park, began to tell and the Belgians retreated back towards the polder.

*Turn 5: My Jagers trade shots at left as my center brigade gets pummeled into the ground. My supporting brigade rolls poorly and stays in field column.*



Tanner also had a command besides the artillery and pressed forward when necessary, aided by the strong right hook of the far right.

On my far right, the German C-in-C Peter was waging a fine battle. I don't know if the die rolls went his way or not, but I'm just going to say superior generalship winkled the Belgians out of the front lines and the right wing began to turn the flank and head inwards.

## The Cavalry Battle

Thanks to better living through firepower, I bounced a battered and bruised Belgian brigade back bisordered (ooops, one too many bits of alliteration), I mean retreated it disordered from the ditch/hedge. What a perfect time for my cavalry to charge.

*Turn 6: I break one Belgian brigade and an artillery battery at bottom, but a Jager retreats due to a bad die roll. The polder is just to the left of the villages, behind the canal where an entire division awaits us. The Belgians have a pretty solid line on my end of the battlefield, but the German right hook is making headway at the top of the photo.*



I did and the supporting Belgian infantry unit laid on some supporting fire into my charge path. It proved ineffective and my cavalry swept away the dispirited defenders, providing me with a breakthrough charge into those pesky supporting infantry. I swept them away, too, but left myself right in front of fresh Belgian cavalry.

Then it was my turn to be pummeled and kicked backwards. The breakthrough charge sent them towards nearest enemy -- a full infantry brigade of mine and two artillery batteries from my German compatriot that were lined up along a ditch. The Belgian cavalry was forced to charge, but fortunately for us, didn't have enough movement to reach the troops and force a second melee.

In the subsequent fire phase, my German compatriot Michael hammered the Belgian cavalry and retreated them back across the field. I then charged them with my own cavalry, but lost. The resulting fire by my infantry brigade along with several batteries' worth of shelling did in the Belgian cavalry. There's lessons to be learned here.

## Advancing Jagers

Meanwhile, I finally kicked the laggard Jagers into gear and both Jager units advanced across the field. The resultant firefight swept away one Belgian infantry brigade and supporting artillery, but the other hung tough. A reinforcement Belgian brigade moved up to shore up the line.

I lost an infantry brigade in the center, which had stuck its nose out for too many turns. An untouched supporting infantry brigade must have panicked at the sight, for it fumbled the movement roll and stayed in column in the middle of the battle. The next turn it shook out into line, fortunately without casualties.

One of my heretofore reliable Jager units flubbed a roll and sped away back to the German start line. The offensive on my far left fizzled as Belgian Kelly and the troops formed up a nice line anchored on the village.

I was too scattered to do much except send artillery and MG fire into the village to chip away at the enemy units. I figured it would take me a turn to reorganize my units so I could launch a coordinated attack on the enemy line instead of going in piecemeal.

## Game Over, (Her)Mann

After six turns and about five hours, Bill called the game as a Belgian victory. Our German far right was in position to sweep in, but had not actually done so. I needed to reorganize the units to put them all back into position to roll into another attack.

*End of Turn 6: Game Over.*

I don't think we Germans eliminated enough Allied troops -- it would take another six turns, if not more, to clear the villages and reach the polder. The Belgians still had a half dozen brigades and two garrisoned villages between me and Michael's forces and the polder. That would be a tall order to crack at 1:1 odds -- although we had an advantage in artillery.

Kelly and Mark played a smart defensive game. They held ground and sacrificed a unit or two to delay us. The French division slowly made its way across the polder as a large reserve. As far as I can tell, I wasn't able to pull any units my way, although Michael pulled a few in the center.

## Is It *Fire & Fury*?

From what I can tell without a deep dive (and Bill provided a fantastic memory stick of WWI manuals, his rules, maps, scenarios, music, and more), *AoV* is like *AoE* is like the new *F&F Brigade*, only with more up close and personal (i.e. integrated MG) firepower. Granted, one convention game is not an in-depth look, but I got the hang of *AoV* in a couple turns, while it took a few more to understand the close-in lethality of MG firepower mechanics.

Given the massive damage on the Belgian cavalry that missed contacting our infantry and artillery by this much, I can imagine that overcoming trenches will be difficult. Granted, real WWI offensives were often preceded by days-long artillery barrages, but close-in MG fire seems appropriately devastating. Add in supporting artillery, make that supporting large-caliber 105mm and higher artillery, and you can create a killing ground between the trenches.

Between Bill's puns and general banter, this was an entertaining game. Thanks, Bill for hosting and thanks all for a rather pleasant wargame.



# Bill's Recap: Umpire's View of WWI

By Bill Gray

*I used this abridged version of a recap Bill sent out. --RL*

All figures were 12mm from Great Escape Games 1914 product line. Cigar Box Battle made the terrain covering -- two sheets of Europe Nothing but Fields. The latter attracted a LOT of attention from folks who evidently had not seen this design before, so CBB, you owe me for the several sales I likely got you. Other terrain included more of Doug Kline's own BTC line, plus buildings from Timecast, Bacchus, and other firms. Scale is an average of 360 infantry (240 Light Infantry), 180 horse, or 4 to 8 cannon per stand. Ground scale is 150 to 180 yards per inch, while each turn is 30 minutes real time.

I put on a game at 10 am and another at 5 pm, same scenario, same table. The subject was the battle of the Yser where the battered Belgian army, ably assisted by the French 42d Infantry Division, went into last stand mode to protect the extreme Allied left flank in northern Flanders from being turned by the Germans.

They succeeded by holding off the Hun just long enough for the polder and other farmlands along the Yser Canal to be flooded. That fact gave the players their objectives. The Germans had to breach the Belgian lines and advance across the polder and secure the far railway before the Belgians could flood the place. The Belgians had to stop the Germans from cracking their defensive line in front of the Yser Canal.

The Allies had more infantry and cavalry and were full of élan, but the Germans had guns. Lots of guns. Beaucoup und zwanzig guns. I swear the Germans never had that many guns, as in I have never painted so many feld-grau guns that if I ever see anything with a Krupp name attached, it will be too soon.

Both my games were full, and I had excellent players all around. Many had experience with *Fire & Fury*, *AoE*, or its variants, so they cheerfully helped those who did not, even if they were on the other side.

Winning was secondary to having a good time and as usual, after just three or four turns the players were running the game themselves. I'd answer a question now and then, but otherwise I could have driven back to NJ and returned with no real impact on the festivities.

In the two crews we had Peter L (Aussie extraordinaire determined to put a few French on the barbie), Russ Lockwood (award-winning journalist), a tough as nails Shieldmaiden, dad and two youngsters who more than earned their nicknames of Demolitionist par Excellence and Master Gunner, and of course, the Canadian contingent, to include Ben (earning his membership in the Sacred Order of the Pink Pansy) and Mark A, obsessed with putting the right regimental numbers on 6 mm uniform buttons.

Last but not least, one doughty soul who became the first initiate into Pink Pansy's Ancient and Holy Knight Commander Class by thinking it was a good idea to charge Belgian lancers into an elite-with machineguns German Jaeger battalion supported by three nearby Krupp artillery batteries. In tribute to such out-of-the-box military acumen, he received a set of NSFW 20-sided dice.

Bill's website is: [ageofeagles.com](http://ageofeagles.com)

On Military Matters carries paper versions of Bill's rules, plus you can buy electronic versions from Wargame Vault, Kindle, and Google Play.

*Bill generously gave every participant a memory stick filled with WWI manuals, uniform guides, rules, and other goodies. -- RL*

## Back to Wandering

I was in the flea market a bit and picked up some impulse terrain to go along with my impulse dealer area purchases. Thanks to Jeff for the cookies -- enough to keep me going after missing lunch.

*Saturday: 2:34pm. Just inside the main ballroom. Seems a little thin, gaming wise.*



Alas, I did not attend any lectures (sigh) or Hobby University events. I did stop and chat as I walked about. Man, there's so much good stuff to do, Fall In could be a weeklong convention and I probably couldn't attend everything that looked great in the convention book.

*Right: Saturday: 2:36pm. Stairs leading to the tournament area. The flea market is way in the distance.*

*Bottom: Saturday: 2:37pm. Tournament area to the left of the previous photo. The flea market is way in the distance.*



I should also mention the Boardgame Room off the main entrance (in with Registration) with shelves full of boardgames of all types stood ready for inspection and play. I stuck my head in there at various times during the convention and it seemed well attended.

*Below: The Boardgame area. The shelves are off photo to the right. HMGS Registration is off photo to left.*





Above: My starting character played by a not-so-serious gamer.

Below: Ol' pasty-wand rotates among three sectors.

## Harry Potter and Voldemort

By Russ Lockwood

I saw John earlier in the convention and he noted he had just picked up a Harry Potter game based on the *Thanos* cooperative superhero game. I enjoyed *Thanos*, so we sat down to try out the *Harry Potter: Death Eaters Rising* version.

Now, before you assail me with Potter references, understand that while I watched most of the movies, I only read the first book. I probably know more about Colonel Potter than Harry Potter, and probably know more about Beatrix Potter than Col. Potter.

As with *Thanos*, you get a starting character. I had Sirius Black, who apparently is part of the Order of the Phoenix. He gets certain colored dice and some special abilities (roll an extra die, remove a hit, and so on).

The object is to recruit friends, obliterate foes, and prevent Voldemort from controlling all three areas of...something...magical Britain, I guess -- there's an Alley and Hogwarts and Wrexham. OK, I made up the last one, I have no idea what the three areas were. Funny, they weren't labeled on the Voldemort version of *Twister*, but all areas needed 15 evil points to be conquered.

I recognized many of the characters from the movies, although my knowledge of their names is rather sketchy. It was less recruiting so and so and more recruiting the guy with the extra die or the girl with kaleidoscope eyes.

As with *Thanos*, you roll a direction die that twists Voldemort to a sector (or he stays in the same sector). That gives all friends cards an immediate hit and triggers foe cards' abilities. That's usually more hits all around.



The game is a resource control endeavor mixed with a bit of luck. There's nothing like needing a 1 in 6 roll to complete a quest and rolling that icon. Sure, I added a friend and defeated a foe, but a lot of times, I just whiffed. Wrong die, wrong cards, wrong ending.

We strived mightily, but our scramble to remove damage faded before Valdemort's ability to inflict them. We went down fighting, but we went down.

*My team included a couple of Weasleys and a Fletcher. Boy did we take hits (red cubes)!*

In essence, *Harry Potter: Death Eaters Rising* offers almost the exact same game play as *Thanos*. I'm not altogether sure it mimics the Potteresque universe because in the movies Harry seems to spend a lot more time trying to unravel a clue instead of bash baddies with Mjolnirecto-Smashasaurus spells.

Yet it's easy to pick up and learn, especially if you've played *Thanos*. For me, it's a good little game. For *Harry Potter* buffs, it's a great little game.

Thanks, John for the game.



*GM John (left) settles in the four adventurers before they enter the Dark Forest.*

## Wandering Into The Dark Forest

*By Russ Lockwood*

After wandering around some more, I stopped by the food spot on the main floor: choice of pulled pork, fried chicken, or... um, something else. I selected the fried chicken, mashed potatoes, cole slaw, biscuit, and soda: \$20. Everything was generally fine, although I stopped eating the innermost part of the chicken because it was undercooked. No adverse effects, but I think I'll go for a different entree next time.

Anyway, I found myself in the science fiction and fantasy room (Heritage) and plopped down to watch John run *Sellswords and Spellslingers* -- apparently a fantasy version of *Song of Drums and Tomahawks* produced by Ganesha Games. I had played *SoDaT* before (see the 6/30/2023 AAR).

*Adventurers head into the forest, but monsters are popping up all over the place. About halfway through the game.*

The key is the 'push yer luck' style dice activations. You choose whether to roll one, two, or three 20-sided dice per figure, with every 8+ generating an activation (move, shoot, stab, etc.). If you roll two or more non-activations, your turn is over -- even if you had figures that had not gotten the chance to roll. I'll leave those with higher math skills than me to figure out the percentages of activations versus fails.

Cards determine activation orders and contain stats and specs on them to give each character some, er, character. This was the bare bones basic combat. I don't recall any spellcasting. His game was full with four players, with each player controlling three characters. The characters take three hits before dying while most monsters were one or two hits.

*Almost there! As players battle wandering monsters, one of the player's characters scoots off the map to end the game. GM John is shown rolling for an attack.*

## Across the Forest

The goal was to get across the forest first, which is none too easy given the number of wandering monsters (cards) or monster movements (more cards). The players spread out and began the movement, each player keeping his characters in mutually supporting distance. So, four 'knots' of characters headed through the trees and past the ruins...

And that's when the monsters starting appearing. Ambush!

The stats were compared, the die rolls were compared, and one or the other took damage. Naturally, the characters have the advantage as in all good role-playing games, so the slaughter factor rose as the characters moved deeper into the trees.

Ah, but every now and then a sword or fang slipped through a character's armor. It's basically roll to hit and roll to save, although that's a little too simplistic. Every once in a while, a character stumbled and fell, burning an activation to stand up.

Meanwhile, everyone avoided the troll. He took four hits, regenerated, and actually drew a random card that boosted him two hit points to a six! Fortunately, he was dumb and moved randomly. The other monsters? Heat-seeking missiles!

Eventually, after an hour or so, one of the players scampered ahead and off the map, winning the game. One of the guys wanted to play his group a little more and I also jumped in to take over one of the other groups.

I didn't do so well. A "horde" (four monsters) managed to roll well enough to sprint, so to speak, and catch up with me because I kept rolling two fails and couldn't do a thing.

The horde pounded one of my lads into the ground. As my other two characters dispatched these one-hit wonders, the crumbled mess of a character had a healing potion (drawn at random at the beginning of the game). Another character used an activation to pour it down his throat.



A few monster carcasses later, I dragged the poor sot off the map.

It was an entertaining game. Other than the use of 20-sided dice instead of six-sided, the basic mechanics played the same for fantasy as for the French and Indian War.

*Tournaments are winding down on Saturday 6:45pm.*

I think the system has potential, even if a character suddenly suffers paralysis and stands still for no reason – which happens quite a bit when rolling three dice. But I do like the idea of either playing it safe (roll one die), taking an average chance (roll two dice), and gambling (roll three dice) when wanted or just plain desperate. As long as each player controls few characters and play alternates by sides, even a first flubbed roll means a player will not wait too long for a chance to roll again.

There's quite a bit more to the system and characters than that, but this basic introduction can be a great convention game. Thanks, John for running the game.

## Sunday Shuffle

And that was a pleasant that for the show. I left early on Sunday...an hour earlier than I thought because I forgot to reset the time. The trip home was just as uneventful as to the convention and with less traffic.

I found the convention to be a terrific time, but then meeting friends old and new and gaming a bit more than usual seems like an awfully good idea. Thanks to the HMGS volunteers for helping make this another great convention.

Alas, no Cold Wars '24, but maybe there's another convention close by to try in the early Spring. We'll see.

## Warrior Tournament: Experimental Rules

*by Fred*

*Fred played Assyrians in the 25mm Warrior tournament. Some of his thoughts.  
-- RL*

My games were against Qin Chinese (won 5-1), against Muslims from Spain (lost 1-5), and vs. the Marian Romans (lost 1-5).

Shooting was hamstrung for this tournament as an experiment. The die roll could only be -1, 0, or +1. In an earlier game, I rolled a pair of up 3s and another pair of up 2s with 24 darts -- that would have caused a disorder in both cases, and my Assyrians would likely rout them in subsequent hand to hand ... or maybe not given my bad melee rolls.

I did miserably against the Marian Romans. The tournament had special rules about circulating combatants. For example, if I disorder a four-element block of "special Romans," the front elements can exchange with the rear rank. The rear rank comes to the fore NOT DISORDERED. Apparently, a unit can now be in two separate states (front intact and rear disordered).

It didn't help that I rolled miserably, not one single even up or up roll for any melee. I lost big time when a unit routed by Romans caused three nearby units with B morale to roll consecutive ones on waiver tests.



## NEWS

### ***Snappy Nappy in Australia: The Campaign in a Day Video***

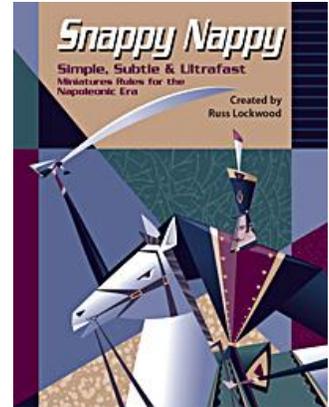
By Russ Lockwood

The Napoleonic Wargaming Society of Perth (Australia) held its third annual *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-in-a-Day wargame. This year, it was a Peninsula Campaign in Spain, held across six tables and using the Little Wars TV variation (QRS available for download at the Little Wars TV site and regular QRS available for download at Peter's Blunders on the Danube blog).

The YouTube video lasts 13 minutes, from the *Star Wars*-like scrolling sit rep to the map movements to the battles and to the winning side. The martial music playing in the background adds to the atmosphere of the game.

The video is at:

<https://youtu.be/EBxhMswchmo>



### **Games as Journalism**

By Russ Lockwood

Last issue's *On My Mind: Journalism Games* column about using newspaper layout as the basis for a eurogame generated a link from Brian Train, who taught a course on using games *as* journalism. If the message is the medium, here's a way to think outside the doom scrolling box...

<https://brtrain.wordpress.com/2023/09/11/presentation-analog-board-games-as-citizen-journalism-university-of-turin-13-september-2023/>

### **New Wargames: Waters Unvexed and Muerte Desde Arriba**

By Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the High Flying Dice Games press release:

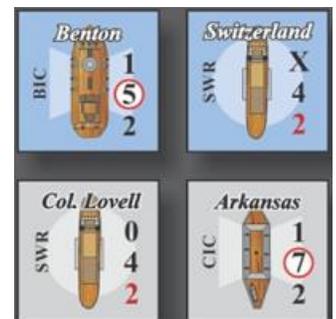
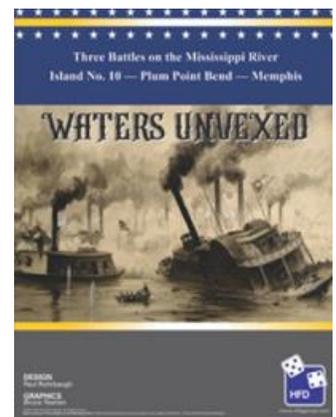
#### ***Waters Unvexed: Three Battles of Mississippi River, 1862***

The wargame portrays the battles of Island Number 10, Plum Point Bend, and the First Battle of Memphis – the three largest naval battles fought on the upper Mississippi River (north of the city of Vicksburg) in the months of May and June, 1862.

The Confederate vessels of the Mississippi River Defense Fleet had been formed from converted river sidewheel paddle steamers whose bows had been fitted with iron rams and reinforced with packed bales of cotton, as well as armed with various numbers and sizes of artillery pieces. The Union Mississippi River Squadron was made up of purpose-built stern paddlewheel gunboats and sidewheel rams. The Union vessels were fitted in many places with thin iron sheets and dubbed “tin clads.” The gunboats were all armed with powerful rifled cannon while their rams were only armed with their iron prows.

**Contains:** Three 11x17-inch hex maps; One sheet of 157 single-sided, un-mounted counters; One players' aid sheet; and 10 pages of rules. The game sells for \$20.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters are an additional \$8.00.

Note: You will need a regular deck of cards. A custom deck is available for \$10.00.



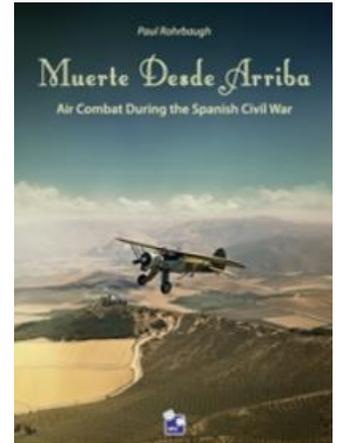
## Muerte Desde Arriba: Air Combat of the Spanish Civil War

The title translates as: Death From Above. This is an introductory-level aerial combat game set during the Spanish Civil War. Each player takes command of two or three aircraft and attempts to either conduct a bombing or reconnaissance mission, while the opponent attempts to prevent the mission from being successfully conducted. Each plane represents one aircraft and each turn about 10 to 15 minutes of time.

Contains: One 8.5x11-inch map; One sheet of 55 unmounted, double-sided units; and six pages of rules. The game sells for \$15.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00.

Note: You will need a regular deck of cards. A custom deck is available for \$10.00.

More info: [www.hfdgames.com](http://www.hfdgames.com)



## 3D Printed Modern Armor: 12mm and 15mm

by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games has been licensing and 3D printing lots of different lines for a few years. Since NATO countries are starting to ship Leopard tanks to Ukraine, and this press release appeared in my inbox, I figure I'd share the info and photo.

This model is the 2A6 version, but I see 2A4 and 2A5 versions are also available. A 12mm version is \$15.30 for a single model and a 15mm version is \$17 for a single model, but buying two or more models drops the price 10% and buying four or more gains you an even larger discount.

Note that M1A1s, T-72s, and other modern armor are available. CPG also has quite the extensive collection of WWII models and *Lord of the Rings* figures.

For example: Orc Rabble with Spears: 28mm (\$15), 40mm (\$21), or 54mm (\$35.00). Again, buying two or three sets gets a 10% discount and four or more sets gets a 15% discount. Description: Set of 6 assorted miniatures; Spears are included but it is recommended they be replaced with metal; Unpainted plastic miniature; Can be used for many periods and armies; Bases not included; Miniatures are a single piece.

More info: [chrisparkergames.com](http://chrisparkergames.com)



# I'm Cuckoo for Kokoda: 1942 New Guinea

by Russ Lockwood

Yessiree, Hirohito. Whenever I go campaigning in New Guinea, I make sure to bring along ample servings of Kokoda Trail Mix, the chocolately flavorful sustenance for long marches, jungle terrain, and intense firefights. I'm Cuckoo for Kokodas. Cuckoo for Kokodas.

And what better way to while away the conquering but with a Beach Boys marching tune:

To Wewak, To Medang,  
Oooh, we're up the yin-yang.  
We took Lae, and then Wau,  
See the natives kow-tow.  
To Gona, and Buna,  
Stopped for rice and tuna,  
New Guinea...

Off the Solomon Sea,  
There's a trail called Kokoda,  
Like a,  
Japanese spa,  
To get away from it all.

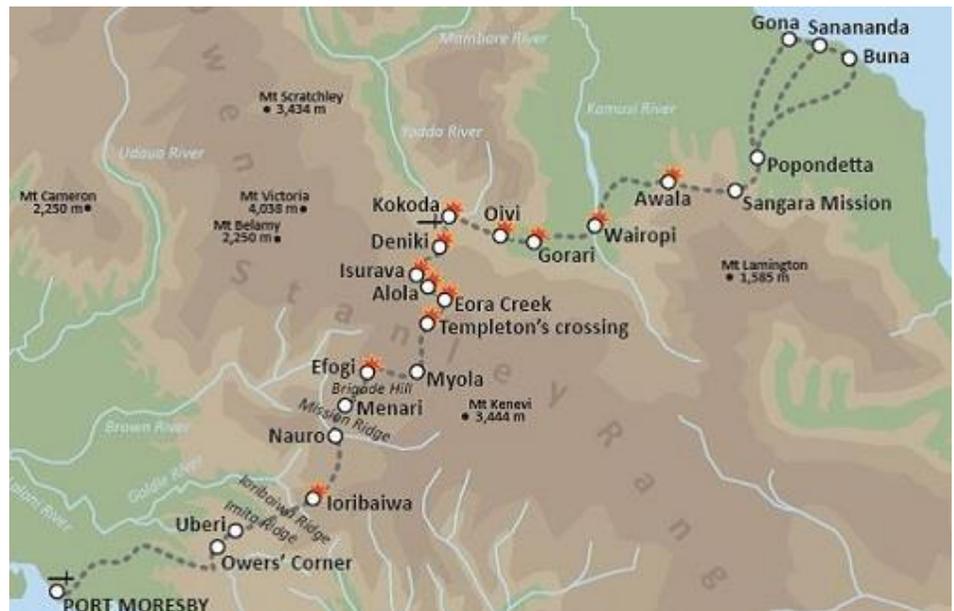
Bodies over land,  
Jungle rot,  
Is fungus on your hand.  
We'll be marching too slow,  
To the rhythm of a reprimand,  
Down in Kokoda.

To Wewak, To Medang,  
Oooh, we're up the yin-yang.  
We took Lae, and then Wau,  
See the natives kow-tow.  
To Gona, and Buna,  
Stopped for rice and tuna,

Baby, propaganda  
(Ooh, I wanna take you down to Kokoda)  
We'll oom-pah-pah,  
And via Papua  
Go Poly-nee-sia,  
Way down in Kokoda.

## Battle of Efogi: Set Up

The rules were *Command Decision*. Each stand is a platoon. Each inch on the table represents about 50 yards. I'm not sure what the time per turn is -- I think a half hour. The game was 12 turns long.



*Efogi is one of many battles fought along the Kokoda Trail. Image from web. Below: At start.*



Pre-game maneuvering placed a Japanese Battalion (Marc-san) on the trail heading south towards Port Moresby that has run into an Australian battalion (Jake) perched atop Mission Hill. A second Japanese battalion (Russ-san) infiltrated around and approached the flank of a second Australian battalion (Pat) perched atop Gumdrop Hill.

*Marc-san's Japanese battalion begins to engulf Jake's Australian battalion on Mission Hill. The Kokoda Trail is the only clear space. Tsk. Tsk. German swastikas instead of the rising sun?*

Our Japanese job is to clear the trail. The Australian job is to delay and withdraw.

The entire table, and I mean the entire table, except for two clearings just big enough to hold an infantry gun each and the actual trail is jungle. Deep, dark almost impenetrable jungle. Visibility is two, yes, two (2) inches in jungle. That also means firing range is two inches in jungle.

*My Japanese battalion advances towards Pat's Australians on Gumdrop Hill. This hill is to the right of Mission Hill and Port Moresby is way off table to the right.*

Movement in jungle is half normal, so a cautious, terrain hugging infantry move is three inches and a hasty infantry move is six inches. It's a good thing we start close -- danger close to my eye, but that's before the realities of two inches encroached on my perceptions. Two inches on a six-foot wide table is a teeny tiny space.

As for my battalion, I had four companies, each with three infantry stands, one command stand, and one heavy weapon stand. I also has a scouting patrol stand, a battalion command stand, and two medium machine gun stands. I also had one infantry gun for indirect fire, but with two-inch visibility, that was rather limited in application.

Marc's Japanese battalion was likely identical, although he also had the regimental commands stand with a big red sun flag that did ... something. I'm guessing morale. As it was three feet away in tabletop inches, unless he waved it atop Mission Hill and I was atop Gumdrop Hill, I would never see it. As you might guess, I never did spy the rising sun.

The Australian battalions were five or six companies each, supported by a couple mortars. They were dug into prepared positions atop the hill.



## Special Rules

The Australians received a P-40 flight for air support that would randomly arrive twice during the 12 turns.

*Clockwise from left: GM and Japanese player Marc, Australian Jake, and Australian Pat. This is the end of Turn 1. I've managed to get my battalion roughly into a line to threaten as much of Gumdrop Hill as I can.*



The Australians also had to roll to leave. I didn't pick up on exactly what this was or why until later in the game. In short, each company rolled a 1d10 and if it rolled high enough (the 'to leave' number went down each turn), that company could withdraw off the table.

What I didn't quite grasp is that the Australian companies could not move at all until a successful roll. Since this was basically a 1:1 attack (my 22 stands versus Pat's 18), I figured it would be an uphill battle (pa-dum-bum) to take Gumdrop Hill. The same went for Marc.

The Japanese could use Banzai rules. I used it in a previous game and I can say that a single defensive stand killed off two Japanese stands with firepower ... and still managed to get away thanks to my inability to roll a 1/3 kill result on six dice.

## The Attack

I was concentrated more to the northern half of Gumdrop Hill. Given the situation, I was concerned that Jake would send the bulk of his battalion on Mission Hill south towards Gumdrop Hill. I didn't like the idea of a pincer movement, but I guessed I should go as fast as I could to clear the prepared position on the north side of Gumdrop Hill to block Jake's escape attempt while trying to press Pat with the superior Japanese firepower.

*The end of Turn 2 finds sporadic firing on the left only as the right is out of range. Pat nailed my heavy weapons stand! I pinged bullets off the entrenchments.*



As it turns out, Japanese firepower was not so superior, but it sure looked so at the start.

## Advance

My first couple turns were to advance through the jungle. It is tough to get to within two inches. I was able to first trade ineffective shots with B company, although it later pinned me due to a failed morale roll while just being near Allied troops. So much for the spirit of Bushido. A bad d10 roll is a bad d10 roll.

I closed in the middle and traded shots. The Australian fire was more effective here. In Command Decision, you fire at a stand, but all stands within four inches are part of the "target" and can be hit, as determined by a random

roll. Sure enough, the one dead Japanese stand was the heavy weapons stand. Apparently death is of no concern, for I passed the morale roll.

On the right, the company with the attached Medium Machine Gun platoon (stand) finally advanced into range and traded shots.

## How Firing Works

I wasn't making much of an impression. I needed a 1, 2, or 3 (on a d10) to hit the Australians while Pat needed a 1, 2, 3, or 4 to hit my Japanese troops. Due to the defense adding 1 die when shooting on defense (i.e. not moving), the actual number of dice thrown was about even. His infantry stands tossed 2d10 looking for 4s or less while I tossed 1d10 looking for 3s or less. My heavy weapons and MMG stands tossed 2d10 looking for 5s or less.

First, you roll for hits. Then, for each hit, you roll for damage (1-4 is a whiff, 5-7 is a fall back, and 8+ eliminates a stand). So, you want low rolls for to hits and high rolls for damage. I'm not a fan of low-high idea -- I'd prefer "good" rolls to be all low or all high. But it's been engrained in CD mechanics for 40 years, so I imagine it won't be changed.

## Over On Mission Hill

Marc-san pushed troops south up the hill, trying to reach the top of Mission Hill. He scooted a couple companies around the flank and astride the Kokoda Trail, blocking the exit to Gumdrops Hill.

He was losing a lot of troops in the northern part of the hill. So much so that Jake joked he could leave the board to the north. Marc dispelled that illusion, noting that Japanese troops were following our two battalions. Indeed, he had a third battalion ready to go in case Japanese reinforcements were necessary.

## Air Raid!

That's when an Australian P-40 came buzzing along. As all Japanese troops were in jungle except the infantry guns and aircraft can only attack units in non-jungle terrain, the P-40 winged over and lined up on Marc's infantry gun. Alas, no AA fire.

The bomb missed, but the strafing took out the gun and accompanying mules.

*Marc-san's infantry gun and mules receive many punctures.*

The P-40 came back on a later turn and instead of going after my (largely ineffective) infantry gun, it lined up on the Japanese patrol stand atop Mission Hill. Once again the bomb missed and the strafing hit.



## Mid Game Push

By turn 5, I had cleared the southern leading edge of the hill, but the Australian B company held fast at the northern end. I noticed a company on the other side of the hill left their foxholes and headed my way.

When B company left to retreat down the Trail, I advanced after them and cleared the leading line of prepared positions. I was able to kill off a number of stands, but then again, so did Pat. In one devastating turn, I lost four platoons across the line. Yet, I made all morale rolls, including that for 6th Company, of which I only had the command stand and the attached MMG stand left. I rolled a 1 for morale. Now, that's the Bushido spirit. Those two stands advanced into the abandoned foxholes, but went no further for they faced intact Australians that had started the game there and more stands running down the trail.



## H&I Artillery Fire

Harassment and Interdiction (H&I) fire is a type of fire that drops in a "map coordinate" -- as such, it prevents stands from advancing IF, and I mean IF, they use a caution advance. If they use a hasty advance, no one pays any attention to the shells. It's a 1/3 chance of calling H&I in.

*End of Turn 5. I'm taking the lower reaches of Gumdrops Hill, but on my left, Australian B company hangs tough.*



When I saw the Australian stands start to retreat, I tried and failed to call in H&I. As it turns out, since the Allied stands were running as fast as their feeties would take them, H&I stands for Hopeless and Ineffective fire.

*End Turn 6 on Mission Hill. Marc-san cuts off the Australians (top of photo) as he presses on both sides of the trail.*



## End Game

We got through Turn 8, which isn't bad for three hours on a Friday night. Pat was in the process of withdrawing his troops off Gumdrops Hill and I couldn't catch him unless I charged, which would likely cause lots more casualties on my end of things. We had a bit of a discussion about the mechanics of trying to catch a retreating enemy -- because a stand can always rotate before the general fire phase, retreating enemy always turn to face and fire.

As for Jake, he had troops remaining on Mission Hill, but Marc had used half his force to cut off escape, plus I had most of my command parked on Gumdrops Hill, so we reasoned that Jake's remaining troops would be eliminated or captured.

*End of Turn 7. I've taken half of Gumdrops Hill, but Australian platoons flee down the Trail to safety.*



We added up the casualties: The Australians lost at least 18 stands, which is the magic number for a Japanese victory, but also retreated more than a dozen stands off the board, which is the magic number for an Australian victory. Thus, the game was a draw.

Historically, "my" Japanese battalion worked its way south through the jungle and set up a blocking position.

## Woulda Coulda

In retrospect, it would have made more sense for me to send at least one company due south around the end of Gumdrop Hill and cut off the Kokoda Trail, forcing the Australians to fight their way off the hill. At game start, my nearest company was four turns away from such a position and the next company was five turns away.

As I noted, I didn't grasp the importance of the Australian withdrawal rolls. I didn't know that the "leaving" roll meant "remain rooted in place until a successful die roll." I was told to clear the Trail, which meant an attack into a prepared position. I figured if I started to head around, the rear Australian companies would just shift position to block me.

I don't know what happens if I send a couple companies and we just stare at each other and don't attack -- probably another draw because the Japanese don't eliminate enough enemy stands and the Australians don't retreat enough stands off table.

## A Big Thanks

Nonetheless, it was another enjoyable evening learning more nuances of *CD*. As with anything else, the more times you play a ruleset, the faster you will play and the better you will play as you use those nuances. I noticed that Marc and Jake, both grognards of the rules, played faster than Pat and me. Sorry to hold you up, but it all worked out in the end.

Thanks for hosting and GMing, Marc.



*Top: End of Turn 8 and end of game. Pat retreats about half the Australians down the Trail, with one platoon as rearguard atop the hill.*

*Left: The Kokoda Trail is narrow and treacherous. Image from web.*

## Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

**The Battle of Pharsalus: 48 BC.** by Gareth C Sampson. Hardback (6.5x9.4 inches). 200 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Caesar, Pompey & Their Final Clash in the Third Roman Civil War*

Consider this a sequel to *The Battle of Dyrrhachium* (see the review in the 6/29/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org), although the first 50 pages of *Pharsalus* is basically a recap of Dyrrhachium. Starting on page 51, you get a fine analysis of the situation facing Caesar and Pompey and likely thoughts behind subsequent maneuvers.

The actual battle of Pharsalus is covered in pages 74 to 100. Given the sources available, it offers a reasonable extrapolation to examine movements and results. The battle is set within the greater context of the civil war across the entire Roman Empire.

The weakest part of the book involves the maps of the battle. You'd think that with all the graphics technology available, you'd get something better than a quartet of blocks per side that look like they've been drawn with Word's Insert-Shapes function. At best, it's an amateurish afterthought.

The book contains four "battle" black and white maps, five 1960s-standard general maps, and 19 black and white photos.

One typo: "loth to pressure" (p160) is likely "loathe."

This is the second of four books on the Roman Civil War, with Thapsus (46BC) and Munda (45BC) being the next two. I expect the same mix of history, analysis, and excerpts as the first two, but I'm really hoping that the battle graphics get a big boost. I'm not holding my breath, but hope springs eternal.

Enjoyed it.

**Anson: Royal Navy Commander and Statesman 1697-1762.** by Anthony Bruce. Softcover (6.8x9.7 inches). 245 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815 # 111*

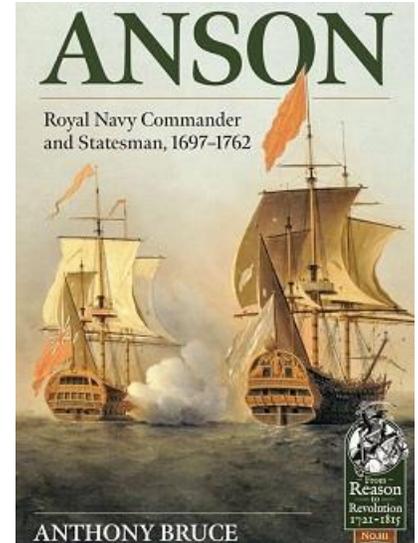
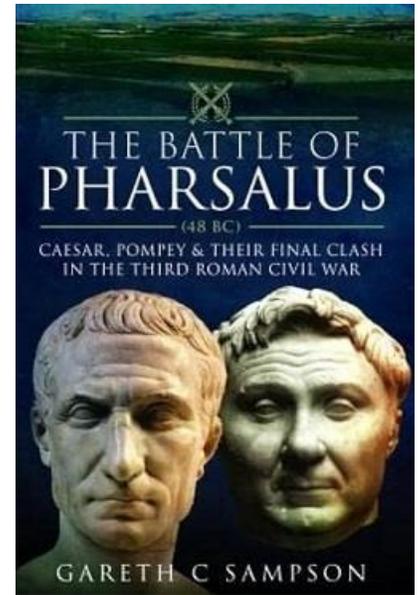
This biography of British First Lord of the Admiralty George Anson is part of the marvelous *From Reason to Revolution* series. Like the others, it is packed with details and erudite analysis -- this volume about the British naval situation and response before and during the Seven Years War. Besides leading fleets, Anson was at the center of Royal Navy policy, even if his suggestions were often ignored or thwarted among the Admiralty politics of the time.

After rising through the ranks, he becomes Commodore of a eight-ship task force sent to plunder the coasts of Peru and Chile during a war with Spain in the 1740s. His force was rather low on priorities, so his ships were smaller and the regular Army soldiers were used elsewhere. Instead, he received "500 Chelsea pensioners" discharged from hospitals, with most over 60 years old and more than a few carried on board the ships on stretchers. The mobile ones deserted, Anson discharged most of the rest, and he took in 300 completely untrained "mariners" (p30).

The passage around the tip of South America proved hazardous and only four of the ships made the rendezvous in th Pacific. Scurvy and other diseases killed about two-thirds of the crew and soldiers (p40), leaving only 335 of 961 alive (p41). Still, he raided the Pacific coast -- the storming of Paita with 58 men would make for a nifty tabletop scenario -- as far as Acapulco, although landing and capturing major towns and larger was never attempted as planned. Further losses reduced his force even more, forcing him to abandon ships.

Heading west, he made for China and ultimately made a successful refit with chutzpah, influence building, and a smidgen of gunboat diplomacy. He doubled back to the Philippines and took a treasure ship, which he later sold in China while bringing the silver back to England. He arrived back in Britain in 1744, circumnavigating the globe to acclaim.

The rest of the book proved just as fascinating, including commanding the fleet with success against the French at Cape Finistere, equalizing the ranks between Army and Navy (p111), standardizing officer uniforms (p112),



and organizing retirements to clean out aging admirals. Not everything was successful, with the loss of Minorca to the French proving painful and initial results of naval actions in the Seven Years War went against the British, but Anson proved equal to the challenge.

The book contains three black and white photos of estates, 10 black and white illustrations (portraits or paintings), and six black and white maps.

This engaging biography offers a favorable portrait of Anson and a sharp analysis of the changing naval situation as the decades rolled by. There's not much on his home life, for he spent a considerable time away at sea or overworked at the Admiralty and his wife died young from fever and he had no children. Reading this makes me want to break out a game of *Close Action* or *As Per Margin*.

Enjoyed it.

**F8F Bearcat: Legends of Warfare.** by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 112 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Grumman's Late War Dogfighter*

The Bearcat, from what I gather, did not see combat during WWII. Although prototypes were ordered in Nov 1943, the first planes were delivered to the USN in Feb 1945 and the first fleet deployment was to Fighter Squadron 19 in May 1945 (p12).

In between is a bit of a conundrum about when the prototype first flew. It was either August 21, 1944 (p4), August 31, 1944 (p6), or September 21, 1944 (p8). The text notes the same BuNo for the latter two dates.

As with all volumes in the series, you get a visual feast: 91 black and white photos, 15 black and white illustrations, 94 color photos, and five color profiles. These are exhaustive photo examinations of various systems, especially from planes on display in museums. The text is minimal, but the captions are extensive.

The Bearcat was quickly superseded by jet aircraft. The US equipped 24 Navy and USMC squadrons with Bearcats, although the most famous squadron was the Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Team from 1946 to 1950 (p56). Surplus Bearcats went to Thailand and France and later to South Vietnam.

Another fine addition to the series.

Enjoyed it.



**Siege Warfare: During the Hundred Years War.** by Peter Hoskins. Softcover (6.1x9.3 inches). 234 pages. 2022 reprint of 2018 book.

Subtitle: *Once More Unto The Breach*

As with many medieval subjects, source availability remains key to deciphering the history of Western Europe sieges during the Hundred Years War. This overview covers 84 individual sieges with as much detail as possible given that limitation. Some of these sieges are well known, such as the Siege of Calais, Harfleur, and Orleans, but most are relatively obscure. Yet they all share certain attributes, from the way they were persecuted to the ultimate success or failure of the besieging force.

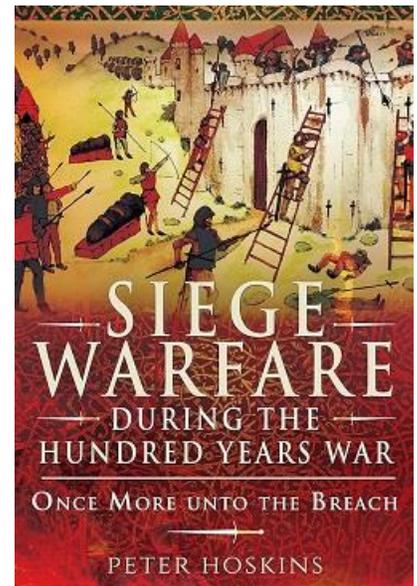
The history unfolds with comprehensive milestones to support the overall war situation. Sometimes, reasoned speculation is included within a siege description, which is much welcomed to try and make sense of conflicting historical accounts.

The prose is sometimes inspired and sometimes insipid, but when essentially dealing with 84 of the same thing, understandable. Numbers are included when available. The appendix covers a table of the sieges as well as averages length, outcomes, and so on.

The book contains 30 color photos of fortifications and recreated siege weapons, four black and white tactical maps (without scales) of towns, and 12 black and white maps with named dots of siege locations. I certainly would have preferred more maps detailing the towns so I might recreate the history on the tabletop. Other books have these, but other books do not cover 84 sieges.

It's a nice recap of HYW sieges and various siege weapons and techniques.

Enjoyed it.



**SR-71 Blackbird: Legends of Warfare.** by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Lockheed's Ultimate Spy Plane*

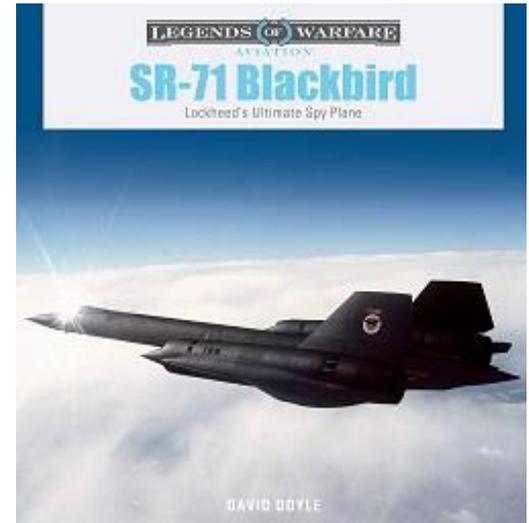
Having just read the exhaustive *Dreamland*, which examined SR-71 design and development at Area 51 (see the review in the 10/26/2023 AAR or up on HMGS.org), this volume in the *Legends of Warfare* series proved to be a photogenic companion volume. Besides USAF photos, you get photos of museum aircraft, primarily from the Udvar-Hazy Museum outside Washington DC.

The book contains 235 color photos, 49 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and one color illustration. As with the other volumes in the series, the text is minimal and the captions maximal.

Yet tidbits abound. During the Vietnam War, 4,500 missiles were fired at Blackbirds and none hit (p45). You start the aircraft with a Buick...welllll, a V-8 engine from a Buick mounted on a Start Cart (p63 to p65). The jet flew from Washington DC to Los Angeles in 67 minutes and 54 seconds (p123). Man, I can't cross New Jersey during the day in that short a time.

Nicely compiled.

Enjoyed it.



**Luftwaffe Eagle: A WWII German Airman's Story.** by Erich Sommer. Softcover (5.8x8.2 inches). 222 pages. 2022 reprint of 2018 book.

This autobiography starts when Erich was a wee lad and ends with him discharged from a holding camp on June 29, 1945 to reunite with his wife and parents in Munich. In between is a fast-moving story of a kid becoming a brewery apprentice and part-time Luftwaffe navigator apprentice in the mid to late 1930s until called up permanently in September 1939.

He trained on the DO-17 and HE-111 until assigned to the reserve unit to replace HE-111 losses. His first air mission was in March 1940, but he was soon assigned to the invasion of Norway in April 1940. He bombed targets in and around the Oslo fjord and later Narvik. He was transferred to Trondheim (Norway) and later France.

By August 1940, he was on night bombing missions over Britain, and then went for officer training in November 1940. In May of 1941, he received an award for completing 110 missions, although he grouched it was more like 130. He made Lieutenant in July 1941 and by June of 1942, he was in Casablanca in a liaison role with the French.

In July 1942, he was assigned to the navigation system research section near Berlin and later on received his pilot's license. He tested bombing Britain from 40,000 feet in a JU-86 and later transferred into the Arado AR-234 test program. He flew the first recon mission over D-Day beaches With an AR-234 on August 2, 1944, taking 380 photos (p132).

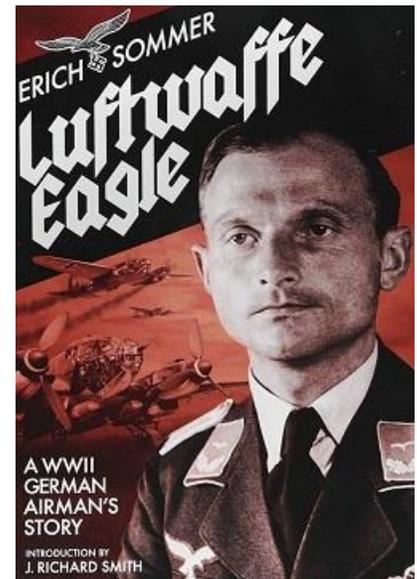
In a what-if scenario, he was training to fly the Horten IX, a twin-jet engine wing that would break the sound barrier -- although in his opinion such a thick wing would never carry the plane through the barrer. The prototype flew twice, but crashed in its third flight in February 1945, while he was performing AR-234 flights. He later saw plans for the four-jet engine Horten XVIII that would supposedly carry an Atomic bomb across the Atlantic, but dismisses this as nonsense (p122-123).

One factoid: The Jumo 004 jet engine was rated for 20 hours of operation, but he used to goose it to 45 hours before replacement.

The book contains 99 black and white photos.

It's an interesting look inside the Luftwaffe from the bomber navigator's and bomber pilot's perspective rather than the usual fighter pilot memoirs. On the other hand, he served mostly in specialty units from mid-war on, so his experience is not the typical bomber experience as the Luftwaffe lost air superiority. His commentary on the AR-234 program, including missions, is golden.

Enjoyed it.



**Forgotten War.** by Brian E Walter. Hardback (6.3x9.2 inches). 314 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The British Empire and Commonwealth's Epic Struggle Against Imperial Japan 1941-1945*

The book actually starts pre-WWII and the first couple chapters nicely recap early WWII campaigns. It certainly provides a sense of Britain and Commonwealth armed forces deployments and reactions as the Germans overran Europe.

A cornucopia of numbers inundates not only these two chapters but the entire book, offering the quantitative evidence to support the qualitative analysis. December 7, 1941 starts on page 65 and the war in the Pacific and Indian Oceans play out with concise campaigns and strategic insight for both Japan and Britain.

Of course, US numerical support factors into the war, but the emphasis is on British, Australian, and New Zealand actions. During the Japanese steamroller, contributions were small as the Germany First strategy was in effect, but after the surrender of Italy in 1943, Britain devoted more and more resources to the Indian Ocean side of things. Late in the war, significant British land, air, and sea forces reached the Pacific -- including the defense of India and reconquest of Burma and Thailand.

A couple minor typos: "gaging Fourteenth Army success" (p158) is likely "gauging," but that might be a British spelling. And "shotty practices" (p240) is likely "shoddy." I also think the font could be a smidge larger, but it's readable.

I can't confirm or deny the numbers within, but it all seems right. For example, Japan lost 332 out of 451 major surface warships and subs (73.6%) and 85% of merchant ships (p232). All the charts list a source, so I have a high confidence in the numerical accuracy.

The book contains 34 black and white photos and four black and white maps.

"Forgotten" may be a bit too strong given that the Indian Ocean realized a lower priority than Europe and North Africa, but the British and Commonwealth contributions to the Allied war effort deserve the quality recap and analysis that this book provides.

Enjoyed it.

**Fighting From the Heavens.** by Chris McNab. Hardback (6.3x9.2 inches). 214 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Tactics and Training of USAAF Bomber Crews 1941-45*

This basically republishes US Army Air Force manuals designed to inform B-17, B-24, and B-25 bomber crews of their duties and responsibilities on the ground and in the air.

As such, it reads like government manuals. I can't say I read every word -- I mostly skipped through until something caught my eye, read a couple pages, and skipped anew.

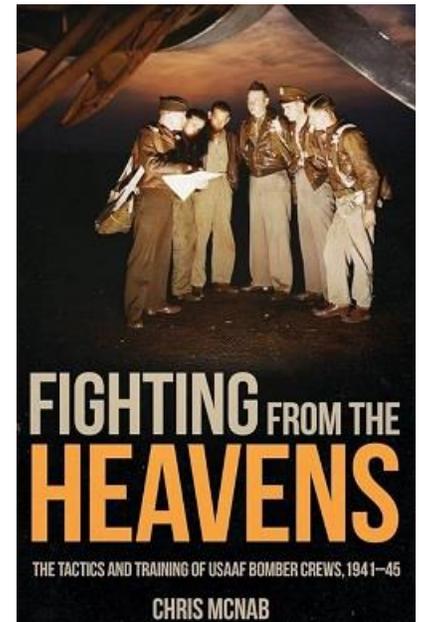
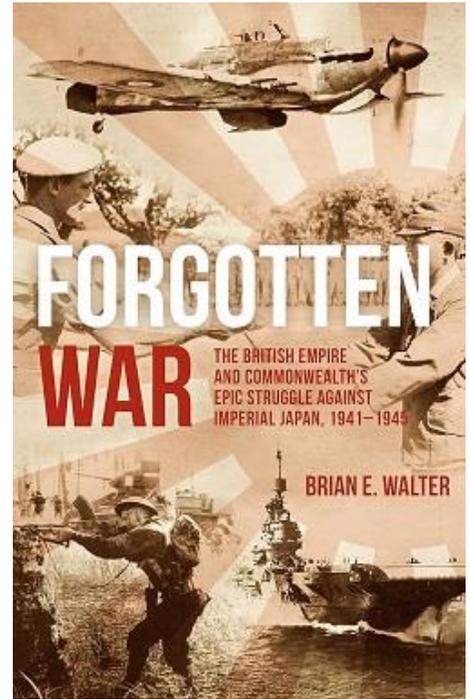
A few points I noted was that between 1941 and 1945, the USAAF air gunnery schools turned out 297,000 gunners (p123) and the 50-cal MG had an effective of 600 yards (p149).

A couple typos: place the lamp test switch to "MOM" (p68) is probably "ON" and insert "beater" tube (p85) is likely "heater" tube. Seems like uncaught scanning errors.

I did read the assorted first-person anecdotes from the airmen about flying home shot-up aircraft and so on. The best one was the bomber crew that made a forced landing on a crater-marked Spitfire airfield in Belgium that happened to be the same airfield the crew had bombed earlier in the year.

The book contains 26 black and white photos and 34 black and white illustrations.

If you are into original source material for US WWII bombers, here's your book.



**Frogman Stories.** by Rick Kaiser. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 154 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Life and Leadership Lessons From The SEAL Teams*

As a member of Seal Team Two and Seal Team Six, Kaiser's well placed to offer his views on the training that makes a SEAL and keeps him sharp.

Kaiser's been all over the world, from warm waters to frigid Norwegian and Greenland terrain, constantly training to keep him and his team sharp.

Fun fact: I never thought of about diving around a warship -- don't go near water intakes in the hull. He didn't. Another fun fact: If you dive in polluted waters, you can get hepatitis, which he did.

There's little actual combat, although his ordeal in the streets of Mogadishu (Somalia) as a sniper is recalled with brevity and purpose. Training is dangerous enough, especially when using live ammo and assuming the walls were ballistic proof. A hostage training scenario went horribly wrong when an inner room was not equipped with ballistic proof walls. His shot went through and killed a fellow SEAL.

His worst injury came as a result of a parachuting accident -- into a dock for his own lakeside wedding!

All throughout the book are little lessons he learned from a variety of mishaps to him or someone else. Much revolve around military applications of weapons, equipment, and planning, but many can be applied to civilian life as well. He's in the business of problem solving and as he rose up the ranks he used creative solutions to solve problems. The scraping of parking lot stickers shows what a little practice and incentive can do to resolve an issue.

The book contains an eight-page center section of 19 color photos and two black and white photos.

Humorous anecdotes aren't front and center, but his use of a cell phone jammer at his daughter's sleepover to get the girls to interact with each other and not the phones was devious and hilarious. I've been to a few restaurants where I'd like to apply the same electronic solution.

It's an easy read and a view into SEAL training and occasional need to use those skills.

Enjoyed it.

**The Armour of Hitler's Allies in Action 1943-1945: Images of War.** by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 127 pages. 2023.

The photos offer a glimpse into the variety of tanks, armored cars, and other vehicles the Germans sent the Hungarians, Romanians, and Bulgarians.

The text is minimal, but the mention of the Bulgarian communist partisan groups was new to me. The stronger they grew, the more tanks and armored cars were sent into the mountain regions.

Eventually, these countries flipped to the Soviet side and used their German tanks against the Germans -- so I guess *Flames of War* tournament armies that pit late-war German units against Germans is actually accurate. Of note, the Soviets issued 14 captured Panther tanks to the Bulgarian 1st Armored Regiment (p52).

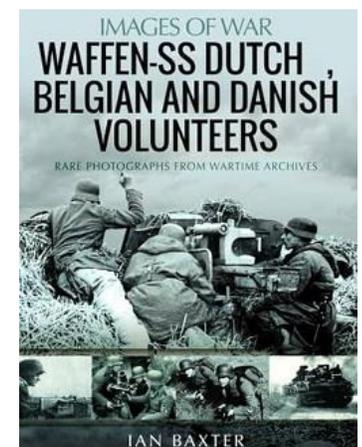
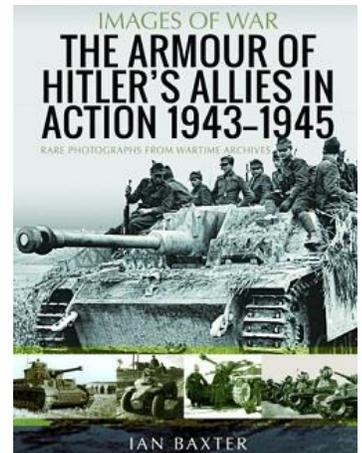
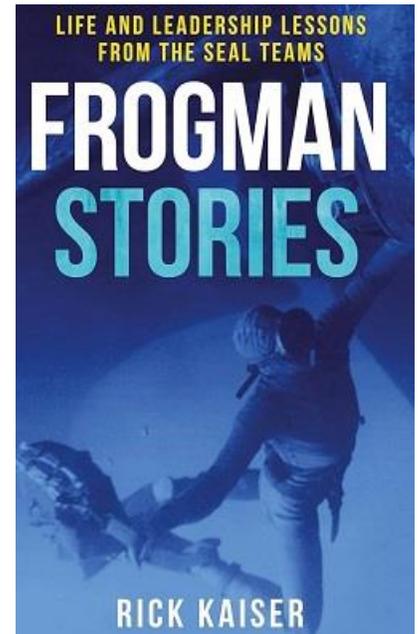
Minimalist OOBs are at the back of the book as is a run-down the of the tanks and other armored vehicles used by the three German allies.

The book contains 150 black and white photos and 13 black and white tank profile illustrations. As most of the photos depict German tanks and armored cars, it's not exactly new material save for the different markings. However, the photos of the allied vehicles, like the Turan tank or modified R-2 and T-60 anti-tank vehicles are interesting.

Enjoyed it.

**Waffen-SS Dutch, Belgian and Danish Volunteers: Images of War.** by Ian Baxter. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 154 pages. 2023.

The usual photo-heavy volume includes lots of front-line photos including a considerable number with associated heavy weapons such as machine guns, AA guns,



AT guns, mortars, and so on. Nebelwerfers also make an appearance in a trio of photos (p64-65). It's always good to include these heavy weapons to help modelers flesh out mini dioramas on a stand.

Parade formations, including handing out Iron Crosses, are also inside, which gives you an idea of the uniforms of higher-level officers. A handful of photos include tanks, motorcycles, and other vehicles.

Concise histories chronicle the rise and fall of these SS divisions, but the captions provide the bulk of the commentary surrounding the photos.

The book contains 177 black and white photos, six black and white poster illustrations, and seven black and white unit insignias.

The end of the book contains OOB info for various divisions often down to regiment and battalion level and sometimes company.

It's a nice balance of photos. Enjoyed it.

**Medieval Indian Armies (2): Men-At-Arms 552.** by David Nicolle. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Indo-Islamic Forces 7th - Early 16th Centuries*

India was part of an extensive trading network with Arabia and Africa, which led to cultural exchanges and then the inevitable Islamic military operations that sought to capture resources and people.

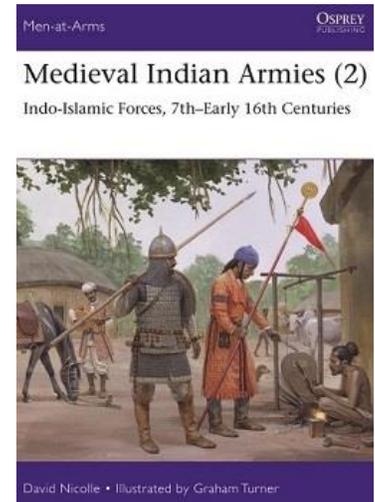
This roughly chronological overview covers a century of uniforms, armor, and weaponry in the usual Men At Arms format.

Of course, the main feature is an eight-page center section of color uniforms for a variety of foot and mounted troops -- 26 infantry, eight horses, one camel, and two elephants. The booklet also contains 14 black and white photos, 27 color photos, 21 black and white illustrations, and five color illustrations.

One typo (p9): took "price" in his elephants should be "pride."

For someone like me without much knowledge of the area from Dark Ages to the end of the Medieval period, it's a nice encapsulation.

Enjoyed it.



**P-39 Airacobra: Legends of Warfare.** by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Bell Fighter in WWII*

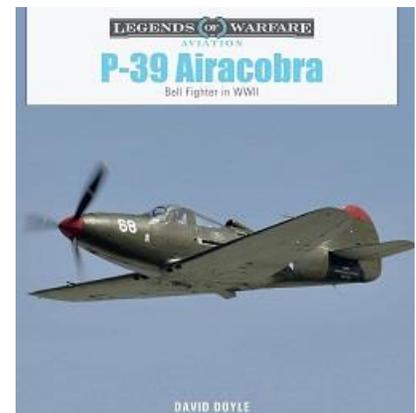
The popular photo-heavy series gains a volume devoted to an underrated fighter and ground attack aircraft of WWII. Design and development overviews combine with extensive captions for the photos of the prototype through its wartime look. Specs for the variations are included.

The Soviets proved far more enthusiastic about the P-39 than the Western Allies, but USSR photos are minimal in this book. What you do get is an extensive photo collection of all the alphabet variations from the P-39A through the P-39Q plus the P-400 (UK version) and a handful of TP-39 (trainer). Lots of external views, but also cockpit and individual system shots for the details that modelers appreciate.

The book contains 147 black and white photos, 27 black and white illustrations, 66 color photos, one color illustration (nose art), and 12 color aircraft profiles. Note that the P-63 Kingcobra is not covered.

Interesting shot: Two P-39Ds in formation during the US's 1941 military maneuvers sport red crosses forward of the tail to indicate they are part of Red Force.

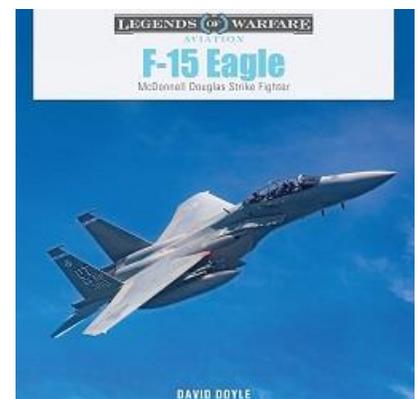
As I've noted before, these books are valuable references for modelers. Enjoyed it.



**F-15 Eagle: Legends of Warfare,** by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *McDonnell Douglas Strike Fighter*

The F-15 entered service in 1974 while the F-16 entered service in 1978. The F-15 went from drawing board to production without the creation of a prototype -- the first 18 were "Full Scale Development" planes (p6), although



"prorotype" might be a better word as changes were made to subsequent models as these aircraft flew and problems were discovered.

I do like the public relations aspect of the camouflage -- the fighter was painted in "Air Superiority Blue." I guess that's better than "Wreckage Red."

Like other volumes in the series, you get a full photographic history of the aircraft, including versions and associated camouflage for planes used by Japan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and others.

The book contains 20 black and white photos, 13 black and white illustrations, 283 color photos, and five color aircraft profiles.

Two cool photos among the many: A formation of a F-15A, F-4C, F-104, and F-5E in flight (p100) and a dismounted static engine test in full force (p118).

It's another fine reference for modelers.

Enjoyed it.

**M-26 Pershing: Legends of Warfare.** by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *America's Medium/Heavy Tank in World War II and Korea*

After US tankers ran into Panther and Tiger tanks, the US sought to design a heavier tank than the Sherman -- even though many were opposed as many Shermans could defeat few Panthers and Tigers. Designs went ahead and the T-26 Pershing with a 76mm gun and then 90mm gun entered production and the first models reached Europe in January 1945 and were assigned to the 3rd and 9th Armored Divisions. First combat was on February 25, 1945 and by March, another 40 T-26s were allocated to the 2nd and 5th Armored Divisions (p26). In July, T-26s were sent to Okinawa, but the fighting was over before they could be deployed in battle.

The Korean War found M-26s in battle in all facets: tank on tank, artillery support, and infantry support. In tank on tank battles with T-34/85s, the US lost six Pershings but destroyed 97 T-34/85s (p98).

The photos cover the tank from prototype and factory production models to system close ups to battlefield use. The book contains 171 black and white photos, five black and white illustrations, 110 color photos, one color illustration (sprocket), and 10 color tank profiles.

A couple interesting photos show the aftereffects of mine damage to the track system (p128, p137) and efforts by an M32 tank recovery vehicle to extricate a Pershing from a crater (p138, p139).

I repeat myself: Another fine reference for modelers.

Enjoyed it.

**Boeing YC-14: Legends of Warfare.** by John K. Wimpres. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 128 pages. 2023.

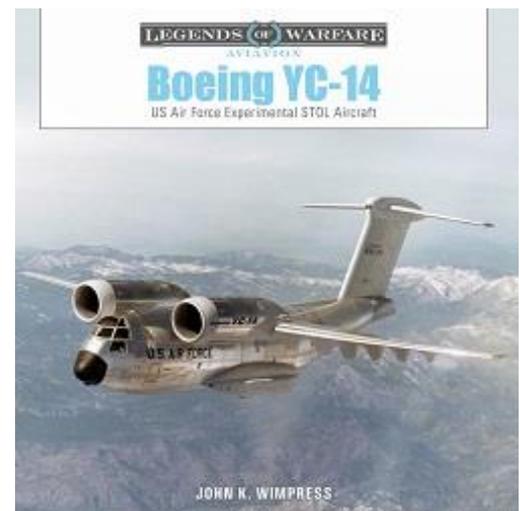
Subtitle: *US Air Force Experimental STOL Aircraft*

This book is a bit different from the other photo maximal and text minimal volumes in the series. The author helped design and manage the project, winning innovation awards for his efforts. So, this is part memoir and part incredibly detailed aerospace engineering analysis of the design process.

Let me emphasize the dense aerospace development and engineering aspect of the text. I skipped around the text enough to get the gist of the design elements, but did not hang on every word.

The book contains 22 black and white photos, 37 black and white illustrations, 70 color photos, and nine color illustrations.

So, there is not a lot of tabletop or even map maneuvering use of this aircraft for wargamers. If you are an aerospace engineer, this is a brilliant book. If you are interested in becoming an aerospace engineer, this is a brilliant book. If you are modeler of obscure aircraft, this is a brilliant book. However, if you are a wargamer, not so much.



**Luftwaffe Fighter Pilot: Defending the Reich Against the RAF and USAAF.** by Wolfgang Fischer. Softcover (5.8x8.2 inches). 229 pages. 2022 reprint of 2010 book.

This memoir covers the chronological assignments and missions of a young Luftwaffe pilot who progressed through the training program on a variety of planes before ending up as a ME-109 pilot. Before that, he was apparently so good he served as an instructor himself.

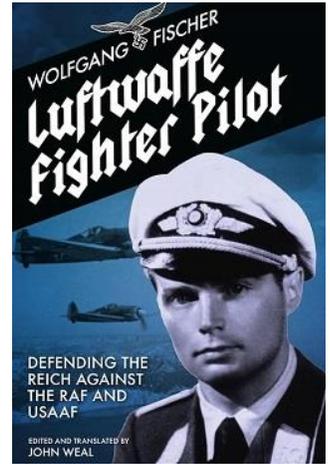
He was shot down in Italy and then returned to retrain on FW-190s. He was again shot down, this time over Normandy, where he was captured and sent to the US as a POW to Como, MS.

This is mostly a sober accounting of his time, with few hijinks. Indeed, his account as a POW proved just as interesting as his time in the cockpit. There were escape attempts -- one German POW got as far as New Orleans before being caught by boarding a "blacks only" tram. Another group got as far as the Mississippi River before being caught.

The German POWs had created an escape committee -- if you've seen the movie *The Great Escape*, you have a general idea of its organization.

The book contains 75 black and white photos and two black and white illustrations.

This is an easy book to read, especially with the details on the training program and then the POW experience. Enjoyed it.



**Bletchley Park Codebreakers: In Their Own Words.** by Joel Greenberg. Hardback (Horizontal: 6.5x9.4 inches). 350 pages. 2022.

From administrative thoughts in the 1930s to ramp up and full operation during WWII, the reminiscences of the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park offer candid observations.

The book contains letters by the staff, some during WWII and some way after the war when they were asked for comments and remembrances of their duties and breakthroughs for other books and histories. It's not a history, but the basis for a history.

A Benedict Cumberbatch movie, *The Imitation Game*, dealt with the subject, although other than a guy named Alan Turing and a world war, nothing in the movie was even close to history. I think the uniforms were accurate. No mention of that movie is in this book.

However, a 2001 Kate Winslet movie, *Enigma*, did consult some of the staff, although one codebreaker wrote "film is amusing enough, but I think wholly inaccurate about life at Bletchley Park and the technicalities" (p75).

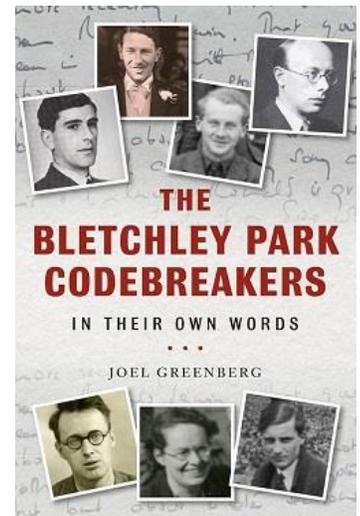
Thus, books of original material serve as a valuable source of accurate information. That doesn't mean their memories are intact, but they admit when they are unsure of some topic or person.

For example, the British had four to six "bombes" (calculating machines) in operation by August 1941 with 1,600 staff by the end of 1941 (p92). By late 1942 or early 1943, 70 bombes were in operation and run by 700 dedicated Wrens (female personnel)(p102).

The book contains 35 black and white photos. It's well copy edited given the amount of transcription effort.

The letters offer the psychology of the times, complete with triumphs, failures, and anxieties that occurred. I found the organizational battles for fiefdoms and control of the bombes rather entertaining.

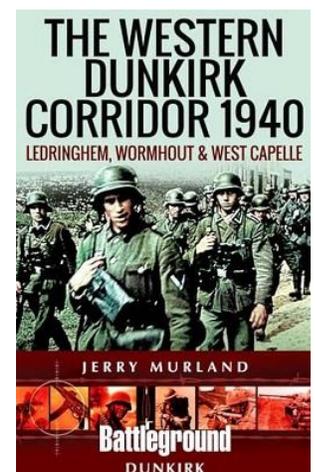
Compilation books are fantastic for those writing articles about the British codebreaking efforts. As a general history, not as much because the subjects shift from letter to letter, even though Greenberg roughly arranged them by topic. If you like this topic, here's your source material to read.



**The Western Dunkirk Corridor 1940: Battleground.** by Jerry Murland. Softcover (5.4x8.4 inches). 112 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Ledringhem, Wormhout, Bamebecque & West Cappel*

The Battleground series of booklets, and there must be 200 of them by now, combines history with travel. As per the format, unit by unit and location by location and



day by day, the war around Dunkirk unfolds as the Germans try to capture the port.

German and British OOBs, combined with some of the maps, can be mined for lower-level tabletop scenarios. It gets down to company level and is peppered with first-person accounts.

Of note is the Massacre at Wormhout, where the SS machine-gunned British prisoners of war.

The driving tours are also part of the book, offering precise directions to various battlefield locations.

The book contains 88 black and white photos and seven black and white maps. The photos are a mix of WWII-era photos and modern photos.

Enjoyed it.

**Allied Air Operations: 1939-1940.** by Jerry Murland. Hardback (Horizontal: 6.5x9.4 inches). 128 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *The War Over France and the Low Countries*

This book covers the air war from the 1939 Phoney War to the June 22, 1940 surrender of France with overview of British, French, and German organization and OOBs. Of note was the split command of the French Air Force with the Army, which hindered coordination.

Both sides soon found that unescorted bombers proved vulnerable, thus ending the myth of the bomber always gets through. Air to air combats receive enough detail to create a number of tabletop scenarios as attrition soon encroached on all combatants' operations. For example, of the 452 Hurricanes that British deployed to France, only 66 returned back to British soil (p139).

This also covers the Italian air offensive, small that it was, from June 10-24, 1940.

The appendices summarize aircraft types and performance. The book contains 78 black and white photos.

The actual air combats present a mix of tension and routine by their participants. By the end of the book, they did tend to start reading alike. Pilots are pilots across all air forces, I suppose, but leadership at the higher levels was definitely not the same. This book will help you understand why and what happened.

Enjoyed it.

**Valentine Tank vs. Panzer III: Duel 132.** by Bruce Oliver Newsome. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *North Africa 1941-43*

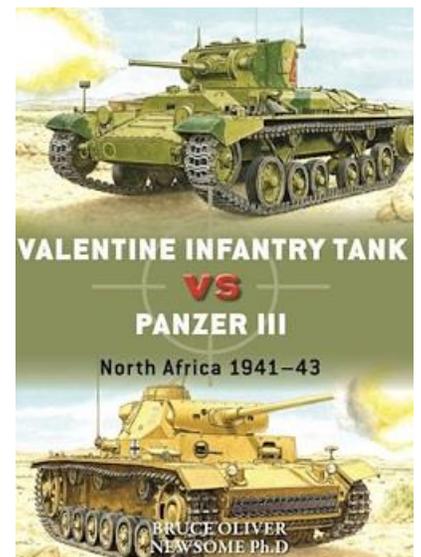
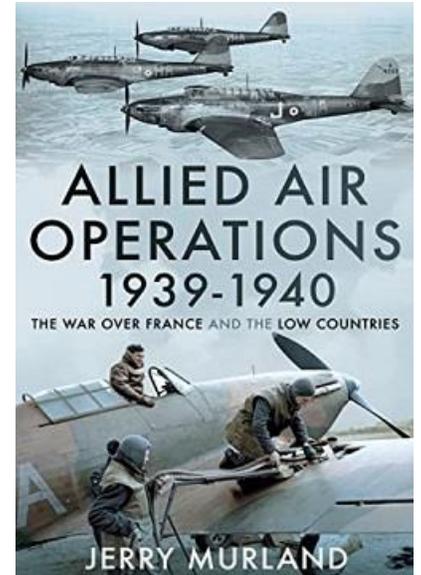
The editor was asleep at the keyboard when it came to consistency. While the German tank was initially referred to as Panzer III (Roman numerals), by page 6 it became Pz3. After that, it was a crap shoot about which numerical system would be used. On page 34, it was both "Panzer III" and "Pz3F." To be fair, the Valentine II and III references were always in Roman numerals.

Also, the Panzer III spec chart and illustration was in the Valentine section and the Valentine chart and illustration was in the Panzer III section. In some ways, this is understandable. The technical descriptions are co-mingled like a bad recycling day after a concert in the park.

Short bios of various tankers are likewise scattered throughout the booklet. Sometimes they're on the top of the page. Sometimes on the bottom. Sometimes on the top and bottom.

The booklet contains 41 black and white photos, five color photos, 12 color illustrations, two color maps, and one color two-page action illustration.

The information is fine, but I was flabbergasted and flummoxed at the jumbled end result. Maybe a deadline that needed to be met "now" and the summer intern was the only one around? Maybe the author was overbearing and the editors said, "Oh, yeah?" and didn't edit the scattershot text and then split his name on the cover. Maybe they want an association with Dennis Oliver, author of many marvelous *TankCraft* books over the years? Dunno.



Yep, that's pretty snarky, but this is so out of whack for an Osprey. OK, that's even snarkier. Let's just call it a day and say that this was the one that got away.

**F4F Wildcat: Dogfight 9.** by Edward M Young. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *South Pacific 1942-43*

All Osprey series follow a defined format, and the volumes in the *Dogfight* series are no different. A quick few pages of air combat is followed by an overview of the situation, how pilots trained and bonded, a technical overview of the aircraft, tactics used, and first-person and other accounts of combats.

The F4F gets the full treatment and accounts are generally favorable for the F4F versus Japanese aircraft. Sometimes, the text plays a little fast and loose with the numbers, especially when comparisons are not made between reported victories and actual victories. Pilots exaggerated all the time, and rather understandable given the swirling nature of air combat, but a little more Claringbould-esque comparisons would be better.

The booklet contains 47 black and white photos, three color photos, one color map, three color illustrations, three two-page 'ribbon' action illustrations of a particular dogfight, and one two-page action illustration.

By the end of this book, you'll understand how combat results occurred given the men, machines, tactics, and strategy. In this case, it's the F4F in the early to mid years of the Pacific War. It's a solid contribution to the series.

Enjoyed it.

**A6M2/3 Zero-sen: Dogfight 10.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *New Guinea and the Solomons 1942*

I was pleasantly surprised to see Claringbould as the author -- smart on Osprey's part. He's logged many a mile in and around the Pacific islands looking for lost aircraft and probably many more hours than that in archives. Of import is that he compares US and Japanese claims and actual losses.

He follows the usual *Dogfight* format, so you get the full story of Japanese pilot training, tactics, and aircraft capability. The wear and tear on men and machines in the South Pacific, especially with minimal rotations out of theater, start to affect air operations. Growing US technical enhancements tilt the air advantage to the US. Still, 1942 and to a certain extent 1943 will find the Japanese competent opponents.

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

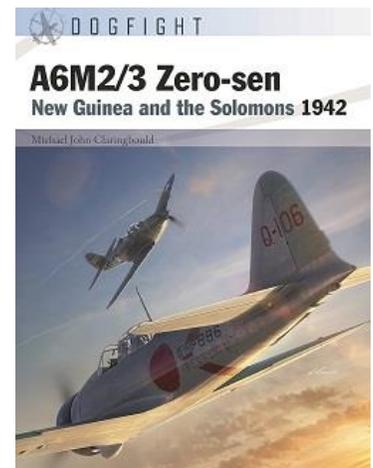
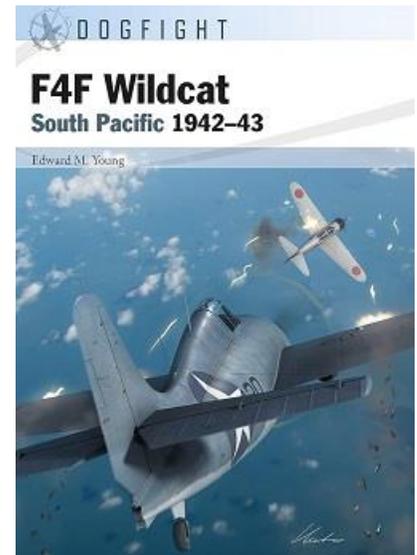
Claringbould has a considerable number of books about the air war in the Pacific theater. Here's hoping this Osprey booklet attracts a broader audience to his excellence.

Enjoyed it.

**Harrier GR 7/9 Units in Combat: Combat Aircraft 151.** by Michael Napier. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

The Harrier served in a variety of war zones, including those covered by this booklet: Iraq, Afghanistan, Belize, Bosnia, Kosovo, and some aircraft carrier-based ops. While I'm not knowledgeable about modern air warfare, I can always find tidbits within an Osprey booklet to keep me reading.

So...Belize? What war happened in Belize? Well, in this case, none, but in 1975, the British detected Guatemalan forces massing on the border and decided to send a little air power over them to get the Guatemalan government to reconsider. It did and no invasion took place (p18-19). Now, that's a die roll for some scenario...



Most of the first-person accounts deal with AA, not air-to-air combat. The Serbians like to jam British air strike frequencies with music or recording of previous missions (p57). The latter didn't work too well as the British pilots learned quickly to ignore it.

The booklet contains 52 color photos, one black and white photo, 24 color aircraft profiles, four color unit badges, and two color nose-art illustrations.

You can likely pull out some bombing missions for the tabletop.

Enjoyed it.

**Operation Pedestal 1942: Campaign 394.** by Angus Konstam. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Battle for Malta's Lifeline*

I rather enjoyed this overview of a British convoy that sailed to resupply Malta in 1942 and the battles that occurred as the Germans and Italians tried to stop it. It follows the *Campaign* format with OOBs, technical analysis, commanders, and so forth before providing the recap of the historical battle and the analysis of what went right and wrong -- on both sides.

Since this is rather well documented, let me start at the end: Of the 14 cargo ships bound for Malta, nine were sunk and the rest damaged. In addition, the Royal Navy lost an aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and a destroyer sunk, with other warships damaged. The Axis lost two submarines sunk and 60 aircraft shot down.

From a tactical perspective, the British took it on the chin. From a strategic perspective, Malta remained operational as a base that interrupted Axis supply efforts to North Africa.

Some points that had me scratching my head. The Spitfire Vs to be delivered to Malta had new four-bladed propellers that were too big to launch from the CV Furious "due to a hump in her flight deck" (p33). Er...what hump?

The carrier *HMS Eagle* was torpedoed and began to list. As the flight deck canted, fighters fell into the sea "and the way came off the ship as she lost power" (p37). I puzzled over "way." Later (p67), another ship had the "way" come off. To my ears, it's either a slang or some sort of variation on "underway."

And this nugget: A SM79 carried a 1,000kg bomb with radio-controlled guidance system (p42). The pilot aimed at a carrier and bailed out, with the SM79 guided by an accompanying CANT Z.1007bis. The Italians had radio-controlled aircraft? I knew the Germans had radio-controlled glide bombs in 1943, but Italian radio-controlled aircraft in 1942? No specific details except that the system failed. You see, there's nothing new like history...

The booklet contains two color photos, 61 black and white photos, nine color maps, and two two-page color action illustrations.

This just screams for a tabletop scenario. Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.

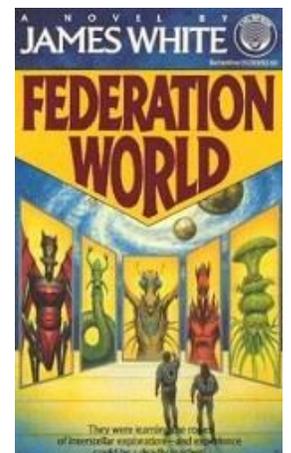
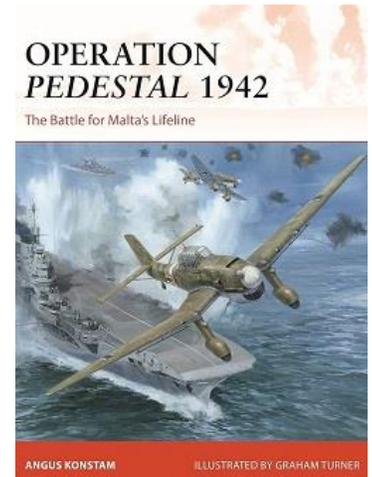
**Federation World.** by James White. Paperback (4.2x6.9 inches). 284 pages. 1988.

The premise proved intriguing: high-tech aliens set up shop to screen humans and see if they were worthy to go through a gateway. They don't say where it leads to or what awaits on the other side other than being a citizen on a Dyson sphere. Would they be eaten? Enslaved? Live the life of luxury?

The main characters, however, are not allowed through the citizen door and instead sent through the other door to be trained as First Contact specialists. They're sent to encourage other species to allow the high-tech shop with the two doors. Thus, the plot follows them on missions.

I didn't quite buy the shift from the captivating decision-making thoughts about whether or not to apply for citizenship to first contact folks who knew little about what citizens do or get.

Maybe that's revealed in total later, but I only lasted about half the book.



**Dykstra's War.** by Jeffrey D. Kooistra. Paperback (4.2x6.8 inches). 284 pages. 1988.

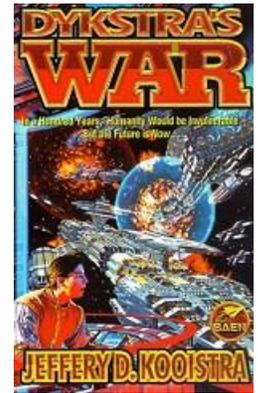
Dr. Dykstra is a 126-year-old supergenius (think Einstein, Hawking, Tesla, and Montgomery Scott all rolled into one) who invented lots of high-tech goodies and expanded the theory and application of human physics.

The Phinons are aliens out in the Oort Cloud that decided humans had gotten too smart and starting attacking and killing outposts. Genocide was in the alien agenda and their higher-than-us tech allowed them to do so with virtual impunity.

Dykstra gets the call to save humanity by reverse-engineering captured alien tech while Dr. Samantha 'Sunshine' McTavish works on a DNA virus to rot the aliens from the inside out. Of course, the aliens move against Earth with a million-ship fleet...

A bit of a research thriller combined with a few spaceship encounters while the aliens form up and head towards the sun make this a fine novel. Sure, Dykstra's a little too smart, the bureaucracy is a bit too lightweight, and the heroes are more than suitably heroic, but that's part of the charm of this novel.

Enjoyed it.



**On The Eastern Front at 17.** by Sergey Drobyazko. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 247 pages. 2022 translated reprint of 2008 book.

Subtitle: *The Memoirs of a Red Army Soldier*

What an interesting and lucky life this fellow led during WWII. This is a foxhole-level view of his Red Army service -- he describes his section of six soldiers and that's about it. No real platoon-level or higher tactics, no operations, no grand strategy -- just day to day survival.

Conscripted in July 1942 as the Germans drove to Stalingrad, he seemed to have not gotten any training. Assigned to a unit, he grabbed a 20mm AT gun. Ergo, he was an AT gunner and tossed into the front lines. In August, the Germans overran his unit and he was captured. A wiser, older POW shepherded him through the process and he ultimately became a laborer for the Germans.

Of all things, he was assigned back in his hometown Krasnodor. He subsequently escaped in December 1942 and hid in his mother's house until liberated by advancing Soviet troops in February 1943.

This time, he received training as a mortar crewman for the 353rd Division, although it seems he was also used as a platoon runner and rifleman. He led a section of six soldiers (supposed to be 10).

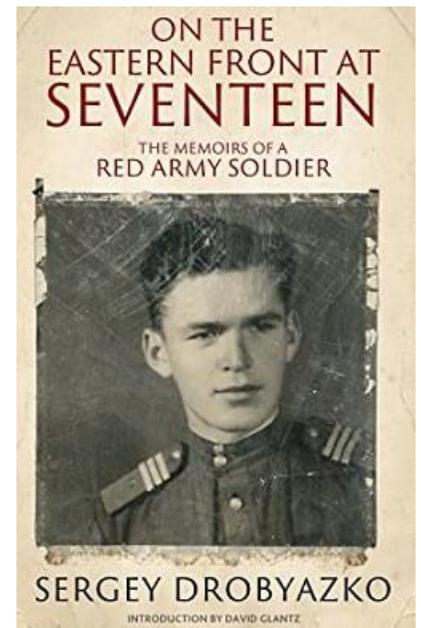
His luck held because during an attack, his mortar team dropped a mortar into the tube before the other mortar cleared. The resulting explosion killed the team (p145-146). When he returned from the rifle duties, he was assigned to another mortar crew.

He was later lightly wounded, but was patched up and returned to his unit. In February 1944 he was wounded again, this time more seriously and he spent the rest of the war in medical facilities.

The book contains 12 black and white photos.

Patrols, river crossings, defense, and attack were all a part of his service. He especially notes terrain use by Soviet and German troops -- in fact, his eyes are on terrain a lot, which makes sense if you're a soldier in the Red Army. Kudos to the translator for making this a smooth read.

Enjoyed it.



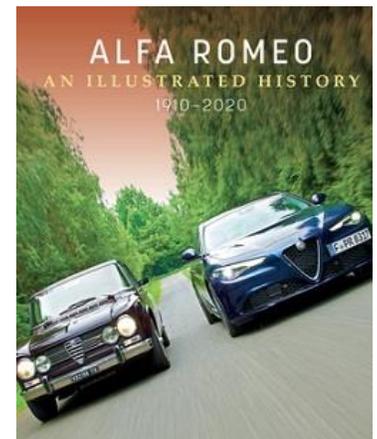
**Alfa Romeo: An Illustrated History 1910-2020.** Hardback (9.3x12.3 inches). 208 pages. 2022 translated reprint of 2020 book.

This nice, big, high-quality coffee table book showcases the cars, designs, and people that made Alfa Romeo history since its founding in 1910.

Nicola Romeo bought the Milan (Italy) factory of a bankrupt French car company and renamed it Aronima Lombarda Fabbrica Automobil -- i.e. Alfa.

Two world wars interrupted automobile design and production. The factory switched to aircraft engines. As soon as peace returned, so did the automotive efforts. The early 1950s proved to be championship seasons for the Alfa Romeo racing team.

The book contains 192 color photos, 38 black and white photos, 25 black



and white illustrations (evolution of the front-end shield 1927-2016), and 15 color illustrations.

Sure, Alfa Romeo did boxy designs at times, but most of the designs over the decades sported sweeping curves with high curb appeal. The 'wedge' shapes were a little odd, but show the designers were trying a variety of styles.

Via various mergers, Alfa Romeo is now owned by Stellantis. Looking at such books is a guilty pleasure of mine and shows what sort of style we've lost in automotive design as most cars look alike due to aerodynamic shapes. The photos show how Alfa Romeo competed against Ferrari and other luxury Italian designs.

Enjoyed it.

**Inside Formula 1: 1950-2022.** by Daniel Reinhard. Hardback (10.2x11.3 inches). 287 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Behind-the-Scenes Photography*

This book offers a photo-intensive memoir of F1 racing through the lens of professional photographer Daniel Reinhard, son of Josef Reinhard -- another auto racing professional photographer whose work is also inside.

*Inside Formula 1* contains almost no stats or descriptions of famous races. Instead, the captions provide anecdotes that led to the taking of the photo or the event in the photo. So, think of it as more human interest, that straight history.

The book contains 131 black and white photos and 211 color photos, from the silly to the serious. Besides car profiles and race track accidents, you'll find mood shots at night and in the rain, close-ups of drivers, and promotional shots worthy of art.

Fun fact: During WWII, Mercedes Benz sent its race cars for safekeeping in Switzerland (p33).

One of the obscure cable channels offers F1 racing coverage, so from time to time I flick on some Grand Prix race and watch the drivers sling the cars left and right around the track. Given the track configurations and speed, it seems almost impossible for one car to pass another, but drivers do with speed and quick reflexes.

If you have any interest in F1 racing, you'll be glad to discover the wealth of photos that track the sport from post-WWII to today. The more your knowledge, the more you'll identify with the drivers and cars.

Enjoyed it.

**Eyes on the Enemy: US Military Intelligence in World War II.** by Chris McNab. Hardback (6.5x9.3 inches). 198 pages. 2023.

This is not a history of WWII intel ops as I originally thought. The book reprints selected sections of US WWII military manuals used to train intelligence officers.

Intelligence includes OSS, counter-intelligence, and code breaking ops, but most of the book involves outlining organization and duties, plus sections on photo recon, prisoner interrogation, and other more routine intel gathering.

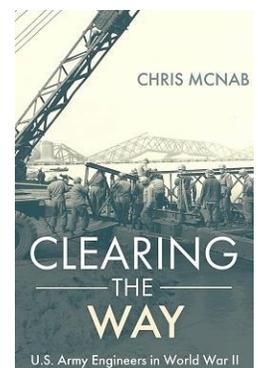
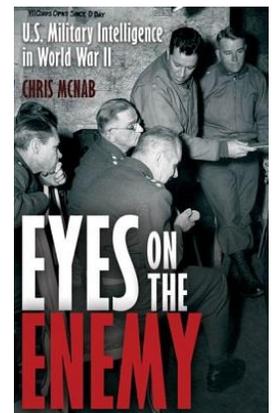
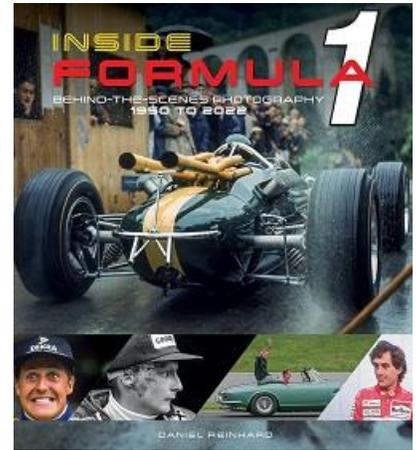
It contains 24 black and white photos and 16 black and white illustrations.

I didn't read this from cover to cover. It's a manual. I popped in here and there for a read, but it also reads like a manual. If you are running some sort of RPG character or NPC, it has some value. If you are researching intel manuals, here's your book.

**Clearing the Way: US Army Engineers in World War II.** by Chris McNab. Hardback (6.5x9.3 inches). 194 pages. 2023.

This is not a history of WWII engineering operations. The book reprints selected sections of US WWII engineering manuals used to train engineering soldiers.

As such, it has a bit more relevance to the tabletop than *Eyes on the Enemy*. The one aspect I wanted to know was time needed to perform certain tasks. How long does it take to lay a bridge? Dig a foxhole?



I got some info, but not exactly what I was looking for. It explains the various types of bridges, the pieces of a bridge, bridge dimensions, bank preparations, and how to lay a bridge, but time was mostly not one of the points. "Hundreds if feet of bridge must be built in a few hours' time" (p89) is as close as I got.

I had better luck with excavations for foxholes and weapon pits -- a table (p105) lists the types, dimensions, and man hours needed. For example, a proper foxhole approximately man height (so a soldier can stand and fire) with camouflage takes 1.5 hours. An 81mm mortar pit listed as 16x16 feet with camouflage takes 6 hours. However in another section of the book, a circular mortar pit is listed as 11 feet in diameter and one foot deep (p116). I guess that one gets dug faster.

It does mention that one man in good condition can excavate 20 to 30 cubic feet in one hour -- although I don't know if that includes root-filled soil in woods. And laying Marston Mats (pierced steel planking), engineers can create a 5,000 foot long by 200 foot wide airfield in two days (p88).

The book contains 26 black and white photos and 22 black and white illustrations.

One typo: A three-quarters filled sandbag weighs between 40 and 75 pounds. A full sandbag weighs 665 pounds (p89). My guess is that the weight is either 65 or 66 pounds.

I didn't read this cover to cover, either. It's a manual and reads like a manual. I did find a smidgen more information useful for tabletop gaming, especially for campaign engineering activities.

Ties go to the author. Enjoyed it.

**The Battle of Castillon 1453: Retinue to Regiment No. 21.** by Peter Hoskins. Softcover (7.2x9.8 inches). 125 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Death Knell for English France*

The first surprise for me was that this battle lasted about an hour, or maybe just a little bit longer. Sources are sketchy at best.

The other was that the booklet starts with a decent encapsulation of the entire Hundred Years War. I appreciated it, as it's been a while since I read the *Essential Histories* booklet on the Hundred Years War. You'll understand how England, which came so close to actually uniting Britain and France under Henry V, lost it all under the indolent Henry VI. Castillon may be the last pitched battle of note, but the section of the book discussing the rapid capitulation of towns and castles in Normandy and Gascony helped Charles VII reoccupy those domains. In between is a nice recap of artillery advances in metallurgy and use.

Interesting tidbit: The cost of a handgun in 1430 was less than half that of a crossbow, the training time on either was about the same, and a handgunner didn't need the strength to wind or pull the string (p30).

One typo (p39): "where artillery fire pressurised" is likely "pressured."

Another factoid: The English Mayor of Bordeaux in 1450s was Gadifer Shorthouse, who shares the last name of OMM's Dennis Shorthouse. Distant ancestor?

The actual battle starts on page 94 and ends on page 104. The map (p96) is a bit crude, but includes a scale. The OOBs are a bit sketchy, but so is the source material of the time.

It seems a two-part battle: Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, steals a march and runs over French archers outside of town, but hesitates to carry forward into the rest of the French, who pull back into a camp comprised of turf walls and a ditch. The English attack and just as they reach the palisades in hand-to-hand, 1,800 cavalry (counting the grooms) outflank the English and tumble them backwards. Talbot is killed and the French continue to advance and take towns, castles, and cities.

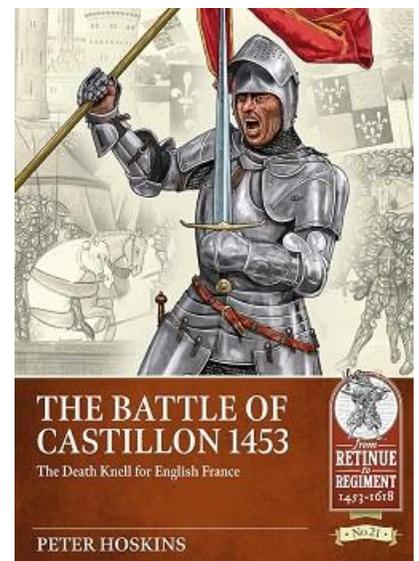
It's well explained. You'll be able to set up a tabletop scenario with some reading between the OOB lines.

Enjoyed it.

**Fighting Ships of the US Navy: 1883-2019 Volume 3.** by Venner F. Milewski jr. Hardback (8.8x12.0 inches). 431 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Cruisers and Command Ships*

I'm not sure how I missed volume 3 of this series of ship specs and mini-histories, but allow me to make up for lost time. This volume concerns US



VENNER F. MILEWSKI, JR.

**FIGHTING SHIPS  
OF THE U.S. NAVY 1883-2019**

VOLUME THREE



CRUISERS AND COMMAND SHIPS

CRUISERS

Navy cruisers since 1883.

As with the other volumes, each ship receives a short entry about launch, commission, and various other dates as well as a bare bones recap of its history, including the end of its days, whether by scrap, museum, or sunk. One or more photos are included and specifications are by ship class.

Lots of tidbits that might warrant further research. For example, the *USS Baltimore*, launched 1888 and commissioned 1890, went through a series of decommissionings and commissionings 1896-1907, although why is not covered in the text. It was converted to a minelayer 1913-1915, decommissioned in 1922, struck from lists in 1937, and left as a hulk. It was sold for scrap in 1942, but the sale was cancelled and ended up scuttled off Pearl Harbor in 1944 (p23).

The *USS Charleston*, commissioned 1905, was sold to the Powell River Co Ltd of Canada in 1930 as used as a breakwater for the company's paper mill on the Powell River. It doesn't say if it is still in use as such or rusted away or buried.

*USS Charleston.*

Although I didn't pore over every recap of every ship, I did find one typo: A photo caption noted Camden, NY (p135) for shipbuilding, but it is really Camden, NJ. For those interested, the battleship *USS New Jersey* is moored as a museum ship in Camden, NJ, across the river from the Spanish-American War cruiser *USS Olympia*, which is a museum ship in Philadelphia.

The oddest conversion was the *USS Wright*, a converted cruiser to light aircraft carrier that was then converted to a command ship. It sported massive radio masts that look like a kid glued them in the middle of the flight deck (p376-377).

The book contains 695 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, and 90 black and white camouflage pattern illustrations (mostly side and top views) with hundreds of various ship locations' patterns. Many of the photos show the various camouflage patterns in use during WWII, which is a nice touch for modelers.

This is another excellent compilation volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.

For reviews of the other books in the series: *Volume 1, Part 1 -- Aircraft Carriers and Light Carriers* (see the 12/21/2020 AAR), *Volume 1 Part 2 -- Escort Carriers* (see the 09/02/2021 AAR), *Volume 2 -- Battleships* (see the 05/27/2022 AAR), and *Volume 4 Part 1 -- Torpedo Boats, Destroyers* (see the 05/20/2023 AAR). All reviews are also up on hmgs.org.

For over 1200 military history book reviews, go to:

<https://www.hmgs.org/blogpost/1779451/Historical-Book-Reviews>

And let me exit, stage right, with a little bit of Bill Gray WWI humor:

