

Doin' Doughnuts: Romans at Ilerda
A Man With A Plan: And Dice
Historical Ilerda: Adapted From Wikipedia

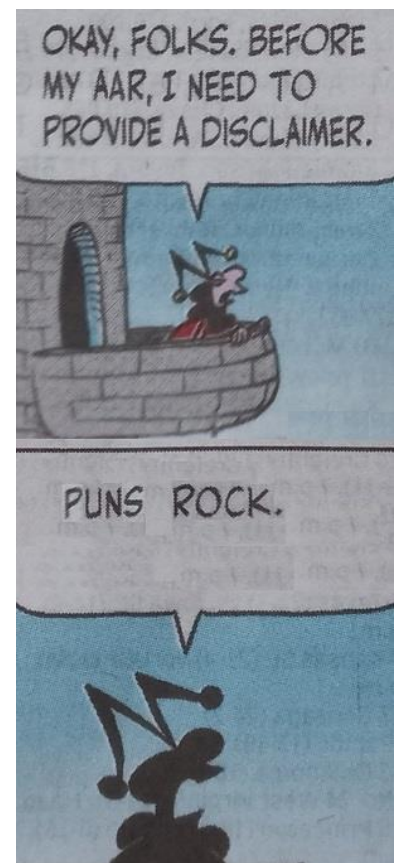
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Books I've Read

The Wars of the Roses: Medieval Art
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Barbarian Warrior vs Roman Legionary (Comb 76)
M42 Duster: Legends of Warfare
USMC Tracked Amphib Vehicles: Legends Warfare
Heinkel HE 162: Drawing Board to Destruction
Czechoslovak Armies 1939-45: Men At Arms 554
The War of 1812: Essential Histories
Tanks Are Coming Through Now: Gazala 1942
Harpoon Missile Vs. Surface Ships: Duel 134
11th Waffen-SS "Nordland" Division
WWII Italian Soft-Skinned Vehicles: Vol. 2
Coalition Armor vs Iraqi Forces: Duel 133
Light Troops in the Seven Years War: RtR 122
Eastern Front 1945: Air Campaign 42
Pacific Profiles: Vol 12 P-51 and F-6
Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane: WWII
The Battle of Tinian: 1944 (Images of War)
Vandal Heaven: Post Roman North Africa
Solomons Air War: Volume 2 - October 1942
Tailships: US DEs 1970-73 (Europe at War 38)
Kings of Battle: LandCraft 13
The Great Escape From Stalag Luft III
The Killing Ground: A Biography of Thermopylae
Midsomer Murders on Location





Pre-game kibitzing and table layout. Caesar's force is just off bottom left corner of photo.

Doin' Doughnuts: Romans at Ilerda

by Russ Lockwood

"Great Caesar's Ghost!" exclaimed Fatuous Maximus.

"Tis no ghost," Supercilious spat. "Just a lucky, lucky, lucky traitor."

"Ghost or no, surrounded we are as if grabbed by Octopus!"

"Who?"

"The nephew."

Supercilious thought for a moment. "That's Octavius, not Octopus, you idioticus!"

"By Jove, so it is. So it is."

"How did you come to command our force here in Ilerda? Explain!" Supercilious demanded.

"Bribed Senator Virtuous.

Scared Senator Nervous. Chopped Legatus Lettus. Shafted Tribune Legolas."

"You what?!"

"Like my Uncle Insidious always said, it's the Roman way," Fatuous proclaimed. "And now, we advance. Centurion Status! Lift high our standards of solid gold eagles with inlaid ruby red eyes, wingtips frosted with diamonds, and carrying a Gucci scabbard bedazzling all with sapphires spelling out SPQR."



Fatuous' troops. Spanish lower right corner, then legions, and lights.

Uno, Dos, Tres, Catorse!

So began our Ancients *Fields of Glory* tabletop Battle of Ilerda. I, Fatuous Maximus, commanded the Pompeian faction in Ilerda with my generals Samus the Sardinian, Davidus the Druid, and Troy the Trojan. Against us, Jayus Caesar commanded the usurper Romans with his sidekicks Mikus Minoan and Chrisus Crassus.

Caesar's Troops: Legions and Heavy Cavalry.

The town of Ilerda sat next to the river, but the forces supporting Pompey were in the middle of the Caesarian faction -- the hole in the doughnut so to speak. My force occupied the main tented camp on one hill and generally faced Mikus Minoan. Davidus the Druid and Troy the Trojan occupied the next hill over and generally faced Jayus Caesar. And Samus the Sardinian was across the river facing off against Chrisus Crassus.

Spies quickly explained that Jayus Caesar commanded veteran legions while we made do with newly raised legions. Our advantage lay in numbers.

From my vantage on the hill, I could see that Mikus Minoan had but two legion units and one of light troops while my own command -- Force Fatuous -- sported three legion units, one of medium Spanish infantry, and a unit of lights.

Jayus Caesar commanded two legion units and three of cavalry. My twice feared commanders, Davidus the Druid and Troy the Trojan, could count on three cavalry, one legion, one Spanish, and two light units. The infantry would have an advantage holding a hill.

Chrisus Crassus commanded two legion units and one light unit versus Samus the Sardinian's one legion, one light, one Spanish, and one cavalry force.

Mikus Minoan maneuvers to defend his camp. Fatuous' troops at bottom.

Fatuous' Plan

Across the river was the easy decision: Samus should tie Chrisus Crassus up in knots and prevent that Caesarian Roman force from crossing the river.

Davidus the Druid and Troy the Trojan proved a more difficult decision. Knowing they would face Caesar himself, I wanted them to take advantage of the hill defense and stall Jayus Caesar as long as possible. Davidus noted he had an advantage in lights and wanted to push ahead and shower Jayus' troops with javelins. If that would delay Caesar, then more power to him.

As for me, I debated between holding the hill and camp and trying to use my numbers to swarm Mikus Minoan. With a two-unit advantage, I decided to swarm. I attached myself to my line of troops and marched toward Mikus.

Across the river (l to r): Chrisus Crassus, Samus, and Umpire Phil.



The Battle

My battleline advanced and the lights contacted each other and traded javelins. Despite being outnumbered, my lights gave as good as they got and began to whittle down Mikus' lights. Meanwhile, my wings advanced with the idea of a mini-Cannae.

Beginnings of battle (l to r): Samus roars a battle cry. Umpire Phil provides guidance. Jayus Caesar advances as Troy the Trojan meets the cavalry. A sliver of Davidus the Druid defends the hill as skirmishers fling javelins.



Now, Mikus didn't just stand rooted to the spot like a ficus. He advanced to the edge of the hill, but as my troops began to curl in, he shifted troops here and there trying to take away my angle on his flank.

The lights toss javelins as my flanks extend. Mikus defends atop the hill.



My Spanish troops had an advantage fighting on the hill and I wanted to pin him in the front and whack him in the flank.

Our mutual assured destruction of javelin tossing between the light troops got me an opening. I could charge a legion unit and his troops could not run away because they were locked in melee with my own light troops. Little did I know this would be my downfall.

The Spaniards (left) swing wide to outflank. My lights do much better than expected. My legion charges in, too.



Over The River

While I jockeyed for position, Samus lined his troops up and sent his lights against Chrisus Crassus' lights. As the two battled on the flank, Chrisus brought up a legion to oppose Samus' units. It should have been a Caesarian victory given the veteran versus newly raised status, but Samus was everywhere, encouraging his troops onward, plugging holes in the line, and performing feats of die-rolling derring do.

Troy's cavalry skirmishes with Jayus' heavy cavalry and legion while Davidus' skirmishers peel off a legion.



One moment the battle lines crashed and the next, a Chrisus legion was running for its life, routed.

Rendering Caesar

On the other side of the battlefield, Davidus the Druid maneuvered his lights to toss javelins at one of Jayus' legions while Troy the Trojan sent his light horse to harass Jayus' heavy cavalry.



Troy's light cavalry evades as the heavy cavalry melees. Davidus is keeping Caesar's Legions at bay.

As a good 'lights versus heavies' battle should go, charge and evade were the order of the day. Jayus Caesar plodded on, but not quickly.

Eventually, Jayus launched two of his three heavy cavalry in one massive charge, met by Troy's heavy cavalry. Meanwhile, Davidus' troops formed a wall on the hill, scaring the Caesarian legions, for they were not attacking.

Mikus' lights dissolve, but Fatuous' legion is forced to charge uphill. Impact and melee phase proved disastrous. The Spaniards are desperately trying to turn the flank.



Back to Fatuous

With a legion and lights, I easily sent Mikus' lights packing, but then came my undoing. I was forced to follow. I didn't mind my lights chasing lights, but my legion was another matter. And of course, the goddess Fortuna chose that moment to "roll up" in pursuit and my men dashed up the slope to hit Mikus' waiting legion at the top of the hill.



Fatuous' legion routs and Mikus' legion, led by Mikus himself, does a mandatory pursuit out of range of a Spanish charge. The Spaniards are one turn behind...

"Oh my! Wait! Stop!" Fatuous cried, which was not an exact translation of his Latin mutterings. There went my carefully crafted line and plan. The lights hit the adjacent legion. My legion hit Mikus' other legion.

Oh, I hurried my Spanish up on the left and went as fast as I could with a legion on the right, but the damage was done.

Mikus' good fortune continues as he routs my second legion. His other legion hangs on with more spectacular saving 'death die' rolls. Note the red badge of courage is really the red chip of routing. End of game positions.



The resulting battle could have been worse, but the timing was now off. My lights bounced. No problem. But my legion went down a morale level and my left flanking force would need two more moves to be in position to hit Mikus' flank.

Beloved by the Gods

Now, in *Fields of Glory* parlance, Mikus had a 50-50 chance of inflicting a hit on me and I had a 33% chance to inflict a hit on him. While I rolled about average or slightly less, over the next couple rounds of melee, Mikus rolled an astounding 23 hits on 24 dice.

"Are you Serious?!" I screamed. Well, that's not the exact Latin translation, either.

"No," Mikus replied. "I'm Mikus Luckius Fortuna, beloved of the gods."

Worse for me, he rolled his 'death die' so well, his command stayed relatively intact. I dropped his six-stand legion down to 50%, but because it was a veteran legion, it would not rout until he lost four of six stands.

As for his other legion, it vaporized my impulsive legion in the minimum three rounds. My once fine fellows ran for the camp as if a cohort of succubi awaited them.

Worser, I had just maneuvered my Spanish unit to hit him in the flank, but remember, my rout meant he had to roll for pursuit. The pursuit took him beyond the charge reach of my Spaniards.

And worstest of the worstest, he was now on my flank. His next charge routed another one of my legions.

About the only thing I accomplished was capturing his camp. He'd have to fight to get it back as my Spaniards were now atop the hill, although I would move and hit Mikus' legion in the flank.

Another view of the second routing legion. Photo by Mike.

Samus Polishes Off Chrisus

Across the river, Samus rolled heroically and routed Chrisus' other legion.

The Davidus and Troy Happy Hour

Troy dismantled Caesar's cavalry. Indeed, Jayus Caesar himself was in the front rank of the fight, narrowly missing being beheaded. True to his past, he tried to salvage the situation.

Davidus had swung behind the flank, forcing Jayus to peel one legion unit backwards. The javelins had apparently found their mark, for it had dropped a level.

Both of Chrisus' legions adopt the red chip of routing. Samus is in hot pursuit.

Troy's light cavalry was peppering Jayus' other legion unit, goading him into a charge. Davidus' Spanish waited upon the hill. If Jayus' unit went after the cavalry, Davidus could hit them in the flank. If Jayus went after the Spanish, the cavalry could come back and hit the other flank. Davidus' other legion unit on the hill backstopped the Spanish, just in case.

Neatly positioned, those.



Pompeian Victory

Although fighting could continue, Umpire Phil declared it a Pompeian victory. Chrisus was routed. Mikus' one legion was hanging on, but almost surrounded, leaving me with one legion, the Spanish unit, and my lights against it and the fresh victorious legion.

Davidus and Troy were winning the battle over Jayus, whose command had nearly been decapitated.

End of game for Caesar.



It was a nice change of pace not to have two parallel lines move ahead and bash each other. The doughnut idea presented possibilities beyond line up and charge.

Thanks, Phil, for umpiring the scenario and thanks Dave for hosting.

A Man With A Plan: And Dice

by Mike

This was my type of scenario. It's always a good sign if there is reason for debate in the pre-game 'team talk' about how to best play the tabletop situation. And we certainly had that. We asked Phil Qs regarding victory conditions, fording the river, and crossing the bridges. It quickly became clear he had little desire to reveal anything! In fact, he seemed to stress that keeping Chris and his command where it was, was where it should stay. And so it did.

The green badge of disorganization for Mikus' light troops. Photo by Mike



I was certain that my command would quickly be outflanked and with the *FOG* rules' very punitive rear and flank attacks, it would only be a question of how long my two legions and unit of lights would survive.

My plan was to try and delay for the longest possible time that moment when Russ' Spanish foot unit would hit my flank. First, I moved my two legions away from its path as much as possible. Second, I would exterminate his six-stand light foot unit with my eight-stand light unit with lightning speed, and then send my victorious lights towards the Spanish unit hoping to further it further. Third, my two legions would take on Russ' three legions with an uphill bonus -- never mind the camp.

The pursuit that saved a legion. Photo by Mike.

My plan quickly went haywire, when my eight-stand light foot unit was destroyed and his lights stayed on the table.

But then, my die rolling turned into a wargamer's wildest dream -- lots and lots of hits! That's 23 out of 24 dice, which not only sounds right, but is so well deserved! I had some re-rolls, which helped, but often I would roll four dice and roll four hits without the need.

Whether I would have survived had we continued playing, I don't know, but I wasn't going to stay on the hill allow the Spanish even combat odds on top of its greater speed.

I was surprised by how far out the Spanish hooked, then how far behind my line, but I thought Russ had decided to sack my camp before turning back and then on to the rear of one of my legions.

Anyways, as we learned, in the real battle, Caesar and his troops quickly swayed the Republican Romans to surrender. That obviously wouldn't be worth wargaming.

Historical Ilerda: Adapted From Wikipedia by Russ Lockwood

Between the city of Ilerda, and the hill where the Pompeians were encamped was a plain of about three hundred paces, in the midst of which was a rising ground, which Caesar wanted to take possession of; because, by that means, he could cut off the enemy's communication with the town and bridge, and render the supplies they had in the town useless. (Caesar Commentaries)

The contest for this hill led to a protracted battle.

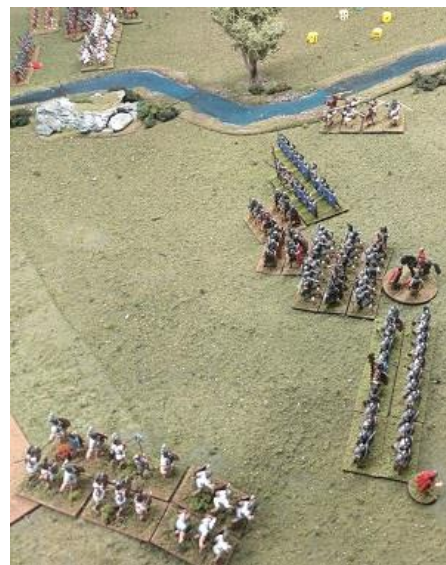
Both armies sent detachments towards the hill and the Pompeians occupied it first. This, combined with their skirmish-like combat technique, overwhelmed the Caesarian detachment and his troops were forced to give ground, eventually retreating to safety.

The Pompeians abandoned their camp and the city of Ilerda and retreated towards a second republican army under Marcus Terentius Varro.

Caesar ordered a pursuit which overtook the retreating rear guard of the Pompeian army and blocked the retreat to Varro. The Pompeians retreated back to Ilerda and were surrounded by Caesar*.

The Pompeian commanders negotiated terms of surrender to Caesar, and in front of both armies, Caesar accepted the surrender of the five Pompeian legions.

Caesar caught up to Varro, who immediately surrendered. Caesar left four legions in Hispania and took the rest eastward for the showdown with Pompey.



* Our game starts here and assumes the Pompeians were made of sterner stuff and fought it out, not surrendered.

NEWS



Princeton Battlefield Reenactment and Tours: 2024

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the Princeton Battlefield Society newsletter:

General Washington's troops had nothing on the 575 spectators and over 220 reenactors who braved the winter weather and rain to participate in the 246th anniversary of the Battle of Princeton on January 7. Both the reenactment, which featured the bayonetting of General Hugh Mercer, and a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at the Colonnade, received positive reactions despite weather conditions rivaling those on January 3, 1777. We hope to see you and others next January 5!

Take a look at your calendar and pick a date to take family and friends on a tour of the Princeton Battlefield and the Thomas Clarke House. Each tour starts at 1 pm and includes an exciting narration from one of our historical interpreters: Larry Kidder, Will Krakower, David Price, Roger Williams, and Tom Kane.

2024 tour dates are: May 19, June 9 and 23, July 14 and 28, August 11 and 25, September 8 and 22, and October 6 and 20. You will be able to register at www.pbs1777.org starting on March 1.



King's College Wargaming Week: NATO

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from notice on page 3 in AHIKS Kommandeur newsletter (v59 n1 2024 issue):

The Wargaming Network is pleased to announce the dates for our Wargaming Week 2024 in partnership with NATO ACT, 16-18 April 2024 at King's Strand Campus in the UK. Wargaming Week 2024: Wargaming to Support Operational and Doctrinal Success will feature a range of activities that meet the Wargaming Network's core mission of the expansion and democratization of wargaming as a method of inquiry. Events will showcase the educational wargaming work taking place at King's, including wargames designed by the graduates of Dr. David Banks' "Designing Wargames for Education & Analysis" MA module and wargames designed by Dr. David Banks, Anna Nettlehip, and Network staff to inform dissertation and policy research and to support the institutional goals of partner organizations. Panels and moderated discussions will feature researchers and practitioners in contemporary

wargaming and workshops and working groups will showcase the wargame design and academic expertise being developed at King's.

Note that as of February 12, the King's website has not been updated to include the 2024 info, but a note can be found on X (nee Twitter) at: @kclwargaming noting details on on LinkedIn.

FYI: For hex gamers, check out back issues of AHKS' newsletter:
<https://ahiks.com/the-ahiks-kommandeur/>

Seven Years War: Portuguese Dragoons

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the website:

Portuguese Dismounted Dragoons of the Seven Years War are 3D printed and come six infantry (no horses) to the package in 28mm, 40mm, or 54mm. Three poses are available. Miniatures are gray in color and come unpainted. The heads need attaching. Bases are included.

Cost: 28mm: \$15.00. 40mm: \$22.00. 54mm: \$36.00. Buy two or three packages for 10% discount. Buy four or more packages for 15% discount. A 50-cent packing fee is added to an order.

Top: Portuguese Dismounted Dragoons
Bottom: Portuguese Dragoon Command

Website:

<https://www.chrisparkergames.com/product/syw-portuguese-dismounted-dragoons/>

Also available is a Portuguese Dragoon Command package with four cavalry: one each of officer, non-com, drummer, and banner. Miniatures are gray in color and come unpainted.

Cost: 28mm: \$20.00. 40mm: \$28.00. 54mm: \$45.00. Buy two or three packages for 10% discount. Buy four or more packages for 15% discount. A 50-cent packing fee is added to an order.

CP releases often, so visit the website for all his historical and *Lord of the Rings* fantasy minis.

website: <https://www.chrisparkergames.com/product/syw-portuguese-dragon-command/>



New Wargame: Remember the Maine (2nd Edition)

by Russ Lockwood

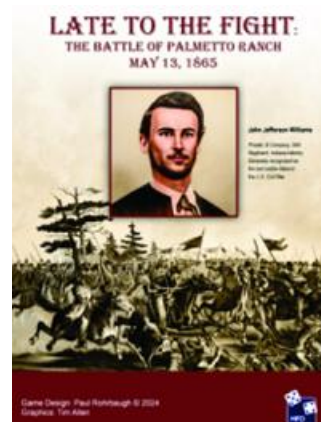
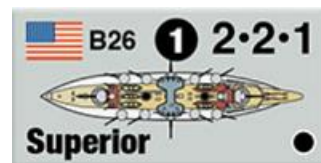
Adapted from the website:

Avalanche Press continues to release naval wargames based on its *Great War at Sea* system. The Spanish-American naval war of 1898, with all the actions that took place in the Caribbean Sea. Includes 45 scenarios, two maps, and 180 playing pieces. \$64.99

New Wargame: Battle of Palmetto Ranch 1865

by Russ Lockwood

Adapted from the press release:



Late to the Fight: The Battle of Palmetto Ranch is an historical simulation of the battle fought on May 13, 1865 at Palmetto Ranch along the Rio Grande River just to the east of Brownsville, Texas. The Confederates knew about Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox and President Lincoln's assassination, but the Confederates nonetheless assembled a force at Brownsville and showed no signs of surrendering.

Union General Lew Wallace ordered the 34th Indiana Infantry Regiment and 62nd United States Colored Troops Regiment to retake the town and disperse any rebel forces found there. This last battle of the ACW was fought nearly a month after Appomattox.

Each turn represents one hour. Infantry and Cavalry units represent Companies. Artillery units represent two to four guns. Each hex represents approximately 250 yards across.

Contains: Two 11x17-inch hex mapsheets with game record-keeping and turn record tracks, random events table, and Terrain Effects Chart; 108 single-sided, double-sided un-mounted counters; one players' aid sheet; and rules. Designed by Paul Rohrbach with graphics by Tim Allen. Cost: \$22.95 plus shipping. Mounted counters can be had for an additional \$8.00. Players must provide at least one d6 and one d10.

Website Info: <https://www.hfdgames.com/palmetto.html>



Adventure Together: 3D Color Printed Minis

by Russ Lockwood

Back in the October 2023 (see the 10/26/2023 AAR), I reported on a company called Adventure Together that purported to offer 3D printed models that are pre-colored. The Kickstarter videos looked cool, but videos are videos and seeing is believing.

L to r: Vince (co-owner of OMM), Lee (OMM rules author), Dennis (co-owner of OMM, Anthony, and Chris.



So, I asked Dennis of On Military Matters if they could come for a show and tell demonstration. He said yes and Anthony and Chris came to display their efforts.

I was absolutely amazed. Blown away is more like it.

For background, painting minis is not my strongpoint. I can paint OK, with shading and highlighting, but I prefer writing and creating to painting. Some of my gaming buddies are world-class painters who have won HMGS painting competitions and others are terrain makers extraordinaire. Ah...not me. Don't get me wrong. I can drool over well-painted figs like the rest of us, but I'd rather write.

So along came Anthony and Chris of Adventure Together and out came their wares. First of all, this has been a five-year process for them and the others that make up Adventure Together. They offer a number of products.

3D Pre-Painted Minis

I already noted, but worth repeating: I was absolutely amazed. The 3D fantasy minis looked great. They come in a variety of 'skins,' which I take to mean basic color combos. So, for example, you can get the same mini in a red outfit or a blue outfit.

As I understand it, and pardon if my explanation is simplified: the 3D machine lays down a layer of plastic and then lays down a layer of ink. These are thin layers, so the ink looks continuous. I'm sure there's more to it than that, but I'm sure we'll hear more about it in time.



The building plate upon which these plastic layers form is about the size of a large baking pan, so you can get x number of 60mm figures on the plate and say 4x number of 15mm figures on the same plate. Height is another concern regarding time and cost per figure.

One of the things they are pursuing is trying to match colors from paint lines, including duplicating a digital sample. Chris noted something about 10 million colors.

At start, they are offering fantasy figures because that's the biggest market, but they are also working on sci-fi.

The fantasy figures are currently 60mm and retail for about \$20. They're scalable, so they figure to offer 28mm figures for about \$7 and 15mm for about \$3. These prices for a painted fig are about what the market is charging for a base unpainted mini and getting a painter to paint it up.

Fortunately, a *D&D* gamer dropped by who purchases HeroForge painted figures for about \$40 or \$45 each. Cutting the price in half was an eye-opener to him.

Source: 3D Wargaming Hex Platform

Think of this as 1-inch hex Legos -- snap together colored hexes that come in three sizes: a triangular 24-hex piece, a 15-hex (3 hex by five hex) rectangle, and single hexes. Adventure Together showed these off, too.

Each hex can hold a 1-inch base with a slight gully in between each hex. They are stackable. They can be in pretty much any color, but they showed the basic brown and green highlighted by individual blue water



and red lava hexes.

Unlike Legos, the hexes lift off easily with one hand -- a point of pride -- and use a unique series of side ridges to do so. Yes, they have patent protection. This is injection molded plastic production, so once the mold is created -- and this is the expensive part because molds are made of high-grade steel or aluminum -- the actual plastic pieces created are inexpensive.

At this time, basic retail pricing is about 17 cents per hex and they are looking to do a 4x6-foot hexfield for about \$75 or \$80 or so -- about what a good terrain mat would cost. They talked about offering different surfaces and colors. They talked about a line of stickers to paste atop a hex.

They even showed us prototype rooms with square (not hex) floors that drop onto the hexes and walls that pop in. The doors also pop in, but on a horizontal tab, so you can build multi-story buildings and kick in doors and remove them without dismantling the building -- although how you move inside once the door is removed might be a little tricky.

They call it *Source* because they want it to be an open-source product. They want gamers to create whatever they want out of these and share across gamerdome. Obviously, the patent protects them, but they want minimal interference with gamers who want to use their product.

They have created a *Tabletop Simulator* version of *Source*. That's pretty cool.

TimeStrike: The Boxed Game

Adventure Together is bringing out a boxed game called *TimeStrike* that includes 21 minis, a "board" of *Source* hexes, and a "Battle Royale" rulebook that is also available as an app. The tentative cost is \$70 for the basic unpainted set. The tentative cost is \$199 with the pre-painted figures. I don't have any other specifics.



So What About Historicals?

The idea of pre-painted minis at a reasonable price is quite appealing. Well, at least to me. I think one of the reasons why Axis and Allies 1:1800 WWII warships did well was that they were reasonably "painted" out of the box. Well, the common-uncommon-rare collectable part probably helped at first. Certainly Etsy is filled with 1:1800 ships so you don't have to buy 702 packages to get a "rare" ship.

Anyway, we showed Anthony and Chris a number of figure types and scales, from foot to vehicles, 6mm to 54mm, painted and not. They seemed to like the 6mm, believing that it could represent a simple approach that can be mass produced.

Obviously, I like this idea of pre-painted minis. Guessing the right historical period before committing to sculpting and production is important and will not be soon. They have to continue with the fantasy and sci-fi market first, where the sales are higher than historicals.

I look forward to seeing the first retail products.

More info: www.adventuretogether.games





The battlefield. Soviets coming from right. Hill 210 and crossroads in upper left. Italians in between.

Fanteria Fantastica: Italians at Serafimovich 1942

by Russ Lockwood

A number of books about the Italians in WWII came out, including *Snow, Ice and Sacrifice: Italy in Russia 1941-1943* (reviewed in 01/25/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org). So I was pleased to see Marc had set up a *Command Decision* (CD) game based on a July 30, 1942 Soviet-Italian meeting engagement near the town of Serafimovich -- northwest of Stalingrad by the Don River. The Soviets were trying to expand a bridgehead over the Don. The Italians aimed to eradicate the bridgehead and protect the German flank on the way towards Stalingrad.

Marc assigned Pat and me to the Soviet side. Allen and Marc took the Italians.

Comrade! We're On Offense?

The bottom line is that us Soviets were assigned to capture Hill 210 and the crossroads. Basically, we had three battalions to do so: The 291st Rifle, the 346th Rifle, and the 652nd Tank. Each rifle battalion contains three companies of infantry (three stands of rifle infantry and one MMG), one SMG company of two stands, a 76mm gun, an 82mm mortar, and the HQ. The Tank battalion contained a T-34/76 company (two stands), a Lend-Lease Lee/Grant company (two stands), a T-26 company (two stands), and a T-34 HQ platoon. We also had a division HQ stand in charge of a 120mm mortar stand.

My troops occupy the right flank, two companies to the left of the road and one (off photo) on the right in the woods. My 76mm gun battery is behind the tanks. Rises block line of sight. Patski's battalion off photo to left of tanks.



Opposing us, the Italians fielded the 54th Fanteria Regiment with two battalions, each with three companies of infantry (each with one command stand, two infantry stands, and one MMG stand), one AT platoon (47mm AT gun stand), and a battalion HQ stand. Attached: 120th AT battery with the 75mm AT gun stand, and a forward artillery observer in control of two off-board 100mm gun stands.

The Italians advance to meet the Soviets. L to r: Soviet Patski and Italians Marcus Aurelius Raffio aka "Col. Mario" and Col. Alleno Kapistrano aka "The Swallow."



Reinforcements: two batteries (each with one 75mm gun stand with HE only) of the 120th Artillery battalion. So, it looked like three attacking Soviet battalions versus two defending Italian battalions plus some artillery support. The ace in the hole is the Soviet tank battalion.

I will point out that neither Patski nor I knew anything about the Italians other than what we 200-foot-tall generals saw on the table. We figured that Italian reinforcements were coming if Il Duce's troops hoped to reach further SE towards Stalingrad.

One Other Thing About the Soviets

Command at this point in the war was limited. Patski and I had one battalion commander and one assistant battalion (political) commander to deal with three companies. When you are limited to a six-inch command radius from the command cube, that's barely enough to cover them in line. Since you can't shoot through your stands, line is important.

Worse, the Soviet tank battalion only had one command stand (tank model) to control three companies. Same six-inch radius, so they are not going to disperse much. The division commander can provide command support, but then he will need to follow up the tank company he orders about -- same six-inch radius from the order cube.

The saving aspect is that you can place the cube within line of sight of the commander. As the table was criss-crossed by LOS-blocking rises and woods, and the "open" terrain was scrub brush that cut LOS in half, this can be a challenge at times.

Italian command was far more numerous and flexible.

While the cube 'guessing game' and other command control nuances are more than a bit fiddly and annoying, the limited number of cubes represent a clever limitation of command. The rules designer giveth and the rules designer taketh.

The Soviet Advance

Patski was on our left flank with one battalion and also took control of the tank battalion in the center. I took the battalion on the right with the aim of protecting the road that led off table and formed the basis of the Soviet line of supply and communications.

The Italians wait on the 'reverse slope' of the rises as my Soviets advance to start a firefight. The cube with the single arrow represents a 'cautious advance' order and the glary cube with the double arrow represents a 'full advance' order.



A convenient patch of woods was just in advance of the road and would form a good defensive line. I stationed the political officer and a company to defend it. A LOS-blocking rise stretched between my troops and the Italians. I moved up the SMG company in support.

Patski's advance on the left flank into the woods. The cube with the hand icon represents a 'hold' order.

As for my other two companies, I moved them up to the rise with a cautious advance. I didn't know if the fierce Italian commander, Col. Alleno Kapistrano, known as "The Swallow" for his swift attacks, would be his usual bold self, or play a canny waiting game and let the reinforcements roll into play.

Patski, as per plan, swung his battalion wide to the left in an effort to outflank Col. Marcus Aurelius Raffio, known as "Mario" for personally tossing hand grenades shaped like turtles in an assault. The tank battalion would advance and dominate the center, then eventually pivot to aid Patski's battalion push through the woods.

Here's where the Soviet command restrictions hurt. I would have dearly loved to get my hands on a tank company (two stands) for direct support, but if any split off from the battalion commander's range, I'd need the division commander to come, too.

Why are tanks important?

Morale. Just seeing an enemy tank within 12 inches is an automatic -2 to the morale rating. Seeing enemy infantry is another -1. So if the basic Italian morale is 9 (i.e. you pass on a d10 roll of 1 through 9, now you pass on a 1 through 6 -- big difference when trying to blow out a line).

Col. Mario adjusts his line and deals with a pesky SMG company that infiltrated behind the Italian lines.

Italian Response

Col. Kapistrano parked his 75mm gun and forward observer atop Hill 210. He generally held his side of the rise, but started to let the off-board artillery play an aria of shells on my troops. Once he managed to (die roll) call in the arty, he could move the template to zero in on my troops. Fortunately, he was having a grand ol' frustrating time rolling hits. Or maybe all the shells were duds.

Col. Mario stretched his line to meet the enfilading Soviets and waited, knowing his defensive opportunity fire would be better than regular offensive fire.

Gunfire erupted in the woods.



Sneaky SMG Scouts

Patski took advantage of the open flank to move his "scouts" as he called them, deep behind Italian lines. Only these two stands were not scouts, but his SMG company.

Patski presses forward.

Now, Col. Mario would have no idea these clever lads had infiltrated through the woods, but he knew it would be bad if the SMGs reached the artillery atop Hill 210, so he peeled off his reserve company to deal with them.

"Wait, wait, wait," implored Patski. "Your troops don't know they're there."

"Weeeelllllll," Marc hedged as he laughed, "We saw tail-end Luigi having a snack."

"No, no, no," I chimed in. "If this was one of your double-blind games, you wouldn't put the SMGs on the table."

All of us know about Marc's fantastic double-blind games at HMGS conventions...

"Er, this isn't a double-blind game," he countered with eyes rolled up to heaven.

By this time, we're piling on the good-natured poop and having it flung back at us with ever more outrageous claims and counter-claims until the game stopped for a few minutes as we laughed ourselves silly. Of course, Marc pulled his reserve company back to shoot up the SMG company and get shot up in turn.

Soviet Probing Attack

With shells falling in and among my troops, I decided that if I'm going to be hit, it might as well be in the attack, not being the proverbial fish in a barrel.

I had previously placed my 76mm gun next to the tanks for shooting any Italians that came over the rise. It sat there lonely and unused. The Swallow finally spotted it with his forward observer and fired his on top of ol' Smoky 75mm gun. His 100mm artillery could not hit any troops for love or money, but one shot from ol' Smoky and my 76mm gun battery was blown sky high. The battery commander's HQ troops passed their morale check and reported for infantry duty.

Meanwhile, I inched most of two companies over the rise to engage part of Col. Kapistrano's infantry. The exchange of gunfire proved fruitless for both of us. This went on for a turn or two.

Col. Kapistrano puts the guns on the front line and advances two companies in support. Bloodbath!



Italian Gun Attack

Reinforcements arrived for the Italians and the trucks, guns, and troops powered up the road at light speed (wheeled vehicles can really move on roads), depositing two batteries of 75mm guns directly on the front line atop the rise for all to see.

Soviet Lees and my left-most company fail morale and become 'Shaken' as marked with green cube.

I thought I was being overwhelmed. All I could see were vehicles and stands and guns. Then the firing duel began with my troops on the "reverse slope" so to speak. As they were on opportunity fire, my SMG company took out an entire Italian gun battery.

My other companies shot up an Italian infantry company that took the rise in support of the guns. They were forced back with loss. I lost a stand, too, but defensive fire proved much more effective than offensive fire.

That's also the time I blew a morale roll (another 10 on a d10) and my left-most company routed ('Shaken' in CD parlance) back over the rise. I issued them a withdraw order. I then issued a rally order.

Not so fast, Ivan. You need a commander. I have one. Here. The battalion commander himself. He's placed his order cube within line of sight about 10 inches or so away and the cube is within six inches of all the company's Shaken troops.

As Marc patiently explained, the LOS placement is for any order EXCEPT Rally.

Oh.

Anyone mind if I change my Rally order to a Movement order for the commander? No? Thanks, guys.

Next turn, assuming the Shaken lads pass a morale check to stay in place and not rout some more, the Rally order will be plopped in their midst.

Right at this time, I managed to roll not one, but two 10s on my d10 morale rolls for the SMG company by the rise and my political officer's company in the patch of woods. That's enough to suffer a "Pin" result.

The one thing we missed, and in my report to the Commissar I lay the blame fully on Division commander Patski, was his tanks failed to fire a single MG shot at the troops that advanced towards my troops. Not one. And the Tank platoons were on Overwatch, too. NKVD thinks I'll be taking over the Division soon.

My lads did rally and I formed the company into a line that covered the gap between the patch of woods and the Lee tanks.

Patski launches a tank counter-attack. I rally my shaken company and fall back to form a line between the patch of woods on the right and the tanks on the left. My pinned SMG troops attract an Italian close assault.

Italian Assault

With one company Shaken, the other in fighting spirits but down a platoon, and the SMG and third company "Pinned," the Swallow flitted a



company over the rise and close assaulted my pinned SMG company. Another company crossed over the rise in support. It was a full-scale push to break my troops.

Patski turned most tanks to the right and slammed into the flank of the Italians attacking me. Oddly, he also sent the T-26 company far, far away to the left flank and out of command control for a turn.

Italian Gold Medal moment: a 47mm AT gun platoon exterminates a T-34 platoon (upper left), although the crew subsequently failed a morale test, ran, and became Shaken (green cube). Most Italians in front of me are eliminated or ran away.

In any case, my former artillery HQ turned infantry stand did its job and popped an Italian platoon. Ala, it was crushed under the return fire.

Patski's tanks fired many a shot from main guns and MGs. In a brilliant, odds-defying display of die rolling, despite changing dice, he managed to roll a pair of 10s (bad misses), then another pair of 10s, and then a 9 and two more 10s. The 10s kept coming and The Swallow's troops were virtually untouched.

On the other hand, my SMGs, despite the negative die modifiers for being Pinned, gunned down all three assaulting Italian stands. The Italian MG from the company gunned down one of the SMG stands, but I'll take a three to one trade any day. An Italian gun crew and commander was gunned down as well.

Patski's morale was solid. The Italian morale collapsed. The remaining 75mm gun crew ran and ran some more. The lucky, lucky infantry company that found itself among tanks also panicked and ran and ran. The way was open for my battalion (once it recovered from its Pinned state).

Italian Gold Medal Earned

Col. Mario ordered his 47mm AT gun platoon over the rise to plant itself on the flank of the T-34s, but the T-34s were clever enough to pivot and hurl themselves among the infantry attacking over my rises.

The Italian gun crew fired at the front of the T-34 at point blank range. It hit. Then came the damage roll -- a 10! In this game, firing and morale rolls of 10 are the worst result. Damage rolls of 10 are the best result. The T-34 platoon went up in flames. The Italian crew failed morale and ran away as fast as they could, but the entire crew deserves Gold Medals of Valor.

The Other Flank

Patski's efforts to turn the flank proved successful, but a barrage of accurate Italian MG and small arms fire coupled with a seemingly endless supply of bad morale rolls by Patski stalled the offensive. Patski needed to regroup.

Patski's flank stalemates.



The Armored Victory

Meanwhile, without any Italian troops in the center and right, Patski charged the tanks and took Hill 210 as well as the crossroads for a bloody Soviet victory.

The T-34 takes the crossroads and the Lees take Hill 210. The right flank is wide open. The left flank in the woods is not.

Thanks for hosting, Marc, and thanks all for a laugh-filled Friday evening game of about three or three and a half hours.

Historical Outcome

The Italians repulsed the Soviet attack and destroyed 14 tanks (three game stands) despite lacking much in the way of AT weaponry. The Soviet attack delayed the Italian attack on Serafimovich by a day, but the town fell. However, the Soviet bridgehead was never completely eradicated. (Sept 9, 1942 German situation map below)



Books I've Read

by Russ Lockwood

The Wars of the Roses: Medieval Art of Graham Turner. by Graham Turner. Hardback (9.9x12.7 inches). 287 pages. 2024.

Gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous. This oversized book showcases Graham Turner's War of the Roses artwork. The cover (Edward IV in the thick of battle) highlights the exceptional color illustrations within...And black and white drawings...And medieval manuscript illustrations...And color photos of castles, battlefields, tomb sculptures, and various places. If you are going to be accurate, including liveries and "harness" (armor), be accurate.

Let's set aside the fantastic artwork for a moment. The accompanying text is a chronological recap of the wars as they started and stopped at kings' and nobles' whims or circumstances. Quite often, included are black and white sketches of the major personalities, color photos of the location, armor and weapon studies, and other details that are incorporated into the painting.

The prose is quite readable except he inserts lots and lots of excerpts from period letters and documents written in Medieval English. That brings the text to almost a full stop as you try and figure out the non-modern spellings. A plus for using period documents and adding period color, but there's color and there's an overabundance of color.

Remember that this showcases his artwork, so you're not going to get detailed OOBs and battle maps. Other than that, if you have the slightest bit of interest in the War of the Roses era, what a delightful volume of eye candy.

The book contains 119 color illustrations of personalities, battles, and so on, and I include close-up details of portions of painting in that total. Also included: 153 color photos, 16 black and white illustrations (pencil drawings of personalities), one other black and white illustration, one color map, and 41 color illustrations (most taken from medieval manuscripts).

Like Don Troiani for the American Civil War and Keith Rocco for Napoleonic Wars, Graham Turner for the War of the Roses is one of those artists with hyper-realistic details that just amaze. It's all capped off with printing of his online work-in-progress diary of a painting that provides insight into the creative process.

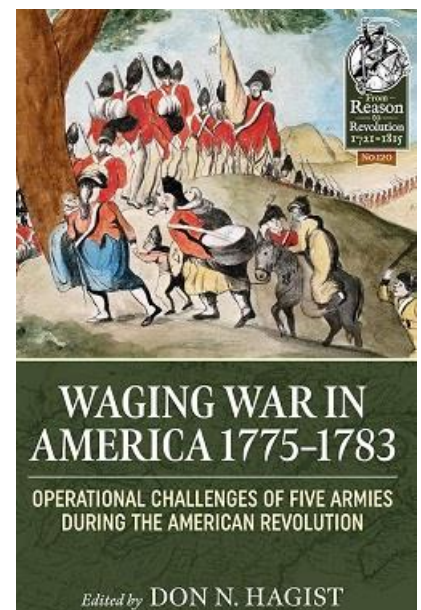
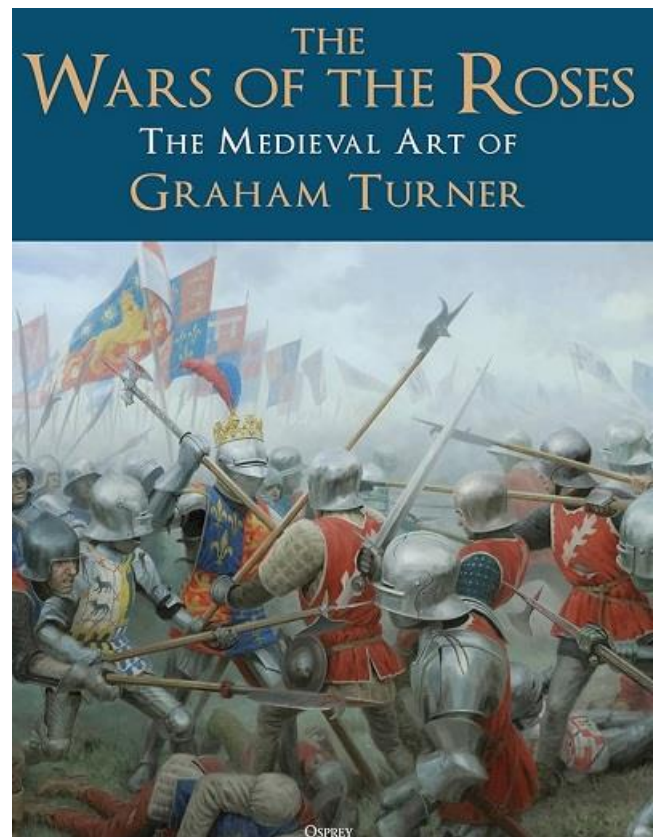
Enjoyed it.

Waging War in America: 1775-1783. edited by Don N. Hagist. Softcover (6.6x9.7 inches). 220 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Operational Challenges of Five Armies During the American Revolution*

Subtitle: *Retinue to Regiment No. 120*

This collection of nine essays about warfare during the American Revolution offers a wide range of topics: British Regiment Training Evaluations, Hessian Tactics, Mutinies, NY Militia on British Side, Frontier Massacres, Continental Army Draft, Spanish Planning and Logistics for Siege of Pensacola, French Army Reforms, and Court Cases. How much can be adapted to tabletop tactics is limited, but many topics can be used for campaign considerations.



The 1781 Pensacola campaign chapter offers an interesting campaign opportunity as the Spanish advanced out of New Orleans to try and capture Mobile and then Pensacola from the British. The maps, devoid of most locales mentioned in the text, are virtually useless, but the descriptions and discussions are magnificent.

The Continental Army recruiting system of drafting men ages 16 to 50 would also be interesting in a background campaign system. In 1777, they were supposed to raise 82 regiments (p118). The NJ 2nd as an example shows 566 men were supposed to muster, but 316 never joined or quickly left, leaving about 250 men for a regiment that was supposed to number 688 (p119). Other examples from other states follow.

Irish-trained British regiments provided a higher standard of war readiness than regiments trained in Britain proper. Hessian skirmishing tactics (called patrols or flankers) were often called by the unit commanders from among the regulars. The jagers were a separate entity. The Continental Army suffered from frequent "mutinies" that were often considered an acceptable negotiating tactic to gain back pay -- 5.8% of all court martials were from group action mutinies (p57). NY militia coverage concerns arms, uniforms, and a number of raids and skirmishes with Native Americans. The rest are informative, if not particularly wargaming-centric.

A possible typo: "so slowly, that not of them..." is probably "none of them" (p143).

The book contains two black and white illustrations, five black and white maps, and 10 black and white photos of period documents.

Five of the authors hold doctorates, so you'll have to make allowances for a tinge of academic prose, but all offer fascinating information on their subject matter.

Enjoyed it.

Every Hazard And Fatigue: Siege of Pensacola 1781. by Joshua Provan.
Softcover (6.6x9.7 inches). 213 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Retinue to Regiment No. 123*

Fresh after reading the chapter about Spanish Planning and Logistics for 1781 Siege of Pensacola in the book *Waging War in America: 1775-1783*, here came a book about the siege. As my knowledge of the siege was incomplete, here seemed a more extensive book to create a mini-campaign.

Sort of.

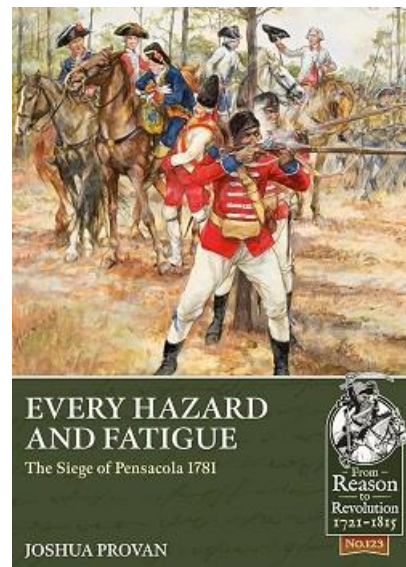
This book contained far more detail about the forces involved, including a nice Order of Battle appendix with pretty good numbers for the Spanish and a general number for the British. You can find additional numbers for the various skirmishes during the siege within the text. You also get a good line on Spanish ships that transported troops from Havana. General terrain descriptions (p64-66) are quite helpful.

That said, I was not enamored with the prose in the first third of the book -- a lot of run-on sentences and a little bit too much of a flair for the dramatic. I guess that's his style and I mostly skipped the text until p79, where a more focused approach to the campaign starts. The actual siege starts on p108 with a day-by-day account of the Spanish approach and creation of siege lines.

Pensacola was protected by a fort with on the hill above the town, a couple of blockhouses next to the town, and two redoubts further up the hill above the main fort (good period map - p43). The farthest one, called Advanced Redoubt, or alternately Queen's Redoubt, was the focus of the Spanish siege lines.

A considerable amount of skirmishing between Native Americans and the Spanish occurred in and around these lines, supplemented with the occasional sally from the redoubt. Of note are the exchanges between commanders about minimizing civilian casualties.

A 1763 map of Pensacola. Image from web.



The actual siege ended in a spectacular fashion with a Spanish shell exploding at the entrance to the powder magazine. When that blew, the Spanish quickly gathered a scratch force and stormed the redoubt. The British commander surrendered soon afterwards. Without that quirk of fate, the siege would have taken longer.

The book contains one black and white photo, four color photos, 26 black and white illustrations, three color illustrations, and 14 color uniform illustrations.

The Spanish campaign to capture Mobile and Pensacola may make for an interesting campaign. *Waging War in America: 1775-1783* provides the Spanish planning and *Every Hazard And Fatigue* the numbers and challenges of siege work.

Enjoyed it.

The Han-Xiongnu War: 133BC-89AD. by Scott Forbes Crawford. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 170 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Struggle of China and a Steppe Empire Told Through Its Key Figures*

As I know nothing about this war, this book is as good a place to start as any other book. Sources, including archeological artifacts, are generally skimpy, but biographical sources seem abundant enough to piece together an overview.

The Xiongnu are northern steppe nomads, think Mongols, that were a loose federation of tribes brought together by a chanyu (leader) to raid the Han Chinese empire. The Han never had as many horses as the Xiongnu, so it was difficult to pin the raiders down, but like Romans vs. Parthians, battles and campaigns waged throughout the region. The Han eventually headed west for an alliance with other tribes and civilizations, spelling the eventual demise of the Xiongnu. It's not that simple, and the Han royal line was replaced by usurpers, but that's the gist.

The focus here is on personalities. Crawford does an admirable job keeping every general, chanyu, and emperor straight in the mind of readers unfamiliar with the period. You may have to go back and forth a couple times to do so, but that's how it goes delving into something new. Like Rome to barbarians, the Han often resorted to paying off the Xiongnu with gold and wives with the idea that marriage bonds and wealth would dissuade the Xiongnu from raiding. It worked to an extent, but different Xiongnu tribes would invade from time to time.

Battle descriptions are rather perfunctory, mostly ambushes and slaughters without too many details. Chinese crossbows were pitted against Xiongnu compound bows as infantry were easily evaded or surrounded. It took decades if not centuries before Chinese infantry adopted tactics designed to frustrate mobile cavalry.

The book contains a center section of 20 color photos and illustrations.

I didn't find typos, so give credit to the editing, not that I would know if a Chinese name or term was right. I did find mention of a source from Hirth, but did not find the name in the bibliography -- an omission, not a typo.

Cavalry-centric vs infantry-centric armies offer interesting wargaming possibilities. Here's a new period to investigate.

Enjoyed it.

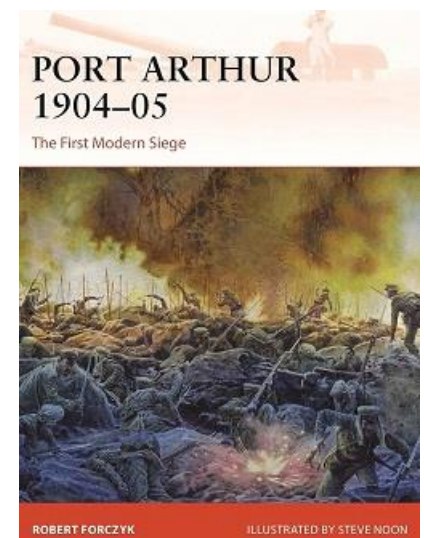
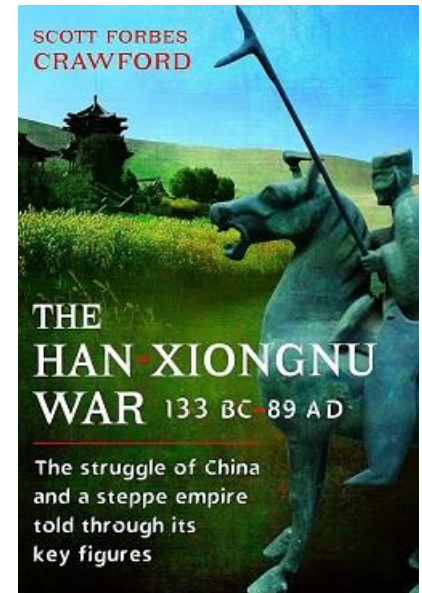
Port Arthur 1904-05: Campaign 398. by Robert Forczyk. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The First Modern Siege*

The Japanese started the war with a surprise naval strike at the Russian military port of Port Arthur. Ten DDs launched 19 torpedoes at the fleet at anchor. Only three torpedoes hit.

So started a disconnected and ill-coordinated naval and land attack on Imperial Russia under the command of inept commanders on both sides.

For Admiral Togo, victory at Tsushima helped the Navy forget all the ships he lost trying to sink and later blockade the Russian ships. For General Nogi, frontal assaults against entrenchments, artillery, and MGs cost the Japanese Army dearly, but he emerged the victor only due to the loss of nerve by Russian commander General Stoessel, who surrendered despite plenty of food, ammunition, and manpower. Not that his subordinate General Fok had much to do with it -- erratic commands and timidity in the face of the enemy doomed Russian defense line after defense line. Admiral Alekseyev sent the Russian fleet



in and out of the anchorage until engaging in the Battle of the Yellow Sea -- and ships retreated to Port Arthur and neutral ports.

On land, trenches and redoubts mitigated effects of artillery. Japanese frontal assaults proved costly, but Russian loss of nerve when it came to counterattacks to restore the line doomed the Russian defense. All is deftly told in typical campaign format of background, forces, commanders, and the campaign itself. Indeed, the key element in the Japanese land victory was Russian General Fok's incompetence, with quick retreats without notifying all the units and refusal to authorize counterattacks on weakly held sections of the line that had fallen to Japanese troops.

The booklet contains 61 black and white photos, five color photos, three color two-page action illustrations, three color 3D maps of dubious quality, and six color maps.

Interesting booklet about a little-known, or little-known to me, campaign. Of note is that the early Russian surrender allowed the Japanese 3rd Army to head north and participate in the Battle of Mukden.

Enjoyed it.

Weapons, Warriors & Battles of Ancient Iberia. by Fernando Quesada Sanz (translated by Elizabeth Clowes and Pablo S. Harding-Vera). Hardback (7.0x10.0 inches). 299 pages. 2023 English translation of 2010 book.

What a marvelous examination of Iberian weaponry during the Carthaginian and Roman periods, all supported by a massive number of illustrations. The color archeological photos of grave excavations and what few monuments and stellae remain delve into the details of swords (falcata et al), spears, shields, slings, and body armor. Besides re-enactor photos, the book contains Osprey-like color uniform illustrations for those wishing to paint up a force. Note that Carthaginians and Romans used Iberian mercenaries, so figures can be used on three sides: natives opposing invasion, mercenaries for Carthage, and mercenaries for Romans.

One aspect of specific interest is revising the way Iberian troops fought. Modernish accounts promote them as guerrilla forces carrying out hit and run raids against invaders. That is true, but infantry also served as battleline troops with formations and practiced tactics. The battle descriptions explain how well or poorly such forces did in a stand-up battle against Carthaginians and Romans.

Kudos to the chapter on the Siege of Numantia -- nice tabletop battle for those interested in such.

Also discussed are cultural touchstones of warriors, alliances, and allegiances. This, too, was new to me -- wonderful information for a tabletop campaign with diplomacy by e-mail.

As this uses the metric system throughout. My difficulty was making the mental conversion to English measurements. Metric dunces like me have to think about spear heads/shafts weighing 800 grams (p115) or sling stones of 30 grams to 80 grams (p121) mean in ounces and pounds.

The book contains seven black and white photos, 138 color photos (mostly archeological artifacts), 26 black and white illustrations, 21 color illustrations, 24 color uniform plate illustrations, seven color photos of re-enactor uniforms, and eight color maps.

Enjoyed it.

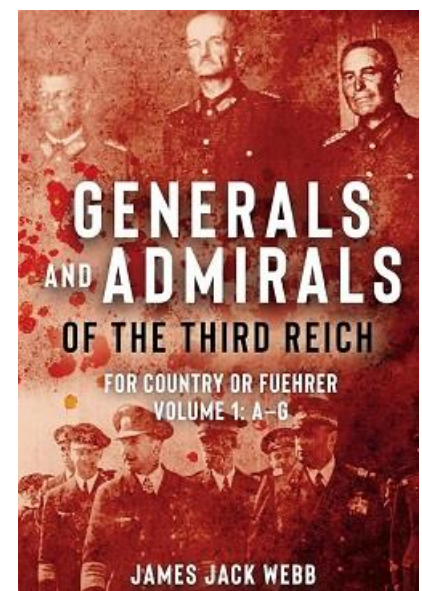
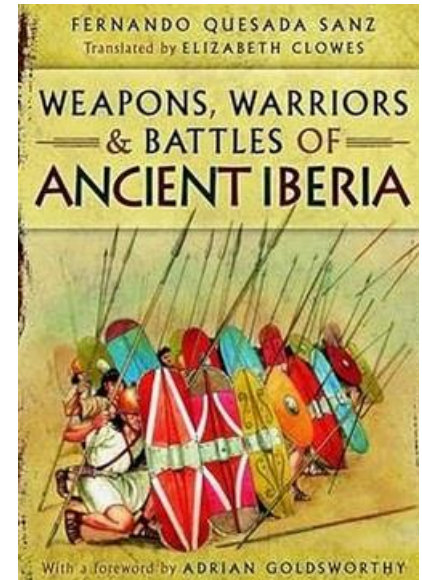
Generals and Admirals of the Third Reich, by James Jack Webb. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 377 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *For Country or Fuehrer Volume 1: A-G*

First of three volumes offers snapshot bios of title characters, with name, birth and death dates, WWI service, WWII service with specific units and organizations, promotions, Nazi and SS numbers, and WWI and WWII awards (German and foreign).

Give the author credit for the research. Primary sources list Nazi Party Dienstalterliste der Schutzstaffel volumes 1934-1944 plus Dienstalterliste der Waffen SS 1944, plus memoirs and Nuremberg transcripts. In the secondary sources, Generals of the Army 1921-1945 (Vol I-VII), Navy (Bands I-III), and Luftwaffe (Bands I-III) are listed. My guess is that these started him off, but as the titles are in German, the translation effort alone seems impressive.

If you run across some German general or admiral, here's a place to find



a paragraph about him. I'm not quite sure what you can do with this info, but I will say that randomly flipping through the book and reading an entry here and there proved pretty interesting -- A little "just the facts, ma'am" repetitious, but in short bursts, interesting.

One question I have is what happened to some generals and admirals whose assignments ended before the war in the ETO ended (May 1945). Appendix V lists the fates of generals and admirals who were killed in battle, executed during and after the war, died in captivity, and so on, but not every entry is represented in the appendices.

For example: GeneralMajor Ludwig Fricke (p249). His assignment lasted until March 1945. He wasn't retired, executed, captured, or hospitalized. What did he do in April and May? Fuhrer Reserve? Dunno. He lived until 1967. Credit the entry for making me ask the question.

Note that the vast majority of these officers did indeed keep their commands through May 1945.

The book contains 150 black and white photos (head shots) -- I'll take their word for it.

This volume lasts until G, with two more volumes to presumably take you through the end of the alphabet. Limited use for tabletops, but impressive compilation in English.

Battle of Bong Son. by Kenneth P. White. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 241 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Operation Masher/White Wing 1966*

Subtitle: *The Start of Large-Scale Search-and-Destroy Operations in the Vietnam War*

White served 18 months in Vietnam with 1st Cavalry's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol unit, so I'd say he has a pretty good grasp of jungle warfare. Certainly his terrain descriptions are vivid enough for those seeking to set up tabletop scenarios.

This particular operation came two months after the Ia Drang battle (aka the movie *We Were Soldiers Once*) and features air mobile operations near Bong Son and in adjacent valleys. You'll learn about insertions (flight of four choppers with six men each in diamond formation -- p32 -- three minutes apart, or 96 soldiers in 12 minutes), coordination or not of ground attacks, and the aid of airpower -- including B-52 strike (p151-152) that was followed by tear gas and US troops assaulting in gas masks. Learn something new every day.

Helicopter vulnerability (p42) is amply demonstrated with a start of 30 UH-1Ds with only 14 flyable at the end of a day, three UH-1B (two flyable), four Chinooks (one flyable), and two observation helos (one flyable). Repairing helicopters must have taken a considerable amount of time and parts.

While from a body count objective this particular 41-day search and destroy operation was a US tactical success, within weeks of its conclusion, the NVA infiltrated back into the area. The US would mount another search and destroy mission, succeed in driving away the NVA and VC, leave, and back it would fall into enemy hands. So, tactical victory and strategic loss.

One aspect I would think could be improved is a better OOB on the NVA and VC side. Sources, as much as I can tell are US, with NVA and VC information coming from transcribed prisoner statements. Maybe that's all there is. Yes, I understand the 22nd NVA Regt (7th, 8th, and 9th Bttns) of the Sao Vang Division were in the fight along with the 2nd VC Regt. Yet the actual battle descriptions are vague and generic in terms of NVA and VC positioning.

Maybe that's all there was without heading to Vietnam and cracking open their archives -- assuming you can trust anything they show. The "official" communist Vietnam history of the war that I paged here and there through is virtually useless as a history, but a marvelous piece of propaganda.

The book contains 25 color photos, seven black and white photos, and 12 black and white tactical maps.

White offers a ground-level view of search and destroy missions and includes a considerable amount of information for those seeking to encapsulate tactical jungle warfare on a tabletop.

Enjoyed it.

Batter Their Walls, Gates, and Forts: Century of the Soldier 109. edited by Stephen Ede Borret and David Flintham. Softcover (6.1x9.3 inches). 162 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Proceedings of the 2022 English Civil War Fortress*

THE BATTLE OF BONG SON

Operation Masher/White Wing 1966

Kenneth P. White



BATTER THEIR WALLS, GATES AND FORTS

The Proceedings of the
2022 English Civil War
Fortress Symposium



Symposium

These papers were presented at a symposium about forts and deal mostly with archeological excavations. These academic papers offers benefits and detriments. Benefits include superb examinations of various fortifications, from earthen fieldworks to city walls and proper fortifications, with dimensions and discussions of military construction. Detriments include prose that may cause paper cuts as you fall asleep face forward into the pages.

Only one of the papers, *A Small Fort in Devon: How 40 Musketeers Changed History*, offers a good tactical scenario. The Appledore fort is small, the 40 Cornish Royalists held out against at least one storming attempt, and a Royalist relief force provides a clock mechanism to end the game. Plus, the fort is not that big and ample illustrations of its plan and location allows for a relatively quick build.

A long-winded discussion of Chester and Gloucester sieges starts things off. Other chapters include Newark City Walls, Siege of King's Lynn, and a discussion of siegefields and impact gouges of the walls of Moreton Corbit Castle by musket balls. Not much for the tabletop, but good for background information for a mini-campaign.

The book contains 20 black and white photos and 38 black and white illustrations, many of these are fort plans.

If ECW is an area of interest, so this book will be of interest. If fortifications is an area of interest, so this book will be of interest. If ECW fortification archeology is of interest, grab this quick.

Because of Appledore and the precise measurements of walls and such throughout the rest of the book, I'm going to say ties go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

M48 Patton: Legends of Warfare. by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *America's First "Main Battle Tank"*

Firsts are always so dependent on descriptors and definitions. I went back to look for the reference to the "MBT" quote, but didn't find it -- must be in there somewhere, but not in the introductory text. From a Wikipedia standpoint MBTs seem to describe post-WWII, multi-role tanks: "main battle tanks were as well armed as any other vehicle on the battlefield, highly mobile, and well armoured. Yet they were cheap enough to be built in large numbers."

And I thought engineers gave you three choices: good, cheap, and fast, but you could only pick two...

Anyway, the M48 arose from the M-26 Pershing and stop-gap M-46 and M-47 tanks. It was ordered into production before final testing was completed, so heating and other problems arose from the start and modifications were introduced. The big upgrade came from swapping out the gas-hogging gasoline engine that limited range to 70 miles for a diesel engine that gave the tank a range of 300 miles (p29). The next big upgrade boosted the main gun from 90mm to 105mm (p133).

The photos show development, factory production, testing, and field operations from prototype to final version, plus flamethrower and other versions. Lots of close-ups of wheels, hatches, headlights, and other components of museum tanks provide considerable detail.

The book contains 115 black and white photos, 259 color photos, one color illustration, five black and white illustrations, and a spec chart.

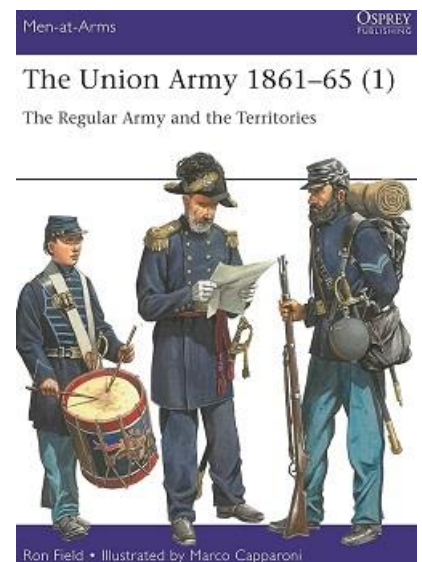
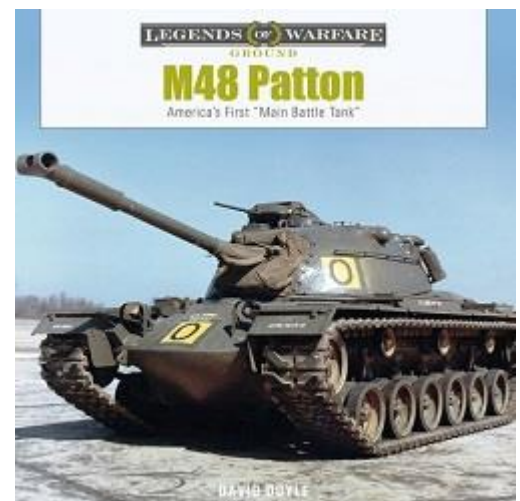
The first M48s entered the Vietnam War with the USMC in March 1965 (p66). For modelers of the era, here's a prime volume to get ideas for dioramas or just wargame table embellishments.

Enjoyed it.

The Union Army 1861-65 (1): Men At Arms 553. by Ron Field. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *The Regular Army and the Territories*

Osprey has produced a number of *M-A-As* on the US Civil War, so this is well-trod territory. I suppose it was time for a refresh and so this book follows the typical format: text information and an eight-page center section of color uniform illustrations, plus supporting photos and illustrations.



The text contains encapsulations of uniform details plus excerpts from regulations and other references. Infantry, artillery, engineers, signal corps, medical, invalid, colored, and other types as per the title are covered.

The book contains 24 black and white photos, 17 color photos, 33 black and white illustrations (primarily rank insignia details), and one color illustration. In the eight central pages are 21 color uniform illustrations of infantry, two of cavalry, and one drummer boy plus various equipment and close ups of uniform details.

Enjoyed it.

Volume 2 may be Eastern and New England Union troops and *Volume 3* may be Union Midwestern and Western troops.

F-104 Starfighter: Legends of Warfare. by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Lockheed's Sleek Cold War Interceptor*

The new volume in the photo-heavy series offers up the F-104, conceived after pilot complaints about the F-86 in the Korean War. The first prototype took only a year and the USAF and Lockheed proceeded with production prototypes -- i.e. fixing defects on the assembly as discovered in testing rather than creating and testing prototypes to iron out bugs before factory production.

The process went through a variety of problems, especially engine flameouts and jammed Vulcan 20mm guns (p22). The first operational unit was only activated in 1958. By 1963, 40 incidents accounted for 24 aircraft lost and nine pilots killed (p60). The attrition rate never went down much, as NATO and Japanese pilots suffered accordingly.

The F-104 was used in the Vietnam War in the mid 1960s and into the 1990s. It was also equipped with a rocket engine to boost speed and reach up to 118,000 feet (p45).

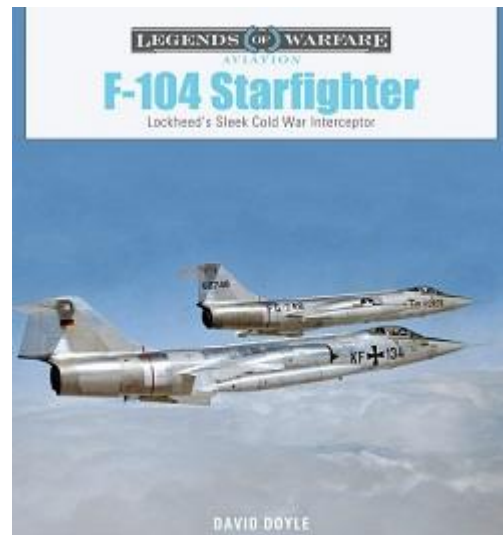
Of note: It could be equipped with the MB-1 air-to-air nuclear warhead missile with a 1.5 kiloton yield designed to destroy and break up USSR bomber formations. 3,150 MB-1s were produced from 1957-1963 (p13). Put that in your Cold War air warfare scenario.

The book contains 114 black and white photos, 89 color photos, three color aircraft profiles, 20 black and white illustrations, and a spec chart.

Note: A more extensive history of this fighter is *Lockheed F-104 Starfighter: A History* (review in 11/20/2019 AAR or up on hmgs.org). For modelers, see *Lockheed F-104 Starfighter: Kit Build 8* (review in 03/02/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The photos and captions march through the various alphabetical upgrades, indicating changes, differences, and upgrades. Modelers will especially enjoy the close-ups from museum aircraft.

Enjoyed it.



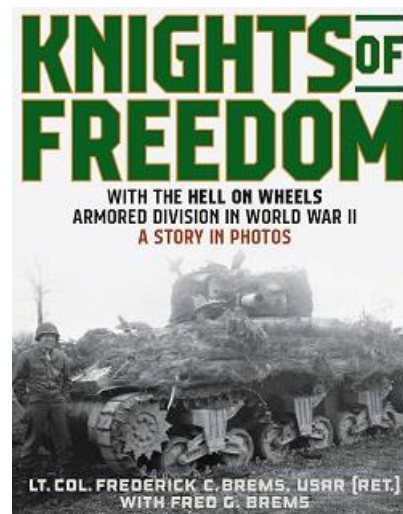
Knights of Freedom. by Lt. Col. Frederick C Brems with Fred G. Brems.

Subtitle: *With the Hell on Wheels Armored Division in World War II: A Story in Photos*

Fred the elder trained as a US Army tanker, became an instructor, and later was a captain commanding a tank company in Europe. Fred the younger gathered his dad's diary entries, letters home, and photographs and added maps, other photos, and contextual history to create a turret-eye-view look at commanding a platoon and then company of Shermans in WWII. You'll find plenty of scenario opportunities, with Duchamps (p108) especially interesting if you can play double blind.

Being a photo clerk pre-war, he carried a camera throughout his time, so the photos cover training through combat. Thankfully, the photos are integrated into the text, so you read about something or someone and there's the illustration right there.

As he was on the front line, I wondered how he got film and then had it developed so he could send home some of them. Some mentions in the text



about a Lt. McClung developing his photos (although two rolls of Battle of the Bulge were improperly developed and lost) and presumably getting him film, too. He did note that he had a three-day pass in Paris and couldn't find film. Later he obtained a European camera (Rolleiflex) that had far more film availability.

I asked Fred the younger about this. He replied:

"Dad had a contact with someone in the rear area who did his developing. Being an officer probably had its benefits, and Dad no doubt talked someone (he was a natural salesperson) into the favor or traded something he had picked up at the front. The negatives measure 2.25 x 2.25 inches.

Film always seemed easy for him to get -- other guys seemed to have a roll or two if he ran out -- and the Rolleiflex he got later was easy to find in Germany, the Rollei being made in Braunschweig (Brunswick -- see Chapter 12). He mailed the photos home."

He had a number of close calls as he often dismounted to direct operations -- during one battle earning a Silver Star (p211). Oddly enough, the official US Army photo caption had the wrong unit designation (he was in armor, not armored infantry) and listed the wrong town for the ceremony. Think about that in researching WWII events in an archive.

Interesting that he mentioned that German tanks had a tighter turning radius than the Shermans. And no surprise that they wanted more than one tank with the 76mm gun. Later, they got five M-26 Pershings.

Being part of the 2nd Armored Division, he was stationed in Berlin for a bit and took immediate post-war photos.

The book contains 597 black and white photos and 43 black and white maps.

This is a very personal memoir about tank warfare in WWII, down to individual tanks and individual soldiers. It reads quickly and well.

Of note: Brems the younger created a web site displaying the more photos and some color versions of the books' photos and maps. Worth a visit. Website: <https://knights-of-freedom.com/>

Enjoyed it.

Barbarian Warrior vs. Roman Legionary: Combat Men 76. by Murray Dahm. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Marcomannic Wars AD 165-180*

Following the format of other volumes in the series, this one covers the Germanic and Roman soldiers. Army composition, tactics, command and control, arms, and armor take center stage along with the usual focus on how they fought in three battles.

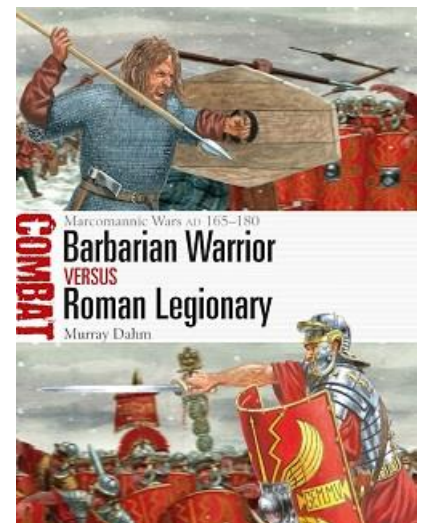
The battles: Carnuntum (170 AD), Battle on the Ice (172 AD), and Miracle of the Rain (173 AD). Each battle covers forces involved, provides a map of the battle, and a description of the battle. Given that all occurred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the text is well illustrated with scenes from the Column of Marcus Aurelius and various other archeological finds that help detail the equipment of the combatants.

The booklet contains 57 color photos, four color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and four color uniform illustrations (front and back of the warrior and legionnaire as per cover).

The prose offers as much detail as it can be extrapolated from written texts. These battles may be adapted to the tabletop, although you'll have to pick through the text and your rules of choice for specific units and strengths. For the Battle on the Ice, you'll probably need a special rule about Romans dropping their shields on the ice placing one foot upon their shields for stable footing. Barbarian horses don't seem affected by the ice of the frozen Danube River, but barbarian foot were. Go figure.

Another fine volume.

Enjoyed it.



M42 Duster: Legends of Warfare. by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Vehicle*

Although considered obsolete in the jet age, The US sent three M42 Duster battalions -- each battalion consisting of four batteries of 16 vehicles per battery -- to Vietnam, where its twin 40mm guns proved deadly for supporting ground troops. Each M42 contained six crew, including two loaders who fed four-round clips into the guns. The basic M42 carried 480 40mm rounds plus 50-cal MG rounds.

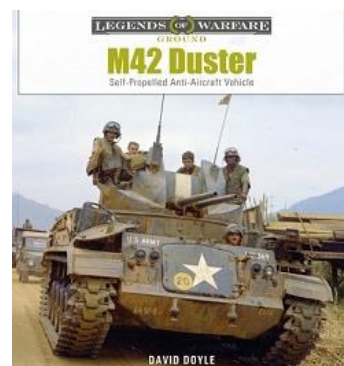
A trio of actions receives attention, although the lack of maps and OOBs limits tabletop scenario building without additional research.

Notable photos: a tank rollover jig (p27) that can clamp and rotate a vehicle 90 degrees for unobstructed hull maintenance, a M42 in Vietnam perched atop a sandbagged raft made up of pontoons being pushed across a river for some fire support (p99, p100), and for modelers, close-up photos (p106 to p144) of a renovated Duster owned by the National Museum of Americans in Wartime (p106) or Americans in Wartime Experience (p144) – captions differ.

The 88 black and white photos and 213 color photos cover the vehicle from every angle, especially the last 38 pages of the book with a restored vehicle. Also includes four black and white illustrations, one color illustration, and 10 color vehicle profiles.

Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.



USMC Tracked Amphibious Vehicles: Legends of Warfare. by David Doyle. Hardback (Horizontal: 9.3x9.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *T46E/M76 Otter, M116 Husky, LVTP5, and LVTP7/AAV7A1*

The four vehicles in the subtitle entered service in 1952, 1962, 1952, and 1971 respectively in part to offer ship-to-shore armored transport and support. Most served in Vietnam at some point, with the AAV7 used in Grenada and Desert Storm. The LVTP5 was often used inland, where it suffered from out-of-water problems including excessive suspension wear and tear and since the fuel tanks were on the underside (supposed to be in water), detonated land mines would obliterate it.

Although initially cargo and soldier carriers, it didn't take long to upgun them. The M116 variants soon added a cupola with twin MGs, grenade launcher, and mortars. The LVTP5 added a 105mm howitzer (p67), bulldozer blades, and recovery winch.

The 163 black and white photos and 153 color photos cover the vehicles from every angle, including inside with museum and reconditioned versions. Also includes one black and white illustration.

Like other volumes in the series, modelers will gain considerable insight into customizing their models.

Enjoyed it.



Czechoslovak Armies 1939-45: Men At Arms 554. by Nigel Thomas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 56 pages. 2024.

Once the Munich Agreement occurs, Czechoslovakia fades into the background for the most part. However, with additional research, this would make for a great what-if scenario as partial mobilization occurred on May 20, 1938 as two divisions fought Sudetenland German insurgents (p15) and full mobilization occurred on Sep 23, 1938 (p15) in anticipation of a German invasion. Munich short-circuited any defense and the German Army rolled into Sudetenland and never stopped heading east.

Czech pilots in the Battle of Britain receive the best PR, but 630 Czechs formed an infantry battalion and fought in Poland in 1939, 4,000 emigrated to France and fought with the French Army in 1940, and 3,500 were evacuated from France with another 200 from Vichy to England to fight with the British Army. Another 1,000 ended up in the USSR to fight with the Red Army.

The uniforms and equipment used were pretty much the same as the host



country, so your figures can do double duty in a tabletop scenario.

The booklet contains 32 black and white photos, 18 black and white illustrations (rank and insignia 1940-1944), 21 color illustrations (pre-war rank and insignia), and eight pages of color uniform plates containing 21 foot soldiers and officers.

Enjoyed it.

Heinkel HE 162: From Drawing Board to Destruction. by Robert Forsyth and Eddie J Creek. Hardback (9.2x12.3 inches). 208 pages. 2023 reprint of 2009 book.

Subtitle: *The Volksjäger*

As I've noted in previous reviews of recent Forsyth books, he's a pretty smooth writer. Yet it still came as a bit of a surprise that he was just as facile with technical development history of the HE-162. I don't know if it was re-edited or not, but it's a nice read if you are into the tech specs of aircraft.

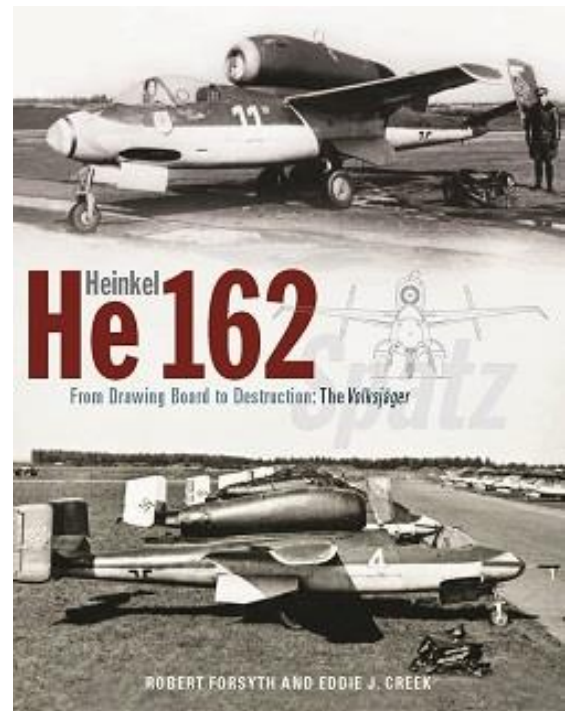
The book divides into sections for Development and Manufacturing; Testing and Deployment; and Allied Capture and Testing. Give the Germans credit for coming up with five competitive versions of a cheap interceptor, of which the HE-162 won the contract, and then racing through development, prototyping, testing, and manufacturing to start fielding a new fighter in about seven or eight months. When you consider the state of German manufacturing, resources, and transportation in autumn 1944, that is quite an achievement.

The actual fighter proved that rushed development yielded compromises and resulted in a lot of testing and training accidents. The plan to produce 1,000 jets a month piloted by raw teenagers never quite came to fruition before the war ended.

Combats apparently were few and there is a question whether the HE-162 ever shot down any Allied planes. Loss of airfields delayed training as planes had to be ferried to different locations. The airfield at Leck (cover photo) has 23 jets lined up to turn over to the British.

The book contains 371 black and white photos, 10 color photos, 71 black and white illustrations (mostly blueprint drawings), 27 color aircraft profiles, two color maps, and five color unit emblems.

Enjoyed it.



The War of 1812: Essential Histories. by Carl Benn. Softcover (5.9x8.3 inches). 144 pages. 2024 revised edition of 2003 book.

Essential Histories are nice compact overviews of a particular war that hit the highlights about war causes, actions, and resolutions. In this case, the US Congress voted for war on June 18, 1812 over British restrictions on US free trade and impressment of sailors off of merchant and US naval ships.

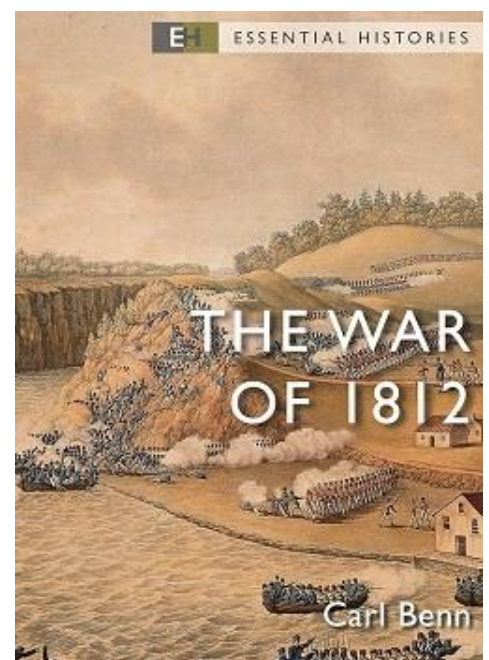
Fine prose offers descriptions of battles all across the Canadian border abound, covering actions between the US and Britain from New York to Michigan. The US called up 450,000 militiamen during the war (p29) to serve alongside regulars on all fronts.

Once again, militia could not stop the British from burning Washington DC. The line was held at Baltimore along with Fort McHenry lasting through the night. The Battle of New Orleans ends the active land operations.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, four black and white illustrations, 12 color photos, 35 color illustrations, five black and white maps, and eight color maps.

It's a quick introduction to those new to the war and a nice refresh for grognards.

Enjoyed it.



The Tanks Are Coming Through Now. by Neal Dando. Softcover (6.2x9.2 inches). 204 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Brigade Battles at Gazala 27 May - 18 June 1942*

As Dando's last book I reviewed (*From Tobruk to Tunis* -- see the review in the 03/25/2023 AAR or up on HMGS.org) was a recycled dissertation, I mistakenly figured he was a grad student because it mostly read like an unseasoned author. That must have given him a chuckle. This book contains a photo of the author, who is actually a professor at University of Exeter.

This covers British preparations, training, and planning of the Gazala campaign, with attention paid to the battles of the brigade boxes and the mobile reserves. Once again, his British research is exemplary and he tackles each box in considerable detail with unit by unit precision. In many ways, each box was an independent battle as reserves often failed to relieve a particular box.

I would have liked to see more balance with an Axis view, but British reports often had details about the Axis forces, so you'll have to be content with that.

My biggest complaint about his first book about desert terrain was pretty poor maps -- and that was being kind. Here, the central section of eight color maps is better. Some maps indicate individual mortar and AT gun locations -- just the thing to translate a battle into a scenario. Most even have a scale. Now that we know you can include well-drawn maps, don't ever saddle us with poor maps again.

There are no other images in the book.

His style may be an acquired taste, as between the academic straightjacket and a difficulty in writing simple sentences, it can be a chore to read. I get the difficulty in switching to a more general style, but somebody give this author an editor. The information is too good to remain buried...however, ties will still go to the author.

Enjoyed it.

Harpoon Missile Vs. Surface Ships: Duel 134. by Lon Nordeen. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *US Navy, Libya and Iran 1986-1988*

If you like gaming modern naval, you'll likely enjoy this book. It details the development, deployment, and use of Harpoon cruise missile in the US Navy, with actions against Iran and Libya.

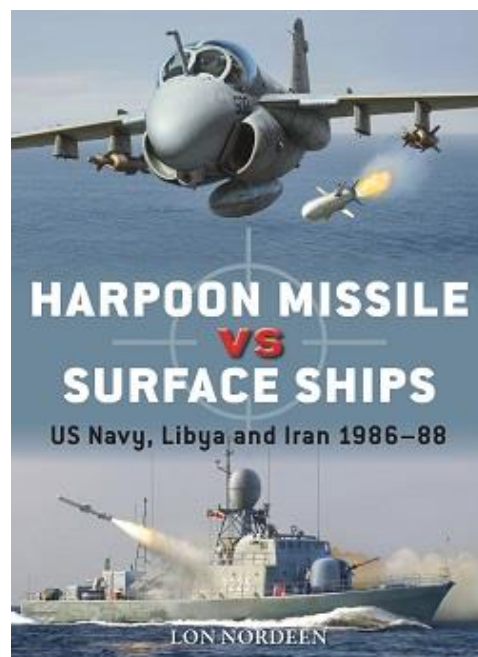
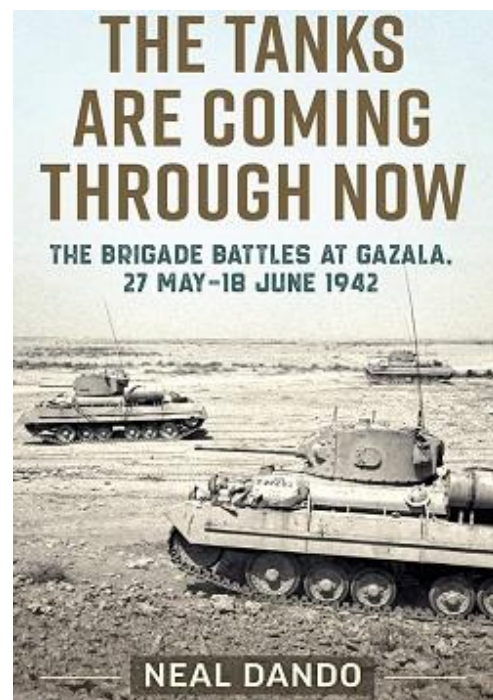
It follows the usual *Duel* format with plenty of illustrations. I'm not particularly knowledgeable about the subject, but I do recall reading a book about 20 years ago the US-Iran naval clashes in the 1980s. I recall that it was not as one-sided as this overview indicates.

Of note are the numerous excerpts of first-person accounts of firing Harpoon missiles at various ships and the damage that occurred when they struck. Apparently, it is not easy to sink modern naval ships with a single missile, but a hit causes considerable topside damage.

Of note to me was that the first launch of a Harpoon missile from a ship was by the USS Lockwood (p6) --named after the WWII Admiral Charles Lockwood in charge of the US submarine fleet.

The booklet contains 12 black and white photos, 37 color photos, four color illustrations, three color ship profiles, one color aircraft profiles, three color maps, and one two-page color action illustration.

Enjoyed it.



The 11th Waffen-SS. by Massimiliano Afiero. Hardback (9.3x12.3 inches). 205 pages. 2024 English translation reprint of 2022 Italian language book.

Subtitle: *Freiwilligen PanzerGrenadier Division "Nordland"*

This illustrated history follows Afiero's other unit illustrated histories on the 7th, 23rd, and 27th SS divisions (see the review of the *29th SS Italiensche Division* in the 05/27/2022 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The 11th was created in 1943 in an effort to enroll Germanic volunteers from Denmark, Norway, and Netherlands, although due to a variety of internecine challenges, the Dutch formed their own and Germanic Romanians filled in, along with a handful of Swedes and others.

The division was deployed to the Leningrad front in December 1943 and almost immediately became part of a general retreat as a Soviet 1944 offensive propelled the Germans backwards to Narva, to the Baltic countries, Kurland, and eventually Pomerania and Berlin.

Knights Cross accounts are included in the text during the appropriate actions, with small successful counterattacks and large-scale tumbling backwards. OOBs are included at different times, although unit names, not numbers are listed. You'll have to pick out the numbers from the text.

The desperation of many actions comes through in the text. One interesting scenario idea is a Soviet naval landing on the coast at Merekula (p64-65) with a land push across the Narva River. This has a mix of Soviet destroyers and landing craft dropping off troops around Merekula, where the German 227th Division had its HQ while elements of the Soviet 47th Army tried to expand its bridgehead. Estonian police battalion, German Marine battalion, German infantry, German SS, coastal artillery, Stuka attacks -- what a mix to toss on a table. Two maps offer a decent start to tabletop terrain, although neither has a scale. More unit IDs in the text.

Typos: "The same day, a Soviets were..." is likely "the Soviets" (p134) and missing a period after "river" (p57).

The book contains 480 black and white photos, two black and white illustrations, and 35 black and white maps.

Another good unit history in his Waffen SS litany.
Enjoyed it.

Italian Soft-Skinned Vehicles of the Second World War: Volume 2. by Ralph Riccio, Mario Pieri, and Danielle Guglielmi. Softcover (8.3x11.7 inches). 226 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Motorcycles, Trucks, Artillery Tractors 1935-1945*

This encyclopedia of vehicles is just what you need to build an Italian force, for the variety of vehicles is astounding. I never knew they had so many different truck versions.

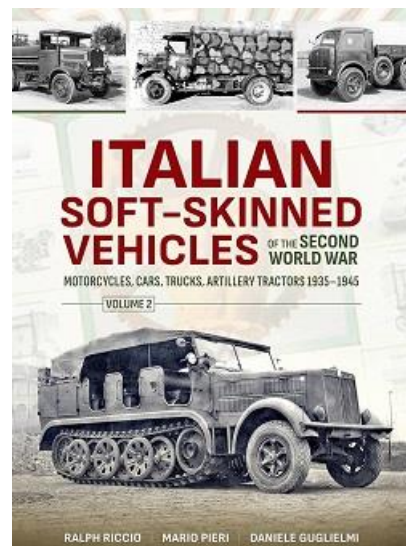
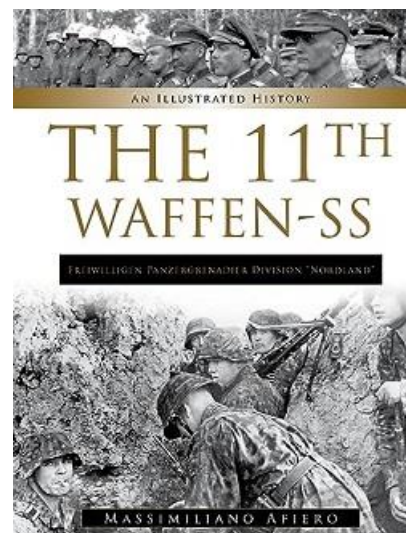
Each specific vehicle entry contains specs, photos, and short development, deployment, and service history. Some include scale drawings (top, side, front, and back), although what scale is not listed.

Now, I can't say I read every entry in its entirety -- they tended to read the same after a while -- but as I paged through the book, I read some whole and picked at others as whims and photos took me.

The medium and heavy truck section contained all sorts of cargo, tanker, bus on truck chassis, and specialty trucks. I stopped and read about the Bianchi Tipo Medoilanum mobile cinema (p30). If that was on the table, Italian units get a +1 to their morale roll. I also found the Fiat 665 (p70) that had 7.5mm steel plate bolted to them (some included top cover, too) to create an APC (although the tires were exposed).

Artillery tractors contained a selection of wheeled, tracked, and half-tracked vehicles, some with guns mounted on the beds.

There is also a section on trailers of various types.



The subtitle is a bit off. There are no motorcycles in this volume, but it does contain special purpose vehicles such as desert light trucks. The markings and camouflage section show photos (OK, including a few motorcycles here).

The book contains 44 black and white photos, 11 color photos, 86 black and white scale illustrations, 10 color markings, and 10 color vehicle profiles.

Enjoyed it.

Coalition Armor vs Iraqi Forces: Duel 133. by Chris McNab. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Iraq 2003-2006*

The armor covered includes the US Abrams tank, Bradley infantry fighting vehicle (IFV), and LAV 25 IFV; the British Challenger tank, Warrior IFV, and Scimitar IFV; and the Iraqi T-54, T-55, T-62, T-72, T-59, T-69, and the BTR, BRDM, and BMP IFVs.

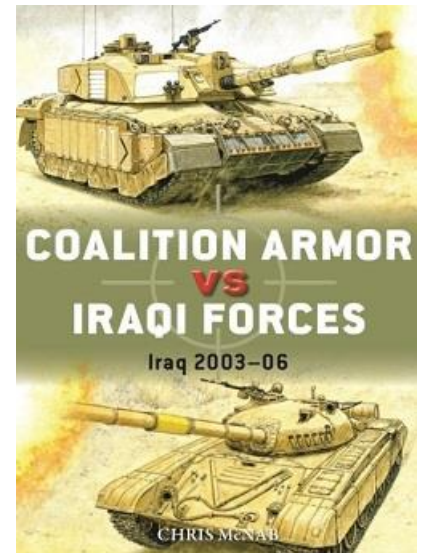
The US brought 850 tanks and at least 200 Bradleys to the battle and the British brought 116 Challengers, 140 Warriors, and 66 Scimitars against the 1,800 to 2,000 Iraqi tanks, 1,200 BMPs, and 1,500 other armored vehicles (p32-33).

The main matchups covered are the Abrams vs. T-72, Bradley vs. BMP-2, and Warrior vs. RPGs. Of note is that the US lost 23 Abrams and 150 Bradleys during the war (p74).

The booklet contains 12 black and white photos, 37 color photos, four color illustrations, three color ship profiles, one color aircraft profiles, three color maps, and one two-page color action illustration.

I'm not much of an ultramodern gamer, so this overview provides enough detail for me.

Enjoyed it.



Light Troops in the Seven Years War: Reason to Revolution 122. by James R. McIntyre. Softcover (7.1x9.8 inches). 155 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Irregular Warfare in Europe and North America 1755-1763*

As the subtitle indicates, this comprehensive overview from the editor of the *Journal of the Seven Years War Association* provides considerable detail about the start of irregular warfare -- also called Small War -- from before the Seven Years War through the end of the SYW.

This covers the raising and role of light troops for the major combatants in Europe as well as American (British) and Native Americans in North America in what we on this side of the pond call the French and Indian War.

Interesting info abounds within the pages. A 1757 Prussian unit under Anjelelli contained five companies of musketeers and two "amusettes" (translates as "playthings") -- basically a tiny artillery piece, or rather large musket, that fired 1-pound balls (p43-44). In the field, one soldier rested the gun on his shoulder and another fired it. In 1759, the amusettes were replaced by 'several' 3-lb cannons. You don't think of irregular light troops hauling cannons, no matter how small. Apparently, the unit had an undistinguished record and most ended up captured (p45).

A 1756 French unit, Fischer's Chasseurs, consisted of five companies of 40 foot troops each plus 20 mounted troops. Their tactical use was effective enough, but the unit was better known for looting and pillaging (p55).

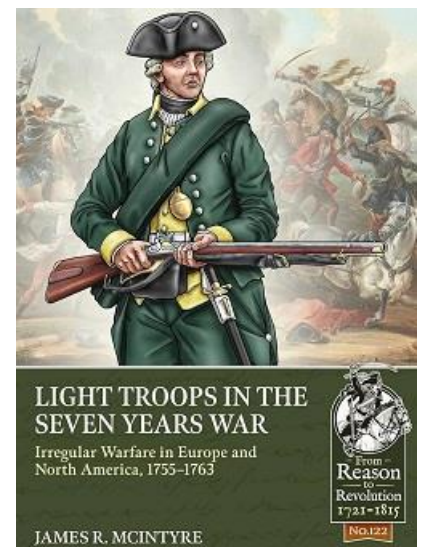
One of the best suspects for a mini-campaign would be Hadik's raid on Berlin in 1757, which caught the city with only a small garrison. He stormed the place and made off with, wait for it, loot and other plunder.

Plenty more eye-opening details for those seeking something other than major SYW battles. Chapters also cover the French & Indian War in North America with equal detail about units such as Rogers' Rangers and the various Native American tribes. Indeed, the Small War in North America offers some notable scenario ideas, including a great Fort Bull skirmish including a fort, supply column, and ambush.

The book contains 10 black and white illustrations, eight color uniform illustrations, and six color maps.

Well written, well footnoted, and well-reasoned.

Enjoyed it.



Eastern Front 1945: Air Campaign 42. by William E. Hiestand. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2024.

Subtitle: *Triumph of the Soviet Air Force*

By 1945, the Luftwaffe was pretty much a spent force, although for a brief moment in February, it transferred 650 fighters from bomber defense to the Eastern Front to temporarily gain air superiority in defense of the Oder River (p49). It didn't last, but Germany needed such desperate measures to at least try and hold back the Soviet Army.

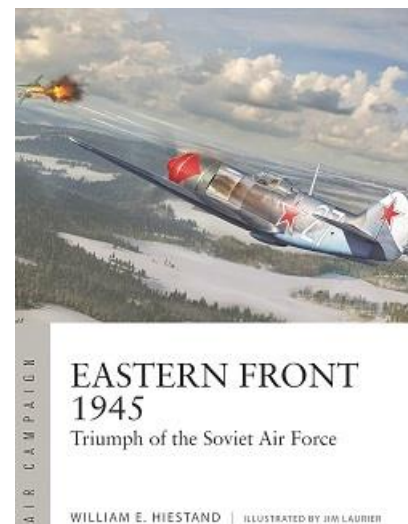
The month before, on January 16, the Luftflotte 6 flew 587 sorties. The Red Air Force's 16th Air Army flew 3,431 sorties (p42). Note that the Soviets had five Air Armies, so start multiplying sorties.... Successful or not, that tells the story behind denuding Reich bomber force.

The booklet contains 65 black and white photos, five color illustrations, five color maps, and three two-page color action illustration.

One typo: the graph (p72) lists April 1945 German fighter strength at 651 fighters, but the chart (p73) lists it at 641 fighters.

I'll put in my usual complaint about too small text font for the *Air Campaign* series text compared to other Osprey booklets. The information is enlightening, but the physical format is difficult for my grognard eyes. Bring a microscope for the index.

Enjoyed it.



Pacific Profiles: Volume 12. by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 108 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Allied Fighters: P-51 & F-6 Mustang Series - New Guinea and the Philippines 1944-1945*

This latest volume in the *Pacific Profile* series covers the P-51 Mustang and its recon F-6 model during the last year of WWII. I'm going to poach my recap from the previous volume, because it mostly applies here too.

"For the aircraft modelers, the Pacific Profile volumes offer a considerable reference source for markings and nose art. Squadron by squadron, the illustrations of selected aircraft offer color and nose art options. This is a illustration booklet and contains very little in terms of dogfights and the like. You get a short recap of the squadron movements and usually a line or two per airframe. Some are pretty interesting."

A couple differences: P-51s almost never encountered Japanese aircraft, but did bomber escort missions and ground attacks. Eight P-51s of the 41st Fighter Squadron escorted B-24s and two Consolidated B-32s to hit Formosa (p45). Wikipedia sez: The B-32 was developed in parallel with the B-29 as a fall-back design -- only 118 were built by September 1945 and the rest on order cancelled.

In another mission, the P-51s had to shoot down a crippled B-24 (after the crew bailed) (p45). I wonder if the pilot painted an American flag on the side of his plane to denote the kill...

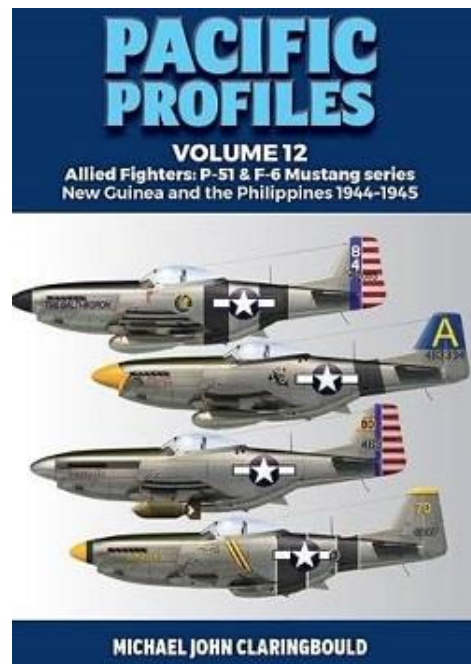
Capt. Louis Curdes of the 3rd Air Commando Group did on the side of his P-51 Bad Angel. On Feb. 10, 1945, he shot down a C-47 carrying 13 US troops and nurses when its pilot was heading to land at a Japanese airfield. All 13 were rescued (p31).

Also, for whatever reason, P-51s did not sport any risqué pin-up art on the noses, just lettering -- although some of the names certainly evoke pin-ups from other aircraft.

The booklet contains 66 black and white photos, 16 color photos, two color maps, one black and white map, one black and white illustration, 104 color aircraft profiles, 11 color unit emblem illustrations, and six other color illustrations.

It's another fine volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.



Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane. by Vincent dePaul Lupiano. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 264 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Nazi Gold and the Murder of an Entire French Town by SS Division Das Reich*

Ordinarily, I'd pass on a book about this well-known massacre during WWII, but 'Nazi Gold' was a wrinkle I had not heard before. I had thought it was a cut and dried case of a SS division on the march after D-Day, French Resistance attacks, and the SS gets tired of being ambushed and kills and burns an entire town.

However, according to this book, the SS division commander, Maj. Gen. Lammerding, has accumulated untraceable gold bars from German and French sources. As the prospect of a nice SS pension dimmed, he concocted a plan to hide the gold through the end of the war. With the Allies on the beaches of Normandy, and the division ordered to the front, he had to think quick about what to do with a literal half-ton of gold.

He couldn't get to Switzerland and couldn't store it in southern France, so with the aid of two accomplices, he crated it up as Division records and took it with the division. However, plans go awry and one maquis and five French teenagers ambushed a car, a truck, and a half-track on a tertiary road 2km outside Oradour-sur-Glane.

All the Germans were killed, and all the French except the maquis leader were killed or ran away. He discovered the shipment of gold -- and buried it. The problem was Lammerding wanted his pension and ordered a battalion to find the "records" in the only place that made sense to hide a half ton of gold: Oradour-sur-Glane. On June 10, 1944, the SS surrounded the town.

This book turned out to be far more interesting than at first glance. The opening in the Fuhrer Bunker in Berlin is jarring, the style's a little abrupt, and the pace is a little odd, but you get there in the end. It also covers events long after the war when that maquis went back to find the gold.

Two typos: an "eloquent" apartment (p11) is probably an "elegant" apartment, and, on "27 April 1944, days before WWII ended..." (p8) is likely "27 April 1945."

The book contains seven black and white photos and one black and white map of the town.

The SS killed 642 people and blew up most of the town in the sweep for gold, although the troops were told that the French partisans had burned several SS soldiers alive.

Enjoyed it.

The Battle of Tinian: Images of War. by John Grehan and Alexander Nicoll. Softcover (7.4x9.7 inches). 207 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Capture of the Atomic Bomb Island, July-August 1944*

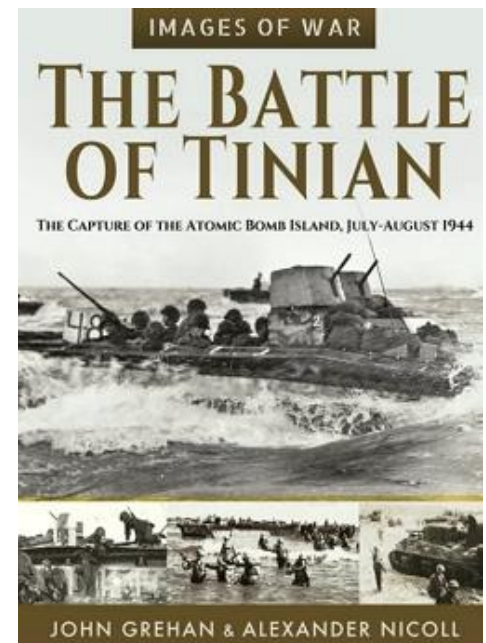
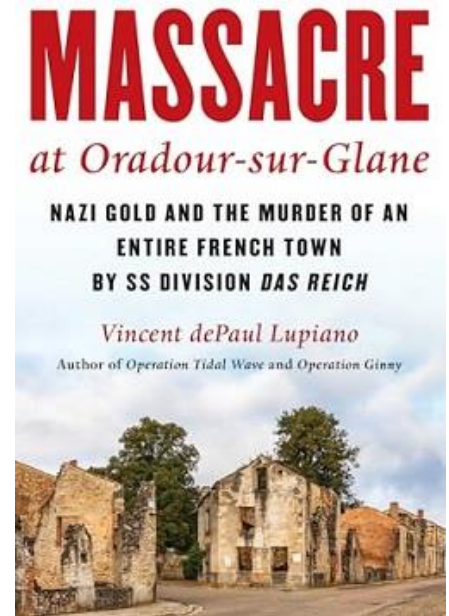
Like *The Dieppe Raid* from the same two authors (see the 01/25/2024 AAR or up on hmgs.org), this volume offers more text than usual in the series. You get a better appreciation of the operation to capture the island than a straight photo journey.

Photos and text cover planning and pre-invasion bombardments, step by step capture of the island, Japanese counter-attacks, mopping up, and building airfields for B-29s, one of which -- the Enola Gay -- dropped the first atom bomb on Japan.

The book contains 177 black and white photos and two black and white maps.

If adding text is a trend in the series, I'm all for it. Captions are great, but I like the added context that bounces back and forth between the combat explanations and the accompanying photos.

Enjoyed it.



Vandal Heaven: Reinterpreting Post Roman North Africa. by Simon Elliott. Hardback (6.4x9.3 inches). 216 pages. 2024.

Vandals get a bad name through the ages. You take one vacation through Gaul, Italy, Spain, and North Africa and are forever linked to sacking cities and pillaging lands. This book tries to rehabilitate them to an extent.

Before tackling the Vandals, the book provides a wide-ranging overview of Roman society and culture, including the rise of the Latin language, shifting religions that culminated in the official Christian religion, and pre-Vandal Roman wars against the Gauls, Cimbri, Germans, and Marcomanni. For all of us without this in brain-ram, this is an excellent overview.

One point about the Latin word for barbarian. I had always thought it to mean someone who isn't part of the Roman Empire and to a certain extent that's true. However, in a refinement, the word represents the 'bar bar babbling' of non-Latin speakers (p32). I begin to wonder what the Romans would make of the yadda-yadda-yadda-ists.

Anyway, next comes the history of Wandals (wanderers), who became known as the Vandals, who are one of five main Germanic tribes according to the Roman historians of the period.

About 100,000 Vandals crossed the Rhine River on New Year's Eve 406 AD (p87) in a mass migration. They couldn't have picked a better time as the Roman Empire was in the throes of rebellion and other pressures. As they overran the provinces and sacked cities, the Roman response proved slow.

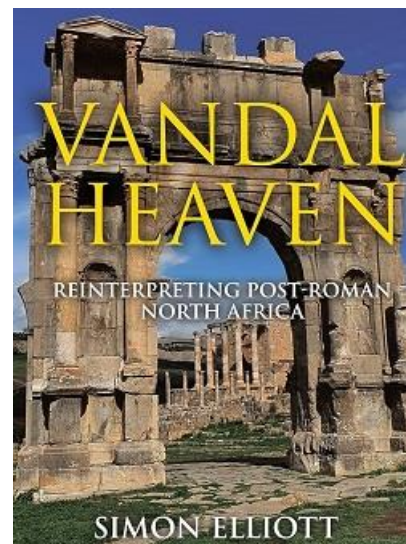
The personalities and series of events in the trek from the Rhine into Spain swirl through the text. The step-by-step progress, with all the dealings and double-dealings among foederates and Roman factions, becomes a bit overwhelming at times, but here is one interesting intersection of power politics and military activities. Actually, quite interesting. Fodder for a mini-campaign, I think.

In any case, the migration of about 80,000 Vandals (including families) versus about 15,000 Roman field troops and 10,000 border troops (p149) ends up in North Africa with a lightning campaign that captures coastal and inland sections and includes a hop into Sicily, too.

The book contains a center section of 39 color photos, most of the North African ruins visited by the author.

As for rehabilitation, the Vandals neatly replaced the Roman elite at the top of the political pyramid. They figured that taxes would be a better long-term plan than sacking everything and they put down roots to stabilize the economy and society. The Byzantines did eventually reconquer North Africa with a more oppressive approach, and Elliott argues that the Arab conquests were eased by hatred of the Byzantines.

Enjoyed it.



Solomons Air War: Volume 2 - October 1942. by Michael Claringbould and Peter Ingman. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 192 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Guadalcanal and Santa Cruz: October 1942*

I reviewed the superb *Volume 1* (see the 08/23/2023 AAR or at hmgs.org). As expected, *Volume 2* continues the air war over Guadalcanal and then some. Besides the claims and counter-claims of swirling dogfights, bombing runs, tactics, nuisance raids, search runs, and seaplanes over the Tokyo Express get a detailed look. The Battle of Santa Cruz also receives a fine examination of aircraft actions, including search, CAP, strike, and escort missions.

Volume 2 continues the day by day and night by night air war in and around the Solomon islands in minute details down to individual actions by individual planes. You can just about open to a random page and ta-da! Instant aircraft scenario.

As both US and Japanese records are consulted, you get the real results of aerial battles. Indeed, the two appendices in the back are charts of every US and Japanese plane downed with date, type, serial number, fatalities, and other comments. You really get spoiled by Claringbould's research of both sides' claims and realities.

The prose is straightforward and clear, if sometimes a tad repetitive given that missions often duplicated previous missions. Thankfully, it's more 'just the facts, ma'am' than long-winded hooey.



The book contains 41 black and white photos, two color photos, five color maps, 20 color aircraft profiles, and 15 color action illustrations.

One typo: "Seki sound found..." (p144) likely should drop "sound" from the sentence.

I suspect *Volume 3* is in the works and I look forward to it, too.

Enjoyed it.

Tailships: Europe at War 38. by John Rodgaard. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 84 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Hunt for Soviet Submarines in the Mediterranean 1970-1973*

With the Cold War in full swing and USSR submarines prowling the Mediterranean Sea, the US refitted three Destroyer Escorts (DEs) with experimental towed sonar arrays. These three, originally based in Newport, RI, and then out of Naples (Italy), would perform experimental sonar sweeps for three years. The experiments proved successful at finding US subs on training missions and USSR subs as part of day-to-day operations.

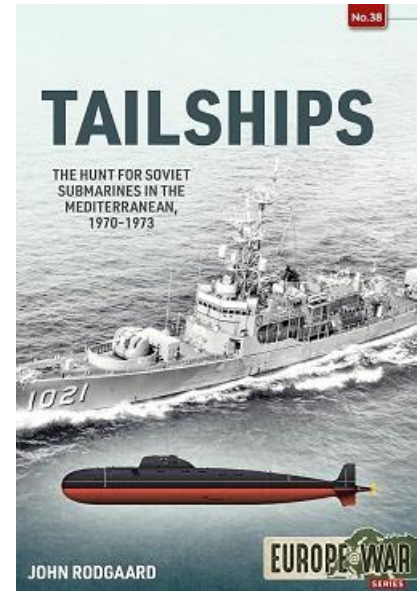
Rodgaard served aboard a DE and provides the developmental history of the Interim Towed Array Surveillance System (ITASS) and its operation while on patrol. In between, he describes shipboard routines, shore excursions, and the hydrodynamics of finding subs in the Med. He includes lots of first-person excerpts from fellow sailors, but not much from a Soviet perspective.

Of note is that the USSR identified seven chokepoints in the Med and usually has 11 subs on patrol (p45). A color map in the center section shows the spots.

The book contains 59 black and white photos, 12 black and white illustrations, 19 black and white maps (mostly plots of experimental sonar sweeps), one color map, four USSR color submarine profiles, and two US color DE ship profiles.

While the DEs did not target the USSR subs with weaponry, this is a nice little cat-and-mouse recap of Cold War naval experiments in the Mediterranean Sea.

Enjoyed it.



Kings of Battle: LandCraft 13. by David Grummitt. Softcover (8.3x11.8 inches). 64 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *US Self-Propelled Artillery 1963-2023*

Another volume in the marvelous series covers the development and deployment of US post-WWII self-propelled artillery: mostly the M108, M109, and M110 vehicles.

The history runs pages 1 to 17 and then p39 to 64 and contains 64 color photos and 19 black and white photos.

The 15 color vehicle profiles with camouflage patterns runs pages 18 to 25.

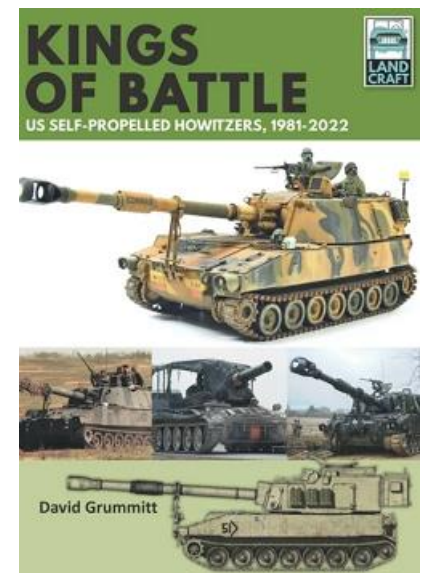
The plastic model section of pages 26 to 33, including builds and occasional modeling tip, covers four 1/35 scale models and showcases the talent with 36 color photos of models and three color photos of the actual vehicle being modeled.

The last section, model kits and accessory products, covers pages 34 to 38 and includes 27 color photos of box covers and contents.

One interesting tidbit: After WWII, the US began to design new self-propelled artillery vehicles with the specification for 110mm and 156mm guns (p4). As WWII standard calibers were 105mm and 155mm, it'd be nice to know why these were initially considered, but other than a throwaway line about unspecified "concerns were raised," nothing. Whatever the reason, the guns soon returned to 105mm and 155mm.

For those with Vietnam campaign games in mind, an artillery fire support base, complete with bunkers, barbed wire perimeter, cleared area outside the wire, and sandbagged positions, could be created in 24 hours (p49).

For modern gamers, the US currently has 11 Armored Brigade Combat Teams, with each containing two tank battalions (87 M1 Abrams main battle tanks), one mechanized infantry battalion (152 Bradleys), and one artillery battalion (18 M109s) (p61).



The booklet covers self-propelled artillery in US, NATO, and other countries' service. Use in Vietnam War, Gulf War, and Cold War exercises is included.

It's another modeler's delight.

Enjoyed it.

The Great Escape From Stalag Luft III. by Jens Muller. Softcover (5.9x9.0 inches). 153 pages. 2024 reprint of 2019 reprint of 1946 book.

Subtitle: *The Memoir of Jens Muller*

In the movie, *The Great Escape*, 76 Allied POWs escaped from a German POW camp. Of these, 50 were recaptured and executed, three escaped back to England, and the rest were returned to the POW camp. The author was one of the three who escaped.

Muller, a Norwegian, was in Switzerland studying engineering when Germany invaded Norway. He subsequently took a train through France and a ship to England to volunteer to fight. He became a Hurricane pilot and was shot down on June 19, 1942 off the coast of the Netherlands.

After 66 hours paddling an inflatable dinghy -- itself an interesting description of the escape kit in the Hurricane (p15) -- the ocean current drove him ashore where he was captured. Well prepped for interrogation, he gave nothing away and was ultimately sent on a train ride with other captured POWs to Stalag Luft III.

Unlike the movie, this was an already established POW camp, not a new camp for all the rotten eggs in one basket. As the war continued, it was expanded and Muller transferred there with others and new arrivals.

Fascinating for me were all the previous escape attempts, including through tunnels, that were foiled before the Tom, Dick, and Harry tunnels. One of the prior tunnels in the old section was discovered and a fire truck driven into the camp. The Germans pumped water in to collapse the tunnel (p74).

The most successful escape involved 24 POWs walking out the gate for delousing led by a German-speaking Dutch POW in fake German uniform. Most were quickly recaptured, but one Englishman made it to the Swiss border. Alas, he was picked up at Passport Control -- no motorcycle (p90-91). The penalty for escape was 14 days of bread and water in the cooler.

The author repaired an existing air pump and built a new one. Parts and tools were easy to get by bribing the German guards (kinda like the movie).

The actual digging of Tom, Dick, and Harry proved more troublesome than the movie depicted, including the underground dirt dispersed via hidden bags (like the movie) smelling real bad and being a different color (unlike the movie). Work ceased in wintertime, as newly dug dirt could be easily identified -- until they filled in the other tunnel.

Like the movie, the author was one of two who boarded a Swedish ship. Unlike the movie, they traveled via train, not rowboat, where local passenger trains were almost never checked but express trains always were.

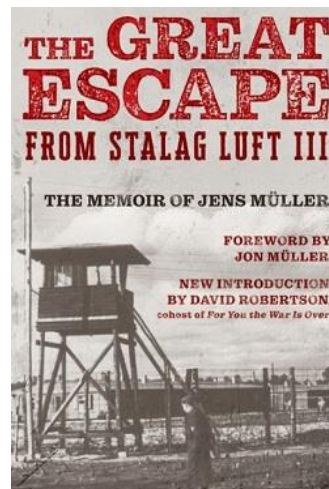
The book contains 16 black and white photos and four black and white maps (one a nice birds-eye illustration of the POW camp for those who want to recreate each building for an escape skirmish game ala *Escape From Colditz*).

Two typos: "open fire with canon" (p9) should be "cannon" and "unitl" (p75) should be "until."

As the historical note in the front of the book mentions: "little resemblance between the movie and reality" (p. xxvii). For example, no US POW escaped, the characters were more symbols of Cold War than actual POWs (albeit with some similarities), the distilled spirits were by Poles not for US 4th of July, and sadly, neither Capt. Hicks (played by Steve McQueen) nor any other POW stole a motorcycle and tried jumping the barbed wire barriers on the Swiss border.

While the movie is suitably dramatic, the reality is even more so. I suggest watching the movie for the drama and then reading the book for the reality. It's a smooth, fast read.

Enjoyed it.



The Killing Ground: A Biography of Thermopylae. by Myke Cole and Michael Livingston. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 335 pages. 2024.

Mention Thermopylae and you immediately think of the 300 Spartans holding off masses of Persians for a few days in 480BC. I'll quibble with the authors' suggestion that it's the most famous battle in history. A couple movies, *The 300 Spartans* in 1962 and *300* in 2007, popularize it, but I'll argue that Waterloo is far more famous (a multitude of movies and an ABBA song seem to dwarf Thermopylae references). I'm not sure anyone says they "met their Thermopylae" as much as meeting their Waterloo.

Bar and pub discussions aside, this book looks at one piece of killing ground, Thermopylae and its mountainous environs, that saw action -- 27 separate ones recorded in history -- over a few millennia. It's a natural chokepoint for many an army invading Greece and no less than three walls/field fortifications were built at the "Hot Gates" and many more defending the other passes and pathways around the main area.

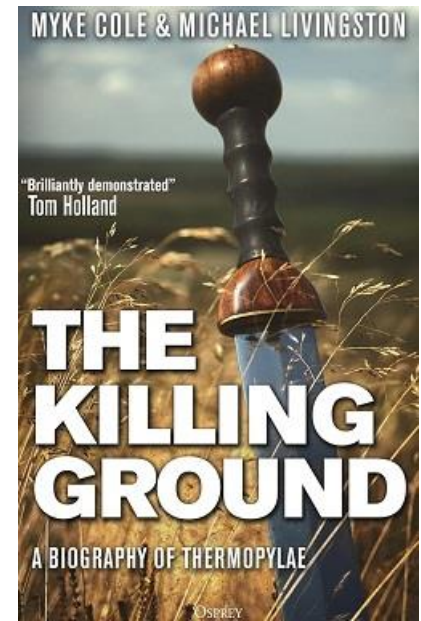
The 480BC battle, second on the 27-action hit parade with Leonidas and company vs. Xerxes, is an absolute gem of recap and analysis. It is the authors' contention that Leonidas and around 8,000 troops "hid" at the Hot Gates with the expectation that Xerxes would use the Oti Pass to head into Greece and then the Spartans and other city-state troops would pop out and savage the Persian supply lines. It's an interesting theory and well laid out.

As for the rest, some actions are a bit of a stretch. Even the authors admit they were "scraping the barrel for any action" (p286) related to Thermopylae. Blame it on sources, or lack thereof. When the ancient through Byzantine sources become plentiful, the battles stand on firmer ground.

The book contains one black and white photo, 14 color photos, seven color illustrations, two black and white maps, and four color maps.

Nicely done.

Enjoyed it.



Midsomer Murders on Location. by Sabine Schreiner and Joan Street. Softcover (5.8x6.3 inches). 92 pages. 2015 edition.

Subtitle: *A Guide to the Midsomer Counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Herfordshire and Oxfordshire*

Subtitle: *Fully Illustrated, Indexed and With Location Maps*

This British murder mystery TV series first appeared in 1997 and continues to this day (24 seasons). It certainly lives on in reruns on PBS and Ovation channels, the former usually without commercials and the latter peppered with so many it's virtually unwatchable.

It's a 'cozy' mystery, which means the murders, and usually three per show, while often grisly, are rarely shown on screen due to stopping the camera work just before the fatal point. Along comes Barnaby and DS sidekick to piece together the clues and puzzle out the motive, opportunity, and means.

This describes all the places where the series is filmed, moving county by county mentioned in the subtitle to show buildings, village greens, and so on. You get a little history about each village, and then an overview of what building was used -- and reused -- in various episodes. There may be a newer edition than this one, I don't know.

Theoretically, you can retrace the series by visiting the villages, towns, and cities. The maps show the county and the villages -- finding a specific location probably involves a bit more footwork. It's a lot easier now with various smartphone map apps. The book contains a map of the fictional county.

The book contains 44 black and white photos and five black and white maps.

According to the book, each 2015 episode took five weeks and 1.5 million pounds to make (p5). Per the *MM* fan site, they make anywhere between four and eight episodes per year, with 140 total episodes at the end of Season 24.

You do have to be a bit of a bigger fan than me to be able to identify the location with a specific episode. For those with less of an encyclopedic memory of episodes, it contains a reverse lookup index in the back listing episodes and associated pages for locations.

Enjoyed it.

