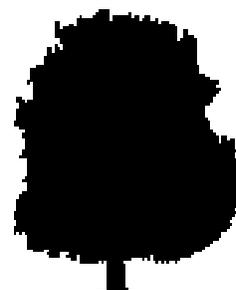




Military Muddling



Volume 17 Issue 01

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

4Q2007 Edition

Editorial

Inspired by the Autumn Conference, I have launched my email game on the subject of Scandinavian Politics in 1939/40. The diplomatic messages are flowing in that game. Now I have time to get back to editing MilMud. Which makes this somewhat a bumper edition...Thanks for so many varied contributions...enjoy the read.

Daniel T Shaw

Contributions for Military Muddling

To: Daniel T Shaw, preferably as ASCII Text or Word documents, by e-mail to MilMud@chestnutlodge.org.uk or clwg@ProjExpertise.com

but you can also send paper or disks to:

La Montvallière 3 rue du Capitaine Lacuzon, 39150 St Laurent en Grandvaux France



Officers

Events Organiser: **Jim Wallman** events@chestnutlodge.org.uk

Games Organiser: **Brian Cameron** games@chestnutlodge.org.uk

Military Muddling Editor: **Daniel T Shaw** MilMud@chestnutlodge.org.uk

Treasurer: **Andrew Hadley**

Admin Officer: **John Rutherford**

Solstice meeting and social.

Saturday 15 December 2007 at John Rutherfords from noon until 10 pm. Games of a less serious nature, including En Avant - Napoleonic Game by Jim, SF Role-playing Game by John, and Weird War II by Brian

Events at Anerley Methodist Church Hall from 12 noon until 6 pm

Sunday 6 January 2008 WW2 Naval Damage Control Game – Jim and Night Fighters over Germany - Martin and Steve

Sunday 3 February 2008 Merkur vs Scorcher – Jerry and '18 Wheels and Dozen Roses' (Iraq convoys) - Mukul

See also <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/clwg/> and <http://www.chestnutlodge.org.uk/>

CLWG Autumn Game Design Conference

Held on Saturday and Sunday 06 and 07 October 2007, here are some reports:

Game Design – Jim Wallman – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

Bucking the bookies' expectations, I turned up only a short while into this first session. I thought Jim's analysis was really interesting, especially in the way that he systematised the early parts of the game design process which are usually part of our intrinsic assumptions about games. The framework looks like a good tool for assisting in making different conscious choices about design. This might perhaps lead to different games than those that we 'normally' produce.

I thought the feedback loops ought to have linked all the parts of the process, as I think at any stage one can go back to the drawing board or indeed any other point, but it all did seem to make sense. I've been designing and redesigning my Carthage game for years now and perhaps a more conscious attempt to work out what stage I was at might have helped me make progress. Still, I was reassured that the testing and redesigning loop I was stuck in is a perfectly plausible part of getting to a decent outcome!

Victorian RPG design – John Rutherford – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

This was a fascinating session as the mixed boardgame/RPG style of megagames interacted with a different approach to large-scale games – the freeform system championed in this case by Jerry and Pickles. John wanted input on his upcoming game and got a lot of suggestions!

It's very interesting for me to see and hear about new models for game design and approach, especially as I've pretty much grown up with the general approach of Chestnut and Megagames. I think the session illustrated just how strong people's expectations and assumptions can be, and how useful different experiences (for example Dillon/Dylan's comments about re-enactments and the different games he has taken part in).

I'm looking forward to John's game and (having spent a few years bashing other kids with latex swords in caves) hope that he can make use of some of the ideas that are floating round in the LARP/re-enactment/freeform 'worlds'.

Company Commander by James – Offside Report by Andy Grainger

I hope that James found this session useful as I felt at times that there was a certain lack of focus to the aim. James explained that he wanted to have a game set around, say, a WW2 company attack with players representing the company and platoon commanders. Early on he emphasised the importance of individual soldiers, their skills and that the Platoon Commander would know them personally. However, we could not have a game at company level with resolution at soldier level. Indeed, it became clear that the role of the Company Commander was quite limited in that he would either set or define the objective and the routes to be taken by the different platoons. Typically these would be one up, two back so that the players in the rear platoons might not have much of a game.

Jerry mentioned an interesting game by John Armatys of WD in which the platoons advanced across terrain of about 1km in depth and where the defenders were represented by face-down cards, many of which were dummies. This sounded as though it gave a very realistic idea of the approach march – the 75% of the battle where the company selects, if it can, a covered approach to the objective. The final assault might be dramatic but is actually only the culmination of a long and nerve-racking process. We discussed the ways in which the Approach might be gamed using examples such as WD's own "The Birds are Singing and It's a Wonderful Day" which used a 3D model; the Armatys game which used cards (and which could be used to reflect hidden terrain features as well as enemy troops) and the use of maps and air photos from Google Earth. Ironically my own "Bocage Battle" did not spend much time on the Approach since the terrain was

so close. In Italy, by contrast, soldiers might be visible 2km away on the other side of a valley but be well beyond effective weapon range.

This did not solve the question of role. We could imagine a phase at the beginning of the game where the officers conduct a map and physical recce – the longer this takes the less time they have to conduct the operation. But once the orders are issued there might be a lot of dead time for the units at the back. We discussed the possibility of using a pool of players so that a group of four players might swap the various command roles as the game went on. James was very keen to have separate players for platoon corporals as well as the officer but I was not sure that they would have much of a game at this level unless you went to skirmish level which would not be able to cope with a 1km advance – although perhaps it is worth exploring.

I last explored this level of game about 20 years ago so it was interesting to try it again.

Somme Logistics by Jim – Offside Report by Andy Grainger

Having designed at least two games on the Battle of the Somme – one tactical and set at Beaumont Hamel and one operational 'Muck & Bullets' – Jim explained that he was inspired to try a logistics game. His reference was an article in the journal of the Royal Logistics Corps, which offered a broad but sufficiently detailed and short explanation of the problem. My initial view was that logistics games do not work on their own but must have an impact on the operations unless the players just see them as 'work'. But we quickly appreciated that the build-up for the Battle of the Somme required the construction of a vast logistic infrastructure whilst at the same time it was necessary to supply the troops already at the front. Using a fictitious map of a 20 mile Army sector we identified the sort of troop density that might be involved and hence the level of demand to be expected. We could then calculate the tonnage of munitions, food, fodder etc that the system would need to handle and so draw up a list of the elements that would need to be constructed or maintained – Standard Gauge Railways (SGR), Narrow Gauge Railways (NGR), canals, roads, bridges, dumps etc. Then we listed the resources that they might require – labour, machinery, locomotives, rolling stock, stone, timber, specialist craftsmen and so on. A tariff could be built up so that players could cross-index resources against task and get a time to construct. They would be juggling the resources needed to supply materials quickly against the longer-term requirement to build a more robust infrastructure. Added to this was the fact that in 1916 operational staffs did not tend to consult with logisticians but simply expected them to provide what was necessary to support an operation.

So I think Jim was encouraged that there was a “train building” game here where the players would not necessarily be battling the King's Enemies so much as time, weather and their colleagues in the Ops Branch.

Computers by Dave Boundy – Offside Report by Andy Grainger

For some years Dave had sought to develop a computer-supported game on the Battle of Britain (BoB) but had suffered a number of setbacks. Following a recent run of “Rheinubung” (Hunt the Bismarck), however, he had been encouraged to look at BoB again. Dave produced a diagram of the Fighter Command communication structure and since Jim and I had designed the 1989 megagame supported by our trusty Amstrad PCWs we were glad to be able to talk through it. The original megagame had used computer generated print-outs of radar reports which then had to be read out to the player teams via a selection of people with an immunity to sore throats. In future we would expect to be able to use computerised voices. A more difficult area was the handling of the RAF fighter squadrons. In the original games these had been played by a pool of umpires who 'flew' their counters manually on a big map according to the directions of speed and height given them by the players and a chart showing the performance of their aircraft. With the Rheinubung experience Dave now felt that he could computerise the flight-paths of the RAF squadrons and their visibility against the pre-planned German bomber tracks. These commands would still be input by a human umpire who would also generate appropriate verbal feedback such as 'Climbing to Angels 20' or 'Tally-ho, they are down on the right' but would automate the interception process (or its failure). This

would allow Dave to make interception much more realistic i.e. difficult – if he wished; he would be able to vary the parameters. It should be a great game – but we'll have wait a few more years for it!

Quote of the Session from Dave “Speed is just a number.” I must remember that next time I am running for a bus.

Merkur / Scorcher by Daniel and Jerry – Offside Report by Andy Grainger

Daniel had designed a game about Operation Merkur, the German attack on Crete in 1941 for the Dutch gamefest Murphymania. They thought the game had gone well to the extent that the results seemed convincing but the style seemed 'gamey'. Someone else described it as BOD which I understand means Buckets of Dice. Daniel also wanted to reflect the poor communications and consequential fragmentation and confusion in the land battles whilst still offering players a game at the operational level.

Subsequently Gerry had taken the air/naval aspect of the game and run it successfully at the Conference of Wargamers (COW). They now wanted to join the two halves together, meld the timescales with a view to producing a megagame for the UK market which they regarded as desiring a less 'gamey' product than the Dutch players had enjoyed.

The first area we looked at was timescale. We were looking for a timescale of about one hour per day which would allow five or six days of play. The original game had three daylight phases which offered a problem for the German air since aircraft could fly two sorties a day if they flew morning and evening but only one sortie if they flew a lunchtime sortie. This had resulted, however, in land turns taking too long – about 80 or 90 minutes. After discussion Daniel and Jerry decided to go for a scale of one hour per day made up of two half-day turns and a night turn.

This scale was thought to be good for the higher level and operational players but it led to a difficulty at the tactical level. The infantry battle on Crete was fought by infantry units with very poor communications and limited heavy weapons – almost WW1 style. Daniel wanted to reflect the fragmented nature of the battle by having company level resolution with players at brigade level (so lots of units) at screened off tables. But he wanted to reflect the allied command difficulties by having divisional players who, in practice, retained command of some units as reserves. Unfortunately communications were so slow that the orders they gave were too late and counterattacks failed. I don't think we came up with a solution to this during the session. My own thought is that a Div Commander will have very little decision making to do in a 20 minute turn and so I would leave out that role. To reflect the fragmentation of command one might keep the brigadiers with their company resolution and have them report direct to Freyberg's HQ. The Brigadiers would be very busy, especially with separate tables and so this would strain communications if not in a precisely historical way. I would also suggest that the combat be analysed carefully since a company would not last long in a timescale lasting days. Where, also, did the ammunition come from to keep the fighting going?

Crete has always been a challenge and it was interesting to hear two designers who seemed to have a system that was on the edge of working. Sounds like an ideal candidate for a tryout game.

Blitz by Jim – Offside report by Andy Grainger

Some months ago I had been round to Jim's house and found an enormous model of a burning building in his kitchen being attended by about 6 CLWGers armed with several packets of drinking straws. This was Jim's tactical game on the London Blitz. In this session he asked the question “Is there a game at the Operational level?”

Jim was one of the few people since the war to have looked at and photocopied some of the Operations Logs of one of the six sector stations of the London Fire Brigade during the Blitz. He hoped that more detailed research, including that on the German side would enable him to establish the nature of a raid and to track the reactions of the Fire Service on the ground. For the moment he wanted to look at the organisation of the fire-fighting arrangements in London and see what decisions the commanders had to take and the resources they could deploy.

By way of introduction Jim first explained that planning for bombing raids on London had started as early as 1933. The Fire Service had been strengthened, an Auxiliary Service recruited, a communications network set up and the infrastructure improved. For example, large steel water tanks had been built in streets and extra mains constructed. London was divided into six sectors (A-F), each of which had four to five Fire Stations. Each Fire Station had four substations lettered W, X, Y and Z.

A sub-station had 3-4 appliances and a Station about 12. There was a limited amount of special equipment eg turntables held at Station level or higher.

Fires were reported by the public at special telephones in the street (long gone) which were patched in to the Station. The implication must be that a lot of low-level fires were reported to and dealt with by the Stations direct. The Sector HQs seemed to deal with the bigger incidents involving anything from 20 to 100 appliances.

We discussed timescales – speeding up real time by 4 with an Admin turn during the day would allow two to three days to be played so reflecting the strain that built up during consecutive nights of bombing. We thought a team of four players for a Sector Team – commander, two map markers and comms would be busy receiving and evaluating reports, keeping a tote board of resources and allocating them to incidents.

Jim said that the session had helped him to gather his thoughts on this level of game and it was certainly helped by the knowledge he had gained from the tactical game and the clarity of the aim.

Incidentally, at a recent work meeting on Disaster Planning I discovered that the Bronze, Silver and Gold we hear in the media refer to levels of command - the tactical game would be at BRONZE level, the operational game at SILVER and the highest level game at GOLD.

Medieval Re-enactment by Dillon Burke – Offside report by Andy Grainger

I think many of us were very impressed by Dillon's talk about medieval re-enactment. Having been to the Royal Armouries a year or so ago and seen a very historical demonstration of a knight being “armyd” it was interesting to hear that there was another side to re-enactment. This sacrificed a degree of strict historical accuracy in terms of the style of armour but emphasised real combat. Basically, if you made a precise replica of a 15th century armour you would not want it bashed about in repeated combats. Two aspects, safety and training, were linked together to allow real fighting to take place but with blunted weapons and limits as to the strength of the blows and, occasionally, the type of weapon. For example, flails were banned because it was not possible to control the strength of the blows. Apart from the fighting, his group, Society for Creative Anachronism or SCA practised many other types of re-enactment including cooking, weaving, brewing and so on. Both sexes were involved.

Dillon explained that he had to design scenarios for battles with anything from 30 combatants to around 1,000 per side.

The two criteria were:

- ◆ Balance
- ◆ Involvement (everyone wants to fight!)

Not unlike any other game really but different from real battles where most warriors or soldiers will want to get maximum kudos from minimum danger.

Additionally there were, as might be expected in mediaeval armies (or hosts to use the technical term) a wide variety in unit quality. Most groups seem to fight as individuals but a few fight as formed groups manoeuvring as a block and fighting as a team with short reach weapons in the front ranks and pole weapons in the rear ranks. Needless to say, these can be very intimidating just to look at and so battles do have real morale.

Dillon also explained that commands are all but impossible to hear when helmets are worn. Signals can be given by horn or standard but only likely to be heard by troops not engaged. It is perhaps worth considering

that in ancient battles that even when a formation was engaged it would be of such depth that many men would not actually be fighting and so they would have a possibility of being aware of such signals. He also explained that fresh troops have a significant impact especially if attacking from a flank. He said that the line being impacted “rises and falls like the spines on a hedgehog” which sounds like a real medieval simile. But this impact is very short-lived, perhaps only 30 seconds. Nevertheless, it might be longer with bigger ancient formations.

This was a very stimulating presentation which offered a lot to think about, despite the big differences between re-enactments, wargames and real warfare.

Norway 1940 by Daniel – Offside report by Andy Grainger

I was a little late for this session but it consisted simply of a question by Daniel - “Is there a Game in Norway 1940?” supported by a very large map of the country and its neighbours. The obvious answer is 'No, there are many games in Norway 1940' and we discussed a few of them. Daniel described the political decisions which were made leading up to the war and we wondered how such bizarre decisions might be replicated. As ever, it is vital to look at the position from the point of view of the participants and a quick look at the very good Wikipedia article on the campaign suggests that the decisions were not as ridiculous in the light of 1940 as they might appear now. The reaction of the Norwegian government and armed forces to intelligence indicators seems very slow and poorly judged but then it was a country with no martial reputation and the major western allies hardly did any better. A game set at a political level might therefore be very interesting with properly briefed players.

A peculiar facet of the campaign was that the two invasion forces were at sea – or potentially so – at the same time. There was some discussion as to whether a game should start at this point or be freer in form which would offer fewer constraints but lead to the possibility that one side might not invade at all and so there would be no game.

The campaign was all about denying the Germans the ability to use the port of Narvik from which Swedish iron ore was shipped when the Baltic was frozen. We spent a lot of time considering whether Sweden might have been involved directly by one side or other trying to occupy the mines directly. No doubt this aspect was discussed but there seems to be no strong evidence that either side seriously considered invading Sweden.

Apart from a political or military campaign there was a lot of scope for fighting smaller battles around Oslo in which the general unpreparedness of all the units involved would have been a factor as would the dubious loyalties of some elements of the Norwegian Army. One could also envisage a game about, say the evacuation of the Royal Family – assuming of course that it needed to leave the country.

Plenty of interest therefore. Daniel just needs to focus on what game he would like to play!

Norway campaign – Daniel Shaw – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

Daniel was considering if and how he might run a campaign about the Allied and Axis interventions in Norway. He gave us an absorbing run through the chronology of events, which demonstrated the absurdity of some of the decisions taken – especially the French veto on British mining of German canals due to the transit trade, and the British treaty with the Swedes which allowed them to sell 10M tons of iron ore a year to the Germans.

We explored various options for a game, and seemed to decide that a political game, perhaps by email, would be interesting if run pre-intervention, and that perhaps this could then feed results for an operational game using the decisions taken by the political players. We also seemed to decide that Allied involvement seemed doomed to failure unless they could get Swedish support.

AQUILA – Onside report by Andy Grainger

Aquila is a set of Rules designed to provide a quick game between an Army of several Roman Legions and a Native Tribe such as one of those faced by Julius Caesar in Gaul. I designed it in about 1990 at about the time I was a member of the Society of Ancients. I had just read Caesar's Gallic Wars, surely one of the great war memoirs of all time and wanted to turn it into an army level game. But I wanted the game to have a context – the Romans and Gauls were a clash of cultures as well as armies and so I built in a mini-campaign system. The idea of this was to reflect the objectives and styles of the two sides. The Romans were monolithic and remorseless, the Gauls were unco-ordinated but more aggressive.

It is a two player umpire moderated game, one player taking the role of the Roman General, the other the chieftain of a Gaulish tribe. Each player has his own briefing while the umpire deals with aspects of the game outside the control of the players and adjudicates combat. To keep the game short it concentrates very specifically on the perspective of the battle which the General or Chieftain would have. Certain aspects, therefore, receive only generalised treatment.

The Roman General will be able to make effective and wide-ranging decisions before the battle but once Legions are engaged his ability to influence them will be much reduced. Basically he will be able to influence the whole Army in a very broad way or exert a stronger influence on a smaller part of it, to the exclusion of the remainder.

The Gaulish tribe is composed of several separate clans who require a charismatic leader and a desperate situation to act in concert. The tribe does not often meet together; the invasion by the Romans is an unprecedented event in its history.

Before the battle the Gaulish player will have to gather the clans and persuade them to accept his control but once they are engaged his ability to influence them will be considerably reduced. Any plan which he does propound will have to take full account of clan relationships within the tribe.

In this session I wanted to refamiliarise myself with the game and look at an aspect of the combat system which I had explored many years ago – namely to have a relatively open game but still offer a degree of concealment from the players. I acknowledge that I failed fully to explain the various options to the players and perhaps overestimated the extent to which some were familiar with the period. In the interests of the session I got the commanders to keep their own casualty records. Normally the umpire would have done that and provided a commentary to the players amplified by the tabletop display. Again, my pre-occupation with getting to grips with the rules meant that John's very strung out Roman legion hung on for far too long and deprived Mukul of a well-deserved victory.

But I was inspired to get back into the system and hope to bring the game along to the April 08 Games Conference.

Aquila – Andy Grainger – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

This saw John Rutherford leading 3 legions in an attack on some Celts on a hilltop led by Mukul. The rules seemed good on morale and combat but appeared to lack details on the limitations of manoeuvre. The Celts should have won but Roman book-keeping, however questionable, seemed to win the day. The rules did not appear to offer a conclusion to the key issue of the conference – how best to game/simulate medieval/ancient combat?

I think there is still work, or perhaps games, in this topic yet.

Weird War Two – Brian Cameron – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

I really wanted to see where this great game idea was going after taking part in several earlier discussions about it. Brian was interested in narrowing the focus of the game, and we spent a considerable period of

time arguing about what he could or should focus on. Eventually we seemed to settle on the base operations and projects rather than the super-hero interactions.

I hope Brian does run this again as a game. It's stuffed full of potential, whether as a simplified system or as a more open, freeform role-playing style game. I didn't personally have a problem with the less structured, story-telling approach the in the previous version, although I agreed it would probably have to be streamlined if it was to be a short club game. If Brian really does want to play in this sort of game, maybe someone would be interested in running a WW2 superheroes RPG?

Strategos After dinner game – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

We tried out the academically-derived Strategos rules by Philip Sabian. They seemed a bit clunky and lacking substantial decision making, and the rules themselves appeared to be rather badly constructed. I've been told the next version might be better. Jim is interested in exploring links with Sabian which sounds like a good idea – we might even get some new recruits for the club from his MA course!

Bashing Britons – Jonathan Pickles – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

Pickles discussed his long-standing interest in running a Dark Ages game. He had focused the session on two areas: a battlegame and a campaign game, perhaps for generating battlegame scenarios.

We came to the conclusion that the battlegame itself lacked substantial decision making as the battles seemed to be about the shieldwalls, and tactical decisions during the battle were restricted to deploying reserves and where the commanders stood. We thought there might be more scope in a battlegame which emphasised pre-battle decisions and manoeuvre, and agreed that a campaign game to generate these would be better than just a set of scenarios and/or cards.

We then discussed the campaign game and listed different sorts of activities (raiding, campaigning, feasting, agriculture, trading, mining etc) that would have different consequences. The focus seemed to be on the teulu/hearth/warband/comitatus of the leaders – a hard-core of trained warriors, with the ability to deploy less trained peasants to augment them in certain situations. We agreed that some differences between the 'races' would be interesting to introduce.

I hope Pickles does run this game again. I'm still interested in a Britain-wide political game based on the period and I might think about doing something on this myself if Pickles is moving his focus to the combat and regional level. We'll see.

Delta Blues – Mukul Patel – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

This was a brilliant session, despite the apparent lack of preparation. By chance, Mukul ended up in a room with two people with connections to the Oil industry, which was handy as he wanted to do a game about the oil companies in the Niger Delta. I was also able to offer some input from a competition economics perspective so we had a fascinating debate.

We discussed a game that would run on 5-year turns, which Daniel thought would work well given the investment cycles of the oil industry. The game would focus on the oil companies and the factions within the Nigerian government, and the links between the two. This would show how the oil money would support factions and lead to contracts in return, and how this destabilises the local and national economy. We also thought it was an excellent game for stitching-up due to the cartels, bid-rigging and promises on both sides. I thought it would also be useful to have the possibility of a revolt or resistance by the locals if they were overly abused by governments and companies. I really look forward to the game that comes out of this.

Lord of the Rings Confrontation – Trevor Farrant – Offside report by Andrew Hadley

This game looked absurdly simple, and has counters hidden from the opponent, as in Stratego or Dover Patrol. It was not simple at all, nor was it the memory game that those aforementioned can easily become. I recommend it to those that don't have the time to spare 3-4 hours on War of the Ring. I especially liked the way the abilities of the different units interacted (e.g. Saruman can choose to stop cards being played) and how in conjunction with the cards the whole thing became really variable despite the very simple design.

Shekels, Shophetim and the Sea – Andrew Hadley – Onside report

This is, I think, the third incarnation of this game. It started out as a game about choosing types of activity in Carthage (making use of the 'jobs' concept in Puerto Rico) and then morphed into a detailed resource management and conquest game set in the Western Mediterranean.



This version is now taking shape as a joining together of a trading game and a game about governmental change. The key thing I learnt from the session was to make both games (trade and government) separately and simple, and only then build mechanisms to put them together. I now feel as though the game might actually work, thanks to the useful debate and really helpful suggestions.

The problem, and the attraction of the period (which is pre-Punic wars Carthage from around 600 BC to 300 BC), is the lack of source materials. One can make the use of the archaeological record and the scarce external tensions (notably with the Greeks) have produced some questionable, but helpful texts. There seemed to have been two dominant economic relationships – the use of Carthage as a massive marketplace, by the traders, but also the metal from Spain being supplied to the wealthy eastern nations (Egypt, Assyria etc) in return for luxury goods such as incense, pottery and metalwork.

The players will always be able to trade. However, governments (played or not) may take over some of the functions of this rich elite – monarchs, for example – take over military and religious activity. In a democracy (shudder) the players can only influence the plebs' no doubt terrible decisions...

I've had to make some assumptions about the effects of different governmental systems, but one key one is that governments seemed to change primarily based on external influences (military threat and military failure). This may of course be a consequence of the external nature of the sources but it also makes some sense – the mercantile classes are more willing to accept strong military leaders in times of danger, but if these leaders fail then the leaders lose power pretty rapidly. These changes in government led to drastic changes in policy, such as the Barcid conquest of Spain after the first Punic War, and the collapse of aristocratic government after the failures against the Greeks in Sicily in the fifth century. This will form a key part of the game.

Thanks to everyone who took part in the session, especially those who've been to several sessions on this from me! More to come...

Quiz for Fun by Jon Casey

1. If yesterday we had daily cleaning, and tomorrow morning we shall have what to do after firing, what do we have today?
2. In the same context, what is it that in your case you have not got (and why not)?
3. Who were not so old in the Army List but not so young at their trade?
4. When the wind is in the palm-trees, what do the temple bells say?
5. "He's a cheery old card" grunted Harry to Jack as they slogged up to where and with what?
6. Where did a lady pray that God should put beneath His special care One-Eighty-Nine Cadogan Square?

7. After which battle was there woe in Oxford Halls and wail in Durham stalls?
8. Which village sounded like wedding bells in June?
9. Who arose into the streets of Laredo with his big wig a-smoulder?
10. Who went on the drink for a fortnight and then went to the bad before taking the Queen's shilling?
11. What story is told when the goodman mends his armour and trims his helmet's plume?
12. Whose landmark was a kopje-crest?
13. Who lay musing in bed?
14. The Army all saluted as they marched along the road. Was it the King? Or Kitchener?
15. When the opposition make synthetic rant, with what does the Minister answer?
16. Why did the airman not love those that he guarded?
17. Who was a kind of a giddy harumfrodite, but not a limpin' procrastitute or special chrysanthemum?
18. What don't single men in barricks grow into?
19. Who will you find in the ranks of Death?
20. Why are we here?

The Siege of Yendor

A victor's tale of heroic deeds and determined defiance

As dictated to Reej Morrlys by Great Big Chief Errikx of the Yendorkz Tuath

Containing much that is true about the valiant defence of the South Wall of the City of Yendor against the huge hordes of Lord Abranoth of Grinch and his cowardly minions who dare not approach the combined Tuaths of Yendorkz and Sarforkz commanded by Great Big Chief Errikx who single-handedly defeated Lord Trogdor at the Battle of the Sacred Aydee Bridge with some assistance from Big Chief Bandagh who dug ditches and went and fetched wood.

Those seeking the secrets and mysteries of Shaman Gnarlugh need read no further as nothing on this earth could persuade me to start discussing Religion with Great Big Chief Errikz. Life is short enough already.

During the weeks and months leading up to the Siege of Yendor, The Council of the Strong had been paying careful attention to the outcomes of the discussions of the Councils of the Free of the Tuaths that have settled in and around Yendor.

There was never any question that the Council of the Free of the Yendorkz Tuath would not follow my lead in supporting King Martin. After all if it wasn't for me, he would never have regained his throne in the first place. And of course not to do so would have upset Red Sonya, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

The problem was the backward thinking sections of Norforkz and Sarforkz Tuaths who can never agree on anything anyway. After much headbutting, both of these Tuaths agreed that, despite Lord Abranoth of Grinch's past performance, the world has moved on and his old fashion approach to labour relations and political correctness would bring nothing but trouble for Free Folk in and around Yendor for whom the win-win approach adopted by the Yendorkz Tuath and the younger generations in the Norforkz and Sarforkz Tuaths is paying dividends according to the Grand Vizier, Lord Dendistri.

All three Tuaths agreed to form a Battle Group to defend Yendor on the understanding that the Norforkz and Sarforkz won't fight shoulder to shoulder with each other but would fight alongside the Yendorkz. Shaman Gnarlugh conducted the rituals and practices necessary to bless the venture under the guidance of Aydee, the Goddess of War. This was a good omen as you can't fail to notice that Red Sonya is a woman

willing to fight for her home and honour and one, like Aydee, that you want to have on your side as fighting against her is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

So when King Martin invited me to the Palace to teach the Knights of Yendor all about Sieges , because of my previous experience with Convents and Nunneries, I naturally summoned Big Chiefs Bandagh and Zargulgh to join me so they could learn more of the benefits of life in Yendor.

King Martin explained how we needed to stand shoulder to shoulder and all pull together. He asked me if I was willing to take responsibility for the defence of the South Wall assisted by the other Big Chiefs. Naturally I was honoured to accept this task as the Freefolk Quarter abuts this wall.

King Martin then asked the Grand Vizier to explain how if we gave him all our food and wood he would ensure we were all fed throughout the siege and that if we gave him all our wood and oil he would give us what ever we needed to build whatever defences we wanted. Since I knew we would need lots and lots and lots of wood to build ditches, overhead protection and field defences and I only had two wood with is even less than some and nowhere near lots, this seemed like a free lunch and so I was the first to hand over all I had.

My previous experience in amassing the biggest and best collection of exotic weapons in the world and making sure they couldn't be retrieved by the City Watch who seem to struggle with the fundamental principles of raiding that any five year old member of the Tuath has down to a fine art lead me to insisting that the Grand Vizier gave me a parchment in return on which he had printed in large letters what I had given him. It was interesting to observe that Lord Cashbak did the same – the young lad is learning a lot from me!

Everyone there handed over all their food, wood and oil without further prompting – well, Red Sonya may have tapped her foot once or twice – but when Big Chief Zargulgh, who was stupid enough to turn up late and miss the impressive demonstration of feasting given by King Martin as he devoured not one but two whole pigs as well as the extortion by the Grand Vizier, indicated that he wasn't going to hand over anything, I felt it was my duty to remind him that Red Sonya really is really hard, which is why she is not only Free but an Honorary Big Chief and that he was upsetting her, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All. He declined to put up and he shut up and shelled out and failed to get a receipt so will no doubt lose more than just honour and prestige.

As there was obviously not going to be any feasting provided by the Palace, The Council of the Strong convened a meeting in the office of Merchant Steenveld to discuss what to do next. It was clearly to me with my experience of Sieges that we needed to dig ditches to prevent Siege Towers and Battering Rams from reaching the walls. We also needed Catapults and Bolt Throwers but without Engineers could not build these for ourselves.

Unsurprisingly as Big Chief Bandagh immediately conceded that I was correct, Big Chief Zargulgh couldn't bring himself to agree. Nevertheless we persevered and set the Yendorkz and Sarforkz Battle Groups to work supervising the digging of a ditch in front of each of the two towers on the South Wall. Big Chief Zargulgh was given the honour of defending the wall itself but declined to order his Battle Group into position as he was “Too busy – I'm going shopping.”

This insult to Red Sonya and King Martin did not go unnoticed. Red Sonya herself came into the Freefolk Quarter to remind Big Chief Zargulgh of his options. He continued to argue and insult her. It was clear to all that he was upsetting her, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

The outcome was inevitable – I've seen before what happens when Red Sonya gets angry and she's well hard. The fight was short and sharp - Big Chief Zargulgh clearly thought he had struck first but at the last second Red Sonya dodged the blow and with a lightning fast riposte drew first blood. She paused and dropped her blade, giving Big Chief Zargulgh every opportunity to withdraw with honour intact. He shook his head, lunged forward and missed, she struck and he died. As I said, upsetting Red Sonya is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

Well, as is well known, the only way to get elected Big Chief is to prove you're the hardest Free in the Tuath and what better evidence can you present that you've bested the current Big Chief? So it came as no surprise that half the Norforkz Battle Group immediately swore allegiance to Big Chief Red Sonya and joined her retinue. The other half decided that that was enough for them and disbanded. No real loss to us as they've never been much use in a fight anyway.

Meanwhile I'd heard there were some new traders in town and that they not only had information about a number of exotic weapons I've been trying to locate for time, they also had some previously undocumented items for sale. As everyone knows I have the biggest and best collection of exotic weapons in the world, but there's always room for more.

Now the problem with these Merchant types is they get very upset about being raided and as the City Watch also share this unenlightened view I've learned to play a game called "Swappsies" where you give them something you don't want or need much for something you do.

Well, during the slight recent misunderstanding with the Corsairs a few years back, I ended up with quite a few new weapons and this boat the Dwarves built for me to ferry out a new fort which we set up on an island in the Estuary as a Summer Camp for the Tuath where our youngsters could be taught all the traditions that seem to upset the other folk in Yendor. We haven't used it for a while as there's now a regular ferry service but it's lovely thing. Real pine, oak and ash and everything and handmade by Dwarven craftsmen. Worth an absolute fortune.

All the traders seemed really interested but wouldn't just do a swap. They either wanted me to provide a crew or to see it sailing first. "Don't be stupid," I said, "Red Sonya wants us to defend the City not go swanning around on the River. It'd get her upset and upsetting Red Sonya is Not A Good Thing To Do At All."

However I did pick up some good leads as to the whereabouts of the Doublehanded Orcsbane of Regeth and a couple of minor items for a few kopins each.

The Yendorkz Battle Group dug another ditch whilst the Sarforkz collected enough wood for both Battle Groups to dig the final two ditches the following day when a Dwarven built Catapult was installed in one of the Towers and some of the better educated Yendorkz troops were taught how to load and fire to the great consternation of the observing besiegers. Some observers were highly critical of our ability to hit any thing but when I pointed out that we weren't responsible for setting the targets which kept moving and as we hadn't agreed an action plan for coaching and improving our performance as yet they agreed it would be smart to keep out of range in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

King Manech, the Barbarian King of the Desert Tribes, had clearly understood the danger as, much to our disappointment, his Tribesman refused to move off the picket line the next day even when we offered him some ladders so they could at least try and give us some sport. Still, we had a useful discussion about exotic weapons and agreed to meet again later to see what we could trade – I'm certain one of the Barbarian Kings has the Doublehanded Orcsbane of Regeth which has a space ready for it in my ever expanding collection of exotic weaponry.

I decided that if I could find out which one of them had it, then a small raiding party would be in order. Of course this would mean infiltrating the besiegers camp. Great sport! "Time spent is reconnaissance is seldom wasted," according to Mercenary Captain Gore but I think he really means "You should look before you leap to make sure there's lots of them waiting for you."

The next day there was no sign of Lord Abranoth or his minions and as some of the Sarforkz had pointed that standing out under the wind and weather on the walls wasn't the sort of home comforts they had been led to expect would be provided I ordered them to join the Yendorkz in supervising the construction of overhead protection for the South Wall.

Shaman Gnarlugh took this opportunity to point out that although I was acting "ipso facto" acting as Great Big Chief Errikx I hadn't "in fact" been elected Great Big Chief in accordance with Tradition.

If I didn't know him better I'd have thought he'd be speaking to the Mages who always finish their songs with similar mumbo jumbo. I mean, I can join in "I'm a Mage and I'm okay, I work all night and I sleep all day," with the best, but what's the "Itsy bitsy polkcus whatsit" at the end all about?

However when he pointed out that I was in danger of upsetting Aydee, the Goddess of War, I knew I needed to do something very quickly as that would have been even worse than upsetting Red Sonya which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

The Council of the Strong was convened, according to tradition, in the office of Merchant Steenveld who seemed to be much slimmer than the last time we meet. He was muttering something about "a shakedown" and "taxation without representation" and seemed to be a little upset about with the Grand Vizier who has apparently become a "War Profiteer".

Naturally I can't discuss the rituals and practices of the election of a Great Big Chief in detail but I believe it has become common knowledge that Big Chief Bandagh failed to understand that Red Sonya meant what she didn't say when she had the opportunity to nominate herself as Great Big Chief and she didn't. She had to tap her foot several times before he withdrew his own nomination and I had to point out that he was in grave danger of upsetting her, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

At around this point it became clear that the Freefolk were the only Battle Groups that had successfully defended their allocated section of the City Walls without a fight and King Martin suggested that we would have more success in actually getting some fighting and taking some heads if we moved off the South Wall to the Great Bridge as it was clear that we were too formidable an opponent for the minions of Lord Abranoth.

Well, I've learnt a thing or two from the Grand Vizier, Lord Dendistri, about making sure you get a reward for doing anything for somebody else especially when it's what you were wanting to do anyway. So naturally I reminded King Martin about our earlier discussions about the reconstruction of the Freefolk Quarter as we had already dismantled a large part of it ourselves when collecting wood to construct defences.

Evacuating the population and moving north of the River Yend would inevitably result in complete destruction by the Barbarian Tribes who would be pouring over the South Wall when the Battle Groups withdrew. He agreed that it would be completely rebuilt by Dwarf Engineers who would also install drains and a clean water supply. We also agreed that ensuring that educational opportunities for Freefolk were fulfilled would result in further financial benefits to the City of Yendor.

A brief respite after moving to the Great Bridge gave the Battle Groups time to construct Field Defences for our new position and for Shaman Gnarlugh to conduct the solemn and secret ritual necessary to request the blessing of Aydee, the Goddess of War. It is no secret that a ritual of this importance requires sacrifice and votive offerings.

It doesn't take much effort to compare the catalogue of my extensive collection of exotic weapons and work out what has happened to The Great Shield of Wonder and The Great Death Cleaver and, yes, of course I know where the offerings were made.

I also know that the wrath of Aydee, Goddess of War will be visited on anyone who desecrates the offering and that as one was made on behalf of Red Sonya, any attempt to recover it would be certain to upset her, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

There is also no secret that the runes cast were Giving, The Arrow and The Oak. Only the Shamans of the Freefolk have the power to Read the Runes and interpret their meaning when cast but every member of every Tuath knows that The Arrow is the Rune used to depict Aydee, Goddess of War.

So when Lord Trogdor and his men at arms launched an attack across the Great Bridge, it was the hand of Aydee herself that guided mine as I slew all that stood before me. Soon none would approach other than Lord Trogdor himself. Aydee was merciful and he died swiftly.

I fell to my knees and declared that we would not be moved from this sacred spot that henceforth would be known as the Sacred Aydee Bridge.

Here we would defeat all that dared approach and none did dare approach.

And it is indeed now known as the Sacred Aydee Bridge, as to do otherwise would risk upsetting Red Sonya, which is Not A Good Thing To Do At All.

Which is the end of this story but the start of the tale of how I added the Doublehanded Orcsbane of Regeth to the biggest and best collection of exotic weapons in the world.

Basic Probability for Game Mechanisms By Jim Wallman

It occurred to me that it might be useful to set out some of the real basics – not because most of you don't already know all this, but as the starting point for subsequent work on a game mechanism review that I suggested at my Conference session on game design principles.

There is a spoiler warning – if you like BOD1 games then read no further – this is not the article for you

“Just Roll The Bloody Dice!”

Everyone knows the basics.

The chance of a 6 on a d6 is 1 in 6 (or roughly 16.6%); the chance of a 0 on a d10 is 1 in 10 (or 10%).

What sometimes becomes more problematic is understanding what happens when we modify die rolls or combine die rolls.

Thus, when you roll 2d6 the chance of a 12 is, obviously, not 1 in 12. Similarly when you roll 2d10, or when you combine dice in different ways (such as subtracting or adding die score from each other).

The probability is further altered in different ways when you add or subtract factors.

The example most people are familiar with the 2d6. We know, of course that a 12 on 2d6 is a 1/36 chance (or approx 2.8%), but how do we work out the chance of, say, a 7, or a score of at least 3.

The key concept that you might find useful is the ‘possibility space’. That is a diagram of all the possible outcomes. So we might map our two d6 die rolls thus:

		Score on 1 st die					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
die Score on 2 nd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Each box represents a unique combination of the first die and the second die – and I have put the resultant score inside. You will see that there are 36 boxes – showing that there are 36 unique outcomes – the possibility space.

You will also see that there are 6 instances of a combined score of 7 (red highlight), so the probability of that event is 6/36 or 1 in 6.

Similarly, there are three instances of a 10 result (yellow highlight) – making the probability 3/36 or 1 in 12.

¹ BOD = ‘Buckets Of Dice’

This gives a probability spread of:

2d6	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	2.8%	5.6%	8.3%	11.1%	13.9%	16.7%	13.9%	11.1%	8.3%	5.6%	2.8%
Cumulative probability	2.8%	8.4%	16.7%	27.8%	41.7%	58.4%	72.3%	83.4%	91.7%	97.3%	100%
variance	0	5.6%	8.3%	11.1%	13.9%	16.7%	13.9%	11.1%	8.3%	5.6%	2.8%

Possibility space is a useful tool because you can use it to map all sorts of dice combinations to understand the probabilities involved.

So you might want to look at one d6 minus a second d6

		Score on 1 st die					
		-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6
die Score on 2 nd	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
	+5	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1
	+6	+5	+4	+3	+2	+1	0

Or a d6 plus a d10

		Score on 1 st die					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
die Score on 2 nd	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

In the example above, it generates the following probabilities – quite a different shape to the spread of the 2d6 combination:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.6%	3.3%	5%	6.7%	8.3%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	8.3%	6.7%	5%	3.3%	1.6%

When +1 doesn't equal +1

Looking at the different probabilities for different combined dice scores points up an obvious probability problem when it comes to die roll modifiers.

When we roll a single die – say a d6 - +1 on the die score increases the probability by 16.7% (roughly) every time..

If we roll a d10 and have a +1, that increases the probability by 10%.

But when we roll 2d6, and a +1 modifier we are increasing the probability variably anything from a mere 2.8% (modifying a roll of 11 up to 12), to a massive 16.7% (modifying a roll of 6 up to 7).

Yet we think of the modifiers as consistent variables. It is useful to understand this when thinking of how modifiers might be applied to your die roll.

It also illustrates the huge problem of using different die types with the same modifiers since the effect of the modifier on probability is utterly different for each type of die.

Of course all this assumes you have an idea of the relative probabilities of the various events you are simulating, and in many games (or perhaps all games) we do not – we merely make a variably well informed guess.

Competitive Dice

We then come to the common competitive die roll – each player rolls a die and the highest scores wins. The odds are easy to calculate using the tools above, if, say, you are rolling a d6 each, then there is a 1 in 6 chance of a draw and a 15/36 (41.7%) of either side winning.

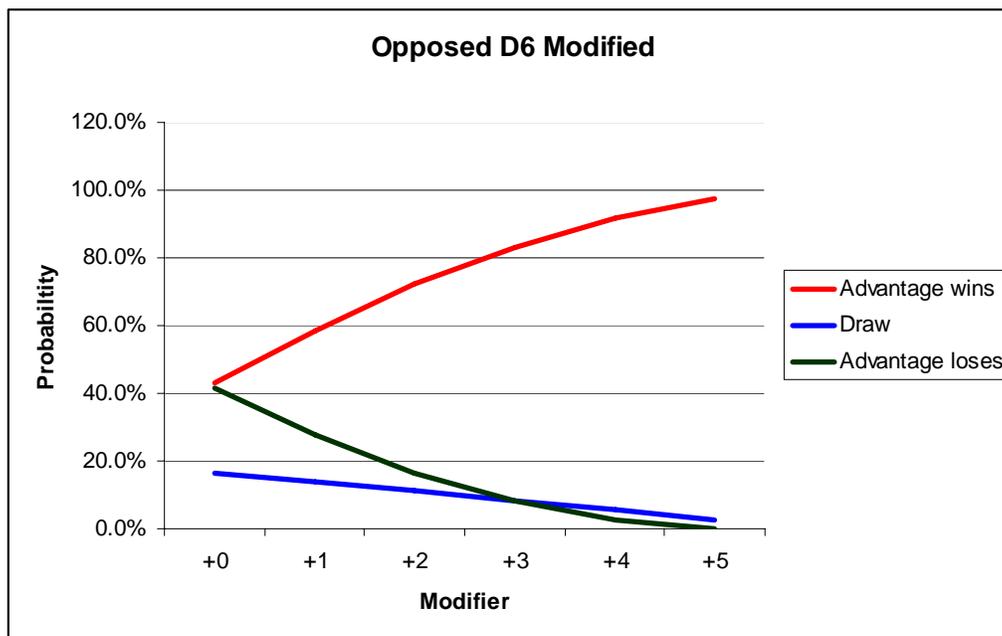
And we know, obviously, that if you give one side a +1 it gives them an advantage – how much advantage though?

Well it can be done with a series of possibility space diagrams – but to save space I've just shown the results for d6 competitive rolls:

	Die modifier					
	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Advantage wins	42.9%	58.3%	72.2%	83.3%	91.7%	97.2%
draw	16.7%	13.9%	11.1%	8.3%	5.6%	2.8%
Advantage loses	41.7%	27.8%	16.7%	8.3%	2.8%	0.0%
Variance		+15.5%	+13.9%	+11.1%	+8.3%	+5.6%

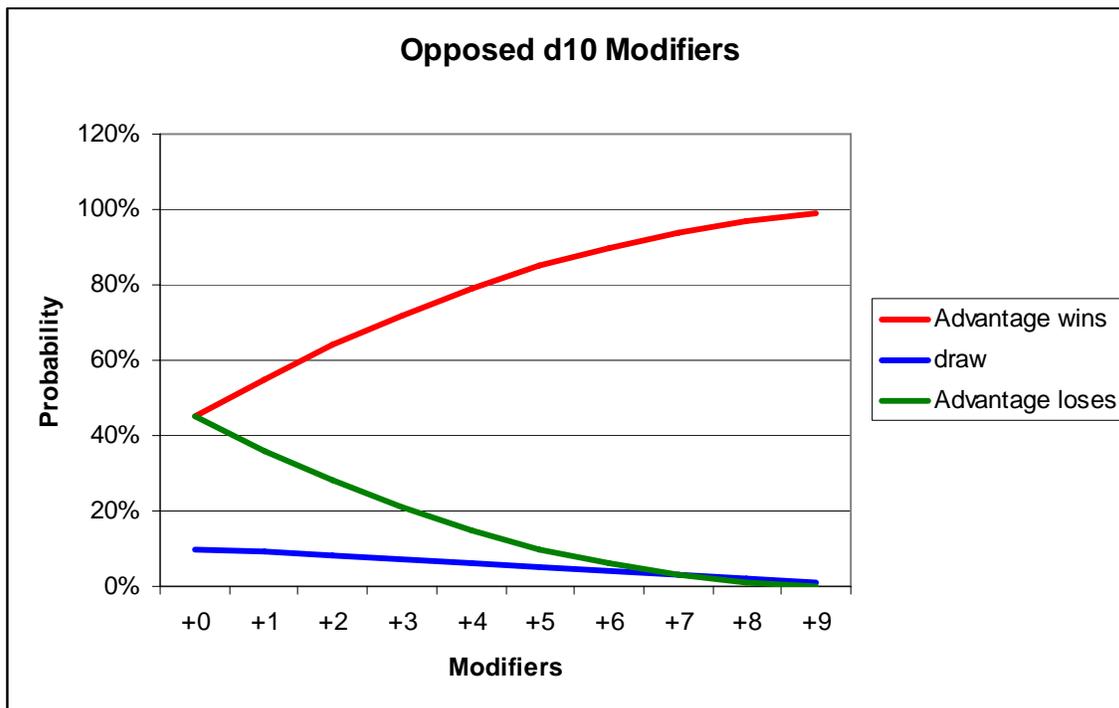
This shows that each additional +1 made a decreasing impact of the chance of winning (until you get to +6 when victory becomes certain!)

Here it is in graph form:



The effect is the same where the opposed dice are d10s, except that the variation is smoother and easier to see:

	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Advantage wins	45%	55%	64%	72%	79%	85%	90%	94%	97%	99%
draw	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
Advantage loses	45%	36%	28%	21%	15%	10%	6%	3%	1%	0%
Variance		+10%	+9%	+8%	+7%	+6%	+5%	+4%	+3%	+2%



You can see from the above figures, that the disadvantaged side is roughly half as likely to win against a +3 as it was on parity, and the biggest gain is for the initial +1, with declining advantages until you get to +9, obviously.

A Die To Far

The next areas I'd like to look at are using multiple dice when one will do, and the rather quaint and old-fashioned system of 'saving throws'.

Let's take a simple game idea. In this example we'll use some hypothetical Old School Napoleonic rules that say that you roll 1d6 for every infantry figure firing and need a 5 or 6 to hit. My units are made up of 12 figures usually in one rank, so there are 12 figures firing normally (lets ignore range for the moment).

The sums are, of course easy – 1/3 of the firing figures will hit each turn, on average – inflicting 4 hits on the enemy 12-figure unit. Three turns and the enemy are wiped out. Oh dear – that's a bit fast.

Aha! Lets have saving throws! For every target hit they are 'saved' on another d6 die roll of 4,5 or 6. So on average 50% will be saved – making a turn's worth of casualties; typically 2. Great – problem solved.

BUT. You've increased the time taken to resolve the turn by a factor of at least 2. Probably more with lots of units involved.

What if you'd simply made the original hit chance a 6? On average 1/6 of the firing figures would hit – casualties would be $12 \times 1/6 = 2$. Simple - and no need for elaborate time wasting saving throws.

But you are still using 12 dice to resolve casualties inflicted. It is simple but very time consuming when many units are firing.

Lets assume that the hit rate you are expecting (or think is reasonable) is about 1/6 or about 17%. (in the Napoleonic wars it was probably nearer 5% but this isn't an article on early 19th century casualty rates).

You know that you might have a variable number of figures firing (assuming you remove figures for casualties). And you want the result to be variable by some random factor.

I've seen many methods for reducing the dice needed – including:

A. You could try something like throw 1Avd (average die) for each 6 figures and the score equals the number of hits. This would produce between 4 and 10 hits from a 12 figure unit, and an average of 7. Too high, we want an average of 2 and to reduce the hit rate you'd have to go back to pointless saving throws.

B. You could split the unit into two groups throw 1d6 per group of 6 or less and score the number of figures or less to hit. This would generate 2 automatic hits from a full strength unit, declining as the unit got smaller. This is quick and simple, but doesn't reflect the hit profile very well.

C. Or you could write a very simple fire table like this – reading off a die roll against the number of figures – with number of hits in the table.

D6 Die roll	1	2	3	4	5	6
No of figures						
1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	1	1
3	0	0	0	0	1	1
4	0	0	0	1	1	2
5	0	0	0	1	1	2
6	0	0	1	1	1	2
7	0	0	1	1	1	2
8	0	1	1	2	2	3
9	0	1	1	2	2	3
10	0	1	1	2	2	3
11	0	1	1	2	2	3
12	1	1	2	2	3	4

A table like this allows you to be very precise in your probability spreads, as well as add subtleties, such as variable lethality with numbers etc. And all with just one die roll. Combine this with an understanding of how modifiers affect probability, and you are able to construct very simple tables that are also very strong models. And you are rolling 1 die for each unit instead of 12 dice.

By the way, I have done the sums above – the hit distribution is pretty close to that achieved with multiple d6 rolls – if anyone would like the spreadsheet let me know, if you want to explore it yourselves, look at the binomial distribution function in Excel.

In my experience fire tables are superior to multiple die rolls above about 3 dice in pretty much every situation. (Unless, of course the aim of your game is to sell multiple dice and have a game so protracted that players lose the will to live)

So What?

So what indeed? The above is a very quick canter through the real nursery slopes basics. .

There is a fashion in rule design at the moment to use multiple die types as a substitute for thinking about mechanisms. Quite apart from the slowness, fiddliness and inconvenience of multiple dice types, in my view from the game design point of view dice types are not a mechanism – and in probability terms they create consistency issues for things like modifiers.

Of course if you are designing a mere game then none of the above matters and you should have as many hundreds of crazy dice as you like – but if you have any sort of notion to model something in your game then at some point you probably need probability.

2007 November Meeting Offside report by Mukul Patel

A very enjoyable meeting. A great game and great design session. First off the game, Wierd War 2. This game came out of Dr Cameron's extensive study of world war 2, and is about the hitherto secret history of world war 2, the guys and gals in spandex. Baron Blitzkrieg and that all around babe Liberty Belle, the great fiendish engines of war, Lenin's super tank and so on. Its a bit more boiled down from the previous outing of this game and so moves a a quicker pace, less complicated but reveals more of the story. It strips away a lot of base building, and complicated personal attributes, stresses super weapons, winning the war, and players bashing each other! Its seems to have more interaction. I thought the game had very simple systems, but was immense fun, had great colour. I was a bit uncertain as to whether the game needed both a terror track and war winning track and the relative balance of the two methods of winning the war but thats

quibbling, perhaps a total win would be one in which a side wins on the winning the war track and the terror track. Its a great game, I reckon you all should have a go at playing it and contributing to it if it does make an appearance at the December meeting. I think the game could be made better still. Jim Wallman for instance has made a number of suggestions such as pregenerated wonder and terror weapons, and slightly more nuanced combat. I would be very happy to add anything that contributes colour to the game, like pictures on the props, anything that helps the players transport to the period and mindset/crazymind, without sacrificing pace and storytelling. Peter Merritt made a great suggestion for a follow up theme, superheroes in the cold war, perhaps darker more dirty and political game, assassinations of political figures a propaganda track, a space race, influencing neutrals, adventurers in space.

The design session, Jim Wallman's European ancient battles. A really good Session. I have some unhappiness with gaming ancient battles stemming from two things. One the lack of sources and evidence, (I'll admit now that i have read bugger all off the translated sources that do exist like Caesars Gallic battles). The second problem is that i recall hazily I read a milmud article by Nick Luft which boiled it down to deploying the troops into something like centre and two wings and then letting the commander release the "clockwork" army and making no influential command decisions . It seemed to me these problems make most miniatures ancient battles akin to playing a fantasy battle.

Jim had looked at Nick Sabin's ancient rules, apparently Mr Sabin has read the sources analyzed a number of battles and come with a few key factors in the battles and then made a game system around the perceived facts. The game itself though didn't quite deliver something to Jim. Strategos 2? was still to gamey and not enough simulation for instance commanders could still make to many influential battlefield decisions and the battle game was to much process?

We had a very long and for me difficult discussion about the key bits of an ancient battle. Most of the key bits seemed pre-battlefield decisions. My recollection is something like this, #1 did you want to fight a battle, #2 troop quality and type,(with only a few key troop types) #3 where do the troop types deploy in the battle line and #4 do the troops know what they are meant do on the battlefield in the morning and #5 geeing my the troops, the confidence of the troops and sub commanders.

Now this all seemed a bit more interesting than fantasy miniatures ancients battles that I have usually played. Can this approach translate into game system that works, I reckon it can. I now don't what the game mechanisms will look like, but the short discussion we had on that subject gave me confidence. Some of what we talked seemed very fresh to as well, after having recently attended Andy Grainger's revisit of his "Aquilae" rules at the games conference. I really enjoyed this session, thanks Jim

A book review “Love my rifle more than you” Author Kayla Williams by Mukel Patel

A bit dulled by reading too many books on world war 2 and inspired by James Kemp's, i saw this book on the library shelf at Tooting.

The Centre of the book is about an American Female Soldier in Iraq in 2004. There are better reviews of this wonderful book in Internet land. Its pretty frank account of what its like to be female in the American Army. I learn't the difference between a bitch and slut...and a whole lot of other stuff.

The start of the book is a frank account of her early teenage and adult life in no name America, seems to a difficult life, she certainly seems to have lived.

Kayla seems to have a pretty varied experience in Iraq, as translator she had a quite a few mission types. Their is ar eally crazy account of small a infantry searching a Christian Monastery in Baghdad , where a Monk who does speak English is totally ignored by the Platoon leader who had Kayla translate from the Monks good English into English weird huh? Its a book full of good stuff and incidents. A constant theme part from the Female perspective and is her fucked up relationships with her immediate superiors. This is really interesting when i recalled the CLWG meeting. James Kemp's put on design session about a platoon or section at war. James Initially wanted a campaign game that combined looking a bit of fighting and

illuminating the downtime of a platoon. Reading this account by Kayla me thinks the downtime part of such a game would be very interesting.

The account of her time near the Yeshdi's is a bit chilling when you recall the recent big bomb that blew a lot of them up. Iraq seems to have been a place of alot of faiths, who are now coming under a lot more pressure with the allied invasion.

Another incident book concerns the numerous convoys she has to travel on. She tells the experience of being very tense and fingers on the trigger has she travels in convoy of trucks. Its reads very scary. Even worse it gave me a possible game idea or a cardbox box simulator type game.

This is book definitely worth reading, great title, its different, and engaging. And its also got some lovely pictures.

Answers to Quiz for Fun by Jon Casey

1. Naming of Parts. (Henry Reed)
2. The piling swivel. (The instructor has the Mark III Short Magazine Lee Enfield while the recruits have the Mark IV which didn't have this feature).
3. The Irish Guards, 1918 (Kipling)
4. "Come you back you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay" (Kipling)
5. Arras with rifle and pack. (The General, Siegfried Sassoon)
6. In Westminster Abbey. (Betjeman)
7. The Battle of Naseby. (Lord Macaulay)
8. Lidice. (Ernst Waldinger)
9. Sir Christopher Wren. (The Streets of Laredo, Louis MacNeice)
10. Private Ortheris (Kipling)
11. How well Horatius kept the bridge. (Horatius, Lord Macaulay)
12. Drummer Hodge. (Thomas Hardy)
13. Sweet Polly Oliver. (Anon)
14. No. It was Mister Toad. (Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Grahame)
15. The Foreign Office cant. (The Minister has all his notes in place, Richard Heller)
16. Because he was an Irish patriot. (An Irish airman foresees his death, W B Yeats)
17. A Royal Marine. (Soldier an' Sailor Too, Kipling)
18. Plaster saints. (Tommy, Kipling)
19. The Minstrel-Boy. (Thomas Moore)
20. Because we're here. (Anon)