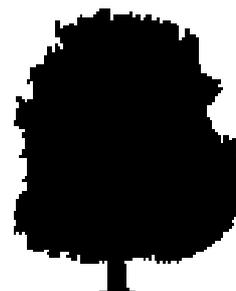




Military Muddling



Volume 17 Issue 2

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

1Q 2008

Editorial

If you haven't noticed the Spring Games Weekend is a week later this year! Read the program here or check into the Chestnut Lodge website for the latest updates. I have been busier than usual with running a Norway wargame by email taking more of my keyboard time than usual. Hence, this edition has been slower off the press than usual, but that made it longer, so 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 Montvallièrre 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

Events

Saturday 19 April 2008 EXCEL SALUTE 2008

Weekend 26-27 April 2008 Delft, Netherlands MURPHY MANIA - our friends from across the water - we'll be doing something there, and there is a small megagame on the Sunday based on the Siege of Yendor megagame.

Sunday 4 May 2008 Anerley Methodist Church Heroic Samurai - by Jim

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

CLWG SPRING GAMES WEEKEND 12-13 April 2008 "Conference Program"

Pass the word - friends and non-members welcome!

Weird and Brilliant Devilry - By Jim Players: At least 4 needed Duration: 3 hours Difficulty: Simple

Following on from my design session at the last conference, this is a map game about managing firefighting during the London Blitz of 1940. Players will be at command level, so unlike my previous tactical game there will be no need to spend time rolling out hoses and positioning fire engines. Played on a large map of London this should be fairly easy to pick up, but with some tricky resource management issues.

Barricades & Borders - By Brian Players: 6 Duration: 3 hours

My ever developing game (though quite playable as it is) on the economic, political and military developments of the 19th century.

Renaissance & Reformation - By Brian Players: 6 Duration: 3 hours

After doing the Habsburgs Ascendant megagame I'm renewed my interest in the 16/17th centuries and this is game about the rise of protestantism. I first did it back in the days when we met at Riggendale church hall and it worked but could do with some development.

Bocage Battle - Andy Grainger Players: ? Duration: 2 hours

WW2 platoon level action in Normandy 1944

Aquila - Andy Grainger Players: ? Duration: 2 hours

Ancient warfare from the Roman perspective.

Pig and Needle in the Jack - John Players: 4-6 Duration: 2 hours

A rowdy role-playing game set in a Victorian London pub, so drunkenness with added violence. It's a cold evening in 1894, and a tough gang are planning a prize fight in a room above a Docklands pub. But who is the languid toff in the corner, and why is he sneering? [I want to test out some ideas for my forthcoming megagame 'Mystery By Gaslight.' Rhyming slang ability not necessary - John] .

The Great Prize : England in the eleventh century - Andrew Hadley Players: ? Duration: 2 hours

In the eleventh century England was invaded not once, but many times. Two of these invasions saw the replacement of 'native' English dynasties with first Danish and later Norman kings of England. They all came seeking the rich rewards of England's successful taxation system. This game/design session will look at mechanisms for generating foreign intervention and coping with the multiplicities of protagonists involved.

Carry on Up the Yangtse - Brian and Dave Players: lots Duration: 2 hours

A tryout of part of our Interesting Times megagame. We're going to look at player interaction on one of the three sections of the main map as if it were one of the map tables at the actual game. Players will have the resources and offices that they will start with on the day. We'd like to see how players may interact at the province and faction level. Hopefully the rules are developed sufficiently that we'll be able to play through the equivalent of a couple of turns.

Railroad Tycoon Expansion: Age of Steam meets 18xx - Jerry Players 3-5 3 hours

Playtesting the latest development version of Martin Wallace's series of Railway Games. This one involves building track, moving goods, shares and mergers using variations of familiar mechanisms.

'Tis to Glory We Steer - Jerry Players ? Sunday Afternoon (4-6pm)

Will you remain a snotty or rise to Admiral of the Yellow? A game for up to 6 players, taking no more than an hour to chart your career in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. The WD Display Team North Participation Game that will be launched at Triples.

Enemy in Sight (Avalon Hill 1988)

A simple fast paced card game with a good mix of strategy and luck of the draw. Each player starts with a fleet of six ships and six cards. As your ships are destroyed your hand size diminishes as well.

Neutral Zone - Dillon Players ? Sunday Afternoon (4-6pm)

Around about 2000 I designed a fairly simple sci-fi ship design, fleet building and ship combat game and used it for a couple of convention games. At the last conference my interest in it was resparked by an off-hand comment about how naval games always turn into shooting galleries in which maneuver drops out of the game. This is something I built into my game (called Neutral Zone) which starts with the assumption that as all ships are in range of all other ships, then ship location is irrelevant, which makes the game much faster to play. Anyhow, I have taken another look at the game, and I think with a bit of the chrome trimmed off I could easily make a few counters up, print some forms and run it.

Weird War II - Brian Players: 6 Duration: 2-3 hours

The secret war for war winning Wonder Weapons in WW2. Giant robots, super tanks and UFOs.

The Megagame Casting Game - Jim Players: Any number Duration: Who knows

This is a simple simulation of the best bit of designing a megagame - the casting session. Sadly only a select few ever experience the excitement and entertainment of casting, so this is a re-visiting of a game I did a few years ago to offer the experience to a wider audience. The game is basically a resource allocation game - with a follow-up section on how the casting decisions pan out when the megagame is 'played'.

“En Avant” by Jim Wallman Offside Report by Andy Grainger

This was a game that Jim had developed for the National Army Museum as a way of showing children (although not excluding adults) the nuts and bolts of the Napoleonic battlefield. Rather than red Indian style cavalry charges and Sharpe's Flamboyance the idea was to show that soldiers moved in closely packed blocks, mostly in a straight line. Changing formation was very difficult and whilst fire caused casualties it was the impact on the formation and hence the steadiness of the troops that was important.

Jim set up a scenario involving a French advance guard of six battalions in two regiments plus two cavalry regiments and two batteries advancing an Anglo-Spanish position on a ridge about a kilometre distant – infuriatingly just out of cannon shot. To get the battle report over first Daniel and I, as the French Regimental commanders operating under the benign supervision of General 'Drums Along the Danube' Cameron deployed our two Regiments abreast with cavalry on the flanks and moved off.

Daniel's battery was able to reach the enemy but I had to manhandle my guns forward about 200 paces and they were never very effective. First surprise was Daniel's cavalry being charged and then driven from the field by the Spanish but his infantry marched doggedly forward, his guns playing effectively on some rather unsteady Spanish infantry which promptly gave way under his column attack. A textbook assault by Daniel.

For my part I was distracted by British infantry deploying into a village and woods on my flank. My cavalry was able to prevent them from deploying fully but when they tried to do so – charged. Unfortunately the better trained English formed square and we were rebuffed. This meant that my Regimental column felt it necessary to charge the second English battalion but, again, the English, this time in line, held them off and an English Cavalry Regiment scattered the remaining battalion and seemed set fair to overrun my battery as well. But my own cavalry were now in a position to support Daniel's attack

on the ridge and so we achieved our objective and could wait for our main body to come up with confidence.

The game uses figures to represent company bases. A French battalion therefore comprised six bases each of three figures which typically moved in a two by three block formation (attack column). Skirmishers are not separately represented – they are assumed to be out. Orders are given to Infantry battalions, Cavalry regiments and Artillery batteries according to a menu such as:

- Advance
- Retire
- Form Line (two turns)
- Form column
- Wheel Left / Right
- Fire
- Halt
- Reform

Units were also classified as Nervous, Steady, Determined etc. I am not sure how many levels of ‘Steadiness’ there were but combat involved comparing these ratings rather than firing factors although since we players did not see the rules I may be wrong! Steadiness could be improved over time by the presence of the commander or by regrouping.

I think the game achieved its objective in showing just how difficult it was to manoeuvre blocks of troops in close order formations. I had just read a new book about Talavera¹ which was very much a classic Peninsular battle with heavily outnumbered British deployed behind a ridge and defeating clumsy French attacks by mobility and shock action.

I think a good test of ‘En Avant’ would be to set up an historical scenario – there are several from Talavera alone. One point I would make, however, is that hidden movement – or at least deployment – is important. Some of the terrain at Talavera was also pretty rugged. One sometimes has an image of Horse & Musket battles being fought on flat terrain. This is certainly not the case and units were trained and drilled to take account of a variety of obstacles but their effectiveness was always subject to the constraints of manoeuvre and communication.

Finally, I think all of us were grateful for – and surprised by – Dave Boundy’s collection of superbly painted 15mm figures. I understand that they may not have seen action for a period almost as long as the Napoleonic Wars themselves!

Building Bridges by John Rutherford Offside Report by Andy Grainger

John created two teams and set them the task of building a 90cm bridge (I think) capable of handling a 20 gram remote-controlled car. The bridge materials comprised a number of sheets of dried lasagne pasta, a packet of spaghetti and a tube of superglue.

Due to the need for drying time construction proceeded in phases between the other games. Each team produced a very different style of bridge. The Green Team, which I felt did not always feel appreciative of my place in its ranks, constructed a solid but crude and artistically uninspiring design based on a sandwich of pasta sheets and spaghetti bundles. The Red Team, on the other hand, produced an eye-catching design based on a roadway constructed from a single ply of lasagne supported by a keel or fin of the same material.

Unfortunately the R/C car broke down before it could be tested but a series of weights revealed that both designs were extensively over-engineered. If memory serves, the crude Green bridge took a load of about 1.2kg whilst the eye-catching Red Bridge handled nearly 2kg.

¹ Talavera by Peter Edwards, Crowood Press published March 2007

I feel, however, that Il Duce would be certain to favour the Green design on the grounds that the bundles of spaghetti resembled bundles of fasces and so it would win out on grounds of ideological purity.

Weird War Two By Brian Cameron Offside Report by Andy Grainger

I am not familiar with all the sources that inspire this game – which I understand relate to American superhero comics published during the 1940's but I created my own fantasy from a mixture of James Bond villains in their secret bases constructing Nazi secret weapons and being chased around the globe by a mixture of Indiana Jones and 007s.

There are six teams playing USA, USSR and Britain versus the real Axis of Evil, Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. The war is going on abstractly across a schematic map of the world. Weird War Two focuses on the attempts by each country to build war-winning weapons and for this purpose all have identical capabilities. Players need to design their superweapons which require a mix of resources made up of:

- Motive Power
- Power Source
- Armour
- Firepower
- Landing (optional if a missile)
- Guidance

These resources can be constructed in factories or the three agents allocated to each country can scour the globe for them. Once resources are assembled, it takes time to build the weapon but it can then appear on the battlefield where it will materially shorten the war by moving a counter along a track. At that stage the enemy's agents will be seeking to sabotage it and their factories will be trying to build a counterweapon.

This was the second appearance of Brian's game and although he took many notes during the game these were largely to clarify points of detail. The structure of the game was very sound although I must say that I am not sure how one would actually write the rules which took me a little time to grasp. It entertained several of us for about three hours before the USA's armed forces swept the allies to victory in fleets of Kaiserkiller Helicopter Cars. The course of alliance warfare had not been all sweetness and light, however, since the Axis of Evil had concentrated their agents against the HMS Indestructible and GazProm, the British and Soviet bases respectively. This allowed the Americans a much freer hand at the expense of the Avro Streatham jet bomber which had barely reached prototype status after production had to be moved to South Africa and the Joseph Stalin IV Heavy Tank which remained on the drawing board. And the Axis players did not always trade their resources in a way that was conducive to building a relationship based on trust. But then they were the Axis of Evil and presumably felt they had to maintain standards.

After another ruletest I think we can confidently expect a boxed game in the shops for Christmas 2008.

Shekels, Shophetim and the Sea by Andrew Hadley Offside Report by Brian Cameron

Its nice to see this game developing over the years; I'm reminded of my Barricades & Borders game which has gradually been pieced together over many years and try-outs. The trading seems to work well and there were lots of options, no 'optimum opening moves'; we certainly had quite a debate during and after the game about proposed lines of development. I'll be interested to see how the game works out when the Greeks are played, there's quite a high non-played portion at present.

Shekels, Shophetim and the Sea by Andrew Hadley Offside Report by Jim

Andrew has been working on this for quite a long time now, and I think it is showing in the game design. The game we ran through on Sunday was, to me, an interested economic model of the trade relationships facing the Carthaginians in ancient times. Andrew has narrowed the commodities down to a small number of key things, food, metals, luxuries etc. The 'trading' part is probably more about resource gathering in

the early stage – managing your transport capacity to move items from the cheap source areas to the highest return market areas. As we played it, the first few turns did not generate much interaction on the trade side – though it was clear that early choices could have a marked effect on future prosperity, that are hard to overcome in the game. This is common in this sort of game – however, I could see how some of it balances out in later stages (beyond the point we reached) because sources and markets are capped – once you have cornered the supply and market you have to start rubbing up against the other traders and the whole thing starts to become more conflictual – with the inevitable weaker families conspiring to undermine the trade empire of the more successful.

There is, in this part of the game, quite a lot of NPC involvement in the form of various flavours of Greek and other barbarians – and I know Andrew is considering opening up the game to include player roles for them – making the external threat more significant – and more real competition for lucrative markets from non-Carthaginians.

If this is then overlaid with the military / political game of foreign policy and military aggrandisement there are the makings of a really interesting and complex economic and political game for about a dozen players that would be easy to play (in rules and systems terms) but quite rich in complex gameplay.

Air Wars Onside report by Jim

I wanted to dust off my old model aircraft and play a simple jet fighter game I developed a long time ago. This was originally designed for young wargamers – so had to be fairly easy to master, and I subsequently ran it as a participation game at Salute sometime in the 1980s.

The premise is straightforward, and like many games of its type – the aircraft are on a hex grid (in this case 1/72 scale models on a big blue hex-marked sheet) – and players control one or two aircraft. The movement and firing is simultaneous based on secret written orders. It's pretty fast moving. Most of the time planes that get shot at tend to go down – but the hard part is getting into a position to shoot. Because of the limited size (in terms of number of hexes) of the playing area we were using the longer range radar guided missile were of more limited use – so a volley of heat-seekers was the most common route to bringing down the enemy.

We played several scenarios – the first two were set in Vietnam, with two US Navy Phantoms fighting three North Vietnamese MiG21s. The heavy, faster, well-armed Phantoms having a technological advantage over the smaller slower MIG – but the MiGs have the edge in manoeuvrability. This makes for quite a tense game as the MiGs have to survive an initial onslaught of medium range radar-guided missiles to get close enough to use their superior manoeuvrability to get behind the Phantom and unleash the heat-seekers.

The third scenario we changed model scale to 1/300 (I only have a small number of 1/72 aircraft) and did a bigger battle based on the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict. Using the smaller models on the big hex grid made the game feel different and gave a better sense of the distances involved (as each hex is 1km). In this scenario we had three Israeli Skyhawk bombers going to bomb a bridge, with three Phantoms as escort. These were intercepted by six determined Egyptian MiG21s intent on protecting the bridge.

The Egyptian Team (often accused of being Soviet pilots) lost, I think, five out of 6 MiGs but concentrated single-mindedly on taking down the bombers, which they did at the final point, just as the last MiG was down to its last drop of combat fuel.

I hope the participants enjoyed it – it's got me thinking about air combat again, and I might do some more Vietnam air war stuff sometime later in the year, if my enthusiasm holds and anyone is interested in giving it a go.

If anyone would like a copy of the rules they are, as usual, freely downloadable from my rules site www.jimwallman.org.uk/wargames

Air Wars from Jim. Offside Report by Brian Cameron

A blast from the past. Actually I'm more familiar with the Stingray! variant (shows how versatile the rules are). It's a very simple game to pick up which doesn't suffer at all from being two dimensional. What helps to make it entertaining is the different characteristics of the two sides. Phantom's have long range radar guided missiles as well as heat seekers, great speed but lack in manoeuvrability; MIGs only have heat seekers (so you have to get behind the target and be quite close) but they have a much better turn rate. Appropriately for its subject it a fast game, we played three games in a couple of hours with none of us knowing the system apart from Jim.

The Party Game - Onside Report by James Kemp

I brought a still shrink-wrapped copy of Paul Eddington's "The Party Game" with me to the Christmas meeting. I picked this up for next to nothing in a charity shop and thought that it might be a good thing to see what we could make of it and see if anything was worth re-using in some of the other political games we might play.

On opening the box we found a board featuring a map of Britain overlaid with 1.5cm squares surrounded by a monopoly style track (although with many more areas along each side). The general idea was to move your counter around the outer track and by landing on certain squares (marked with either Speech, Question, Greasy Pole or Ladder of Success) acquire (or lose) votes.

For every 5,000 votes acquired you got to buy a constituency seat in the form of a rosette that you placed on the map of Britain. In the central map you were playing a form of connect four, every time you placed four of your rosette's in a row you got a fifth one free. You could place these wherever you wished, but there was a limit of no more than two per turn (except for the free ones for getting four in a row). This presumably helped to stop people from saving up and buying a load all at once and then getting those multiplied up with the free ones from getting four in a row.

There were some interesting features in the game. We particularly liked the speech mechanism. There were a number of cards with a topic printed on them and an egg timer. On landing on a 'Speech!' area the player had to draw a card and speak without undue hesitation on the subject on the card for the minute or so that the egg timer took to run out of sand. As the Green Party I lost the plot somewhat on talking about Capital Punishment, mainly because I interpreted it as punishing those that lived in the Capital and caused all the pollution driving about in their Chelsea Tractors. I did somewhat better on nuclear disarmament and talked for some time longer than the egg timer. John Rutherford also did a good speech as a Liberal in favour of corporal punishment. A successful speech gained you 10,000 votes.

There were also cards with helpful or hindering events, but these were felt to be a bit too random. The cards could be used though in generating some randomised background for political events in a wider game (although you might moderate the penalties somewhat). For example one of the Greasy Pole cards I picked said something like "You hire a hot air balloon to get the campaigning message across, unfortunately it strays into military airspace and is shot down. Lose 4,000 votes because the electorate won't trust you on defence."

The question cards asked what were reasonably topical politics related questions when the game came out. Even though they are somewhat dated (being over 20 years old) there was still quite a resource of questions (six to a card and well over 100 cards). Of the dozen or so asked at least one person out of the four players knew the answer (although not always the person being asked). There could be a use for these in another game, although I preferred Michael Dollin's suggestion of getting the chaps in the other room to write the answer to the question for the asked player to read out later. Much more like real life, and if I can manage to do it in a game I will.

Overall it is a reasonable ice breaker game, and there are bits that can be mined out of the box to use in other games too. The best feature is probably that all the rules fit on one side of A4 (with a generous margin) and that is relatively unusual. I'm sure that we could have improved on it if we had tried.

Murker v Scorcher off-side view by Brian Cameron

As someone who knows very little about WWII I thought I was an interesting choice to be the overall commander on the German side! With so much pre-planned I found it quite difficult to grasp all the information provided. I think part of this was intended to represent the confusion in the German planning but I would have been more familiar with the overall plan as I would have been involved in developing it. Fortunately the main geography of the island is very simple but I still felt like sending out to the local tourist office for a map. I think all the German team had problems with getting together with all the material. Possibly having an orbat just for the troops commanded by each player might help, perhaps with a graphical depiction with boxes for 'in transit', 'on convoy'. With so much pre-planned it did give us a chance to get to grips with the material while the pre-planned phases were resolved by the umpires. (though its possible these could have been pre-gamed).

Perhaps it's the nature of the beast but I didn't have too many decisions to take, mainly about whether to cancel the operation (and blame its failure on Student) and where to send in the reinforcements. During the second day, when we had failed to capture a single airfield or port, I could see no possibility of sending more troops and thus faced with little option except to cancel. At the end of that day Jerry announced that we had taken one airfield and we could reinforce by air transport. I have to say that this appeared to be an umpire fix to keep the game going given that we weren't involved in resolving the action on the ground. It may not have been but it did appear to be, which is never a good thing from a player point of view.

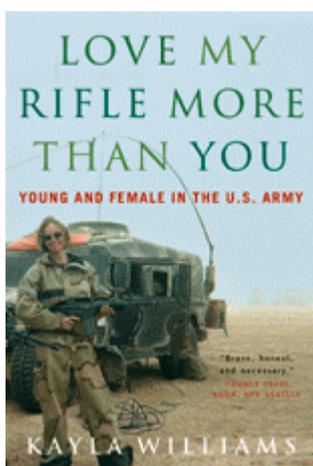
I should mention that the entire the entire German team was based in Athens, which made for some difficulty later when the air transportable stuff went in but we still didn't have a player presence on the ground. I think it would have benefited from using some of the players (see below) to model the ground game, though this has a consequence I'll go into later.

After that it was just a case of urging on the efforts to capture a port so that Martin's convoys could finally make an attempt to land more reinforcements. There was a political game about a glory and blame but I really couldn't get into it, as it seemed to be aimed at keeping us entertained while the action was resolved.

The debrief was interesting. Apart from Cunningham, the British naval commanders had nothing to do in a game in which the sailed to Crete, stood off the island, bombarded it while waiting for the convoys to show up (very sensible, why search the Med when you know where they're going) while taking pasting from the Luftwaffe. I think Martin, in charge of the German convoys, had actually spent most of his time helping Alex resolve the action on the map, while waiting for a port to be captured. Mukul, in charge of the German air effort, probably had the most to do, sorting out the how he was splitting his air assets in response to my requests for particular targeting.

So it was all a very well presented effort, which attracted a very good turnout, and I wish I could be more positive about it, but it did seem to have a major problem of not enough for most players to do. There's talk of doing a megagame of the operation which I find puzzling. If the ground effort is gamed there will be a few more roles (but lots of detailed combat for the umpires to resolve) but if an airfield isn't captured by the Germans in the first couple of days, the whole game is going to come to a very sudden and early end. And judging by the amount of decision making in the rest of the game I would have thought there was about a dozen player roles in all. Games don't always benefit from increased numbers of players, the subject has to need those players. To illustrate the point, I have a game, Barricades & Borders, about 19th century developments in politics and conflict which, it has been suggested, could be made into a megagame but it works very well as a 'club' game and I'm not sure it would benefit from having a team run each country as there's no internal game. 1494, my game about the French invasion of Italy, needs the numbers as there's an internal game in each Italian state which determines that state's response to the invasion. Its game which is only possible as a megagame. And I think that's the important point.

'18 Wheels and Dozen Roses' Onside report by Mukul Patel



A very crude and quick simulator game. I read book called Love My Rifle More Than You by a young female American soldier/translator Kayla Williams about her tour of duty in Iraq. She had been fired at, but had never had to shoot her rifle at another human.

There was a passage in the book I thought would make an easy game. In that time in Iraq car bombers would try and place themselves in the midst of an American Convoy and then try to kill the Americans around them. The US Soldiers were very aware of this and the US soldiers wanted to live. Kayla Williams was once the rear lookout in a convoy, and saw a car approaching the convoy from the rear. She tried to get it to stop, but it kept coming, she started to get very worried. She started to squeeze the trigger and wanted to shoot, but then recognised that a kid was sitting in the passenger seat, and she breathed relaxed and didn't kill the kid . I wanted a game about that unhappy and tense experience.

Crudely the idea is that someone pretends to Kayla Williams Rear gunner of the convoy. Everyone else pretends to be a civilian car/vehicle and its passengers. Cars are approaching towards Kayla from the rear all the time, she has to deal with them, keeping them at a respectful distance by whatever means she can. She looks at pictures and behaviour of the vehicles to decide what to do. The Rest of the players hold up small hazy pictures of the passengers for Kayla to see. Little stories on the reverse of the pictures tell who they are, in some cases how to drive, whether they are a bomber or just an ordinary civilian or special ops, whatever.

The basic idea of the game I am sure works. Its execution on the day wasn't as good as it should have been; let down by my writing inappropriate and absence of stories on the reverse side of the pictures. One idea that might be useful in any rerun would be to have a pool of toy cars and vehicles to go with the pictures to give better visual cues to Kayla.

It also became clear that you might be able do the same sort of thing with a fixed roadblock and other situations like sentry duty at night. John Rutherford revealed he has had thoughts about doing a vehicle checkpoint type game.

'18 Wheels and Dozen Roses' off-side view by Brian Cameron

Mukul's short game, '18 Wheels and Dozen Roses' about convoys in Iraq based on an account by a translator in the US forces. She had recounted how she had been the 'tail-gunner' on a convoy, with the job of determining whether civilian vehicles approaching from behind were a threat or not – and thus whether to open fire (interesting that of all the combat soldiers, they had to use an interpreter for this).

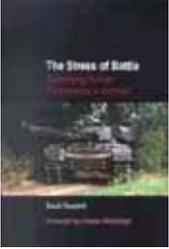
Mukul set up one player (Andrew) as the 'tail-gunner' and the rest of us as 'suspects', each equipped with a photo (somewhat obscured in a plastic folder) to show our appearance. Quite short game, in which Andrew blew away an 'innocent' Jim but then allowed 'suicide' Jim to go past, get in amongst the convoy and blow himself up. An interesting discussion followed about the total lack of time and criteria for such judgements.

The rest of the February Meeting on-side view by Brian Cameron

To fill the rest of the time I ran an impromptu design session for my planned Renaissance and reformation megagame (coming to a venue near you in 2009). The specific problem was how to handle the transition of some Catholics, discontented at the state of the church, into Protestants after Luther kicks it all off. We had an interesting (to me anyway!) discussion about representing motivation and the benefits of going protestant or remaining catholic and how to represent them in the game. Possible solutions were the use of god points and status charts, as in my Habsburgs Ascendant game, the use of a 'Pickles' mechanism

(Pickles came up with a useful mechanism for his Mexico games where, on each political issue, your stance was defined as Strongly for, For, Against or Strongly against) and applying this to the religious issues. An interesting suggestion was that the catholic and protestant ‘preachers’ would try and influence the stance of the player on a particular issue until they lined up with a particular religious fraction (the protestants soon split into various strands). My thanks to all those who took part and gave me some good food for thought.

Book Review by Andy Grainger



Stress of Battle, Quantifying Human Performance in Combat by David Rowland, HMSO 2006 ISBN 0 11 773046 7 pp254. Foreword by Charles Messenger, (£30 but also a Google e-book)

This book is about the trials conducted by the Defence Operational Analysis Establishment (DOAE) during the 1970's and 1980's when the British Army was preparing to fight the Warsaw Pact on the North German Plain.

The author begins with an introduction about the analysis of weapon effectiveness, explaining that the origins of the scientific analysis of this subject lie in the First World War when Lanchester's theorems concerning air warfare appeared. A Russian, Osipov, examined land warfare in the same way but it was only in the interwar years that the armed services adopted this approach in conjunction with real operations – Operational Research (OR) or Operational Analysis (OA). For example, Watson-Watt used real aircraft and real systems to test the efficacy of the fledgling radar network on the east coast and the passage of information in the communications chain. The 1941 Butt Report which showed the ineffectiveness of Bomber Command was a product of OR as were many of the tactics developed by the Royal Navy to fight the U-Boat war. The Army, however, was more reluctant to adopt OR taking the view that land combat was more about unquantifiable factors such as morale and fighting spirit which scientists could not understand. This did not mean that the Army did not use OR, rather the studies tended to be equipment based and did not look at the actions of soldiers in battle.

The effect of this was summed up by Brigadier Nigel Balchin (the scientist, businessman and best-selling novelist who wrote in October 1945:

“The moral may be to the physical as three is to one but the fact remains that at a time when literally hundreds of scientists were engaged in studying fragmentation and muzzle velocities there was not a single man engaged full time in the study of those morale effects which are all that 95% of shells, bombs and bullets produce.” (p50)

The Army, in particular, often seemed reluctant to undertake research, presumably on the grounds of what it might find. Lt Col Lionel Wigram, the Commandant of the first Battle School set up in the UK in 1940 following the fall of France went to Sicily in 1943 as an observer. His principal finding was that in every platoon there were *“six gutful men who will go anywhere... twelve sheep who will follow... if they are well led... and four to six who will run away.”* His view was supported by several field officers in 78 Inf Div where he later served before being killed in March 1944. Montgomery was resistant to Wigram's idea of altering platoon tactics to take account of these factors by splitting it into one large fire group and a small assault group and suppressed the report on the grounds that it would be bad for morale.

A report by OR specialists in Normandy indicated that the vastness of modern warfare made it essential to conduct wide-ranging research in order to understand why a particular approach had succeeded *“where the end-results of a particular course of action are quite remote from the initiators; where, for instance, the results of air attack on an enemy position can only be judged by whether the subsequent ground attack succeeded, when in fact it may have succeeded for a dozen other reasons.”* p16.

During the 1970's two other developments enabled the Army to take OA further. The introduction of effective computers linked together with laser weapon simulators enabled battles up to battalion level to be designed and ‘fought’ with an ability to measure the results using the data collected. As time went on the

use of computers was developed to analyse a mass of historical data from past battles which had been neglected either because it was deemed irrelevant or because it had been too difficult to sift.

A scientific approach to the measuring of weapon effectiveness requires hypotheses to be constructed with the best data that can be found and then tested against other cases. In this way Historical Analysis (HA) was developed using data from historical trials, reports, war diaries, psychological studies and so on. The idea was to construct a greater range of case studies from history and test them against current hypotheses to compare, for example, the effects of the stress of battle on weapon performance across a range of engagements.

The first exercises involved a simulation of a Warsaw Pact (WP) force attacking a British company group (known as a Combat Team). By analysing the laser weapon simulators, for example, it was found that the main clash was preceded by a number of mini-battles or skirmishes, a phenomenon which was a constant feature of WW2 war diaries but a feature which had been discounted due to greater weapon ranges since 1945.

One unexpected characteristic which quickly showed up was overkill ie targets being engaged repeatedly even when clearly knocked out. This happened even when troops were specifically made aware of it.

Analysis also indicated that:

- Rifles were only about 14% as effective as on a range
- MGs were about 60% as effective as on a range
- The chance of a hit on a moving target was only about 40% of that on a static target.

Rifles

A range of battles studied in the American Civil War, Boer war and early WW1 revealed that weapon effectiveness is roughly constant at about 10% of the peacetime trial figure. But also constant was the finding that at 1:1 each defending rifleman hit about 0.25 of an attacker whereas at 3:1 it was about 0.5 due to the greater number of targets.

Adding MGs and Mortars

A British OR study of the D-Day landing beaches had calculated that three machine guns were equal to one 81mm mortar for casualty effect.

To calculate the effectiveness of machine gun fire a number of other battles were looked at – 1 July 1916 on the Somme, Blue Beach on the Dieppe Raid and four battalion actions at Sidi Rezegh fought by the NZ Division in the Western Desert. From these it was calculated that MGs were about 15-25% as effective as they were on peacetime trials which was remarkably close to SLA Marshall's unsourced assertions as to the effectiveness of crew-served weapons.

The research with the simulated weapons revealed that an unsuppressed rifleman will cause 0.5 casualties and the eight men in a section will therefore cause four. But, again in line with SLA Marshall, it was reckoned that most of those casualties will be caused by one man. This ties in with Wigram's view that there will only be 4 to 6 'gutful' men in a platoon and research on 'heroes' and anti-tank guns (see below).

Suppressive Fire with Artillery and Tanks

Further research using historical data collected in WW2 was then done to establish the effects of bombardment on defending MGs. This seems to suggest that, for example, at Omaha Beach where there was little effective suppression each MG inflicted about 2.4 casualties, at Juno and Sword it was about half this and at Gold about one quarter.

Further research seems to show that a density of 0.4lbs HE per square yard over a duration of one hour is as effective as one of 4lbs spread over 100 hours.

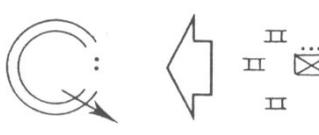
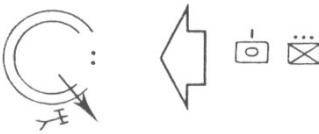
Anti-tank guns and Fortifications

There is further research on how the presence of attacking tanks degrades the effectiveness of the defending MGs still further and then how defending anti-tank guns reduce the effectiveness of the tanks. I

fear that I could not follow the terminology or the graphs here but the research is summarised in Table 13. This does not include the effect of fortifications of a style similar to the Atlantic Wall or the Siegfried Line but research indicated that such fortifications increased the defence effectiveness by about 1.65.

The magic of the internet allows you to look at the Google e-book yourself, however.

Figure 13

	DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF BATTLE	DESCRIPTION OF BATTLE	CASUALTIES TO ATTACKING INFANTRY MEN (Killed + Wounded)
Infantry Defence, No Anti Tank Capability (Section + M.G.)	 Infantry Platoon Attack	Pure Infantry Attack at 3:1 Force Ratio	12
	 Infantry Platoon Attack Supported by One Tank	Infantry Heavy Attack At 3:1 Inf. Force Ratio On Pure Infantry Defence	4
	 Infantry Platoon Attack Supported By Tank Troop	Square Inf./Arm. Attack At 3:1 Inf. Force Ratio On Pure Infantry Defence	0-1
Infantry Defence, Strong Anti Tank Capability (Section + M.G. + A.T. Gun)	 Infantry Platoon Attack Supported By Tank Troop	Square Inf./Arm. Attack at 3:1 Inf. Force Ratio On Infantry & Anti Tank Defence	10
	 Infantry Platoon and Three Tank Troops Attack	Armour Heavy Attack At 3:1 Inf. Force Ratio On Infantry & Anti Tank Defence	6
	 Infantry Platoon and Tank Squadron Attack	Armour Heavy Attack At 3:1 Inf. Force Ratio On Infantry & Anti Tank Defence	4

Simple comparison of effects of attack AFV support on attack casualties in battle.

Urban Combat

The research on urban combat produced some surprising results which perhaps need studying further. This research came from a study of 47 WW2 battles in Europe and 24 in Burma plus data from simulated battles in a training complex in Berlin. The assumption has always been that the attacker suffers more casualties than the defender in urban warfare (assuming also that he attacks with at least equal numbers). In practice, researchers found that it was the defenders lost more:

Force Ratio	Attack Force	Attack Casualties (killed and wounded)		Defence Casualties (killed, POW and wounded of 100 defenders)
		1 MG / section	2 MG / section	
1:1	Infantry only	16	24	80
3:1	Infantry only	27	40	80
1:1	Heavy tank support (no defence a/tk)	3	12	80
3:1	Heavy tank support (20 tanks) (no defence a/tk)	5	20	80
1:1	Trained attack – Infantry only	8	12	80
1:1	Trained Attack – Heavy AFV support	2	6	80

The waters are muddied somewhat by discovery that in some battles where the attackers had been driven off that this was due to counterattacks which caused the original attackers very serious losses. The tentative conclusion was that in urban combat defence is best done by a light screening force with the bulk of the defenders held back to counterattack. The researchers also found that battle in rubble areas produced an increase in defence effectiveness of 1.55 which was similar to that for fortifications.

This reviewer feels that it may be noteworthy that in battles like Stalingrad or Cassino the defenders had little room to fall back and so defended forward in strength thus leading to very bloody battles.

Fighting in Woods

The researchers found that infantry defending in woods were about 2.5 times less effective than when defending in the open, a figure similar to that in urban combat. This was thought to be due to restricted fields of view and fire. Again, the inference was drawn that in defending woods it was better to use a screen followed by counterattack rather than forward defence.

Experienced Troops

Casualty rates were examined to see if attackers lost fewer men as they fought more battles in towns or woods. It was thought that a battalion that fought ten battles could reduce its losses by half. This does not mean that the same troops fought ten times but the battalion had ten experiences from platoon to company and upwards.

Tank and Anti-tank

Chapter 5 of the book concerns actions where it has been possible to make a detailed study of anti-tank guns against tanks. These primarily come from North Africa, Alam Halfa, the Snipe action at El Alamein, Medenine and certain actions in Greece 1941.

The research seems to show that anti-tank guns are only about one-third as effective in combat as they are on the range but is distorted by the fact that in the engagements studied, most of the tanks killed were knocked out by a relatively small proportion of 'heroic' (ie were awarded a decoration) gunners.

Typically 25% of the gunners would score 90% of the kills whilst 75% would only kill the remaining 10%. These ratios are similar to those for fighter pilots and U-boat captains where similar research has been done.

Anti-tank guns were thought to be much more effective tank killers than tanks. This was partly because tanks had other things to do on the battlefield as well as shoot at tanks but also because there is a much higher ratio of officers and sergeants in an anti-tank unit (typically every gun is commanded by a sergeant) than there is in a tank unit or an infantry platoon. The combination of relatively senior leadership, detailed supervision and specialist activity produces an effective weapon system – or possibly it has to since operating anti-tank guns is a highly dangerous business!

The final Chapter considers the effect of Shock or Surprise. The research here seems much less conclusive but seems to indicate that factors such as sudden heavy firepower (eg an intense artillery bombardment) or poor visibility assisted attackers and degraded defenders significantly. On the other hand, shock achieved its greatest effects when defenders' morale was already weak.

Conclusion

This is a very stimulating book especially if you are a wargamer because in designing rules we have all adopted methodologies like this albeit not in such a precise, detailed or scientific way. You will find it all the more useful if you can understand graphs and are good with numbers and ratios.

I found it interesting that SLA Marshall's views of combat effectiveness were broadly found to be accurate albeit for reasons other than those he proposed. He felt that soldiers did not shoot for moral reasons – that they were not killers. There has been some research into how difficult men find the act of killing but most of it seems to concentrate on the effects of killing on the man when he returns to society. The research above seems to indicate that suppressive fire plays an important role in degrading defensive firepower and, of course, from a wargamer's point of view it is more important to quantify the extent to which soldiers do not shoot rather than the extent to which specific moral reasons may play a part. Certainly, those veterans to whom I have spoken have not agreed with the view that most of their soldiers would not shoot in a battle (as opposed to an isolated face to face meeting with an enemy soldier) but some have clearly been very affected afterwards by the effects of their shooting in the form of the dead bodies they had created.

On the other hand, because the research is very precise, it is actually too detailed for much of our wargame rules. There might be skirmish games, typically, in which we want to measure the performance of individual men and weapons but mostly we are seeking to find an overall effect. And many of the effects analysed here could be altered very significantly by particular factors which the researchers have, in fact, not considered or not been able to quantify such as weather, training, surprise and morale.

In other words – you might as well just make something up and throw a dice!

And ironically, of course, for all the emphasis on the stress of battle and the importance of 'heroic' figures there is no discussion as to how to identify them, deploy them encourage them or persuade others to be like them!

As Nigel Balchin wrote in September 1945:

"I have been trying for five years to get something done about a scientific study of morale and am naturally delighted at this high level recognition of the need for it... I suggest therefore that no report by a high level committee on this matter is the slightest use unless the high level committee has at its disposal some agency to obtain for it a mass of factual data and the sociological and psychological interpretation of this data. The army never employs any of the people whose job it is to study the problems of groups of human beings. Until it decides to do so, it can only go on guessing and using nice big phrases which mean nothing whatever. For my own part, I am sick of talking about morale. What I want now is to see the Army collect some facts about it."

Well, a lot more data is available now than it was then but perhaps 'heroes' are for another bunch of scientists! Have a look at the e-book and see what you think.

Scandinavian War by Daniel T Shaw

At the design conference, I had been advised that my ideas for a wargame on the international relationships leading up to the German invasion of Norway in the Second World War would work well as an email game. So, I set about doing it. Running at a pace of real time, with the game date corresponding to the history date (lucky 1940 and 2008 were both leap years), this game ran from the Russian attack on Finland at the end on November to the German invasion, which came early as the dice told us that Hitler was incensed at Norwegian failure to maintain the neutrality. In brief the outcomes were:

Russia : Did not get kicked out of the League of Nations and have been given the Karelian Isthmus to avoid further bloodshed.

Finland : Kept the Russians out of most of Finland and gave them a good kicking to boot. However, did not get any country to give them any serious help.

Sweden : Successfully trading with just about everyone in war goods. Turning a blind eye to the odd contraband crossing into Finland provided a profit was to hand (shame there was not more of it).

Norway : Declined offers of “help” from the West and got invaded by Germany. The government is headed for exile and Quisling taking office in Oslo.

UK : Cabinet struggled to decide how to intervene, especially with Norway ambivalent and eventually declining offers of military support. Three Divisions are trained and ready to sail and the home fleet is ready for action.

France : Keen to declare war on Russia, but wouldn't without similar action from UK. Mobilised two brigades, which are ready to sail. Political turmoil as the French people cannot stomach the lack of support for Finland. The President invites Reynaud to replace Daladier as Prime Minister.

Poland (in exile) : The most beligerant of all. Managed to scrape together a Brigade and persuade the French to kit it out with arctic equipment. Moved it in their own ships with their own escort to Scotland, where it is now ready to sail.

USA : One businessman showed interest in the affairs at the League of Nations, but despite his considerable personal wealth did not commit a cent to the war effort (apart from shouting a drink or two for some diplomats).

League of Nations : Did anyone expect it to do anything?

The Geneva Police : Still trying to solve the murder of the Russian Delegate to the League of Nations.

This game consumed inordinate amounts of my spare time, yet was for me a great success. Players had varying amounts of time to commit to the game and I tried to match that to the roles, as politicians in the war had other agendas to attend to than just Scandinavia. Thanks to all who participated.

Washington Conference – a view from the French by Daniel T Shaw

“Could we do enough to avert the great depression?” I had asked Dave Boundy in advance of the Megagame and he had offered to call this decision after the game.

Crossed emails meant that I did not receive the official welcome package, but with modern technology such limitations could be fixed.

In preparation, I gathered more than enough material – Dave had pointed me to an archive website and told me what I might download – true to form, I had downloaded all the half gygabyte. Dave had said you can't possibly attempt to read it all, which of course cajoled me into speed reading pretty much everything. And Jeepers, I read a lot of irrelevant words. Authors in the 1920's clearly wrote more copy than substance!

Yet, between the extensive descriptions of who frowned at whom, I learnt far more about the post Great War period than I had in my entire lifetime.



Emails with the fellow French players started to sow the basis for a plan – mainly focusing on delegating responsibility to study particular aspects of the pre-reading, which would become the delegated roles of the team players on the day. Advice from experienced Megagamers included avoiding Wizzard Wheezes and keeping the press on side. The less experienced players probably wondered what we were trying to suggest!

For the first time ever, I found Anerley without getting lost, which was a good omen for the day.

Like the Americans, I wanted to keep my powder dry, but I had a strong team who had some great ideas about how to move the (sub)issues forward. We spent a few moments reviewing the characteristics of the leader of each national team, with the aim of anticipating likely crises. I insisted upon my own personality being included in this debate (what do you think my team members said?).

We agreed to the following negotiation objectives:

- keeping land troops off the agenda,
- cutting the naval expenditure by about 10 percent yet seeking a better navy than Italy,
- filibustering the topic of conduct of war (where fortunately we secured the chairmanship) especially on submarines where we hoped to build cruiser submarines,
- keeping attention away from Indo China
- keeping the press fully informed.

All these goals I delegated, keeping only the higher level inter-county issues for myself. The others will I am sure tell their stories of how they fared on their individual missions. Let me recount the grand scheme as I perceived it:

I had decided to make at least my preliminary statements in French. I was actually prepared to do the whole show in French and let the team speak English (I wonder how that would have gone down). Several players commented surprise about how much French they understood, but of course that English language is merely French watered down with warm beer!

The problems started when I understood about the Anglo-Japanese treaty, which was coming up for renewal. On principle, I would not want France left out! The Italians also wanted a treaty to align our intentions in the Mediteranean, which I would just love, especially if France held a stronger fleet at the end of the day.

Les Etas Unis would not listen to suggestions that they should assume the liability for collecting reparations directly from Germany in place of War Debt from France (and the UK) which incensed my hard nosed economic principles. Added to US refusal to ratify the League of Nations, I felt they were on weak ground. What would the US offer to the French apart from smiles?

If you have not guessed, I am, by now, way off my prepared script of non-intervention and defending the status quo. Dave Boundy was getting itchy that he would have a declaration of war at a disarmament conference!

The Japanese were being polite, reasonable, understanding. The Chinese, although slightly miffed that we would not recognise them officially, did not mind what happened on the world stage if they had a place at the big table and were asking nothing of France. As in real life, I have great difficulty anticipating the

Asiatic negotiating position, but am very happy to work with such countries where their word takes a long time to be given, but once spoken is followed devoutly.

Brinksmanship would have to be my trump card. France signed into both the Italo-French treaty of mutual recognition and the expansion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. I did not even read the text of the latter, confident that neither country would have written about Indo-China, just as neither would really consider France an Asiatic power. When I later read the text, I found I was 100 percent correct! I had also left the US in a place of ambiguity because the Italian treaty talked of signatories to the Versailles Treaty, which they had signed but not ratified. Dave Boundy was white, because the USA would be threatened and isolated. In my view, the USA was already isolated, and needed telling in language they would understand.

My finesse play invited the US to join the Anglo-Japanese-French Alliance. If they did not, they would be perceived as warmongers and we could pile on the international pressure for disarmament. If they did, they would have to accept the tariff system in China undermining their free trade agenda. The US ran out a high card with “so disappointed in the position of Europe falling into the trap of international alliances that lead to the last Great War”, but the Europeans were short in that suit and still held the brinksmanship trump.

A ten-minute recess called by the US and they were back at the table with a request to rename the Alliance with a US title. The terms would stand, but we had doubts that Congress would be any happier with this document than they were with the Versailles Treaty. I smiled as France picked up a grand slam, to share the points with our newfound allies.

Now, I wonder, did we do enough to avert the great depression? Maybe an early war between Japan and America would keep the wheels of the world economy turning and Europe could recover its former glory. I am sad to admit: I have been learning geopolitics from Mr Bush. Time for you to call that one, Dave?

Once again a big thanks to Dave for a super game and thanks to the Megagame folk for making it such a good day.