



Military Muddling



Volume 17 Issue 4

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

3Q 2008

Even if distributed by electronic form, MilMud allows the club to remember the days of paper publications. The article in this issue on meeting in Second Life, shows how up to date we are as a club. Whatever your comfort with these new technologies, happy reading! *Daniel T Shaw*

Contributions for Military Muddling

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Events

Sunday 7 September 2008 Anerley Methodist Church Barricades & Borders – Brian
Starship Strike - first playtest of a fast play space battle game based on the classic Sea Strike - Jim

Saturday 20 September 2008 Anerley Town Hall MEGAGAME : Interesting Times.

Sat 4th - Sun 5th October 2008 Royal Logistics Corps Museum, Deep Cut, Surrey
Bombs, Bullets and Bayonets, The Weapons of Trench Warfare 1914-18 (including Trench Assault public participation wargame)

Saturday 11 October t.b.a Universe day - Science fiction games from 11am

Weekend 18-19 October 2008 PET, London Bridge Annual Weekend Design Conference 2008

Sunday 2 November 2008 Anerley Methodist Church Come One Come Eorl - Andrew H
Delta Blue - a Game about the Oil Industry in Nigeria as its the 50th anniversary of Nigerian Crude Oil arriving in England- Mukul

Saturday 22 November 2008 Anerley Town Hall MEGAGAME: Mystery by Gaslight.

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

CLWG AUTUMN DESIGN WEEKEND 17,18 and 19 October 2008

The program is taking shape for the Autumn Design Conference over the Weekend:

Pre-Conference Dinner and discussion session : 7.30pm onwards

Restaurant: The Great Wall of China - Tooley Street SE1

Wargame Mechanisms Workshop - Jim

A good mechanism can make a game work well - a clumsy mechanism can ruin it - but is it sensible to think that a novel, interesting or elegant mechanism that works well in one game is automatically appropriate for all games?

Following on from the game design methodology seminar last year, and Jim's article on probability in MilMud, this session takes on the initial work of reviewing game mechanisms and their application - perhaps even starting to look at 'best fit' ideas for rules mechanisms.

Nigerian Politics - Mukul

If possible I would like time and people for a small session to help develop a game about the politics of Nigeria in the last 50 years, this is a carry over from last years session

The Winter of our Discontent - Nick

It's an old Hot Chestnut. How do we enable sufficient player interaction (talking), without losing track of the action.

Can we use a system of resource cards to represent hidden information, spies, rumours, influence and news? Should we have a public "action" board that players can visit to see what is happening. Can we also use this to have rumours and dummy information.

I am looking for a system that is tight enough to work, but so restrictive, that it just becomes a board game with low possibilities for role playing. I would like to make a game on the succession conflict after Edward IV's death, 1483.

AFTER DINNER GAME The Megagame Casting Game - Jim

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'.

Bombs, Bullets and Bayonets – The Weapons of Trench Warfare 1914-18

The Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) Museum Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th October 2008 11am - 4 pm
Free car parking and free entry to the event and the Museum. For further information 01252 833371.

This special weekend event, presented in association with the Surrey branch of the WFA, will examine the development of the weapons and tactics used by the British Expeditionary Force during the Great War. From the Webley .445 revolver to machine guns and mortars, the weekend will offer a real 'hands-on' opportunity to get to grips with familiar and the more unusual weapons, combining talks with demonstrations of bomb throwing, machine gun and mortar drill, wiring and trench clearing.

Playing Games in "Second Life" by John Rutherford

I am writing to say a few words about my experiences playing games inside the 'Second Life' virtual-reality world, and to encourage more British gamers and role players to get involved.

First, let me say that the basic 'game' costs you nothing to try, as long as you have a broadband connection and a reasonably fast computer with a decent video card. I could list them here, but it's quicker to check it out at the second life website yourself. If you do decide to get more involved, it does cost money; it's hard to say exactly how much as it depends on what you want to do, but I think you'd have to work very hard to spend as much as World of Warcraft costs to play.

Let me describe what I did when I started back in May 2008. Once I'd created my 'avatar' I learned to drive it around, learned how to use objects and change my appearance. So far it's quite similar to any other first-person computer game. Where 'Second Life' is different is in the open-endedness of the environment. I switched my avatar from a human to a robot to a dwarf and back to a human while wandering about making friends in hundreds of different 'simulations' from fairly mundane shops and houses to re-creations of colleges, medieval towns, starships, battlefields, Cthulhu towns, castles and dungeons. All of these environments were created by the players themselves using the tools provided by Linden Lab, the SL hosts in California. After a few weeks of occasional playing I have several different appearances, an address book of SL friends, and a piece of land with a furnished house on it and a whole inventory full of objects from guns and a tank, to hats and shoes.

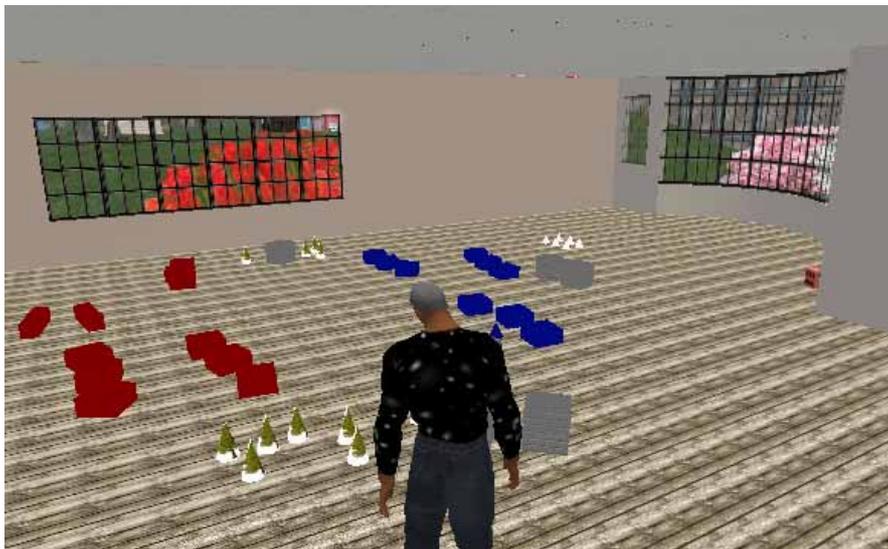
It helps a lot to know some other people in 'Second Life'. Unlike, for example, 'World of Warcraft' there are no pre-determined 'missions' for you to slot into as a noob; just several thousand other people online who will have their own reasons for being there. A lot of the fun is finding out what that is, and trying to join in, and though some of the activities are not to everyone's taste it's easy to move on. It's a bit like moving to a new town or starting a new job or college, and there are volunteers to help you settle in. The vast majority of people I've met on Second Life have been friendly and polite, and they are from a wide variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Though as you'd expect there are lots of Americans, I also now have French, Danish, Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Australian SL friends, as well as several Brits. I bought translation software which, within limits, enables me to 'speak' basic Japanese among others, for example, but the language of SL is English and non-anglophones will usually take on the task of translation. The people are from all walks of life, and they are often older and more thoughtful than the stereotypical shoot-em-up player.

On fighting: the combat systems are not brilliant, and it has to be said that if you only want to fight, there are better combat games; Second Life usually works by linking a chunk of land of a few thousand square metres to a combat software website [the ones I've tried are DCS, CCS and 'bloodlines'] and then that 'runs' the combat results for anyone who has that software loaded. It's adequate as a role-play background in my opinion but it is not of the standard of, say, Half -Life. But realistic violence is not really the primary aim of SL.

In order to play Second Life you have to choose a name for your avatar which can't be the same as yours, at least not unless you pay for the privilege, and it's up to you how much you tell others about your 'First Life'. Personally, I think that it makes for better role-play if others don't know too much about me, at least initially, so I tend to be cagey. If you wear a female avatar you can expect a certain amount of cheesy chat-ups especially if there are any Italians there, but my female friends in SL say it's not so bad and there are plenty of ways to mute, ban or ignore annoying people. Likewise if anyone is being racist, homophobic or just plain objectionable such as pushing, stabbing or shooting you when you're not in a combat...

I would really like to see more gamer friends of mine from the UK and Europe inside SL, not least because quite a few of my non-British friends tend to be online at odd hours so I don't have enough people to play with during the evenings. Of course, it's also a good way to keep in touch, hang out and chat, and it can be used in a similar way to MSN Messenger if you wish and you don't want to get involved in anything complex.

I now have a patch of 'land' where I have a house and anyone who wants to can visit me there. Dave Boundy has built a brilliant reconstruction of the original 'Chestnut Lodge' and the plan is to have SL – CLWG meetings, so let's get more of us in the SL world. Go to <http://secondlife.com/whatis/> hit 'JOIN NOW' and follow the steps to create an avatar. Let me know you've done that, send me a message with the name of your avatar, and I will get online as soon as I can and show you round a bit. Look forward to seeing you there.



The picture is of the upper floor of the Chestnut Lodge building in Second life (constructed by Dave Boundy) - which might be useful for MilMud. In the picture is club member 'Major Fullstop' experimenting with a napoleonic style game using blocks.

The Second Life CLWG meets every Sunday at around 8pm.

En Avant Masse by Jim Wallman Offside Report by Divn. Commander Mukul Patel

A game about ordering, pushing and fighting a division on Napoleonic Battlefield, whose interesting aspect was its difficulty in command and control, and dice less combat system.

The scenario was a one taken from the Crisis along the Danube in 1809 involving French and Austrians. The Austrians are trying to keep isolated a powerful veteran French Corps and other French forces.

It was an interesting scenario. The French of who I played divisional commander Morand had an small discussion about our possible deployments and where our divisions would attack and how they would attack, and adopted a fairly reasonable traditional simple approach 2 divisions and one division back to exploit reinforce success/carry forward the battle.

It was a n encounter battle and my first big surprise was how long it took to deploy my division The time taken in issuing orders that I really liked, divisional commanders had to manage their time well and with a host of tasks, ordering brigades , (Brigades were our smallest unit) sending reports reading reports, getting the timings right and do it harmony with my other divisional commanders even moving to do this was not easy, so this made it difficult to swan around the battlefield. Everybody had the same problems and things simply took time.

Formations and tactics. Well Formations were handled in an easy abstract fashion that I thought was good, we had four formations, road marching, loose used in woods, Assault used in normal combat, and Dense to used vs cavalry, a nice simple table that told us how long it would take to switch formation, and some speeds. Didn't have to worry at all on lines columns and all that jazz, that was the brigade commanders job. My job was to select where the brigades were going and what they were going to, defend , assault, move and so on.

Turns were only 10 minutes long and I was expecting turn lengths of about 1/2 an hour but actually 10 minutes worked really fine. I was expecting something like half hour because it takes a long time to get moving and things battles take a long time, 10 minute chunks seemed small. The 10 minute chunk worked cause the umpires kept it moving and the rules kept it simple.

Combat and firing the dice less bit, worked fine. There were two bits to combat artillery bombardment and close assault. There was not a lot of artillery bombardment and so didn't really get a feel for it. Close assault there were lots of those. There was an emphasis on the nerve of the troops and then a bit on fire-

power, and brigade leadership. First part of close assault was do they get stuck in and then what happens in the close assault. The close assault outcome system was not open to the players but I am guessing was fairly simple. It was a fairly attritional system, in which losses were reflected in loss of nerve, rather physical disintegration. It was pretty quick to figure a divisions worth of combats, just taking a couple minutes. There were very few things a divisional commander/player could do to intervene without any reserves to influence events once a close assault started going.

Some say said the game was a bit predictable, and did need a small random element, I reckon its pretty easy to introduce that without being jarring and slowing things down. Quite a few people said we don't need dice and there is enough just going on that you need dice. Reckon the case could be made either way with no problem.

Stuff I wondered about but didn't voice..would troops falling back infect surrounding friendly brigades with nerves and fear? Should their be some sort of corps morale?

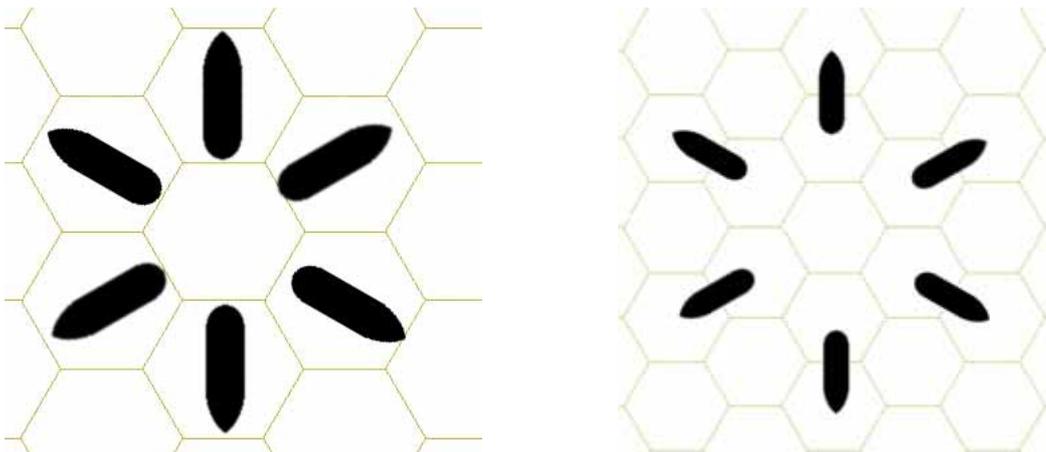
Improvements to the game, we could do a bunch of just to help the game, but boy did I like this game, gave me a definite thirst to play this game and take to Trevor and Chris's games fortnight and play it, just ordered the book (from the Library) that scenario was ripped out off, and then its off to the map site that Nick Luft supplied awhile ago, and hell maybe buy a few toy soldiers, nah thats going to far maybe flats. I really very inspirational game thank you Jim.

Movement in Sailing Ship Wargames by Daniel Shaw

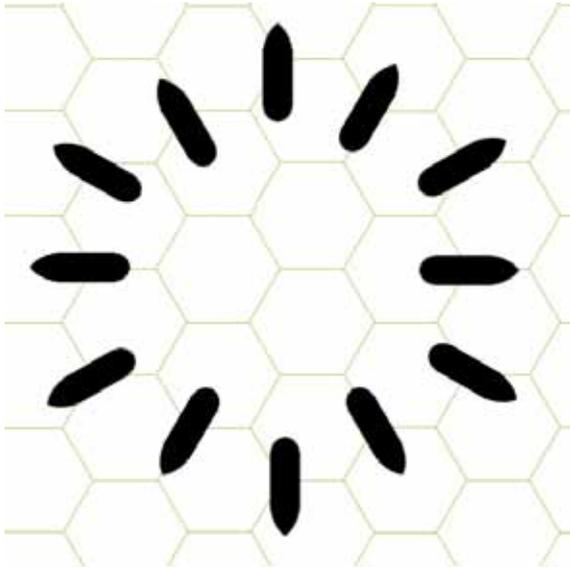
A hex grid facilitates movement and range counting in naval ship games, as well as providing some rigour about wind direction effects. I have played in several age of sail period games recently, including the Napoleonic Naval Game at Chestnut, Wooden Ships and Iron Men at Casus Belli and Victory Under Sail at Fall In.

I talked about the advantages of putting the ships on the vertices of a hex grid. This article is to explain in a little more detail. I must credit Stanley Sunderwirth for having first shown me the idea which features in his rules: Victory Under Sail.

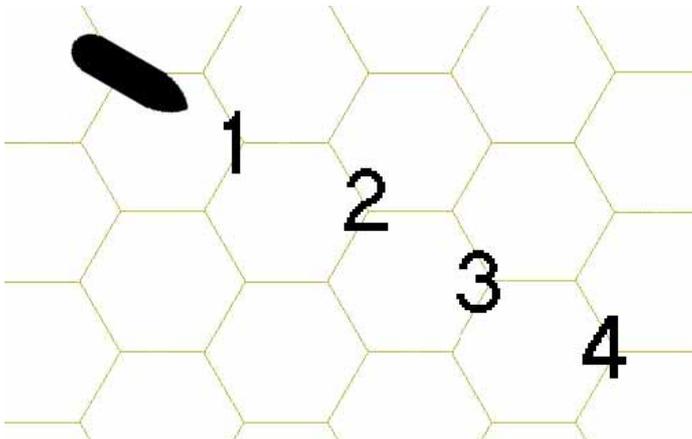
First a reminder of the six classic directions of in the hex or straddling the hex-side games:



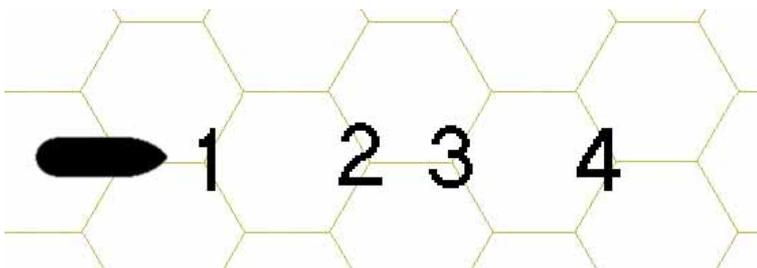
The twelve possible directions of “on the vertex” gaming are as follows:



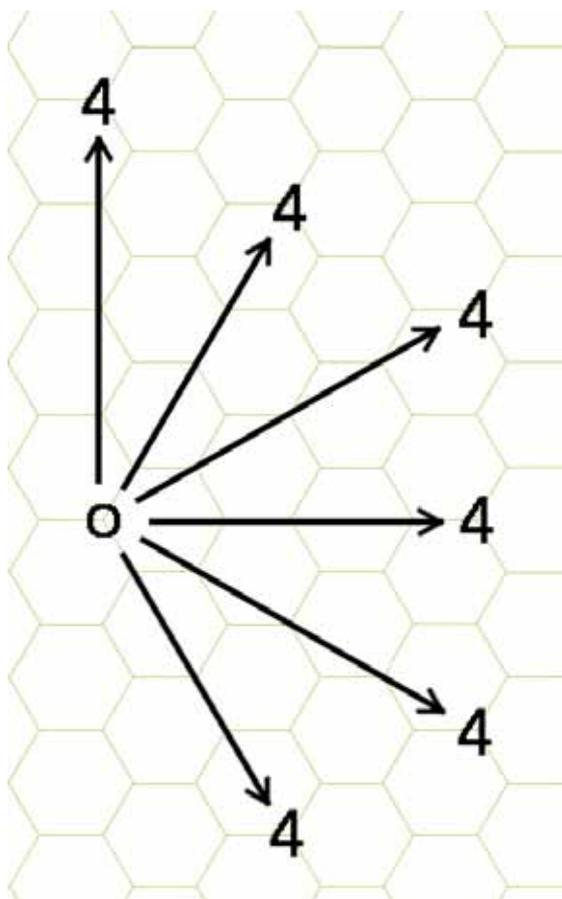
The additional directions provide more flavour to the game.



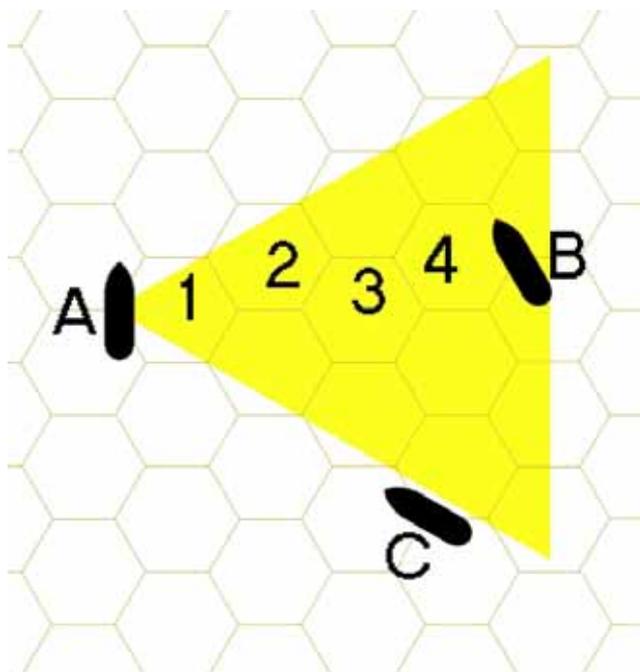
The rule for counting movement is to only count the vertices directly on the line of movement. Vertices just beside the bow and stern are ignored.



It does mean that some moves have alternately irregular distances for each movement step, but that averages out in the long run.



Thus counting four hexes in different directions does not exactly yield a circle. Purists might design the game with only even number movements permitted or wind speed effects to compensate.



Counting ranges is done by intervening hexes. A 60 degree arc of fire needs some careful checking at times, but with practice becomes quite easy. In this diagram, the arc or fire for Ship A shows the range of 4 hexes to ship B, but that Ship C is just outside the arc of fire. Of course, were you gaming without a hex grid you would have difficulty deciding if ship C was or not in the arc of fire!

I hope this little might inspire some of you in the use of a hex grid. As an after thought, it could of course apply to other periods of wargaming. Which makes this a good point to slip in some pictures of naval games.



Victory Under Sail at Fall In



Wooden Ships & Iron Men at Casus Belli



And our own Napoleonic Naval Game at Chestnut Lodge: Including the all important court marshal.