



Military Muddling



Volume 16 Issue 10

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

2Q 2007

Editorial

A going to press date has helped inspire several authors put pen to paper or the more modern expression of hitting on the keys. Thank you to all those who contributed. I hope you enjoy the read as much as I have.

We now have a regular meeting place at Anerley Methodist Church hall. From the web site and comments from those in the know, it looks like a very suitable facility. Directions are later in this issue.

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: Arthur Harman

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

Sunday 3 June 2007 **Old School Wargames** (Arthur) and **Consulting Detective** (Dave) – commercial Sherlock Holmes game to help John Rutherford think about the Megagame "Mystery by Gaslight".

Sunday 1 July 2007 **Dark Age Britain** (Pickles) and **Boston Riots** - using the Little Lambent Meteors rules (Jim & Brian)

Sunday 5 August 2007 **Crossing the Wire** – WWI Brigade Level Trench warfare 1916 (Jim)

Sunday 2 September 2007 **Rheinubung** a.k.a. Hunt the Bismark (Dave B)

Friday 5 October to Sunday 7 October 2007 **Annual Design Conference** and business meeting (venue tbc)

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

Games Weekend Saturday 31 March and Sunday 01 April 2007

Orange or Lemon? - Onside Report by James Kemp

This game was intended to show the political goings on in the attempt to get a revolution settlement in Scotland following the English parliament's declaration of Prince William of Orange as their King in February 1689 (new style). The game we played was a highly entertaining role-play of some of the issues and certainly gave a good flavour and, more or less, reached the historical outcome. I certainly enjoyed it immensely, and I think the players did too.

I designed the game with almost a board game like level of mechanism for winning the support of the non-played members of the Convention (which was essentially an unofficial Parliament as it had been called by Prince William of Orange and not King James). Almost none of those mechanisms was tested in the game we played, but it worked as a game anyway – almost a proof of the old saying that you could stick a bunch of CLWG members in a room with some game money and an a game would break out. Instead of money I gave them a map of the Edinburgh High Street and an idea. I'll leave it to the players to tell you how the game actually went.



In terms of future development I will refine the player briefs (I was still working on these when I started the session and a couple are not yet fully complete). This will improve player understanding of the period and importantly make their personal objectives a bit more tailored from the generic ones of:

1. Stay alive.
2. Ensure that the clan remains in being and in control of its territory.
3. Increase you/the clan wealth (either through plunder or by increasing territory).
4. Increase the influence of Clan Cameron.
5. Have your King accepted as de facto sovereign.
6. Ensure that your enemy is diminished.

For the lowlanders you can replace 'Clan' with 'family/heirs'. These do work, but there need to be a couple more triggers to get some of the characters to get stuck into being active. There is also a need to explain the general apathy of the population in their support for the King who has antagonised most of them in the last decade, even before he became the King.

Crete Scorcher Offside Report by Mukul Patel

What do in know about the events on Crete in 1941? Not a lot. The Nazis won, a heroic retreat, the royal navy lost some ships and the German Paras got involved and didn't ever fly again. Oh yeah and one more thing Andy Grainger suspect its a bit of black hole for gaming.

I was interested in Daniel's game after Andy's comments. Daniel introduced the game by telling what it was about, what would be in the game and what wasn't. He especially wanted to test the orders sequence and he certainly got some ideas from the session to help him put this game on at Murphy Mania for an

audience of about 30 people. Crete Scorcher is about the fight that broke at various places on Crete after the initial landings by the German Paras, the land fighting, air support, but Daniel had not included the naval actions nor the pre planning. The core for the game, I think, was meant to be the "ding dong" battle over the airfields. Not a really high level game involving ultra for instance, which is removed as a played factor by allowing no preplanning and slow Commonwealth reactions for the turn of the game.

Game style was a turn based, map game. Turns are 6 hours long, 3 daylight and one night turn each day.

The maps were really nice, roads, contours, towns, simple, clear and large. I believe by the look of them taken from the official histories and edited to remove the hard core unit information. (I recall using tipex for some early Cossacks games; bloody hell it was tedious). Anyway it was clear to see the rugged nature of the terrain and gorges that Dave Boundy had written about after his visit to the Island. Daniel's handbook was easy to read and got over most of the points. Unit resolution, smallest unit a company, grouped together where appropriate into cohesive battalions, but there were some odd isolated companies that had been dropped or landed out touch of there companions.

An unusual thing was an open map movement system, We could see with perfect accuracy both the enemy and friendly units, and the quantity of them: not something I am used in a CLWG map game.

The order sheet was different! Each battalion or smaller independent company formation had its own order sheet. An order is chosen each for unit, a placing a cross in box. No need to say the destination or route of for a movement order...interesting... nor for an attack order – Daniel had defined a few different types of attack – but the direction/target of attack did not need to be written. To some extent, because we were consenting adults, this didn't cause problems. We told Daniel our intentions, and we didn't read each other's intentions and try react at the last moment. I thought this might be weakness in the game, but with the top games players in the club Daniel was having no trouble!

Combat, was described by the game designer as a scissors-paper-stones system. Different attack types and defences combined in matrix to give quite different outcomes to a combat. This meant the players could outthink/guess each other a bit. There was some comment on the lack of terrain effects, but I was not sure this was all that important. We did have three major terrain types, normal, dug in, and really bloody well dug in with barbed wire. These terrain types seemed enough. Another big factor was air support and after playing the designer modified the air support system so that it would require a bit more forethought from the players. Combat resolution after the usual slow start was dead simple.

Other factors represented were fatigue and ammo/supplies, which seemed easy for the Commonwealth forces and hard for the Krauts. These and losses or combat status were tracked on the orders sheet.

I thought this an excellent session, a potentially very good game. My only reservation being the open movement system, but with umpires around and decent players it should make an interesting, informative game about Crete in 1941.

Crete Scorcher Offside Report by Dave Boundy

This was Daniel's game of the German invasion of Crete in 1941 (Operation Scorcher). It was a try-out of the game to prepare for the main event the day after Murphy Mania (13th May in Delft).

The game deals with the early parts of the invasion – the first 3 days and the landings/action in the northern coastal area. Counters represent companies and orders are by battalion. Movement is on a large-scale OS type map and combat adjudicated by a grid involving the type of orders given/ tactics used as well as the strength of the unit. Casualties are more by nature of effects on morale – units are not so much destroyed as continue to run away (and thus continue to have an effect of any activity).

I was initially surprised at the lack of terrain features in the mechanics, but Daniel has changed this to forbid movement over 300m. Although a bit simplistic, this will probably work, although I still wonder if the terrain did not have more effect than will be represented.

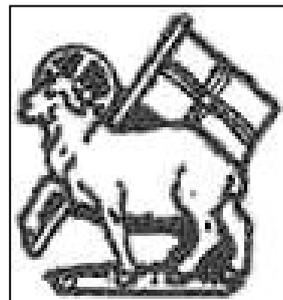
I did like the way morale was used, which felt more realistic than casualty rules – I wonder if it would be possible to enforce secret rolls so that a German unit would just see retreating British units, rather than see a British unit which has failed its morale.

There may be a lot of umpire involvement. The nature of the rules means that there is a fair amount of judgement about where a unit attacks and how as well as where it ends up. This will be OK with the right attitude between players and umpires – I think that Murphy's Heroes should be fine.

Overall, I think it works and I shall be interested to see the full thing in May. (*Editor : see article below*).

Religion in Hapsburg Ascendant – Offside Report by James Kemp

Brian started off a discussion of the role of religion in games set in the 17th century, particularly his upcoming megagame. His wish was to get some roleplaying of the religious motivations that were what made the 30 years war happen and to get the players to warp their rational decision making process (if you can describe wargamers as rational) to fit the religious mindset prevalent at the time. We had a fascinating discussion, aided by Arthur having a stack of relevant textbooks to hand in his classroom. We talked around the issues of not giving perverse incentives and not making it too easy for players to work out how they got advantages from religious behaviour.



We concluded that each of the major sects needed to have its own set of rules, that there ought to be a league table so that there was a visual incentive to act correctly (this being a lesson from the Sengoku megagames). Once a defined level of behaviour had been reached that there ought to be a direct umpire driven reward for the correct behaviour. The reward needs to be strong enough to show that it was 'God's work' but also not so strong that it caused problems. Also, we felt that because 'god works in mysterious ways' that the players should not get to determine what might happen if they had their god's favour.

Habsburg Ascendant - Offside report by Jim

As appropriate for a Sunday morning, the conversation turned to religion. Brian's session wasn't a game - which was good really. Not because I wouldn't want to play the game, but because what replaced it was really brilliant. As Brian has said, he is hoping to greatly emphasis religion in the forthcoming megagame, and was originally disappointed by the overall inability, apparently, of megagamers to take religion seriously, in the context of the 30 Years War in the previous run of the game.

So, the starting point for this session was, given that this is a high level game about the first seven years of the 30 years war, there should be an emphasis on religion and belief. The protagonists at the time saw their god as real and his interventions as actual events. Brian wanted to introduce some sort of 'God Points' system, that explicitly focussed players on piety and devotion - whatever the flavour of their belief.

It quickly became clear that whatever system used should not be explicitly expressed in terms of points so far as the players were concerned. We had a really lively discussion about religion and its impact on society of the time. I think, Brian may have come away with a sort of visible league table idea, where each team will see where it stands relative to its co-religionists in terms of piety. Underneath that (and opaque to the players) is a points system that builds up a critical mass of god points, which when sufficient have been amassed, is unleashed in something spectacular and not necessarily predictable at some point in the game. Of course, those with very low scores might provoke something altogether unpleasant as an expression of the deity's displeasure. And, it went without saying that each of the main variants (Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran) have their own independent league tables - since they each had very different measures of what constituted piety.

All-in-all a great session, although not a game, greatly entertaining. I'm looking forward to Habsburg Ascendant - if you haven't booked I strongly recommend you do at www.megagame-makers.org.uk

Interesting Times – Onside Report by Dave Boundy

Brian and I have recently played a board game called Warlord – China in Disarray 1916-1950. I bought it because I am fascinated by the period. The board game along with the further reading it prompted has convinced us that there is a really interesting political Megagame of the Warlord era 1922-1928 or thereabouts.

As part of devising the Megagame, we have taken the simple mechanisms in the board game and have adapted them to give an appropriate underlying model for the Megagame. This session was an attempt to try out the new rules. I say “attempt” because I am not at all sure it worked – but that’s OK, I expect to screw up the pieces of paper a number of times before the game is ready (by September 2008).

The basic Warlords game is played on a map of the provinces of China. Each province has a resource value and a “forage” value (which allows armies to stay in the province unfunded). Resources can be spent on creating armies, adding troops to armies, moving armies and, of course, on bribes and other political shenanigans. Turns have a seasonal structure, with operations in spring, summer, autumn and winter being set aside for admin and diplomacy. There are between 3 and 7 factions – each faction is allowed to come to agreements with as many other factions as it wishes, but only ally formally with one other faction – alliance is near to merging the factions. Movement is fairly restricted – at most 2 provinces in a season, depending on terrain and what is facing you. Factions move sequentially, depending on political status (which is changed by winning /losing /gaining provinces etc.).

Our changes were simultaneous action, rivers, railways and districts. Other changes came from those basic differences.

Simultaneous action is necessary in a Megagame because of the administration of sequential action. It does introduce difficulties, I don’t think we had dealt with every eventuality but I don’t think it is a great issue.

We introduced the three major rivers – the Pearl river, the Yangtze (upp and lower) and the Yellow river. Each river had an economic value which was available only if the districts bordering the river all agreed on how it would be split (and, guess what – there are not enough points for everyone). Each river also gave a defensive bonus. I think the changes for rivers seemed to work OK and will give a real point of contention in the political arena.

We introduced railways – holding both ends of a railway reduced the movement points required to move from one district to another to ½ instead of 1 or 2. Again, I think this worked although some felt that the movement was not enough (but the railways were not brilliant and improved movement but did not give anything like instantaneous movement).

We split the provinces into districts. The basic reason for this was to allow resource values for each player to be evened out – the board game has some provinces with 10 or 12 points and some with 1 – this seemed impossible for players in a Megagame. The district structure certainly has a base in history and allowed us to have about 50 districts and thus plan for a Megagame with about 50-60 players. Some provinces had only one district and some had a number of districts. Where a province was split, there was a province bonus available to the provincial governor (the player controlling all districts in this try-out, but a player appointed by Peking and agreed by local district players in the Megagame). This change did not seem to work well. It resulted in much more complexity in terms of the number of armies and the administration. I think, however, that this was the result of misjudging the situation and we should have had more than the four players we had for the game.

I also think that we were very optimistic to expect to achieve much of a game in under two hours. By the time we explained the background and got used to the rules, there was little time for real play.

With a CLWG audience, there was also the issue that people were not playing just the game, but looking on to the Megagame. With ideas on player roles and mechanisms only at the “bat ideas around” stage, this caused some worries.

I think the next stage will be to pin down the Megagame ideas more, then to try out a game with 10-12 players. Watch this space. Many thanks to Daniel, Trevor, Andrew and Pickles for indulging us at this early stage of development.

Interesting Times – Onside Report by Brian

Dave has summed up the situation very well and I can add little. There are always concerns about players in megagames having valid roles and resources that permit them to make decisions; a structure in which they are a junior member of a team, with very little say in the proceedings isn't satisfactory. And clearly one of the dangers with Interesting Times is that players may quickly lose the relatively small piece of territory they start with. There are, however, roles within the eight factions for being the faction representative at the central government (and indeed president of the republic and chairman of the national assembly) as well as governor roles. Hopefully there will thus be sufficient activity for players but, as Dave points out in his last paragraph, we do need to try this out.

Fantasy Seige Game - Onside Report by Jim

I am running a seige megagame later this year, set in my fantasy city of Yendor. Part of the reason to run the megagame was that I had an idea for a seige game that would be fast and easy to play - something that, in my view, is essential for the megagame format. Having worked up a first outline of the game system, I needed to give it a tryout with real players to help me design the next stage. As ever, at CLWG, I got a lively and constructively critical group of diverse players for my session.

Each complete game turn is divided into two types of activity - 'assault' and 'preparation'. We tried out the assault phase first, and then went on to the preparation phase.

The assault is played on a series of 'wall section' plans, each representing part of the city walls. The areas in front of the wall are marked out in zones - based on weapon ranges - so the assaulting forces move forward until they reach the range of, say, archery, and stop, test their morale, and recoil or move on. Eventually, if they have been able to damage or intimidate the defenders sufficiently they will force their way onto the battlements, or even force a gate or make a breach. Working through this really clarified my thinking and tightened up the rules enormously.

We had quite a bit of discussion about the critical transition from storming the walls to breaking into the city and street fighting. In the final version with will have to be handled very carefully.

In the Preparation Phases the commanders on both sides have to allocate their units to a range of chores - from collecting wood to building things, to guarding the walls. This was a good test of my assumptions. We went through the decision-making process for this as well - and I came away with a number of helpful suggestions for things that could be added to the list of things to build.

Without going into detail of the discussion - the game showed that the basic premise of the rules seemed to work ok. What this session gave me was some really good practical insight into what will be needed for the megagame - and I came away with a host of improvements (and simplifications) which will make the game much better. It also showed that the seige system might very well work for historical seiges, since we didn't really go into the fantastical aspects at all - relying on ordinary men at arms and militias etc to do the fighting for the test.

If you are interested in seeing how the final version turns out - sign up for the megagame! www.megagame-makers.org.uk

London Blitz! – Onside report by Jim

At the last conference back in October, I did a design session on gaming fire-fighting during the London Blitz. I had no models and only a very vague idea of what I wanted to do. That session got me moving and in the intervening six months I have been working on the project and have developed a figure game about

wartime fire-fighting using 20 mm figures and model fire engines. I even managed to get Brian to cast some trailer pumps for me.

The game is played (as you will have seen from some of the photos on the club website) using foamboard buildings and models.

In the game at the weekend, we ran through a mission, in which Auxiliary Firemen Patel and Harman were led by Sub-Officer Shaw on a shout to the Wilson Insurance Building on Victory Street, in the autumn of 1940.

On arrival they discovered that, in addition, Godfrey's Bakers was alight, as was the Oil and Lumber Yard across the street from Wilson's. S/O Shaw quickly assessed the situation. He directed the teams: Auxiliary Leading Fireman Harman and his men (medium trailer pump) to the wood yard; Auxiliary Leading Fireman Patel and his team (medium trailer pump) to start on the Wilson building; while he took his heavy pump unit and crew to sort out the Bakery.

Over the next couple of hours, S/O Shaw managed to put out the bakery fire, and L/F Harman brought the wood-yard under some control. However poor L/F Patel and his men were struggling with the much bigger fire in the Wilson building, which owing to the great quantities of papers and documents inside was growing rapidly. In fact, there was concern that this might spread across the intervening alley to the neighbouring prestigious Mainwaring Building. L/F Patel and L/F Harman redeployed their teams to put down a water curtain on the threatened Mainwaring building, while S/O Shaw brought his hoses to bear on the lower floors of the Wilson Building, now well ablaze.

There was a moment of relief, and even a ragged cheer as the all clear sounded.

But relief was short lived, as two, previously undetected, delayed action incendiaries ignited - one on the roof of the very tall (4 levels) Mainwaring Building, and one in the rubble right next to the main hoses from S/O Shaw's heavy unit. Shaw's crews doubled back to extinguish their own hoses, while everyone looked up, in horror, at the roof of the big office building.

S/O Shaw quickly raced to the telephone and called Control - "Make Pumps Up to Eight". As it happened, Station Officer Cameron (LFB) was in the Control room and was able to have a conversation with Shaw about the situation down on Victory Street. He led reinforcements, comprising a shiny red LFB Heavy Wheeled Escape unit, and the Station's Turntable Ladder Unit (just returned from another fire) under Sub-Officer Kemp (LFB). The professional firemen, or 'Red Riders' swiftly arrived and took charge from the Auxiliaries, and while the Wilson building was contained, challenged the fire that was spreading across the roof of the Mainwaring Building.

Unfortunately we ran out of time, so we'll never know whether the Wilson building would have been saved, but we think it probably would have been.

The game is, I think, quite entertaining - though die rolling for the fire model is a little laborious, and this makes the overall play slow. At present it means we don't finish a fire, and I would like to have a game that covers ignition to extinction in, say 3 hours or so. Brian and I discussed this in the car going home, and we might have come up with a slightly different, simpler system, so I'll be giving it another try soon, I hope. Any excuse to play with fire engines!

This Happy Breed - Onside report by Jim

After playing in Trevor and Andrew's megagame a few weeks before, I got to thinking about a sub-game, or set of mechanisms that would simulate dynastic breeding, but based on 'real' genetic principles. To do this I created a set of mechanisms that measured the characteristics of various noble bloodlines in the form of dominant-recessive gene pairs. The various player-families would then arrange suitable intermingling and breeding between their lines to try and eliminate undesirable characteristics and emphasise desirable ones.

After a very short time into the session, it became clear that the system I had in mind was unworkable - the complexities of working out, in secret, the genetic mix for each pairing was too laborious to do manually. The decision making was a bit limited too. I quickly abandoned the experiment - though we had an interesting discussion on how a less scientifically rigorous game system might make the whole thing more fun. This was a good session, despite being abandoned. It demonstrates the value of playing ideas and trying wacky thoughts - even if they turn out unworkable in the end - and the discussion on genetics and breeding was very interesting (if only it had been taught like this when I had to do it at school!).

I don't plan to do any more work on this idea - but if anyone would like a copy of the original draft rules let me know.

Jim's Breeding Idea – Offside Report by James Kemp

This was a design session rather than a game, but we gave it a good go none the less. Jim had come away from the Light of the Trees megagame with an idea that it ought to be possible to do a sub-component of a game about breeding heroes using some real genetics theory. The main aim was that, as in real life, the players managing the breeding programme wouldn't actually know the actual genetic make up of their characters. Over time those players that were keeping an eye on things and using the evidence that they were accumulating would be able to make some educated guesses about the best pairings that would drive their breeding programme in the direction that they wanted.

We each started off with a single individual, although without worrying about whether that individual was male or female (as this was thought to over-complicate things). The idea was to work with a bloodline rather than a series of individuals, although each generation would be split into separate individuals representing the main lines. This was felt to be necessary to allow the breeders an opportunity to selectively breed those with the correct traits with individuals from the other bloodlines.

The fact that we rapidly bogged down was fairly predictable as we tried to track several individuals. There was a fair amount of mechanical detail involved in generating the offspring as well as the players not having enough information to make good decisions about which individuals to breed with which others. There would have been a better handle on it if we'd played out a bit more of the game before moving into a general discussion of the issues, approach and suggestions of how it could all be achieved. As a design session it was very thought provoking, and I carried on thinking about it for almost a whole week, on and off. Jim's conclusion from the session was that it probably wasn't practically possible to achieve what he set out to do. At the time I would have agreed with him, but a few days of thought have changed my mind on that.

I come to this with more than a smattering of background, I studied "Genes, Organisms & Evolution" as an undergraduate, the course forming a major part of my degree. That said I've forgotten most of the detail in the intervening 15 years since I graduated. However the text books are still on a bookshelf nearby.

I think that the general premise that Jim was trying to attain is a sound one and that with some streamlining and appropriate background that it can be achieved. The key is to stick with Jim's bloodline idea and not get drawn into dealing with individuals, except where heroes or other primary characters are required, and these Heroes should have nothing to do with the breeding stock, although their characters will be determined by it.

The key assumption I am working on is that that this is a sub-component of a game that plays over generations rather than a game in itself. As part of the background the designer of the main game needs to make some decisions about how many characteristics need to be tracked, whether these have any inter-relationship or are independent and also how often he wants particular characteristic levels/attributes to feature. For example let us assume that a game designer wants to track both personal bravery and intelligence in the hero bloodlines. He might decide that these will not be related to each other. For bravery he might decide that there are four possible states, Heroic (no morale required), Brave (positive modifier to morale), Normal (no modifiers) and Cowardly (negative modifiers). Of these outcomes he

might want Heroic to be quite rare, Brave to be common but not a majority, Normal to be the majority position and Cowardly to be less common than Brave, but more likely than Heroic.

Taking the assumption that bravery is a hereditary characteristic, how does this translate into genetics? Well you could specify three variants of a bravery gene (alleles are they are known), H, O & C. HH would be the Heroic types, HO the brave, OO and OC the normal and CC & CH the cowards. In these cases the H allele is recessive (so only those with two copies are heroic). The C allele is also recessive, but dominates the H allele. The O allele is dominant over C but not over H.

This takes you into a method of at least allocating a characteristic based on genetics, but it doesn't address either simplicity of recording it nor of proportions. Not all genes are evenly distributed in the population. Those that confer survival advantages propagate more widely and those that lead to disadvantages rapidly leave the gene pool. In this case you would expect O & C to be widely distributed, possibly equally. H is likely to be less frequent as though it confers an advantage when hunting it becomes much less advantageous once farming is available, and in fact becomes a positive disadvantage over time. If 10% of the population carried the H gene then 1% (i.e. the proportion with two copies of it) would be heroic. If the O allele was 50% of the population and the C allele the remaining 40% then you would have a distribution as follows:

	H (10%)	O (50%)	C (40%)
H (10%)	1 (Heroic)	5 (Brave)	4 (Cowardly)
O (50%)	5 (Brave)	25 (Normal)	20 (Normal)
C (40%)	4 (Cowardly)	20 (Normal)	16 (Cowardly)
Heroic	Brave	Normal	Cowardly
1	10	65	24

Let us also assume that there was a decision to track intelligence as a numeric score also with three alleles generating a score when summed. The alleles being 0, 1, 2. These would be distributed as 10%, 80%, 10% in the general population.

Tracking Bloodlines

The method I thought you would use to track each bloodline is a table with each of the attributes to be tracked down the side and the alleles to be tracked along the top. Each allele would have a score between 0 and 10 to show its relative proportion in the population of the bloodline. An example of this is shown below.

Bravery	H (r)	O	C (r)
Bravery alleles	1	5	4
Intelligence	L (0)	M (1)	H (2)
Intelligence alleles	1	8	1

In each generation the player running the breeding would be given some feedback of their bloodline's characteristics. In this case they would be told that they were of average intelligence and not especially brave. The breeder player would then make a decision about trying to improve the bloodline either from the general population, another player's bloodline (with the specific approval of that player) or from within his own bloodline.

The general population bloodline should be determined before the start of the game and remain constant for the duration of the game. Player controlled bloodlines are very likely to change over the course of generations as the genealogists recommend good matches for strengthening the bloodline based on observed characteristics of other bloodlines.

Breeding from the General Population

There is a general assumption that there are other bloodlines that the genealogists are aware of but which are not part of the played groups. These probably represent the minor nobility or some other class that the main bloodline knows but are lower than those represented by player teams. When breeding from these it is assumed that the characteristic, which is sought to be improved, is always manifested in the individuals to be added to the bloodline for breeding purposes.

Using the general bloodline track (see example above) the umpire checks whether the person has one or two copies of the appropriate gene. In the case of characteristics that are recessive, there are always two copies of the gene. (e.g. If you were trying to breed heroes into your bloodline then you would start off with two copies of the H allele to breed in).

For each of the genes recorded (i.e. Bravery and Intelligence in these examples) you would determine which alleles were to be incorporated into the new bloodline. Roll 1d10 for the copy to be imported (except where we have previously determined that recessive characteristics give an exact gene). We're already getting an H from the hero, we need to roll 1d10 to see which intelligence allele will be passed on. This is most likely to be an M result.

These alleles will then displace one of those in the general bloodline. If a 2 is rolled for the Bravery gene then the new H allele displaces an O allele. Another 2 for Intelligence has the new M allele displace another M allele, so no real change. The new bloodline track looks like the example below.

Bravery	H (r)	O	C (r)
Bravery alleles	2	4	4
Intelligence	L (0)	M (1)	H (2)
Intelligence alleles	1	8	1

The feedback to the player would be that the family was of average intelligence and above average bravery, although with a larger number of cowards than one would expect. (There are now 4% heroic, 16% brave, 32% Cowardly). This might prompt an attempt to breed out the cowards, harder than might appear as the C allele is largely recessive.

This system needs to sit within a proper game. Ideally one of dynastic succession and involving at least a bit of individual character impact on the outcomes. Sadly that isn't something on my current project list.

Just Settled - Onside report by Jim

Having abandoned the 'This Happy Breed' game after about 40 minutes, we had a gap in the program. As luck would have it I had brought along another draft game 'wot I wrote' - called 'Just Settled'. This is a game of developing planetary colonies set in my SF universe.

The idea of this game is to follow the growth and development of a colony from inception to independence - and to use this to populate worlds in the larger campaign where I needed to have some back story, or as a stand alone game in its own right.

I had tried this concept once before a few months ago with a small group of Universe players, and this version was the slightly more worked through second version.

The basic game system (which bore some similarities to an earlier game system I'd devised, used for John's megagame 'Ursa Major') involved seeking out resources and developing the colony's infrastructure to the point where it was able to trade with other planets.

Within this, there are decisions to take about developing the colonial workforce, importing technical specialists, defence, road building, mining etc.

We ran through a couple of years of the initial stages of a colony build, and then expanded the session into a development discussion. The key issue was how to model the later development of the colony from the

command economy model of the first few years after landing - to a more democratic and market-led colony that it would probably grow into once the initial period of potential risk has passed. We have a truly fascinating discussion about early political development in a colonial setting - about how different political models would be represented in the rules, how cities might grow up, about what sorts of buildings and facilities the more mature colony might need. It was a wide ranging and excellent discussion, and I'm going to settle down to writing this into the new rules. If anyone is interested in seeing how these end up, I will add them to the universe site in the near future, www.theuniverse.org.uk.

Crete Scorcher – The story by Daniel Shaw

This is my story of creating a (small) maga-game. It started with an MSN Messenger chat with Jurien last November, when I asked if, as in the past, there would be a Sunday game following Murphy Mania. I had had a good meal and wine with a client in Norway, it was late at night, and somehow I volunteered myself to run a Crete game.

I had already done quite a lot of reading about the German invasion of Crete, so I had some ideas. My first move was to draft a character list of about 30 historic names. Players would have Brigadier rank or higher. However, my reading of the action on Crete recounted action at quite low levels, battalion and company. I parked that dilemma for later.

There were several aspects that I wanted in the game: Command communication difficulties; Air support; Simple logistics; Tiredness; Medical Units. I quickly settled on four turns per day, which in my mind I labeled morning, lunch, evening and night. I could imagine keeping records for each battalion, as each player would have in the range of three to six, which would be manageable.

Command communication is always difficult between any number of players, so just making players pass messages up the line would be enough for the high command problems. Down the line, there are many accounts on Crete of battalions not doing what the Brigadiers had intended, so I would need some game mechanics to handle that. Reading some more, I decided a morale test and reaction movement should suffice.

Air support proved to be the last topic to resolve. It was simplified by the absence of Allied air units, so I only had to deal with German aircraft. The literature is very clear about how many aircraft were available, how many got shot down, but not too clear about how many were serviceable. Also I had to decide on manageable number of air units (in practice how many counters and what impact they should have).

Logistics would be a critical factor for the Germans. They would have to decide whether to use aircraft to fly in troops or supply, but I did not want piles of supply counters. Eventually, I came up with the simple idea that any transport aircraft not carrying something else would be deemed to carry supplies, as there must be stacks of it available in Greece! The players would have to log consumption, again by battalion. I decided on food (which historically also meant drink too) and ammo. Arbitrarily I set 24 hours as the time that rations would be good after which troops would be tagged Hungry and fight at a disadvantage. Similarly three turns firing would put a unit Low on Ammo. The Allies interestingly stacked all their supplies in the naval base at Suda and shipped it out from there, so a line of supply principle would work for them. In Crete there is basically only one road, which runs the length of the island along the north coast. Cut that road and supplies stop getting through.

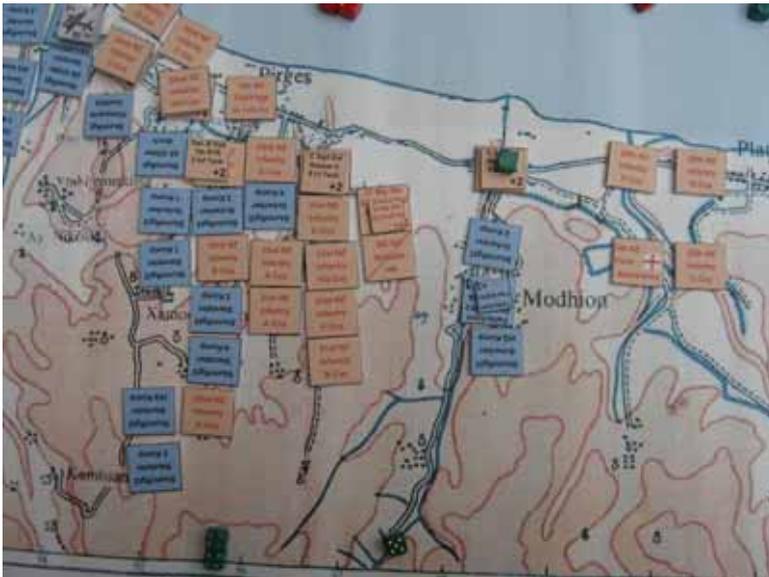
Tiredness was interesting. There are accounts of units sneaking past the enemy while they sleep (and not necessarily at night!). I decided that after 24 hours in action a unit would need a rest. Of course they could struggle on with a Tired disadvantage.

The idea of Medical Units also comes from the literature. There are accounts of taking doctors hostage; also happier accounts of medical units looking after the enemy. The Germans even went to the trouble of setting up landing strips on the beaches to evacuate the wounded in Storch aircraft (which also ferried the officer staff to the island). What would be the effect of not doing this? Maybe the troops morale would be

affected? If your mate had taken a bullet and was not getting any treatment, just maybe you would be a little more reluctant to risk your neck! So I had an extra morale factor.

With all these factors in mind, I started mapping. On the internet, I found some good maps in the official histories, with enough terrain details to be interesting. I spent many frustrating evenings cleaning the troop positions off those maps, using (Paintshop) bitmap editing. By Christmas, I had maps at about 4 inches to the kilometer printed and laid out in my game room.

The Allied order of battle is very clearly documented, so I started cutting some cardboard counters in half inch squares. The German OB at first reading was simple, but when I started placing counters on the map I got very confused. Even now I am in doubt as to which troops were in the convoys, and which did not fly on the first day (either intentionally or because of a lack of planes in the afternoon sorties). Only in April, did I find out which artillery units were parachuted in on day one.



I started pushing counters around the map and quickly decided I had too much space and not enough counters. The answer was to cut new larger company counters at about 3cm square. Then without stacking the historic distribution of the troops on the maps fitted just right. I decided stacking would be allowed, but only one unit in a stack would be allowed to fight. Every gamer will spread his troops out with such a rule. Historically however whole battalions arrived at Maleme airport, so the Germans might have to risk some large stacks (which caught the photographers' attention on the day).

I developed game mechanics from scratch. Vaguely the combat principle is like the Axis and Allies games, with quite a lot of dice (one for each company and bonus dice for concentrated attacks) and results recorded at the battalion level. This was deliberately mechanics rather than realism, because I want the Brigadiers to focus on where to send the units.

By the Chestnut Lodge spring games weekend I had a game to test. I took two maps with me, but on the day decided to test just one map. We set out the counters and I explained the rules, which I had published in a first draft booklet. In Chestnut Lodge tradition we spent a lot of time discussing the intent of a few words. For example, I had used the word Blitz, which to me was just a game mechanic descriptor but to the play testers meant Blitzkrieg and all the associated doctrine, so how could the Greeks Blitz?!? Surprisingly, we did manage to play enough turns to see that troops would soon be tired, hungry and short of ammo, but we did not get to the point of anyone taking the initiative to fix such problems. It was not evident how a commander would take troops out of the line for a rest, when everyone seemed to be short of troops.

The biggest learning from that play test was the desire of players to circumvent the rules. Can I move with an attack order? I had not thought of that. How far can we move? In six hour turns an awful long way, but I did not see that you would want to leave a nearby enemy alone to march off somewhere else! As Mukel kindly put it, my task would be to rewrite the rules so that the players would do everything – the umpires would have nothing to do...!

True to character, Dave Boundy pointed out the absolute necessity of having a naval game! Without it the Allied ground commanders would not need to garrison the coastline against a sea borne invasion.

On the plane home I wrote an action list of things to fix. Reading the history started again in earnest, with even greater focus. My consumption of Post-It notes increased dramatically.

Nick Luft agreed to spend a weekend play testing, so I had a fresh target. Just before he arrived, I printed out the naval game. We agreed to try the naval game and a different battle map. Nick kindly refrained from getting too much into the text of my rules – maybe they had improved enough or maybe he was just polite – but he did help me enormously by working through the physical actions of the players. He kept asking me where I thought everyone would be in the room as we progressed with our play testing. Who is delivering the messages? Who is moving the aeroplanes? Who can talk to whom? It became clear to me that I needed to formalise any transaction between tables and make some trays to move counters.

The naval game proved to be a great game in its own right: fun; simple; maybe even realistic. At any rate it made a naval landing possible and developed a dilemma for the Germans balancing how many aircraft to commit to the land battle and to the naval action. We fine tuned the rules, reprinted them and played it again, with the agreement that the second naval play test would count for the Sunday land battle. Low and behold a German convoy got through!

The land battle play test demonstrated that the game mechanics worked. Nick was still worried that the umpires would have to arbitrate over simultaneous movement, but otherwise he expressed confidence that the battle mechanics worked. The big learning from play testing with Nick was the need for explicit player briefings and umpire briefings. What a lot of work that is!

Nick also suggested making counters for the Allied air units. Someone will see them in a plastic bag and therefore the Allied players would, as in history, keep the airfields open for their arrival – that worked!

As the big day approached, my wife expressed some frustration with the time spent printing player briefings and packing things in plastic bags. I had photographed the set up sequence and put the counters in bags that corresponded to each step in the set up along with the photos (on the day that worked very well). When I came to close the last bag, of course, I had five counters left over, which takes me back to my doubts about the actual arrival of German troops: did the five left-over companies miss their flight on day one?

All the maps rolled up into a big tube (I used a piece of plastic drainpipe so I could ship them by air). My clients messed me about in the week before Murphy's – on the Monday I had air-tickets to Aberdeen, Heathrow (three times), Paris and Amsterdam! In fact I went to three of those places and was very relieved when my outsize luggage – the map tube – arrived at each destination.

Dick Bax had been managing the player inscriptions. I had to plan for fewer players than I would have liked, but would have (just) enough to play all the battle maps. Some players would be very busy!

On the day, we had one no show and a few folk who did not like their appointed roles. With twenty-five players and umpires it was a bit chaotic. We did a few player swaps, set out the maps and counters, and at 10h10, I was ready to roll.





A short yet rousing pre-battle speech got everyone's attention. Then, I explained the battle mechanics. I was sure most players (and even some of the umpires) would not have read the rules. By 10h30 we were under way.

One problem had been anticipated: two of the maps had nothing happening for the first two turns – in history the Germans did not land there until the afternoon. Orders still had to be written for these areas and the players did not seem to mind. I had not realised that in swapping some players, I had assigned only one German player to two eastern maps (whoops). It was too late. Although I had another map with two German players, they had already mentally committed to their characters and (quite rightly) refused to

move. Fair enough. The German operations on the eastern end of the island would suffer poor communications because the player was overloaded. As umpire, I arranged to help him as best I could.

The game evolved almost exactly like history. At Rethymon, the Germans managed to clear the airport and get into the harbor, but were beaten off by counter attacks. At Heraklion, the Germans just had a tough time and forgot to ask for more supplies. At Maleme, the elite paratroops took the airfield. I am not sure about the counter attack, but I do know that the Germans advanced and started pouring in reinforcements. At sea, the Italian convoy was sunk outright, but the Royal Navy suffered ten ship losses and when play stopped they had the whole fleet North of the island ready to be bombed all over again.



What do I think now? The game worked. Yes, and it could be improved. The game mechanics have some features that should be changed for a more realistic feel. If ever I do it again, companies out of formation (disrupted), rather than simply having their combat value halved, would not be able to support each other. Some of the rule wording (as ever) needs changing, but because I explained the rules first, the players did work the rules as I had intended. Between thirty and forty players would allow faster play and some more time for role-playing.

I used the historic distribution of allied forces and the actual landing locations for this battle. Partly that was for convenience and partly because I was not confident the game mechanics could handle anything else. I now believe that pre-battle planning on both sides would work to allow the commanders, within the historic constraints of their respective higher commands, to decide their own troop distributions and that would make for an even more interesting game.

Crete Scorcher – Offside Comments

Jim – True to form I never managed to read the entire handbook. But as Daniel sensibly gave a presentation on how the rules worked before the game started, there was no real need to read the handbook at all!

Andy (*far offside*) – I particularly liked the picture of Dave Boundy indulging in the typical megagamer's pastime of reading the Game Handbook on arrival at the venue. Delighted it went well although my fingers were a bit frightened by the stacks of counters...



Dave – I intended to read the rules on Friday evening, but I seemed to find some difficulty in concentrating.

Jur – Lost a real life hockey match for the championship, drowned in my Italian game role and surrendered in my German game role, all in half an hour.

Jerry – Someone will have to eat his words, as you've proved beyond doubt that there is a game in Crete. I'm particularly delighted that I didn't have to throw a die all day. I know I didn't see much of the ground combat but from the rules and from the discussion with Jim and Dave on the way home I suspect that there's an interesting discussion to be had on "game or simulation?"

Nick – First game where I have even written orders to take sleep and get some rest!

CLWG Venue – Anerley Methodist Church Hall Oakfield Road, Anerley, London, SE20 8QA

The hall is on the right at the bottom of the hill from Anerley station (on the side away from Crystal Palace). You get to the church by a short service road which starts opposite the pub and goes behind the bus station where a number of different buses terminate. At the top of the service road is a small car park - there will be a few spaces when we arrive, but many will be taken by church members who will still be finishing their service and after-service socialising. Car parking on the road is easy, however, so I suggest that you only bring a car up to the church if you have kit. At the top of the service road, the church is on the left and there is an entrance to the side of the hall straight ahead - this has a bell so it will either be propped open or you can ring the bell.

