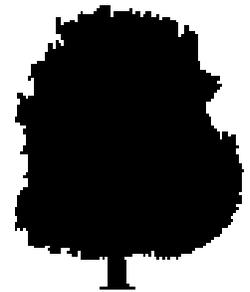




Military Muddling



Volume 16 Issue 12

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

3Q2007 Edition

Editorial

Having spent many hours recently working on the planning phase of Rheinbung, Dave calling the planning phase over has given me the breathing space to pull together this edition. I am excited by the prospect of the Rheinbung game and the upcoming conference. The club is alive and well...

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

Sunday 4 November 2007 **English Civil War** following design session at April Games Weekend (Brian)

Friday to Sunday 5-7 October 2007 Annual Design Conference & Business Meeting

Main Venue PET, 92-94 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TH

See below for more details.

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

Crossing the Wire - Onside Report by Jim Wallman

This is a game system I originally designed to support a brigade HQ simulator that was run in July 2006 at the National Army museum. I wanted to try it as a more game-like effort. At this session we had two teams representing the front line brigades of 29th Division as it assaulted Beaumont Hamel on the first day of the Somme battle. I allowed the attacking Brigades to have some choice about deployment and attack method, to make it a bit less of a re-enactment. The German players also had choices about their initial deployment, but were spread so thinly that they had few real choices.

Dave Boundy and I umpired and did all the combat adjudication.

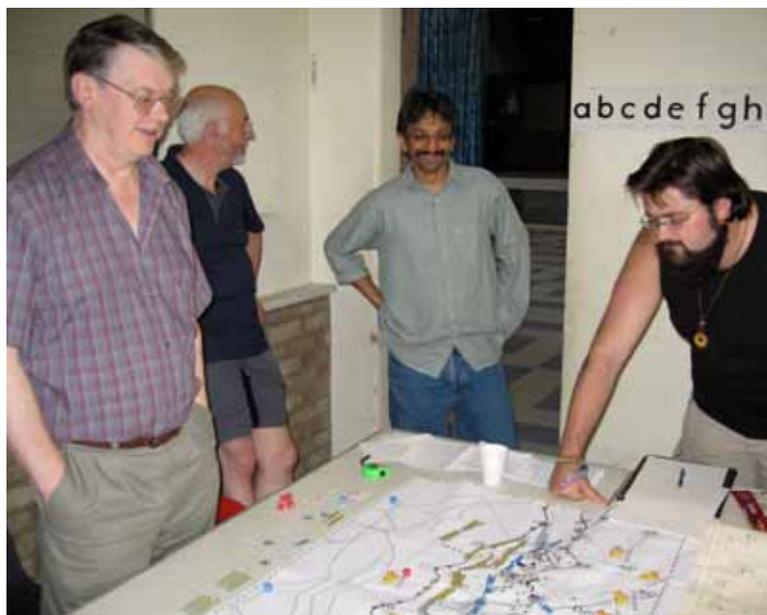


Without going into too much detail, the attacking Division's plans went fairly well - having successfully broken into the front line trenches in front of the village, and breaking through all three trench lines on the right flank - potentially outflanking the main German resistance around the village of Beaumont Hamel.

As a game, the whole thing was very slow burn for the players - because I had realistic communication delays and command and control limits. This meant the player teams only took a couple of decisions in the couple of hours of the game, and mainly just oversaw the execution of their plan.

So, whilst it was probably passable as a simulation of this level of fighting, as a game-playing experience I believe it was fairly lack-lustre (even though through game the players plenty of opportunity to sit and chat).

I think the next level of development might be to try it with only British players - allowing them to work out the combat results against a programmed enemy - so even though they can't change the plans much



they can at least participate in the process - this might be more entertaining. Or concentrating on the defence with a pre-programmed attack - the defenders have more decisions and more chance to influence events - as their HQ is inevitably nearer the action.

In the post-game discussion there was interest in a game set above this level, but below the level of the megagame system 'Muck and Bullets'. The timescale and combat resolution would allow more feedback and decision-making in the context of a single playing session, perhaps having battalion units, and divisional teams (Muck and Bullets as a megagame has Corps teams and brigade resolution).

I'd be interested to see such a development.

Crossing the Wire - Offside Report by Daniel Shaw

Jim and Dave umpired this game, with Trevor and Andy commanding the Germans, and for the British Daniel and James commanding the 87th Brigade, Mukel and Brian commanding the 86th Brigade. Each pair of players seated at a separate table (with the Germans enjoying the sunshine outside). At a roll of a die, I took leadership of the 87th and James took up the role of staff officer, writing out extensive orders throughout the game. The following extract will give you some idea of the level of detail that James chose to write.

From 87th Brigade HQ

To COs in 87th Brigade

28 June 1916

MISSION: Capture German trenches in BRIGADE BOUNDARY.

EXECUTION: FIVE PHASES

PHASE 1

KINGS OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS on LEFT FLANK will capture German front line between point 89 and point 54. It will move with A Company on left and B on right, with C and D in second wave, C behind A and D behind B. MG with A and trench mortars with D.

ASSEMBLY LINE BY H-15. Advance at H. Our barrage will lift H+10. Second line lift at H+70. Exploit to Y Ravine and dig in along North side of ravine.

ROYAL INNISKILLING FUSILIERS will capture German trench on Bde RIGHT flank between point 54 and point 03. Lead with A Company on left and B on right, with C and D in second wave, C behind A and D behind B. MG with A and trench mortars with D.

Move to Assembly line by H-15. Advance at H. Our barrage will lift H+10. Second lift at H+40 to Third German Trench.

Consolidate 50 yards NE of German First line and dig in.

At H+35 Borders will pass through your position.

PHASE 2

THE BORDER REGT will capture German Second Line between Y ravine and Brigade Right boundary. A Company on left and B on right, with C and D in second wave, C behind A and D behind B. MG with A and trench mortars with D.

By H-15, occupy our front line trench on right battalion front of Brigade.

At H, move forward to assembly line.

At H+5 maintain 200 yard distance behind Inniskillings. Stop 50 yards short of German Front Line.

At H+20 Cross German first trench (now in hands of Inniskillings).

At H+40 Capture German Second Line and Consolidate it, 50 yards to N and E.

PHASE 3

SWB will capture German third trench between Y ravine and the right Brigade boundary. A Company on left and B on right, with C and D in second wave, C behind A and D behind B. MG with A and trench mortars with D.

By H-15 Occupy left battalion front trench...

If I go on typing the British orders, this would have to be a bumper volume of MilMud as James was very prolific. Contrast his style to mine in communicating with the 86th:

From 87th Brigade HQ

To 86th Brigade HQ

QUERY POINT 89

Having difficulty getting chaps into point 89. Have your boys taken first trench? If so, can you help with point 89? PS. There's a bottle of claret for your help. Brigadier Shaw.

And not even a thank you in the response from an obviously hard pressed 86th Brigade Staff:

From 86th Brigade HQ

To 87th Brigade HQ

QUERY POINT 89

YES. Will do old chap.

Brigadier Cameron

Dave and Jim did all the hard work in this battle adjudicating the battle progress, rolling all the dice, calculating the losses, etc. Meanwhile, us commanders were left sitting at our command table waiting for news to filter back. The pace was realistic. Whenever we did get news, we tried to adjust our plans and send out order updates. The time it took to write these was extensive and the battle was all the time moving ahead. The tension mounted and we were truly unsure whether our troops were winning or merely getting slaughtered.



When Jim called the game over, I was surprised how successful we had been. In the debriefing, we regretted that our gentlemen's agreement with Brigadier Patel had proved too difficult to fulfil and our renegeing had rather left the 86th in the lurch. We had stuck to the official Brigade boundaries set by Corps, rather than venturing across to help the 86th to what seemed to us to be a more logical line given the terrain. Sometimes those higher up do seem to know a thing or two after all.

We had feared a German counter attack, but evidently after their initial losses in the front line, they did not have enough troops to man their positions, let alone assemble a counter strike.

As a game, it was rather slow at times, but it clearly demonstrated how little control of the battle the Brigadiers had once the orders to go over the top had been drafted.

WW2 Platoon level Game - Report by Jim Wallman

James had been doing some initial work on the mechanisms of a game where players represent the platoon commander and Platoon sergeant - taking two players to run a platoon during a tactical action, such as attacking a village or something similar.

We spent some time refining James' game objectives - and this discussion tended to suggest something that was a bit more like a role-playing game. Some suggestion were that the actual assault part be dealt with very simply, using a sort of tactical paper stones scissors - and the players' decision making include things like man-management problems - who to send to do things - how to control the men in action etc.

Also discussed was the importance of reading the ground - finding a good approach to the assault, avoiding enemy strong points and MGs etc. Certainly there were several examples called to mind of better troops using the ground to their advantage.

This is likely to be an interesting project - very similar in some aspects to Andy Grainger's 'Bocage Battle' game of the late 1980s, but with a slightly different 'take' on it.

I look forward to further iterations at the Design Conference.

Yellow Sea Battles - Offside Report by Jim Wallman

This was Mukul's design session on sea battles in the Russo-Japanese War. As always, Mukul brought his considerable knowledge of the period and wanted to discuss how to distil this into a rapid 'one brain cell' set of pre-dreadnought battle rules that did not have all the 'faffing about' of conventional wargame rules.

We had a lively discussion about naval warfare of the period - of the problems of commanders in the theatre, of the relative merits of the two sides. In the end we came down to a possible system (I don't know

if Mukul will actually take this option) of a battle board to line up the two fleets against each other and resolve the firing very fast and easily. This would allow combat resolution in, I guess, 10-20 minutes at most. I'm not sure if this is *too* fast for Mukul - but it is certainly an elegant way of handling this sort of 'line of battle' sea engagement - perhaps for when Mukul does his Russo-Japanese War megagame.....?

Lets see what comes of it - I'm hoping to see a development session at the Design Conference!

Dust Pneumonia Blues – Inspiration from Mukel



In a recent email, Mukel provided some inspiration with reference to the Dust Pneumonia Blues, particularly the last verse, which runs:

Down in Texas, my gal fainted in the rain,
I threw a bucket o' dirt in her face just to bring her
back again.

Lyrics as recorded by Woody Guthrie, RCA Studios, Camden, NJ, 26 Apr 1940, released on "Dust Bowl Ballads," transcribed by Manfred Helfert. © 1963 Ludlow Music Inc., New York, NY

A Google search brought up these battle scene pictures. There must be a game here somewhere...



Wargaming Meeting in the Jura Mountains - Report by Nick Luft

Over the last couple of years I have been living in Geneva. Which is perhaps why I have not attended many CLWG meetings lately. Of course, I have been trying to organise my own gaming group and so far I have met several board-gamers, and a few wargamers. I now organise a regular group of board-gamers, at my place. Daniel Shaw also attends these sessions when his travel plans allow, as he lives about 80km north of Geneva, in the Jura Mountains. Recently Daniel kindly offered to host a wargaming weekend at his house, for those gamers who we have met who are interested in wargaming. So with Joe and Seth, I gladly accepted.

Joe and Seth are both interested in gaming, and have had some experience of playing board-gamer wargames. Joe is a historian with a speciality in the Cold War, and an extensive knowledge of the equipment used World War 2, mostly planes, tanks and ships. Seth, is a CERN physicist, which is great, as he can do the math in his head, without using his fingers and toes. He is generally interested in history but has no particular military interest. He does like games. A neighbour of Daniel's, Christoph also joined us for the second day – he had previously played some computer games and computer wargames.

All of them were wargame novices and much younger than I am. During the day I had the pleasure of watching them get to grips with taking decisions and experiencing that first thrill of experiencing a "wargame."

"The First Battle of Narvik" presented by Daniel Shaw – Offside Report by Nick Luft

Daniel told us that our only preparation for the game was to know nothing and not to read anything. I like that level of preparation. *[Editors Note: This game was run after dinner at the CLWG Autumn Conference 2006, so you could look back at previous reports on that run of the game in MilMud.]*

Daniel introduced the game's setting with a PowerPoint Presentation that outlined the strategic importance of Norway, the problems with neutrality, our secret and illegal mine laying mission, a later change to that mission, and a new set of orders from the Admiralty.

"According to Swedish press reports, the Germans have landed at Narvik. You are to proceed to Narvik, sink the enemy ships and, at your discretion, land forces in the town."

Daniel then asked us to discuss our plan, and hinted that our historical counterpart had thought of some excellent ideas (wizard wheezes) before going into Narvik. This of course floored us. What were we missing? We spent a long time talking about what we could do.

The Game

I will not give a blow by blow account of the battle, especially since this game has a lot of hidden features and any detailed account will spoil the fun for other future players.

Which is just an excuse for me to focus on what I did. So other than the fact that I captained the only surviving ship, and I was the first ship into the Narvik, and my ship caused the most damage to the enemy and my ship voluntarily cut her tow-line in mid-channel to act as a decoy to the pursuit, and that I was able to effect repairs to the steerage and my ship was then able to move off under her own steam; I won't mention any of the details.

My report is now in the official record of the incident and it has been strongly hinted there might be a medal in this for me. It sure went well for me.

Thoughts on the Game

Without wishing to make too much of this, it is similar in some respects to a typical role-playing dungeon-bashing scenario. We were five young and untested fighters (RN Destroyers at the start of the Second World War) and had been given a quest by the First Lord (of the Admiralty), to find and destroy the evil Orc's Galleys (Kriegsmarine Destroyers).

So we left the pub (Home Fleet) and decided to talk to any locals we met: the Dungeon-keeper (The Tromso Pilot), the whispering Oracles (the radio) and also to talk to other locals (Fishermen) we encountered. We crept into the dungeon tunnel (Fjord) trying to avoid any lurking monsters (Submarines). We peered into the caves and dark passages along the side of the tunnel wall. We met random monsters, and we were frightened by ghosts (local shipping) looming out of the gloom (Snow Storm) until finally we found the evil Orcs (German Mountain Troops) looting the magic Pixie-dust (securing the passage of Iron Ore from Sweden to Germany for the Nazi war effort).

Which was why this game was so much fun. It was a well-researched historical scenario, we had interesting decisions to take before the game, decisions that made us think. It was a mission that must have tested our historical counterparts as this sort of mission is not in the doctrine books and is not taught at Staff College. And this added to elements of tension and exploration that some good role-playing scenarios can have.

The mechanics of the game were simple. The game flowed quickly: we had to write out our orders for movement and firing. The adjudication of each turn was then quick and obvious, with no debate. The rate

of play was never too fast or too slow. We had doubt, tension and moments of exhilaration. The game was less of a grind than the usual tactical wargame, perhaps this is a feature of naval games, less sub-units to worry about moving.

I think Daniel's use of cards to indicate damage caused by shooting was a welcome relief to yet more dice rolling. (On the second day of gaming we played Spearhead and after a while dice rolling becomes quite tiresome).

"The First Battle of Narvik" – Offside Report by Joe Apostolos

The first Battle of Narvik took place in April 1940 during the Norwegian campaign when both the Allies and Germans simultaneously violated Norwegian neutrality. What began as an attempt by the Royal Navy to lay mines in part to prevent shipment of Swedish iron ore to Germany, became an attempt to prevent the German invasion and occupation of Norway (Operation Weserbung).

I had the pleasure of playing a naval wargame based on this battle, and using rules developed by Daniel Shaw. My report will focus on the rules and mechanics of the game from a first time player's point of view. The game consists of a large felt map of the Narvik area with the land and water and major towns marked as well as a smaller more detailed map of the Narvik harbour. The players, we were 3 for this game, are given command of a flotilla of 5 H-class destroyers. One is designated flotilla commander (playing the historical role of Captain Warburton-Lee) and commands the lead vessel, HMS Hardy, equipped with a radio hut. The rest control whatever is left, in our case 2 destroyers each. The umpire takes the role of the Germans, as all their decisions are based on what we do, as well as giving us visibility and intel reports. The players are given a briefing on the historical context and specifically on the mission of the flotilla as well as the information available at the time. We were given scant information based on news reports and sightings on the possibility German troops may have landed at Narvik, and our objective, which was to ascertain what forces were there, and determine if we could retake Narvik. Using miniatures we proceeded with the mission.

To begin with each ship has two cards. One for movement and fire orders and protected in plastic to be reused and the second for damage. Movement is plotted by ruler, and speed indicated by cards placed under the ship. At the start of each turn movement and any fire orders are given, guns are fired at the end of the turn, but torpedoes any time (though intention must be marked on the card). The cards are very nicely laid out with movement, fire (allowing controlled and uncontrolled fire and allocation of turrets and torpedo tubes) and a very good simulation of the captain of a destroyer. One special manoeuvre rule is incorporated, allowing the crew to take evasive action on hazard spotting without input of the captain but with consequences of collision or running aground. Combat is based on die rolls, influenced by controlled vs. uncontrolled fire mainly, as well as ship aspect (to see which turrets and torpedo tubes can bear) in this scenario distance and gun calibre were not factors so it is unknown if they are incorporated into the rules. Torpedo quality is however, as the German Kriegsmarine suffered from faulty magnetic exploders at this stage of the war. Oddly enough, it would seem that target speed is not taken into account with the odds of a successful torpedo or gun attack. Cards are used to account for torpedo results for the Germans, as well as the type of damage due to gunfire (any successful torpedo hit is reasonably assumed to be fatal, at least for destroyers and merchant vessels). Weather is limited to visibility effects in this scenario (time of day is also important) as the sea state was calm during the battle. Chance events are also simulated, as are misidentified ships (wrong flags).

While I have extensive experience with wargames and computer games (mainly simulations and strategy games) this was my first experience with an umpired game. The experience was thoroughly enjoyable, was quite accurate historically, and most important an excellent ship and flotilla commander's simulation of naval warfare. The correct sequence of orders, as well as setting and altering of objectives and co-operation (within limits of communication) between players is well portrayed for this level. I suspect the rule set, while very well suited to small level action would need amending if larger ships or airpower were included. Nevertheless, they remain simple and easily understandable.

"Someone forgot the key: The Battle of the Ardennes" presented by Daniel Shaw – Offside Report by Nick Luft

On the second day Daniel presented a Word War 2 tabletop miniatures-game (6mm) using the commercial rules "Spearhead."

The Rules

Spearhead, as interpreted by Daniel is a very simple set of rules, that we all picked up very quickly. The scenario also helped us come to grips with the rules gradually. Initially it was a simple infantry assault, with artillery support, on dug-in infantry positions. Later on we added some half-tracks and tanks, and we were never overwhelmed by lots of tables and new rules.

However, I did have some criticisms of the rules:

1. The morale rules seemed too simple. A test is only taken when a set amount of casualties occurred and if failed the unit just disappeared. I was expecting units to get pinned by morale checks, and was looking for more modifiers for such things as enfilade fire, being cut-off in the rear etc.
2. The fire rules were too easy to direct. You could choose which unit to direct your fire against, so that this was optimised rather than using a shoot at the nearest rule of thumb, which I think is more realistic.
3. I thought that artillery fire was perhaps a little too deadly after the initial round of firing - most casualties are caused by the first few rounds. I was also a little surprised by how easy and specific the artillery was to target.
4. Daniel did not use of dead-ground or hills, which might have added to the defender's problems.

The Scenario

The game was based on a particular assault on the Americans during the Ardennes Offensive of 1944. It had a very simple operational order. The lead German infantry division was assigned to break in and through the two river lines, to enable the Panzer Divisions to drive through and breakout towards Antwerp.

In the game the German's did worse than their historical counterparts. The reason for this was two-fold.

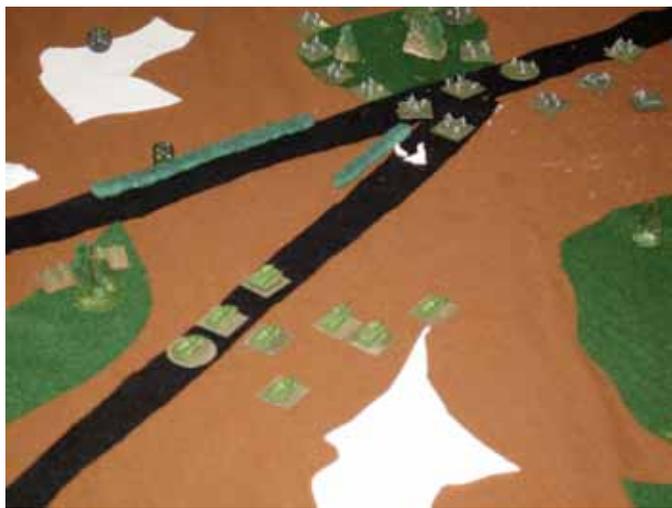
1. The American players deployed further forward, thus delaying our assault for that bit longer. Historically the Germans deployed to assault this forward position, not knowing it was not manned... we just attacked it off the line of march, causing us to lose a battalion and more time just to take a company position.
2. In real-life, the Germans accepted heavier casualties and were more bold than we were. Our German's paused and defended against a company sized armour counter-thrust, whilst in reality they just kept on going, accepting the casualties.

Playing the Game

Daniel decided to put Joe and Christoph (Daniel's French neighbour) on the same side as Joe is fluent in French. They played the American defenders. Seth and I were the Germans, speaking only English. Daniel also gave some briefings to the American team in French and to the Germans in English. Sometimes we were invited to step outside so we could be given real secret briefings.

The main problem for the Germans was building the bridge. The first river barrier was undefended, but all the bridges were down. The Germans had the option of building three types of bridge - a footbridge for infantry only, a light-pontoon bridge for up-to light-vehicles, and making a repair on the main-bridge suitable for all traffic (i.e. the tanks). We opted for one footbridge, with an initial battalion being boated across the river, and then all engineering effort being put into the main bridge repair. In the event the main bridge took 36 hours, which was similar to the history. This was too late. By this point, the German infantry were being counter attacked by two armoured thrusts, against which they had no anti-tank guns to reply.

As I have already mentioned, the Americans deployed further forward than they did historically, to buy time. This did achieve its objective and slowed down the main German regimental column. Undeterred the Germans outflanked this position with the rest of the Infantry Regiment. In doing so they were able to take a village on the American left-flank, that had been left undefended. This then had the unfortunate problem for the Americans in that their first armoured counter-attack hit the German battalion in a well defended village, defeating this counter-attack in short order. Which is perhaps the problem of such tabletop games, tram-lined without reference to the big picture. In reality, the American commander chose to defend a line that connected him to his neighbours on his flanks.



The rest of this first regiment attempted to assault a larger village on the main road, and were thrown back in confusion after trying to bounce it from route of march.

The second German regiment, their initial advance being delayed by some heavy woods, were moving purposefully to the main village at the centre, which was finally reached late in the evening. They deployed for a formal attack and entered the village during the night and found the opposition had withdrawn.

After that the Germans attempted to move down the main road to the second river line and with a supporting move on the right-flank. The main thrust down the road was delayed by a strong armoured thrust, throwing the Germans back into defensive cover. The German's used their limited artillery to break up this thrust and then resumed their advance. However, this delay had allowed fresh American infantry to occupy the woods along the line of advance.

The German right-flank attack was moving confidently towards the river line when it encountered about two companies of Americans, holed in wood-lined river-valley, and well supported by artillery. The Germans were soon thrown back.

We left the game at the point when the Germans got their first tanks over the bridge, but before their infantry could secure a passage of the second river line. Thus it was an operational defeat for the Germans.

Thoughts

I think I prefer the operational level of World War 2, using maps and perhaps going down to level of the company for defence and the battalion for attack, to using model soldiers on a table top.

The cons of maps and counters for me are:

1. It encourages operational thinking rather than concentrating on the tactical deployment of model soldiers. Also the full German assault could be easily played through on a map.
2. Using maps would enable hidden movement, making the game more tense and interesting.
3. And at the level of resolution suggested, there would be less dice-rolling per combat resolution.
4. The maps would be more detailed, enabling features like hills, and dead ground to taken into account.

Afterword

Joe, Seth and I would all like to thank, both Florence, Daniel's wife, and Daniel, for their hospitality, excellent food, taking us for interesting walks, even if we did get a close-quarters incident with cows and cow-dung late at night, and Maxou, their cat, for talking to us.

A great weekend, thanks.

Rheinubung for the September 2nd : Outline by Dave Boundy

Dave has been making plans for the September 2nd run of Operation Rheinubung. Although we have a good number of players, it will not be enough to add the Med. The initial role allocation is as follows:

German

Group North/West Overall command Daniel (commander) and Tankers and Air Arthur

U-boats Jim Mann

Operational Command Fleet Command Jim Wallman and Other units Andrew

Planning (not on the day) Martin

GB

Admiralty Command Mukul(commander) and RN subs and RAF John

Western Approaches Jerry and Steve Convoys Escorts and Coastal Command

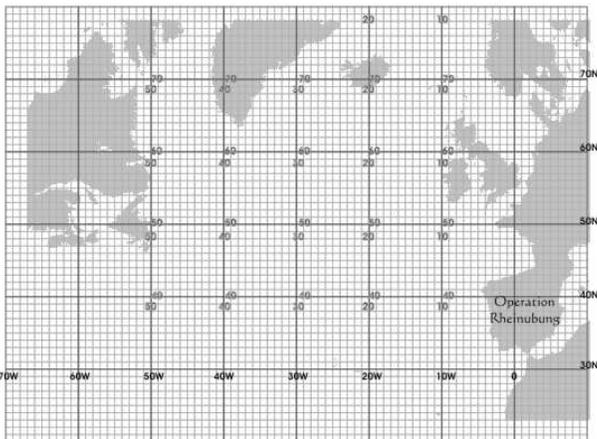
Operations North Atlantic, Home Fleet Martin and mid/south Atlantic, Force H Trevor

Umpires

Dave - main plot and combat adjudication, Andy - LU German Brian - LU GB

If you want to join in, no doubt Dave will expand casting to suit. Please let him know if you are coming.

Rheinubung : The British planning game – by Mukel



I was a bit surprised by the planning game. I thought that it would be just a German planning game without the British having to do anything. I could have probably done much more in the planning game but as said I am bit lazy and was surprised to be in a planning game. Anyway as anyone knows I'm lazy fellow when it comes to stuff not involving maps. So I have been pretty laid back in the planning game. I have had few priorities that I have followed and am by turns both overly optimistic and pessimistic. Optimistic in that Operation Rheinubung can't win the war outright? But pessimistic that it will probably do much better than history.

One the good things the planning did was nudge me in finding a really good book on the operation, it gave me a better feel for the challenges that Admiral Tovey faced and those faced by Lutjens. It gave me more a feel for the fragility of the machinery in this operation, such as the self-defeating British Battleships like HMS Rodney, radar, the weather and the fuel problems.

I could have probably done much more in the planning game but as said I am bit lazy and was surprised to be in a planning game. If it were possible I would love to have someone else help with making decisions, I don't really like the loneliness of solitary command, in most games, but especially in one where other players are relying on me to make the right ones.

Rheinubung : The German planning game – by Daniel Shaw

After an initial struggle to gain traction on the subject of priorities, particularly Konteradmiral Von Wallenmann making my life difficult with some very logical questioning, we got the planning process underway. Like Mukel, I felt very lonely at the top, with few voices of support and even fewer positive suggestions. Thanks to Martin for his suggestions, particularly on air power.

British bombing and mechanical troubles aside, everything has progressed according to plan. Dave has called a halt to the planning phase, which I suspect means that contact has been made and maybe someone has been sunk. No doubt the day will start with a bang...

Chestnut Lodge Game Design Conference – Draft Program

The conference program is shaping well. It will be held at PET, 92-94 Tooley Street, London Bridge, London SE1 2TH. (That is NOT at our Monthly Meeting Venue). On the program so far are:

Friday Dinner and Discussion : “Why I Wargame !”

Its Just A Game - Jim

Several years ago Jim presented a session on game design methodology. Jim recently took the opportunity to revisit the basic premise and revise his thinking in the light of another ten years experience. This session is a presentation of his current thinking and discussion of game design methodology, looking particularly at design theory and process.

Interesting Times - Brian and Dave

"Interesting Times" will be the Megagame (September 2008) of the warlord era in 1920'2 China. Brian and Dave have designed all of the game in outline, with detail in some parts. They would like to go over this with a wider audience, to get reactions and further ideas. They would also like to work at putting some more of the detailed game together.

No Sh*t Sherlock - John R

A 19th century mystery gaming session. John wants to consider the pros and cons of at least two methods of running a large role-playing game set in Victorian London, involving mysteries, investigation and crime: First a 'Boardgame' method: players use counters on tabletop maps, use dice to determine combat etc. Second 'Live role play' method: players represent their own characters and move to 'real' locations which stand for parts of old London, e.g. 'the Docks' is the carpark etc., and use paper/scissors/stone to determine combat etc. Fancy dress very much optional! Is there a way of combining the best features of these, and other methods people may know of?

The Rheinbung Computer Program - Dave

Dave developed a computer program to assist in umpiring the game of the Bismarck break-out. Dave has now rewritten that program so that it has a lot more facilities but importantly, so that it uses a remote database approach. This means that other programs could easily share access to the database and opens the door for our own network games that would be usable in a rigorous environment (such as a Megagame). Others might find this easy, but it has taken some while to get this working reliably and others could use this approach and could benefit from seeing what can be done. The intention of this session will therefore be to explain the program, to explain the MySQL database use, to show the SQL internal procedures and how they make life easy for the game designer and to show the Delphi interface. This will therefore be a technical session, but easily understandable by non-technical people.

Battle of Britain - Dave

About 10 years ago, Dave worked on a program to run a Battle of Britain game to follow the BOB1 and BOB2 Megagames. At the time, lacking the technical tools and abilities and because computer and network power was not up to the job, Dave gave up. That has all now changed and Dave would like to examine the possibilities again. This has to do with understanding what the game needs to do and therefore what data needs to be stored and what procedures need to be written to run the game. Dave initially wants the program to allow for networked access from player teams, automatic movement and combat adjudication and automatic report-back to the players. The session might need to examine what parts are appropriate to put into the program and whether there is an approach that allows development of parts of the game process initially. Dave envisages the game working in a similar way to the Operation Rheinbung computer program.

Shekels, Shopetim and the Sea - Andrew H

Between its foundation (probably in the eighth century BC) and its defeat by Rome in the third century, Carthage changed from a small trading outpost to the greatest city in the Mediterranean. It experienced radical political change (from kingship to some form of mercantile republic) and huge swings in policy in terms of its commercial focus. This is a design session aimed at creating a series of systems to track the development of political structures. The players would, to a limited extent, be changing the rules and their own identities as they developed new structures and changes take place. There would be some limited religious and economic interactions.

Weird and Brilliant Devilry Playtest - Jim

Developing my interest in firefighting during the blitz, this session is a playtest of a map-based game about the operational level decision making of the LFB and the AFS during a series of air raids on London in late 1940.

Bashing Britons - Pickles

A Toy Soldier Game of Battles in Britain 450 - 600 (or even 600 - 1100), aiming to design a miniatures game for the period subject to the following criteria

- * Capture the Colour of the Period not the absolute detail, which is in any event elusive
- * exaggerate "racial" differences
- * focus on big men & elites
- * Be a Game in itself
- * more substantive than brains ACW campaign resolution system,
- * playable out of context ie points
- * Gamey decision making
- * Low admin needs
- * Minimal record keeping
- * Minimal time spent just moving stuff, measuring etc
- * No tables
- * Easy systems
- * Unity of systems
- * One core system for all resolutions
- * Make the miniatures work
- * Not just as living/dead tokens
- * Morale flags
- * Show disorder
- * AOB
- * Information on a page of stats - inc systems
- * Unit data & any records that need to be kept & summary systems to fit on one side of A4
- * Interactive
- * No umpire
- * Not Igo Ugo unless turns are very fast
- * Use existing stuff
- * Table 4' square or smaller
- * Models in 40 mil SQUARE bases or similar

Those are the elastic constraints, with perhaps a square grid, rather than a clear tabletop:- Battles moderately linear. Manoeuvre not a big issue (so eliminate it), which makes measuring easy & fast.

Sinews of the Somme Design session - Jim

Having been doing some games on WW1 recently, and particularly the Somme battle, Jim has inevitably started to look at the logistics of it. This session is to see if an interesting game can be designed about managing the logistics of a WW1 battle - either as a stand-alone game or as an add-on to an operational megagame.

Crete High Command & Politics Design Session- Jerry and Daniel

To look at developing the land battle side of the Crete Scorcher game with a view to running it as a MegaGame in late 2008/2009. Jerry ran the high command and naval version of the game at the Conference of Wargamers. The Murphy's version of the game was already prepared for 40 players. Daniel chickened out of holding a pre-game planning session to allow alternative troop setup and invasion plans, but that was prepared. (Hitler had imposed the targets, so the German basic plan is fixed!) But Daniel did have the command structure problems to play had there been additional players. With the number we had on the day at Murphy's, the choice was between discarding some maps and playing the command problems or fighting all maps and simplifying the command issues. We did the latter. Now is the chance to discuss the command game and develop more realism in the land rules.

Delta Blues - Mukul

About goings on in the Niger Delta...

WW2 Company Level Action - James

WW2 company level actions based on the output from a design session that was done at the Conference in 2004 or 2005 (not entirely sure which). The feature of that game is that each platoon has two players, an officer and a sergeant, each with different responsibilities. It will need some serious playtesting to see if it works. Probably use some of the bits from the SF game we've been developing at Full Moon sessions as that works at a similar level of abstraction. Half way between a design session and a play test. The idea is to do a wargame that works with a team of players in the key appointments in a WW2 infantry company. This would cover both the traditional officer roles (platoon and company commanders) and also some of the NCO roles that often get subsumed (i.e. the Company Sergeant Major (CSM) and the Platoon Sergeants). Each of the units would then have two players, an officer and a sergeant, both with different roles and different rules that would share a common objective. The officers would move units, motivate them and fight the battle. The sergeants would help with the motivation, look after re-organisation after the battle, supplying ammo, food, dealing with casualties and POWs. In short, a game that captures some of the teamwork involved in battles and also shows the importance of looking after your troops.

Norway 1940 Design session - Daniel

Northern Norway was the first place where the Germans were beaten! Negotiations with Sweden to form a neutral zone in the North were starting. Reinforcements to hold the north were being embarked from France, when the invasion of the low countries began. Indecision in the corridors of power did not help the commanders on the spot. In the evacuation, the Kriegsmarine sallied forth and sunk quite a few ships including an aircraft carrier. There must be loads of games here....A mega-game in the same scale as my Crete Scorcher appeals...but perhaps the Chestnut Lodgers can help me find better avenues.

Something else promised from Nick Luft

After Dinner Games promised for Saturday evening include :

Another Naval Game - Daniel

A Drop Too Many – Jim

We look forward to a great weekend...