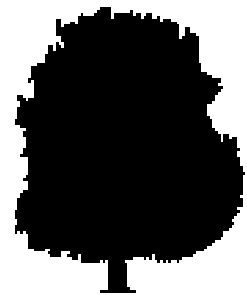




Military Muddling



Volume 16 Issue 7

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

Fourth Quarter 2006

Editorial

Despite rumours like “They managed to hold you down and extract a volunteer out of you,” I did step forward like a true volunteer. This is my first edit of Military Muddling. I am pleased to have received a good number of articles, so I hope you enjoy the read. Even more, I hope it inspires you to write some more articles and wargame some more too...

Daniel T Shaw

Contributions for Military Muddling

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Forthcoming Events

Friday Supper 27 October 2006 at Cafe Rouge at Hay's Galleria at London Bridge

Sun 5 November at James' home, from 12 noon featuring Amazing Adventures by Brian Cameron and Remember Remember by Jim. (Off-Shoot, same day at Daniel's in France, Nick and Daniel at least).

Saturday 16 December Winter Solstice Social Meeting - emphasis on fun games and hilarity. Venue t.b.a.

Please remember, when members are kind enough to allow CLWG to use their homes for meetings, to show them the simple courtesy of informing them by telephone or email that you will be attending!

Reports from the 2006 Games Design Conference

Game Design Conference Saturday 30 September and Sunday 1 October 2006 at The Hampshire School, 9, Queensborough Terrace, Bayswater, London W2 3TB.

Onside Report: Ireland 1691 by Steve Challice

Thanks to all those who took part in the Ireland tryout game in London on the 30 September. Also to all those who contributed comments and suggestions on improving the game. I plan to introduce pretty much all of them.

This game was the second one I have tried out at a Chestnut Lodge weekend and as with the first one I feel that I was the real gainer from it. Many things that I hadn't thought of came to light and many good ideas to improve them were suggested.

The first game that I ran was an idea for a game system for current day Middle East warfare in the Gaza Strip which was very useful because it has given me the start of a good system for a full blown Iraqi war game in the future. Several ideas such as command points to do things went out the window and in came a cash generated action system. All players to have several personalities in the game so that if you get killed you aren't out of the game as well as the ability to have a flavour of both politics and military action for all players. I am looking forward to a first tryout of the Iraqi war game in February and have started on the map already. Anyway more of that in the future.

The Ireland game was set in 1691 with both James 2 and William 3 on the English throne. The game scenario was after the battle of the Boyne when both James and William had left Ireland and everything was still in the balance. The starting position was that the Irish Catholics were behind the river Shannon and had to do something to both keep the Williamites to the east of that river as well as attract the attention of Louis of France to send them reinforcements to beat the Williamites. The Williamites on the other hand had to cross the Shannon and defeat the Catholic army (which is what happened in history). The Catholics nearly succeeded when they made a dash for Dublin which for some reason was left unguarded by the Williamite's who only just managed to get back to guard it in time. Several battles took place, which resulted in some interesting actions and supply became quite important. One thing I hadn't expected to be quite so bloody was the loss of leaders who seemed to get killed and wounded at an alarming rate but when I checked later it was actually quite accurate for the time. William nearly being killed by a cannon ball at the Battle of the Boyne and St Ruth being killed at the later battle of Aughrim which actually ended the Catholic resistance. I have had several good suggestions on how to alter this and I plan to implement some of these.

If anyone wants a copy of the Ireland map (its an Illustrator file) please ask and I will email it to you. Its only about 1.5 Mb.

Offside Report: Ireland 1691 by Paul Hill

Enjoyed the game, right number of people, would have happily played for another couple of hours. Game system was simple but not simplistic. Combat was good, interesting 'fractions' mechanic, results seemed reasonable. Nice leadership advantage – superior leader get to re-roll one or more of either his or his opponents dice. (Although we didn't see it's effect enough to assess it's effect of game balance). Simple supply mechanics that effected playing decisions - On reflection can see advantage of eating supply markers when out of supply. Need for Leadership 0 counters - maybe every leader could be accompanied by their leadership value in Leadership 0 counters (they wouldn't have to be physically placed on the board until needed.)

Offside Report: Ireland 1691 by Andrew Hadley

Despite coming very late to this game, it looked very interesting and the players seemed very absorbed. I'm not an expert on Ireland in this period, but have done quite a lot of reading for Scotland in the same time-period, and the campaign seemed to have the right flavour – with both armies worried about supply-lines, and commanders dying right and left. The difficulty of forcing a decisive result also seemed to come out well. The only thing that seemed a little odd to me was the use by both sides of independent cavalry columns, which doesn't chime with my (limited) impressions of the period, as the commanders were often mostly concerned with keeping effective forces together in the field.

Onside Report: For the Light of the Trees by Andrew Hadley and Trevor Farrant

Having fought the opening stages of our upcoming megagame (March 2007) based loosely on Tolkien's Quenta Silmarillion, as well as multiple runs of the Human-Orc conflict in the east, we decided it was time to see how the endgame might look. It was also a chance to avoid making CLWG members 'breed' with each other (in-game, of course) again!

We assumed a break-out from the siege of Angband by Morgoth's armies with casualties to both sides, so the howling hordes of evil were poised to over-run the flat and lightly defended plains of Beleriand. Mukul and Tom played the forces of darkness and Pickles and Paul the legions of light. At first, the dark tide seemed to be winning the day, with the fair Elf-havens of the Falas falling easily along with several other key locations.

However, a desperate series of forced marches by the Elves and Dwarves allowed the forces of light to gather a large army in the marches to the east. In a hard-fought battle they managed to inflict a serious defeat on Morgoth's hordes and drive back one of his armies, killing two dragons and Sauron himself in the process. A glorious victory was thus earned, but at a high cost – the dragons' fire breath proved devastating and slew several Elf heroes as well as many soldiers. Sturdy dwarf armour saved the day and the king of Belegost, Azaghal, threw down the last fire-drake at the crux of the battle.

The Elf-Dwarf-Human alliance had thus shown that even once their siege had been broken, they could cause serious damage to the armies of evil. However, their losses were very heavy, and one of Morgoth's armies remained undefeated and indeed untroubled in the west. Another epic battle seemed the only way to determine the fate of Beleriand, but sadly we were out of time.

We learned that the combat system seemed to hold up in both small and large battles, and that battles were typically pretty bloody. They also showed the value of decent troops, and the vulnerability of heroes. A number of helpful changes in the wording and structure of the combat rules were made – thanks guys – and overall we felt pretty happy with how it went.

Roll on March!

Offside Report: For the light of the trees test session by Paul Hill

Enjoyed the session. Interested in seeing how the combat combines with magic and quests. I'm not sure about combining a 10 year turn length with a 'Line of Battle' System. That said I think the battle system was workable and a number of good suggestions came out.

It may be too easy to get large forces together and to manage them but this might be compensated for when there are multiple player teams on each side by the politics and bickering.

There seemed no clear General in charge of each side in a battle and thus no overall strategy. The Leader seemed only to effect the location of the battle. Maybe the better Leader should get some extra information about how the enemy will be deployed? (we discussed the very large monsters should be fairly visible and

that the enemy should know if a dragon is going to be deployed in the left, centre or right of the battle, maybe something information like this should be given to the side with the better leader?).

I suggest that when it's scaled up each player involved in a battle is given a section of the line (which section could be highly contentious and is able to organize their forces freely within that section (should it be possible for a player to be given too small an area to place all their units). This may create friction between different races and between overall General and factions.

I'm not convinced by the rule that the smaller force has to deploy all of its units in the line – shouldn't they be able to have a reserve too. Though what the downside should be I don't know.

I don't think a hero (one person) should be able to defeat a unit containing hundreds of warriors. They may be able to bolster their own side (though morale or combat bonuses), weaken an enemy or even intimidate them into not attacking. You could do Hero vs Hero combat first with the result affecting the ability of the unit they were attached to?

I'm still unconvinced by a unit being able to target a hero rather than the unit he/she accompanies; but there should be an element of risk to the hero in combat – perhaps if the unit is damaged there should be a roll-on attack on the hero.

Offside Report: English Civil War Megagame Design Session by Jim Wallman



It is always stimulating to discuss megagame design and Brian Cameron's revisitation of his successful megagame was no exception. I know that Brian was less than happy with his earlier version – though I felt it worked fine on the day – and he wanted to streamline and simplify the systems which, in current terms were may have been more process-heavy than needed. The key it seems is making the complexities of managing locally recruited forces and building an maintaining field armies. As Brian explained, in the majority of cases, locally recruited soldiers were notoriously reluctant to campaign too

far from home. The earlier system was a good simulation of that process – properly mobile field armies being hard to construct and maintain out of the home counties – but this design session was looking at how we could simulate the same effect using much simpler game mechanisms. Oh yes, and in addition the system had to be 'open' and easily manageable by megagamers.

We covered a lot of ground in the session (after all the ECW is a big subject), reviewing all sorts of way the situation could be shown on the megagame map. Gradually we moved towards a streamlined regional model – making a distinction between purely local forces that were to all intents and purposes static but cost nothing and more mobile 'field army' type forces which were expensive. The field army could be manoeuvred freely around the country, but the cost would mean that such armies would be few and not huge. The record keeping for this would be easier – as the static forces would simply be barred from moving outside the region – though there was some discussion about what, precisely, a region might constitute.

I hope Brian came away more optimistic about how his next ECW megagame will work – I for one could see it working very well with a system similar to the one discussed and with fewer administrative headaches – and fewer opportunities for megagamers to be ‘flexible’ with the rules.

Onside Report: Muggergames Revisited by Jim Wallman

The Wargames Developments Handbook describes the Muggergame as "A game where the overall result is decided over a number of intermediate steps, by the consensus of those playing, based on historical precedent and reasoned judgment. Usually takes the form of a tabletop game, but without any rules". It's been many years since we'd done a muggergame at CLWG and I thought it was about time it was re-examined as a useful tool for game design.

To set the scene, the way we have, in the past set up the muggergame is to lay out a battle situation – in this case I used some foam board counters to simulate a French attack on a British battalion in line in the Napoleonic wars. The participants then discuss what is likely to have happened, taking account of the situation and the balance of probability. No dice or other random event generators are permitted – the ‘players’ must reach a consensus on the outcome of every stage of the battle.

Of course this contains little if any ludic elements but as a research and development tool is extremely helpful. By forcing the participants to consider all the factors that might affect an outcome (rather than letting the dice decide) it requires us to think carefully about what it is we are simulating. I chose the Napoleonic setting for this example because, for most of us, it is a fairly familiar environment.

Despite this, we found ourselves delving into areas of command and control, morale, observations, tactical doctrine and the like that we seldom, if ever discuss.

If I were designing a game about battalion-level fights of the period, this sort of discussion would have proved extremely valuable. We had to think carefully about the key decision points in the action and the timing of each stage was crucial to the arguments for and against the range of possible outcomes. In fact devising the range of possible outcomes was educational in itself.

All in all, I hope this has re-affirmed the muggergame as a research tool and that anyone thinking of developing a new set of rules or game on a tactical level would do well to set one up. There were a number of key points that arose, about the nature of the muggergame itself:

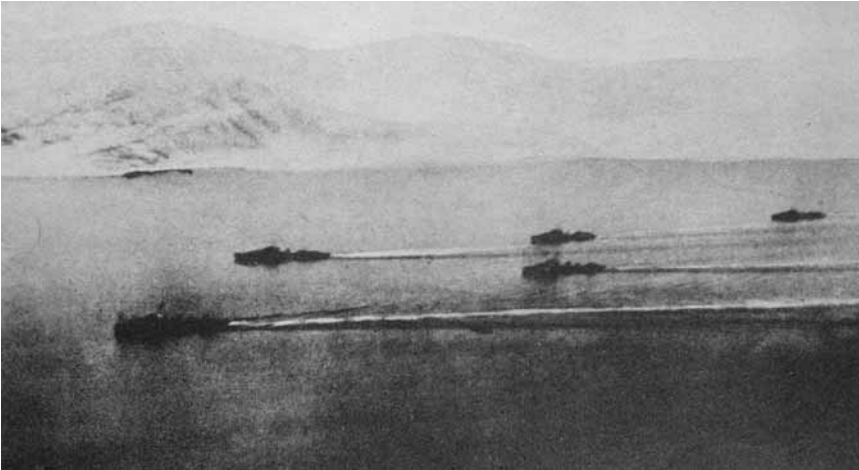
1. It takes a long time – the hour and a half we had wasn't long enough and we could have gone on longer, probably 2 or 3 hours.
2. There is a need for consensus – and this requires willingness on the part of participants to accept a consensus view. We were fortunate in this group that we are generally agreeable folk. A more argumentative group might find the muggergame quickly stalls if opinions are too entrenched.
3. The muggergame identified gaps in your knowledge. Even in the familiar Napoleonic period we found ourselves asking new questions.
4. It helps identify key decision points – especially who is deciding what and when and in what order?

Certainly the participants in this session seemed engaged and it was, for me, an entertaining intellectual and social activity even if it isn't really a game. After all we all like to pontificate endlessly about military matters!

Offside Comment: Muggergames Revisited by Paul Hill

Interesting experience, useful design aid. Agree with Mukel – not really a game. A good way of getting a group to tease out key factors and decision points.

Onside Report: First Battle of Narvik – After Dinner Game by Daniel T Shaw



H-Flotilla had discretionary orders to attack the German force at Narvik. Under falling snow, Captain Mukel Patel chose a bold approach, sailing straight down the centre of the fjord, but easing back on the pace to ensure arrival after sunrise. On the way, a warning shot was fired at the Harstad ferry, which totally ignored the signal and proceeded running to schedule. The destroyers had to break formation to avoid the determined course of the ferry. Perhaps Mukel had forgotten

that the ferry would be expecting arriving ships to be under the control of the Norwegian pilots, who would know the schedules.

While the formation was reforming, one of the commanders spotted a submarine periscope and opened fire. What drove him to decide it was German is anybody's guess. The submarine returned fire with a salvo of torpedoes, which luckily ran too deep.

Entering Narvik harbour, the signals from Mukel were confused. Some thought he had signalled to retain a rear guard, whereas the tail of the flotilla recalled the instruction to attack in line ahead. In any case, all five destroyers sailed into the harbour, where four German destroyers were identified amidst an array of ore carriers. Two of those German destroyers were casting off abreast an oil tanker, where evidently they had been refuelling.

In the initial exchange of gun and torpedo fire, one German and one British destroyer, HMS Hunter, blew up. Mukel chose to lead a sweeping turn through the harbour, firing as he went. It was unclear who was doing the most damage, but the German tanker had caught fire. Several of H-flotilla took substantial damage, but all were holding out. One destroyer released a broad fan discharge of torpedoes, which to everyone's surprise hit nothing more than the quayside. The Germans attempted a breakout, but as each destroyer approached to the mouth of the harbour, it was met and sunk by torpedoes.



A fifth German destroyer was identified moored alongside an ore-carrier at the quayside. It proved to be the most difficult to sink, holding out and returning fire for a full hour, before finally being hit by the last of the British torpedoes. The ore carrier alongside was engulfed in flames, but the crew managed to put out the fire.

In the fog of the battle, the British were firing indiscriminately and in the process sunk several ore carriers. Reports after the battle would reveal that none of these were German: they were two Norwegian, one Danish, one French and one Russian!

The Commander of HMS Havock saw an opportunity to land marines at the jetty. Twelve brave men rushed ashore, to be met by a hail of bullets. The sergeant was killed in the first volley and the others would not survive the dreadful odds against the hundreds of German mountain troops in the town.

The Germans wheeled out five 105 mm infantry guns and set up on the quayside. This battery served to drive the destroyer from the jetty, wreaking terrible damage to its superstructure and gun turrets.

Mukel, his ship perilously at risk of sinking, signalling for an urgent withdrawal, cleared the harbour mouth only to identify two German cruiser bearing down from the North. The Germans had the British in a trap. In fact, they were not cruisers, rather a larger class of German destroyer, but in the poor visibility and under stress, the mistake was understandable. However, out of the mist appeared not two but three destroyers; while to the west salvation appeared with two British cruisers coming to the rescue. But no, it was another mistake: all the fresh ships were German destroyers, all firing co-ordinated shots and launching arrays of torpedoes.

In haste to avoid the torpedoes, HMS Hotspur ran aground, wrecking most of the equipment but not sinking the vessel. Captain Mukkel steered a straight course through another two array of torpedoes, which looked to be the best evading action, but one torpedo struck home blowing HMS Hardy clean out of the water. HMS Havock had taken so much damage at the quayside, that she could bear little more punishment from the incoming fire. She keeled over and sank. Severely damaged, alone and boxed in by five in tact enemy destroyers, HMS Hostile was not in a position to escape, so she struck her colours to prevent further loss of life.

This game was an unfavourable British result. Should I have retitled this history “Captain Mukel’s Folly”? Five British destroyers and five allied merchantmen lost in sinking five German destroyers and one German tanker. In history, a Victoria Cross was posthumously awarded to Captain Warburton Lee (whose HMS Hardy was also blown out the water) for bravely sinking 8 German vessels at a cost of only three British destroyers. I have umpired this game previously at Murphy Mania and at Basingstoke wargame club. Sadly for Chestnut Lodge this after dinner result was the worst showing of all the British teams, as the element of surprise was squandered with early firing at an unidentified submarine followed by an unhurried approach to the harbour allowing the Germans to wake up and react. My next playing of the battle under the title Destroyers in the North is scheduled for the Fall-In show at Gettysburg this autumn.

Offside Report: Ultra Modern RPG– After Dinner Game by Tom Mouat

An interesting game about special forces being deployed to deal with a series of situations. Tom’s aim was to put us under pressure and the special forces team was rushed from one anti-terrorist mission to another without time to rest or re-equip. The idea being that we had to make the best of what we had and had to think on the hoof.

It turned out to be a disguised gothic horror scenario, complete with cultists and ‘things man was not meant to know’. We managed to destroy all that gubbins so the mission was a success.

Of interest from the game point of view was Tom’s very neat set of equipment cards – making equipping party members really quick and easy (so easy that Tom put a time limit on it). Each card had an integer ‘weight’ score, and your character could only carry what he could carry.

His game system was also very simple and easy to play, and I hope to see it written up in a future MilMud so that I can steal ..er.. admire it. I certainly plan to use a version of the equipment cards in my own RPGs in future.

Offside Report: Footfall – After Dinner Game by Andrew Hadley

This was an after-dinner game by Tom Mouat where we played Special Forces initially tasked with recovering a stolen prototype sniper rifle, and then with dealing with a dangerous book buried in a ‘library’ deep beneath London. I am pleased to report the complete success of both missions, admittedly with a high casualty rate, including the tragic death of my character in the line of duty. I suspect my team were rather unimpressed with my inaccurate use of a grenade, but I would point out that it did take out ALL of the remaining terrorists/cultists/whatever the hell they were.

I liked the fast-paced and rather deadly combat system. I didn’t like burning myself to death with my own Thermite grenade. I’ll stick to the pistol next time.

Offside Report: Quick and Easy Fantasy Battles by Brian Cameron

This session was a challenging one because Brian wanted a battle sub-game that could be used with a Fantasy megagame, in much the same way as we have designed sub-games for other megagames (Rob Cooper’s Successors megagame and my Japanese megagames were given as example).

The tricky part is to have enough ‘feel’ and decision making without time-consuming detail. The system used in Crisis in Albion using playing cards was unsuitable because whilst it maximises player participation it has virtually no unit definition or tactical aspects.

We spent a lot of time discussing around the subject – and in the end started to think of a system based around Heroes. The thinking was that fantasy fiction (and indeed much classical mythological writing) is build around the significance of the Hero. So the battle system that we outlined (for Brian to fill in all the practical detail of) was a sort of personal combat between Heroes, where the army sub-units were simply modifiers to that personal combat. A brief calculation was made to see which army is superior, and then in effect, the bigger supremacy the more ‘hit points’ the Hero has. The Heroes then fight using a simple paper/stones/scissors system.

This has all sorts of consequences – for example, a small army can defeat a larger army through the player’s luck/skill against his opposite number. It make the Hero very significant and therefore very like the fantasy literature. Without a hero (or villain) to lead it a huge army is next to useless and easily defeated.

It think we’ve developed a very interesting approach to battle sub-games, and its one I may very well use for a future Yendor game (or even to revise the Sengoku battle system).

Offside Report: The ‘perfect’ fantasy RPG combat system by Andrew Hadley

This was a discussion (led by Dave Boundy) prompted by various disagreements over the quality of the combat system in the current incarnation of the Dungeons and Dragons rules. We struggled to agree principles on which to base a ‘better’ system, and the session seemed to end up focusing on individuals’ pet hates.

It was very interesting to hear what others thought was important in RPGs and in combat systems more generally, as well as the myriad solutions that were suggested, all of which seemed to pose different problems. We seemed to be heading for a card-based system of attack and defence cards, with individual ‘decks’ for each character – I personally find this overly limiting (you’re stuck to the cards) – which offered greater basic choices to players than the usual “roll the D20, roll the damage”.

Onside Report: Blitz! The Firefighting Game Design by Jim Wallman

I've been thinking about designing a firefighting game set in the London Blitz for a while now. Many years ago I developed a forest fire disaster management game, and that got me looking at disaster management simulations in general. The attraction of the Blitz is that it is a historical period, and the technology level is low, plus a personal interest in that my father was a fireman in London at the time.

I brought along a few books on the subject, and we quickly found that despite some useful data in the books we were short on quite a lot of hard operational data. It occurred to me that this might be what it was like when Don Featherstone and his chums starting wargaming for the first time in the 1950s, before all the glossy military history books had started to appear.

Certainly, finding technical details or even pictures of the key vehicles and equipment is not as easy as, say finding out about tanks.

Anyway, we did some inevitable sketching of how the game might look. It was clear that this was a cooperative game – the players pitting themselves against the fire and bombs). One suggestion was that there is also a game in the overall command and control aspect – choosing where to deploy firefighting units as a raid develops. However I wanted to keep to the design brief of a tactical game about actually putting out fires in a particular building – ideally using models and figures etc.

We talked about developing a fire model – modelling the propagation of a fire through a building and the ways in which it could be fought, as well as issues such as the availability of water, risk to firefighters and the way in which bombing affected things – for example the way in which bomb damage influences fire spread by 'opening up' buildings.

In the end I felt I had a really good germ of an idea for how the tactical game will work, and since the design session I've been writing some rules and collecting some model fire engines (good old Ebay) and I hope to put it on at a CLWG session really soon.

Offside Report: Maintenance of the Peace by Andrew Hadley

Dave Boundy decided to run this session, I believe, to see if there was still a workable (mega) game for 1920-30s military (and political) planners. A number of us felt strongly that there was a way of doing it, and we went through a number of possible solutions, all of which posed some serious problems.

The chief issue seemed to be in the roles and structures of the players. The group was attempting to find a way of having players compete over the fate of major countries, but we found it difficult to resolve what the 'losers' would do once, say, Germany had gone fascist or communist.

Solutions included:

- 1) Redefine player objectives
- 2) Move players to different teams
- 3) Have players as members of 'political' rather than 'national' teams

None of these seemed to be without downsides:

- 1) Seemed unsuitable as players generally don't like big changes on the day
- 2) Seemed to wreck continuity and risked being cyclical and unpopular
- 3) Is potentially ruined by game balance issues

The fundamental problem seemed to be that forming governments/teams with former opponents would be very difficult. Another potential solution was to limit the game to a shorter time period which would mean less change, although this was felt to be unsatisfactory to those who wanted to see the long-term impact of economic decisions by teams.

Offside Report: Maintenance of the Peace by Daniel T Shaw

In this lively debate, I saw the possibility of an exciting megagame developing, despite David's view to the contrary.

My vision is teams of about four, who represent the major nations. The roles are Policy, Military, Foreign, and Economics. They are NOT individual politicians, rather the players do the functions of who ever happens to be in power in the country at the time. Ministers might resign or even die, but players would simply continue in the person on their successor. A government might fall, and the players then act out the functions of the subsequent government. However, a country might be eliminated, in which case the players disperse to help their choice of allies in the mechanics of regaining their independence or running their old resources. To take an easily understood historic example, if Poland falls, the Polish players join France and UK teams to fight for freedom or join Germany and Russia, either way to help cope with the increasing workload.

The game starts in 1933 with Germany walking out of the League of Nations and the disarmament talks. Anyone with fore-(or is that HIND)-sight should be aware that this is the moment to make decisions to counter future aggression.

The economic model can be adapted from The Last War with perhaps a different set of factors to cope with the needs of peacetime as well as war.

The choices for players include whether to push for democracy, dictatorship, communism, monarchy, etc. Whether to push for centralised or decentralised government? On what to spend money? Whether to expand the borders so taking more resources but at the risk of expensive war?

In the event of war, some players would have to pass their administrative activities to their colleagues to command the front line. Maybe Germany should be a bigger team to help them in this (likely) circumstance. The war mechanics can also be the same as The Last War.

Keeping the scope down to just Europe would make it manageable, so teams for UK, France, Germany, Spain, Poland, Italy, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Minor teams for Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal,. The USA would only be an economic influence and trading partner, with no will to intervene militarily.

Time scale is one-year turns from 1934 through 1940. Where was the Third Reich progressed? Has Czechoslovakia found its place as a world power? Is Spain the richest country on earth? Does this inspire anyone else? Do you think that the usual crowd of megagamers would enjoy this piece of action.

Offside Comment: Maintenance of the Peace by Peter Merritt

Just wanted to say thank you very much for the invitation to the conference - really very stimulating, as ever. I'm very surprised that my favourite turned out to be the 'Maintenance of Peace'; a very new set of mechanisms to be designed!

Offside Report: Politics session by Andrew Hadley

This was a two-pronged session – James Kemp wanted to develop a two-party political electoral system for use in another game. Daniel Shaw wanted to explore his idea of players being chiefly representing political ideas rather than nation state teams. There was a good deal of synergy between the two ideas, and I'm really looking forward to seeing both of these games in action. I especially liked Daniel's idea of the players being key figures, but not just politicians – artists, journalists, aristocrats – and the idea of the distribution/concentration of particular political positions in the population.

Onside Report: Tyranny Aristocracy & Democracy Ancient Greece by Andrew Hadley

As part of my reading for my Carthage game, I've got stuck into some of the absorbing accounts of Greek history, particularly of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars. I'd thoroughly recommend having a look at the period for anyone who isn't familiar – it's absolutely fascinating.

One of the main things that struck me about the see-saw conflicts was their overtly political character, and the constant process of 'regime-change'. In particular, the Sparta-Athens conflict saw the two great powers supporting political exiles and installing oligarchic or democratic governments in cities as part of agreements or even by force. In the end Athens was only defeated when Sparta was able to install an oligarchic government in 404 BC.



This struck me as especially fascinating given the largely apolitical (in the sense of the form of government) that dominates most of the historical periods in which we

game. Although this is not always the case (e.g. Iraq, post-WWI Russia) changing the form of government is not usually a war aim in most conflicts – it is usually about control, territory, resources and/or individuals.

I wanted to work on a game where the players represented the three forms of government as defined by Plato, Aristotle and Polybius, which form the political cycle. These are Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy, accompanied by their 'corrupted' forms, Tyranny, Oligarchy and Demagogracy/Ochlocracy (mob rule).

Following two interesting sessions on 1920s and 30s politics, James, Jon, Daniel and I discussed how the game might work in practice. I suggested a number of cities with the various classes represented by counters, which the players would seek to control, with victory going to the 'team' whose governmental form held sway in the most cities for the longest time. Control of a city would give the team access to tax funds which could be used to gain more support in cities.

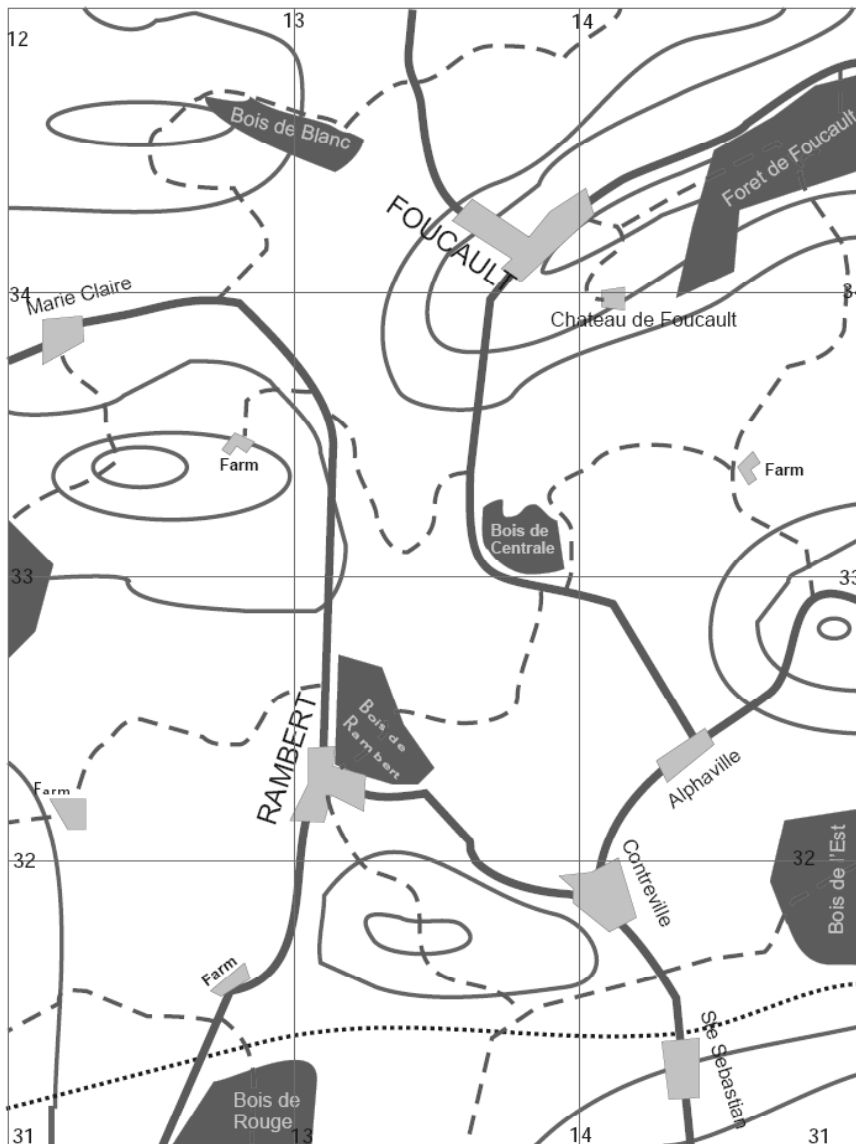
One comment was that I needed to ensure that the flavour of the period was present in the game – this could be done partly with cards or events involving historical characters and occurrences such as the Persian invasions. I might also try and use some of the original Greek words.

It was suggested that I focus on the mechanics of the game, perhaps with a small number of cities, before taking the game wider (my eventual aim is possibly a Mediterranean-wide game which would assimilate the Carthaginian game as well). It might even be useful to think of it as a self-contained board-game at first. I hope to run the (short) game in April/May 2007. Thanks for all the comments.

Other Chestnut Games

STONK by Jim Wallman was played at the September meeting of Chestnut Lodge and again...

Battle Report STONK fought Sunday 15 October at Jim's by Jurrien



Jim and Daniel provided the scenario and umpiring. The scenario was based on a sideshow on the Flank of the Goodwood offensive in July 1944. The forces involved were:

Germans: battalion of green infantry
Two companies regular Panzer Grenadiers
One Company of Veteran Panzers (All German tanks look like Tigers if your are in front!)
2 batteries field artillery 6 shots each.
Commanded by Michel and Jur

Canadians: 4 battalions regular infantry
One armoured reconnaissance squadron
One armoured car squadron
10 batteries of field and medium artillery, with 10 shots in stock
Commanded by Arthur, William and Mukul

The Germans were told that their infantry had a position on the ridge of Foucault and the Bois de Blanc, with a company isolated in Rambert. Meanwhile an advance guard of the Panzers was established at Alphaville, having occupied it that night in preparation for a full scale counter attack in the flank of Goodwood.

Canadian infantry were reported to be in strength at the Bois Centrale, from where they had made several unsuccessful attacks on Foucault. They were also assumed to guarding the flank of Goodwood on the Marie-Claire edge of the map. The task of the battle group was to clear the area up to Rambert as a base for the subsequent attack of the Panzer division. The tanks were to be harboured as far as possible.

To this end the infantry was ordered to advance on Marie-Claire and the hill beyond. A company of Panzer Grenadiers was to take Contreville, supported by a platoon of tanks, and to establish contact with the troops in Rambert. The rest of the Panzer force would then be committed to clear out the Bois Centrale or meet other eventualities. The attack started at 0600 hours.

Not surprisingly this plan ran into the teeth of a larger Canadian attack. Prime target was Rambert, which was subject to a 50 minute bombardment by 5 batteries followed by two battalions attacking from different angles.

At the same time the Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Squadron charged towards Marie-Claire. It met the advancing German infantry company on the crest of the hill and just rode them down, hardly noticing their presence and demise, before racing off map to their distant objective.

The attack on Rambert succeeded quite easily because the inexperienced Germans chose to hold their fire rather than use it at greater distance to pin down the attackers. The village fell quickly (around 0730h) although a platoon held out some time in the woods behind it until surrounded.

The only glitch in the attack was the near destruction of the battallion attacking from the hill between Contreville and the Bois Rouge. It was taken in the flank by the Panzer Grenadiers probing from Contreville. Heavy concentration of Canadian artillery on Contreville and support from the Bois Centrale saved the infantry from a massacre.

Arrival of the armoured car squadron was even able to outflank Contreville, thus cutting off the Panzer Grenadiers. However, anti-tank fire from Alphaville forced them to withdraw and the remaining Panzer Grenadiers were withdrawn safely under cover of the tank company.

This caused a major scare for the Canadians in the Bois Centrale, who had been subject to German artillery fire to suppress their fire. However, the tanks soon withdrew to their starting line as their object was only to get the Panzer Grenadiers out safely.

Urged on by the division commander, around 0830h the Canadians attacked out from the Bois Centrale towards Foucault, preceded by a short bombardment. Although this was quite successful, the last German infantry reserves were moved into the village and were able to stop the attack in its tracks. Although the battallions from Rambert were also moving up towards Foucault, the advance was called off at 0930h.

So, in the end the Germans were driven from Rambert and the Bois Blanc, while releasing Contreville. Two infantry companies and one of Panzer Grenadiers were virtually destroyed. However the Canadians had lost heavily in the attacks on Rambert and Foucault.

Two things stood out in the game: 1) infantry attacks without sufficient artillery preparation and/or armoured support are not going to be successful 2) the winning edge of the Allies was artillery superiority. Canadian ammo consumption was more than four times that of the Germans. The latter were forced to retain their last shots for emergencies. 3) good use was made of smoke by both sides to cover withdrawals. Offensive use of smoke would have helped.

My first impression of the rules is very favourable. Michel and I had little prior knowledge but picked it up quite quickly. Our inexperience was a bit of a disadvantage with our opponents, but using historical tactics seemed to be rewarded. Some rules need further elaboration, and we discussed a slight redesign of the counters for increased clarity and easier unit identification.

I liked Daniel's suggestion of variable turn length (representing friction), a pet project of mine, but how it could be done I'm not sure. *[Editors note: this topic has been explored further on the STONK yahoo group.]*

Thanks to Jim for hosting the game, and Daniel for helping. Michel and I enjoyed it a lot.

Megagame: Battle of the Somme 14 October 2006



We have received many messages of thanks to the organisers of the Somme Megagame.

The photo on the left is from the original battle, at the command post of Colonel Messimy, French ex-Minister of War (he's the chap with no helmet with his back to the camera), taken in September 1916.

Below at St Olave's School, Orpington 14 October 2006, we observe the same sort of deliberations at the front.

The next megagames scheduled are:

For the Light of the Trees

Vast epic conflict in Middle Earth
17 March 2007

Habsburg Ascendant

The 30 Years War
16 June 2007

The Last War 2

The whole of WW2 in a weekend
20-21 Oct 2007

Washington Conference (2)

Inter-war arms limitation
role playing
17 November 2007

See

www.megagame-makers.org.uk



CLWG Treasurer's Report

The club made a small profit in the 2005-6 year, with a balance of just over £700. Membership fees stayed level at £5 per year but may need to rise in the future to cover the costs of hiring venues for the Conference and Games Weekend.

There are 18 paid-up members for 2006-7.