Military Muddling

Volume 13 Issue 4 Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter March 2002

Editorial

Firstly my profound apologies to those of you that weren't at Clash of Titans. I printed up loads of copies of the last issue and handed them out there and then carted them about with me for the last three weeks or so. I even printed up a few copies of the previous issue for some of you that didn't get it. So there will be a few of you that get a very large envelope when this arrives, hopefully in time for the March meeting.

This issue is later than I expected as well. I've had a virus on my PC and have spent my time killing the bloody thing. For the few that like technical detail it was the nimda.gen that got me. It didn't manage to send you all e-mails before I got to it though. All it did was take up loads of disk space. (At least I hope that's all it did!) I also had to re-install MS Office. So in doing all that I still haven't installed my scanner, so still no cartoons.

Please write things.

Contributions for Military Muddling

To: James Kemp, preferably by e-mail to milmud@chestnutlodge.org.uk but you can also send paper or disks to me at 19 Castlegreen Street, Dumbarton, G82 1HG (note change of address)

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 22 March 2002

Trevor Farrant (Events Organiser) 020 8577 2573
Mukul Patel (Games Organiser & Admin Officer)
Michael Dollin (Treasurer)

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group

Date	Venue	Game	Author	Blurb
Sun 3 Mar 2002	Bedford Park Pub **from 12**	None but Americans	John Rutherford	A type of role playing game about a feature of what was called the "American Revolution". The revolution was a key event in history, and frankly a damned exciting one. Full of misunderstood heroes and villains.
		Massive attack	Mukul Patel	development session drawing on the talk at the conference. I want to try some things out in a game see what needs fixing, tinkering and ripping up and move the game forward. I want a sysytem for a fighting a sttcking Soviet Divsional sized engagement at the battle of Kharkov in about 1 hour for two people.
6-7 April	Jim Wallman's Office	Games Weekend		Offers to Trevor asap Trevor_Farrant@Gillette.com

Games pending.

I neglected this one but now ideas are starting to come.

By Trevor Farrant a WW2 land battle game. Very suitable size and setup for playing at a members home.

By Mukul Patel, Barricades and Borders the collectible card trading game. Yes I really mean it.

By Mukul Patel, Tanneburg 2, Streamline. Developing from Alsace Lorraine Streamline. A fast play game of the dramatic campiagn of Tannenburg.

Ok over to you. Lets gets some games and sessions going.

Venues

Jim Wallman's Office

The Wells
7-15 Rosebery Avenue
London EC1R 4SP
Telephone: 020 7841 3660

You need to press the button for "One Plus One Partnership" to get in. Nearest train station is probably Farringdon.

Bedford Park Pub

The pub is located on Streatham High Road opposite Streatham Station. It opens at 12:00 & games will be in the upstairs room.

Games Organiser

Message From Mukul

Email mukulpatel@37.com
Phone 020 8769 0538
Post 215 Valley Road
London SW16 2AF

Things I need when you do make an offer

- Participant numbers how many people do you need
- Venue - how many rooms needed, equipment needed such as tables or phones or intercoms etc,
- Is the session (game or whatever) ready to go and be included in the programme or is it still under development. If it is still under preparation when will it be ready
- When do you want to put it on or when do not want it put on.
- How much time do you want

Games Weekend

Message From Trevor

Trevor_Farrant@Gillette.com

I have a high level planning session for the WWII campaign I intend to run over the games weekend should take about an hour.

Also just to echo Mukul's sentiments offers are required for the games weekend (6th and 7th of April, Jim please can we confirm your office for the venue?). [***confirmed by e-mail on the club mailing list***]

So far I have WWII battle for Berlin very late April 1945, which can run for up to six sessions. I can also supply some of the old favourites for after dinner games but come on gamers it's a club show not just my weekend.

On/Offside Reports

Against the Nature of Gentleness

Offside Report by Rob Cooper

Edward IV, King of England, set sail from the continent with 200 loyal bodyguards and 1000 Flemish Mercenaries. His destination was Scarborough, from where he hoped to link up with the Duke of Northumberland, Warden of the Northern Marches. The King's most loyal supporter, Lord Hastings, had landed some days earlier in East Anglia and was raising a second army in his Midlands estates. With the support of his brother in law, the Duke of Burgundy, the King was returning to England to prevent its impending doom at the hands of the evil witch Margaret of Anjou. The perfidious Earl of Warwick had given Margaret's cause new hope when, together with the King's own brother (Clarence), he conspired with the Lancastrian Earls (Pembroke and Oxford) to place a crown upon the head of the idiot Henry (so-called, the Sixth). [***Tracy objected that he <u>was</u> Henry VI***]

At this very same time Margaret of Anjou and the so-called Prince of Wales were heading for Wales by sea, and the protection of the Earl of Pembroke, raising his own army in that province. The Admiral of the Fleet, unsure where his loyalties lay, shadowed her ships but did not intervene in her passage. Warwick, hearing of the possible return of Edward, headed North to his Yorkshire estates to raise new troops, while Clarence went West to raise yet more. The cunning and sly Earl of Oxford had however duped these two poor souls, who had previously been stout defenders of the Yorkist cause. Upon hearing of their departure from London he marched there with his retinue and seized the person of Henry in the Tower. There are those who say that Warwick and Clarence were simply unwitting pawns, while others suggest that much of this was a cunning ruse by the once brilliant Kingmaker. But, whatever the reason, events took a sharp turn at this point.

Warwick, raising men for his defence of Henry arrived at Skipton. But while here he heard that Hastings's army of 700 men was already raised behind him, between him and London. In addition news of Edward's landing reached him, as did the support for Edward granted by Percy, the Duke of Northumberland.

Thus, outnumbered and surrounded, Warwick marched to York to parley with

Edward. The beneficent King accepted the return of Warwick to the Yorkist cause, informing him that while his past actions might lose him his office as Master of Calais, his current one would allow him to keep his head. Warwick, always with an eye to a good deal declared his allegiance for King Edward, while several hundred of his new Lancastrian recruits slipped back home in the night. Showing remarkable trust, as befits a great King, Edward then transferred half of his army to Warwick with orders to subordinate himself to Hastings and march south to cover London. Meanwhile the King went North to meet Percy and reinforce his forces from this allies resources. However, when the King requested that Percy follow him south, or provide several hundred men to reinforce the King's Army, the worm turned. Percy turned his back upon the King and declared him "dictatorial". In the ensuing "Battle of Pickering" Percy was sent fleeing back North with his retinue.

Although Percy was now clearly a threat, and needed to be removed from his office, it was the King's foremost task to re-establish his control over England. Marching back south he joined Hastings and Warwick at Bedford, to take charge of his Army of over 3000 men preparing to march on London. The Admiral of the Fleet also declared for York, and prepared an army of 1000 men at Winchester. Margaret of Anjou and her lackey Pembroke cowered fearfully in Wales. And then, Percy in an act of supreme ignominy and folly, outraged by his embarrassment at Pickering, rallied a rabble of 2000 Scots to his cause, and undermining his office as Warden of the Northern Marches led them south into Northumberland. And while the Dogs of War strained at their leashes one final act of madness was enacted before the clash of armies.

The King's brother, Clarence, had returned to London, reinforced by some men he had recruited to Henry's cause. But he found himself barred from the man he had turned coat to support. The Earl of Oxford had barred the gates of the Tower of London against him. The Earl now controlled the Lancastrian claimant to the throne and Clarence had no cards left to play. It is said that he openly wept upon realising his betrayal of his very brother might end so cruelly. Throwing himself and some of his men upon the gates of the Tower, Clarence made one last desperate bid before dying with an arrow through his guilty heart.

This was an interesting and effectively compacted version of Nick's Wars of the Roses Megagame and he allowed me to reprise my role as the previous Prince Edward in playing it. The array of characters and the lack of sufficient long-term funds make for a tense battle of wits in this scenario. I went into the game with little hope, and with one ally against 6 potential or real adversaries. My one ally stayed with me as another potential ally turned enemy, and one certain enemy became a surprising ally in a tangled web.

The greatest success of any game is to make me forget mechanisms and start playing the role. This game succeeded admirably. Thanks to Nick for mounting this game.

American Civil War Battle by Mukul Patel

Offside by John Rutherford

Mukul had us designing a highly stylised battle system. The idea was that the Shenandoah valley would be represented by three sheets of A4, and our 'divisions' would be allocated in an attempt to hold as many as possible of them. As we began we went into a deployment race, which resulted in an enormous battle. Attacking proved very costly as Adam found out; his Union forces were battered when I launched a Rebel counter-attack and drove him away. As Mukul had intended, the absence of a reserve made it impossible for him to stop the rout. It would be good if Mukul could publish the rules that result from this tryout.

Shenandoah Valley

Onside report by Mukul Patel

I put on a game designed by the Streatham and Tooting collective. This is a battle game. It is set in a period of the American Civil War. The backdrop to the battle game is the Jackson Valley Campaign of which I know little but that it has hard on the Union.

The game is a very stylised. It features little terrain, no measuring stick and some dice. It takes less than an hour to play a big battle. When it is played and run by people who know and follow the rules it is a very challenging game featuring difficult decisions. (I forgot some of the rules, even though they are simple, so the game broke down a bit.)

The battlefield consists of the three fighting areas and a number of rear locations. It's hard for me to describe the system of the game but it does feature simplicity and speed of play.

I really enjoyed this game, it's got lot going for it. The battlefield game has been refined and simplified even more recently and had a campaign game created for it (or was the battle game created for the campaign game?) I am not sure. The campaign game will be run at this year's Salute. So those attending this years Salute will have the chance to play in a campaign game and fight a number of battles, politic like mad in a single day at a wargames show.

WW3 at Sea by Rob Cooper

Offside by John Rutherford

One of two elegant little games from Rob today. Reminiscent of his 'nuclear build-up' game, NATO and WARSAW PACT navies and marine aviation were represented by a fistful of cards [e.g. a card stood for two carriers, a surface group, or a pack of subs]. NATO had to bring 'convoys' across the Atlantic represented by a 'waypoint' map with between seven and twelve steps depending on the route; the Russians had to sink the convoys. Simple, vivid and very involving; the sort of wargame I could imagine giving a history class or any other group of newbies. Great stuff.

WW3 on Land by Rob Cooper

Offside by John Rutherford

Another little gem. Set-up time about fifteen seconds. Europe represented by a 'gridiron' type board with a dozen or so zones [e.g. Hamburg] on each side of the Iron Curtain, circa 1981. Soviet objective to get as close to Antwerp as possible, NATO to push them back. The front was literally a pencil. The main variables were expending 'logs' points and drawing cards that enabled escalation while giving attack bonuses, e.g. chemical warfare, air surge, tactical nukes!

This game was playable in minutes yet gave a good flavour and it was fun to see whether my bluffing worked on the NATO team who thought, I hoped, that I had more logs than I did - as I had attacked with no build-up. It would be excellent to run these two games in parallel, and of course could be linked to Rob's theatre nuclear options should that escalation occur. On the basis of these games, I suspect it would. Thanks Rob, great fun.

Rob Cooper's Cold War Games

Offside report by Mukul Patel

Rob has done a cold war land battle game, which is very quick and easy to understand. It's a stylised card based game. Opposing players chose a few options such as army deployment, air power and so represented by cards. These are played a few at a time and ultimately limited by the number of supplies each side has against the opposition and results simply determined. Movement of the frontline is represented on a simple one-column scale starting at the Inner German Border and ending up in the low countries. The game took maybe only half an hour.

Rob also put on a more complex Naval Cold War game. The map of the North

Atlantic and Mediterranean consists of a small number of linked boxes. Movement is thus box to box. Cards represent forces. Soviet Forces consisted by submarine groups, surface groups, ASW groups long-range missiles. Finite supply and nice theatre nuclear weapons limited supply. These forces/cards are grouped together into task forces and then manoeuvre across the map. Each side has separate maps. The results of conflict are easy to adjudicate.

Both of Rob's games are very simple. They sacrifice detail for speed and simplicity. They still retain, especially the naval game, difficult decisions for the players. I would like some more decision making for the land war game, to me it almost seemed too simple. I liked the naval game. I think that both of them would happily sit and function in the wider context of a cold war megagame, which I hope will happen.

Nightmare in Detroit, redesigning an umpire resolution system

Onside report by Jim Wallman

I was going through some old game designs, and looked at my Nightmare In Detroit game again. In the unlikely event that there are club members who haven't heard of this, the game is about the political upheaval that accompanied the massive race riot of July 1967 in the city of Detroit.

The original game has a fairly systems-intensive umpire map system that modelled the spread of violence and fires. Police, fire and national guard players order forces to map areas in an attempt to stem an unstoppable tide. I've, in the past, designed a computer-moderated version to try & take the effort out of the underlying model.

It's been a few years since I last looked at it, and I wondered, this time, whether the underlying model needs to be as sophisticated (or process intensive) as I originally designed it. It is easy to see how we get drawn into game systems that have lots of processes - that is how the history is written, and how we mentally break down what we are trying to simulate. But the question is, does it have to be like that?

In this case, I thought the good old *one brain cell methodology* might apply - i.e. look at what the outputs required of the system are, rather than the processes.

The game is a one-sided multiplayer game - the crowds and fires have no decision-making, and this means that all the security forces need to know is where they are and what they're doing. This allows deployment decisions and it is the success or otherwise of these deployments that form the source of the political conflict as successive levels of government (city, then state) have to admit failure and refer the problem up to the next level.

The bottom line is that the operational problem of quelling what becomes, ultimately, an insurrection, is probably insoluble - or at least very hard to solve. The city authorities have never faced a situation like this before, no standard operating procedure exists - everybody is, in effect making it up as they go along.

Players should feel that the situation is growing out of control, and that they lack the resources to deal with it.

So, what did this new perspective produce? It came down to a simple - almost draughts-like system of counters on the map, where they automatically increase in severity, then spread to adjacent areas unless the authorities intervene. The number of units needed to make an effective intervention varies according to the quality of the unit - police are very good (but few), national guard are useless, but numerous. The more intense the crowd activity, the more units are needs to make a difference. There are no die rolls, a force is either sufficient or not. There is one main simple reference table (which is quickly memorised). This makes for extremely fast resolution.

A couple of sheets of rules and explanation were all that was needed, and in solo tests I arrived at a rough balance of forces that reflected the actual build-up of police strength, and the growth of the problem.

Mukul was pestering me for a game, so I thought I'd give it a try at CLWG. Using the same map I'd used before, and some quickly assembled counters we exposed it to the full glare of the CLWG membership. The first game took about 40 minutes or so (I think), and was an abject disaster for the security forces. We reset and did it again. With the benefit of hindsight, the authorities shut the riot down in about twelve hours!

I was initially disappointed that the riot could be closed down quite so easily, because that isn't how I saw it. But there were some useful comments, including the thought that actually it might be better for player's morale if the umpire could reveal that it is, in fact, possible to 'win', just very unlikely (since the players can't possibly guess the optimum deployment on their first go). We had some very useful other comments on the start-up force, and also, as always, contact with players reveals the odd bits I'd left out of the rules or hadn't explained properly.

I think the net result was a very quick game system that could be used (hidden obviously) with in the large political game, with minimal stress on the person running the game. If anyone is interested in a copy of the umpire rules, just email me - or if there is enough demand to the editor, perhaps we might put them in MilMud?

Having done the system for Detroit, I'm wondering if it could apply just as well for any revolutionary, insurrection or riot situation, or even for a fantasy or SF version. It merely needs an 'areas' map of the city and the parameters would only need slight changes - the key thing being the player political briefings, and that they do not know how the game system works.

I'd be interested in others' thoughts on the subject. [***You'll find a copy of the rules in the envelope with this issue***]

Nightmare in Detroit 'Turbo' by Jim Wallman

Offside by John Rutherford

Jim told us he wanted to streamline this favourite 'rioting and politics' game, set in the enormous and catastrophic 1967 riots. I think the main objective was to reduce the umpire workload of running the 'rioters' [which are a non-played mechanism, and reminded me a bit of the 'Game of Life' syllogism {***use English!***}, i.e. the riot and fires would spread to neighbouring areas if not suppressed]. We tried out various ways of operating the 'rioters' so that they behaved similarly to their historical counterparts. Our cop and National Guard counters had variable skills, but were never sufficient to succeed - but see below. This freed us up to play the political game, which was about gradual escalation from City to State to Federal intervention.

We debated whether there should be a 'solution' to the riot, in the sense that a perfect deployment of cops could prevent its spread; but I think we concluded that even if such a set-up did exist, the chance that players would be able to find it - given the high Fog Factor of differing commands and political imperatives - would be remote. I commented that if such a solution did exist, it might be a useful riposte to players who claimed they had been stitched up by an 'impossible' problem. But if it did exist, there was at least a theoretical possibility it would be found and the game would abort early on - perhaps not a major problem unless with paying customers. The politics is in itself a fascinating conundrum and well worth playing; in a bigger game with press teams etc, it could almost be played in real time.

Jim Wallman's Nightmare in Detroit the hacked down version.

Offside report by Mukul Patel

A familiar setting for Chestnut Lodgers. The HUGE Detroit Race riot of the later 1960s. Jim created a simple fast system for creating trouble spots and fires of various grades. Players had to deploy riot control and fire fighting teams around a map of Detroit to try and control the ever-growing turbulent area. Jim had very fast and simple hidden rules for working out the effect these teams had on the various trouble spots. Part of the challenge of the players was making sure you did not get the blame for bad things, which I failed as State Governor. A few turns after my national guard turned up the riot grew even worse and property damage surged on.

The Other challenge was to work out how many and what kind of resources would work to control and then eliminate various kinds of trouble spots. It was a very easy game to pick up and play.

Reviews

Lord Of The Black Hawk Behind Enemy Rings

Certificate 15, All Cinemas Review by Simon Shakewell

I fell asleep a few times during this movie, lulled by the constant machine-gun fire, but I think it went something like this.

Brave American ace hobbit Frodo Baggins, [Tom Cruise] must fly a photo recon mission over MogaMordor to destroy the power of evil Serbali warlord Mohamed Milosauron [Mike Tyson]. Frodo's helicopter is shot down and he must fight hordes of orcs armed with AK-47s. He is helped by an elf [Julian Clary] a dwarf [Brian Blessed] and the elite U.S. Rangers led by Colonel J.J. Aragorn [Jack Nicholson or maybe Gene Hackman.] The climax is a welter of deafening bloodshed as Aragorn, 'Human Kebab' Boromir [Sean Hasbeen] and American gunships chop up and blast the orcs; the hummvees rescue the wounded and the magic photos proving Milosauron's guilt are safe in Frodo's pocket. But will Harry, even with Gandalf's help, be able to defeat Voldemort and win the Congressional Medal of Honor? We must wait till Christmas 2002 to find out.

Black Hawk Down, Book & Film Review

Nick Luft

I chose to watch the film first and read the book afterwards. I have wanted to read the book because it is the most requested book in the Joint Services Command & Staff College Library, next to the John Masters World War 2 memoirs. Two books the officers at the College actually want to read.

I watched the film first because I wanted to watch it as entertainment, without the knowledge reading the book would give. The Lord of the Rings film was spoilt because I had read the books and knew the plot quite well. I think I missed out because there were no surprises. When my family watched it later on they were full of excitement and questions about what will happen next. I find films more engaging emotionally and books more challengingly intellectually.

My first reaction is to be priggish. You see I remember writing, in MilMud, about U571 (or whatever it was called), and defending it against lots of allegations about its distortion of history. Well here is a good example of a US film about their own history that is distorted.

If you think the film Black Hawk Down is accurate examine the case of Private Blackburn, the guy who fell out the helicopter, the film added facts and changed the order of other incidents. Mind you Lord of the Rings is not faithful to the book either. What does this tell us about films and books? They are different. Don't expect them to be the same. Anyway, enough said.

The film Black Hawk Down is about men in combat and the reaction of warriors.

I have read a lot of criticism that the film should have been about something else that the reviewer thought was more important. Usually they would have preferred some criticism on the US or UN or The Chippenham Women's' Institute for the failure of the nation-building mission. This is so much wishful thinking. It's rather like criticising the film The Longest Day because it does not also consider the parallel Allied bombing campaign, Operation Pointblank.

The theme of the film is men in combat. And I thought it did not fully explore this theme. Perhaps it tries to tell the story of the action too accurately, and thus distorts its artistic thrust. I would have preferred to concentrate on fewer individuals and engage me with those characters, to experience their reaction to combat. The warriors' ethic, the warriors' code, is a timeless theme, and worth exploring.

I was quite surprised how the film showed USA soldiers shooting women and at times indiscriminately at other targets. In the book you learn that they were shooting children, women, donkeys, cows and into the middle of crowds, sometimes with mini-guns and rockets. In this respect the film sanitises some of the action despite its publicity stating it is the most accurate portrayal of combat.

I will have to buy several copies of this film for the College. I predict it will be frequently requested for inclusion in students' presentations. There is a current trend for using feature films in presentations at the college; regular ones are - Cruel Sea, Zulu, Saving Private Ryan etc. In the book the author mentions the soldiers regularly found themselves thinking they were in a film and only the reality of a nearby friendly casualty could change this. Also soldiers made film references, using well-known lines as jokes. Fairly bizarre but not uncommon. [***Bear in mind that the daylight portion of the action was videotaped from several aerial platforms - the author saw some of the 15 hours of footage***]

I was a little shocked, when reading the book, that some of the soldiers had such strong Christian faith. As an atheist who regards religion as an affliction of the weak minded and a Brit, who naturally eschews talking about such things I found this a little unsettling. Were these people really that convinced they are right and God was sanctioning their decisions? I find this worrying in any religious faith, whether it be Islamic, Jewish or Hindu etc. Why do people need a super natural intelligence to bolster what are their own isolated ideas? [***The most committed Christian I know is currently serving in our own armed forces, so it's not just an American thing - and he's not on his own, there is an officer's Christian union!***]

A theme the book emphasised was the lack of training and youth of most of the Rangers and how this caused some friction with the Delta Force and the helicopter crews who were more experienced. At times it seems that some of the Rangers disobeyed orders or forgot their battle drill. In the film one or two of the Rangers were portrayed as inexperienced, but mostly acted correctly in a tactical sense. Most of the Rangers hadn't seen combat and some only had a few years in the Army/Rangers.

Another aspect touched on in the film, the conflict between the commands on the ground, between the Delta Force and the Rangers, was given more room in the book. Apparently, two of the ground commanders were not talking. Groups of soldiers got mixed up or lost because of confusion between the commands. Films are not a good media for communicating complex ideas like this.

What is emphasised in book and film is the obsessive casualty focus of the US military. Black Hawk Down could be a scathing indictment of the US military's preoccupation of rescuing not just its wounded but its dead! At one point the entire rescue convoy, plus all the rescued soldiers are held up for hours while they free one corpse from a helicopter crash. Men probably died as a result and were certainly wounded, for this pointless act. In fact the whole operation was jeopardised because they sent the entire ground force to rescue the crew of one helicopter, thus causing more death and casualties.

[***At least one Ranger did die because they were trapped overnight. If they had abandoned the helicopter and come back for the body in the morning it would have been a whole lot easier and there would have been fewer casualties all round. It's against the US doctrine so not likely to have happened, but I couldn't help think that a British unit would have left the dead behind. The Somalis would have run out of steam after a bit and gone to bed, the UN forces could then have cleaned up.***]

Eventually the US mission became one of casualty evacuation. The overall mission was aborted and the initiative was lost. If the US task force commander had withdrawn his forces with their prisoners (the aim of the mission) and accepted the loss of two helicopter crews he would have been successful, with minor losses. By staying in to rescue the crews the US lost 18 dead and 70 odd wounded and the Somalis lost about 500 - 1000 dead!

The book mentions the Somali fighters' reaction and exploitation of this, casualty aversion. They perceived that the US soldier is not prepared to die fighting for his cause. To a Somali they were at home and no alternative. To the US soldiers, they wanted to get back to base and safety and normality, one guy kept on wanting to get back to finish his John Grisham novel. For the Skinnies combat was for real things, their lifestyle, their culture, their religion, their prestige, wealth and power. For the US Ranger it was a bit of excitement, to do vaguely some good, and to see what combat was like. Many of the Rangers joined up to get away from a boring job, in their healthy, well fed, secure life. Something a Somali might dream of. This does not come out well in the film.

One tactical lesson that is hard to grasp from watching the film was the contribution air power and technology made towards the US military effort. From the Somalis point of view the US soldier was well armed and equipped but lacking tactical acumen and determination. They regarded the American use of helicopter gunships as the tactical factor that saved the US soldiers. Frequently the US used the smaller helicopters Little Birds to swoop down on Somali crowds and literally blow them away. These agile craft were too swift and manoeuvrable for the Somalis to locate in an urban environment. The Somalis could cope with the larger Black Hawk helicopters; they shot four down on the day, because they had been taught by exiled Afghan guerrillas how to shoot down helicopters from their experience with Russian ones. These facts only come out from reading the book.

My conclusion is to watch the film for entertainment and scene setting. Read the book for a more factual account, an attempt at reportage rather than interpretation. Each medium has its strengths and weaknesses, but taken together they can compliment each other. Just don't expect the truth whatever that is.

I would suggest that to enhance a customer's cinematic experience a cinema should provide the book of the film with the film ticket. My reaction to watching a film based on historical events is always to find out more.

War Movie Reviews

John Rutherford

Behind Enemy Lines [Bosnia escape] is bollocks except for the bit where they get shot down, which is a good two minutes. Black Hawk Down [Mogadishu firefight] is not bad at all and worth seeing if you a) care about war movies and b) thought Private Ryan was worth seeing and the beach bit was the best. The portrayal of the Somalis shows them to be bad shots and very brave indeed. But we have a real stinker to come, apparently. The new Mel Gibson 'We Were Soldiers' is, allegedly, a mindless flag-waver along the lines of John Wayne's 'Green Berets.' Unbe-fugging-lievable. Why does Gibson want us to hate him? [**Don't tell me, Al-Qaeda are played by English actors? - should go down a storm here if that's true. Ed]**

Cochrane - Britannia's Sea Wolf. By Donald Thomas. Cassell, £6.99

John Rutherford

The real-life model for fictional heroes such as Hornblower and Aubrey. Amazingly, his exploits are more stunning than either of those two! Thomas does a good job of writing a life with more incident than would be credible in a story, and also capturing the social atmosphere of the Navy of the period. This book is a must for anyone with an interest in naval warfare, or who enjoys naval fiction of the O'Brien/Forester kind.

Guinness Book of Naval Blunders. By Geoffrey Regan. Guinness, £12.99

John Rutherford

You may be put off by the 'Guinness' bit, thinking it to be a crappy travesty like the current 'Book of Records' [a once-worthwhile reference book debased!]. But don't be put off - this is a good book, well written and full of interesting stories and facts. For students of military stupidity this is as good in its way as Dixon's 'Psychology of Military Incompetence'. Regan's book is at first thematic - useless officers, suffering and hardship, shipwrecks; and then a useful listing of battles showing notable incompetence; 21 of them, and I bet a game in each one. There is a companion volume of land-based disasters which I read but didn't think was as good as this Naval one.

Iron Coffins - a U-Boat Commanders' War. By Herbert A. Werner. Cassell £6.99

John Rutherford

Good technical background, but I found the story oddly unaffecting; perhaps the author's rather dry style.

Das Boot [The Boat]. By Lothar-Gunther Buchheim. Cassell £6.99

John Rutherford

You all know the movie based on this book; I found it an excellent read and full of detail about the men as well as the machines. A good companion book to Werner; between the two I think you could get a pretty good grasp of the reality of U-Boat warfare at the sharp end.

Colonel Waugh-Gaymer
The Voice of Reason

Urgh, where am I? Let me out of this cage, you Damned Buzz-cut Yankee! All right, ask me your questions! Yes, I am a senior member of a dangerous and heavily armed organisation. We call ourselves al-Dershot. No, not Arab, I'm British! Yes, we all sign up for glamorous violence, wouldn't you if you came from bloody Croydon? What? Pittsburgh is worse? Now I'm warning you, these slippers are primed to detonate!
TAKE ME AWAY FROM CUBA!

HURRAH!

Expected Issue Dates for Military Muddling in 2002

Issue	Deadline	Post date	Meeting [1]
April	22 March 2002	25 March 2002	6-7 April 2002
May	19 April 2002	22 April 2002	Sat 4 May 2002
June	17 May 2002	20 May 2002	Sun 2 June 2002
July	21 June 2002	24 June 2002	Sat 6 July 2002
August	19 July 2002	22 July 2002	Sun 4 August 2002
September	23 August 2002	26 August 2002	Sat 7 September 2002
October	20 September 2002	23 September 2002	5-6 October 2002

[1] All dates for meetings need to be confirmed by the Admin Officer.

Game designers are strongly encouraged to submit previews and general briefing in advance to stimulate interest in their session. Preferred format is typed in plain text, preferably by e-mail, but you can send me bits of paper, floppy disks, CDs, or whatever other medium you can get hold of. I shall award a prize for the most notable submission at the end of the year.

Articles can be sent by e-mail to: mailto:milmud@chestnutlodge.org.uk or by post to James Kemp, 19 Castlegreen Street, Dumbarton, G82 1HG