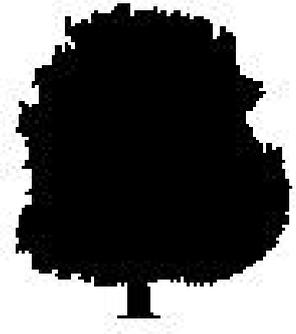


Military Muddling



Volume 13 Issue 6

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group Newsletter

May 2002

Editorial

Not a lot to say really. This is the sixth issue so far and we're over half way through the club year. Things appear to be dying down over the summer, or at least no-one has sent in any previews of games other than John Rutherford.

Lots of reports in this issue from the games weekend, but still plenty of scope for more, only a handful of the games in the programme were covered and not everyone who was there has written something, so please write an article if you haven't already.

Also with this issue is a set of rules that Jim Wallman has put together following his quick game at the games weekend.

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: 17 May 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 5 May	John Rutherford's House	Street Fighting	John Rutherford	Miniatures game involving house-to-house fighting.
Sun 2 June	Bedford Park	TBA		
Sat 6 July	Jim Wallman's office	TBA		

Games pending.

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

By Trevor Farrant a WW2 land battle game. Very suitable size and set-up for playing at a member's home.

John Rutherford's House

125 Gleneagle Road

Streatham

Telephone: 020 8677 5427

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

Located between Streatham Common and Streatham railway stations. Easy to get to by train from Central London (Victoria, London Bridge or Thameslink). Parking is atrocious in Gleneagle Road (AKA the home of double parking) but you can park not too far away.

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

"None But Americans" By John Rutherford. Suitable for anywhere but his house! I hate to think what he has in mind...

Games Organiser

Message From Mukul

Email mukulpatel@37.com

Phone 020 8769 0538

Post 215 Valley Road, London SW16 2AF

Ok over to you. Let's gets some games and sessions going.

Venues

Jim Wallman's Office

The Wells

7-15 Rosebery Avenue

London EC1R 4SP

Telephone: 020 7841 3666

You need to press the button for "One Plus One Partnership" to get in. Nearest train station is probably Farringdon. Parking is restricted before 13:00 on Saturday but is free on Sunday.

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 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

Bedford Park Pub

Letters to the Editor

From: Jon Casey [jon.casey1@virgin.net]

I was interested to read the views about the www.shotatdawn.org.uk website in Milmud 13/5. I agree with Andy that it is not really possible to have a case by case review after all this time, but I can't see how the almost negligible cost implications of a general pardon for those convicted of purely military capital crimes can be holding back a government that is prepared to squander millions on lawyers' fees for the Bloody Sunday enquiry.

This isn't the first time that the question of posthumous pardons for the soldiers executed in WW1 has been raised in Milmud. In Volume 8 Issue 7, back in the heady days of June 1997, when we still had a government committed to doing weird and wonderful things like enacting Human Rights and Freedom of Information legislation, I wrote in the editorial:

"I was glad to see that one of the new Government's first announcements was that the cases of the soldiers executed in WW1 were to be reviewed. While it is far too late even to bring comfort to the immediate families of most of these men, reopening these cases is worth doing if only to show those smug b*st*rds in the MOD who is in charge. The execution for

"cowardice" of these men was a disgrace even by the standards of the time; contrast their treatment with that of the "neurasthenic" officer-poets. The MOD's refusal to reconsider the cases implied that the executions were justified by military necessity; the implications that British soldiers (unlike their Australian counterparts) were only kept fighting through fear of the death penalty is a monstrous slur on the memory of all who served in the War, and a

perfect example of the British General staff's inability to handle a citizen army. And if the MOD understands that the Government and public expect greater openness in these matters, they may even be forced to do some justice to more recent victims, including the A-bomb test and Gulf War veterans..."

Well, five years and one election on, it looks like we can see who is in charge when it comes to expecting Ministers to take on MOD entrenched interests.

From: Nick Luft [nickluft@clara.co.uk]

Zero Resource Start Points

I made some general comments in my Offside Report of Brian's Barricade and Borders that seem to have confused Brian, from his remarks in April's MilMud (see page 6). Below is the original text:

The game started at a sort of Year 0, with all players at the same level of technology, size of armies etc. I realise that Brian is just testing a game, but I feel the game should never be tested with such a startup. All countries should have some development from the start.



Perhaps I should have said that this is a general feeling I get with all resource games, like Settlers of Catan; Civilization; Age of Empire etc. They present, often within a historic setting, a year zero. You start with a base of about 6 men and then start to build a medieval empire or whatever. This approach seems to turn what is a historic process, even if it is within a game, into a race game. How quickly can you exploit and develop.

I always prefer to start the above games with a developed city or civilization with a problem and then manage that problem. It appeals to my sense of historical process.

I do understand that resource games need testing and that testing from a similar baseline for all players is a useful test and will demonstrate problems etc. I should not have said never in my original comments. What I would like to see is a test of the game running from a later point of development. Testing a mature game is worthwhile. For instance if one player manages to achieve a dominant position, what can the other players do about it? Is there an optimum military resource? Is one resource more effective than the others? How would the game cope with one player whose economy was spiralling out of control? Perhaps some scenarios could be designed to test these ideas?

Balkans, I read a short chapter on the Balkans wars of 1912 and 1913. This brought up the remarkable fact that the Italian navy attempted to bombard the Dardanelles straits in 1911! Which of course does not help with the design of my game.

The stressful part is trying to get a design down on paper that is robust, simple and fit for the job. There is the added worry that it has to entertain and occupy the minds of up to 40 paying customers for an entire day. My designs for CLWG never have this burden.

I have yet to start the production cycle. Not until I have finished my design will I know what maps and counters I will need. Currently I feel more than a little dread at the prospect of having to provide maps for the Eastern Front, the Western Front and the other campaign areas of World War 1. The counters are a lot easier. But the maps...

The Muddy Path

Reflections on designing a Megagame *Nick Luft*

After running my one and only megagame, Shameless & Impudent Lords, in 1999, I wrote a longish piece for Mil Mud, reflecting on the design and production process for megagames and games in general. Well here I am in the middle of that process again. At the time I noted that the design process cannot be short circuited, it can only come when work has been done and then comes inspiration. The production of the game is just hard tedious work. Have my perceptions changed?

I now realise I actually enjoy the design process though I find it stressful too, but for different reasons. I enjoy researching for the game and how it gives direction to my reading. This is fun. Currently I am dipping into books attempting to read my way into campaigns I have limited knowledge on: the Serbian campaign, 1914-15; the Salonkia campaign, 1915-1918; and in an attempt to understand the

Game Previews

After You Sir *by John Rutherford*

A game about the nature of command and teamwork. Early 21st century. A squad of soldiers is preparing to do a mission into dangerous territory. Will the way they prepare make any difference to the outcome? How important is the officer? The NCO? Will the soldiers work as a team? Will you survive?

This game will start as a roleplay meeting and will move on to use toy soldiers and perhaps live action depending on player decisions.

On/Offside Reports

Humbugged, by G-d!

Offside Report by John Rutherford

Who was humbugged? I don't think I was, was I? Answers to the Editor...

A kriegsspiel game set in the Napoleonic era; Arthur told us it was a refight of the Ligny/Waterloo campaign on different ground, but knowing that did not really help me, as the invading commander and Napole-clone, {or perhaps Duke of Badlyington} Ruritanian General Nashorn. Probably I don't know the history well enough to be able to tweak it to my benefit. Would I risk my life to capture... Brussels?

Anyway, at the start my plan had been pre-determined for me; my 2ic was to screen off one half of the Bosrovians while I beat the other half. I wrote orders for 'General Nickkopf.' And my own Corps. I enjoyed this bit – as my son Adam {General Schlachtenbummler, heh-heh} was my staff officer, I was able to do my orders by dictating them to him. Striding up and down, hands behind back, pontificating prussianly, I felt quite authentically military.

Unfortunately the slow pace of the game from then on took some of the fun away. After a couple of hours of play, maybe representing four hours of real time, my forces had not yet deployed against 'Brummar' and the only sizeable action fought was Nickkopf against 'Wilhelm'. I had very few decisions to make - or at least, if I had more I didn't perceive the opportunities - until we got together at the end and we were able to see how the situation might develop over the rest of that day, and perhaps subsequently in speeded-up time.

The Battle of Nennweiler (Nickkopf vs. Wilhelm) was destined to be an epic, and my Zobigker could be memorable too! I thought it a pity there wasn't time to play the fascinating issues of actions dependent upon each other; two battles developing slightly out-of-synch and

a few leagues apart make a good leadership and generalship challenge!

The time it seems to take to resolve actions means, I think, this would be a better game if a whole day could be set aside for it; though perhaps the players need not be engaged on it full time. I think it would be great fun to have it running in 'real time' over a whole day, with chunks of time programmed for players to decide actions, write orders etc – maybe five minutes an hour, with a fifteen-minute session every two hours. That would allow players to take part in other activities, if they chose, during a day or even weekend-long event. I think the level of detail Arthur felt was appropriate for order-writing could be fitted into that time as long as each team had a decent staff. I thought the scenario of 'two parallel battles with results of one feeding into the decisions of the other commander' to be an intriguing one, well worth developing. Perhaps it could also be a real-time email game, using Netmeeting or similar for map updates.

In any event, thanks to Arthur for doing this, especially as I gathered he was suffering somewhat from sleep deprivation.

'Arm! Arm! It is – it is – the baby's opening roar!' [Byron, 'Childe-carer's Pilgrimage']

Knocking the Props Away

Onside Report by Nick Luft

Knocking the Props Away is the name for my next Megagame to be played on the 23rd November this year. It is a high level strategic / political game of the First World War, starting in late 1914, after all the initial deployments and moves had stalled, leaving the future course of the war to be decided.

At the Games Weekend I intended to run a test of my combat rules, focusing on the Serbian campaign of 1914. I did the research, made a simple map and grabbed some coloured counters, wrote up the orbats and was ready for a little play test scenario.

Of course being CLWG we never got beyond looking at the map. I was immediately plunged into a discussion about scale and intention and game level and game function. Later the discussion moved onto integrating the political and naval aspects of the game.

This was a very useful discussion for me. It made me re-focus my level of design – something I feel I had realised but not admitted to myself. Some of my ideas (eg how to handle technological development within the game) were approved, but there was a lot of discussion about how to reflect political support, troop and civilian morale, arms production etc.

When I got home I sought out and read the chapter “Total War and Power Balances, 1914-1918” from Paul Kennedy’s “Rise and Fall of Great Powers”. This was a useful exercise. Somehow I need to design a game that fits his level of analysis of the war. I must, I must think big.

Thanks. I may be back to bounce more ideas off you.

Knocking the Props Away ***Offside Report by John Rutherford***

Nick gave us a particular issue to help him resolve, and in typical CLWG fashion we created our own agenda and gave him more advice than he’d have got at the Annual Convention of Agony Aunts.

Nick is designing a megagame on the Great War, and he wanted to know whether a particular early campaign – Austrian invasion of Serbia – should be played at a different counter-scale to the rest of the game. The issue was that this campaign had huge consequences for later events, yet if resolved at ‘Western Front’ scales would be a mini-campaign of only three counters. Other ‘Little’ Campaigns – e.g. East Africa – would not feature as their consequences were deemed too trivial. I think Nick decided he could build enough player-choice in to be able to stick to only one scale.

Then we had a large and free-wheeling discussion about morale, national [home] morale, army morale; which I hope gave Nick food for thought. And then we talked about Navies, which we agreed were nice to have and fun, but difficult to integrate into a large-scale Great War game, unless by creating categories allowing clear distinctions between big and little ships and subs. Dave Boundy was able to offer support on this from his ‘Washington’ megagame and I think Nick felt he was progressing there.

Good Chat - defined as plenty of dead lice - with some Pals.

Hi Jack! ***Onside By Jim Wallman***

Not so much an onside, more an apology.

There was a small gap in the programme on the Saturday afternoon, and I happened to have a map of Luton Airport with me (as you do) - I did a instant rehash of the Aircraft Hijack game that I did year ago. I spent about 20 minutes doing the briefings and a layout of a 737-300 from memory, and off we went.

The apology is to those who were dissatisfied with the game because the roles, rules and briefing weren't clear enough and the situation wasn't realistic enough for them. ("the SAS couldn't possibly have got to Luton so quickly...." - like you'd *know* that?)

Next time maybe I'll spend a whole half-hour writing the emergency fill in game....or perhaps they'd like to step into the breach with a game?

The roles were

- Police (Airport police - Pickles, Local Police John R)
- Airport Management (Mukul)
- Army (Sean and Adam R)
- Home Office (Andy Hadley)

- Democracy and Freedom Today - British Underground General Group Executive Resistance Service) Alex, Jerry and Colin)
- Flight Crew (Nick and Arthur)
- Game Control (Me, Peter and Dave Boundy)

General Situation

SimpleJet Flight CLWG0001 has been hijacked and forced to land at Luton Airport. The terrorists that hold the plane are believed to be armed and dangerous. The aircraft (a Boeing 737-300) is very low on fuel and has to be refuelled before it can go anywhere.

What happened (in brief).

Plane landed at Luton and the authorities start trying to come up with a plan. The terrorists demand €5M and the release of some prisoners, to be delivered by a policeman in his underpants (...no, lets not go there).

The terrorists quickly lost patience with the stalling tactics of the authorities and started shooting people.

The SAS arrived and planned a joint assault with the armed police present.

The flight crew, sensing an opportunity, jumped on of the terrorists - taking his gun, and in the ensuing short gun battle the pilot (Nick) was killed and one of the terrorists wounded. The co-pilot survived.

The SAS conduct the attack with the 4 SAS men that had arrived (most of the British Army was still 'on its way').

Co-ordination between the police assault and the SAS assault fouled up (as expected) - and the brute force SAS attack prompts the maddest of the terrorists (Jerry) to detonate his bomb, blowing the plane in half and killing many, including himself. Lots of unhappy people, bad media coverage etc etc - game over.

My special thanks to Peter and Dave for umpiring a game they hadn't seen before - in the true CLWG 'make it up as you go along' spirit. Cheers guys.

War Against Tourism by Jim Offside Report by John Rutherford

Jim created this game ad hoc, and it provided a good role-playing opportunity which I relished. It was also surprisingly thought-provoking. Ostensibly a 'silly' role-play of a 'terrorist' attack on a plane by DAFT (our old friends 'Democracy and Freedom Today') [*Huzzah! For our old friends!*] it quickly took on a darker, more troubling edge as the terrorists started to shoot hostages.

There was a total lack of trust between them and us (I was playing a senior policeman, Sir Archibald Volestrangler.) Our attempts to open a dialogue with the DAFTs were fruitless, because they, manically from our point of view, refused to give us enough time to do anything other than attack them. Granted, our plan had been to stall, but it quickly became apparent that it would actually be quicker to send in an SAS attack than it would be to organise the refuelling of the 737. DAFT thought they had been waiting too long and would NOT listen to our protests. Here is a sample.

Me [cop] to Airport Manager Mukul: 'How long will it take to organise a fuel bowser?'

Manager: 'Our staff have either run away or have refused to drive the bowser, whether in underpants or not.' {at this point two passengers had been shot}.

I order a brave cop (Trevor) to prepare by finding out how the bowser works. This will take at least 20 minutes unless he wants to cause an explosion. So I call the DAFT on the plane.

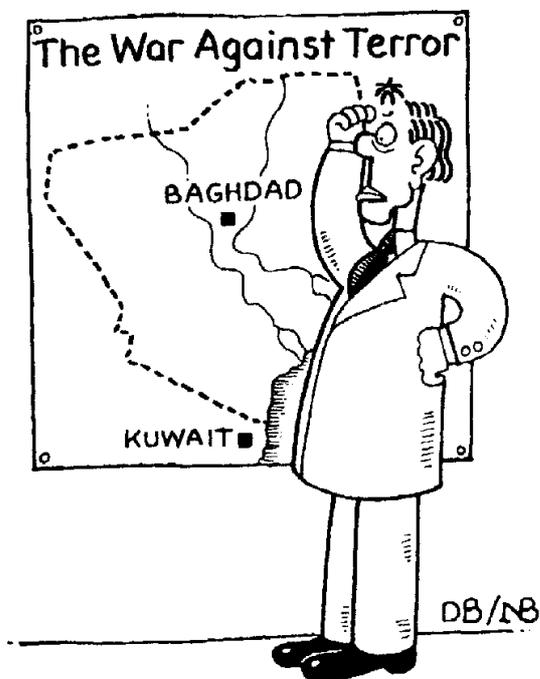
DAFT: [in Alan Rickman 'Die Hard' accent] 'You haff ONE minute to start refuelling zer plane or a hostage vill die!'

Me: 'Hang on, that's impossible... can't we negotiate? Please...'

DAFT: 'VON minute!' [hangs up]

FX: BANG

And so on. In the end there was general agreement among all the other players that the DAFT must be shot down mercilessly like mad dogs. And so in went the SAS, but there was explosive on board and everyone on the plane died. Suboptimal outcome. Granted the DAFT players had decided, they told us in debrief, that they would play as insane and irrational, but it was a little galling to have no chance at all of negotiating...maybe a future outing, with a little more time for preparation, could give the DAFT more complex objectives than soldier-assisted suicide?



Caught between Iraq and
a hard place

Hostage Crisis at Luton Airport *Offside Report by Nick Luft*

Jim designed this on the Saturday morning of the Games Weekend. The scenario was a familiar one. Three political terrorists (or were they?) produced pistols and took over a 737 flight and diverted it to Luton airport, making

various demands for cash (in Euros), refueling and clearance to fly elsewhere.

The players' roles were as terrorists, air crew, airport management, Home Office officials, police, army and special forces. I played one of the air crew who heroically died after wrestling one of the terrorists to the ground.

As is often the case with these games, the difference between live-action role playing and a moderated committee game blurs. Most of our activities on the flight deck were real time unless we were otherwise told. So as the air crew we could listen in to the terrorists' discussions and bickering about what to do next. However when they split up and we decided to take our chance to overpower one, we had to get an umpire to assist. There was of course the difficulty of maintaining information flows between the various groups so that when the counter-terrorist force struck, the terrorists would see this. Difficult to do, especially with only 2 umpires.

As an interesting development some of the players used the internet to research for information they would not have had to hand. So the counter terrorist units looked for plans of 737's and other information. Live action researching!

Jim intended to move the inevitable counter terrorist fight onto a PC game, that involved a shoot-up on a 737, with the players playing each side. This was attempted, but inexperience with the game controls caused some problems for the participants.

DoomStone - Wild West Game *Offside by Jim Wallman*

Not much to say about the this - the plot was far too complex for me to have time to write a blow-by blow, so I'll concentrate on the game systems.

Pickles has a good track record for this sort of game, and I don't think we were disappointed. The structure was free role play, with a few mechanisms for combat. As usual we all milled about finding out as much as possible whilst at the same time giving away as little as possible.

Pickles had written the personal briefings so that we all had a major plot and links for a number of sub-plots. Victory conditions were loose and there were several options - so there were several ways one could come out feeling good (if not actually 'winning'). I think this is essential because it is too easy to be 'blocked' by limited single-issue objectives.

The gunfighting mechanism was good - designed to reflect the stylised movie-style gunfighting that this game was about. It didn't get in the way, and allowed for all sorts of movie cliché's - like the gunfight the Sheriff (JR) and I had against the dynamite-throwing mad Mexican bandit (Nick - typecast again).

It needed quite a bit of umpire intervention - but that added to the play, even if it was more work for Pickles - we were able to do stuff.

An enjoyable game, thoroughly recommended, and I look forward to the next one (or it's ilk).

***Doomstone – Wild West Role Playing
presented by Jonathan Pickles
Offside Report by Nick Luft***

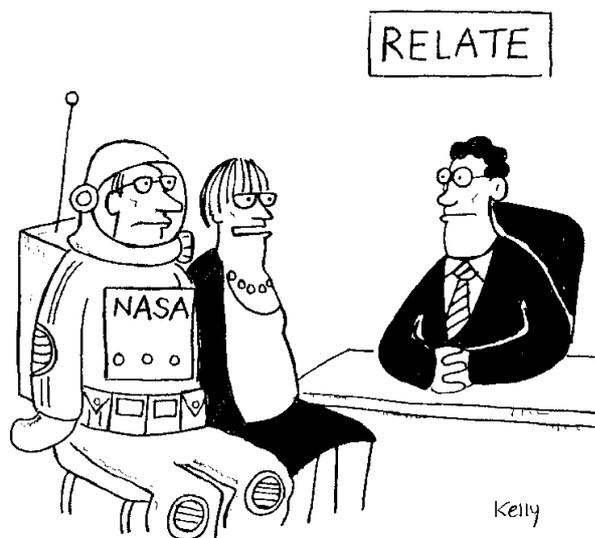
This was a sprawling game that was loosely based on so many recent cowboy films it was a reference-spotters heaven. The main plot was a gunfight knock-out competition, stolen unashamedly from the film "The Quick and the

Dead". Pickles had many sub-plots for each character that usually involved another player-character, so that interacting with the players was a must to achieve your sub-goals.

During the game each player was more intent on their personal goals than the main plot. This seemed to cause Pickles some problems as I think he had designed the game to be self-regulating, with little need for umpiring, so long as the duelling plot was the main focus. When we started to disappear off into multiple locations and ask for rulings about what other players would see of our actions, things got a bit more tricky for him.

My role was that of a Mexican patriot, a freedom fighter, who bore the real name of the historical character Pancho Villa (Pickles told me Pancho changed it because it was like a girl's name). I was able to play a boasting, shifty, devious and noisy Mexican, more based on El Tuco (the Ugly) from the "Good, the Bad and the Ugly". My accent was wide ranging and varied.

I had two plot lines. The first was that I wanted guns and would pay for them with some of the cash I started the game with. Obviously I would steal cash to achieve this aim too. I also had incomplete information about the location of a large cache of loot. I rapidly assumed that the graveyard was where the loot was buried - it was the only other location and each grave was clearly named. I talked to the other players about the graves, all except Jim's character, who I suspected was a Mexican hater, though I found out later that he had the second clue of the three clues needed to find the correct grave and a supply of guns. Doh!



"He says he needs space"

I had the skill of using dynamite, either to assault others or blow up safes. When I could not find the hidden loot I decided to steal the competition prize from the Sheriff's house and make off. I quickly acquired a supply of dynamite from Trevor, who was playing the kid, Leonardo di Caprio, from his role in "The Quick and the Dead". The kid had a wonderful role-playing ability of being able to eavesdrop on all conversations, as he was only the kid, so we would ignore him.

I went to the Sheriff's house after calling up my Bandidos and riding through town and confronting the Sheriff (John Rutherford, playing Gene Hackman) who had just defeated me in a gunfight. It was not a good tactic, as it alerted him, but what the heck I was El Tuco, I had to grab screen attention with my facial grimaces and swaggering boasts. On my way to the Sheriff's house I met Jim, a "southern good ole boy" or the "man with no name" – I was never too sure who he was - who had been made a Sheriff's deputy. He tried to stop me. He was a better gunfighter than I was, but I was able to use my dynamite to blow away his men, and for a while it was touch and go, and then the Sheriff turned up, and it was all over.

A good game. Upon reflection I wonder if it was necessary to try and run the main plot. With all the sub-plots each player was happily interacting with other players and pursuing their

own goals. I liked the gunfight duelling rules, once you had used them, the next fight was much quicker and there were some tactics behind the card play. Perhaps there is a need for a set of shoot-out rules, in which players either ambush each other or get involved in a large scale shoot outs. A top gunfighter would always beat a lesser player in a straight duel, so the only option was to avoid duels with them, but there was no other tactic to use, except stealth and dynamite.

Doomstone by Jonathan Pickles
Offside Report by John Rutherford

This was a game of the sort even many non-gamers have tried – a 'dinner-party'-style role-play murder mystery, with a Hollywood theme. As the sheriff [corrupt and very dangerous] I was the best gunfighter in town with the personal objective of finding a tough and evil hombre to be my new side-kick. I didn't get very involved in the mystery plot which seemed to be about a dead whore with a key in her guts...

The gunfighting system was not as simple, I thought, as Pickles assured us it would be, but it was good at creating tension, at least when it was an even fight. My character was so tough it was only fair when my Mexican enemy (El Lufto) threw dynamite at me! I still killed him though. Having found the evillest desperado in the game to be my new side-kick, we formed the Hole-in the-Wallman gang and rode off into the setting sun, our saddlebags full of silver dollars...

A Knight to Remember
Offside by Jim Wallman

The Jousting Tournament at the games Weekend

A great game brought by Phil (Trevor's mate). Simple rules, fantastically fast play, easy and fun. I also thought it was a pretty good simulation of a highly stylised form of personal

combat. I hope Phil can be convinced to write it up, with the rules, for MilMud, because it is well worth re-visiting. The best thing of its type since Arthur Harman's classic (in both senses) Gladiators game. *[If I get sent rules I'll publish them]*

Stockmarket from Nigel Buckle Offside by Nick Luft

My main gaming activity now-a-days is playing commercial boardgames. So when I saw a well produced boardgame at the club I decided to play.

I was very impressed at the quality of production. Nigel had not only colour printed onto card, but had laminated all the boards and chips. His playing cards were neatly housed in silver backed plastic card holders. *[I'm sure this is all rather ideologically unsound you know!]*

As the game was introduced I thought the rules were a little complicated, with various adjustments being made according to a variety of factors. During the game I found that the factors were well colour coded and were easy to control.

As we learnt the game we quickly started to move the game on. Players were given several options during their turn and always wanted to do all of them, leaving them in the happy position of having to decide which was better.

The game was a fairly straightforward simulation of the stockmarket. Shares were bought and sold, dividend and price were set by our actions and other random actions, from card play. An interesting variant was that each company's business strategy was rated as low, medium or high risk, giving more information for a player to judge their dealings.

I found that maintaining the game information was a bit tedious. Every card played often meant moving one or two markers, to adjust either the dividend, the share price or a company's progress on the risk track. Some chance cards

were a little ill-conceived – one card meant that you played more chance cards. Sometimes the combination of several card plays meant moving the same company multiple times only to get back near to where it had started. I thought a simpler random effect generator could have been used.

One particular rule was inelegant and perhaps a game fudge. Once a company achieved certain level on the price track it was very hard to dislodge. With good cards and a little luck this was achievable in the game. Once in this position a company could start to earn a lot of money.

There was also a rule that effectively made a successful company's share worth two shares out your allocated 10 share holding limit. This usually meant having to sell another share. I could not understand why this rule existed at the start of the game and it did seem complicated for no good reason. After the game I realised that it was probably introduced to try and limit the positive feedback that a company could reach once it had achieved a certain price and dividend limit. The stronger it was the more it earned.

The game did not excite me. There were some simple calculations, some no-brainer decisions and a little risk taking to be done. There was a lot of chance occurrences too. I suspect it is a game that has an optimal strategy if you can be bothered to sit around and calculate it. None of the mechanics inspired me as being elegant.

I know that Jerry enjoyed this game and was even talking about cost of production and buying a copy. I do not enjoy calculating games. So perhaps my criticism should be seen in that light. And if any of you think my criticism is based on performance in the game, I came second.

Middle Earth Boardgame ***Offside by Jim Wallman***

Trevor ran a Middle Earth boardgame with 1/300 scale figures for counters. I was one of the free peoples (known as Goblins to some), Jerry (Big Chief Errixs) was, obviously, Chief of the Free Folk (orcs), and Peter Howland was in charge of the Mumaliks (elephants-sort of) and the Slave. We were fighting Sean as the E***s, and later Mukul as Men of the Westernness and Mark as the Dwarves.

The scenario was a race - the E***s had to get some scummy seed into the City of Minas Turdith (or something), and we had to stop them. Not my real objective, obviously, which was to kill as many of those nasty E***s as possible. *[Why is it that most people see E***s as nice friendly creatures? They're obviously like cats...]*

The game rules were nice and simple and fast moving. Basic boardgame stuff, played on hexes, zones of control, push-backs, advance after combat - I'm sure everyone knows this sort of thing. I really felt quite nostalgic for a while. Was it really 25 years ago that 'Napoleon at Waterloo' came out? You never know - these games on hexes might really catch on....!

Anyway the battle became deeply confused and convoluted - resulting in a total and utter victory for us - on a single die roll at the end. We did ask whether we could have saved ourselves 2 hours and just done that at the start - but it was amusing anyway. And I did get to kill a very large number of E***s, before I got killed myself, so the time wasn't entirely wasted.

Thanks Trevor - it was fun, and recommended to anyone who wants a short, easy and visually pleasant game.

Steel Coffins from Phil ***Offside by Jim Wallman***

This was the second run, I think of a tactical tank fighting game. It used 1/72 scale tank

models and we played on a simple model terrain about 6' x 4'.

On one side were Mark Weston and Peter (I'll get you next time) Howland as the evilly beweaponed German Hordes, and on the other Jerry Elsmore and I, the square jawed defenders of the Motherland as the Soviets. The Germans had six tanks (assorted PzKwIVs and a rather lonely little PzKwIII), and we had four (two shiny new T34/76s and 2 doughty and reliable KV1s).

The scenario was straightforward - the Germans had to cross the narrow width of the playing area, and we had to stop them. Phil had thoughtfully added a couple of handy ridges - which by some stroke of tactical genius we immediately occupied in hull-down positions - with the aim of massacring the German tanks as they charged over the open plain towards us.

Well, it wasn't exactly a massacre, more a grazed elbow - as we had only managed to knock out one enemy by the end, and had lost a T34 in the process.

We then, inevitably, had the debrief on the game system. This was most interesting in that Phil had decided to concentrate on the minutiae of tank fighting. It was his aim to introduce some elements of skill and judgement - if possible to do away with dice altogether. This meant that we had to issue orders for our tanks giving 'track speed' (yes - movement by track - so, for example, you made the left faster than the right to turn right), turret bearing - to the nearest degree or so (Phil thoughtfully provided marked protractors), and gun elevation (in bands from 1 to a maximum of 10 or so).

When we wanted to fire, we used pre-prepared range sticks - different lengths for different gun elevations. These were placed exactly along the bearing of the tank gun. The sticks were marked with colour coding to determine which part of the tank had been hit. This would allow the skilled firer to judge their shot to hit hull, or turret or tracks. In our case, of course, just

getting the round to land somewhere near the target was a major achievement.

Moving tanks had the only bit of die-rolling, because the movement of the tank might put the gun off its aim by either elevation or bearing.

Finally, Phil's system had a command and control delay feature - we all had to write orders several turns in advance - more turns in advance for the Soviets than the Germans to reflect their poorer command and control and crew quality.

In game terms, however, this all made for quite a slow game. In two hours we had played about 20-odd game turns and the German tanks had advanced about 30cm or so. They had fired five times, we four. This would be faster with more experienced players, obviously.

I thought the game was interesting - particularly the attempt to make it a 'skill only' game. The disadvantage was that it was probably less entertaining than it might have been because in order to allow for skill, you have to introduce quite a bit of detail. I think I would have preferred the game to be one player per tank (but then I wouldn't I?)

Anyway, in discussion afterwards we thought through some ideas to speed things up a bit, hopefully Phil will find them useful, and that we'll see another outing of the game at CLWG sometime in the future.

Reviews

Tank Tracks, Peter Beale *Review by James Kemp*

This is the story of 9 RTR in WW2 written by one of its officers and including material from many of the survivors and contemporary diaries, including the battalion war diary, the brigade history and at one point the radio logs. It is packed with a wealth of material, much of which is a direct quote from a primary source. If

you want a feel for what life was like for a heavy tank battalion then this is the book to read. The stories told by the survivors and in the diaries don't pull any punches, and some of what is described is quite horrific, many of the casualties in the battalion are well documented and the nature of the injuries suffered by tank crews tend to be severe.

The battalion re-formed in late 1940 and was one of the first to be equipped with Churchills. It trained in the UK until mid to late June 44 when it went to France. It took part in Goodwood & Epsom and the Falaise battles supporting the Canadians and 43rd Wessex Division at various stages. After that they were involved in the capture of Le Havre, Walcheren, and the Reichswald.

Each of the stages of the battalion's existence and each of its battles forms a chapter. These are opened by the official account of what happened followed by personal narratives of events during the same period. Often the same incident is reported from several sources which gives you a clearer idea of what might have happened, and the level of confusion. For example one tank driver reported that he had no idea where he was during one operation as his vision slits were covered in mud and he was relying on the tank commander to guide him.

At the end of the book are several appendices with a wealth of statistics and other information useful to gamers. Amongst other things the casualties are very well documented, not only in the usual table of numbers, but it also gives service number, rank, name, trade, appointment (e.g. troop leader's driver), date, place, and sometimes a short description of the incident (e.g. mortar fragment in the face). There are also extracts from operational orders and most battles have several maps showing you the ground and the movements of the troops.

Overall I'd rate the book very highly and strongly recommend it to others that have an interest in WW2 and/or tank operations.

“With the Jocks” by Peter White
Review by James Kemp

This is an excellent book and I would recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone who is interested in an infantry platoon commanders view of the NorthWestern Europe campaign in the last few months of the second world war.

The book is based on Peter White’s contemporary diaries and has been published posthumously. The book covers his time as an infantry platoon commander with the 52nd Lowland Division from when they first went into action on Walcheren Island in late October 1944 to the end of the war. It is a much more detailed account of life in very unpleasant surroundings than some of the other books written by his contemporaries. I would rate it much higher than Sidney Jary’s 18 Platoon for detail, although I can understand that Jary may have had to tone down his text because many of those involved were still alive when it was published.

I read this book immediately after reading Band of Brothers, which I thought was a pretty good book and showed how hard life was for infantry soldiers in WWII. However compared to the experience of the White’s platoon the men in Easy Company had a very easy war. By British standards 52 Lowland also had an easy war. They were a territorial division and went to France for about 6 days in 1940 before being evacuated without being substantially engaged. They spent the next four years training as mountain troops and then as airlanding troops. They finally landed in Belgium in October 1944 and went into action for the first time at the end of the month. They didn’t come out of the line until the war ended. On two separate occasions White’s platoon suffered 75% casualties, once from ‘friendly’ fire.

Anyway, I think it’s a powerful book and I think you should all have a wee read of it.

*Israeli tanks
began pulling out
of the West Bank
towns today ...*



*Both sides have agreed to
co-exist within a framework
of mutual understanding,
respect, and love.*



*Prime Minsiter Sharon
declared "Operation
Defence Shield" a
complete success ...*



*And now
the weather ...*



*.. and Chairman Arafat
recognised the legitimacy and
restraint of the action, and has
called on all Palestinians not to
retaliate*



*Hell froze
over today...*



Poetry Corner

The General *Siegfried Sassoon*

'GOOD-MORNING; good-morning!' the General said
 When we met him last week on our way to the line.
 Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
 And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
 'He's a cheery old card,' grunted Harry to Jack
 As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

Expected Issue Dates for Military Muddling in 2002

Issue	Deadline	Post date	Meeting [1]
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: milmud@chestnutlodge.org.uk or by post to James Kemp, 19 Castlegreen Street, Dumbarton, G82 1HG

Colonel Waugh-Gaymer



The Voice of Reason

U.S. Ranger Loo-tenant Hernhern kindly explained to me why we Brits get the most dangerous missions. 'It's simple, you goddam Limey bastard', he confides. 'American voters don't care if YOU get killed.' That's reassuring, isn't it, gentle reader?

Meanwhile budget pressure even at the Front Line! Bean-counters force me to choose between a] choccie biccies at my Mission Briefings or b] a box of 'bullets' for my 'pistol'. [?? check with ATO for correct technical terms here] This is what my U.S. chums call a no-brainer! Bagsie the Viennese Sandwich!

HURRAH!