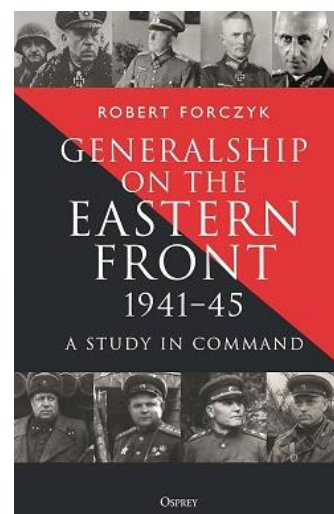


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Alien RUSE: Ripley's Sacrifice
Day At The Museum: Edelman Dinosaurs
WWI RFC: Kansas State University
HMGs Next Gen: Schoolin' Students in History

NEWS: Minis, Events, and more.

Books I've Read

Generalship on the Eastern Front 1941-45
Battles Forum Gallorum and Mutina 43BC
Closing the Ring: 1778-1781
Donbas 2014-15: Campaign 435
Florence 1944: Campaign 431
UK RN Med Fleet 1793-1805: Fleet 20
Gathering Secrets (murder mystery novel)
New Guinea 1943-44: Air Campaign 63
Man of Confidence: WWII US POW
British Army American War Independence
US Tank Tactics in WWII: Elite 269
Spanish Armada from Spanish Perspective
Demetrius The Besieger
English Armies in France HYW 1337-1453
Ally Abandoned: WWII Palestine
The Art of Fighting: Transformative
Scottish Warlocks, Wizards, Magicians
The Battle of Ulundi: 4 July 1879
Commando Who Refused to Die: WWII



Get ready...



German commanders (l to r) Dan, Daniel (fedora), and Jake; the GM Marc; and fellow French commander Pat.

Hannut 1940: CD Panzers on the Attack

by Russ Lockwood

With the Germans on the attack once again, the French High Command decided to advance into Belgium to stop them. Historically, the Belgians originally didn't like this strategic thought, but eventually figured out the French were the lesser of two evils.

German panzers on the advance meet defending French forces.



In the meantime, Germans and French tanks met at the town of Hannut.

On the German side in this tabletop battle, a pair of panzer battalions with some motorized infantry advanced against a French tank battalion and infantry battalion. The Germans had to take three of four towns. The French had to deny them.

The rules used were *Command Decision (CD)*. Dan (panzer battalion), Daniel (panzer battalion), and Jake (motorized infantry and artillery) were the Germans. Pat (tanks) and I (infantry) were the French. Marc was the GM.

Set Up

Most of the set up was fixed. The French had a 75mm artillery battery that needed to be placed, which I did on the right flank. The good news was that one company of French infantry could be placed anywhere. The bad news was this company of French infantry was a dummy formation -- one look and it would melt away.

I had been previously fooled with Marc's skillful use of dummy units before -- regular tanks needed to butt up adjacent to the infantry to see if it was real or not. Infantry needed to close to one inch away and recon could spot them from two inches away. Sometimes I figured his troops were dummies and they were not. Other times I was cautious and they were dummies.

So, I looked over the battlefield and noticed a glaring lack of troops on our left flank -- that's where I placed the dummy company.

We French didn't have much in Hannut proper -- some recon troops backed by some armor -- as most of the infantry was deployed in other towns. My infantry didn't have much in the way of anti-tank guns, either -- just two platoons.

The terrain was horrendous for fields of fire. Every field blocked line of sight. The panzers had much cover for their attack. On the other hand, all this broken terrain gave our tanks cover as well.

Panzers In the Attack

The two panzer battalions entered and split to be line abreast, followed an hour later by the motorized infantry. Aside from some sporadic shelling that would suppress the occasional platoon, the Germans were content to bypass Hannut.

But the French tankers were not content to wait in ambush. Pat pushed the recon through Hannut in a spoiling attack. Although ultimately unsuccessful, his maneuvers kept the Germans at bay for quite some time, even though the town was surrounded on three sides. The small French tanks played cat and mouse within the town, shifting to fire out one side, then another.

Obviously, German reports of massive French forces filtered back to Regimental HQ, for von Daniel's panzer battalion did a 90-degree turn to avoid Hannut, probably figuring that the supporting motorized infantry would be better suited to taking the town.

Maybe not. Many a German infantry platoon succumbed to French fire, including pinpoint artillery strikes.



Stuka Support

A random Stuka attack came in earlier than anyone expected and struck the column of French armor heading towards Hannut. Fortunately for us French, it didn't do as much damage as it could.

JU-87 hammers a French column.



Indeed, a ME-109 later showed up to strafe with minimal effectiveness. Must have been the B Luftwaffe pilots - the A grade pilots were probably down at Sedan.

Panzers to Our Right

With von Daniel's 90-degree pivot, French Pat charged a company of Somua tank straight ahead into the fields. A close-quarter battle swirled with three Somua platoons facing on five German platoons: Pz I, Pz II, a pair of Pz III, and a Pz IV. Soon, another Pz II company with three more platoons showed up.

Brave French face off against the Germans.

Pat's charged shocked the Germans as he lined up platoono-on-platoono, cleverly leaving the Pz III platoons out of the fight due to line of sight restrictions. It didn't go well with all the cross fire, with two of thre three Somua platoons destroyed versus only a Pz II platoon destroyed. The third Somua fled back towards French lines.

ME-109 stand-in strafes the French tanks. Dummy French company sits in the foxholes at bottom of photo.

Panzers to Our Left

Von Dan had to peel off a couple platoons to deal with Pat's tanks and recon in Hannut. This somewhat slowed the German push along our left flank. A slight ridgeline down the left side blocked line of sight, allowing Pat's light tanks to drive towards the Germans while ignoring those tank platoons on the other side of the ridge.

However, without the tank support, von Jake's push into Hannut would have been far more problematical.

Again, the exchange of fire proved advantageous to the Germans. While one Pz II platoon went up in flames, one French platoon also di and the company failed morale. First it pinned and then it failed again and what was left fled.

The Dummy Infantry

The dummy infantry company had an attached dummy 47mm AT gun. A recon Pz I showed up in firing range. So, I "fired." Now, my dummy "firing" was just saying I missed with three shots. But because I fired, I was automatically spotted, which meant that I was spotted as a dummy AT gun. Marc said to remove it. Since it was part of the company, I removed the 47mm AT gun and the rest of the company. That generated a "no" from Marc -- leave the infantry as they weren't spotted.

The German Panzer battalion overwhelms the French company in the North. Hannut in upper right.

But. But...

And, Marc added, we don't fire dummy units.

But. But...I had three shots for basically a 50-50 change of a hit and the penetration value of



a 47mm round vs the tin plate of a Pz I was almost automatic destruction. So, if I don't fire, they know it's a dummy unit.

The Somuas charge the other Panzer battalion.

Last month, Vito picked up his dummy infantry company because he said it was a dummy and didn't do anything. He also had a pair of light tanks that never moved into a firing position, which I found odd. They were dummy units.

At about this point in the break of the action, I noted, new guys with dummy units need instruction on what they can or cannot do. Pat helpfully noted that my use of dummies might work in Role Playing Game land. Gee, thanks.

The result of the firefight.

So...my take is that CD dummy units don't move and don't fire. They don't pretend to move. Nor pretend to fire. Got it. Next time...assuming Marc entrusts dummy units to me as a dummy commander.

Von Dan swung his command 90 degrees toward Hannut to attack the other towns.

Back to the Panzer Battle on the Right

With one company of von Daniel's panzers pinned with fear at Pat's bold attack, the Pz IIIs with IIs swung around to our right. Somewhere in there, his motorcycle recon platoon was destroyed.

That's when the 47mm AT gun -- a real one -- fired and took out an advancing Pz II. Pat did it again and charged his surviving Somua right at the Pz IIIs. He blew up one and fled.

This surviving Somua then turned and attacked von Dan's lead panzer platoons. The luck of the Irish vanished into the luck of the French and two of his last three armored platoons were blown up without putting a scratch on the German armor. Only a light recon tank was left and it was hot footing it away in retreat.

Even the French 47mm AT gun scores a kill ring.



Fall of Hannut

Despite heavy casualties, including the loss of the battalion commander from French artillery, the Germans managed to take Hannut. The other three towns were still French occupied and another Somua company appeared from the reserve.

Hannut (top middle of photo) falls to the Germans. A fresh company of French tanks arrive as reinforcements.

That's when the game ended after six turns as it was pushing 11:30pm. The scenario lasts another six or eight turns, so, the Germans have plenty of time to drive the tanks close to the other towns and wait for French morale to fail as the entrenched infantry gets a plus for cover, but minuses for seeing tanks and infantry within 12 inches.

In the Hannut fight, Pat made a lot of his morale rolls, which created more opportunities for firing at German infantry. If he could do the same in the other towns, the French have a chance of holding.

The Germans take a small village and French fortunes fall as tanks flame up.

Final: Draw

The Germans took one of three victory towns in half a game or thereabouts, so Marc called it a draw. That pretty generous given the hulks of French armor, few French AT guns, and 12 intact German panzer platoons versus five French tank platoons. The German motorized infantry took about half losses, which will make it difficult to assault more than one town.

Thanks for hosting, Marc, and thanks to my fellow gamers for a close game.

End of game, but only half the turns were played. A generous GM call of a draw.





Gimli, Aragorn, and Boromir face off against my initial goblins while the four hobbits, Gandalf, and Legolas stand ready.

Balin's Tomb: Sabretooth's *LOTR*

by Russ Lockwood

Dan brought out the oversized *Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*) figs and the hex map for Balin's Tomb scenario drawn from the *Lord of the Rings*. The nine intrepid heroes found Balin's Tomb and thanks to a Fool of a Took, the goblins attacked to protect their hearth and home. They even brought a cave troll to help.

By random selection, I was the goblins and Dan the Fellowship.

The Game

Back in the early 2000s, Sabretooth brought out a collectible miniatures skirmish game played on a hex grid. The figures were mounted on a hex base with two sliders or wheels (depending on the release date). One slider tracked wounds and the other tracked action points. When wounds equaled zero, the figure was eliminated.

Special icons on the base used action points to generate some benefit. As I recall, the game had lots of these icons and some characters would have more and better ones the later the release version (i.e. Gandalf the White was better than Gandalf the Gray, the later Aragorn and Boromir versions had additional icons, etc.). Once used, action points were not regained during the scenario.

Combat was d6s with hits and wounds -- modified by appropriate icons. Missile hits were basic 5-6 on a d6. Melee hits were 4-5-6 on a d6. One special rule was that on a roll of 1 (die icon), the attacker can spend 1 action point to turn the "1" (a miss) into a hit. Likewise, when rolling for wounds, the attacker can spend 2 action points to turn a "1" (no effect) into a wound. The wound part depended on the armor rating. Roll higher than the target's armor rating and you deal a wound. Equal or less is no effect.

The good guys usually had four or five hits, four or five action points, and the four hobbits each had four armor and the five other characters each had five armor. As you can understand, only a "6" wounds a character, so that spend two action points to turn a "1" into a wound is important.

The Forces

The Fellowship is easy: four hobbits, Gimli, Legolas, Aragorn, Boromir, and Gandalf the Gray.

My goblin lads were in three waves: all with a mix of archers and swordgobbos, and the third wave included the cave troll. The entryway was narrow: just four hexes across. It was 36 figures to 9, but only the cave troll was a match for the Fellowship.

The Battle

Forward went my archers. Best to soften up the intruders. Alas, although my gobbo archers fired shot after shot, most just bounced off the armor.

Boromir and Gimli rounded the pillars and engaged the goblins in hand-to-hand. The gobbos, with their 1 factor armor, dropped with alacrity. I mean, if you're rolling four or five d6s for 50-50 melee hits, you only need a 2 or higher on the wound roll to kill off a gobbo.

The only bright spot was Legolas. He kept shooting arrows and kept missing. Gandalf, however, proved a superior marksman. Who knew he could shoot?

Seriously? Bringing a frying pan to a swordfight?

Second Wave

Hemmed in, I sent one archer to close with Gandalf to drop his firepower to a minimum.

Hidden in and among the gobbos were a pair of better archers. I did manage to plink Aragorn a few times -- roll enough dice and you're bound to get a 6 now and again.

In fact, he retreated. I think that's a win, well, a moral win for the gobbos -- if the gobbos have morals.

Enter the cave troll....

Likewise, I also managed to get a couple hits on Boromir and Gimli with the riff-raff and then sent the better melee gobbos in. More hits, but even the hobbits came up and joined in the gobbo carnage. Samwise tried to take on a gobbo, but he



brought a frying pan to a swordfight and took a hit or two.

And Legolas continued to miss... Oh, not all the time, but his membership in the Eagle-Eye Marks-elf Club was about to be rescinded.

The front end of the cave troll figure.

Third Wave

By the time I sent in the third wave, the first two waves had been obliterated. The third proved more of the same, although I was making some progress in wounding the Fellowship. I mean, really, when you have to send in hobbits...

So, I unleashed the Cave Troll.

It did some damage, but took many hits in return. You see, the Fellowship saved all its action points to turn 1s into hits and 1s into wounds. It wasn't Legolas' arrow to the throat that killed the Cave Troll, it was just an accumulation of wounds. And with that, the last couple gobbos fled.

Full Fellowship victory.

However, I came close to whacking one Fellowship character with a couple more about half dead...

Good game!

And now for the Fellowship account...



Balin's Tomb: *LOTR TMG*

By Daniel

Russ stopped by for a game and I offered him choices of games we haven't played in a while. He picked *Lord of the Rings* miniatures game by Sabertooth Games and I set up the Balin's Tomb scenario. I used to run this scenario at Cold Wars, Historicon, and Fall In conventions many years ago, which were always well attended.

Dan feeds in more of the Fellowship to stop the goblin horde.

By random selection, I would play the Fellowship and Russ would play the Moria Goblin attackers (33 Goblins, two Goblin leaders, and the Cave Troll).

The Figures

Each figure's game information is printed on the base: Attacks: How many dice the warrior rolls in combat; Toughness: How hard it is to damage the warrior; Movement Points: How fast the warrior moves across the map; Ranged Attack: If the warrior is capable of a ranged attack, there will be an oval with 2 numbers. These numbers represent how many dice the warrior rolls when shooting and how far the warrior can shoot; and Special Abilities: The special skills the warrior possesses, if any.

The Scenario

The Fellowship starts deployed in Balin's Tomb, but cannot set up within four hexes of the entrance. Aragorn, Legolas, and Boromir would be the "Advance Guard." The Moria Goblins enter on Turn 1 with a force of 12 Goblins.



To shoot, each figure needs to “see” its target. To hit, a score of 5+ is needed on a d6. A roll of “1” (miss) allows the option to “exert” to change the roll to a “6” (hit). Hits are then rolled to determine damage. A d6 roll per hit scored is compared to the target’s “Toughness” to determine if the target is wounded.

For melee, each figure adjacent to an enemy can roll dice equal to its Attack value, requiring 4+ to hit. A d6 roll per hit scored is compared to the target’s “Toughness” to determine if the target is wounded.

Most of the Moria Goblins were lightly armored (“1” Toughness) with some having Toughness of 3. The Goblin leaders had Toughness 4 and the Cave Troll Toughness 5. The Hobbits had Toughness 4 and the rest of the fellowship Toughness 5.

The Battle

Russ elected to set up a line of archers to shoot at the Fellowship, mostly targeting Aragorn, but otherwise declined to advance or push the flanks. After seeing how feeble the Goblin archery was, Russ started advancing some Goblin warriors to attack Boromir and Gimli, while the archers continued to shoot at Aragorn.

Another 11 Goblins and a Goblin leader became available on Turn 2, but had to wait outside as there was not enough room at the entrance. The Goblins in close combat were dispatched fairly easily, but Boromir did take a wound. The Fellowship shifted to close off the flanks so the Moria Goblins could not spill around to enter the tomb and try to overwhelm the Fellowship with greater numbers.

On Turn 3, the last group of Goblins, a Goblin leader, and the Cave Troll were released and became available. These did not enter until Turn 7 or 8 when enough of the previous Goblins were eliminated to make space at the entrance. The Cave Troll finally entered and engaged Merry, dealing two wounds while taking one in return. The Fellowship reacted strongly, but Legolas and Gandalf failed to wound the monster. Aragorn did a Fast Strike that scored one wound. Boromir, Merry and Frodo ganged up to deal three more wounds (two by “exertion” -- the spending of action points), which brought the Troll down before it could regenerate. That brought the game to a close.

Kept in reserve, the Cave Troll made a big entrance and quick exit...

End Game

The Fellowship survived without loss of any members. Gimli took two wounds with two remaining, as did Aragorn and Boromir. Merry took three wounds with one wound left while Sam and Gandalf each took one wound.

Born a Travelin' Deck: *Dominion*

by Daniel

After our first game, Russ was up for a “quick game of *Dominion*” – but suddenly remembered that selecting one of more than 400 Kingdom Sets of 10 (or selecting a random Kingdom set) could take some time to set up. I offered to use my “Travel Version.” This version uses a large “Black Market” deck of 100+ Kingdom cards, plus the standard Treasure and Victory cards. I called it a “travel” version that could fit in a small “Base Set” box. Russ and I have played this several times when we’ve traveled to GenCon or SnapCon.

The Traveling Twist

Dominion is a deck-building game released in 2008 that inspired a large number of subsequent deck-building games. The game ends when the Province pile is empty, or a time limit agreed to has been reached. The winner is the player who has the most Victory Points (VPs) at the end of the game. VPs can be from any cards or tokens that generate VPs - in your deck, hand, and Discard pile.



To make room for the “Black Market” deck of 100+ Kingdom cards, the Base Set Treasure and Victory cards were reduced: 12 Platinum, 24 Gold, 32 Silver, 42 Copper, 8 Potion, 16 Curse, 18 Estate, 15 Duchy, 12 Province, and 12 Colony cards.

Instead of a set of 10 Kingdom piles in a standard game of Dominion, there will be 3+N Kingdom card spaces (where N = the number of players). These spaces are filled from the “Black Market” deck. Up to one Event, one Landmark, and one Project may be revealed in addition to the 3+N Kingdom card spaces. If a new Event, Landmark, or Project is revealed while one of that type is in play, it is discarded. Each player has a “marker” that can be used to place on a “kingdom card” to discard it at the end of their following turn and replace with a new card (alerting other players to allow each of them one last opportunity to gain it).



Build Your Deck

Each player starts with 7 Copper cards and 3 Estate cards as per Dominion. A player's turn consists of 5 phases (Action, Buy, Night, Clean-Up, Draw). The player also has three “pools” (an Action pool that always starts with one Action, a Buy pool that always starts with one Buy, and a Money pool that always starts with 0 coins in it).

Cards not belonging to any player are either in the Supply (including Kingdom cards), or the Trash. Cards belonging to the player are either in the player's Hand, Draw deck, Discard pile, the player's Play Area, or Set Aside by the player (as instructed by a card effect).

I credit Russ for picking up some really good Kingdom cards that I would have grabbed: Council Room, Highwayman, Hunter, Scheme, Town, Warehouse, and Wharf.

I found some others for myself: Farming Village, Festival, Grand Market, Moneylender, Nobles, Priest, and Royal Blacksmith.

While we were familiar with the rules, Russ and I made some significant poor plays by not reading an Action card correctly. For me, it was the Royal Blacksmith card that instructed “+5 Cards” in large bold letters, but the smaller instruction (which I'll call the “fine print”) said to reveal your hand and discard all Copper cards, forcing me to discard 4 Copper cards and rendering me unable to purchase anything new, resulting in a useless turn. I eventually adjusted my strategy by trashing all my Copper cards through Moneylender and Priest, but this took several turns to accomplish and Russ was able to purchase Gold cards and gained two Province cards before my deck was capable of gaining the higher Treasure and VP cards.

Culling all the Copper cards out of my deck made it smaller relative to Russ' deck and allowed it to cycle through faster and concentrate its buying power. As we both started buying VP cards, our decks started to “slow down” as VP cards take up space and are useless during play. Russ used Warehouse to cycle through his VP cards while I used Farming Village to bypass VP cards.

When the Province pile was empty, ending the game, I thought it was a closer game than it was: 114 to 84.



I felt the momentum shift about halfway through when his deck often started buying two VP cards per turn while mine slowed and eventually cranked out only one VP card every other or every third turn. "Trashing" cards at the right time proved a smart strategy for Dan. I relied on drawing more cards into my hand, but didn't cull my deck and could not get the multiple action cards in play often enough. Dominion and Dan's Traveling variation prove continually entertaining, at least to me. -- RL

Warriors of God: 100 Years War Part 1

by Russ Lockwood

By serendipity, I was reading the book *English Armies in France During the Hundred Year War 1337-1453* and Renaud cracked open the shrinkwrap on the boardgame *Warriors of God: Hundred Years War*. Better yet, it turned out I commanded the English side and Renaud took the French.

Well, who says you can't learn anything from a wargame? As Renaud read through the rules and we pointed to this counter and that, or this place or that, I learned just how badly I can butcher French pronunciation.

Even worse, I also needed a few beats more than an opening riff to understand particular names. The worst example was when he talked about "John Dark." The first time, I let it go. A lot of Johns in the game. I had never heard of John Dark or John the Dark, but I'm not a medieval expert. The second time, I figure this leader must be important, even if I didn't remember him from the book.

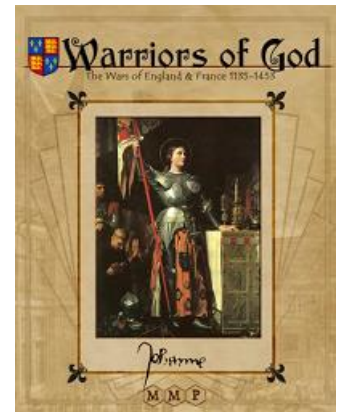
Mulling it over, I didn't see a counter for an English commander named John Dark. Mind you, my brain cells do take a while to smack together to form a spark. Then it hit me.

I asked, "Do you mean Joan of Arc?"

Nonchalantly, he answered, "Yes."

"Doh!"

Photo: Renaud's reaction to yet another of my mangling of French names...



Provincial Control

Most of the Victory Points revolve around controlling French and English provinces. The book reinforced my memory that William conquering England in 1066 plus descendants of various ancestors muddled the issue of sovereignty. The English king had the better pedigree to be the French king, but a French Duke taking England meant fealty to the French king -- and a Frenchman stepped up to claim the throne. Believe me, there's far more in the intervening 250 years than I will relate -- read the book.

Anyway, leaders from the province (nice bit of heraldry incorporated into the counters and map) can claim provinces if the heraldry matches, but need a die roll if not. The best die roll possibility is 50-50 and oddly enough, the quality (from I to III) of the province doesn't matter.

The trick is that if a commander and troops leave a province, some enemy commander can come in and do the same thing. The French seem to have a lot of commanders hanging about.

Other VPs come from killing or capturing commanders.

Open Battle

Battle is after all movement, called impulses, is completed. One leader will "pin" another in a province, no matter what the troop strength. Troops are never dropped off -- no garrisons. This is odd, because historically, troops of garrisons were often siphoned off to bolster an army.

Each commander is rated for bravery and command capacity. In open battle, the commander's counter generates 1d6 and each strength point of troops generates 1d6. You take the lower of strength point dice or command capacity. Thus, Edward III (1d6) can move with up to 9 SP (9d6), but his command capacity is 5, so he rolls 5d6 in combat, not 10d6. To this number of dice is added 1d6 for any longbowmen icons or troops.

Finally, the bravery ratings of the leading commanders are compared. The difference, if any, is a die roll modifier for the higher rate commander. So, if you have a 3 bravery rating versus a 1 bravery rating, the 3 commander gets a +2 to his die rolls.



In a Featherstonian way, 6s hit, so those die roll modifiers really help. Each hit kills off 1SP or one commander. After three rounds, the aggressor must retreat if any defenders remain. You can retreat earlier, but the enemy gets a free attack.

Sieges

If the defender thinks he'll be whacked, he can always go in a "castle." The quality of the province (from I to III) gets a +3 addition to get a baseline siege number. Then you add the bravery number of the best defending commander and subtract the bravery number of the attacker. The attacker rolls 1d6 and if the roll beats the final siege number, the attacker wins and all defenders are eliminated. If the roll is equal to or less, the defender wins and the attackers must retreat.

Yep, it's an all or nothing die roll.

Year One

Just kidding. Each turn is five or 10 years as the game is 12 turns.

First surprise for me: The French can cross the English Channel. I sent Edward III on his chevauchée (raid) into Normandy and the other commander into Wales and two French commanders popped into England. They didn't look too touch, so, um, John of Torquay fought an open battle and lost big time. He ended up captured and in a French prison.

Battle of the two capitals...

Edward III charged into Paris and sieged the French King, Philip the Faithless, but the walls of Paris proved sturdy enough to send Edward packing eastwards. That was a bad opening turn...

It proved worse for Renaud because all the commanders have to make a death roll at the end of the turn. French commanders keeled over all over the place. We stacked 'em like cordwood off the map. The Black Death made an early return...

New troops appear based on the quality of the province, but if no commanders are available, they perish, too. Dysentery struck th French and English.

New commanders appeared and I ransomed John of Torquay by giving up control of a province. As the VPs were an even trade, I ransomed him. Sadly, commanders killed via the death die, i.e. natural causes so to speak, don't give any VPs to the other side because all commanders eventually die of old age. My big VP mistake was losing England turn one, so Renaud was way ahead on VPs.

Continuing the War

So the cat and mouse game continued. I was able to control more provinces, had a battle or two, and captured a leader. I narrowed the lead, but Renaud was also wise in the way of game mechanics. He also got lucky because he managed to roll a death die for his leader in the Tower of London...so no VPs for me.

I was able to take Flanders and inherit Aquitaine and grab three of the four II level provinces, but Renaud was far ahead with the I and II level provinces.

For example, he had nabbed Scotland (II) with the commander David the Second. He tried to take England, but this time I shuffled home Edward of Woodstock (i.e. Black Prince) to deal a decisive defeat to the Scots. Alas, Renaud nabbed David the Third and still had Scotland.

Then the Black Death visited my commanders...except Edward III, he defied the death roll odds to live another turn.



The big threat was du Guiscard out of Navarre. He is a fantastic leader every bit as good as Edward of Woodstock. I tried a quick zap attack, and almost got away with it. Renaud rolled a pair of 1s and gave me a free attack. Alas, I couldn't roll a 6 and the second round found me running back to Aquitaine -- and was hammered in the back for another SP loss. My commander was labeled a coward for his bold, if futile, attack.

At the end of Turn 4, we both looked out over the devastation that was England and France. Renaud took a photo and will recreate the map for more campaigning.

Thoughts

As we were experimenting with what works and what doesn't, we had a lot of discussion about how a mechanic worked. A couple wobbles, but we figured it out. I will note that Renaud downloaded a cleaner version of the rules, so between the original and the cleaner versions, we nailed down most questions.

There's a lot of picky things to remember -- sometimes you use the province quality, sometime the commander's "star" quality. There's a bit more to remember than at first look.

I hate to say this, but the commander death roll was a highlight of hilarity. I mean, battle is usually the most tension filled aspect of a game, and looking for 6s when rolling only a couple dice can be, but rolling a 1 or 2 (usually) to kill off a commander generated lots of cheers and jeers.

Stay tuned.

Warriors of God: 100 Years War Part 2

by Russ Lockwood

As we continued the game, I'm sad to say that Edward III finally passed away -- peacefully in his sleep, of course. He was the longest living leader of the war. Henry IV took his spot.

Turn 7: Lots of Blue French leaders and control markers.

Alas, Renaud's strategy of mobilizing leaders in "home" provinces proved to be rather effective. When they stopped dying on him, they could be used to pin an English Army so the English can't move. Then, they could withdraw into the castles and accept a siege -- usually a high-odds chance of success in chasing away the English.

Renaud won a couple sieges and turned a couple provinces, each one generating VPs. The province control was the gift that kept on giving. I needed an English leader and no French leader in the area to eliminate French control, and then I needed a roll of 1, 2, or 3 on a die (depending on the leader) to flip it to my control. And you had to be in the space to roll the die. I did not convert many French provinces to English control.

In the few open field battles, I had a better shot of winning and thus triggering the die roll for control. But those were few and far between. Mind you, when I was outnumbered, I sat behind castle walls. And when the castle was taken, I tried to hide but was found.

I only lasted a couple turns when Renaud hit the magic 30 VPs.



Thoughts

It seems odd that ships can cross from England to anywhere on the French coast except for Flanders -- and Flanders is a big VO province.

The control system works fine, but it's odd that combat only occurs at the end of the turn -- and each turn is five or 10 years. Leaders cannot take unoccupied castles without a long siege. Since it's an impulse system, it'd be interesting to see what happens if you could spend one impulse to siege a castle. Granted, sometimes there are only three impulses per turn...

Leadership certainly matters. Each leader is rated for quality ("Bravery" in game parlance) and quantity (troop strength points). In general, French leaders get better as the game goes on, but a typical one-star, 1 Bravery leader can retreat into a castle and survive a siege. The best sieges, with gunners, had a 50-50 chance of success, but usually it was 33% or sometimes 16%.

The English, thanks to longbows, had an edge in open field combat, but Renaud often avoided open field battles and opted for sieges.

I made a big mistake on Turn 1 when Edward III left England and allowed Renaud to waltz right in. Granted, Renaud allowed me back in on Turn 2, but such was the nature of this area control game. Starting your leader in his home area to automatically take control of the province was the smart thing to do. The VPs pile up and keep piling up turn after turn. Taking control by marching in is a low-odds die roll. Even a King has only a 50-50 chance, and the number of troops accompanying him don't effect the roll, except mercenaries that reduce the odds further.

So, interesting little game. We played 7 turns out of 12. Or, to put it another way, the 100 Years War lasted only 63 years.

Thanks for the game, Renaud.

Blitzkrieg: WWII in a Half Hour

by Russ Lockwood

As the 100YW game ended and we had a little time left, Renaud brought out *Blitzkrieg*, a quick and clever game I played a long time ago (see the Feb 2020 AAR). Basically, the war is divided into several theaters, each with a number of rows of icons. You draw counters from a bag and alternately place them in the spaces in a row. The spaces have icons for research, bombing, factories, VPs, and other processes. Some of the counters have special icons, too.

The counters have strength point numbers on them - most SP in a row gets the VPs of the row. Plus, you might grab an extra VP or so from a theater status row. First to 25 VPs wins. Alternately, first to not have any counters left to play loses.

By random pick, I was the Allies, and Renaud the Axis. Axis places first and off we went. We went back and forth, and I used a blitzkrieg icon to place two counters instead of the usual one. However, I also had to place on factories to keep my strength up. At one point, I placed my last two counters and we had to look up if I had lost or not. I did not because I could draw a counter for next turn's placement.

Renaud often went for the R&D spaces that allowed picking from the special counters pile.

I was ahead on VPs 13 to 8 when Renaud played the special Aircraft Carrier counter with a bomb icon on top of a bomb icon space. That meant I lost two counters. As I only had two counters, I immediately lost the game. Clever play!

It's a clever game. Thanks, Renaud for hosting.





Starship commanders (l to r): Bob, Greg, GM Marc (standing), and Ed. Other gamers in the background.

Feds vs. Klingons: Star Trek Starship Rumble

by Russ Lockwood

It's been a couple years since I attended an Eastern Pennsylvania Gaming Society session in the Community Room at the Oxford Valley Mall. They usually hold sessions on two Saturdays per month. Full year membership is \$75, Half year membership is \$40, and a single session is \$10. As the website epgs.org notes, "Dues allow us to keep paying for the room rent, insurance, plus website and meetup fees."

The room has tables and chairs and that's about it. The food court has a dozen or so food stalls for those, like me, who needed a Dunkin Donut coffee and doughnut fix and later lunch.

I went because Marc was hosting a Star Trek starship game using his still evolving rules *Multiversal Starship Battles: Starship Tactical Combat Rules*. Like *RUSE*, this is supposed to be a universe-independent rules set that allows you to fight spaceships from *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Babylon 5*, and any other universe.

Quick Overview

We used a hex grid, although previous versions used a ruler and inches to measure movement and firing distances. One side moves half its ships, then the other side moves half, then the first side moves the other half of ships, and the second side moves the other half of ships.

The Feds are easy to spot, but the four Klingon starships require a little squinting.

Roll dice for firing against a defense value to get a number of hits -- crossing off the boxes that make up the shields and hull. A



number of hull boxes contain a "system." When that's crossed off, you roll to see what type of system (weapons, engines, transporters, shield generators, etc.) gets blasted to bits. Damage control gets a roll to fix them back up.

It's a simpler system than Star Fleet Battles and uses some aspects of other systems, notably Full Thrust, but of course, the playability depends on the damage sheets. How many shields and hull boxes does the Enterprise get versus a Bird of Prey or D-7?

Game the First

By random selection, I got the Enterprise heavy cruiser (technically, the ship decal said Hood) and a destroyer. My fellow Fed, Greg, commanded a heavy cruiser and light cruiser. Klingon Ed had a heavy cruiser and light cruiser while Klingon Bob took the heavy cruiser and destroyer. GM Marc ran the show.

Heeeyyyyy. This seems an awful lot like a completely balanced force against force.

We rolled a random starting location, which turned out to be less random than expected as the dice turned out to put the Fed ships together and the Klingon ships slightly apart.

It didn't take long to see that damage could be heavy and both sides soon concentrated on the weakest ships if possible.

As for tactical maneuvers, each bank of phasers, disrupters, and photon torpedoes had a firing arc. Like WWI and WWII dogfights, getting on the rear quadrant, more or less, was better than just about anywhere else.

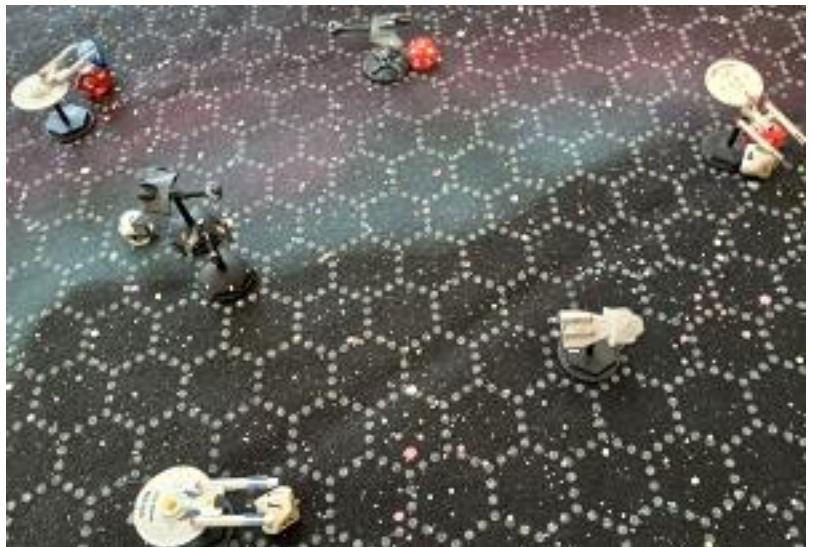


Turn 3 conga line. The dice mark the number of hexes since the last turn.

Surprisingly, we were all able to position ourselves just so every so often. However, with four ships on the table, one ship may not be able to fire full at a particular ship, but the other three usually could. Things got far more interesting when ships started to explode or weapon banks on one side were blown to bits.

At one point, we had three ships forming a conga line blasting the ship directly in front of it -- and the lead ship firing at the enemy a few hexes away.

Turn 5: The Feds circle in for the kill.



One aspect we keyed on was the concept of a Kill Zone -- close enough that hits counted double. This was especially important for photon torpedoes because they fire only every other turn.

So we all went, maneuvering best as we could, blasting away with cheers and jeers depending on the fall of the dice. Apparently, the Damage Control teams on my USS Hood were made up of Academy dropouts. They couldn't find the tool to unlock a panel to fiddle with the shield harmonics. "Engine?" they would ask. "What engine?"

They couldn't even get my can of soda unstuck from the vending machine. When I called for Scotty, all I got was a box of tissues.

The only good news was that the Klingons scattered their shots too much. My well-holed destroyer ended up dead in space, but so most of the Klingons. One for the good guys...

Game the Second

I kept my dynamic duo of heavy cruiser and destroyer, but Bob switched sides to become a Fed. Probably because he was bribed with a battleship. On the other side, Ed took a Klingon battleship while Greg took the heavy cruiser and destroyer combo. We came in on opposite sides of the map. Marc added a sideslip maneuver to the movement.

Game 2, Turn 4: Battleships (top right corner) exchange broadsides.



No matter. Maneuvers soon twisted our ships into a loose scrum.

The Klingon destroyer was hammered to within a couple hull boxes of obliteration, and so warped out. Next to go was the heavy cruiser. That left the Klingon battleship, which also came within a couple boxes of crumbling, but luckily still had warp drives.

Once again, my destroyer was vaporized, but the USS Hood was untouched. Sure, a few hits struck the shields, but automatic shield regeneration fixed that. My damage control teams brought their manuals, but they never needed to consult them.

Another Fed victory, mostly because we still held the starfield of battle. We could vacuum the vacuum for spare parts and scrap alloys.

The Klingon battleship (top left corner) gets away.

Thoughts

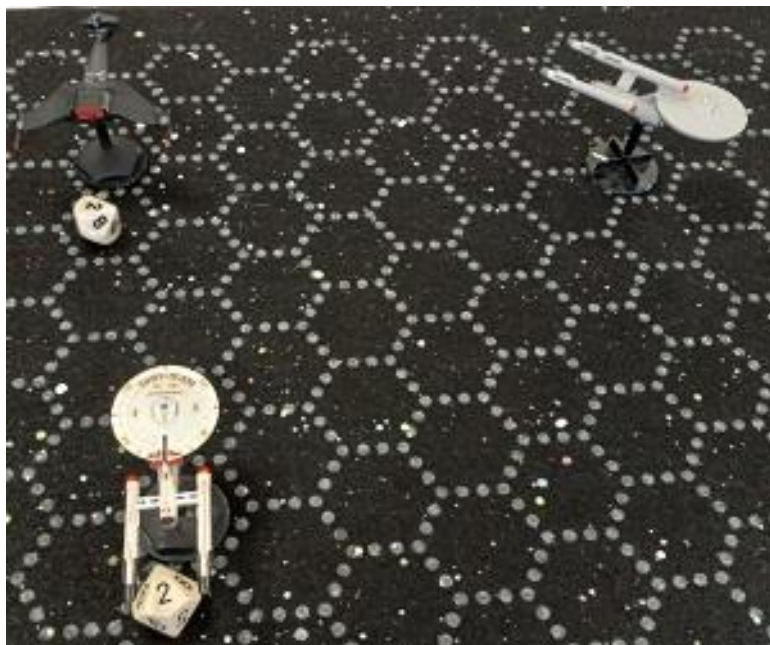
As it turned out, we each had exactly the same number of shield and hull boxes, although the weapons were different. And, let me note that the die rolls were the big variable.

I didn't see any major problems, although I would make the suggestion that rolling dice against

a defense number and then rolling the hits again as a filter could be shortened to one set of rolls by condensing the math.

Off the top of my head, if you're rolling x number of dice with an 80% chance of a hit, and then rolling those hits with a 70% chance of inflicting actual damage, condensing them would help. If my math is correct, suppose you roll 100 dice and get 80 hits and then roll those 80 dice and get 70% of those as damage, that's 56 hits on average. So, make the % to hit either 50% or 60% and roll the 100 dice once. Sure, people get streaky one way or the other, and there is a certain tension in the two-stage process, but to speed things up, that's my two cents.

Otherwise, an entertaining few hours.





Running the gauntlet. Ripley leads the team and Newt from left to the bunker on the right. Renaud readies Alien dice.

Alien RUSE: Ripley's Sacrifice

by Russ Lockwood

Ripley and her team found the little girl. Now they had to get her back to the bunker. The Aliens had different ideas.

So began a running fight using Renaud's revised *RUSE* rules. Ripley, the android, and five soldiers had to escort Newt (the little girl) across the table and back to the bunker. Protecting the bunker were three soldiers, the lieutenant, and the company representative. As the latter two had only pistols, I kept them inside.



Ripley and team.

The aliens? Dunno. They were out there somewhere...

By random selection, I was the humans and Renaud was the aliens.

The System

AAR readers know *RUSE*, a "universal" skirmish experience and unit miniatures system good from ancients to sci-fi/fantasy, has been on the tabletop many a time. Renaud's tried many different variations of the basic system. This is another tweak, so to speak, with a variation of the d12 "kill die."

The bunker team, with two more inside.

In essence, when a stressed figure (or unit) is activated, it must undergo the kill die test. If a 12, no matter what the type of figure/unit, it's immediately eliminated. Keep this 12 result in mind. Other results depend on the toughness of the unit -- usually rolling low is no effect and the middle to upper numbers offers a number of wounds, which may or may not eliminate a figure/unit. There's more, but that's the key roll for survival.

The same d12 works for all figures/units, although a variety of traits will affect the die roll or allow a re-roll and the figure/unit can absorb varying degrees of damage.

As for activations, each figure gets an activation bead (Ripley the hero gets two) and these beads get placed as you want in the first through sixth compartments of the typical plastic 7-day pillbox. The seventh compartment holds the beads from eliminated figures. A deck of cards Ace through 6 gets shuffled and one card is drawn -- that's the compartment used. Low number of beads goes first. Ties are a d6 roll off.

It's a clever little activation twist, with the idea of maximum flexibility in activating any figure and doing one of the half-dozen or so actions (move, fire, etc.). It also forces you to think about whether you want to scatter your beads across all six compartments, or, load up on one or two compartments so when that card is drawn, you get lots of activations. Each turn, you can switch your choices, so you might start out cautious and scatter and later on make a concerted push, or visa versa. On a higher level of design, it really shakes up the typical Igo-Ugo mechanic. Like I said, clever.



The Running Fight

Ripley and squad entered from the south and headed towards the bunker at the north end. I wanted to start a guy on the roof, but Renaud said I had to have a soldier climb up (one activation using the move action).

One alien survived (upper left corner), but one alien died (yellow acid chip) and one human (red blood chip). Another alien waits in the shadow of the rock (upper right corner). Clear beads indicate action used. Red shows stress.



Ripley sent out a flanker to each side to spot the fast-moving, no terrain worries aliens. Sure enough, aliens popped out on both sides. On the west, the alien charged, but soldier Sam dropped him with a well-placed shot (hit for stress and the Sam rolled as 12 on a d12 -- a good omen!). The acid blood of the alien spread across the desert floor.

Sam must've felt pretty giddy, because the alien's buddy said, "Hresz grtxpl jhateks!" That translates as "You shot Fritz!" and Sam missed his next shot and was bitten and acid-ed to death. The human blood intermingled with the acid blood.

On the east side, gunfire by Soldier Ron kept an alien at bay until inflicting enough wounds to drop the beastie. Ripley's team moved up, trying to balance movement with preparation (i.e. Overwatch).

At the Bunker

The aliens, no fools they, sent one from the east to draw attention and two from the west to attack. By this time, I had Soldier Hunley on top of the bunker when a eastbound and down alien flowed onto the roof. Hunley, obviously a keen observer of Soldier Sam, fired and blew away the alien -- another roll of 12 on a d12!

Alien versus Master Sergeant Apone....

Alas, the second alien got him.

The company man came out to protect the east side. An alien appeared from the east, engaged, and dropped him. The other soldiers guarding the bunker soon dropped that beastie.

Meanwhile, aliens gathered on the roof, out of sight of the soldiers by the door.

One unlucky alien had a case of the hurry up and waits. I said it was because the one shot blew off its leg, but the real reason was that it never quite rolled low enough to shrug off hits, nor high enough to die.

Alien rolls two 12s and double wins melee.

Back With Ripley

The aliens kept up the attacks. One alien chewed and acid-ed Master Sergeant Apone into a puddle of blood. Another got Soldier Sid, but the android took that one out.

The diminished group shuffled forward. All of a sudden, Riply realized that Newt was the victory condition -- I really have to pay more attention to pre-game conditions. Newt took advantage of a break in the aliens and raced to a nice rock where she could use her hobbit-like hide function.

Notably, more 12s on a d12 were rolled out of proportion to odds.

Hunker Outside the Bunker

Aliens tried to storm the bunker, including the rooftop leapers, but some were gunned down and others stalemated.

An alien hops atop the rock while another heads into a kill zone: note the yellow acid chips designating dead aliens.

The Newt Scoot

Newt advanced to the next rock as Ripley and what remained of her squad performed rearguard and overwatch action.

The queen appeared out of the east, saw the little girl Newt all by her lonesome, and said, "Psleutzxk wraylkjox sukehs!" That translates as "Me want fig newt-on!"



Soldier Drake ran out to interpose himself and his big gun in between the queen and Newt. The queen moved next.

The queen spies Newt while the troops at the bunker mobilize to save the little girl.

A Discussion About Charge Targets

Here Renaud and I discussed charge targets. Renaud, as player, obviously wanted the Queen to attack Newt and win the game. I suggested that a Charge should be against the nearest target, especially if the intervening target has a big gun versus a little girl without a weapon. He noted that the Queen was smarter than the average bug and should be able to pick her target.

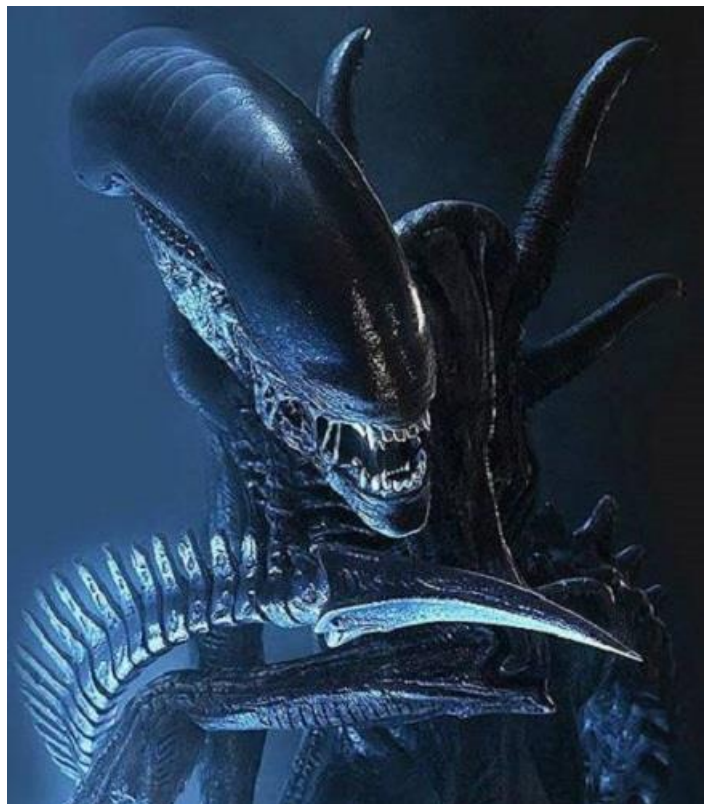
Only heroes get two activation beads, so regular characters can only move or shoot, or, prep (overwatch) for a possible later shoot, or, half move and half (i.e. half the firing dice) shoot. The angle precluded the half move and half shoot.

We pondered and considered. In the end, Renaud launched the Queen against the soldier Drake and Newt scuttled away for a human victory. It could've gone the other way just as easily.

It gave Renaud something to think about for his next tweak.

In another twist of fate, we rolled a lot of 12s on the death die -- I think about five or six of the dozen eliminations.

Still, 'twas a nice tight game that came down to the last two activations. Thanks, Renaud.





The entrance.

Day At The Museum: Edelman Dinosaurs

by Russ Lockwood

Rowan University's Edelman Fossil Park and Museum is a relatively new museum in South New Jersey built around a quarry that yielded a considerable number of fossils, including dinosaurs. A few hundred million years ago, this spot just east of the Delaware River was coastline. When the big asteroid hit, dinosaurs were buried and the bones preserved. Dinosaur bones were found in the 1800s in the area and continue to be unearthed to this day.

The complex consists of the main museum, the quarry, a playground, and walking trails. The date of our visit was Wednesday, September 2, 2026.

The Museum

The tickets have a timed admission. You're supposed to be there no later than 15 minutes after the time. I don't know how much they'll hold you to that. We saw people just walk in and buy tickets, but then again, it was mid week just before Labor Day and not crowded at all.

Like an HMGS convention, since we bought tickets online, we had printed out our tickets' QRS codes. To the left is the ticket station to buy tickets. We went to the right to scan our codes in, which we didn't have to do as a very helpful ticket taker did it for us ... because there's a wrinkle.

You get a keycard, like a hotel keycard, on a wrist strap. You have to head behind the ticket takers to sign in at a kiosk. We weren't quite sure why you had to do this, but apparently this keycard unlocks all sorts of interactive aspects in the museum display area. Our ticket taker had to do mine twice because he pressed the wrong icon.

I'm glad he fiddled with this. It would be like the hotel desk gave you a room keycard and then you had to go to a kiosk to activate it. I have no idea why it should be an extra step. I still don't...and being a bit of a curmudgeon about all this modern "helpful" tech, I don't care.

But, checked in we were and we headed for the stairs.

Dryptosaurus Skeleton

At the top of the stairs stood the skeleton of a Dryptosaurus, a two-legged relative of the Tyrannosaurus Rex. This one was not as big as T-Rex, but it seemed big enough. It was, as a later sign noted, one of a couple dozen cousins of the T-Rex.

Down the stairs we went.

The Dryptosaurus looks at a tasty morsel.

What's on the Slab?

A "touch" exhibit allows you to tap dance your fingers over various bones and fossils. A young gal explained each one and gave a wave over the rest of the lab on the left. Cubbyholes to the right highlighted specific finds.

The lab. The big dino bone on the right is labeled Dreadnought. Obviously, the head on the table at left is from an alien.

Main Exhibit

A meandering pathway takes you through a variety of full-size reconstructions of dinosaurs. Each one offers panels of information about the particular dinosaurs. I'm not sure how the sculptors knew what colors the dinosaurs were, but that's above my paleontological paygrade. I've seen various dinosaur TV documentaries that posit dinos were far more colorful than basic elephant-gray skin.

Acrocanthosaurus loses to an Astrodon.

The odd thing is that I can't remember seeing the actual skeletons other than the opening Dryptosaurus. The classic skeletal poses found in the Smithsonian in Washington DC, Natural History Museum in NYC, or any of a number of museums with dinosaurs I've visited are not here.

You'll see some bones in that touch exhibit and some fossils in rocks, but not full-scale skeletons. Instead, you get the full-scale recreations.



I kinda like them. Make a great statue for the front lawn. Indeed, there's a place in Pennsylvania near the intersection of 202 and 313 that sells replica statues of dinosaurs. Or at least they used to.

Priconodon.

Key Cards

I'm not that enamored with the keycards, or perhaps, I should say not that enamored with the interactive exhibits. Maybe there's more to it than what I found. Dunno, but the interaction is tapping on a screen to "dig" up a bone.

Keycard reader (right) lights up the screen to "dig" such as it is. The text reads Hello Russ.

The idea is ok, but the execution is inane. Then again, I'm not six years old. I expected videos of excavations in the quarry or some sort of trivia. Or at least something that would hold my attention.

I did go through one entire station of multiple tap-tap-tap, "oooh, you found a bone" with a specific tool (like a trowel or brush).

And the creepy part: the screen greeted me with "Hello, Russ" on every screen.

The Dryptosaurus on the run after dinner.



From the Land to the Sea

Anyway, it's a nice meandering path through dino land that eventually leads you to dino sea. You can't miss it -- a full-size Mosasaurus hangs from the ceiling. This eel with a crocodile head is about three and a half times the length of a great white shark. A bigger boat won't help you.

Mosasaurus.

You'll find all sorts of sea life recreations with big teeth, including a big, nasty variety of salmon. If you ever found yourself transported back to dinosaur times, I wouldn't suggest taking a swim.

One bit of whimsy.

Portholes

Of note were these portholes at shin level scattered throughout the main exhibit area. These are obviously for the small tykes, because my joints creaked like crazy when I squatted down to get a better look at what was inside.

Whimsy.

Little dioramas of whimsy. The one I took a photo of showed a dinosaur painting a mammal.

Cute. But not cute enough for me to get closer looks at any of the others. But give the museum a +1 for whimsy.

The Asteroid Video

A continuously running video shows an asteroid that impacted Earth 65 million or so years ago somewhere near Mexico. This was not so good for dinosaurs, but proved fortuitous for mammals. Besides the immediate effect of



earthquakes and a massive tidal wave, it also tossed up enough dust to choke the planet and kill off vegetation. And if you thought you were safe in the sea, it killed off lots of the building blocks of sea life, too. I recall it said 75% of all species were estimated to have perished.

It also led to cold temperatures and the formation of ice at the poles.

A wall of fossils then leads you to a display of wall panels and videos explaining ecological conservation and global climate change. It points to dinosaur times, noting the sea level was far higher, like hundreds of feet higher, than it is today.

Aquarium

A small room holds an aquarium, which includes a touch tank with horseshoe crabs, starfish (er, now called "sea stars" I'm told by the docent), and sea urchins. Other tanks hold other critters like lizards and amphibians. Then there's a mouse tank, or maybe it's a rat tank, with rodents.

The quarry where you can pay a bit more to dig when the weather is better.

Cafe

As it was now early afternoon, we headed into the cafe for lunch. I had a decent cubano panini with coffee and Susan had a decent eggplant sandwich with lemonade. The inside seating was a bit too much in the direct flow of the air conditioning, so we headed out to the terrace that overlooks the quarry.

Steps lead down to the Pterosaur Pterrace Playground.

The Quarry

I'm afraid my visit was a day or so after a deluge that hit the area. The quarry was a complete mess. It was

closed that day. Normally, you can pay extra to dig in it and help find a bone or fossil. The pumps used must be massive, but the sunny, dry bed showed on the website is an ideal compared to the sloppy conditions on our visit.



Pterosaur Pterrace Playground

Just off the front entrance was the playground dominated by a climbing gym in the shape of a pterosaur. I'd call it a pterodactyl, but that's what I call any pointy-headed dinosaur that flies. A number of kids were climbing on that and other structures.

Walking Trails

We took a very short hundred-yard walk down one of the trails just to take a look. It wasn't the best day for a hike and we had just spent a couple hours walking around the museum, so we headed back to the building.

Gift Shop

It's a typical gift shop filled with plushies, toys, some books, jewelry, and clothing. It also had a section of rocks. We bought a couple of T-shirts and a kids book.

Overall

It's a nice few hours of dinosaur viewing. The staff was friendly, for we talked to volunteer docents from time to time. Everything went smoothly.

Cost is \$29 per adult ticket, although we took advantage of an end-of-summer two for one deal. I don't know what a kids ticket costs. I also don't know what an hour in the quarry costs, either, but didn't have to worry about it. There's also a Virtual Reality gimmick, I believe in the theater, for extra cost. Add all that up and it'll be one pricey admission. The web site has the actual costs.

I don't recall exactly what the food costs, but under \$20 per person, which for a museum cafe seems reasonable. The T-shirts were \$26 each, which is about what museum T-shirts go for.

Would I go back? Unlikely, because the exhibits are unlikely to change -- unless they swap out dino sculptures. The museum runs special events, for example, a GreenFest, DinoYoga, Fright Night, and such -- consult the website schedule. It's also a bit of a drive: about 1.5 hours each way and that was with light traffic and no tie-ups.

That's always the bug-a-boo for museums: changing exhibits and distance. They need to keep what made them unique in the first place, but add new things and events to encourage visitors to return. If it's close, you can stop in without too much trouble for even a marginal event or exhibit. If it's far, gotta consider all the aspects.

All in all, it was a lovely few hours. If you haven't been and you're within a couple hours' drive, then yes, worth the trip.

Cabinet of fossils. Top left is a Triceratops scapula. Top right is an Oreodont upper skull.





The swirl of a dogfight.

WWI RFC: Kansas State

by Brad Burenheide

We've been doing some great work recently for the Next Gen Banner.

We ran a mini campaign of a day in the life of the Royal Flying Corps during Bloody April 1917 in the Arras Sector using the *Wings of Glory* game and a personally-designed campaign. Six future classroom teachers participated at The Kansas State University Game Lab.

Mission 1 was a recon mission where the RFC had to escort a two seater over German lines to take photos of German trenches. The German fighters brought the observer down but paid for it with the loss of both of their planes. Where the mission was worth 3 and planes worth one, the score was: Entente 2, Central Powers 4.

Mission 2 was a RFC observer identifying where AA guns were. Had they won Mission 1, they would have had an advantage in finding the positions. With their work cut out for them, their spotter was brought down before it could get back to base, but the AA guns were spotted for British artillery and both German fighters were brought down. The end of Mission 2 had the score: Entente 7, Central Powers 5.

This led to a wide open dogfight for the end of the day. Both sides brought three fighters to end in a wild scramble. The RFC squadron leader and the German Jasta leader picked each other out and happened to drop each other in the same exchange. With the score 10-8, the Germans were able to drop one of the fighters as the sun set, and the remaining fighters returned home with a small German win, the score Central Powers 11, Entente 10.



AWI Princeton

The KSU Game Lab then attended the Manhattan Chautauqua the past weekend. On the 2nd day Dr. Burenheide and Mr. Ross Conner refought the battle of Princeton in honor of the 250th Anniversary of the United States.

The game was played twice and those who observed the game were placed in the roles of Hugh Mercer, Capt. Luke, and even George Washington, making decisions and rolling dice. In both battles, the Colonial force was able to break the Redcoat Brigades and secure the supplies in Princeton.



Upgrades

We've upgraded our recording materials at KSU TGL and hope to be able to do recording and reaching out to more future teachers. We had a great time this summer hosting a three-day summer camp for classroom teachers and game-based learning. Additionally, I'm teaching a graduate class this fall *Wargaming in Learning and Teaching* and not only having a blast, but learning a lot as well.

More use of gaming as a teaching tool of history.



Siege of Acre.

HMGS Next Gen: Schoolin' Students in History

by John Spiess

Siege of Acre: Larchmont

We had a great crowd, plus some librarians from Pleasantville who wanted to check us out. We hope to run a few events for them before year end -- just have to work out the dates. Larchmont continues to be one of our best programs. We had a bunch of kids attend Historicon and I'm noting that Fall-In is coming.

Battle of Crecy: New Canaan

One of our regulars, Rory (who also attended Historicon), showed up a bit early with his mom. He looked around and sat down on the English side. Rory is home schooled, so his mom told me they spent some extra time learning about this battle.

I looked at Rory and asked, "Wow. Is that right?"

He smiled and replied, "Why do you think I'm sitting here?"

Just a quick footnote that I actually make the games pretty even. That's why I give a historical summary at the end, so they can learn what happened and the differences from the game. In this case, the English did win, but just barely. We had a new gamer, Aiden, do a great job holding his



position by the Crecy windmill. And the MVP went to Alex, who had to hold the other English flank without the advantage of archer stakes.

*Near right: Lewisboro ancients.
Far right: New Canaan Crecy.*



The French tried to swamp that flank, and almost broke through. I told Alex at the beginning of the game that if he just managed to survive, they would win. He barely held on. It was a great game.

Ancients: Lewisboro

We started with another Greco-Roman game at the Lewisboro library. They run a combined program, so this was adults versus teens. The kids were getting trounced, but as always, dice favored the young and they pulled out a squeaking victory when they passed key morale checks and the adults failed all of theirs.

Battle of the Bulge: Rye

We put on a Battle of the Bulge tank game at the Rye Library Free Reading Room. This was the first game of the new school year, so it was good to see a lot of regulars return. We ran events over the summer, but a lot of kids were away on vacation. Turnout was back to normal.



*Right, top: Bulge at Rye.
Right, bottom: WWI air at Rye.*

WWI Wings of War: Rye

Jim was back in Rye, only this time running a WWI *Wings of War* aerial combat game for the younger 4th and 5th graders. This rule system is great for the younger players and they picked up the mechanics immediately.

Kudos for to Jim for running a miniatures after-school program three days a week at Stamford, CT, with the start of a new school year.



WWI Trenches: Larchmont

While the aerial battle was going on, I was a few miles away running a WWI trench wars battle at a birthday party in Larchmont.

These kids are all “veterans,” so I didn’t even need to review the rules. I have to admit that I was pretty impressed with the birthday brownie cake that the mom baked. She converted it into a no man’s land, complete with craters, a trench line, twizzlers for sandbags, and Teddy grahams for the soldiers. If you look closely, some of them are knocked down as casualties. That’s a dedicated mom!



The birthday bash.

For party favors, I gave everyone a nice set of WWI Armies in Plastic figures, along with the last few copies of *Ravenfeast* that I still had.

Bulge: Darien

Hosted a *Bolt Action* Battle of the Bulge tank game in Darien. Of note is that three of the gamers in the photo attended over 30 events at Darien since we started the program. That's pretty impressive. Sooner or later, we'll get them to conventions. One of the lads has a somewhat running joke at Darien. He always slips a Star Wars stormtrooper into the game to see how long before I notice. Pretty funny.



More Bulge: New Canaan

I ran the same *Bolt Action* tank game in New Canaan. *Bolt Action* is now one of their favorite rule systems, especially with large tank battles.



Harlem Heights 1776: Greenwich

The Battle of Harlem Heights (September 16, 1776) was held at the Greenwich library on the actual 250th anniversary (September 16, 2026).

More Bulge: Somers

I ran yet another *Bolt Action* tank game at the Somers Library. They opened it up to adults, so we had a few veterans attend as well, which was nice.

Veterans enjoy a tank game.



Ancients: Harrison

I hosted a Greco-Roman ancients game at Next Gen's newest venue library, Harrison, to great attendance.

The Greco-Roman ancients gamers at Harrison.



Did someone say Fall In?



NEWS

101 Words: *A Lil' Bootlegging in Speakeasy City*

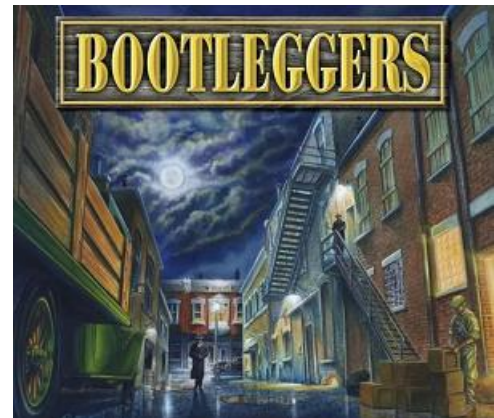
by Russ Lockwood

I had the most pleasant e-mail late last month. Back in May, I submitted a short story *A Lil' Bootlegging in Speakeasy City* to a writing website called 101 Words. How short a story? The stories have to be exactly 101 words. Yeah, that's short. In August, they noted that they had selected it for posting on September 26.

So, do me a favor and click on over...I mean, it's only 101 words and you might get a chuckle.

<https://101words.org/a-lil-bootlegging-in-speakeasy-city/>

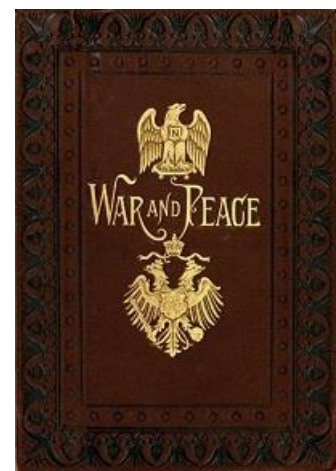
Thanks!



How Many Words? AAR vs *War and Peace*

by Russ Lockwood

An AAR reader asked about upcoming conventions and events and I replied that if I'm sent something in a timely manner, I include it in the News section. Now, I don't go looking for News because as a volunteer for HMGS East, believe you me, I already spend a lot of time writing, re-tooling graphics, e-mailing, and posting the AAR. Hmmm. I wonder... Gimme a sec...



Issue	Words	Contributions by other authors
August	29,383	(1,800)
July	22,690	(1,700)
June	24,518	(2,000)
May	24,861	(2,200)
April	28,506	(4,400)
March	26,587	(6,100)
February	31,018	(5,200)
January	30,052	(2,700)
Total:	217,615	(minus 25,100) = 192,515

War and Peace? Google AI sez: "Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* contains approximately 587,287 words."

So my eight AARs Jan-Aug. 2026 are about a third of a *W&P*. Assuming the same rate through the end of the year and that's 256,044 words for 2026. Or, that's about a *W&P* every two and a quarter years.

Another way to look at it is that a paperback book has about 300 words per page. The combined AARs would make up a 641-page book in eight months, or extrapolating through December, that's an 853-page book for 2026.

Hmmm...I've been writing the AARs for HMGS since 2019, and for many years before that just for a growing number of gaming friends and acquaintances. Earlier AARs weren't that long, nor had many book reviews, but it's amazing what can be done if you're always doing.

Back Issues of 2025 AARs Now Up On HMGS.org

by Russ Lockwood

Now having gotten the hang of posting AARs on hmgs.org without minimal problems, I've posted all 12 back issues of 2025. Clicking on the headline or photo of a specific issue brings up a Table of Contents for that issue and a link to download the PDF. The 2025 issues join the 2026 issues for all to read and enjoy.

AAR Issue List: <https://hmgs.org/blog/category/after-action-reports/>

Author Display: Sherman Tank

by Russ Lockwood

Fred Brem, author of *Knights of Freedom* (reviewed back in the Feb. 2024 AAR), set up a table at the 2025 US Army Heritage and Education Center's Army Expo in Carlisle, PA. I'm pretty sure, well, mostly sure, um, just a feeling, that's not his 1:1 scale Sherman tank, but it is a cool backdrop. The smaller tanks on his table were 3D printed by HMGS' Mike Gesser and represent each of the tanks Fred's dad was in. They're paired with photos his dad took of them.



Brem noted he's posted all the photos for the chapters to his website: <https://www.knights-of-freedom.com>

CPG: Now 20mm and 58mm Scale, Too

by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games notes 3D prints in three major scales: 28mm, 40mm, and 54mm. However, it announced it's now printing selected lines in 20mm (1:72nd) scale and 58mm scale as well.

Also, CPG is now printing a seven-piece Dark Age/Medieval Villager Set for those needing peasants. Cost: \$16.00 for 28mm, \$22.00 for 40mm, \$36.00 for 54mm, and \$45.00 for 58mm.

Info: <https://www.dayofbattlegames.com/new-medieval-and-dark-age-miniatures/>



ACW and Fantasy Pirates: New Minis

by Russ Lockwood

Chris Parker Games announced the addition of 28mm, 40mm, and 54mm 3D printed American Civil War figures -- technically listed as Confederettes. Prices vary depending on the set, usually six infantry figures per set with pricing of \$16.00 for 28mm, \$22.00 for 40mm, and \$36.00 for 54mm -- but verify first.

CPG also announced a seven-figure Fantasy Pirates set -- one dwarf, one elf, two halflings, and three ogres. Price: \$26.00 for 28mm, \$30.00 for 40mm, \$45.00 for 54mm, and \$50.00 for 58mm.

CPG also announced 25 sets of 3D printed English Civil War artillery, foot, missile and staff figures. Prices are \$16.00 to \$60.00 per set, depending on the number of figures per set and the size of the miniatures.

Shipping: Flat Rate \$8.00; Free Shipping on orders over \$30.00; and 10% Army Builder Discount on orders over \$60.00+. Note that CPG uses an eBay storefront for actual sales.

Info: <https://www.dayofbattlegames.com/>



WWI Journal: *Relevance*

by Russ Lockwood

Lombardy Studios announced that PDF back issues of *Relevance*, the quarterly journal of The Great War Society, are now up for sale on Wargame Vault. Articles include military history, scholarship, personal accounts, book reviews, technical studies, and overlooked stories from the First World War and its aftermath. Each year (four issues) costs \$5.95. Table of contents listed for each issue. The full 91-issue run of the magazine is \$69.95.

The issues "explore everything from the Russian armaments crisis and the Second Battle of the Marne to African colonial troops, naval operations, fortifications, aviation engines, and overlooked theaters such as Lake Tanganyika and Gallipoli. Rich with maps, photographs, book reviews, research guides..."

Info: https://site.wargamevault.com/browse/pub/33316/Lombardy-Studios/subcategory/56264_58068/Relevance-Magazine



Europa Total War: MIA

by Bill Stone, Europa Series Wargame Foundation

The Europa Series Wargames Foundation is an Illinois-registered non-profit. Its current directors include Marc Miller, John M. Astell, and Bill Stone. As a long-time Europa gamer (well, not so much now-a-days), I was intrigued to see Bill's posting about Total War, trademarks, licensing, and so on. Total War was a separate product to be released by HMS, but never came to market. So, here is Bill's take on Total War for those who have not seen it. -- RL



From: Bill Stone

Date: Wed, 02 Sep 2026 08:54:49 PDT

My personal notes about a year of conversations with Gar, Arthur, and Judy might be of interest to anyone following the sad saga of *Total War*.

Many years ago HMS (also known as HMS/GRD) promised to publish *Total War* (TW). HMS accepted orders and money for the game from many Europa gamers. But HMS failed to complete the game and, according to many customers, failed to issue refunds for unfilled orders. In September and October 2025, tired of waiting for HMS to get its act together, I spoke with Gar and Arthur several times about the possibility of purchasing *Europa* from them. While performing my due diligence, however, I discovered that the HMS trademark for *Europa* had expired in 2017. Why? because HMS failed to file the requisite paperwork. HMS, it turned out, failed to even be aware of the expiration until I notified them. For eight years they failed to realize they did not own a registered trademark.

Rather than snapping up the trademark for myself, I gave HMS the opportunity to file for renewal. HMS failed to do so. At the beginning of November 2025 -- in a complete surprise to me -- Rich Banner reasserted his rights to the trademark and copyrights and revoked permission for HMS to use them. It might have been possible to challenge that action. HMS failed to do so. Shortly afterwards, acting on Rich's behalf I offered HMS the opportunity to secure a license to use the intellectual property for their long-delayed *Total War*. Despite repeated discussions and prodding and agreement in principle, HMS failed to act. When Rich transferred control of the trademark and copyrights to the Europa Series Wargames Foundation in 2026, I became one of the directors of the Foundation. In that capacity, I again offered HMS a license on terms very favorable to them.

How favorable? In order to secure the license, HMS would only need to provide the Foundation with three complete copies of the game, report quarterly sales figures, and pay a fee of US\$1.00 per quarter. That's right. One dollar per quarter. No other fee. No royalties on sales of the game. It certainly seemed to me that HMS had the opportunity to grab a good deal. HMS failed to do so. Instead, after telling me they agreed, HMS simply stopped communicating. They failed to acquire a license.



Why does this matter? Gamers can be forgiven for thinking this was all a ridiculous charade when, based on past performance, HMS doesn't need a license because they will never, ever publish and ship Total War. However, Gar, Arthur, and Judy -- the HMS principals -- repeatedly insisted to me they have the funds in hand and will be publishing and shipping the game at the end of this year, 2026. Over the last twelve months I have spoken to them on the phone dozens of times and exchanged dozens of emails. They have consistently repeated the same mantra: "HMS plans to ship Total War in 2026." They even confided some of their specific plans regarding how they intend to go about doing so and where the requisite funds have come from.

Unfortunately for them and for gamers still waiting for TW, HMS failed again. They failed to follow through on any of their promises to me. They failed to take the steps they said they were going to take. They failed to accept an extremely generous license that would cost them only US\$1.00 per quarter. They failed to do anything other than blow smoke. As a consequence they failed to secure the legal rights to release TW, even though they claim to have the funds to do so.

After communicating and negotiating with HMS for a year, they failed to actually do anything except waste my time. I guess that means I failed too.

Note: The Europa Series Wargame Foundation is working to release Barbarossa Unleashed, an upgrade of Fire in the East, which is an upgrade of the original Drang Nach Osten. Yes, somewhere in the attic, I still have the original DNO map with the middle Moscow hex cut out. Why that hex? Because you got \$14.75 off FitE as a reward of being an original customer. When I mentioned that via a post, John Astell replied that he had found a bag full of those original hexes.

Barbarossa Unleashed will offer upgraded maps, improved orders of battle and unit ratings (especially for the Soviet armed forces), and refined rules. The rules will permit players to choose a somewhat simpler, faster "core" version, or a more complicated "advanced" version for maximum simulation. -- RL

Info: <https://europaseries.com/>

Followup by Bill Stone: Arthur Goodwin phoned me to say HMS intends to hold a Board meeting on Sunday, 6 September, to make a decision about accepting the ESW Foundation's proposal for a license allowing HMS to publish Total War....

Another followup by Bill Stone: In case anyone is wondering, nothing has happened. The HMS Board meeting has been postponed at least a couple of times. I've been told that over the last month or two the principals of HMS have suffered illness, emergency travel, hard fall, fire, injury, food poisoning, and/or flu, computer problems, loss of a loved one, hospitalization, etc.

Analyzing the Ten Crucial Days: Zoom Lecture by Russ Lockwood

The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table will meet via Zoom on Monday, October 12, 2026 from 7:30pm to 9:00pm. There is no charge to attend. The Washington Crossing American Revolution Round Table is sponsored by the Swan Historical Foundation.

David Price will speak about his recent book: *Winning the Ten Crucial Days: The Keys to Victory in George Washington's Legendary Winter Campaign*, which examines a pivotal moment in the War of American Independence in 1776-1777.

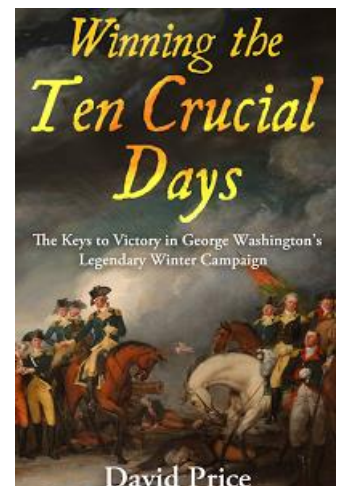
To receive a link for this upcoming meeting, please send an email to: wroundtable@gmail.com

Other info: <https://www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org/washington-crossing-american-revolution-round-table.html>

YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@washingtoncrossingamerican5416/videos>

WCAR website: <https://www.swanhistoricalfoundation.org>



**Toy Soldiers:
Holcombe-Jimison
Agricultural Museum**
by Russ Lockwood

While wandering through the Holcombe-Jimison Agricultural Museum, located just over the northern line of Lambertville, NJ, the "Toy Shed" was open and I saw a small collection of toy soldiers.



I don't think the 1711 Farmhouse was open, but the three-story barn crammed with farming displays certainly was -- hadn't been inside for a long time. Tractor and carriage sheds were also open. The blacksmith gave a demonstration of making a horseshoe and a printer gave a demonstration of the original 19th printing press. A three-musician string band played outside the barn. \$5.00 per person donation for an hour to an hour and a half of wandering around.

Upcoming events: October 4: Long Hill String Band & Special Guest: Professional Blacksmith and Farrier Demonstration. From 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

October 25: Farmers Honor Roll & Closing Day & Special Guest: Professional Blacksmith and Farrier Demonstration. From 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Although not on their website, they have a Christmastime opening with a live Santa Claus in the farmhouse, which houses a toy car/truck collection and other exhibits.

<https://www.holcombe-jimison.org/hjnj/>

Carnage 29: Oct. 16-18 Convention
by Russ Lockwood

The Carnage 29 gaming convention will be held at Killington Grand Resort in Killington, VT, on Oct. 16-18, 2026. Badges via Tabletop Events. Cost \$40 pre-registration for one day (\$55 at the door) and \$75 pre-reg for the weekend (\$90 at the door) plus the Tabletop processing fees. Youth Badges (ages 10 to 15) are \$30 pre-reg (\$45 at door) for single day and \$50 pre-reg (\$55 at door) plus fee. Youth aged 9 and under can pick up a free Guest badge.

Info: <https://carnagecon.com/>



10 Crucial Days: From Crossing to Princeton
by Russ Lockwood

Mark the following down on your calendar. The joint program *Ten Crucial Days: 250th Anniversary Events* boosts the traditional event up to an "11" (for you Spinal Tap fans).

December 24: The Skirmish at Johnson's Ferry

December 25: Washington's Crossing

December 26: The March to Trenton and the First and Second Battles of Trenton

December 27: Experience the Battle of Princeton (EBOP) Reenactment

January 3, 2027: Wreath-laying and Transfer of 14.8 Acres of the Washington's Charge property to NJ's Princeton Battlefield State Park.



Normally, the big Battle of Princeton reenactment is held on the anniversary of the battle: January 3. However, to take advantage of supersizing the event with reenactors and making it a part of the big week between Xmas and New Year's, EBOP was moved to December 27. EBOP is at the NJ Princeton Battlefield State Park, but the event is organized and coordinated by Princeton Battlefield Society.

For full disclosure, I am a trustee of the PBS.

The 2026 EBOP held back in January 3, 2026 had 350 reenactors (yes, that's three hundred and fifty) and 3,500 spectators (yes, three thousand five hundred). And I can tell you, before being a trustee, I had no idea of the effort and funding that was needed to pull off the spectacular reenactment. Tickets for the event will be on sale soon. Additional details to come.

Info about this and other events: <https://pbs1777.org/>

Cadwalader Lectures: American Revolution

by Russ Lockwood

Speaking of the Princeton Battlefield Society, it hosts a number of lectures throughout the year. Here are the next two:

October 17: New Jersey Signers of the Declaration of Independence and their Descendants

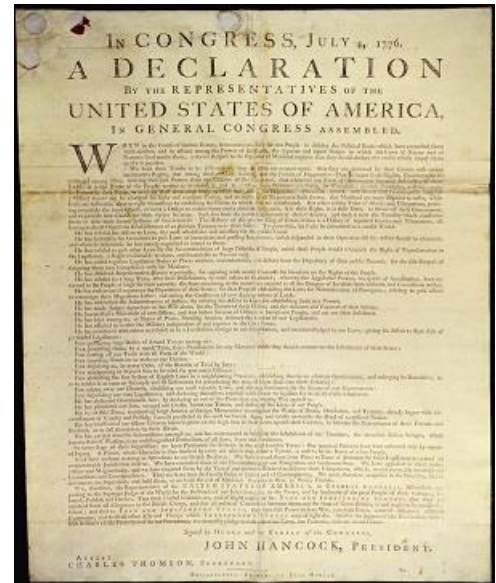
November 19: George Washington's Revenge and George Washington's Dilemma. Arthur Lefkowitz, author of many books about the American Revolution, presents information from his latest.

Location: The Nassau Club, Princeton

Admission: \$50 donation

For full disclosure, I am a trustee of the PBS.

Info and Sign Up: <https://pbs1777.org>



Hunterdon County Historical Society: Answering The Call

by Russ Lockwood

The Hunterdon County Historical Society (HCHS) has tentatively scheduled the opening of its exhibition Answering The Call Hunterdon County's 250 Years of Service and Sacrifice for Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026 at the Society's Museum and Library, 114 Main St., Flemington, NJ 08822. A special opening for veterans and their families is planned for Veteran's Day.

The exhibit will display artifacts from the Society's archives, including uniforms, equipment, photographs, documents, and so on, in the 1845 Doric House and attached Library. The exhibit will run Saturdays through at least the end of January 2027.

Admission is free, although donations are welcomed.

For full disclosure, I am a trustee of the HCHS.

As details emerge and dates are confirmed, info will be on the HCHS website: <https://hunterdonhistory.org/>



And a bonus new image: ECW designed by BattleCat and 3D printed by CPG.



Books I've Read

Correction: German Marders of World War II

An eagle-eyed reader noted my mistake in a review of *German Marders of World War II: New Vanguard 350*. I had noted the Marder III was based on the Panzer III chassis. This is incorrect. The Marder III was built on the Pzkw III 38(t) chassis. The detail is correct in the book and the mistake is my own. Mea culpa.

Generalship on the Eastern Front 1941-45. by Robert Forczyk. Hardback (6.1x9.5 inches). 608 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *A Study in Command*

This is a big book for a big topic -- how well or poorly did the top German and Soviet commanders do during WWII on the Eastern Front. Each year receives a chapter, but each chapter gets divided up into specific operations. Each operation receives a recap and then an analysis of how the commander planned or responded to events.

A report card follows with a final conclusion about effectiveness or ineffectiveness using six criteria: Objective, Offensive, Mass, Maneuver, Surprise, and Security. Appendix 1 explains these six terms -- something I would have put up front.

As the years roll by, various myths that had popped up in German memoirs and unchallenged due to a decided lack of Soviet information receive scrutiny.

One big difference between German and Soviet operational practice was German generally favored one big attack with all troops while the Soviets generally favored echelon waves of formation attacks (p39-41). Indeed, one strength of the Soviet system was creating huge strategic reserves of manpower with the idea of releasing the second and often third echelons of troops after the first echelon broke through. Or, for that matter, to counter German breakthroughs. The ability of the USSR to create and rebuild fronts time and time again was only slightly more amazing than German efforts to patch together a line using culled support troops.

The Soviets' weakness was in logistics -- they constantly ran out of ammo and fuel just as they cracked the German lines. Granted, the Soviets got better at it as the years passed, but only rarely did they plan ahead enough and assign enough support to make logistics a non-problem.

The casualties were enormous, especially for the Soviets. For example, in 1942, the Germans suffered 1.1 million casualties and lost 2,450 tanks. The Soviets suffered 7.35 million casualties and lost 13,000 tanks (p251). A rule of thumb is that about 1/4 to 1/3 of casualties were deaths or missing. In 1943, the Germans suffered 1.5 million casualties and lost 7,000 tanks. The Soviets suffered 7.85 million casualties and lost 22,400 tanks (p373).

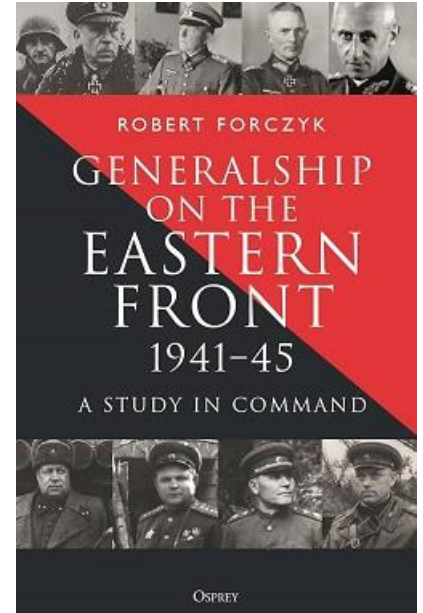
These numbers really beg the question how tabletop wargames can match such ratios. This disparity of up to 10:1 depending on the operation continued until 1944, when the Germans suffered 2.8 million casualties (tank losses not listed). The Soviets suffered 6.8 million casualties and lost 23,700 tanks (p487). In 1945, the Soviets suffered 3.0 million casualties, but German casualties were not listed (p524).

Those are the aggregate numbers. Individual operations break down numbers and ratios within the context of how the commanders ordered their formations around. Just to be clear, this is high level: German corps and Armies are the norm versus Soviet Armies and Fronts.

One excellent reason for high Soviet losses resides in Stalin's style of commanding. Commanders who suffered stinging reverses, especially those not of the inner circle of old comrades, were often jailed and/or executed. Commanders who did not follow the specific instructions of Stavka, not to mention the political officers assigned to them, suffered the same fate. Given the choice between ordering an ill-advised attack or arguing with a Stavka order to attack, the Soviet commanders attacked, prepared or not.

Of note, the Germans held a four-day wargame of Barbarossa that found escalating logistical problems. These results were ignored (p54). The Soviets held two wargames of a "Blue" invasion of "Red" USSR -- Blue won both times under different commanders (p44).

The book contains 38 black and white photos and six somewhat basic black and white maps. The lack of maps is a significant weakness. Ideally, one map should be included for every operation. I am not that familiar with USSR geography that I knew where each formation attacked and defended, not to mention remembering all the commander names. You'd think an Osprey Publications book would contain all the maps needed.



The analysis within certainly made me think about how wargames portray results. Europa at 16 miles to the hex, or maybe GMT's line at about 5 miles to the hex, is probably the closest you'll get to seeing a mass of counters develop into an attack. I recall at Tom Johnson's Europa game at GenCon with the maps stretching from Normandy to Moscow and down to Sicily, back in the 1990s, he altered the Europa CRT and supply effects, and had his own counters printed, to showcase the overwhelming ratio of casualties. As I played, I was amazed that the Germans could hold off many times their number -- for a while.

The map point aside, the book provides a significant contribution to understanding the command capabilities and performance on WWII's Eastern Front. The report card offers a quick-hit numeric understanding of each commander in an operation -- a bonus if you plan on assigning some sort of high command benefits or detriments to a tabletop scenario. Impressive book.

Enjoyed it.

The Battles of Forum Gallorum and Mutina: 43BC. by Gareth C. Sampson. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 222 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Caesar, Antony and the Next Generation of the Third Roman Civil War*

An overview of the Caesar versus Pompey campaigns leads into Caesar's murder and subsequent jockeying for position by a variety of politicians and commanders. Somewhere in all this fascinating interplay resides a good politico-strategic game.

As the alliances solidify and legions get vacuumed into one camp or another, the military maneuvers coalesced into the battles of Forum Gallorum and Mutina. The actual battles are covered (p71 to p108) with all the detail that can be mustered from a variety of sources -- minimal as they are for Mutina. As the main armies parted to recover, the political swirl continued with enemies in the Western empire (Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus) joining forces to combat the forces in the Eastern empire (Brutus and Cassius).

One typo: "why there were right to stop" (p38) should probably be "they were..."

The book contains 17 black and white photos and three basic black and white maps that could be much better.

Events of what Sampson calls the Third Roman Civil War prove interesting, in part because of paucity -- and sometimes contradictory nature -- of sources compared to other aspects of the war to succeed Julius Caesar. The use of excerpts sometimes gets a bit much, but Sampson offers insightful analysis and when necessary, speculation.

Enjoyed it.

Closing the Ring: 1778-1781. by Jeffrey A. Denman. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 214 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *George Washington's War in the North*

Washington certainly kept the Americans in the war during the last few years -- despite shortages of every kind, a devalued currency that saw American farmers ignore the Continentals' paper money and sell to the British for hard coin, and frustrated efforts at combined operations with the French.

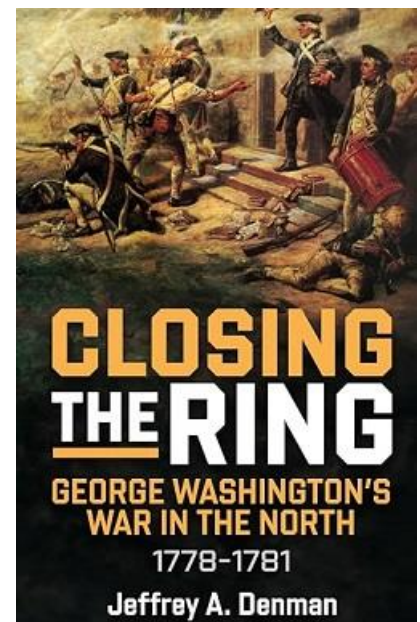
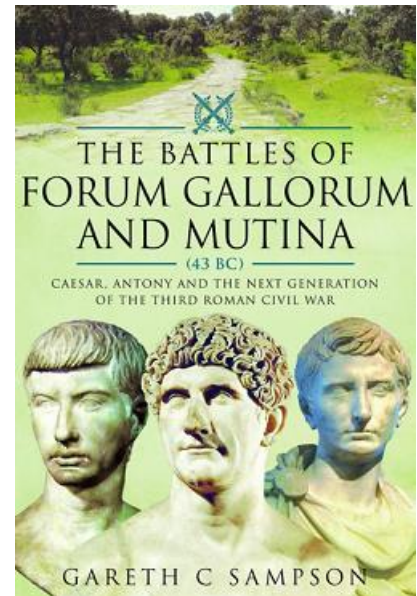
He constantly wanted to attack New York City, and did drive in outposts and such, but also declined to engage the main British Army directly in NY, NJ, and CT. He also authorized the American offensive in the Wyoming Valley that burned villages, farms, and crops of the Native American allies of the British.

Eventually, patience and perseverance triumphed and the French Navy drove off the British Navy just long enough for Washington to coordinate and march American and French troops to Yorktown.

One typo: "accepting the sword for a subordinate" (p174) is likely "from" given the context at Yorktown.

The book contains six black and white photos, 13 black and white illustrations, and 19 black and white maps (period and contemporary).

It's all well told with less about the individual battles and skirmishes and



more about Washington's command presence, deft touch with placating Congressional, French, and American military factions, and working through supply and pay problems and even a couple mutinies.

Donbas 2014-15: Campaign 435. by Mark Galeotti. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Undeclared and Uncivil War in Ukraine*

The disjointed effort of various warlords to keep their independent fiefdoms in the DonBas region of eastern Ukraine suited Putin's plan of keeping the region destabilized. The ultimate goal was to create a puppet government in Ukraine subordinate to Putin. As the Ukrainian armed forces and warlords began to pressure the DonBas warlords, Russian military assistance escalated -- as did the atrocities.

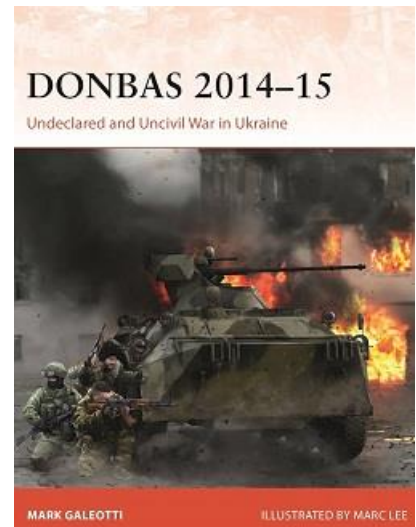
Eventually, the Russians supplied troops along with the weaponry. That escalated into a full invasion. The expected swift overrun has lasted about four and a half years at this point in time as Western democracies send money, guns, and lawyers to help the Ukrainians maintain their independence.

But DonBas is mostly a story of ad-hoc units of criminal origins fighting over fiefdoms. The weaponry and hodge podge lodge of units receive ample descriptions. The battles between Ukrainian Army, security, and ad-hoc local units against the DonBas units provide a sense of chaos within the region. Small mini-unit profiles dot the booklet -- plenty to choose from for skirmish and small-scale gaming.

The booklet contains one black and white photo, one black and white illustration, 65 color photos, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and two color 3D maps.

I certainly forgot about a lot of the historical events that preceded the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, but this Campaign booklet reminded me.

Enjoyed it.



Florence 1944: Campaign 431. by Pier Paolo Battistelli. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Allied Advance In Central Italy*

The drive northward past Rome saw some hard fighting at times, but the German fighting withdrawal to a series of defensive lines was more pursuit than slugfest. An abundance of place names marked the advance and the maps help give a sense of the territory gained.

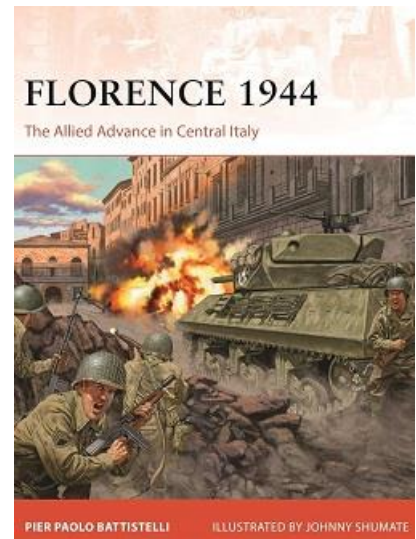
On the western side of France, D-Day was in full swing. That drew off German troops. In addition, the Allies withdrew roughly half the troops for the invasion of Southern France. Bridge demolitions slowed the Allied advance. Florence, by the way, was declared an open city and only bridges and their approaches were damaged.

In the analysis, the Allies come in for criticism for switching the line of attack and advance, ostensibly missing an opportunity to blow through the German line at Valmontone and potentially pocketing a German corp. In addition, three mountain-trained Indian divisions were not used, even though mountain warfare raged in the central spine of Italy. Finally, an amphibious invasion of Elbe Island might have been better used as a tactical leap behind a German flank.

The booklet contains 78 black and white photos, eight color photos, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and three color 3D maps. The booklet also contains good OOBs for May, June, and July down to the regiment level.

Using the Elbe operation as a tactical outflanking attack has a nice what-if flavor to go along with fighting withdrawal scenarios. It's a nice read on the continued Allied advance up the peninsula.

Enjoyed it.



Royal Navy Mediterranean Fleet 1793-1805: Fleet 20. by Casey Baker. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The War at Sea Against Napoleon*

This overview of British Royal Navy operations across the Mediterranean Sea, and even some use in the Atlantic Ocean, includes descriptions of the various ships available, from ships of the line with over 100 guns to bomb ketches, schooners, fireships, and transports. Commanders, plans, and tactical battles intermix during a period where the Royal Navy was not necessarily victorious in all encounters, but certainly was in major ones like Cape St. Vincent and the Nile. French and Spanish ships were often blockaded in port.

In a notable statistic, 90% of all Royal Navy losses from 1793 to 1815 resulted from accidents that killed 80,000 British seamen, while enemy action accounted for about 6,500 deaths (p20). How do you incorporate that stat in a strategic naval wargame?

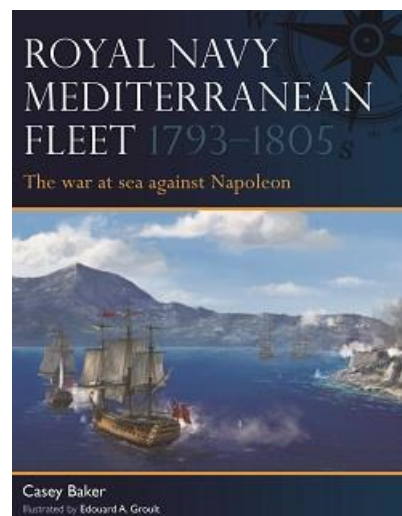
One possible typo: "other damaged fleets returned to England" (p52), but given the context after the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, it's likely "damaged ships."

Also, two pages (p50 and p63) suffer from double-printed text that make it blurry. I don't know if it's just my copy, a couple copies, or all copies.

The booklet contains seven black and white illustrations, 64 color illustrations, one color map, three color two-page action illustrations, and four color one-page diagrams (including battle diagrams for Algeiras 1801, Nile 1798, and Cape St. Vincent).

The strategic aspects and operational movements of the British Royal Navy in the Mediterranean during the early Napoleonic Wars are well covered. While British naval victories were the norm, French and Spanish victories did occur. This booklet offers a nice summation of the naval struggles.

Enjoyed it.



A Gathering of Secrets. by Linda Castillo. Hardback (5.8x8.5 inches). 308 pages. 2018.

I've read a number of Castillo's murder mystery books set in the current day among the Amish of Ohio. They read fast, you don't have to think very much, and she always gets bashed over the head or otherwise ambushed in an Amish barn. Peril and a death-defying struggle with the killer ensue.

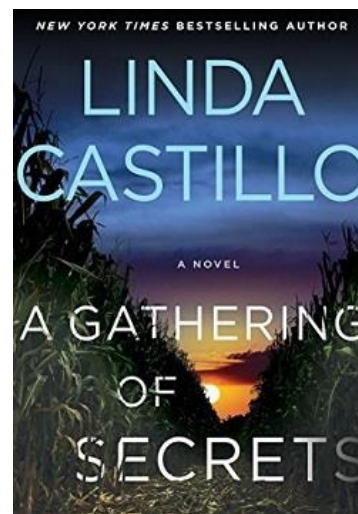
Really, it's tradition -- like an opening stunt sequence in a James Bond movie, or a villain explaining his evil plan just before saying, "Goodbye, Mr. Bond."

You expect Police Chief Kate Burkholder to ultimately triumph, but you really got to wonder about her penchant for entering barns alone throughout her investigations. Small town, of course, doesn't have many cops, but still...even a bicycle helmet would be helpful.

In any case, the town's beloved Amish young handyman ends up burnt to a crisp and the Chief begins her investigation, with twists and turns among the reticent Amish. And did I mention the barns she enters?

I'm not really a murder mystery fan, but if you're looking for a "cozy" genre murder mystery, any of Castillo's books will do. You might want to start at the beginning of the series, which helps explain a few things about Painter's Mill, the Chief, her department, and the Amish way of things.

Enjoyed it.



New Guinea 1943-44: Air Campaign 63. by John Rogers and Mark Stille. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Allies Assume the Offensive*

This is the sequel to *New Guinea 1942-43: Air Campaign 56* by the same authors and carries the war in the air forward. Besides the standard sitrep, commanders, and aircraft profiles, you get a considerable amount of air operations across New Guinea. Unless you're a geography savant, you'll need to refer to the

color map (p20) to locate all the airfields and targets covered in the text.

Among all the details of X number of Y type of aircraft bombing, reconning, and dogfighting in and around New Guinea, you'll understand how the Allies wrested air superiority away from the Japanese. The reasons are expertly summarized in the conclusion section, but the air raid numbers showed the US/UK mounting raids of 100+ aircraft while the Japanese rarely sent 50+ and often only a squadron or two. Don't even think about comparing logistics...

Per usual, claims of aircraft destroyed far outnumbered the total aircraft in the entire theater, but thankfully, the numbers are mostly correlated with surviving enemy records.

The booklet contains 80 black and white photos, five color maps, and three color two-page action illustrations.

As for the latter illustrations, this is the first Osprey I found that seemed off -- something odd with the first, more so in the second, and by the third, something definitely off. I looked a bit more at the third illustration and discovered the artist's copy and paste actions were rather sloppily done. The warship on the left was obviously pasted in -- there was even a rectangular vestige of the drop. Many of the shell splashes were copy and pasted with the same slash. You can also see a circle off to the right, as if covering something. There's also a shear.

Back to the second illustration: Same thing: straight line shears under the shack and explosions and the shacks are too much in sharp focus compared to the blurry ground around it. The first was a bit subtle: some of the aircraft, notably the underside of the P-40, but the P-38 too, looked suspiciously like a paste. Like I said, the images seemed off and indeed, they were.

Other than that, the booklet offers the textual information about WWII air combat operations over and around New Guinea. The Xs and Ys get a little repetitive towards the last third, but showcase the rise and domination of Allied air power in the theater.

Enjoyed it.

Man of Confidence. by Maureen Buick. Hardback (6.2x9.3 inches). 231 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *WWII's Longest-Serving American POW Camp Leader*

This biography of Kenneth "Kurt" J. Kurtenbach examines his life as a tail-gunner in a B-17 who became a WWII POW in Germany. Conditions in German POW camps were bad enough to later convene war crimes investigations. Scarce food, inadequate water and fuel, and withheld Red Cross packages pepper the pages -- with a bonus of horrendous conditions aboard train cattle cars shuttling the POWs between camps.

Kurtenbach was elected "Man of Confidence" -- a term that meant Camp Leader. He oversaw the POWs, interacted with German commandants and Swiss Red Cross teams, and supervised escape committees.

He was indeed a determined fellow -- constantly complaining to the Swiss Red Cross inspection teams about missing packages, bad rations, and other violations of the Geneva Convention. Although mostly ignored by the German commandant, several POWs later said he provided stability to POW life and convinced the Germans to allow sports equipment, theater, and other distractions to alleviate the starvation rations.

In 1945, when it came time for a forced march to keep the POWs out of Allied hands, Kurtenbach stayed behind with the wounded and too weak to walk. A US rescue column gave him two hours to pack up the POWs for the drive back to ambulances and hospitals. He later gave depositions about the horrendous camp conditions to post-war prosecutors.

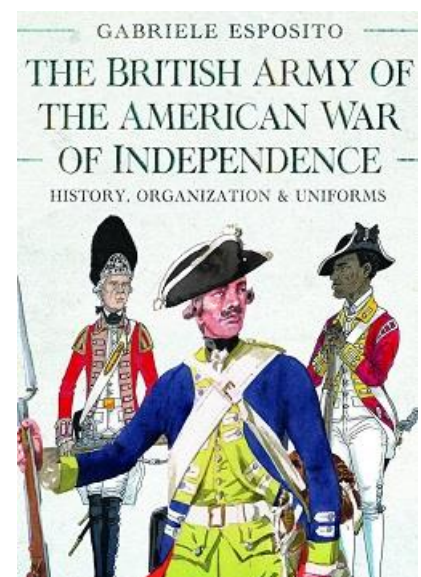
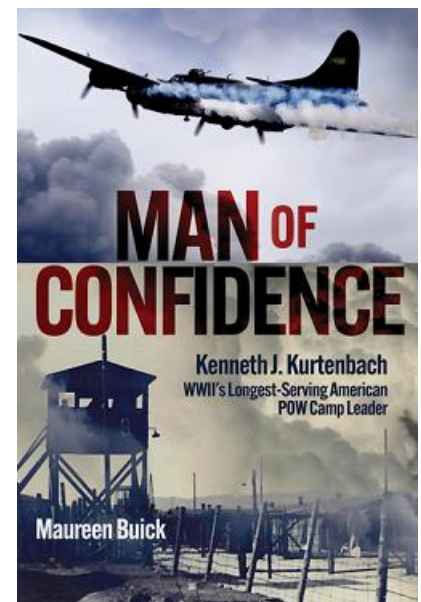
It's an easy read and vividly describes gritty POW life -- this is no clean Hogan's Heroes or Great Escape portrayal. It is a tale of adjustment, dedication, and grit.

Enjoyed it.

The British Army of the American War of Independence. by Gabriele Esposito. Hardback (7.0x9.9 inches). 118 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *History, Organization & Uniforms*

This compilation of British forces serving in the colonies during the American Revolution discusses exactly what the subtitle states -- and pretty much in order of prominence. The analysis of organization and the nomenclature



associated with the various evolutions is impressive.

Units covered, and lots and lots of obscure units are noted, include the infantry, cavalry, and artillery of British, Hessian, and American Loyalists. A smidgen of Marines and Naval types are also included.

I recall a listing of obscure units in one of my other reviews, although which one I couldn't remember. Looking in the bibliography, it must have been an Osprey. Why? Because 20 of the 30 titles listed were Osprey booklets.

The book contains 47 color uniform illustrations, including Knotels and the other usual suspects as well as custom drawn illustrations. The odd part is that they are scattered throughout the text and not paired with specific text. For example, a number of German "Hessian" uniform illustrations are in the American Loyalist chapter.

One typo I found: "hugh-quality furs" (p3) should be "high-quality furs."

If you already have all the Osprey booklets related to the American Revolution, they you probably don't need this book. However, if you're just starting out, then this offers the usual Esposito thoroughness and is a great place to start.

Enjoyed it.

US Tank Tactics in World War II: Elite 269. by Steven J. Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2026.

The title says one thing, but the text provides another. I was expecting explanations on, well, US tank tactics. What I got more often than not were long excerpts from US manuals that often explained the goals of an attack, not the attack itself. I got the feeling, and this is just me, that Zaloga was called in at the last moment to patch something together to meet some deadline.

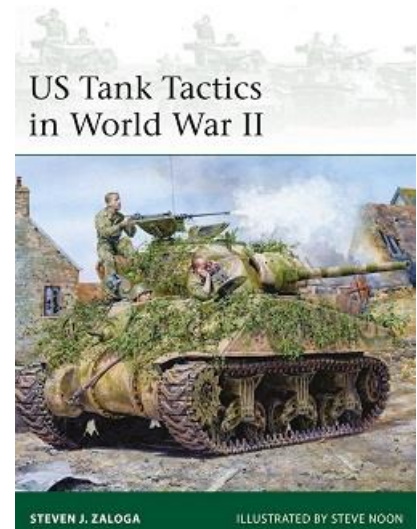
On the plus side, the hedgerow-busting tactics are well explained. That's more like it. The rest, not so much. Indeed, I read and re-read sections to see if I had missed something. Errr, specific tactics-wise, no. At best, a little too generic, I'm afraid.

The organizational information is solid, as is the evolution of tank formations.

One possible typo: "attack was conducted by three infantry defenses" (p46) is likely "infantry divisions."

The book contains 52 black and white photos, four color photos, five one-page color action illustrations, and three one-page color tactical illustrations (which is exactly what I expected text to convey).

A rare miss.



The Spanish Armada from the Spanish Perspective. by J. J. Herrero Gimenez. Hardback (6.4x9.5 inches). 212 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Tudors' Greatest Victory*

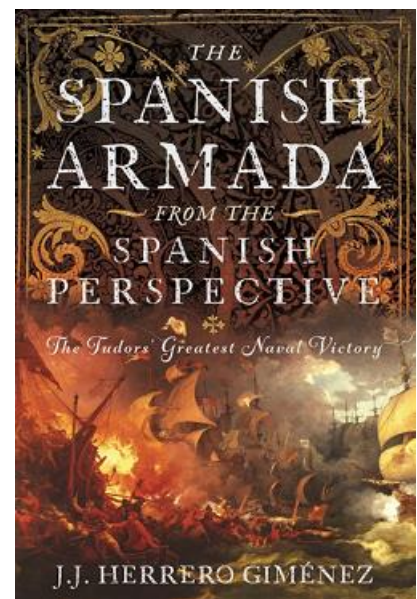
I am a bit ambivalent about the book. On the one hand, getting a Spanish viewpoint that plumbs the depths of Spanish archives is a big bonus. On the other hand, the text is not exactly what I was expecting. It seemed to me to be a little off. A little simplistic. A little meandering. A little ... off.

Now, I'm not sure if it is due to a translation issue. But I wager no English human editor touched these pages. A dearth of paragraph breaks, and I mean page after page of solid text with nary an indentation, is one clue. In the very least, formatting is a problem. This is a hard book to read, partially because you don't get any breaks and partially because critical points that should be separated by indentations ram into each other again and again.

On the plus side, clawing out the details is rewarding. A great Spanish OOB (p60-62) is balanced by an English OOB that suffered from Elizabethan security and a haphazard way in which English ships joined the English fleet.

The battle itself highlights the difference between the myth of an Armada crescent formation and the actuality of three separate Spanish formations with skillful maneuvering. Spanish naval training was second to none in theory and practice.

Spain launched 128 ships for the attack on England, of which 91 returned in various states of distress. Most of the ships sunk were from storms and accidents, especially on the west coast of Ireland, not English gunfire. Only three ships were sunk by gunfire and five captured (p94). Of note, not all the ships were Spanish -- many were rented from other areas and with a variety of seaworthiness, too.



Spanish cannons were heavier than the English and firing was a deliberate three to four shots per hour. The lighter cannons could fire at about six shots per hour (p104).

The English took 2,998 prisoners, of which 1,120 were executed, 315 died of natural causes in prisons, and 1,558 were ransomed (p92). The executions surprised me.

One factoid caught my eye. I'm now adding Sir Francis Drake to my list of book-burning morons (that's the polite term, anyway). In 1586, when privateering against the Spanish, he captured Santo Domingo and, among other buildings, burned the oldest Spanish archive in the Americas (p38).

A couple typos: a photo caption says "sixteenthth" with an extra "th" and "his authority" (p185 footnote 22) should be "her authority" for it references Queen Elizabeth.

The book contains 18 black and white illustrations, 12 black and white maps/ship battle diagrams, and one black and white photo.

Much to like and dislike. Part of it might be the approach -- his MFA degree is in Media Communications and he does film distributing, historical novels, and a couple history books, sez his bio. If the bibliography is any indication, he ransacked the Spanish archives and period Spanish-language books as well as modern English and Spanish journal articles and books. It's just hard to read. Still, ties go to the author for the topic.

Enjoyed it.

Demetrius The Besieger. by Simon Elliott. Hardback (6.5x9.5 inches). 186 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *And the Wars of Alexander the Great's Successors*

Demetrius The Besieger was the son of Antigonus Monophthalmus ("one-eyed" so to speak), who joined Alexander the Great on his invasion of Persia and became a governor in part of the Macedonian Empire. Demetrius later joined him and as a teenager, took part in the Successor battles, learning the art of war from his father.

Demetrius becomes quite good at commanding, especially as early reverses gained him experience in what not to do almost as much as victories taught what to do. He later earned his nickname Poliorcetes (besieger) primarily from his unsuccessful siege of Rhodes, but understanding and using siege engines and techniques brought him more successful city captures than failures.

Antigonus came within a victory or two of re-united the Macedon Empire under one leader, but the Successor Wars proved his undoing. Demetrius then tried his hand, but the battles lost outweighed victories gained.

Demetrius' biography falls on pages 59 to 137. The rest of the book covers Greek hoplite and Macedonian pikemen and cavalry warfare (p1 to p27), the background to Philip and Alexander (p28 to p58), short bios of major commanders (p138 to p143), and recaps of Alexander the Great's battles (p144-p169). Footnotes, bibliography, and the index follow.

I mention pages because if you are familiar with the well-trod history of Alexander the Great, this is half a book. If you are not, then this can serve as a valuable introduction to the period. The writing seems a bit simplistic, hence my comment about being a valuable introduction, but then again, I've read hundreds of books about Greek and Persian warfare over the decades. This is my first modern book dedicated to Demetrius proper and offers a fine overall profile in that middle section.

The book contains 20 color photos -- and I couldn't help but smile at the painted miniatures set up for a Successors tabletop battle. Of course the author gets a +1 for this nod to historical miniatures.

This book includes long excerpts about Demetrius' sieges from ancient texts -- not its finest prose -- but at least thorough. I certainly understood Demetrius' history a lot better after reading this biography.

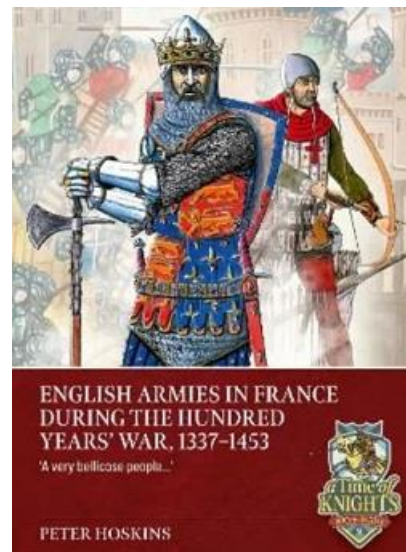
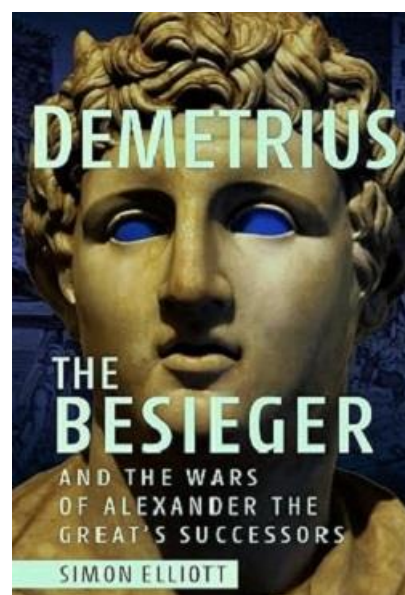
Enjoyed it.

English Armies in France During the Hundred Years War 1337-1453. by Peter Hoskins. Softcover (7.0x9.7 inches). 158 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *A Very Bellicose People*

Subtitle: *A Time of Knights 400 CE - 1453 CE*

This covers all the bases, although being English should probably be covers all the wickets: strategy, tactics, arms and armor, campaign, battles, troops,



logistics, and so on. All the famous pop in, like Edward III, the Black Prince, and Henry V, but also mentioned are the second line of English commanders like Beaufort and Talbot as well as tertiary commanders less well known. As an overview of the campaigns and battles, you get nice summaries, not in-depth recaps and analysis.

While not detailed enough to set up a tabletop battle, I do like the extensive chart (p89 to p93) of the composition and troop strength of English "armies" of the period. It gives you the basics to work out a campaign or a meeting engagement -- assuming you can find the equivalent French numbers in some other book.

The book contains two color photos, 25 black and white photos, six color maps, four color medieval manuscript illustrations, four color flags, and 12 color uniform illustrations. Of note, some of the black and white photos show reconstructed medieval siege weapons from two places in France: Tiffauges Castle and Chateau Castelnaud-la-Chapelle. If I ever get back to France for a road trip, here's two stops that look impressive.

This is a fine overview of the English Armies of the 100YW and perfect for introducing someone to the era. I'd like to see a French volume, too.

Enjoyed it.

Ally Abandoned. by Geoffrey E. Charin. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 221 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *Facing the Axis Invasion Threats to Palestine During the Second World War*

After a bit of a haphazard start, the book settles down into an examination of British foreign policy in the Middle East, specifically Palestine, during the interwar era. The post-WWI straight-line borders that failed to take into account actual divisions among the Arabs exacerbated the impact of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Although we know the modern post-WWII impact of the creation of Israel, the pre-WWII efforts at creating a sustained lasting peace in the region proved just as muddled as today. One state, two state, and no state solutions fluttered about as the British waffled. An Arab rebellion in the 1930s was suppressed as the British also kept a lid on a Jewish rebellion. Meanwhile, WWII broke out and the Brits refused to create a Jewish division, even though plenty of volunteers stepped forward as Rommel raced towards Alexandria and the Suez Canal.

Ultimately, small Jewish and Arab battalions were formed and the Jewish force grew into a regiment that was sent to Italy in the last stages of the WWII.

Before that, despite ample evidence of persecution and later the Holocaust, the British refused to allow more than a few thousand Jewish immigrants per year. Even ships with Jews who escaped Axis Europe were turned away. The reason? German agents could slip into the territory among the refugees.

Of interest as a what-if scenario would be the Final Fortress Line in Palestine that stretched from Haifa to Nablus (thankfully, with a map showing the five strongpoints). This assumes that the Germans took the oilfields of the USSR and marched through Iran and Iraq to attack Palestine from the northeast. Each strongpoint sector would have three battalions, anti-tank guns, and artillery to delay the Germans and slowly fall back to the Suez Canal (p90).

The book contains 24 black and white photos and four black and white maps.

Obviously, thousands of years of contention between Arabs, Jews, and various occupiers make for a volatile region. The 1920s and 1930s contributed to said volatility and after WWII, even more so. I didn't have much knowledge about the region and period, but here's a good place to start on an oft-overlooked period.

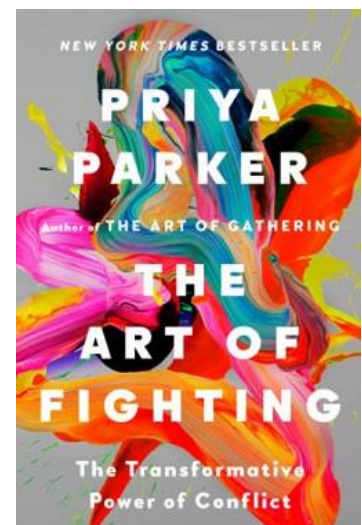
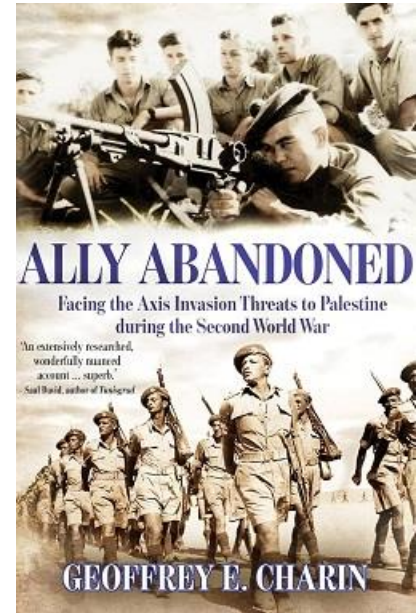
Enjoyed it.

The Art of Fighting. by Priya Parker. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 307 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The Transformative Power of Conflict*

This book is **not** about battles and campaigns. I guess it falls under the category of self-help, or more likely group-help, as it deals with conflict resolution within a group of people -- a club, a non-profit organization, etc. -- and posits that such contention is not necessarily a bad thing.

Like a three-act play, conflict goes through three stages: Tear (the rupture or ruptures within a group), Grapple (the skills used to face the issues and one another),



and Cleave (post-fight resolution that creates tighter bonds, splits the group, or ends the group). Note that "cleave" has two meanings: to cut apart and to come together.

She calls this becoming an "artful fighter" -- which sounds a little pop psychology to me, but I find humans as a whole love labels.

Usually some trigger event brings long-simmering differences to the forefront. You can call it a cause. You can call it an excuse. Whatever triggers the Tear should generate the Grapple that leads to a Cleave.

How to Grapple? You start with "dumb" questions designed to understand the root cause of the conflict. She uses an example of a question: "Pineapple pizza: good or bad?" This allows people to get used to debating "dumb" issues so they can be better prepared to discuss the actual issues.

In some ways, it's all common sense, but as she does this for a living, group sense may be less common than you'd expect. In any case, if your group is bickering beyond control, a little observational advice from someone who's seen it all may be just the thing to grapple with the tear for a cleaving resolution. It's not exactly the subject matter I usually read, but I like to veer off the usual path some times to expand my horizons.

Enjoyed it.

Scottish Warlocks, Wizards and Magicians. by Keith Coleman. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 206 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *A Historical Quest*

Being the season of witches, I figured this title would be appropriate -- and it was. However, it's a hodge podge lodge of disconnected pluckings from the pages of books and presumably the scourings of the internet.

Basically, a subclass of society made its living as traveling charm salesmen and women. From curing illness to protection from evil, these women and men sold magical protections from evil -- and Scotland was full of faeries, the Devil, and other purveyors of ill will. Oddly, a not insignificant part of the 16th and 17th century population paid homage to the Devil in a variety of ways, including setting aside a plot of the farmland for the Devil's use. Of course, if you tried to plow a Devil field or a faerie hill, oxen would drop dead, you'd catch a malady, or some other hardship would occur.

Church and town officials took a dim view of all this, and folks who suffered some wrong would accuse someone of witchcraft and so began trials and executions. "She turned me into a newt...I got better." ran through my mind.

The problem with all this is that all the anecdotes get piled atop each other. Some semblance of organization occurs within chapters, but not much. The rapid changing of people and places within a paragraph makes it a jumble and hard to read.

While nothing within is of much use in tabletop battles, you can probably pull out an anecdote or two for an RPG setting.

A couple typos: "economic burden of maintaining these roaming bards and their extensive revenues" (p88) seems odd -- can "extensive revenues" be a burden? A secondary definition I'm not familiar with? And "distinction His" (p130) needs a period after distinction.

And while not typos, sometimes footnoted passages use the old spellings and don't contain an English translation, but other times do. After all the work I had to do to read the regular text, I soon passed over such untranslated text. My Scottish ancestors probably wouldn't have trouble, but their 21st century descendent did.

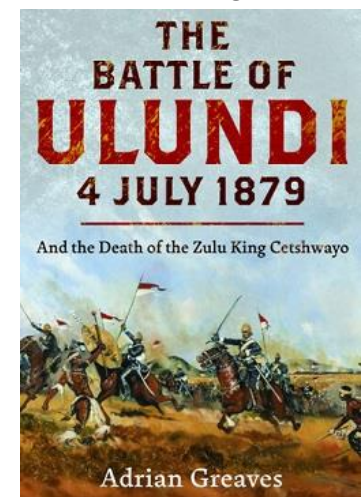
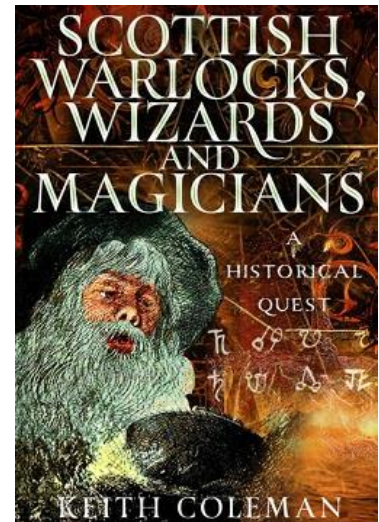
The book contains one black and white map, five black and white photos, and 14 black and white illustrations.

I'm not sure what the editor thought of this accumulation of excerpts, but I would have sent it back to the author and said rewrite it to create a coherent narrative. Maybe this was made for doom-scrolling, where your attention span is measured in partial sentences. Dunno. I do know that the research -- and web scouring -- is here, but not a sense of cohesion to the topic.

The Battle of Ulundi: 4 July 1879. by Adrian Greaves. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 200 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *And the Death of the Zulu King Cetshwayo*

After the better known battles of Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana, the British



regrouped and advanced back into Zululand to attack King Cetshwayo's capital at Ulundi. The British commander, Lord Chelmsford needed to regain his reputation before the replacement British commander, Sir Garnet Wolsely, arrived to take over. Not to worry, after Chelmsford took Ulundi and left, Wolsely had other major and minor Zulu kings to attack and subjugate.

While it makes sense given that Isandlwana had a massive mountain and Boers used various kops, I learned about how the Zulus would use caves to ambush and confound the British. The British engineers blew up the cave entrances, sometimes to good effect and sometimes not. The book does an excellent job of explaining how terrain affected operations.

Of note, King Cetshwayo was sent to London and met Queen Elizabeth and ultimately returned to Zululand. His son, Prince Dinuzulu, tried to reform his inherited Zulu kingdom, failed, and was eventually exiled to the island of St. Helena (p103). Oh sure, you hear all about Napoleon's stay, but this is the first I heard about Her Majesty's government welcoming Dinuzulu to its island prison.

One typo: "weight Taking" (p98) is missing a period after "weight."

The book contains eight black and white illustrations (including a sketch of the British square at Ulundi) and seven black and white photos. Needs area maps, though.

Greaves does an excellent job of explaining the campaigns of Chelmsford and Wolsely, and to an extent the first encounters against the Boers. If you've already done Rorke's Drift, Isandlwana, and Hlobane, you might put those Zulu and British tabletop miniatures to good use fighting the campaigns and battles within this book.

Enjoyed it.

The Commando Who Refused to Die. by Odd Bjerke. Hardback (6.3x9.3 inches). 221 pages. 2026.

Subtitle: *The World War II Story of Odd Bjerke, 5 Troop, No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando*

Oddman Bjerke was a Norwegian who fled Norway into Sweden and then traveled to Britain to fight the Germans during WWII. His mother was German, so he spoke Norwegian, German, and presumably English. His father owned a small machine shop that was eventually taken over for war production by the Germans. As the mother was formerly German, she proved quite useful in gathering intel for the Allies. The biggest danger was not the Gestapo but the Norwegian Resistance, which had a habit of killing off collaborators. The British discovered this and requested the Resistance cease and desist because they lost intel assets.

Anyway, Bjerke joined the British Army and was sent to a weather station on some tiny island off the coast of Iceland. Two years later, he was transferred to Commando school and subsequently was sent to Norway for sabotage and Resistance training missions.

Once, while escaping back into Sweden, he came upon the Swedish border post that didn't look quite right. He and his fellow commando skirted the post and sure enough, two miles later, found the real Swedish border post. The Germans had set up a fake one to capture those who thought they had escaped into Sweden. Just because the Gestapo was evil didn't mean they couldn't be clever.

His escapades in Norway meant he came close to dying and being captured, but he always escaped. He even paired with a Russian commando team on the Finnish-Norwegian border. The refuse to die seems more aligned with his mission in the Netherlands, not Norway.

Bjerke died before he could complete his memoir. To quote the cover: "Transcribed, edited, and recovered by Bruce Cassell, Carsten Bjerke, and Annette Schilt."

They did a good job integrating all the info and making it readable. About the only nits to pick are some factoids that seem out of place, or at least need better explaining. For example, he's a Sergeant (p37), then a Corporal (p41), then a Sergeant (p103), and then a Lieutenant (p158). Or that a radio broadcast mentioned Iwo Jima and Wake Island battles in the same broadcast (p75) -- even though the battles were years apart. Of note from other books, the German Luftwaffe did bomb Icelandic weather stations and the Resistance did occasionally get a ship to Britain. Remember, this was an incomplete memoir, so memories may often be imperfect, but need to be reworked. The Norwegian missions certainly ring true.

The book contains 11 black and white photos.

A few skirmishes between German troops, Bjerke, and Norwegian Resistance fighters would make for interesting tabletop scenarios. Sticking a Gestapo fake border post would be a neat twist at the end of a game -- well, maybe for the German players. A neat read.

Enjoyed it.

