



THE NUGGET

The Journal of Wargame Developments
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 346.

CoW 2022 has been and gone. Hosted for the first time at the Defence Academy, Shirvenham, the event was both very different and very similar to our normal home at Knuston Hall. You can read all about it in the opening pages of this issue. It is worth stressing that this year's CoW could only take place because a number of individuals and businesses were willing to sponsor the event and underwrite some of the costs. The WD Committee are very grateful on behalf of you, the membership, to all the sponsors.

Tim Gow has an important announcement regarding CoW 2023 on page 2. I urge you all to read it and help if you can. John Bassett also introduces the Autumn Virtual Gathering – it's free to all members, so sign up now!

CoW 2022 generated an unprecedented number of sessions. I'm pretty sure I recorded nearly all of them, but I would be grateful if members could check the list on page 27 and let me know of any I missed. It might even jog you into writing up your on and offside reports....

This issue's feature reports from CoW 2021 – the last of which will appear next issue – plus a range of non-CoW discussions and games. It is great to be able to put together a diverse issue and I thank all the contributors who have made it possible this issue.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Matthew

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CoW 2023

An announcement by Tim Gow

At the time of writing it is planned that COW 2023 will take place on 7-9 July, but we don't yet know where it will be.

The default option is to return to the Defence Academy at Shrivenham. However, they will not consider a request to book the venue until four months before the event, so there is a window of opportunity to explore other options. We will, in any case, need new locations for 2024 onwards.

If you have any ideas for suitable venues for COW please contact me (details on the back cover of this Nugget).

For the moment, let's assume it is COW business as usual, so please let me have details of the session(s) you want to offer for COW 2023, wherever it is.

I will provide a regular updated session list in Nugget each issue. If you have sent me a session and it's not on the list, please send it again! I will accept session details by email and WhatsApp.

I look forward to seeing you not only at COW 2023, but before then at the WD Autumn Virtual Gathering and of course VCOW 2023.

The WD Autumn Virtual Gathering 2022 by John Bassett

This year's Autumn Virtual Gathering or AVG will take place on Saturday 15 October. Our current plan is that AVG should run from about 1400 to 2100 UK time.

As before our aim with this AVG is to reach out to our members, particularly our international members and those who couldn't attend COW at Shrivenham in July. AVG is intentionally a discrete event lasting an afternoon and evening that we hope will provide members with a forum to meet and take part in discussions and presentations on wargaming, thus filling the gap between COW in July and VCOW in February. As before we don't intend to run any games at AVG. We find that focusing our distance games around VCOW each February works well.

AVG will be conducted via Zoom and will be open to all current subscribing WD members at no cost. To attend you'll need to register with John Armatys.

Registration will be open from Thursday 1 September until 1200 on Saturday 8 October.
So far our programme is:

Oxford in the English Civil War **David Bradbury**

An illustrated presentation on the city that served as Charles I's capital during the Civil War

Wargaming Positional Warfare [1914-1918](#) **Tim Gow, Ian Drury and David Isby**

A discussion and workshop on different ways to game the great battles of WW1

WD 2040

John Bassett, John Armatys and John Curry
"Where there is no vision, the people perish."
The start of a year long conversation on what WD should be doing in 2040, its sixtieth year, and what sort of an organisation it should be. Will also include a brief introduction to the new edition of the WD Handbook.

Royal Navy Wargaming [1900-1915](#) **Toby Ewin**

A historical presentation focusing on wargaming at the Royal Navy War College in the Edwardian era and also the wargames played in 1915 by the Grand Fleet and Battle Cruiser Fleets

This Was The Future**Russell King, Mike Elliott, David Isby and John Bassett**

A retrospective look at predictive wargames from 1970 to 1995, what these got right and why and what lessons there are for designers of predictive games now

Alaarm!**Jim Roche**

To conclude the evening, one of Jim's legendary historical/musical presentations, this time on the Battle of the Atlantic and featuring shanties, songs of the sea and of course Tipperary Lied.

COW 2022

An Overview

By Matthew Hartley

A mere handful of weeks before CoW 2022 there was a real danger that a physical event would not take place this year, due to the precipitous closure for repair of CoWs long-standing home at Knuston Hall. Through the great efforts of the conference organiser and the WD committee; the good offices of WD members; our professional reputation; the accommodation of our hosts; and without doubt the generosity of corporate and individual sponsors, CoW 2022 was able to relocate to the Defence Academy at Shrivenham.

So was it a CoW? Yes! It wasn't Knuston – we ran sessions in a huge hall and slightly smaller lecture theatre, rather than in the many cosy rooms of the Hall, and yes, we had to walk around the site to get to different venues to

sleeping, eating and gaming. But the camaraderie, intellectual challenge, and pleasure of playing good new games with like-minded friends (old and new) was very much to the fore.

One of the principle advantages of campus site was that we were able to have many more attendees present – some experiencing CoW for the first time despite having been members for years. Another highlight was open access to the rather extraordinary range of military vehicles and hardware that we were able to explore at close quarters.

It wasn't a Knuston CoW, but it was a hugely successful Shrivenham CoW.

Offside report by John Armatys

Well, it actually happened! At various points I was pretty sure that COW 2022 would end up being cancelled, and I wasn't totally convinced that the event would happen until I'd got through the security check at the Guard Room.

Shrivenham is a big site, about a mile by a mile, and COW was spread out, with the accommodation at the North end, the mess roughly in the middle and COW itself in the Defence College for Military Capability Integration (the "Technology School") at the South end. The weather was nice and I turned down offers of lifts to get a bit of exercise in by walking. The en suite bedrooms were basic by OK, the food was brilliant - top end cafeteria, not as good as the Knuston chef produced, but

with more choices on the menu. The dress code in the mess didn't seem to cause any problems for COW attendees, and I managed not to let the sight of other diners wearing trainers, shorts and T-shirts put me off my food.

COW was in a very large room, with a lecture theatre and a smaller area off for those who wanted a bit less noise. I disgraced myself by playing in very few games and spending much time in and amongst the exhibits in the adjoining halls.

One of the lessons of Shrivenham COW for me was that we can be much more flexible on the specification for a venue than I'd have imagined after 40 years at Knuston. On reflection the thing I really missed was the

bench outside Knuston for late night and early morning chats, but when it comes to looking at places to hold COW 2023 I don't think that we should exclude anything. Having said this I am glad that we got into Shrivenham just before the site became "smoke free" - having to walk 20 minutes each way to light my pipe would have spoiled the weekend.

Shrivenham COW was put together at rather short notice, and far more people were involved in putting it on than a traditional COW - I am most grateful to everybody who made COW 2022 possible.

Offside report by Martin Rapier

Many congratulations to the organisers for finding an alternate venue for COW at such short notice after the unexpected closures of Knuston Hall. I must confess I was a bit apprehensive about the new venue, I've been to Shrivenham before and although the venue works fine for a single (large) game, I was struggling to imagine the big hall full of many games running simultaneously. With advancing years my hearing isn't what it was, but in fact it was fine, the acoustics were excellent and it was great having all the games in one place as I like to float around observing a number of them.

The venue admin was all very efficient, and I am sure the exercise of walking between the accommodation, catering and game areas did us all good. The heavily subsidised bar was most welcome. I went for a run early on Saturday and shared the grounds with a considerable number of soldiers doing the

same thing - all rather younger, fitter and faster than me. The huge added bonus of the venue was having lots of AFVs and artillery pieces in the Technical Hall to inspect and climb around.

The games were many and varied, with a considerable number of unscheduled additional sessions, and covered a wide range of tastes and interests. It was great to have Martin Goddard back, as well as so many new faces - something encouraged by the venue being a bit further west and south than Knuston. It was also really nice to have everyone together in one place, and the organisers (Tom in particular) worked tirelessly to keep us fed and watered through the day. Many thanks to Kiera for the cake as well.

The whole thing went really well and was brilliant fun, so thanks to everyone who made it such an enjoyable experience.

Offside report by Russell King

Coming to Shrivenham I think a lot of us understood the extent to which a super-human effort had been made by the event managers to get the show off the ground this year after the (temporary or permanent?) demise of the much beloved Knuston Hall. The relief at finally actually being in the venue was very much evident.

Anyway, three days on, there is an avalanche of good vibes around the event to take us into the new year. Good - spectacular - venue, excellent catering, fantastic cakes, and whole host of wargame sessions to choose from. I stood on a T72! More astonishingly, I even bought something from the bring and buy.

Wow. And the weather – Shrivenham has millions of rabbits running around on the lawns at night. Do they have their own accommodation block and mess?

On the Sunday morning I was lucky enough to be at two presentations which were the first COW events run by two of the newest members, in all aspects at the standard we have all become committed to. So, indeed, we have a lot to be proud of.

The WD future is bright.

Offside report by Mike Elliot

Compared to the rather gentlemanly country house of Knuston, the UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham was totally different - like a cross between a university and a military base with a tank and weapons museum thrown in for good measure! Rather than a scattering of variously sized rooms, we were all in one Big Room. I was a bit apprehensive about noise levels at first, but thankfully my fears were unfounded. The Lecture Theatre was ideal for plenary games and talks. The catering and accommodation were perfectly acceptable. In fact for me the biggest drawback was the sheer size of the place – about half a mile from the accommodation block to the Tech School. I walked there and back on the Friday evening but I'm definitely not as fit as I used to be, so I used the car the rest of the weekend.

The programme contained the usual varied mix of talks and games including a splendid plenary (of which more later). One thing that didn't work as well was the fact that the bar was in the block where the dining room was so it was a bit of a trek and you couldn't just nip out for a drink while taking part in a session. The bar had some strange opening hours as well. Still, all in all, it was definitely a COW with most of the usual hallmarks. Convivial company, old friends (some of whom I hadn't seen for years) and of course that eclectic mix of sessions both serious and silly. A big thank you to the folks who worked so hard to make it possible and a special thank you to Keira for the cakes!

Here's to next year. I wonder where we will find ourselves in July 2023?



The Editor Points The Way

Offside report by Pete Sizer

I've been meaning to attend COW for many years, and after now that I've finally been I'm very glad I made the effort. Accordingly, I've no frame of reference to compare it to previous events but this one was one of the best gaming weekends I've had. Aside from the games the

social aspect was probably the most important part... being able to meet so many people I've only known virtually through the pandemic and distanced/ distributed gaming was worth attending for alone. The venue was great, food and accommodation were good. Access to the

tank shed was very enjoyable too, being able to see things from the inside really give you a much better idea of how important spotting rules should be in a skirmish/ tactical wargame. Furthermore, knowing that the Russian AFVs were cramped and seeing for oneself how cramped they are in real life is another thing...

The games were pretty much of the type that I expected. A wide variety on offer, I could have happily had my time again at COW playing

different games from what I chose, and I would have been equally happy. I was a little surprised that there not as many workshop/ works in progress type sessions, although I suspect that having time during the lockdowns meant that a lot of people had done a fair bit of development work and brought with them fairly polished pieces. Thanks must go to Evan and John A for taking the time to run through their games in quiet moments as I was unable to make their full sessions.

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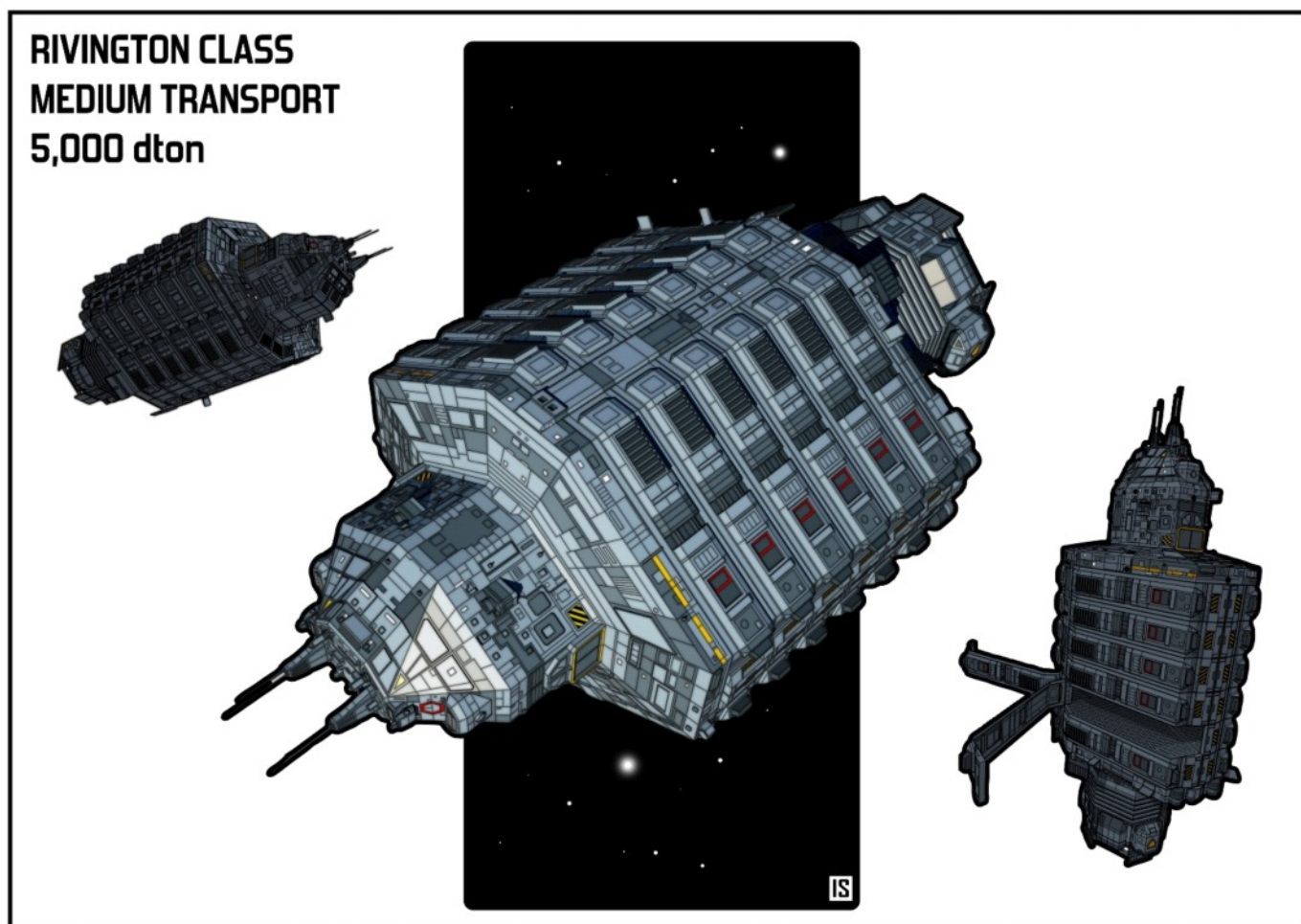


Distress Call

Onside report by Tom Mouat

This was a "traditional 2D6 sci-fi role-playing adventure", set in a 1980s vision of the far future. It is vaguely similar in concept to the Traveller Role-playing game, but is a completely home-brew version with all the material produced by me and the wonderful artwork by a very talented chum of mine, Ian Stead.

The game was set on a Rivington Class Medium Transport, which is a 5,000 dton ("displacement ton") transport ship operating in a system on the edges of the controlled space of the Galactic Empire.



The players were crew on the ship, with a reputation for being the badass go-getters who have got the ship out of several scrapes in the past, and are the first people the Captain turns to if anything unusual or bad turns up.

While passing through the asteroid belt of the system, off the main trade routes, a low power distress call is detected. It is a legal requirement to answer such calls, and since the ship has a Navy supply contract, the Captain like to follow the rules.

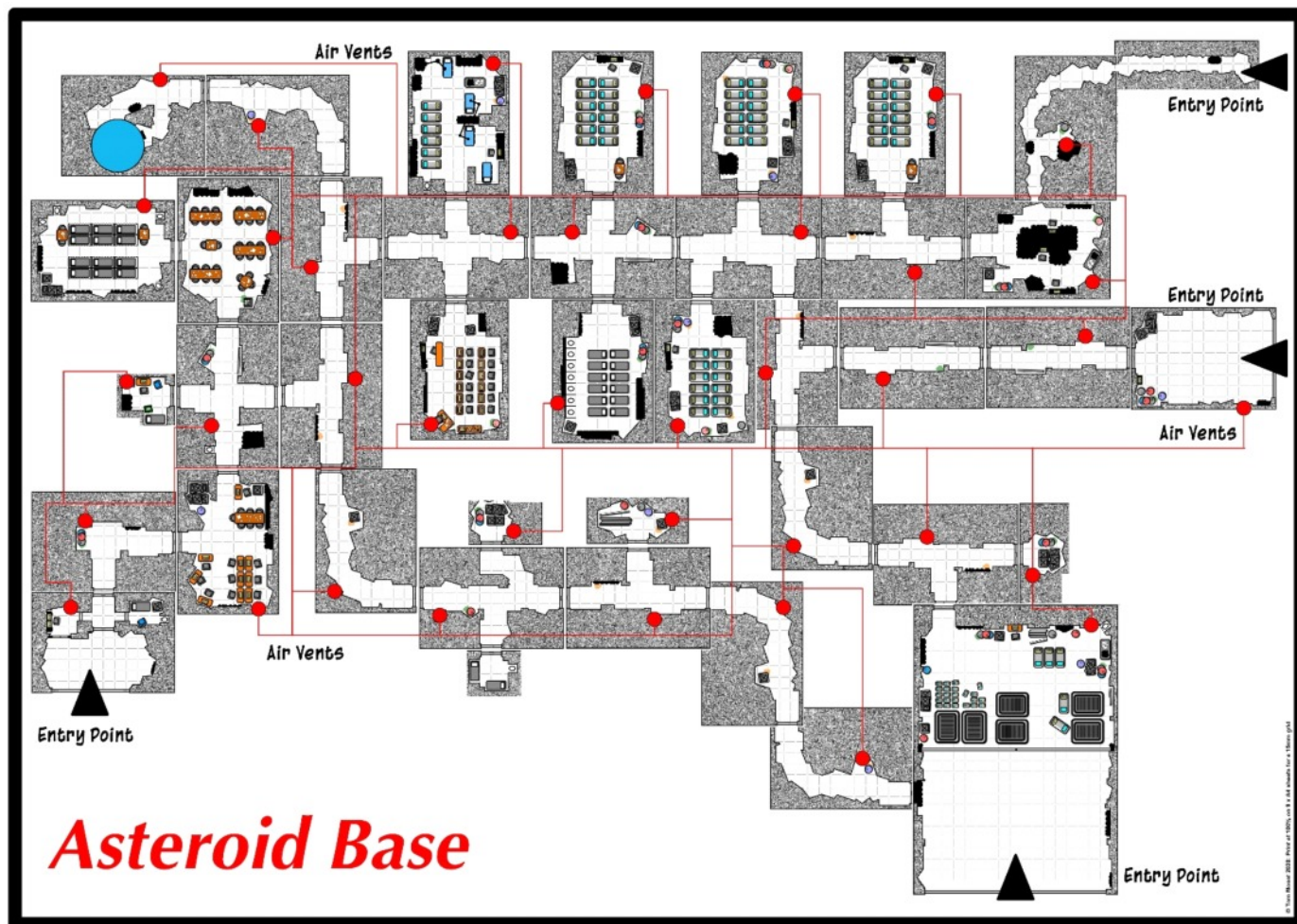
A cutter is dispatched to investigate and discovers a lone spacesuit, with a long dead person inside, their air having been exhausted days earlier. The radio log, however, reveals that a highly illegal (and very immoral) secret asteroid base in creating cloned slaves for sale to the rich and morally repugnant (and the dead person is an escaped slave). The facility is run by a corporation that is indicted by Imperial Decree (meaning that it is "open season" on any and all their assets – a "letter of marque" exists for anyone to stop their activities), so the

Captain senses the possibility of salvage if there is a way to capture the base.

Of course, by an amazing coincidence, the ship is carrying a Navy Stealth Cutter, armed, and can be equipped with a "mission module" containing a variety of sensors or weapons. The Captain authorises its use and the players set off to avenge the escaped slave's death!

I had a detailed plan of the asteroid base, but in playtesting the players took so very long to

decide which of the "mission modules" to take with them, that the game would go on forever... So, I had most of the base personnel make a run for it when the players arrived and announced themselves (or were discovered), with a couple of supply craft heading off in different directions crewed by clone slaves as a distraction, and I used an overview of the base instead and talked them through the locations.



The game ran very well and, apart from some nervous trigger fingers, they managed to kill the evil Corporate slavers, free the slaves and capture the base almost intact (and getting a significant bonus from the Captain!).

I personally enjoyed the game – and I find now, thanks to the Drive-Thru RPG website, that I can sell the scenarios I create and offset (in a tiny way) the cost of my hobby. I find that my eyesight (and patience) is too poor to paint toy soldiers and instead have discovered that

drawing deck plans and writing scenarios to play with my local group to be relaxing.

Adventures on the Rivington Class Transport can be found here: <https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/347213/Ship-File-Rivington-Class-Medium-Transport> (recently updated to include the adventure from COW 2021!)

Offside report by Matthew Hartley

Tim Price's Traveller-inspired role-playing session saw our intrepid, if very paranoid, crew discover a secret clone factory and liberate the inmates following a space battle with the slavers where a single devastating missile hit from the crew's ship destroyed the slavers drives, weapons and bridge (!). In fact, the whole game was notable for a near unbroken

run of successful dice rolls, which made the mission rather easier, although the well-attuned paranoia of the crew also helped.

Tim managed the game with aplomb and, as always his floor plans and schematics were superb. A very pleasant game, well executed.

Offside report by Mike Elliot

My character's role was pretty much just an extra pair of hands (which incidentally is fine by me), but my moment of glory came when I was passed the dice to determine the results of the 9 missiles hitting the starship. I didn't think I had

done very well since I hadn't rolled any 5s or 6s, but the scores related to different parts of the ship and meant that we had made at least one hit on every vital part of the ship!

For Whom The Dice Rolls

Onside report by Graham Evans

FWTDR may be familiar to Nugget readers under an earlier name "Send Not The Know", and is a brigade/divisional level table top game of the Spanish Civil War. They were my first attempt to "do" an SCW tactical game, and pre-date my preference for squares & grids which I used for my later Divisional/Corps rules "If You Tolerate This".

The original version is now about 10 years old. I revisited them after publishing "Taiping Era" as I wanted to do something with the SCW and I wanted to show I wasn't just a guy that wrote rules that worked on squares.

The process of turning the original 12 page booklet to the final published 94 page book took just under 6 months. The original systems turned out to be surprisingly robust, but it was a clear from the text that I took a lot for granted in the reader, and even I couldn't work out exactly what I meant. It turns out as well that writing rules for more modern periods is more complicated than for the 19th century where they don't have tanks and other modern devices. The lack of squares also calls for a

greater precision in language when describing positioning of units and so on.

Unit sizes in the game are normally battalions of eight bases, with two bases per company. These will be grouped in Brigades, with support arms, such as an artillery Grupo, armour squadron, or infantry support weapons like heavy mortars.

The development and play testing for the published version was done mostly through on-line Zoom gaming. The original command activation system had to be abandoned as it required cards to be shared from the same deck. The revised version, forced on me by players being separate, is very similar, but actually works much better even in face-to-face games.

The essence of the command system is that each side cycles through a deck of cards, drawing a hand each turn based upon the number of units and their initiative roll. Units are activated by specific suits, usually a minimum of two, very rarely a maximum of four. Sets of cards of the same suit can be used to activate

one unit multiple times in a turn up to three, or different units once or twice, and there's a limit on their number that can be played at a time, based upon the army's efficiency rating. Co-ordinated unit actions require extra cards, so combined arms attacks are expensive and awkward to organise, but can be devastating. Once you've played all the cards you want or can play, the turn passes to your opponent and so on until one side runs out of cards. Jokers when played cause the arrival of off-table assets, for example an airstrike. For the game at COW I had sourced some Spanish playing cards (Cups, Coins, Swords and Clubs, with only 12 cards in a suit – no queens in Spain) but that isn't essential.

The combat system requires the rolling of d6/d8/d10s depending upon the unit quality or level of damage, always looking for a 6 or more to hit. The number rolled depends upon the range, type of weapon and other factors as well. The modifiers are adjusted such that the effect on the dice rolled is not linear but tails off. Hits are allocated to units and may cause Disorder or Pinning until they are activated when the hits are applied to bases. Prior to that the owning player can reorganise to reduce the number of hits at the cost of them becoming permanent, which reduces the dice type being rolled. Bases with two hits are removed.

Artillery works a bit differently, with "blast markers" representing potential hits being placed on the unit. Any blast marker pins a unit, which can't be unpinned until the artillery lifts. However, it also can't be close assaulted or fired at effectively with small arms either. Artillery firing is effective at dictating the play, but it can draw heavily on the command cards, as once it has fired, each full turn cycle it must always be the first unit to receive an order which can be to cease fire.

The close assault system has a "forced result" outcome, in that the number of hits for each side is determined, and the difference read off on a table. This will result in the inflicting of hits on each side, and an outcome result which will mean the sides are separated. A further close assault command will be needed for the fighting to continue. This has proved to be

particularly good for simulating units fighting from building complex to building complex block in built up areas.

For the game I was joined by David Bradbury and Pete Grizzell as the Italian CTV, and Fred Cartwright and Mike Elliott as the Republicans. The scenario was Guadalajara, and was taken from the free downloadable resources pack that supports the rules. It's available from Wargame Vault, or the Wargaming for Grown Ups blog page.

The actual running of the game could have gone smoother, as I'm a bit out of practice of managing people in the same room. Plus it was really hot. I forgot some special rules, like the ground being boggy and CTV trucks not being able to move off road.

Players will never do what you hope, and the Italians proceeded to dismount as many of their units from their transport as possible before they got on the table. This reduced the chances of being bombed on the road, but also slowed the advance speed to a snail's pace, and they never really got anywhere near the objectives when time ran out. The Republicans re-invented artillery interdiction of road junctions (something my players have never tried) and with a bit of help the CTV managed to stage a combined infantry/armour assault that was devastating, except for the loss of a tank or two. I say tank. They're CV33/5s, so more like motorised tissue boxes really.

I must have been doing something right, as a few people bought copies of the rules over the weekend, and one person even sat and read them (thanks, Judith).

Copies are available from Amazon in hard or soft copy for £14.99 or £19.99 respectively, or from Wargame Vault as a download for £14.99. Or UK customers can order soft backs directly from me for £14.99, including postage. A more complete description can be found on the relevant page of the Wargaming for Grown ups blog.



Offside report by Martin Rapier

I was keen to observe Graham's new Spanish Civil War rules in action. I've been following their development on his blog, but it isn't the same as seeing them played. I dropped in after the WW1 tank game to watch for a while.

He was running the Guadalajara scenario which has been featured on his blog, with the Littorio motorised division attacking one of the International Brigades. The Italians are fully motorised and supported by armour, but handicapped by a lack of air support and muddy ground off road.

At the point I arrived, the Italians had debussed having encountered the first Republican positions were busy lobbing artillery and

mortars at each other. In the real battle the Italians pressed further along the road before dismounting, but as a demonstration of the mechanisms, it worked fine. Further back, two more battalions were marching on, while the Italian tank column trundled up the road to join their motorised pals.

I stayed for about an hour, which gave a very useful grounding in all the game mechanisms including unit activation, morale, direct and indirect fire, air strikes and close assault. This was very useful and gave me a good feel for how the game worked and how it played, and I later had a lengthy discussion with Graham about the design and operation of the command system.

Offside report by Mike Elliot

Being a keen follower of Graham's blog, funnily enough I have not previously played in one of his games at COW. I decided to remedy that this year and duly signed up for his Spanish Civil War game. Fred and I had command of the International Brigade at Guadalajara. Early in the game Fred managed to land an artillery strike on the road. Due to the previous wet weather the surrounding countryside was

saturated and any vehicle attempting to cross quickly bogged down – and became targets for our air raids. This rather threw a spanner in the works for the Italian attack ...

This was an interesting and enjoyable game, not only for Graham's seat-of-the-pants umpiring but also for the convivial company of Graham and the other players – thanks chaps!

I would say however, that although I can see where Graham is coming from with the rules design, it feels a bit too chart driven for my preference. That the game appears (from my

very limited knowledge of the period) to be a pretty good representation of a battle in the SCW is without doubt. I just wonder if the rules mechanisms could be simplified a bit?

Gibraltar Of The North

Onside report by Mike Elliot

Introduction and Historical Context

The fortress of Louisbourg was built to protect and provide a base for France's lucrative North American fishery on one of the richest fishing grounds in the world, the Grand Banks, and to protect Quebec City from British invasions. For this reason it has been given the nicknames 'Gibraltar of the North' or the 'Dunkirk of America' (though apparently the epithet "Gibraltar of the North" has also been applied to the city of Luxembourg – I have no idea why, since it's not exactly in the north!).

In 1748, the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which ended the War of the Austrian Succession, restored Louisbourg to France in return for territory gained in the Austrian Netherlands and the British trading post of Madras. In early June 1758, British troops under the command of Jeffery Amherst landed outside the city and began siege operations. While Amherst's command laid siege to the city, the Royal Navy considered the 7 ships of the line and 6 frigates in the harbour. By late July only five French ships of the line remained, the others having either escaped or been scuttled as additional defences across the harbour mouth. On 21st July, a round detonated the powder magazine of one of the ships. The ensuing blaze carried to two neighbouring ships, and all three were burnt to the waterline.

Three days later, on July 24th, Admiral Edward Boscawen informed Amherst of his plan to capture the remaining two ships – the *Prudent* (74 guns) and the *Bienfaisant* (64 guns). Late in the night of July 25th-26th, two squadrons under the command of Captains John Laforey and George Balfour, with a total of approximately 600 sailors and marines, rowed into the harbour. Concealed by the dark and fog, and with Amherst ordering his artillery to "fire into the works as much as possible, to keep the enemy's attention to the land," they

slipped past the French battery guarding the entrance and approached the two French vessels undetected.

As Laforey's command approached the *Prudent* and Captain Balfour the *Bienfaisant*, each was hailed by sentries aboard the ships. Receiving no response, the guards opened fire, breaking the silence. Nevertheless the attackers captured both ships with minimal resistance, but at a cost of sixteen casualties (7 killed, 9 wounded).

The French defenders, alerted to the threat, opened fire on the two ships. Under fire, and finding the *Prudent* run aground, the British sailors set her ablaze. The *Bienfaisant*, meanwhile, was towed to the Northeast corner of the harbour, safe from French artillery fire.

The following day, with Amherst's ground forces ready to breach the city walls and Boscawen's fleet entering the harbour, the French governor offered the city's surrender to Amherst.

How the Game Came to Be

I have been interested in sieges and how to wargame them for some years. I wanted to do a game about the siege of Louisbourg in 1758, however when I looked at the timeline of the siege it was actually rather boring. I was on the point of giving up and looking at another siege action when it occurred to me that the "straw that broke the camel's back" was the cutting out operation described above. But how to turn it into a game? I was thinking about the idea when I realised that a simple game based on the idea of a cutting out operation might well work. I wanted to get some variation and random effects into the approach phase and I remembered the "higher/lower" mechanism from a game called "Play Your Cards Right". So by using that basic mechanism and adding some extra features to it I could build a bit of tension and rivalry between the players. I also

avoided the use of tapes by using the dimensions of the playing cards as units of measurement.

The Game

Player Briefing

It is July 25th, 1758. The British army supported by the Royal Navy are besieging the French held city of Louisbourg in Newfoundland, North America.

You are Lieutenant [Able, Baker, Charles, Dawlish] of the Royal Navy. You are in command of a company of about 75 marines and sailors, forming part of a cutting out expedition to capture the French ships in the harbour of Louisbourg. Your mission is to capture one of the French ships.

Models and Representation

Each company is represented by a model boat, 4 marine figures and 2 sailor figures. All the figures in a boat are a "crew".

The French ship is represented by card templates. The ship should be about 22in long and show the main areas of the ship. Multiple decks are represented by templates placed one on top of another.

The areas on the ship are:

Fo'c'sle Deck

Fo'c'sle

Main Deck

Quarterdeck

Officers Quarters

Ward Room

Captain's Cabin

Poop Deck

The Fo'c'sle Deck is stacked above the Fo'c'sle. The Quarterdeck and Captain's Cabin is stacked above the Officers Quarters and Ward Room. The Poop Deck is stacked above the Captain's Cabin.

The Approach

Units of measurement are either the width (short edge) or length (long edge) of a playing card.

Each boat is positioned near the edge of the playing area with one card width between each boat and the next. Draw playing cards from the deck and place one face down behind each boat.

Players take turns to move their vessel. On the first turn, turn over the card behind the boat. The player then declares "Higher" or "Lower". The umpire deals a card, if it is higher than the card on the board and the player so declared then the boat is moved one card length forward, or similarly if the player declared Lower and the card is lower. Aces are high. If the player called Higher and the card is equal or lower (or vice versa for a call of Lower) the boat does not move. Regardless of the result, the card just dealt replaces the one behind the boat and is placed face up. A boat cannot move if there is another boat in the way.

As the night is dark and foggy, the suit of the card dealt may have other effects:

Club The boat veers to port. Place the boat one card width to the left after moving forward.

Heart The boat veers to starboard

Diamonds The boat steers a straight course without veering to port or starboard

Spades A Spade card triggers an event:



Ace	A rock appears out of the gloom, veer to port to avoid it
King	Wrecked ship (one of the ships scuttled by the French). No movement forwards this turn in order to negotiate your way past the wreck
Queen	The fog lifts slightly, move forward another card length
Jack	A light appears to port. Veer towards it.
10	Muffled sound of bells for changing the watch can be heard
9	The fog lifts slightly, move forward another card length
8	A man in your boat coughs. Bosun, take that man's name!
7	A rock appears out of the gloom, veer to starboard to avoid it
6	A light appears to starboard. Veer towards it.
5	The fog appears to get thicker. Roll 1D6, odds veer to port, evens to starboard
4	Squeaky rowlock!
3	A man in your boat coughs. Bosun, take that man's name!
2	Wrecked ship (one of the ships scuttled by the French). No movement forwards this turn in order to negotiate your way past the wreck

Sentries

When any boat is within 1 card length of the ship, the French sentries call out a challenge: "Qui est la?". If the player elects to respond to the hail (in French!), then nothing further happens. If the player elects to keep silent the sentries open fire. Roll 2D6. On a score of 3 or less, one base of 2 figures is removed from the target boat.

Boarding

When a boat makes contact with the side of the ship it stops. On the next turn, declare Higher or Lower as before and play a card. If the card is called correctly, then the boat's crew are moved onto that area of the ship with which the boat is in contact.

Each area of the ship is defended by 2 crew figures. When an attacking crew moves into an area where there are defenders then roll 2D6. On a score of 6 or more the defenders are beaten and captured and thus removed from play.

To move from one area of the ship to an adjacent area, then the player declares and a card is drawn as before. If the card is correctly called the crew move into the adjacent area and fight any defenders there. If the card is not called correctly the crew do not move. As crew move to different decks of the ship, place the templates alongside the lower deck.

The only limit on the number of crews in a ship area is whether the figures will physically fit in the space available.

Capture

When all the defenders have been eliminated the ship is captured and the game ends. Tots of rum all round if desired!

How it played at COW

The game was billed as a late ADG on the Friday night. Four players signed up and we decamped to the Beech Room to give it a go.

The game moved along swiftly though Matthew seemed to have an amazing ability to call the cards incorrectly! Nevertheless all four crews managed to reach the ship. There followed a brief fight to capture the areas of the ship and then we discussed the game. Everyone seemed to feel that it was an entertaining way to do a cutting out operation, so that was rather pleasing. One suggestion was that the score needed to defeat the defending French sailors could be increased the more noise that was made by the attackers.

References

<http://www.masshist.org/bee hiveblog/2014/11/the-siege-of-louisbourg-1758-the-daring-capture-of-the-prudent-and-bienfaisant/>

Offside report by Michael J Young

Bands of determined men in small boats capturing large ships by boarding them seems a fool's errand. Surly the large ship has all the advantages? But it is surprising how often this was tried in history, and even more surprising to me how often it succeeded. For example, pirates often used small fast boats rather than large Galleons to attack their prey.

This game represented a time when such an event occurred - during the siege of Louisburg in 1758 when the French frigate *Bienfaisant* was captured by a British raiding party in small boats.

Each of the four players controlled a single British rowing boat filled with Marines and silently approached the French vessel, attempting to board and capture it. The movement was represented by drawing a card from a deck. If it was diamonds the ship went

forwards, if it was hearts it veered right, if it was clubs, left, and if it was spades then a special table of random events was read out saying things like "You see a small light, veer to port" – The main thing the spades did was add colour to the game system.

Eventually the British boats made contact with the French frigate and the ship was boarded. A few easy dice rolls were needed to overcome resistance and the game was over.

The movement was luck driven with the players making few decisions, but I hope this didn't matter as the game was more an immersive experience than a game of skill. It only took a few minutes to play so would be a good candidate for the WD display team to take to shows.

Well done, Mike.

Offside report by Matthew Hartley

This was Mike's Elliot's cutting out game set in Louisbourg, Newfoundland during the 1758 siege.

The game was co-operative with each player controlling a boat of British soldiers approaching and then seizing a French warship at night. The mechanism to move the boat and fight for control of each part of the ship was simple HI-LO "Play Your Cards Right" with the colour of the drawn card indicating direction of drift and any special events, and a card length the distance travelled.



The game was visually appealing and jolly good fun to play. The post-game wash up induced a number of suggestions for improving the game by strengthening the opposition on the ship (representing more crew waking up and getting to repealing stations), be recording the number of nosey events (such as boats colliding and various special event like boat crew coughing) and translating this into defender defence strength.

Matthew 24:11

by John Salt

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many

– Matthew 24:11

*I don't run a cinema here, little man,
But lean over close, and tune in if you
can –
You breathe on the glass, give a rub
with your sleeve,
Slip me your wallet, sit tight and
believe.*

– Beware of the Beautiful Stranger (lyrics by
Clive James, sung by Pete Atkin)

John Bassett (“How I Saw It Then and Why It Might Matter Now”, *Nugget* 344) reflects upon points raised by John Curry (“Ukraine 2022: Why Are Our Wargames Wrong?”, *Nugget* 343, referring to his paper “Professional wargaming: a flawed but useful tool” in *Simulation & Gaming*, 51 (5), 2020). The two Johns make a number of useful points concerning the value of wargaming, the wisdom of keeping records of previous opinions, and the vast difference between brochure and field performance for weapons of all kinds. However, both seem to be falling victim to a fundamental mistake or two about the nature of simulation modelling.

I unhesitatingly categorise wargaming as a subclass of simulation modelling. I hope that most readers of *the Nugget* are sufficiently shrewd not to fall for the tired false dichotomy of “game vs. simulation”, usually dragged up by people who don’t like their hobbies to make them think too hard, and who mistakenly imagine that “simulation” means “a fully-detailed reproduction of the real thing”, which it doesn’t. A simulation is a simplified representation, devised to resemble its subject in some important respects. It seems to me undeniable that all wargames are intended to resemble aspects of some real or imagined original. There are games that have no simulation aspect to them, but these are abstract games such as Hex, Nim, or Poker. As soon as a toy soldier representing a British

Grenadier, or a counter representing a Panzer Division, or a map or terrain model make their appearance, we are firmly in the business of simulation. Of course there are also simulations that are not games, being executed entirely *in silico*, but this merely reinforces the point that “game” and “simulation” are not opposite ends of a scale, but two separate axes orthogonal to each other. No good can come of muddling the two.

It is a mistake to think that a simulation (wargame) can, if only it is correct enough, be used for prediction. Anyone who claims to be able to predict the future is a fortune-teller, not an analyst. I share the opinion of our fellow wargamer, Isaac Asimov, that Newcomb’s Paradox (the Wikipedia article provides a good explanation) precludes the existence of any being capable of accurately predicting the future.

John Sterman, in his “A Skeptic’s Guide to Computer Models” (in Barney’s “Managing the Nation”, Westview Press: Boulder, CO, 1991) points out the difference between predictive and causal models. Cheerfully accepting the risk of insulting any economists who happen to be reading, I will say that operational researchers write causal models, and are always blamed when they fail to predict the future, whereas economists write predictive models, and never are. Once one gets beyond a few basic physical processes, things in this universe are too complicated for accurate prediction. Indeed, deterministic chaos can prevent prediction of apparently simple physical systems, as shown by the three-body problem, the motion of a jointed pendulum, or the orbit of Hyperion.

As I always tell my students, I favour the wisdom of Gascoigne (Paul, not Bamber): “I don’t make predictions, and I never will”. There are no oracles.

*‘Tis mute, the word they went to hear on
high Dodona mountain*

*When winds were in the oakenshaws,
and all the cauldrons tolled;
And mute's the midland navel-stone
beside the singing fountain
And echoes list to silence now where
gods told lies of old.*

– The Oracles (by A E Housman, “Last Poems”)

Things would be bad enough in a deterministic universe, but I also happen to believe that the universe is largely stochastic. On the face of it that is more bad news for accurate prediction, but it does open the door to the idea of probabilistic prediction. If I estimate that there is a 57% chance that something will happen, I can always try to save face in the event my predictions don't pan out by putting it down to chance. This is about as useful as a comment made by an old pal of mine, the military historian Phil Tomaselli, after the results of an Exeter University Guild of Students election were announced: “Exactly as I predicted, except that Gub Neal didn't win”.

We have no way of knowing whether the thing that happens was the most likely thing to have happened, because history only happens once. This fact undermines the otherwise well-intentioned idea of validating simulations by comparing their results with historical outcomes. This is shown in the story about the MIT PhD and the USAF General. During the good old days of the Cold War, the Pentagon had just received the results of a huge and expensive computer simulation of an all-out nuclear exchange with the Russians. The USAF General did not agree with the results, and said so in pungent terms. The MIT PhD responded, defending the simulation and the data it was based on. The argument grew heated. Eventually the General said “It's no good, we can't agree, the only thing to do is to start a nuclear war and find out which of us is right”. The MIT boffin, quite rightly, replied “That's no good, we'd only get one result, that's not enough for statistical significance”.

In an ideal world, the disagreement between General and PhD would not occur, largely because the PhD's model would be open and shared with the General so that they could see

why it produced the results it did. There would be no Delphic hidden mechanisms. After all, the point of such models is to support military decision-making, not to usurp it. As Mike Pidd put it, simulation models are “tools for thinking”, not a replacement for thinking.

Even Tetlock and Gardner, the prediction enthusiasts who wrote “Superforecasting” (a book admired by Dominic Cummings, whose intellectual capacity seemed brilliant when stood beside senior members of the government) admit that their “superforecasting” works only over short timescales for well-understood systems not prone to sudden radical change, and requires a patient process of learning from one's mistakes, all of which sounds decidedly un-oracular. I tend to side with their critic Nassim Nicholas Taleb, and not just because he is an argumentative bald man with a beard. Prediction of the expected is no kind of prediction, it's like forecasting rain in South Wales. It is warning of the unexpected (Taleb's “Black Swans”) that would, if only it were possible, have value. In the absence of warning, one must substitute preparedness.

Related to the futility of fortune-telling is the question of the “correctness”, or otherwise, of simulation models. In his paper “Professional wargaming: a flawed but useful tool”, John Curry makes a point of showing that some wargames from the Cold War era were wrong. Mr. Picky is tempted to disagree with the detail in one of the methods he used to show this, which involved comparing single-shot kill probabilities (in different wargames) of the Soviet 115mm tank gun (U-5TS) against Chieftain, and arguing that as they were all different, they couldn't all be right. This fails to account for the fact that the penetration of the U-5TS varies between 220mm and 350mm (RHAe normal impact at 2 km) depending on the model of APFSDS fired, of those manufactured between 1963 and 1978. And of course it could be firing HEAT-FS. Even so, we can happily accept the contention that these models are all wrong. Of course we can; one of the most often-quoted sayings in simulation modelling is George Box's aphorism, “All models are wrong; some models are useful”.

The wrongness of all simulation models is an unavoidable result of the fact that they are simplified representations of a much more complex reality. To use another well-worn phrase, “The map is not the territory” (Alfred Korzybski). Simplification is the essence of simulation modelling, and I reckon that, other things being equal, the simpler the model, the better. As Saint-Exupéry said of aeronautical design:

*Il semble que la perfection soit atteinte
non quand il n'y a plus rien à ajouter,
mais quand il n'y a plus rien à
retrancher. (“Terre des Hommes”, 1939)*

*(It seems that perfection is attained not
when there is nothing left to add, but
when there is nothing left to take away.)*

A well-designed simulation strips away the peripheral concerns and needless fluff, and concentrates on the essence of the problem. In a recreational wargame it might be desirable to retain some of that fluff – “Merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative” – for entertainment purposes, but that does not make it better as a simulation. One relies on the exercise of good judgement by the people creating the model to avoid leaving out some apparently floccose and otiose detail that turns out to be decisive, and there is no way to be sure they’ve got it right. The difficulty of this judgement is one of the things that can lead to models growing without limit, where the designer, unsure of what matters and what does not, tries to include everything. Even if the designer is not daft enough to fall into the beginner’s error of trying to model everything (“boiling the ocean”), doubt about what matters is often met where the aim of the simulation modelling project is poorly defined. As John Sterman memorably put it, the modeller’s job is to cut out unnecessary detail, and the purpose of the model acts as the logical knife. Since different models can have different purposes, this means that an element that is critically important in one model might be irrelevant in another. This applies even if the subject of both models appears to be the same, as they might be coming at it from different points of view. The example I always use comes up when

presenting a simulation model dealing with the repair of engines in a helicopter squadron. This model is clearly from the point of view of the maintainers (fixers). In cybernetic terms, a pilot’s view of a helicopter might be that it is a machine to convert AVTUR into flying pay and hours in the log book. The fixer, on the other hand, regards the pilot as a machine for transforming serviceable aircraft into unserviceable ones, and creating a demand for spare parts. Both are valid points of view; models to support each will however include many entirely different elements, even though both have a helicopter squadron as their subject. So comparing two simulations and finding differences between them is not a good way of determining that either of them is “wrong”.

In any case, especially in combat models (which wargames almost invariably are), there is very little trustworthy information on which to base the model. I am sure that a lot of the data embodied in amateur wargames is not derived from any published source, but is an impressionistic best guess by the designer, as described by the term POOMA (politely glossed as “Pulled Out Of Mid Air”). Amateur wargamers sometimes assume that professional wargamers must have available to them vast quantities of trustworthy, precise, and complete official data, but it is really not the case. More than one paper has been written on the “base of sand” problem.

Given the unmatchable complexity of the real world, the unpredictability of even simple chaotic systems, the ineluctable stochasticity of the universe, and the dearth of reliable data, I hope it should be clear enough why I regard prediction as impossible.

It has been pointed out to me that customers would like prediction. Customers would like lots of things. Customers would like automated persistent wide-area surveillance, a transparent battlespace, directed-energy weapons, and the repeal of some of the more inconvenient laws of physics. It is the job of the responsible analyst to explain why they can’t have them. Unfortunately it is also the job of the marketroid or sales drone to sell their current product that promises to deliver these things,

and hope that the customer doesn't notice its failure to do so at least until the payment has cleared.

The foregoing points, plus the overriding need to simplify with respect to a particular point of view, mean that it is essentially meaningless to speak of a model (simulation, wargame) being "correct". This is not a bad thing. The point of exploring a question by simulation modelling is not to find out that the answer is 42, but to find out what 42 means, and how it might be something else in other circumstances (simulations are not bound by reality, hypotheticals are fair game, and "what if" questions abound). The real value lies in gaining synthetic experience, building understanding, and becoming better prepared to meet whatever does finally eventuate.

A phrase quoted by John Bassett, C S Lewis' "fingerposts on the road to achievement", finds an echo from Hans Reichenbach: "If error is corrected whenever it is recognised as such, the path of error is the path of truth" (quoted in Naylor & Finger 1967, the first paper on simulation validation). Trial and error has long been the dominant mode of human learning, and the point about simulation games is that they offer the opportunity of making errors

safely, for cheap, in play, rather than hazardously, expensively, and for real. As Isi Mitrani (who introduced me to the pleasures of stochastic discrete-event simulation) put it, the reason for studying systems by simulation is because it is "too expensive, too difficult, or too hazardous to study the real system".

Gaining this synthetic experience in the course of a manual wargame, we may well lose ourselves in the game, enter a psychological state of "flow", and willingly suspend our disbelief as we would with a successful theatrical production. Participating in child-like exploratory play can be a powerful method of producing insights. This is a good reason for playing the game yourself, rather than making a computer do it for you. Once the game is over, though, we should be sure to pick up our disbelief from the hat check and put it on again. It was only a game, and you are not Rommel.

*Comme le disait souvent Papa
Ce n'est plus l'heure de faire la guerre
Il faut ranger tous ces soldats
Bonsoir, John John.*

– Bonsoir John John (lyrics by Gilles Thibaut and Claude-Henri Vic, sung by France Gall)

Modern Table Top Games Are Broken by John Curry

I was playing yet another new set of wargaming rules recently published by Osprey and after a handful of turns I realised I could predict the outcome of the game; the next two hours were merely an exercise in rolling dice.

Modern wargaming rules are frequently well written, include many illustrations and use clever game mechanisms to help model the period and above all, they are simple. Simple is the problem.

In the early days of table top wargames, the wargamers such as Tony Bath, Don Featherstone, Charlie Wesencraft etc. had simple generic rules such as infantry move 6 inches, cavalry 12, guns fire 24 inches, roll to hit and roll to save etc... However, the

simplicity of the rules was not an issue. Wargaming involved the non-trivial task of historical research in what was a desert of tactical and operational military history source material. Buying figures was expensive; basing and painting them time-consuming. Scenery was not cheap if from model railways; alternatively took many hours if homemade. Finding opponents and travelling to meet them also took effort. Actually playing a wargame was the culmination of the many man hours; no-one was that worried about the simplicity of the game. They were just pleased to get the toys on the tabletop.

Wargames gradually increased in complexity in the 1970's and 1980's, with the WRG rules being classics of the era. The latter took time to

study and table top battles were complex events that precluded simple mathematical projections or generalisations that could predict the outcome. The soundest strategy with such rules was usually to apply historical tactics. Of course, the complexity of the games meant most players played a limited number of sets of rules that they gradually became masters of.

The simplicity of modern rules means that there are certain winning tactics, that seem to apply to many of these sets, such as:

1. More dice- the essence of winning is to get into positions to roll more dice than your opponent e.g. attacking an enemy unit coming around impassable terrain by two or preferably three units.
2. An extension of the above is to attack from the flank, whilst also attacking from the front.
3. Massed artillery batteries work in all periods. Rules allow single pieces of artillery to have an impact, but if you have multiple batteries firing at one target, the enemy unit routinely becomes combat ineffective in a few turns.
4. In games that give a player the number of dice for their actions based on the number of units, the strategy is to generate a few really low points cost

units just to get more dice than your opponent. More dice for movement makes your army more agile.

5. In games where an army routs when it looks x number of units, the aim is always to attempt to kill the enemy's weakest units, as they are the easiest to kill. Avoid the guards or elite or veterans, aim for the militia or novices.
6. There seem to be simple game strategies that work irrespective of historical period, scale of figures or set or rules.

Of course, the more dice that are rolled in a game, the more chance of the law of averages applies and the easier it is to predict the outcome. If rules are too simple, is easy for players to project the likely outcome of the game after just a few moves, reducing the excitement that is an essential part of engaging players in a wargame.

Perhaps I am approaching the games with the wrong mindset. Instead of crunching the maths, I should view the toys as real, the battle as history and consider how a historical commander would approach the problems. Don Featherstone said you do not need rules to recreate history, just a player who plays historically.

Additional comment by Peter Perla

"I think your diagnosis might be accurate, although as you know I'm not much of a figure gamer. I've played mostly when someone else knows the rules and runs the game, which means I focus on my understanding of the historical setting rather than the detailed rules of the game. This is certainly not the attitude of a player trying to exploit loopholes and games tricks to win the game.

Spending a bit of time thinking about the issues you raise, the question becomes how do you create a game system that rewards historical understanding and tactics but does so by

illustrating those for players who have initial understanding of anything outside that game system. Here is, in a sense, the attraction of free Kriegsspiel—akin to my own playing with an expert running the game. The problem I have with free KS in general is the need to accept the judgment of the umpire, who may not be someone whose expertise I accept. Hence the boardgamer's desire to know that the outcomes are well defined and consistently applied. So even if I don't know the details of the rules, I want the umpire to use them as written, not make them up as they go."

For those who may be more casual players, with limited grasp of actual history and tactics, playing a game with simple rules that they can understand easily must be attractive. They don't have to research history, they only have to learn the simple rules in order to play the game.

For too many game designers—and I include myself in this criticism—creating complex and detailed rules to “simulate” our understanding of historical or future combat dynamics is what we like to do. Ruthless simplification to retain historicity while creating elegant mechanisms

for the players takes a lot of time and talent to do well. And sometimes it is simply too hard. So simple game rules are, not surprisingly, popular for players. But that doesn't mean that the rules should differ from the problems you describe. Roll to hit and buckets of dice may be fun and have some useful characteristics but when they are used only because they are fun and players like them, the game loses something important—at least to those of us who care about the representation presented by the game.

Five Arrows

Offside report by Michael D'Alessandro

During a spring trip to the UK, I was fortunate to play in this John Bassett committee game with the Holborn Group, in-person.

The game looked at the 513 BC campaign by Darius the Great (King of Kings) into the region of what is now Romania, Ukraine and Crimea. The purpose of this time-limited (several months) punitive campaign, according to the King of Kings, was to punish the Skythians who were not showing sufficient deference to him. I played the role of Lord Bagabazu who was the Hazarapatish (commander) of the Persian Immortals. My aim was to distinguish myself in this campaign and to be appointed as Satrap of Skudra – the ruler of Persian possessions in Europe. Along the way I needed to maintain good relations with the King of Kings and the Queen of Queens, a challenging task due to rather complicated court politics.

The game was played on a current map of Eastern Europe with the historical names overlaid onto it, which immediately and clearly linked the past to the present. The game commenced with a planning session in which the Persians, along with our Greek and Thracian allies, attempted to develop a strategy against the Skythians and their allies. We settled on attempting to ally with one of the Skythians who would rule over the others in our name and failing this we would bring them to battle and destroy them on the battlefield. If they would refuse to fight, we would occupy

and destroy their key temples along a crescent slicing through their territory.

The game was played through a number of rounds, each of which began with a representative of the Persians and Skythians making a speech, with the side that made the best speech gaining the initiative. At the start of the game the Persians gained the initiative and transported ashore by our Greek allies who were handling our logistics, we started advancing and sent our diplomatic feelers to the Skythians which were rebuffed. Thus, we challenged the Skythians and the Sarmatians armies in battle. Once we had met them on the battlefield, they declined to give us the decisive battle we sought. Thus, we advanced on their key temples and began destroying them, although this seemed to have little effect on their morale and nomads that they were, they kept avoiding fixed battle while staging raids on the cities of our Greek and Thracian allies. Since there were no battles to conduct, I focused on keeping our lines of communication to our fleet open and our logistics flowing.

In the meantime, off of the battlefield, it became clear to me that our Greek and Thracian allies were most interested in enriching themselves by trading for slaves and goods, rather than in ennobling themselves by supporting us in fighting and temple destruction. Furthermore, the King of Kings could not clearly articulate to the court exactly how much punishment he

wanted to inflict on the Skythians. I became concerned that our mission was evolving into a counterinsurgency operation where both sides objective was becoming running up a body count. Since that was not our initial goal I began searching for a logical endpoint where we could declare victory and withdraw with a minimum number of casualties. At this point I was made aware of a plot within the imperial court against the life of our Queen of Queens and notified her of such, thus demonstrating my loyalty to our rulers.

Soon after, about two thirds of the way through the planned campaign timeline, the King of Kings spontaneously decided we had accomplished our goals and we began an orderly withdrawal to our fleet and declared victory and praised our Gods. At the conclusion of the game, the plotter against the Queen of Queens was harshly dealt with and I was named Satrap of Skudra.

In the post-game discussion, John reviewed the history behind the game, and the outcome was fairly historical with the Persians attempting to conduct a counterinsurgency campaign that the Skythians refused to join.

John provided a link to Herodotus' description of the campaign which showed that each side achieved – and failed to achieve – their objectives. John also pointed out the geographical and agricultural importance of this territory throughout the ages, and thus this ancient game's relevance to today as conflict rages across the Ukraine. John has promised to continue to explore games about Persia before its war with the Greeks and I look forward to further adventures in this overlooked time period. Thanks, John, for a masterclass on the Persians!

What I might develop from the session for my own use was the use of current maps to portray historical time periods. The Friday before the game found me in the basement of Stanford's travel bookstore in Covent Garden, which was filled with the largest collection of travel maps I have ever seen. Evan, surveying the collection remarked that these are the kind of maps John Bassett uses in his game...and then to see such a map in action on Sunday made a big impression on me.

Asymmetric Wargaming

by R. James Oliver

This is a game design technique I've been using to develop a football game – but I think it has great potential for wargame design too. I'd welcome ideas or comments either in *The Nugget* (if of wider interest) or to me.

'Asymmetric wargaming' means opposing players fight a single wargame – but each uses their own set of rules.

'Asymmetric wargames' have at least two sets of rules – a BASIC version and an ADVANCED version (and sometimes OPTIONAL rules too). This is not a new concept: the practice has long been common in board wargaming. Most players start with the BASIC rules: these give a reasonable game and can be learned very quickly. Experienced players – or those who play a particular game often – soon graduate to the ADVANCED rules to pursue greater

complexity, depth and perhaps even realism. Inexperienced or occasional players can continue to enjoy the BASIC version. Traditionally, of course, either both players use the BASIC rules or both use the ADVANCED rules.

The twist I'm developing with 'asymmetric gaming' is to allow one player (or side) to use the BASIC rules and the other to use the ADVANCED rules to fight the same battle. The key is to fully integrate the different rulesets in a single game.

This is not the same as 'wargaming asymmetric warfare' – the conflict between regular military forces and irregular opponents – like guerrilla warfare, insurgency, some colonial wars and perhaps even terrorism. In 'asymmetric warfare' the vastly different nature of the

opposing forces, tactics and aims generates the asymmetry. In 'asymmetric wargaming' the sides can be similar or even identical – but the wargamers enjoy different experiences.

There are several benefits to this. You can introduce novices to wargaming (or a particular wargame) gently – letting them enjoy the simplicity of the BASIC rules, while you relish the greater challenge of the ADVANCED rules. Or you can play one side of a complex campaign with all its lovely twists and turns – while successive visiting generals (less familiar with the rules) compete with you at a simpler level.

Rather than overwhelm interested readers (if there are any) with the many possible options I'm working on for wargames, I thought I'd give a brief overview of the football game. I've finalised all the rules, and I'm just tweaking the variables – like move distances – for play balance. But I hope it illustrates what 'asymmetric gaming' is all about...

The game attempts to model real football as closely as possible, with each player taking the role of a football manager.

Each manager has a deck of bespoke cards. Each card shows an individual footballer – with specific actions like passing, tackling, shooting and (for goalkeepers) making saves.

The core element of the game is the football match between two managers and their teams. Each manager plays footballer cards to move the ball around the pitch until they score or lose possession. When the cards run out, the game is over. Actually, we play through the decks twice: it's literally a game of two halves!

Matches last from 30 to 45 minutes, depending on whether the BASIC or ADVANCED rules are used. You can play friendly matches for fun or practice – but the game comes alive when you add the OPTIONAL rules for league and knockout competitions. These can accommodate any number of players, each taking on one opponent at a time: 729 teams entered the 2022 FA Cup – you can recreate this if you're willing to do the admin!

In wargaming terms: managers are commanders – footballers are their forces – possession of the ball is the initiative – matches are battles – and competitions are campaigns or wars.

Where's the asymmetry?

In the BASIC game, each manager gets a ready-made deck with a balanced team of goalkeeper, defenders, midfield players and forwards. The rules are very simple – and intuitive if you're familiar with real football – so new managers can be on the touchline in about 15 minutes. The great variety of cards – every footballer has different skills – means managers have lots of options within a simple system, so every match is different. In the ADVANCED game, managers select their starting team and substitutes from a squad of about 25. They pick a formation and tactics – varying (within limits) the number of attackers and defenders they employ.

Under the BASIC rules, managers start and end the match with the same 11 footballers (that is: the same cards). Under the ADVANCED rules, managers can lose individual footballers to injury or indiscipline. They can make substitutions by changing cards to replace injured footballers, revise the team formation to deal with a sending-off, or change tactics (to hold a lead or seek an equaliser).

The manager using the ADVANCED rules enjoys a richer experience with pre-match team selection and greater in-game management – but the play mechanisms within each match are otherwise the same for both managers. The OPTIONAL rules for league and other competitions provide for long-term injuries, suspensions and other features.

I'm sure this design technique will also work for wargames. Does anyone else want to pick up the ball and run with it? Whoops: wrong sort of football!

Strategic Simulation of the Ukraine War

By John Curry

The Ukr side has 14 attack dice, Ru has 18. These represent the combat power, half are allocated at the start of the game to the southern front and the eastern front.

Each turn (representing one month), each side secretly allocates combat dice to each front from the available dice (i.e. not depleted) at that front representing forces in active combat. Each side's choice is revealed. Roll a D6 for each dice, 6 kills an enemy dice, 1 depletes the owner's dice. However, if one side has twice as many active combat dice allocated to the front than the other side, then 5 or 6 kills an enemy dice.

For each 2 dice not allocated to active combat, 1 dice can be undepleted.

At the end of each turn, reinforcements points arrive. 3 for Ru, 1D6 for Ukr, representing the vagaries of western munition supplies. It costs 1 point to undeplete a dice, 3 points to build a new combat dice (this may be allocated to

either front). Unused reinforcement points to the maximum of 6 may be carried over to the next turn.

Attack dice may be moved from one front to the other, but the other player must be told. They can then also move dice that turn after being told (strategic redeployment is hard to keep secret in modern war).

A side wins if the enemy have no active dice allocated to a front, as the front line collapses. Alternatively if the number of active combat dice killed reaches the secret threshold set by the umpire, then national will collapses due to losses and the war is lost.

Assumptions: Ukr has less combat power, but eventually western munitions will mean it has more. Providing the UK and USA continue to supply weapons, and the EU continues to support the Ukr economy, eventually Ukr will win. Unless national will collapses first.

Society of Ancients 2022 Conference

The Society's Annual Conference will take place at the Cambridge University Continuing Education Centre at Madingley Hall (two miles northeast of Cambridge and one mile off the M11) from the evening of Friday 28th October to teatime on Sunday 30th October. The Venue is an Elizabethan Manor House with modern facilities, set in landscaped gardens.

The programme for the Conference is still being built, and members are invited to contact us with offers to stage games or to give presentations. Currently we have Duncan Head speaking about the battle 2nd Mantinea, and a presentation from academic and popular historical fiction author Harry Sidebottom – so two top speakers already confirmed!

We are delighted to announce that the rates have been held at the same rates as last year: Full Residential Package (Friday supper to Sunday teatime): £326

Main Conference Residential Package (Saturday coffee to Sunday teatime): £221
Saturday day rate (non-residential) (Saturday coffee to Saturday teatime): £50
Sunday day rate (Non-residential) (Sunday coffee to Sunday teatime): £50
As in earlier years, Members aged 25 and below will receive a £50 discount

Having dispensed with the deposit system last year due to administrative issues, we will be taking the same approach this year. Hence the full amount is payable at the time of booking – either payable by cheque to the Society Treasurer or by Paypal via the society website booking system.

For further information, offers to put on games, or to give a presentation, please contact Richard Lockwood at conference@soa.org.uk

Session	Onside	Offside
A Battle Of Monsters	343	343
Bandera	343	343
Bitter Medicine	344	344
Changing Horses	343	343
China Implodes	344	344
Cluedo Baeder Meinhof Wagen	338	338
Cluedo Hostage Rescue	341	341
Dicing with Death	345	345
Distress Call	346	346
For Whom The Die Rolls	346	346
Gibraltar Of The North	346	346
Hiding In Plain Sight		X
It's Getting A Bit Chile	344	344
Men Against Fire	X	X
Munchausen Diamonds		
Never Mind The Billhooks	345	
Nostalgia Rules Ok	X	X
Pandemic Planning	X	
Politics		
The Battle Of The Cow Shed		X
The Centurions	345	345
To Sail The Spanish Main		X
War Plan Red	345	345
Wintex-75	X	



COW 2021 REPORTS



Session	Onside	Offside
1922 – The Birth of the Modern World?	X	X
Anchors Aweigh	X	X
Arrive Where We Started		X
Cluedo Hostage Rescue Team	X	X
Cutting Cables		X
Degenerate Art Exhibition	X	X
The Dog-Rose Revolution	X	X
Dune: Houses Of The Landsraad		X
Hiroshima – Virtual Battlefield Tour		X
The Monstrous Regiment		X
Pratas Precipice		X
Taming The Serpent		X
TopGun		X
Wargaming The Interwar Years 1919-1938	X	X
Wargaming Urban Conflict	X	X



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Session**Onside****Offside**

1812: The Road To Moscow

1922: The Birth Of The Modern Era

Another Bloody Normandy Book

Armageddon at Waco

Bandera II

Battle of Blore Heath

Blood of San Gennaro

Boudica

Christmas In Hell

Commando Raid

Coyle's Best

Dicing with Death

Duck Hunting

Hitler's Children

Logistics, Logistics, Logistics

Neverwar: Buckets of Sunshine

Nothing Good Happens After Midnight

Operation Blue Tiger

Paddy's Generalship Game

Petrograd Nights

Pieces of Eight

Raven 2 is down

Scout Base 947

Shiloh

Shooting Daedelus

Space Jack

Spartans and Successors

SPI Dallas

Take That Hill

The Battle For Villa Encogida Jamon

The Battle of Maharajahpur

The Emir Calls a Meeting

There's Something Wrong With Our Wargames

Ukraine 2022

War Of The Three Sanchos

War Of The Roses

Waterloo 1815

What If

COW 2022 REPORTS

WARGAMES NEWS

Wargame Developments:

Conference of Wargamers: 7th to 9th July 2023

Autumn Virtual Gathering: 15th October 2022

Other:

Tabletop Gaming Live 2002, Manchester, 17th & 18th Sept 2022

Other Partizan, Newark, 9th October

SELWG, London, 16th October

Warfare, Farnborough 12th & 13th November

ALL SHOWS ARE SUBJECT TO POSSIBLE CANCELLATION . CHECK BEFORE YOU TRAVEL!

While we always try to get it right, we cannot be held responsible for any details that are wrong. You must check first! If you know of any event worthy of inclusion in this column please drop the Editor a line.

BUSINESS SECTION

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WARGAME DEVELOPMENTS (WD)

Wargame Developments is a loose association of like-minded wargamers dedicated to the continued development of wargames of any type whatsoever. Wargame Developments does not make a profit.

THE NUGGET is the Journal of Wargame Developments. The production target is 9 issues per year.

CONFERENCE OF WARGAMERS

The annual Conference of Wargamers may take place somewhere in England on 7th to 9th July 2023. The conference is open to both members and non-members at an estimated cost of £400 for full board. For further details please contact the Conference Organisers whose details are published to the left.

SUBMISSIONS TO THE NUGGET

We will accept submissions in any format provided we can actually read what you have written. Contributions sent as e-mail attachments should be in MS Word, .txt or .rtf format. Typed or printed articles should ideally be on white A4 paper, in plain (not italic or underlined) black, single column monospaced text, 12 point or larger. Contributions are welcome, however, in whatever format you can muster.

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EDITORIAL CONTROL

The Editor reserves the right to amend anything he receives; before or after publication. Material will be accepted from anyone with something original or intelligent to say about wargames, whether or not they are a member of WD. Membership of WD does not infer any priority of right to publication in the NUGGET. Anonymous material will be disregarded.

DEADLINES

Nugget 347: 18 September 2022
Nugget 348: 18 October 2022

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