Virtual Conference of Wargamers 2020

Knuston Hall – <u>not</u> the location of VCOW!

10-12 July 2020

Conference Organisers:
Tim Gow & Bob Cordery

INTRODUCTION

Virtual COW (VCOW) has been set up so that Wargame Developments can run its annual conference - the Conference of Wargamers or COW - during the current COVID-19 pandemic. It will consist of a programme of talks, lectures, online discussions, and even some games, and will take place over the traditional COW weekend.

VCOW is brought to you by Wargame Developments and has been created by an informal management committee comprising John Bassett, Bob Cordery, John Curry, Tim Gow, Matthew Hartley and Alex Kleanthous, aided by John Armatys, Tom Mouat and Martin Rapier.

NOTES FOR SESSION PRESENTERS

If you need to use a Zoom account other than your own, or other help with IT for your session, please contact ████████████████   Sooner rather than later please!

BOOKING FOR SESSIONS

Sessions fall into two categories – those with no limit on numbers and smaller, numbers-limited games sessions. On the timetable these are colour coded in green and yellow respectively.

For the first, Zoom links will be sent to attendees a few days before VCOW.

If you'd like to attend any of the smaller sessions, please send an email with the subject heading 'VCOW SESSIONS' to ████████████████ by 1200 on 3 July with a list of the sessions you'd like to book for in order of preference. Any late, mislabelled or garbled emails may be disregarded.

For oversubscribed sessions, players will be selected randomly, though we'll make an effort to ensure that those who want to are able to attend at least one such session.

If you secure a place in a game session, the presenter will contact you by email in the week before VCOW. The presenter may expect a reply to their email – so remember to check your inbox!

If sessions are oversubscribed you may be offered a reserve place or the chance to 'sit in' as an observer.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR ZOOM MEETINGS

On joining a meeting you will be put into the Waiting Room and then allowed into the meeting by the host. Only registered attendees will be allowed into the meeting. You MUST ensure that your full name (as used to sign up) is showing as your name in Zoom. People calling themselves e.g. timg or Wargamer01 will not be admitted. If you are unsure how to do this, look at the instructions at https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193 [support.zoom.us]. Specifically, if you are signed into Zoom, check the name it has for you and amend if necessary before joining the meeting. If you are not signed in, put your name in.

When you have joined a session, please mute your microphone unless the presenter has asked for your input

Please join sessions 5 minutes before the start time.

SESSION TIMINGS

All times given relate to British Summer Time. If you are resident in another time zone you may like to have a 'world clock' running to keep you straight, such as :
https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/

COW regulars will notice that the timetable has fewer session slots than usual. This is due both to several sessions being lectures which can accommodate all attendees and the need to have longer than usual meal breaks, on the assumption that attendees will be either cooking for themselves or spending time with the other members of their households.
Speaking of breaks, please remember that there is such a thing as too much screen time.
So, take breaks, move about and stay hydrated! Told you there'd be lectures…

THE SESSION LIST:

The sessions are presented in the following format:
Presenter(s)
TITLE OF SESSION
running time   number of players
platform
description

Peter Perla
WARGAMES: WHAT AND WHY
25 minutes   any number
Zoom
Plenary lecture

Mark Herman
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AND HOBBY WARGAMING
25 minutes   any number
Zoom
Plenary lecture

Russell King
THE DAY OF THE JACKAL
90 minutes   6-8 players
Zoom
DeGaulle needs shooting for dishonouring our war dead and giving Algeria back to the terrorists. This game carries out the original plan to whack DeGaulle in his car on his way to the Elysees Palace. If you fail, you're facing the firing squad, and Edward Fox gets all the money. Features Auntie Yvonne, Paris Match, some bonkers driving and - I shall say this only once - the over-violent, gun-toting French Police.

Ed McGrady, Peter Perla, John Curry
UNFORTUNATE DIFFERENCES
2 hours   any number
Zoom
The game will introduce players to the active edge of professional wargaming led by two of the top professional wargamers in the world. Participants will need MS Powerpoint.
This is a simple, quick, force on modern force game in the area around the Senkaku's. It sets up a knife fight between Japan, China, and the US, one that is inevitably going to get messy. The players represent the Japanese JTF, the US CSG commander/Commander 7th Fleet, and the Chinese Eastern Theater Command. The Chinese have occupied the Senkaku's with "demonstrators" and slapped an exclusion zone around the islands. The Japanese are determined this will not stand and have sent a SAG along with a couple of amphibs to sort things out. The US, with its UK partners (represented by a couple of UK Daring class DDGs), wants the whole thing to go away. But the US still has a CSG muddling around somewhere out there keeping an eye on things. We will start with a planning turn, its best to designate someone in charge as the commander, and we will communicate using maps with annotations on them. Please try and annotate legibly otherwise I may assume that your comms are not working that turn! Basic turn sequence is: space (settle down, remember your ROE), cyber (capabilities will be assigned), C4ISR (how do you see stuff), and then air, surface, and subsurface. Logistics, like always, won't play much of a role here.
There will be three teams: Japanese, American, Chinese

John Curry
ECW VIRTUAL TEWT (TACTICAL EXERCISE WITHOUT TROOPS)
90 minutes   any number
Zoom
The epic struggle between King and Parliament continues. Your army is in the line of march on the wat to take the city of YORKVILLE. The enemy have deployed, do you dare offer battle? You are the experienced command staff of the army, you must deploy your forces and issue your orders.
You will have maps, photographs of the terrain, ORBAT and reports from scouts.

John Bassett
GIVE ME BACK MY LEGIONS!
20 minute presentation + 40 minute discussion   any number
Zoom
A review of John's sprawling Roman internet game which took place in the spring, with a focus on lessons for future multi-centre games ans some thoughts on subjects for future games.

Martin Rapier
ONE HOUR WW2
90 minutes including post-game discussion   4 players, plus observers
Google Meet, with Skype as a backup
An adaptation of One Hour Wargames for brigade level actions in WW2. A largeish action on a small table in a relatively short period of time for up to eight players involving toy soldiers and rulers. Owners of Neil Thomas's 'One Hour Wargames' my struggle to find much resemblance to the original rules.

John Armatys
THE CONVOY - A SIMPLE GRIDDED AGE OF SAIL NAVAL WARGAME
2 hours including post-game discussion   up to 6 players
Skype
A chance to try my pre-steam, iron and steel variant of Bob Cordery's "Gridded Naval Wargames" (Eglinton Books, 2018) using a very small hand drawn board, some very old 1/3000 ships and the cheapest IT kit available.

Jim Roche
COW 2020 SINGALONG - TENS, TWENTIES AND MORE
1 hour   any number
Zoom
This session will feature some drinking-related songs, including 1620's The Parting Glass and 1970's A sailor ain't a sailor, ain't a sailor any more, marking the ending of Rum Ration. I hope to provide an historical/military context for all. Along with Wee Joe and his adventures in Russia in 1920. We will also mark Hitler's Hofbräuhaus speech in 1920 by singing the non-historical Tomorrow belongs to me, while I promote the Bernie Gunther novels.

Gary Sheffield
WARGAMING AND HISTORY/HISTORY AND WARGAMING
30 minutes   any number
Zoom
In this talk Professor Gary Sheffield reflects on his career as a professional scholarly military historian and his other life as a wargamer. He has used wargaming for teaching purposes for over 30 years as well as being a recreational wargamer. Gary looks at how useful he has found wargaming as an educational tool, and discusses its strengths and limitations in informing his research. Over the years he has come across many influential wargamers such as Paddy Griffith and Phil Sabin, and will give his thoughts on the contribution of these people and others to the hobby/profession. Finally, he will indicate some areas in which he thinks there are possibilities to develop wargaming.

John Curry
THE GREAT MUTINY 1857
1 hour   5 players + observers
Zoom
The rebellion against the authority of the East India Company was widespread through much of Northern India, but essentially it was sparked by the mass uprising by the sepoys of the units of the Army which the company had itself raised in its Bengal Presidency (which actually covered a vast area from Assam to Peshawar). Seeking a symbol around which to rally, the first sepoys to rebel sought to reinstate the power of the Mughal Empire, which had ruled the entire Indian subcontinent during the previous centuries. Lacking overall direction, many who subsequently rebelled also flocked to Delhi.
You are in a group of likeminded civilians with some regular officers and men of the East India Company. The enemy are spread out and lacking coordination. You are breaking the back of the rebellion one group of rebels at a time. It is a tactical map-based game.

John Curry
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO STORMING A MEDIEVAL CASTLE
1 hour   any number
Zoom lecture
To celebrate my new book, A Practical Guide to Medieval Warfare by Richard Brooks and John Curry, I will talk about storming a castle. Faced by questions that were unanswered by the history books, the obvious thing to do was to hire some castles and pretend to storm them. This talk is by one of a few people who has actually climbed a siege ladder in recent times, dropped rocks off battlements and shot through arrowslits.

Tim Price
REMOTE KRIEGSSPIEL
2 hours   6-8 players
Google Meeting
Tim Price, a professional wargamer working in the Government funded education sector will demonstrate how to run a two-sided, double blind, Kriegsspiel, using free tools and no downloaded apps. The session will include a game.

Tim Price
HADLEY'S HOPE
2 hours   6-8 players
Google Meeting
Sci-Fi skirmish game with toy soldiers and limited information.

Graham Longley-Brown
DEFENCE AND RECREATIONAL WARGAMES
40 minutes   any number
Zoom
Graham Longley-Brown has wargamed since aged eight, used wargaming for serious purposes throughout his military career and been a professional wargamer since leaving the Army in 2004. He was the lead author of the 2017 MOD *Wargaming Handbook* and published his own *Successful Professional Wargames: A Practitioner's Handbook* in 2019. He is co-organiser of Connections UK, the leading conference outside the US for wargaming professionals (those who use wargames for serious purposes). In his talk on 'Defence and recreational wargames: distinctions and synergies', he will discuss some of the differences between these wargame contexts and invite comments and suggestions from the wider community that might enhance Defence wargaming.

John Curry
BATTLE OF LANDSDOWNE 1643 VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD TOUR
1 hour   any number
Zoom
As is traditional, there is a pre-COW walk on the Friday afternoon of VCOW. This is the virtual replacement looking at an important and well-preserved battlefield site. This will start with a 20 mins introduction to the battlefield, then break into small groups to look at the period accounts, maps, photos of the ground and use Google Earth to walk around the battlefield. Then each group will present their thoughts to the whole group.

Bob Cordery
WD40 – OILING THE WHEELS OF WARGAMING SINCE 1980
40 minutes   any number
Zoom
A look back at the history of Wargame Developments, how and why it came about and what
it has achieved. Bob is the only current member of WD who attended the original Moor Park
conference in 1980.

Mike Elliott
ADVENTURES IN LOCKDOWN
1 hour   any number
Zoom
A general discussion about our wargaming experiences in lockdown:
Did you do more or less wargaming?
Did you use the time for painting figures rather than playing games?
Methods: solo, online, other?
What has worked for you?
What didn't work?
What can we learn from the experience to improve our wargaming activities in the future?

David Bradbury
ON HIS MOST CATHOLIC MAJESTY'S SERVICE
1 hour   any number
Zoom
A simple look at the decision-making of the commander of a Spanish light warship on cruise
in the Mediterranean in 1551.

Michael Young
CARRIER STRIKE: WARGAME PLAYTEST
90 minutes   2+ players, plus assistants & observers
Zoom (but players must have Excel and PowerPoint with macros to be a play the force
commander role)
This is a wargame looking at the effectiveness of the new Queen Elizabeth carrier task force
written entirely in PowerPoint and Excel, illustrating how you can write a detailed wargame
using just these media, and play it over the internet. It does this by extensive use of
Microsoft Visual basic macros in PowerPoint and Excel. I have been commissioned by Dstl
to develop this game and have permission to use this as a playtesting session.
PowerPoint and Excel was an interesting choice for developing a wargame, but it has the
major advantage that these programs are present on all the MoD computers so there are no
difficulties with porting the game from one system to another.
The players move their forces by moving shapes and arrows on a on a PowerPoint slide in
design mode (making a new slide each turn) , and then fight them by putting the slide into
presentation mode and clicking on the unit shapes and arrows. Clicking this way activates
macros, User Forms and Excel Worksheets to resolve the movement or combat.

I'm developing this at the moment, so this will be a work in progress, but I hope to get some good feedback and suggestions on how to further develop the game.

David Burden
REMOTE WARGAMING
60 minutes   any number
Zoom
This session will introduce the different forms that remote wargaming can take before providing demonstrations of three different technology solutions for ways of playing remote games synchronously (i.e. all players active in real-time): Roll20 (2D), TableTop Simulator (3D) and a prototype Virtual Reality (VR) environment. Demonstrations will include equivalents of SPI type hex games, and figure based games. There will be a chance to ask questions about each system and the session will close with an open discussion of the merits (and demerits) of different approaches and how they might be used and evolve in the future.

And not forgetting…
THE BENCH OUTSIDE KNUSTON HALL
One of the great joys of COW for many is the chance to meet and chat with friends old and new, often while perched on the benches outside the main door at Knuston Hall. To this end we present a Jitsi chat session which will run throughout the weekend.
https://meet.jit.si/KnustonHallBenchOutside40

The Wargame Developments Annual General Meeting

So far, the AGM agenda includes the following items. Please let Tim Gow have any other items in writing by 1 July 2020

1. Report by the Conference Organiser (Tim Gow)

2. Report by the Treasurer/Membership Secretary. To include WD membership fees for the year 2020/21 (Bob Cordery)

3. Report by the Editor of "The NUGGET" (Matthew Hartley)

4. Report by the Editor of the Colour Supplement (Russell King)

5. Report by the Publicity Officers (John Armatys, Phil Steele & John Curry). To include details of forthcoming events.

6. The election of Officers: Nominations for Office are open at the AGM. The names that follow have indicated their willingness to stand for Office.

Conference Organiser	Proposed: Tim Gow
Treasurer	Proposed: Bob Cordery
Membership Secretary	Proposed: Bob Cordery
Editor of "The NUGGET"	Proposed: Mathew Hartley
Editor-in-waiting (Colour Supplement Editor)	Proposed: Russell King
Co-ordinator, WD Display Team North	Proposed: John Armatys
Co-ordinator, WD Display Team South	Proposed: Phil Steele
Co-ordinator, WD Display Team West	Proposed: John Curry

7. Any other business

<u>Zoom hosting tips</u> Thanks to John Wilkie for providing this.

At start

Everyone turn mics off but, if possible videos on, use a waiting room to let people in so encourage everyone to use recognisable names

We also ask people to keep general chat free so the facilitator could send messages directly to the session lead (though these were private messages, we wanted to keep the session leads chat window mostly clear so they could see these messages)

In sessions

- Keep sessions short
- Have a separate facilitator and session lead with division of roles between them
- Mics off through sessions except for facilitator and session lead
    - Use "press to talk" to ask questions – pressing the space bar activates the microphone while space bar is pressed and turns off when space bar is released
    - (something different on macs)
    - Someone always forgets so having the facilitator turn people off is useful
    - Facilitator can also kick people out if rogues get in
- Consider leaving time at the end of the session for general unstructured chat in place of chat over coffee – breakout groups might be useful for this
- Do jazz hands at the end of presentations and end of sessions to let speakers know the appreciation. Without this it can be difficult to get a feel for how a presentation/session has gone

Facilitator:

Control microphones, allow participants in, control who can share screen, put hands down once they have asked their question (quite a lot forget so you don't know if they have a new question or have just forgotten), keep track of timing and give a heads up to the session lead that someone is coming close to running over, give a verbal two-minute warning to speakers over-running (never actually had to do this).

Keep the waiting room running during the whole session as people may come and go (whether by choice or after being cut off by network issues)

Twin screens for hosting helps a lot –have the presentation on one and all the admin (waiting room, participant list, chat window) on the other

Admin tools

Participants list is arranged alphabetically with yourself at the top then facilitator (i.e. Zoom host). Raising a hand lifts the person to just below the facilitator, then ranked by microphone use (so it's easy to identify rogue mics and turn them off)

Technology

Proper microphones are a must for anyone presenting – sound quality is the most critical component. If presenters are using webcam mics, they need to be close to them. We would encourage either headset mics or clip-on lavalier mics as even a cheap lavalier will be better than a webcam mic. (Lavalier mics easily available, eg search for "lavalier microphone on Amazon". NB can either be USB of round jack depending on your computer set up.

Get everyone (presenters, facilitator and session leads at least) to check out their tech beforehand

VCOW DATA PROTECTION POLICY

The organisation which holds your data is Wargame Developments (WD). The VCOW Organisers are responsible for data protection compliance. You can contact the VCOW Organisers via the VCOW blog xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or via the WD Website http://www.wargamedevelopments.org/feedback.htm.

WD holds the following personal data about you in relation to your booking at VCOW: your name and your e-mail address**.** The main methods of communication used for VCOW are e-mail and notices posted on the VCOW blog.

The lawful bases for processing your data are "contract" and "legitimate interest". The legitimate interests for the processing of your data are to provide you with information relevant to your attendance at and enjoyment of VCOW and for the administration of VCOW, including making and retaining historic records of the event.

Your data is used to keep a record of those who have booked a place at VCOW and to send you information about VCOW. Your name will appear in lists of attendees and may appear in the agenda for meetings and in sundry correspondence.

Your name and contact details are available to all members of the committee and will be made available to the presenter of any session at VCOW where you ask to book a place in advance. Note that the presenter of a session you have booked a place at may circulate your contact details to other attendees of that session so that players in a game can do some pre-planning. WD will not give your contact details to anyone else unless required to do so by law.

Paper records are stored in secure locations. Electronic records are held on password protected devices, backed up either onto portable hard drives which are kept in secure locations or backed up to remote locations.

The retention periods for personal data held by WD for VCOW is:
- Attendee data – a list of attendees and their e-mail addresses will be retained indefinitely.
- Minutes - the minutes of and other documents relating to meetings are retained indefinitely.
- Sundry correspondence - is retained for up to six years and then deleted or destroyed unless it is considered to be an important part of the history of the WD when it may be retained indefinitely.

You have the following rights in respect of your personal data: the right to withdraw consent; the right of access; the right to rectification; the right to erasure; the right to restrict processing; and the right to object. If you make a request regarding any of the above it will be dealt with within 28 days. If your request is refused you will be told why.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (https://ico.org.uk/) if you consider that the processing of personal data relating to you infringes the General Data Protection Regulation.