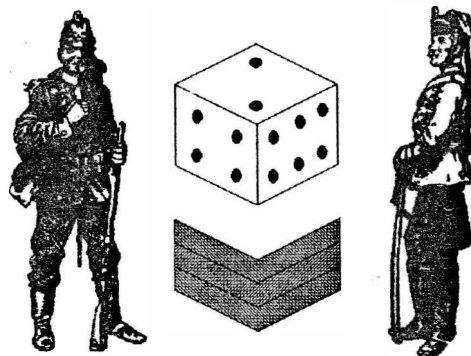


Rank and File



February 1995

Journal of the Tunbridge Wells Wargames Society

Issue 95/1

The Society

Tunbridge Wells Wargames Society meets every Thursday evening and each first Sunday in the month at St. Thomas Church Hall in Vale Road, Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells. Access is from the London Road (A26) turning down Doric Avenue by the Weavers Restaurant and Q8 Garage, then the first right.

The Sunday meeting normally has a lot of traditional wargaming with model soldiers going on. The Thursday meeting usually has smaller games such as DBA, Hordes of the Things, skirmish games etc., though there are also traditional wargames as well.

Membership

Basic Annual membership costs £5.00 for those in Full employment, £2.50 for others.

This entitles you to attend the Sunday meetings at the Hall, any additional meetings at the Hall during 1995, and to receive up to six copies of the Rank and File. Attendance at a Thursday meeting costs £1.00 or £0.50.

Annual Gold Card membership costs £50.00 or £25.00 (for non-wage-earners). This entitles you to access to all Sunday meetings, Thursday meetings, and extra meetings in 1995, and to the magazine.

Persons attending a meeting and not holding a current membership card will be expected to pay £2.00 or £1.00 for Sunday or Thursday meetings. Visitors to the club for the first time will not be charged, but it is recommended that membership will be taken out at the next meeting to avoid having to pay the £2.00/£1.00 rate.

Membership can be taken out or renewed at any meeting by contacting Andrew Finch.

Sunday Catering

At Sunday meetings tea and coffee making supplies will be available, and the kettle will be filled and heated up, however it is up to individuals to make their own tea or coffee, as at Thursday meetings.

Magazine delivery

Each new magazine will be available at the Sunday meeting after publication, and also to the Thursday meetings for about two weeks. After that, anyone who has not yet received a magazine will receive it by post. After all, if you are a member and have been unable for various reasons to get to a meeting, you are still entitled to the mag.

Dates for your diary

26 February Cavalier TWWS Club Open Day

5th March Bring and Buy

2nd April

8th April Salute 95

7th May

4th June Painting Competition

2nd July

8th July Ashford WS Open Day

6th August

3rd September Bring & Buy

1st October

5th November Committee Election

3rd December AGM; painting Competition

Other events planned by the committee are:

A Hordes of the Things 1 day tournament

One day naval battle Jutland.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact the Editor.

Advertisements

Advertisements will normally run indefinitely, or until removal is requested. If you have an advert you would like putting in the "Rank and File" regularly, please drop me a line.

Rules for Sale

Naval Pre-Dreadnought rules for sale: "**Perfidious Albion**"

Contact John Hurst or Andrew Finch. £ 4.00.

Also "**Into the Laserzone**" SF Ground Rules 4th Edition **NOW AVAILABLE !**

Contact Andrew Finch, Chris Avery, or Alan Butler. £ 5.00.

Printing Service

If you have any need for any small printing jobs, such as quick play sheets or rules extracts to make your game go more easily, or have a need for more game counters, then contact Andrew Finch for a quote.

Game damage and wreckage markers can also be produced if specifications are provided.

These can be produced in B&W or colour, as required.

Ashford Wargaming Society

Peter England has asked me to draw your attention to their meetings on the 3rd Sunday of every month. They are organising an Open Day on Saturday 8th July in the Stour Centre, Ashford. For further details contact Peter England

Club AGM

As usual this took place at the December meeting. The Committee had been re-elected unopposed (a vote of confidence, I am sure).

A report was presented regarding the Thursday meetings which had been a general success over the year. It was agreed to carry on with these meetings. Arising from this was a decision that we would maintain an attendance record of each meeting, including Sundays, so we can assess the Club's activities better.

There were a number of items for discussion and two proposals, for a revision of the Subscriptions and for a Charitable Donation to be formally made from the profits of the open day. Both were overturned.

Membership lists

This was also raised at the AGM and a request was made for these to be circulated to members. This will be done as soon as possible, after the bulk of members have re-subscribed. At the same time, we will try and get a better picture of the Club's activities and for this purpose a questionnaire has been produced. Please fill this in and return it to Andrew Finch as soon as possible. The details will be incorporated into the membership records giving us better information on our interests.

Cavalier - TWWS Open Day 1995

Clive McLeod has progressed this apace and we have a good mix of clubs and traders attending. As in previous years we will be setting up the tables the night before, and the noble volunteers will be rewarded with vouchers for spending at the Open Day.

We will also need volunteers to act as car park marshals, entrance ticket sellers, etc., and enough to allow some rotation for all those present.

The **Painting Competition** will be in one of the Classrooms this year giving better lighting conditions, so it will be essential that this is manned throughout the day by at least two people. The **Bring and Buy** will be in another nearby classroom and will, as usual, need a number of people to man it at all times.

The **Club Stand and Participation Game** will be on the stage. The manning of these two items will be combined, being a participation game we only need umpires, not players, so manning of these two can be combined. For your information, the game will be a Spanish Armada game, co-ordinated by Alan Butler.

As usual, I make the plea for volunteers. Remember that the financial future of the club and continued low subscriptions depend on your willingness to put something into the club once per year.

Time is on my side

by Alan Butler

I read with interest the article about using a black undercoat by our chairman in the last issue on painting figures and models using a black undercoat. I have been using this method to speed up the painting of models for a couple of years and thought that some of my experiences would also be of use to fellow members, since I differ in some details from our chairman.

I assume that you are using acrylic paints, which are easier to drybrush with because they dry faster, and that you want to speed up the painting of your models. I use a spray can of acrylic black undercoat, available from Halfords, to put on the basic black. Use an even, light spray from about 6 to 9 inches, and make sure that the paint goes into the deeper creases and under projecting arms and packs. Its a good idea to turn the models over and give them another spray from underneath, especially with models which have lots of angles. I generally stick the figures to a small piece of card or wood with blu-tac so that I can handle the figure and turn it around whilst the paint is still wet. For a spray booth, I use a large cardboard box on its side. After spraying, turn the can upside-down and spray until the nozzle is clear, so that it won't clog with dried paint. When you are using sprays, be careful not to breathe the overspray, so do this outside or wear a mask. You will find that the paint dries and hardens to a workable finish in about an hour.

Start painting the figure by drybrushing on the basic colours, using a large brush. The aim is to stroke the brush over the surface and to miss the creases and undercuts, leaving the basic black underpainting showing to give a stark shadow effect. I find that this generally needs two coats to achieve good coverage and density of paint, but you can use this to advantage, as you can introduce shading into the colours as you paint or drybrush them. Decide on the basic colour that you want on an area of your model, then add a little black or blue to the paint to make a slightly darker shade. Use this for the first coat that you dry brush on to the model, being fairly generous with the paint. Then repeat the process using the basic colour, using slightly less paint. This should give you the density of paint to cover most of the black, leaving just the deepest shadows showing. Finally, add some white or yellow to your basic colour and drybrush over the area again, using less paint this time, to bring up the highlights. Try to avoid covering any areas which will be painted another colour later, but you can make corrections later.

Only when the basic colours are completed do you start to pick out details with a finer brush, leaving a keyline of black around items of equipment, belts etc. Make sure these edges of belts, shields etc. that should have straight edges are really straight, by using thinned black paint and a fine brush. I have also found that medieval heraldry and clothing looks sharper and clearer if a very fine black keyline divides the areas of colour. Actually, this makes the patterns easier the paint, since you can make corrections afterwards, to sharpen up the lines.

Some paints, such as reds and yellows do not cover the black very well, and you can end up with a grubby appearance. The answer to this is to re-undercoat the area with white paint, allow to dry, then paint the desired colour. This process is a lot easier and quicker to do than to describe.

One thing to be careful of is that the brush needs to be really dry. If it is moist from recent washing in water, the paint will streak or smear. If it does, don't panic, dry the brush by pressing between pieces of kitchen paper, and quickly scrub it over the offending smear. This should distribute the paint more evenly, and you can continue painting on top.

The Gush Wargames Rules 1930 - 1945

by George Gush

Again I would like to reply to Russell Hanson's comments on my rules in the November 1994 issue, if the editor will permit. *He will! he will!*

I quite like Russell's idea for allowing both sides to fire in each player's turn, thus doing away with the 'Challenge' rule; in fact I have experimented with this myself though without any very conclusive result. Apart from the things Russell wants to achieve, it shortens the rules quite a bit, and that can't be bad!

The main snags with it from my point of view were, firstly, that it nearly doubled the amount of dice-throwing, thus slowing down the game, and, secondly, that it lacked the excitement and tactical problems presented by the 'Challenge' rule.....edging your Sherman forward through the bocage, never knowing when your opponent will shout 'Challenge!' and reveal the hidden Panzerfaust seems to me much more realistic is spirit that the usual "First we fire; then they fire" wargames thing.

Done as Russell proposes, without modifying any of the Fire-Tables, it will slightly increase tank, and anti-tank fire. This will not be enough, I believe, to create the multi-scoring 88s that he wants to see, since such weapons can override the challenge rule quite often anyway. Russell complains that wargames 88's do not seem to knock out as many tanks as some of their real life counterparts. I think this is due more to the fact that the rules admittedly play down the superiority of the heaviest tanks and guns over the weaker ones, mainly because of the 'Log Scale' system, which scales down long ranges more than short ones. This is necessary if you are to be able to combine single men and divisional size actions which to me is a major asset of these rules; it's what I want from a WW2 wargame. Although it does have the effect mentioned, I'm not too unhappy over that as I don't like rules which say you can't win unless you have some "super weapon", whether it is Elephants, Cataphracts or (as in one set of WW2 rules I have played), the Sherman with 105 howitzer!

Russell's changes will, however, potentially double both direct HE fire and all infantry small arms fire. I don't know if he has considered the former, but clearly he wants the latter, as his main point is that the effects of firepower in the rules are too low.

He supports this both from real-life - a platoon fire demonstration, and from situations in wargames which he considers unrealistic. I would entirely agree that the rules give weapons a lower effectiveness than they would appear to have on paper or in a demonstration. I also have been present at such platoon fire demonstrations, and I have fired most of the British World War II small arms in range conditions. However, I think that the rules OUGHT to downgrade the effectiveness of weapons in this way, for two reasons.

The first, and more important of these, is that battlefield performance of weapons was far below their theoretical performance. US Operational Research investigations after World War II showed that of those American infantry who got close enough to the enemy to fire small arms at them, most NEVER fired their weapons, and that the fire power of sections and even platoons was actually that of a very few individuals within them. It may be that other forces were better in this respect, but probably not entirely different. There are a host of other imponderables that downgrade firepower - weather, visibility, fatigue, fear and ammunition supply being among them. In the case at our Arnhem game which Russell cites, he says a Bren could have delivered sustained fire and stopped a German advance because number 2 would have collected spare magazines and acted as a loader.

The Bren was not a very good sustained fire weapon, having a very limited beaten area and a slow rate of fire, and sustaining fire meant changing red-hot barrels at intervals. Other considerations include whether the target was in fact fully visible, or partially obscured by smoke from explosions or from the unevenness of the ground? (Wargames tables are far flatter and less obstructed than any real terrain, and rules ought to allow for that). Was the Bren gunner brave and fit, or terrified, slightly wounded, bleary-eyed and exhausted? Was the number 2 still unwounded and sufficiently in control of himself to do his job? If he was, were the other members of the section still around and accessible? And had they still got the full magazines they would have had on an exercise? In the Arnhem case, Russell's men had in theory already been fighting hard for twenty-four hours and there were problems in re supply of ammunition - as there frequently are. It may be relevant to quote driver John Prime, RASC, at Arnhem: "I took the Bren and two pouches of ammunition, but left ... the spare canvas wallet of Bren magazines... I shouldn't have, but I was alone in the trees and wanted to get to the DZ." (From 'Arnhem 1944. The Airborne battle' by Martin Middlebrook).

Rulewise, in the case Russell quotes, the Germans shouldn't have been removing the barbed wire, since the rules don't allow for this; and his 'Bren and rifleman' within close range represent 5 points and would kill an average of three Germans at this range in the open, or the Bren alone could ensure by covering fire that half the Germans advancing on its immediate front were stopped, while the rifleman would still have a 50% chance of shooting a man who got through.

(If anything, the rules are a bit too kind to Brens and similar 'automatic rifle' type slow-firing magazine-fed LMGs, in that they are given the same points as the belt-fed, fast firing German MG34 and MG42, which were similar to modern GPMGs. This will change in the next edition !)

The second, and secondary, reason that I disagree with Russell about firepower is that excessive firepower might make for a sluggish and boring game. It is not at all easy to advance against defending infantry as it is, and I get a good deal of flak from players who consider the game too 'sticky' already !

In the other case, of the flame-thrower attacking a tank which had already fired its machine guns, which Russell quotes, I think the main anomaly is that the rules currently give flame-throwers too long a range and make them too effective against mobile targets, both of which I propose to rectify in the next edition. I'm not sure that the challenge rule is at fault, though. The player with the tank, if advancing in an area where infantry attack was a possibility, could and should have kept back one of his MGs to challenge in just such an emergency. If he didn't, doesn't that represent an AFV crew concentrating on visible targets while an anti-tank weapon is stalking them, and suffering the consequences ? Not a wildly unlikely scenario, I should have thought.

I shall be interested to see the trials of Russell's modifications and will, of course, not hesitate to pinch any ideas I think are working !

Buckets of Dice

by Andrew Finch

The rules debate continues, and as Editor I would like to see much more of this sort of contribution than battle reports. They are more interesting and give players something to consider when they are playing.

We tried yet another set of SF skirmish-type wargames rules, in this case set in the Star Wars universe, at the weekend. These had a number of interesting aspects, one being the concept of opposed dice rolls. Targets which were hit (though not the to hit roll) rolled what could be termed a saving throw, while attackers made a damage throw. If either player rolled a 1 initially it meant that the total result became ZERO, while if he rolled a six, he re-rolled and added the result (including 1s) and re-rolled again if it was another 6, etc. This means that there is a very wide range of possibilities, and allows the fluke shot which gets the chink in the armour.

The same applies to morale rolls, so we had some quite interesting results. The morale rules actually differentiate between command (how close the squad must be together, and their command effectiveness) and morale (average, veteran or elite). This means that Elite troops with poor command suffered adverse results, being pushed back, but did not break as quickly as the average guys. There were a number of subtleties there which could be explored further.

I think that games should not end up with excessive dice rolling which continually result in no effect, or worse, one volley clears the table and then we go home at 14.30 ! having played with various types of dice, I still think that the most acceptable dice are D6s, perhaps D10s. D4's should be smashed and I'd borrow George's dice-threatening Nutcracker to deal with these.

We had a debate while doing Laserzone 4th edition about this. The result, while I lost the argument, was actually illuminating. The game should revolve round finding a tactic to overcome the enemy weapon, not a rules re-write.

On the question of dice, there is another problem, how to deal with rolling the dice. In my view, dice should be rolled on a side table, in a dice beaker, which should then be slammed down on the table, lifted, revealing the ONE. Rolling on the play area should be forbidden, as too much can be fiddled by rolling against troops, claiming a cocked dice if it's a 1 and resting against them, and claiming a fair throw if it is a 6. I would also rule that a dice must bounce, wherever it is being rolled (except in the beaker which is shaken anyway). There is some skill in rolling a dice which doesn't bounce on the table, and still comes up with the EXACT SCORE needed to score a hit.

I would be interested in hearing from others what their experience is on this.

And finally...

For 1995, we will be looking for the silliest model figure position on a commercially produced figure. We debate these on Thursdays, quite often even trying to get into the poses replicated by the figurines, sometimes with hilarious results.

Send your entries to the editor at the usual address.