



CLUB SPOTLIGHT

TUNBRIDGE WELLS WARGAMES SOCIETY

Interview with **Andrew Finch** by **John Treadaway**

How did the club first get started?

The Society had its beginnings in an advert in the *Airfix Magazine* back in about 1967 placed by our founder George Gush, which attracted about a dozen players who met in his wargames room in the attic of his home in Tunbridge Wells. After a couple of years the numbers grew so much that we found a meeting place in St Thomas' Church Hall in nearby Southborough, and from that the club was up and running with about 20 members.

What's changed in the years it has been running?

Apart from the venue (we now meet in the Village Hall in Speldhurst), very little has really changed. We cater for all settings and periods, and we have been able to maintain a relatively steady membership in all age groups. Each year we have been able to attract a few new members replacing those that have moved away. We are also pleased to say that many of the founder members are still regular attendees. The most significant change was the introduction of two meetings each month, which provides more flexibility for members. We set up our own website, which has also been expanded to have a members' area where they can arrange games, sell unwanted wargaming "stuff" etc. The Society also set up a Facebook group.

ABOVE

A regular club meeting before Covid restrictions.

ABOVE RIGHT

As you can see we have the space to run some large games at our club venue!



What are some of the most popular games at the club?

This is more difficult to quantify as it varies greatly. Our members are very good at finding new rule sets which gain popularity: some sets have stayed in use for a long time, others have disappeared completely whilst a few have reappeared again at a later date as interest is rekindled. *Black Powder*, *Perfidious Albion* (written by one of our members), *Warhammer 40K*, *Command Decision*, *Flames of War*, *Saga*, *Bolt Action* and *Warhammer Fantasy Battles* all put in a regular appearance but many other games get played sporadically.

What tournaments and events does the club run?

We hold an annual Open Day – *Cavalier* – every spring, and we were lucky to hold our 2020 show just before the Pandemic struck, though the 2021 show has been put on hold, as have our normal activities. We have organised outings to Bovington Tank Museum, The Royal Navy Dockyard in Portsmouth and the IWM at Duxford in recent years. Some of our members have participated in national tournaments, however, the focus of the club is friendly and social rather than competitive. While we do not run formal tournaments, we do hold a monthly Painting Competition open to all members, the results get put into a league table, and at the end of each year there are prizes for participants.

If you'd like your club featured in *Miniature Wargames*, get in contact at miniature.wargames@warnersgroup.co.uk

What's wargaming like in your neck of the woods?

In our vicinity there are a number of other clubs but very little "cross pollination" despite their proximity. In the past we have hosted games with other clubs such as SELWG but these have been one off events. We have around half a dozen members who have been or are actively involved in the development of wargaming rules. We are proud to count that creative talent among our membership.

How do you advertise your club?

The main form of advertising is probably our Open Day, through which we usually attract a few new members and the website helps (twws.org.uk). There is also our Facebook group which does help provide a conduit for prospective new members to contact the Society. We normally have two or three enquiries a year through that route and a similar number via direct e-mail contact.

Conclusion – why would you like to join?

The most important aspect of our Society is that we aim to be a friendly and welcoming group of people where groups of wargaming friends can meet and have a game. Many of our members joined as a group of people – sometimes families or two or three friends – who were seeking somewhere where they could set up a game with more space than in a family home. We have an excellent venue with a large main meeting room accommodating half a dozen games depending on the table size, as well as a smaller room which is large enough for a few more. Most important is that we have fun, there is plenty of opportunity for a friendly chat and, oh yes, not to forget, we provide free tea, coffee, biscuits and sometimes even cake! ■