

EDITORIAL

Perhaps the title of this issue should read 'RANK AND FILE- THE GEORGE GUSH NEWSLETTER, considering that, apart from the humble effort by yours truly on the OPEN DAY, all the articles are by George. Now surely out of a membership of 50 plus, you would have thought that the club would have a surplus of literary artists, but NO, it seems that the majority of members are quite content to sit back and let the same old few do all the work. WELL IT AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH! So all those reading this and feeling guilty - get writing.

If you want the vewsletter to continue as it has over the last 15 years or so then there has got to be a steady stream of articles for it and quite frankly I am fed up having to keep begging for more.

All the articles that were available were used in this issue, so in the next couple of months I should be inundated with Battle reports, BOOK AND KIT Reviews, Painting and Modelling Tips, Boardgame reviews etc, etc, to use in the next RANK AND FILE.

LET'S HOPE SO.

EDITOR

NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

Sunday 6th May(1st Sunday of each month); 2:15 pm at ST THOMAS' HALL, Vale Avenue, Southborough.

Tuesday 15th and 22nd May(3rd and 4th Tuesdays of each month); 7 pm at THE IMPERIAL, London Road, Southborough.

RECENT MEETINGS

NOV 1983: 39 plus present at the club this month with 8 war-games and 2 Boardgames being played. A varied mixture of scales and periods included a 15 mm Fantasy Battle, 1/300th WW2, Large 25 mm Renaissance (French v Poles), 25 mm Napoleonic, A Large Vietnam Skirmish with Tim Freeman's excellent terrain. Other wargames were 25 mm Fantasy, 1/300 th Napoleonic and a 15 mm A.C.W. The two Boardgames were Panzerblitz and Warlock (hiding shamefaced in back room).

No Competition results available I'm afraid.

DEC 1983: Not so many present this month, 30 members and 7 wargames and boardgames. The highlight of this meeting was Alan Butlers superb 25 mm Samurai Castle (home-made) which was the centre point of a skirmish game, well, rite it rooked too. The other games were seastrike (B/G), 15 mm Roaman Civil War Ancients, 1/300th Modern, Diplomacy (very little being used in fact), 1/300th WW2 and a 25 mm A.V.I.

Only one competition class, winner was wargames unit of Modern U.S. Marines (20 mm) by Alan Butler.

JAN 1984: Due to being the day after the night before i.e. New Years Day, I understand that there were only about 15 members present, presumably the rest (including myself) were suffering from the dreaded hangover.

FEB 1984: Very large turnout indeed (all the P.A.'s from last month feeling better) with 48 present. 9 wargames in progress, one being a 25 mm Medieval Seige run by Basil Fletcher of "Fortress Models" and featuring one of his Medieval Castles (very nice indeed). Vietnam took a hammering again from the trigger happy Yanks. There were two 25 mm Fantasy Battles this month (little devils must be breeding). Other games included 15 mm Napoleonic, 25 mm Renaissance, 15 and 25 mm Ancients, and 20 mm American Civil War.

Competition results: Vehicle; Dervish Gun - J Morgan
Figure; 25 mm Fantasy? -
J Morgan
Unit; ESCI British Colonial -
J Morgan

ADVERTS

FOR SALE

Hardly used - new fantasy insect role - playing game 'EARWIG WARS': conquer the insect world! Design your own super-beetles! Five rules and character booklets plus special dice and game-boards representing leaf-litter, rotted log, dustbin etc, Geomorphie, complete at £6.95 which is under HALF price. By V.S. GAMES.

Apply George Gush.

FOR SALE

25 mm Figures: assorted Ancients at 5p each (mainly MiniFigs); Napoleonics - Hinton Hunt Prussian Infantry (about 40), Hinchcliffe Old Guard (about 30) 5p each. Apply George Gush.

LOST AND FOUND

Left at Hall, November Sunday meeting - copy of a recent Wargames Magazine.

Apply George Gush.

'WHAT YOU MISSED'

BY GEORGE GUSH

On Saturday, November 12 1983, four TWWS members attended the Ravensbourne Wargaming Society Open Day, at Ravensbourne School at Bromley. These were myself, Terry Shoebridge, Peter England Chris Avery. We put on a successful demonstration game using my 'Battles of the 19th Century' rules, and (oh, the shame of it) I won the painting competition class for fantasy figures (well, I thought they were historical figures) and all had an enjoyable day, but it struck me this was a small turnout for a meeting only half an hour from Tunbridge Wells, especially as lifts were available free for at least three more from TWWS. Thus it seems worth outlining what those who didn't go were missing, in the hopes that more people may go along another time.

Ravensbourne School for Boys is a vast place, with plenty of space for free parking within the grounds, and the main hall where the meeting took place was very spacious, with plenty of room for demonstrations and stands. Only snag was that one end of the hall was not well enough lit for wargames, which really demand very bright lighting for good effects. The organisers had attracted three trade stands, not many perhaps but all good ones - W E Hersant's bookshop, Games People Play which is one of the best board games suppliers (in fact I think the best, as the proprietor is always ready to give you an honest opinion on a game, will open up new games to let you see the contents and game-board, and is generally exceptionally helpful to customers). The other stand had board games, a wide range of rules, all the WRG books, and almost the full ranges of Minifigs and Dixon figures, plus fantasy figures (ugh, nasty), and the 'Mainly Military' series of 15 mm, 25 mm and 1:300 buildings, positions etc. In addition, at least four club stands were selling new or second hand figures, kits, books, magazines or rules, often very cheaply. Another, very unusual, stand was run by an artist selling his own, very good, aircraft paintings. I particularly liked one of a Spitfire, but could not afford 75 guineas.

There was also a small but quite well-stocked refreshment stall run by the organising club.

There were a lot of Club wargames demonstrations. By a very odd coincidence, we were doing an 1870 Franco-Prussian war battle, and no less than TWO other clubs were doing the same (one in 15 mm, one in 1:300 scale). Extraordinary, as normally you never see Franco-Prussian War games. Wonder if it is the coming period?

There were two 15 mm Ancient games (one marred by hills made of shiny BLACK plastic!) and a very nice 25 mm one between Byzantine and Arab armies (though I think they represented states in a club campaign). There was a 15 mm Seven Years War fight - French versus British - and a large Zulu War game in the same scale on a very good terrain, using Newbury rules. Unusual but hard to see at the dark end of the hall was a 25 mm Samurai skirmish game, featuring a large catapult.

A very big Arab-Israeli game in 1/76th scale had an interesting terrain, part of the field being desert and the rest a walled town (though the town looked rather European than Middle Eastern to me) and had some very good vehicles, many, like the Israeli mortar-carriers, scratch-built. Some helicopters from this game won the 20th Century equipment class in the competitions. This demonstration was by the Ravensbourne club themselves.

Finally, there were two large games in 1/32nd scale, using 54 mm figures. Perhaps this is the coming trend in wargaming?

One was a siege of a very nice medieval castle, and this was a very interesting game, which used H G Wells' type rules, with the players actually shooting with their catapults (very accurately too) and using Britains' guns to shoot matches as a representation of archery-fire! The game was run by Ross Perry, son of F E Perry, who wrote 'The First Book of Wargaming' - attractive little booklets featuring 54 mm figures which may be known to readers. Sadly, Mr Perry died recently, but his son is revising and extending his rules and will publish new versions of these books at some point. I bought a couple of paperbacks from this stand - adventure stories which are actually based on a series of wargames fought by Mr Perry and regular opponent, who was also taking part in the demonstration. He told me something new to me - apparently the Italian Atlantic Figures make not only 20 mm but also 54 mm figures including some Wild West ones, very good for Western Gunfight skirmishes. He showed me a photograph of a very good Gold Rush Prospector from this range, leading a mule simply covered with shovels, blankets, pans for gold etc. One of the nice things about visiting shows of this kind is the chance to meet other wargamers, and often pick up ideas, tips and information you would not get any other way. For example, I also ran into the secretary and chairman of the newly re-formed Crawley Wargames Club, and we have discussed the possibility of an inter-club meeting (probably early next year), at Crawley, mainly to play Ancient and Renaissance games.

Ross Perry presented a prize for the best wargames demonstration, in memory of his father, and this was won by the other 54 mm game (judging for this and the Competitions was done by one representative). This game was a marvellous representation of the fight for the bridge at Arnhem, with a full 1/32 scale representation of the bridge towering over the houses at the end of it - the roadway was at least a foot wide and the first bridge span crossed a cling-film 'river' (very realistic) about six feet across!

Oh, I forgot to mention the only naval game on show. This was an interesting small-scale representation of an American Civil War sea battle at night, with rules for visibility, recognition, illumination etc. It was put on by a newly-formed club for naval wargamers, the 'Privateers of London' who are seeking new members. In case anyone is interested, their secretary is R A Walker, Frampton Park Estate, Hackney, London, E9 7NT.

Another club stand was not a wargame demonstration, but a very large and impressive display of models - aircraft, large-scale AFV's, and 54 mm figures and dioramas, put on by "All Things Military". My favourite was a very large model of an F-16 jet fighter, with open cockpits and fully-detailed interior. I notice it had tiny warnings almost everywhere warning ground crew not to step on this bit or that - it looked as though the best AA weapon against this aircraft would be a well-hurled boot!

Generally, then, a very enjoyable meeting, even if the organisation was occasionally a little vague (this could have its advantages - the door was left unattended for much of the day, allowing visitors to come in without paying!). There were 100 people in the hall at any one time (mainly from visiting clubs rather than passing visitors) - I hope perhaps this account will mean that a few more of them are from Tunbridge Wells next year.

In The Shops By George Gush

Ballards' Model Shop, in Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells, now stocks not only Miniature Figurines' 25 mm Napoleonic range but also virtually their whole 25 mm Colonial range. They also keep Bellona plastic battlefield range 1:300th to 25 mm scales, with trenches, pillboxes, Nissen huts, positions, river and road sections, tents etc, all the Esei plastic 1/72nd military bits and their plastic World War II soldiers, and a pretty comprehensive range of board games and board game magazines - strongest on the fantasy side, but they also have a lot of historical games. Mr Ballard is not an expert on wargaming but is very anxious to help us, always displays our poster and is very obliging about ordering things specially, and certainly deserves our support. He has a good range of paints, brushes, scenic materials, etc, as well.

The EM Model Shop in Camden Road has just started to stock Avalon Hill board wargames, and keeps, beside paints, scenic materials etc, the Esei and Matchbox ranges of military kits in 1/72nd scale.

Tunbridge Well Bookshop, also in Camden Road, has a cut-price book room in the basement, and a very good bargain for the wargames there is 'Battledress' edited by I T Schick, marked down to £4.95. It is really excellent value at that price,

with dozens of colour pictures of uniforms.

The cut-price bookshop at the top end of Tunbridge Wells High Street is also worth a visit. They have, or have had, a lot of reduced price military and even wargaming books (I got my copies of P Perry's First and Second Books of Wargaming there).

An interesting book I recently bought there is 'Numbers, Predictions and War' by Colonel T N Dupuy of the U S Army. It is about, in the author's words, "using history to evaluate combat factors and predict the outcome of battles" - a very relevant topic for the wargamer. It would take too long to describe it here, but one interesting outcome of his calculations is relative efficiency ratios for different nations' ground troops in World War II. The Germans had a consistent 20% superiority over the British and Americans - in other words 100 Germans were the combat equivalent of 120 troops of the Western allies (he attributes this partly to differences in organisation - in a 1943-44 American infantry division, 50.25% of its strength was directly involved in manning or serving weapons; in an equivalent German division, 59.83% was so occupied:- more 'teeth' and less 'tail'. What other book gives information like this? On the other hand, German combat effectiveness in Russia, even in 1943, was more than 100% higher than Russian! Reduced to £1.95, this book is a definite bargain.

Finally, some recommendations on board games, based on those I have been playing recently:

Very good House Divided (GDW)
 Axis and Allies (Nova Games)
 Speed and Steel (Standard Games)

Good Soldier Kings (GDW)
 Attack in the Ardennes (GDW)

Mediocre Fight For The Sky (Attacktix)

These games will be well-known to many TWWS members, but perhaps not to others, and it is to the latter that these comments are addressed:

House Divided is an excellent two-player game of the American Civil War, on the strategic level, using a novel system of linked boxes for movement and fighting, instead of the conventional hexes, and a system of multi-round combat in which sides strike at each other alternately, for the battles. Both work very well, the battle system in particular being very simple but providing lots of difficult decisions for the player about whether to continue, reinforce, retire and so on. An ingenious set of victory conditions more or less forces the two sides to adopt the real historical attitudes, if not the actual strategies: the South weaker but more dashing and enterprising, concentrating its forces for daring raids and tactical victories, the stronger North slow, cautious and plodding, spreading its larger forces all over the place in an effort to hold every point of importance. A system of 'marches' where the number

of moves that can be made in a turn is controlled by a dice throw is chancy but interesting - you not only have to think about this move, but also about not getting into a position where only getting two 'marches' (the minimum) would be fatal, next time. A fast-moving game, it can be over quickly should the Confederates achieve their 'sudden-death' victory conditions, but takes longer if the North grinds on slowly towards its victory conditions, which entail occupying every major town in the South.

I should perhaps state my bias on board games at this point - I like games with rules that can be learnt very quickly (House Divided rules cover about 4 sides of very large print) and can be played in an evening, but which offer a wide variety of strategies and are difficult to play really well. House Divided fits all of these criteria.

Axis and Allies also does this; with the added bonus that it is that relatively rare thing, a multi-player board wargame. It is based (in a rather abstract way) on the Second World War, and the full number of players is five (Britain, U S A, Russia, Germany/Italy, Japan) though it is still an enjoyable game with 4, 3 or even 2 players. It manages to include air, sea and land fighting with a minimum of complexity and a maximum of possible strategies, and has been played constantly at our Tuesday night meetings, no two games being the same, though some common moves are beginning to emerge, such as the Axis drive for Africa, the Russian invasion of China and the British landings in Norway.

Speed and Steel is my most recent acquisition, and is a two-player game based on the arms build-up in the 1930's, and turns out to be a most ingenious and fascinating game. Lots of games (including Axis and Allies) allow for production in war, but only Speed and Steel brings in the time element - of being ready for war when it comes. The game starts in peacetime, but either player can attack - causing war - on any turn, and when this happens, the time-scale suddenly changes. In peace, one turn is a month, and as you produce units (Infantry, Militia, Guard, Tanks, elite tanks, tactical and strategic air power) these go on to a 'Training Track', taking three months to appear on the board. Once war starts, a turn is a week, and something two months from appearing will take eight turns to reach the board - probably too late for the war! You can also spend production points, obtained from your factories, on increasing the future output of those factories, spying and counterspying (counters are face down till successfully spied-on) or on raising your technical level (affects performance of armour, airborne, railways and aircraft). You can also raise your 'Consumer Index' or economy as a whole. As this rises, more sophisticated forces get cheaper (and simpler ones more expensive) and you possible levels of technology and espionage get higher, but, most important, in war you go down this Index as you lose towns, etc, and once down to nought, you have lost! - and fiendish, you can't raise the consumer index once war has been declared. Thus the cunning strategy of one D Cooke the other night - raised his consumer index as high as possible on move 1, producing nothing

and attacked at once with only the 20 weak Militia you start the game with. Malcolm Dove, his opponent, had done a 'balanced' build, but it would be ages before he got his new units etc. Meanwhile he was as strong in forces as the evil Cooke, but had a consumer index of just ONE! Cooke could lose 2 or 3 towns without disaster - as soon as Malcolm lost one he lost the game. Equally, however, we have had games won by panzer-blitzkriegs (high-tech tanks get a useful second movement phase) with stuka support, games won by strategic bombing of the enemy capital, games won by a fairly early assault by elite infantry: again, there seem to be no end of plans which could work, and the problem of when and if you should declare war is a real nail-biter.

Soldier Kings and Attack in the Ardennes are both extensions of the basic House Divided principles. Soldier Kings is a 4 player game of 18th Century princes struggling for control of a fictitious continent; a good game, allowing for diplomacy as well as fighting, its drawback is that it takes a lot longer to play. Attack in the Ardennes is based on the 1944 Battle of the Bulge, and is quite a bit more complex than House Divided though still simple as board games go. I have not played it enough for a final verdict yet, but it looks like being a good game.

I bought Fight for the Sky because I am always looking for a good game on the Battle of Britain, but have not found one yet; this one is not it either. I am a bit disappointed so far; the board is very nice, and so are the counters (though one vital bit of information on them is practically invisible) and the rules are simple, but (unless I have missed something vital) the game seems a bit pointless, as you do not seem to gain anything from different arrangements of raids. However, I may have missed some important rule, and must admit I have only played solo games, which are very much NOT what it is designed for, so it may be better than I think.

Report on the 1984 TWWS Open Day

by Jeff Goldsmith

Thinking that after nearly six years of holding the position of club newsletter editor and that the annual Open Day was approaching fast, I decided that I would produce an article based on the proceedings of Sunday 26 February, not only for the benefit of Club members who could not make a visit on the day, but mainly because I was short on articles for the next issue of Rank and File.

Having arrived at about 9.30 on the morning along with the rest of the Crowborough club members, it was obvious that there was going to be a fair amount of wargames demonstrations going on, I left the others to set up the game while I wandered around looking at the wares on the Trade stands. There were quite a few bodies jostling for prime position even when trades were trying to set up, but I did get my samurai artillery sets.

I arrived back at the club table and found out they hadn't started to set up yet, so I took command and got the proceedings going. By about 11 o'clock everything was underway and the Hall had started to fill up.

I went and entered my painting competition entry of Samurai foot soldiers (didn't even come second) and proceeded to the refreshment area. Here the press-ganged wives of some of the older members were doing a grand job (which they carried out magnificently all day long without a single complaint) providing sandwiches, cakes and drinks to the gluttonous wargamers standing before them. The refreshment stand always provides a handy-sized profit for the club and on behalf of all the club members I thank all the ladies for doing such a splendid job.

After filling my face, I went, and feeling duty bound, did a stint on the door for an hour or so and was quite surprised to see the number of people arriving even at lunchtime. It seems that judging by the amount that was taken on the door (the original ticket number not being recorded) that between 350 and 400 attended during the Day. A quick tally by the treasurer revealed a profit of about £82 plus the excess food which can be sold at club meetings, this would then rise to around £100, which can't be bad.

Walking around and noting what clubs were present it was obvious that a lot of work had gone into some of the displays. Most notable being a 25 mm Samurai Skirmish, based around a castle and village by the Medway Wargames Society and a very nice U.S./Mexican War Battle with Mexican Convent etc by the Colchester Wargames club, unfortunately neither won the best demonstration award. This went to the South East Military Society for their Pearl Harbour game (whilst very good it lacked the visual impact of the larger scale games, this of course is only my personal opinion).

Other wargames were of varying scales and periods, ranging from Ancients and Medievals through to Franco-Prussian War and Vietnam, most periods being catered for in one scale or another. The overall standard of the games were high but some still suffered from the dreaded wargames 'litter' of rules, dice, paper plates, half-eaten sandwiches etc, cluttering up otherwise nicely laid out terrain.

It seemed that most of the tradestands did a reasonable business even in competition with the various Bring and Buy stalls set up around the main hall. The majority expressed an interest of returning next year.

Finally, a word or two about the Painting Competitions. I think that the number of entries in some of the classes could have been higher, but never the less the standard of painting and modelling was high (so high that my Samurai didn't come anywhere) so in that respect the competition was successful. My personal opinion on the trophies is that compared to other show's awards we must rate pretty poorly, (I should know I made the Bazes, in a rush, it must be said) so I think that it would be a good idea

in future to spend a little more money to improve the standard of the 'Prizes', ie trophies, so that the winners have something to be proud of, not just a gold painted figure on a broom handle base. What do other members think?

All in all the Open Day must be rated as a success and the thanks of all the club members must go to Terry Shoebridge for organising this event and to the chaps that helped out on the day, here's looking forward to next year's Open day.

List of participating clubs and Trade stands:-

CLUBS - 16

CRAWLEY WARGAMES CLUB - Participation Game (25 mm)
- Medieval

S/EAST ESSEX MILITARY SOCIETY - Pearl Harbour (micro)

SURREY UNIVERSITY - 1/300 th Modern

ENFIELD - Zulu War Skirmish (25 mm)

BROMLEY - Vietnam Skirmish (25 mm)

SELWG - Franco-Prussian War (15 mm)

CROWBOROUGH WARGAMES CLUB - Renaissance (25 mm)

MEDWAY WARGAMES SOCIETY - Samurai skirmish (25 mm)

SHOEBURYNESSE WARGAMES CLUB - Napoleonic (15 mm) (LEIPZIG)

COLECHESTER WARGAMES CLUB - U.S./MEXICAN WAR (25 mm)

SELWG - Medieval Seige (25 mm)

JUNIOR LEADERS REGT. R.E. WARGAMES CLUB - Ancients (15 mm)

HUNDRED OF HOO SCHOOL - 1/300th Modern Arab

MAIDSTONE WARGAMES SOCIETY - Medieval seige (25 mm)

SUSSEX UNIVERSITY - 5 mm A.C.W.

T.W.W.S. - Jasta Participation Game

TRADE STANDS - 11

CORVUS MINIATURES

TABLE TOP GAMES

DONNINGTON MINIATURES/NEWBURY RULES

SKT FIGURES

RANK AND FILE MODELS

FORTRESS MODELS

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

PAUL AND TERESA BAILEY

GREEN MACHINE FROM DOVER

WARBAND MINIATURES

CALIVER BOOKS