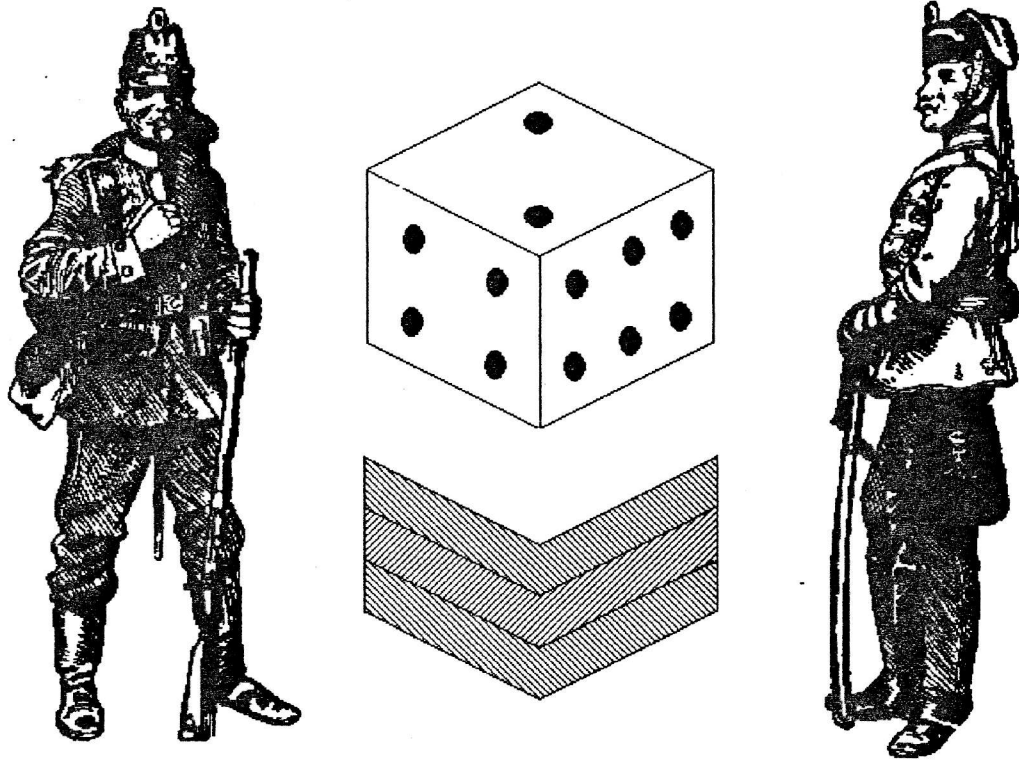


# Rank and File



**Journal of the Tunbridge Wells Wargames Society**

**Issue 94/4**

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## MEMBERSHIP

Please remember that you should by now have renewed your membership. Anyone who has not yet done so should contact either Malcolm Dove or Andrew Finch.

A list of members will usually be delivered with the magazine. Phone numbers and addresses change, and I think it is easiest to give a copy to members with each magazine. This way you can also keep up with new members. You must be a member to enjoy the benefits of the discounts offered by companies on the list.

## MAGAZINE DELIVERY

Some of you will have received the last magazine by post. The committee agreed to my making suitable arrangements to get the magazine to all our members. The system will work as follows: The 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

**4 September 1994 Club Bring & Buy**

**18 September 1994 Arnhem 1 day battle**

**2 October 1994**

**16 October 1994 SELWG** - There will doubtless be others going so ask to make up a car load.

**23 October Tsu Shima 1 day battle at Hall**  
see John or Andrew about this.

**6 November 1994 Committee Elections**

**4 December 1994 AGM, Painting Competition**

**Other events planned by the committee are:**

A Hordes of the Things 1 day tournament

A DBA tournament in November.

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

Contact Andrew Finch, Chris Avery, or Alan Butler. £ 4.00.

### 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.

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

## MAKE YOUR OWN WARGAMES TABLE (PART II)

by Andrew Finch

Last issue I gave the bare bones of my intentions. I can now report that the "experiment" was a complete success. To recap, the ingredients are (for a 6 foot by 4 foot table):

3 sheets of 4 foot by 2 foot ply ca ½ inch thick plywood (5-ply I think). When selecting the plywood, ensure that it is absolutely flat and has no twists or other flaws. A slight curve is allowable, probably unavoidable.

2 lengths of 1¾" by ¾" timber (at least 6 feet long) to be used as link battens.

1 dozen each bolts, wingnuts and washers. I used M6 bolts from B&Q (6mm diameter).

Coarse and Fine sand paper.

This will cost you about £ 50.00 at B&Q.

### Production:

First, cut the timbers to the correct length. These come in lengths of about 7 feet at B&Q, so they need to be trimmed to a length of 6 feet.

Next, cover the table which will ultimately used as support, and lay out the plywood flat and make sure that the sheets match each other. By this mean mean that if the surface is curved slightly, which it will be) the curve is the same on all three.

Now I cheated. A professional will doubtless hold up his hands in dismay. The procedure I describe below allows for production in limited space.

Using two wood clamps, fix one batten to the table top, with the batten uppermost, and flush and parallel with the edge of the ply sheet. If you want to put the battens further in, you will need to ensure that they are still parallel with the edge, and also are far enough apart for them to be on either side of the supporting table top, though a modification on this aspect is also shown below.

Mark off 3" and 21" in from the end, so that holes will be 3" in from either long edge on one end of the ply sheet. Drill these right through (make sure you do not drill into the supporting table !).

Remove the clamps, turn over the ply sheet, and countersink the top surface by enough to ensure that the bolt heads are not proud of the surface. Turn the ply over again, and this time bolt the batten in place with a bolt, washer, and wing nut through both holes. Number the underside of the table top (currently this side is uppermost) and the batten holes - this will ensure that if the holes were not drilled exactly straight, they will still always match up each time you put the table together and the bolt will go through without any problems. You must also ensure that the batten is always the same way up when bolted in place.

Now take the second sheet, make sure that the surface matches the surface of the first sheet (i.e. they are roughly level - a slight difference will not matter) and use the clamps to hold it in place in the same way as the first. Measure 6" and 24" from the nearest bolt along the batten and repeat the drilling procedure.

Remove the clamps, and the table top currently bolted in place. Countersink the new pair of holes, turn over the ply again, and bolt the middle section in place, numbering these holes as well.

Take the third sheet, clamp this in place, matching the surface of the ply as before. Measure the last 6" and 24" from the nearest bolt, and drill through the third top, remove the clamps and sheet two and countersink the top of sheet three.

Now to prepare the other side. Bolt the three sheets together with the first batten. Place the second batten in place and clamp it to the table tops. Mark the drill points as before so they are 3" in from each edge of each sheet. This time it is possible to drill all the holes in one go, remove all the bolts from the first side, and countersink all the tops.

#### **Alternative method if more space is available.**

If I had had more space, I would have clamped both battens to the tops and drilled all the holes in one pass.

It is essential when drilling in several passes that the batten and top are in place from the previous set of holes otherwise you may find that they do not match up afterwards. This ensures that if the battens themselves are not parallel, they will still match their corresponding holes. Hence the numbers. Experience with the first practical use of the table was that it may be necessary to rebore some of the holes if the table has become slightly distorted during storage. My advice is when it is finished, do a dummy run and rebore where necessary. Routing out the holes in the battens will help, making them 7mm diameter which allows some flexibility.

#### **Final touches.**

Use coarse and fine sand paper on all the edges of the battens and the table tops to round them down and smooth them. This will avoid Close Encounters of the Splintery Kind when using the table. This may take a bit of time, but is well worth it.

If you want to paint the surface, you will need to prime it first. I shall paint mine a suitable sea blue-grey colour, as I have tiles for land games, and my black cloths for space.

#### **Refinements.**

It would be possible to also fit rubber feet to the supporting battens. Rubber doorstops would be the best bet, but ensure that the depth of the door stop is greater than the protruding bolt and wing nuts. If you do this, then the table will fit onto a larger surface. You do not have to worry about the spacing of the battens, though placing them at the edge is recommended. If placed too near the centre, the table top will tip up if you lean on it.

## **OPERATION FIDO:**

### **The scene from Able Beach**

**BY RUSSELL HANSON**

While Operation Husky, the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily, is well known to Historians, Operation Fido which took place at the same time has been unaccountably overlooked.

Now my name is Ballsaker, and I commanded one of the three Allied Battle Groups which landed with the aim of seizing the Axis airfields. I append a copy of my Order of Battle (ORBAT) and a map showing the whole area covered by the operation. The task of Battlegroup Ballsaker was to land on Able Beach (marked "A" on the map).

The commander of the whole operation was designated CATFOR (Commander Allied Task Force) and as it was considered desirable to give our Allies some experience of war he was an American. Now CATFOR is the sort of chap who thinks he is "the cat's whiskers", in spite of apparently having gained his military experience through reading comic strips and watching the films of John Wayne. But don't mistake me. CATFOR is a good friend of mine and I've offered to come and give the peasants on his ranch in America a pep talk. What could be more friendly than that?

From the map you will see that behind Able Beach and part of Baker there is a ridge, in practice a series of ridges, thickly wooded and dominated by the town of Monte Cristo. CATFOR, anxious to exert his authority, took one look at the map and told me to "rush" the ridges, crossing West of Monte Cristo in a "left hook", to dominate the high ground before Axis reinforcements could arrive. While I agreed in principle to this rather obvious manoeuvre I said I would have to take account of the ground and its defences on the day. Any fool can plan brilliant paper manoeuvres on the map. What is often more important is an eye for ground and leading a healthy life, going on runs, not smoking or drinking cheap Sicilian wine.

CATFOR also said I would have to do without any significant air support, the overwhelmingly superior Allied air force being reserved mainly for Charlie Beach where he planned personally to run the show. I had to dig my heels in when he sought to remove the monitor, HMS Incredible, from my control to give anti-aircraft support to the US aircraft carrier which was to operate off Baker Beach. I explained that Incredible's anti-aircraft capability was negligible and I needed it to give gunfire support to my operation. CATFOR also proclaimed complete indifference to medical services. I explained how important these were to morale. I think he accepted my points. The Americans, if basically ignorant, tend to be fast learners.

So the day dawned. But before it did Airborne Forces were dropped in moonlight in an attempt to effect an early capture of the airfields. I believe they all landed in the wrong places. The best part of a Parachute Battalion fell behind Able Beach. Their remnants proved quite useful to me and when at a later stage a posse of press reporters appeared they even deigned to advance, uttering blood curdling yells while quite some distance from the enemy.

My first wave, comprising most of 5 TW Highlanders and one squadron of tanks from 32 RTR plus the Matilda flail tank landed at first light on the Western beaches with the aim of advancing to the western part of the ridge. Monte Cristo was in a central position on the ridge and I did not wish to approach it directly as it was bound to be strongly defended.

I held back 17 G Rifles and the other squadron of 32 RTR for my second wave, as I wished to see how quickly the first wave could deal with the defenders (dug in and concealed Italians) before committing it. If the first wave had been able to make rapid progress I could have landed my second wave behind it to give depth to the attack and make the "left hook" so beloved of CATFOR. But, as I had suspected, such was not the case. The Italians, while in no great strength, but protected by mines and wire, had covered the area with small outposts which could ambush and cause heavy casualties to a force advancing too precipitously, particularly as, unlike CATFOR's Americans, my British and Gurkha troops had no armoured transport. Which raises another point., Troops who are forever transported in vehicles become "soft" and are often unwilling to dismount. My British and Gurkha soldiers enjoy marching. With them it's always "Boots, boots etc." as Kipling wrote.

It became immediately clear to me that what was required was a methodical sweep of the countryside, from the beach to the hills, with dismounted infantry following the tanks and co-operating closely with them, and maximum artillery support against located enemy positions. Accordingly I landed my second wave on the eastern end of the beach, and my whole force proceeded steadily to the hills on either side of Monte Cristo. This has been likened to a "partridge drive", and none the worse for that. We made steady progress and achieved all our objectives, the first line of hills, with few casualties, taking many prisoners. Monte Cristo, by now a blazing ruin thanks to the heavy guns of the monitor and most of the artillery which had come ashore, was captured by the Gurkhas in a brilliant flank attack along the east ridge.

By early afternoon I was within measurable distance of complete victory, I know CATFOR was aggrieved that he had to cross the unfordable River Pongo on the two other beaches, but he had bridging trains and amphibious vehicles and far less of the defence in depth, mines and wire, which I had to overcome. The fact was, at this stage, I was well ahead of the other two Battle Groups.

But then a German Panzer Group arrived in map area "D" and, deploying tanks, artillery and anti-tank guns, covered the last remaining ridge all along my front and shot up anything that moved above the crest. I had plenty of infantry in hand but infantry alone cannot attack tanks and my tank losses gradually built up as the armour tried to get forward in a hail of enemy fire. The first phase of the operation had been greatly facilitated by my powerful artillery. Now it proved impossible to get even the artillery forward observation officers (FOO's) into a position of observation. Consequently my artillery could not bring down directed fire onto map area "D" which would have swung the battle in my favour. As you may know, British artillery of the period was well co-ordinated, and a single FOO could bring down the fire of a whole Regiment. For some reason the FOO's on this occasion were only organised to direct the fire of a single battery ! I have instituted an enquiry into this.

Air Support, to take out just two or three enemy tanks, would have transformed my situation. It was not forthcoming. I received the support of a single aircraft in the course of the day. Usefully, it shot down a Stuka. CATFOR monopolised the air force, long after his original reason for doing so (to cover his pontoon bridges) had ceased to be a factor.

We tried every expedient to get on, and when night fell and operations ceased I was planning a "suicide charge" by my heavily armoured Churchill; flail tank.

Now I'm not one to "belly ache". I can't stand "belly aching" and will not have anyone near me who indulges in this tiresome practice. So I shall content myself with saying that just a little of that vaunted Allied co-operation, goodwill and openness which the Americans are always bleating on about would have been appreciated. Come to think of it they don't have much to bleat about, the poor dears, which I suppose is why they make such a noise in the world. So far as I am concerned, I fought my battle according to my master plan and it was a damned good party. When I give a party it always is. I know my troops feel that way too.

K St G Ballsaker DSO UFO, Brigadier.

## BATTLE GROUP BALLSAKER

### ORBAT

#### Headquarters

Tac HQ: Brigadier K St G Ballsaker DSO UFO, in jeep with Gurkha signaller and escort.  
2 M/c Despatch Riders  
1 Scout car with liaison officer

Main HQ: 1 Armoured command vehicle  
1 wireless van  
Staff Officers and press correspondents

#### Infantry

5th Bn Tunbridge Wells Highlanders (approx 50 figs) comprising:

2 rifle coys of two platoons and coy HQ.  
Support coy with 6 carriers, 2 MMG, 2 3" mortar and 2 6pdr A/Tk gun detachments.

17th (Princess Victoria's) Gurkha Rifles with establishment similar to 5 TWH but fewer men in rifle coys.

#### Armour

32 RTR HQ: 1 Crusader tank  
1 Scout car  
2 squadrons each of 5 Sherman tanks

R.A. 2 SP "Priest" 105mm guns 2 Bofors 40mm AA guns  
2 towed 25pdr guns 2 3.7" AA guns  
2 towed 5.5 medium guns  
1 carrier OP

R.E. 1 Churchill Mine Clearer with rollers  
1 Matilda "Scorpion" flail tank  
Mine clearing detachment with detectors  
Bangalore torpedoes (may be issued to infantry battalions)

R.A.O.C. 1 field workshop vehicle  
2 tank transporters

R.A.M.C. 1 armoured halftrack ambulance  
3 ambulances  
Jeeps with stretchers, bearer parties, medical orderlies, doctors, and two RAP tents.



## **SOME COMMENTS ON THE GUSH 1930 - 45 RULES**

Page 7, para IV (b). Why is it necessary to throw deviation dice when firing smoke ? Smoke shell is just the same as any other, apart from the contents.

para IV (f). British artillery, at least, should surely be capable of being directed by a single FOO. (See above narrative).

V. Correction permitted in only one direction per turn. Why not two directions (e.g. up 6" - left 4") ? It isn't a particularly difficult operation.

Amount of deviation. I think the number of dice is excessive. For instance, it was an accepted practice for mortars to "search" reverse slopes with unobserved fire. The fire could be expected to fall within a not very large area.

## **MUSINGS FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIR**

**by Andrew Finch**

The well has dried up...

These words should strike terror into all Editor-fearing correspondents. My supply of articles is no more, and the call now goes out for some reports. I need even short articles filling half a page with some ideas on painting and modelling effects.

It has been suggested by someone, not a member, that we should put in some reviews of museums, exhibitions we have been to, other places of interest, some of which may only have a passing military connection, but which will inspire others to visit.

A view on wargames shows visited during a year would be of interest, I usually report on those attended by myself, sometimes musing on the mass of people there rather than the show itself.

Speaking of shows, we ought to make a bigger "thing" of the main shows we go to by car. How many independent drivers are going to SELWG, for instance. I am sure that our junior members may be interested in going to the show if they know who is going and when. Their parents would also want to be certain that they are being taken by responsible members who will ensure they get home again. Perhaps the committee should be thinking about this. I shall be going this year, probably by train, and will certainly be willing to chaperone a group.

November is election time again. Given my policy of ensuring that all members get a copy of the magazine, I feel that we should also post a ballot paper to any member not present at the November meeting. There are times when we cannot come to meetings we want to be at, and wish to make our voices heard, even if only by putting a cross in a box. A committee meeting should consider this idea for the future, perhaps for this year.

And when the elections are over and announced at the AGM in December, it will only be 10 weeks until the Open Day. If anyone has ideas for the Open Day, then please pass these to any committee member. The Gang of Six is I think prepared to put on a club display again. We might want to do a participation game this time. I think that John's Pre-Dreadnought rules would be a good idea, or we could try a large scale skirmish game. This would be for the Committee to decide, but given the amount of time taken last year to prepare for the Open Day, preparing scenery etc., we need to have a decision NOW.

Cue for a call for a committee meeting lads, venue as usual, date to be decided in consultation with our esteemed Secretary.

To close, may I repeat my call for articles, so that I can do at least one more magazine before Christmas. Perhaps the Commanders at Arnhem and Tsu Shima will be able to take a few minutes to put pen to paper before and after the action. Take Russell's contributions as an idea, because he manages to put a period atmosphere into his articles, true to the spirit of the time, rather than the rather bland and insipid tones of today.

