

## **RANK AND FILE**

The Newsletter of the Tunbridge Wells Wargames Society  
February 2003

### **EDITORIAL**

#### **Good News and Bad News**

The bad news is pretty obvious – the Speldhurst Village Hall, in which we have been meeting for so long, was burnt down during the first firemen's strike, apparently through an electrical fault in the ceiling of the main hall, which was totally destroyed. This was obviously a much bigger blow to the people of the village than to our club, but we have lost equipment and, of course, a place to meet. We had a big search before finding the Speldhurst Hall which this editor, at least, thought was a pleasant place for meetings, though a bit off the beaten track for non-drivers. It will not be rebuilt for at least eighteen months, and we shall have to decide as a club whether or not we want to meet there when it is restored. In the meantime the committee will be considering alternatives, and if anyone has either strong opinions about a suitable meeting place, or information about one, they would be glad to know. Write either to the Secretary (address below), or the editor. In recognition of our use of the hall and the obliging attitude of the people who run it, the AGM voted to make a contribution from club funds – although the hall was insured there will certainly be expenses facing their committee over rebuilding and re-equipping the place.

The 'could be worse' sort of good news relates to the fire and its results. Luckily for us, the club equipment was nearly all in a side room which was the only part of the building which did not lose its roof and escaped the effects of the fire. The only loss we had was the box of hills, which was destroyed completely, with everything else stored under the stage, and it appears that the hall insurance may pay for these to be replaced. The loss of a meeting place was thus the main problem for us, and this has been solved by the quick action of our Treasurer, Malcolm Dove, who was responsible for securing King Charles' Church Hall, Warwick Park, Tunbridge Wells, and booking it for the whole of 2003, on our normal first Sunday of the month date. We thus have no immediate crisis, and can consider options for a future meeting place at leisure.

There is also some unalloyed good news, in that there has been a marked growth in membership and in attendance at club meetings, which started in the later part of last year and seems to be continuing. For several months now attendance at Sunday meetings has been up from around 20 to around 30 people. We don't know the causes of this (any ideas ?) but it is very welcome at a time when the wargaming magazines seem keen on articles about a decline of the hobby. We particularly welcome more younger members to the club, and if new members have suggestions about improving the club, please let us hear them.

Finally, back to the editor's perennial appeal – we need more articles or other items for the magazine. Thanks very much to Malcolm and Gabriel, without whose contributions we would not have had the first 'Rank and File' of 2003. No-one else has sent me anything for about six months, so unless you get writing it will be another long gap before the next issue. Remember, anything with a wargames, fantasy, military modelling or military history connection is welcome. Among possible contributions would be:

1. Battle reports, or accounts of historical battles
2. Reviews of rules (or your own rules if not too long)
3. Articles on computer wargames as well as on tabletop ones
4. Ideas or discussion on wargame (or real) tactics
5. Reviews of figures, books, films etc
6. Accounts of meetings, museums, clubs, battlefields etc that you have visited.

It doesn't have to be amazingly learned, nor particularly long – in fact, short items are extremely helpful in making up an issue. Remember too that you can advertise for things you want or have for sale, free. The ideal format would be an e-mail attachment or 3.5 disc with the contribution as a Word document or as text only. This hugely reduces the labour involved for the editor (who should be able to handle WordPerfect documents too). However, the editor can type things out if necessary, particularly

if they are not too long. Thus typed or hand written material is OK, and don't worry about grammar and spelling which (if the editor notices) can easily be corrected. We can usually scan and use maps, drawings and photos

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for e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## RECENT SUNDAY MEETINGS

### October 2002

There were 28 members present, including at least two new recruits, a very good attendance. There were at least nine wargames. In order of scale, there was a 10mm Fantasy game. 15mm games included a very nice WW2 Eastern Front set-up, Terry Shoebridge and Ian Foster with another DBM duel (effectively an Arab-Israeli contest they said), Clive McLeod and others with a Principles of war colonial game (Fuzzies versus Brits) and a 15mm Napoleonic.

I am always reading about 25mm scale dying out (and prices nowadays are certainly steep), but our club seems to have a good deal of 25mm wargaming. There were two 25mm Napoleonic games, one to Gush rules, featuring the new army of past member Mark Summers, who is hoping to come down more regularly in future, the other Russians versus French, to 'General de Brigade' rules (how about a short article on this set?). The two Warhammer games were probably also to this scale, with a 40K game featuring Khorne (hope I got that right) against Imperial Guard (sounds like another Napoleonic) the other with Gabriel Copus, who has an article on his Kult of Speed army in this issue. This was a battle of alliances, Dwarves and Empire against Undead and Dark Elves.

### November 2002

Only short notes on this, but there were over 30 people and two new members joined. There were ten wargames and a very good number of entries in the Painting competition. Don't know what is causing this upsurge, but it's very welcome.

### December 2002

The Annual General Meeting, our first meeting since the fire at the Speldhurst hall, and our first at King Charles' Church Hall in Tunbridge Wells since the early days of the club. We used to meet here, and held our very first Open Day here – imagine trying to get it into this space today!

A healthy 31 present, so numbers are keeping up well, and despite the time devoted to the business meeting (as little as possible), there were seven games. Three of these were Warhammer games. Two were 15mm Napoleonic battles. Andrew Finch and Alan Butler were developing a rather DBA style game (article?), and there was a very unusual game to Napier rules (article??), based on a crossing of the Danube, using boats and pontoons. Another unusual game was a World War One battle using Peter Pig 'Squarebashing' rules. They are very simple and quick, but highly ingenious and unusual, and definitely warrant an article! Your editor always runs some Hordes of the Things' games at the AGM, for anyone wishing to play. On this occasion takers included Ivor Metcalfe, making a rare appearance. For some reason, there was no painting competition at this meeting.

### January 2003

30 present, and there were no less than twelve games, possibly a record. Some new members signed up. There was the first Painting Competition of 2003, with a good entry.

Clive McLeod celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a TWWS member with the same armies and game he played on his first appearance – Franco-Prussian War, using George Gush's converted Airfix armies and ancient Gush rules. The Munros had a Pre-Dreadnought naval game, featuring the little-known Franco-Japanese War, and Terry and Frank's traditional DBM series continued. Martin Rowe and Ian Kemp had a 15mm Napoleonic game to Napier rules, there were three Warhammer games, and the WW1 Squarebashing and Andrew and Alan rules-developing games continued from last month. One innovation was Tony Wyatt's American Civil War game to the excellent Fire and Fury rules. I must have missed noting a couple of games.

## **REGIMENT OF FOOTE RULES FOR THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR By Malcolm Dove**

These rules are published by Rules for the Common Man (RFCM) and sold by Peter Pig. As with all RFCM rules they are based on the premise that the game should be fun, simple and over in two hours, and they have some novel innovations. This game is primarily aimed at one player a side.

Infantry are based on 30mm x 30mm stands with 4 figures per stand (cavalry 30 x 40 and 3 figures), 2 to 7 stands making a regiment, a typical army will have between 50 and 60 stands and 12 to 15 units.

The game starts with an abstract campaign, with both sides moving towards the battle. After each march dice are thrown to discover what happens - characters are met, unhealthy and hostile regions crossed, towns visited and camps made. These events can either reduce your army by sickness, witch hunts desertion etc or increase the quality of units, by finding extra supplies or reinforcements. At the end, the side that made the most marches becomes the attacker and depending on the number of extra marches made the defender has a chance of losing units or having them delayed.

On the battlefield, generals - 3 per side - are used to motivate units to action, provided a sufficiently high score is made with two dice the unit may then dice to see what it can do. Each action has a cost (e.g. infantry move 3" 1AP, to shoot 2AP) so depending on the score achieved a variety of actions can be made (so following the above on a throw of 5 a unit can wheel [1AP], advance 6" [2AP] and shoot [2AP]). Once all 3 general have failed to motivate units, the turn ends and the opponent's turn starts.

Shooting is straightforward and can be done twice in a move if sufficient APs are available. Each shooting stand throws a dice, any unit hit gets a saving throw, and two unsaved hits destroys a stand of figures.

Hand to hand combat is again simple with lots of dice thrown, it does seem very bloody from the few tests I have run. In a cavalry mêlée the victorious side immediately pursues off table. They can return on a 5 or 6, but are likely to be difficult to motivate as they will be a long way from a general. This seems historically accurate.

As with all rules morale is very important, each hit from shooting and from a lost or drawn mêlée causes a test to be taken. On a 4, 5 or 6 the unit fails, one failure means no advance next move, two failures retire and three failures rout and unit destroyed.

Unlike most other games there is a finite time limit. At the end of each of his moves the defender deducts the score of a dice from 23, when this countdown reaches zero the game ends - so it could last between 4 and 22 moves with 7 or 8 being average. Alternatively a player can attempt a parley by dicing, if successful ending the game early. Presumably only the losing side will try this to minimise losses.

As with other RFCM rules, the victory conditions are different for attacker and defender, the attacker getting points for advancing etc. So an attacker that sits back and shoots is unlikely to win even if they kill more of the enemy.

On the whole I think these will give players a good game and if games only last 2 hours, a return match can be played on the same day using their opponent's army.

I plan to play some games at the club, and will happily involve anyone interested. Peter Pig will be at the open day with the full range of RFCM rules.

## USING A KULT OF SPEED.ARMY

### by Gabriel Copus.

I have been using this type of Ork army for a couple of years now. Like all Ork armies, it takes a lot of trial and error to get the most out of, but here are my observations so far.

The army has very fast, but very fragile vehicles, with above-average close combat troops and below-average anti-tank weaponry. Its anti-infantry firepower works out about average, as the poor ballistic skill can be balanced by relatively numerous assault weapons. The best thing you can really do is to take as many mobs in trucks as you can, and get them into assaults, hopefully on your second turn. Use the cover of woods and hills when deploying, and don't be afraid to crash through dangerous terrain if needs be. All vehicles come with Gretchin riggers, so any immobilised trucks will be got moving again on a 4+ at the start of your next turn, and you only get stuck on a 1 anyway. The risk is normally well worth taking. Try to deploy these units as close to the enemy as possible, increasing your chances of reaching them quicker. You will have to expect to take losses as you advance, just make sure you have enough numbers to overwhelm the enemy on one or two areas of the board.

**Upgrades:** I would recommend giving all the vehicles armoured tops, because it stops them counting as being open-topped (remember that an open-topped vehicle is much more vulnerable to being shot up, especially from ordnance hits). Any vehicles that need to advance quickly should also be given turbo boosters and red paint jobs. I only bother with armour plates on more important vehicles, such as my warboss's truck, as they rarely work, needing a 6! If they do work they are a great source of annoyance to your opponents though.

**Mob improvements:** I like to give each mob a nob, armed with at least tank-buster bombs, or preferably a power-klaw, to deal with vehicles, and a burna per mob, also good against rear armour on vehicles, or as a power weapon against infantry, or a flame-thrower which is very versatile. I give all the nobz evy armour for a bit more survivability as well.

#### What to Take

Here is a rundown on the various vehicles and units, and my humble opinions on them.

**Warboss and retinue:** I have found that putting a really powerful retinue of Nobs with the Warboss is not such a great idea; it's just too many points put inside one rather flimsy vehicle, and if you're unlucky enough to get a crew stunned result on their truck, they are stuck inside it and very vulnerable. Because of this I have started taking a mob of skarboyz with the warboss instead, with a nob with a powerklaw they are nearly as tough as a retinue of nobs, but cheaper.

**Big Mek:** I might take one of these, with a little retinue of mekboyz and grot oilers. If I have the points to spare. I tend to put mine in a Gun Wagon, and give him a kustom force-field to toughen it up a bit (all hits on vehicles within 6" of the field count as glancing). If you give him tools, he can also try to fix damaged vehicles.

**Nobz Warbike Mob:** This is something which I have not yet tried, simply because I have not got the models for it. There are also some rules out now for Warbosses on bikes. I should imagine it would be a very good unit though, especially if it is led by a warboss on a bike.

**Stormboyz:** These are excellent troops, but quite points pricey, so I would tend to use them only in a bigger game. Also, they deserve to be used in quite large units, at least 12, and preferably 15-20 of them.

**Ardboyz:** Not too sure about using these in a Kult of Speed. The benefits of their 4+ save have to be weighed up against the fact that they take a wound on a 4+ if their vehicle is destroyed, whereas the humble truckboyz only take a wound on a 6+ if that happens. I don't bother with them in a Kult of Speed.

**Skarboyz:** These are one of my favourite Elite troops; the extra strength can make all the difference in combat, especially against tough enemies like Marines. I would only take more than the one "retinue" unit of them in a bigger game, though.

**Warbike Squadron:** The Ork Warbikes represent excellent value for their points, but if you only have one or two mobs of them I would suggest upgrading them to Outriders. The extra 5pts a bike is well worth paying out for, as they always deploy at the start of the battle and they get a free 2d6" move before the first turn takes place, which can make all the difference for getting that first shot, or even charge, in.

**Warbuggies/traks:** I have gone off these a bit recently. I used to use lots of them, with twin linked rokit launchers in an anti-tank role, but I found that they were not hitting their targets that often, and the rokits, being only strength 8, bounced off anything with average or better armour. I have tried using them with twin-linked big-shootas, which are pretty good anti-infantry weapons, and in a big game I will wheel out my kustom mega blasta armed buggies! They don't hit that often, and cause a glancing hit on the vehicle firing if they backfire, but are strength 7, AP 2 blast if they hit, which is pretty nasty against Marines!

**Trukk Boyz:** These ladz are the backbone of my army, I usually take 3 mobs of them, otherwise you will find yourself outnumbered, even by expensive points cost armies, which is not good for Orks...

**Tankbustas:** I always take the one mob allowed of these, but try to avoid them being assaulted by enemy squads and let them get on with what they are best at, blowing up tanks (and themselves in the blast!)

**Burna boyz:** I have not tried taking these, but I will do some time, I have discussed how effective burnas are above, so a unit carrying four of the things could be pretty nasty.

**Deth Kopta Squadron:** I have yet to try these, but should imagine the combination of warbike rules and jet bike speed would be pretty lethal. Only downside is the small unit size of 1 to 3 of them.

**Fighta bommerz raid:** The bigger the game is, the more worthwhile it is to use these. There is also a slight risk that the pilot gets a bit over-enthusiastic, and strafes everything on the table! I would only bother using one against an army with a lot of infantry, with softer armour and/or toughness.

**Outriders-**see Warbikes above.

**Battlewagon:** These are pretty good vehicles, and although a heavy support choice, you can actually use them as a transport for a lot of units, meaning you don't use up a heavy support choice for them. They also enable you to use bigger squads as they carry up to 20 Orks. I tend to arm my up with zzapp guns, and leave the big-shootas on them. I don't bother with bolt-on big shootas, as they are fired by the passengers so probably you would only get a few turns worth of shooting from them before they get out and attack the enemy...

**Looted Vehicle:** One of my favourite parts of any Ork army! Recently I have been using a looted basilisc. It has an extremely effective gun, but you do have to practice guessing ranges, which luckily I am very good at (if nothing else). Give it indirect fire ability, stick it behind a wood or some other cover, but not in a place where it will get damaged if you get a bad looted vehicle test and whizz 2d6" forwards into a solid object.. Another good choice is a Leman Russ, Mine has extra armour, lascannon in the hull and heavy bolter sponsons. Gun Trukks are useful if armed with lobbass, as they can indirectly fire like the basilisc, and be an annoyance to enemy infantry, possibly pinning them if you are lucky. I don't use gun trukks with kannons or zzapp guns as they are too fragile to attempt a tank battle or try to close in and zzapp the enemy. Gun Wagons are listed in the Imperial Armour 2 book, as heavy support choices, but I presume that they could be classed as transports like Battle Wagons are. I use a converted Chimera with a kannon - no it's not a biro, honest. I intend to try one with a zzapp gun, as it only costs 10 pts to put on this vehicle, and it has good enough armour to have a chance of reaching enemy vehicles and using it.

Well, there you are, hope you find my comments of interest. Like any Ork armies, they are not the easiest to use, but if you want an entertaining, challenging force, they are great fun. Any comments? Write to [gpaac@copusg.freemove.co.uk](mailto:gpaac@copusg.freemove.co.uk)

Better still, write to the Editor, and give us a Letters Page in 'Rank and File'! (Ed)

## REVIEWS

In this section you can help other club members by writing a few words on wargame-related products that you have tried. These could include figures, paints, scenic items, materials, rules, books, board or computer games. Even a very brief comment, especially on a new product or publication, can be useful to someone wondering whether or what to buy.

### **'Forgotten Victory' by Gary Sheffield (paperback, £7.99)**

This is a work of military history, not a wargames book, and, being mainly a broad general discussion, would not be likely to affect anyone's rules, forces or tactics. However, if, like many wargamers, you are interested in military history beyond immediate wargame considerations, you could find this an extremely interesting book. I find factual books are divided into two classes. One, much the larger class, is of books which rehash fairly well-known information, without throwing any particularly fresh light upon it, nor drawing any but well-worn conclusions. The other, much smaller, class, to which 'Forgotten Victory' belongs, is of books which throw a new light on the subject, either through new information or new interpretations of existing knowledge. From this class you learn, or are forced to reconsider your ideas, whether or not you finally agree with author's standpoint. These are much more worth of time and attention.

Gary Sheffield is Land Warfare Historian on the Higher Command and Staff Course at Shrivenham, and Senior Lecturer at King's College, London. He is one of a number of historians who, in recent years, have challenged prevailing views of the First World War.

In this book he challenges the view of the Western Front presented by the War poets, Oh What a Lovely War and Blackadder, and by many historians, notably Alan Clarke. He argues that the war was not pointless, but in the circumstances a cruel necessity, that it was not directed by 'British Butchers and Bunglers' (in the words of J. Laffin) but by leaders who certainly made bad mistakes, but who learned quickly, and were often not free agents, that the BEF (with which the book is largely concerned) developed into a highly effective force which defeated the German army with good tactics and strategy in the later part of the war. He also discusses the wider issues, the causes, the peace treaty and its effects, the effect of the prevailing view of the war in Allied countries, and whether it really was the prevailing view in the inter-war period.

One striking piece of information that has stayed with me is that the loss rate in British and Canadian battalions on the Western Front ran at about 100 a month. From D-Day to VE Day, 1944-5, battalions in NW Europe suffered a minimum of 100 casualties per month, and rates of 175 were not uncommon. His point is that warfare between well-matched opponents with 20<sup>th</sup> Century weapons is bound to be horribly costly, and that such losses do not necessarily reflect incompetence.

George Gush

## ADVERTS

**You can advertise anything connected with our hobby here, or for books, rules, figures or anything else you want and which other members might have. No charge; any items for inclusion to the editor.**

I have a lot of wargames and military modelling magazines, many in binders, which I have really run out of space for. Anyone interested? For details, contact George Gush