

AIDE-DE-CAMP: THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SBGC



SAMURAI IN KOREA

Mega Wargaming

Stephen Freedman plans a thousand-figure-a-side Imjin War game

French & Indian War

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Holding the Amblève bridge against Peiper

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SOUTH BAY GAMING CLUBAll articles and content produced by the SBGC
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WELCOME BACK TO ADC

Welcome back to Aide-de-Camp, the quarterly magazine of the South Bay Gaming Club. After a longer pause than any of us planned, ADC returns with our biggest issue yet: articles written by members, for members.

Some of these pieces were sent in a while ago, so thank you to every contributor for your patience. A few mention games and events that have since come and gone; we've kept them as written, because the thinking behind them is as useful now as it was then.

It's been a busy year for the club, with our move to non-profit status, the introduction of membership dues and a new website at southbaygamingclub.org. ADC is one more way to share what makes this group special: the research, the painting, the terrain and, above all, the games.

Please keep the articles coming. Tips, after-action reports, scenarios, rules reviews and photos of your latest minis are all welcome. Send them to magazine@southbaygamingclub.org.

Thanks for your support, Geoff



IAN WEEKLEY-INSPIRED JAPANESE CASTLE

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GAME DESIGN

Mega Wargaming

Planning a large multiplayer game

By Stephen Freedman

I would not pretend to be one of the SBGC’s prolific Games Masters; I would give that honor to Nick, Bob, Greg, Pete, or Chuck, who are capable of running excellent games virtually every other month.

I enjoy participating in those games, but my love within the genre is the concept of the mega war-game, involving hundreds of miniatures, eye-catching scenery and the participation of eight or more gamers. It is something that has developed from my love of terrain building, which is how I relax most evenings from the stresses of life.

Every year I start a new project, and I have been able to share some of those projects at club meetings. In the past year or so that included the Indian Mutiny game in 28mm, including the model of the Red Fort of Delhi (a collaboration with Geoff, Nick and Bob), and the Siege of Alesia in 28mm, includ-

ing the walls of Alesia and the Roman contravallation and circumvallation (inspired by Jeff and Freddie, and with the help of Geoff).

My 2024/2025 project is a major Japanese-Korean inspired game from the Imjin and Chongyu wars of 1592 to 1598. The Japanese invasions are unique in terms of the Samurai operating outside of Japan, and were an excuse for Hideyoshi to send tens of thousands of troops over to Korea to keep them occupied after he finished the conquest of Japan. After very early successes over the Koreans, the Japanese were eventually thwarted by the intervention of Chinese Ming troops and the emergence of Korean naval power. This game will be played at the April MiniCon, and I hope it will be an enjoyable experience for those participating.

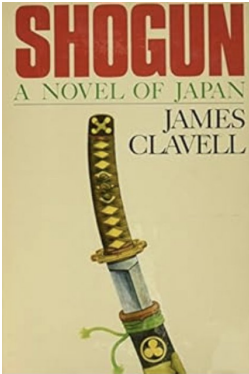
I thought it would be interesting to share my thought processes in planning for this game, with examples of how collaboration in putting it together enhances the process and, hopefully, the results.

Origins

The concept came about originally from watching several movies, including *Ran* (Kurosawa), *Sekigahara* (Harada) and *God of War* (Chan), and the TV series *Shogun* (new and old), plus reading the James Clavell novel of the same name. The visual experience of color, scenery and thousands of Samurai really got my imagination going. The shields and uniforms of the Korean forces were, to me, a natural combination to set off the picture in my head.



Figures 1-3: Colorful troops of the period, from my collection

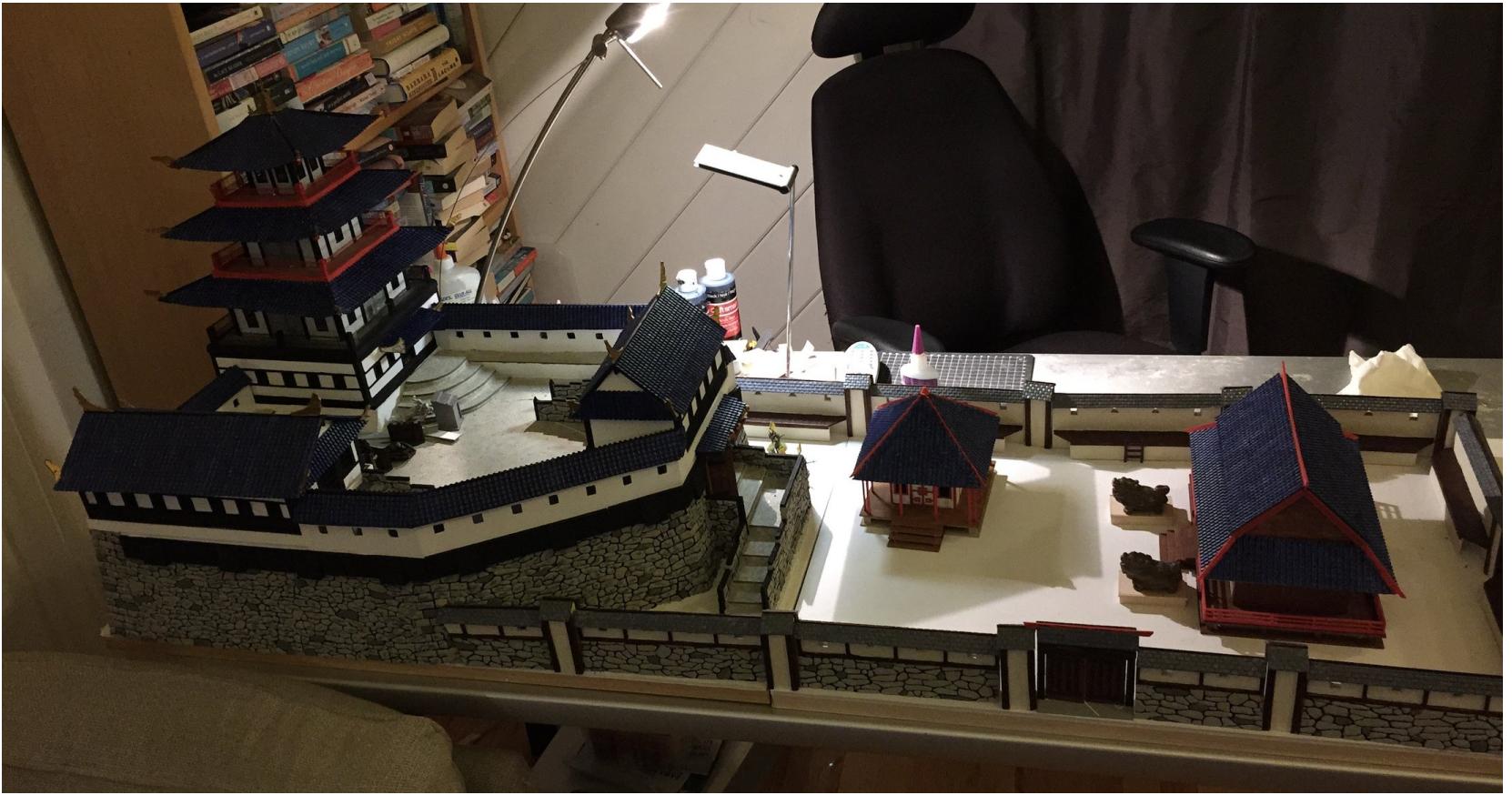


Figures 4-7: Inspirational films and books

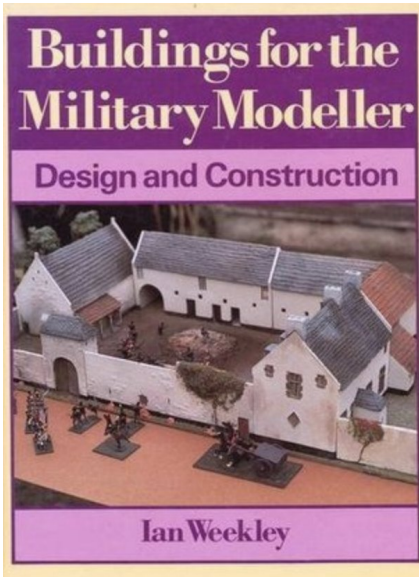
My love within the genre is the concept of the mega wargame: hundreds of miniatures, eye-catching scenery and eight or more gamers.

Terrain Boards

The terrain boards for this project were started almost ten years ago and took about a year to complete. It was fun to produce them, but I would never use the preset terrain board concept again, as it is very impractical for storage. The primer was a multi-level Samurai castle described by one of my inspirational modelers, Ian Weekley, whose articles were ever-present in wargame magazines of the 1970s and '80s. He published a description of the model in *Buildings for the Military Modeller* (Batsford, 1989). This was my first terrain board, followed by ten others in the next few years, including a Japanese village, paddy fields, a temple and more.



Figures 8-9: Weekley inspiration, the Japanese castle



Many of the buildings were scratch built, but I was also able to purchase a number of 28mm period pieces from Sarissa and John Jenkins.



Figure 10: The Japanese village

Figures and Scale

I collect figures in both 15mm and 28mm scale; both have their place in wargaming. For mega

games I just love the feel of 28mm and the detail you can achieve in both figures and buildings. My original collection of Japanese figures was from the Perry brothers, who have an extensive collection of both armies, albeit with significant gaps (perry-miniatures.com). In time I have added a variety of figures from other manufacturers, including Zenit Miniatures (shop.zenitminiatures.es), who sell some superb Japanese and Korean figures suitable for showcasing leaders. Over time I also added some small purchases from eBay, although it is a little hit or miss on quality.

Thanks to Bob Burke I also discovered a small manufacturer of Asian siege troops called Scheltrum, from Scotland. I managed to order a large batch of figures from them before they disappeared from the internet at the time of COVID.

As planning for the army continued, I realized that gap filling became an issue as I learnt more about the historical background for each army, particularly the need for more arquebusiers, crossbowmen and missile-throwing troops (Bob Burke Wargaming Informational Services™). The approach was to buy a large batch of crossbows, swords, shields and small black beads and convert groups of figures. I am in the middle of this process, getting ready for the April game, and working with Bob, Doug and others helps spread the load of research needed for the game background.



Figures 11-12: Conversions of Korean troops

The collection is now approaching 1,000 figures for each army.



Figure 13: Massed Korean troops in preparation for April

Painting

I know my limitations, and detailed figure painting of 28mm Samurai and Koreans is a little out of my class, so I engaged an excellent painting service on the East Coast (Evil Bob's Miniature Painting, evilbobs.biz). I was able to build out many of the detailed troops over several batches. In the interim I focused my limited skills on the simple garrison troops and Righteous Armies. Massed 28mm infantry can forgive a lot of sins.

Planning

A game of this size requires careful planning at all levels. The first issue was how to arrange the terrain boards and design the concept for the engagement. At this point it will see Japanese and Korean troops coming from opposite ends of the table, with the village and temple in the middle being the two critical objectives. It will require six tables to cover the 15 ft x 5 ft plan.

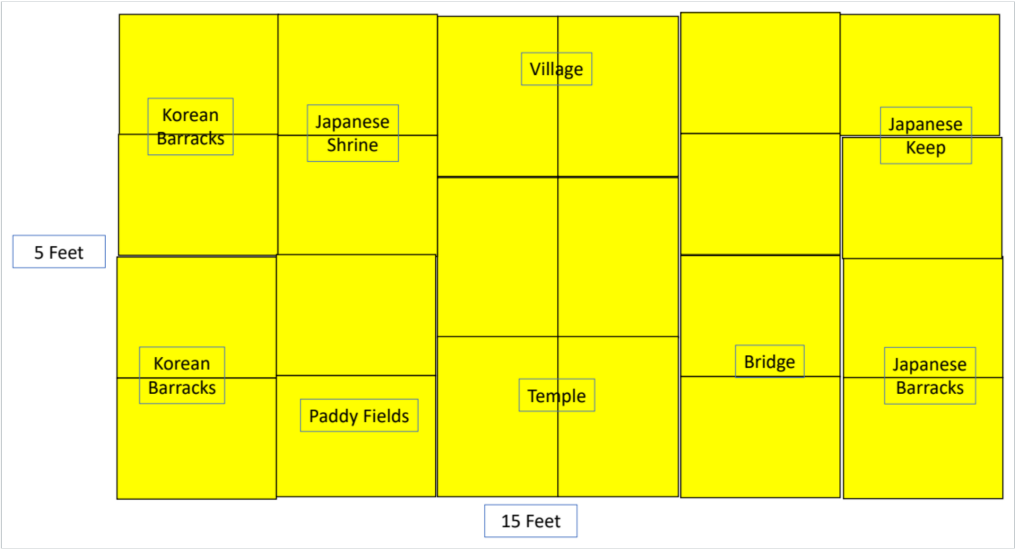


Figure 14: Outline of the terrain plan

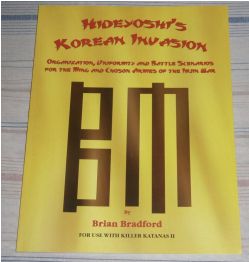
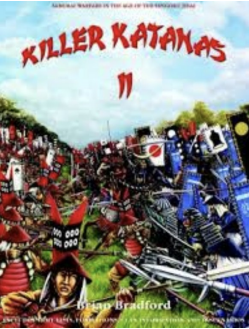
I will work on the distribution and organization of the armies with Bob in order to achieve a balanced game, but one that allows eight players to have independent commands.

Rules

There are many rules that can be used for this period, ranging from those more suitable for skirmish to those more suitable for large-scale warfare. In no order of preference, the following are those I have played or seen: *Kensei*, *Ronin*, *Daimyo*, *Bushido*, *Killer Katanas*, *Peter Pig*, *Medieval Tactics* and *Pike and Shot*.

I recently bought a copy of *Killer Katanas II* and the *Samurai Invasion of Korea* supplement. It is a very detailed set of rules, probably too complex for a club game where most people have not played

them before. The supplement, however, is an incredible source of information about army organization, campaigns, weapons, leadership and many scenarios. It has become the major source book for this campaign.



Figures 15–16: *Killer Katanas* source books

Although in the club game notification I suggested a modified *Daimyo* set of rules would be used for the game, I have been involved in a project with Doug Lange, Chris Salander, Tom Rogers and Bob Burke to playtest and revise Bob's *Bushido* rules to produce a simple, fast-play set of rules for larger battles: *Bushido*, *The Way of the Warrior*. We have been play testing the rules and exchanging ideas via email. The next play test is later this month, with the hope these rules will be suitable for the April game.

I hope the reader gets some idea of the background to putting together these large games: many sources, many wargame suppliers and, most importantly, close collaboration with many members of the club.

RULES REVIEW

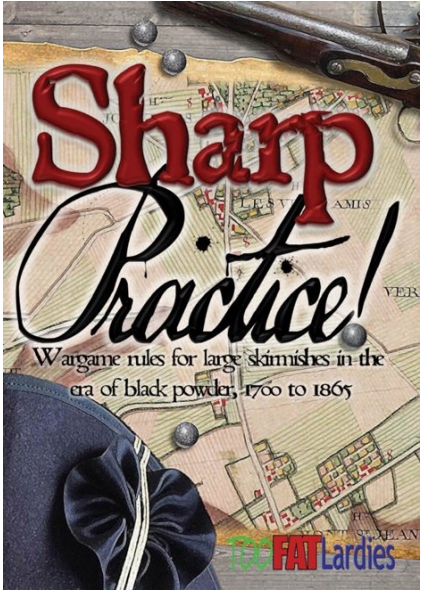
Which French & Indian War Skirmish Rules?

Four rule sets for the FIW and AWI, scored

By Chris Salander

There are four major recent skirmish rule sets which can be used to fight the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War: *Sharp Practice* (SP) by Too Fat Lardies, *This Very Ground* (TVG) by Iron Ivan Games, *Muskets & Tomahawks* (MnT) by Studio Tomahawk, and *Rebels and Patriots* (RnP) by Osprey.

I think that second editions of rules are a good sign, because usually it means that the rules have been fixed up and improved. RnP does not have a second edition. The other three are in their second edition.



Scenarios

How about scenarios? To me, that makes rules very good.

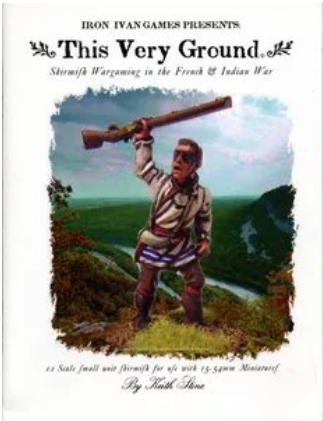
- MnT has three generic scenarios and a “scenario generator.”
- RnP provides a scenario generator and 14 very detailed but generic scenarios.
- SP provides six very vague generic scenarios. However, SP has bunches of actual scenarios in the TFL magazines (+1).
- TVG has four actual scenarios, one for each period (+1).

Family Resemblances

Several reviewers of these rules believe that other rule sets from the same outfit influenced the design of the 18th-century rules. Not so for TFL. Even though Iron Ivan is known for its *Skirmish Campaigns* scenarios for WWII, I can’t see a connection, except the use of a d10. Studio Tomahawk makes SAGA, but again, I don’t see a connection. However, RnP uses the same fighting and shooting mechanisms as *Lion Rampant* and *The Men Who Would Be Kings*. That means more people can understand RnP more quickly, but experienced players who know the period may find them too crude.

Unit Sizes

One frustrating feature of these rules is that each set uses different unit sizes. SP uses multiples of two: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 18. TVG uses 5, 10, 15, and even 20 and 25. RnP uses 6 and 12 (SP Lite). MnT uses multiples of three: 3, 6, 9, 12... All the rule sets use singly mounted figures, so movement trays are common. Can you share the trays when switching between rules?

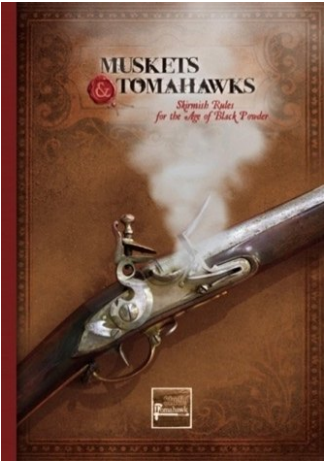


One key difference is that SP mandates what the unit size must be for each troop type. MnT limits specific troop types to a small range of sizes (such as 6–8). The other rules allow you to use any unit size for any troop type, as long as it is a multiple of 5 or 6.

RnP deliberately tries to be the simplest rules, which makes them easier to learn and good for convention games. They also provide examples of small starter forces of the same strength for each period, four to seven units each (+1).

Cost and Length

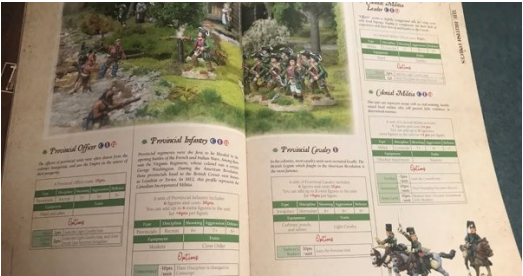
Rules	Pages	Price
RnP	35 (30 without photos and illustrations)	\$20
TVG 2nd ed.	16 (12 without the decorative photos!)	\$25
SP	69	\$64 [ack! -1]
MnT 1st ed.	34, incl. 3 of photos	\$33
MnT 2nd ed.	66, incl. 20 of photos	\$40 + \$20 for expansion (-1)



Compared to the 2012 first edition of MnT, the expansion for the FIW has almost nothing new. Most of it is a repeat of the force data already provided in the rulebook, so you don’t need to buy it. Then, in the 2021 second edition, the force data has been removed, so you *have* to buy the expansions to get the force data for any war. And they have stuffed the rules full of very large color photographs and made it hardbound, driving up the price. Heinous (-1).

Role-Playing Elements

Each game has certain RPG elements, but in every rule set these are confined to the officers. You add traits and abilities to them. The simplest are MnT and RnP, which require only one officer per command (player). The maximum is one per unit. In MnT, officers are treated as separate units! The others have officers for each unit: an officer and an NCO in TVG, up to four different levels of officers or NCOs in SP.



MnT also includes Random Events and “Side Plots”: things that you must accomplish besides winning the battle. This is very similar to SP. An example from the AWI SP game I played at Historicon, GM’ed by Richard Clarke: there was a water wagon parked at the end of the town, rumored to have liquor in it. At one point my skirmishing riflemen took shelter behind it and the return fire stopped, because the enemy soldiers did not want to puncture the large barrel.

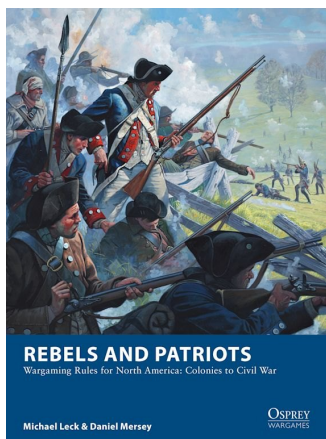
SP also allows the development of detailed characters (mostly officers), and special types of extra people and equipment. You can even create non-military characters who might interact with the officers. Personally, I do not care about or want to use much, if any, role-playing. I want combat.

Activation

In SP you have to activate an officer to activate a unit to perform an action. There is a deck of cards with one card for every officer on both sides, so you never know who will activate next, and the side with more officers per unit activates more often.

In MnT, you draw cards. A card will activate all units of the same troop type on one side. More competent troops have more cards in the deck. Personally, it seems a bit weird to me to use only your militia, then your opponent uses his regulars, then he uses his Indians, and then...

In TVG, you activate a unit, or activate an officer to activate one unit; then your opponent activates one unit, and so on back and forth.



In RnP, you test each unit to activate directly, going through your entire side before handing over the action to your opponent. In all the rule sets the units and officers have to “make their number,” so not everyone activates every turn.

The score so far

RnP 1 · TVG 1 · SP 1 · MnT -2

SP was originally created for the Napoleonic era, and it still has some bias towards it, especially for the 95th Rifles. But I find the rules work much better for the French & Indian War and the Revolutionary War than for the Napoleonic Wars (more terrain, more varied troop types and morale values, and more rifles).

Quick reference sheets: RnP has a one-page QRS; SP and MnT have two pages; TVG has none (-1).

Firing Ranges

- **SP:** all weapons under 12”, 12”-24”, over 24”.
- **RnP:** all weapons under 12”, over 12” (SP Lite).
- **TVG:** bow 15”, musket 30”, rifle 48”, artillery 36”-60”. There is opportunity fire, called “snap fire.”
- **MnT:** bow 18”, musket 24”, rifle 72”. Opportunity fire is called “vigilance.”



The MnT second edition has ten separate weapon ranges, scattered across several pages rather than in a table. Artillery range is 120”. (In the first edition, artillery range is 96”, with a one-page QRS.) Oh, and you have to spot things first before you can shoot them. Now, in what pre-1850 game have your miniature guns been able to shoot eight or ten feet?

Odds and Ends

- **Firing causes smoke:** SP, TVG.
- **Reloading:** SP, MnT, TVG (see conclusion).
- **Rules for close order and cavalry:** all.
- **Rules for boats:** TVG, MnT, and SP in the TFL magazines.
- **Table of contents and index:** RnP has no index but a decent ToC; MnT and TVG have a basic ToC and no index; SP has a two-page ToC and a detailed index (+1).

Troop Types

Finally, how many varied troop types can they handle?



RnP: regulars, grenadiers, light infantry, “shock infantry,” skirmishers, natives, and two kinds of cavalry. But different types of militia and rangers are the key test. To quote the rules: “To reflect militia or freshly-raised volunteers, you can rate them as Green and Poor Shots... Lack of bayonets can be represented by Timid and the use of better-performing firearms (such as rifles) can be represented using the Good Shooters option.” Ugh (-1).

TVG: uses the same troop types as RnP, but with different specs for each nationality: French, British, Natives, Americans and Canadians, plus colo-

nial militia, loyalists, rangers and Compagnies Franches de la Marine. And civilians. Includes King Philip’s War and arquebuses. Much better.

MnT: the same number and variety as TVG, grouped by war.

SP: the same number and variety as TVG, grouped by war, plus minutemen, state line troops and frontiersmen, and two versions of types: early AWI and late AWI. Bravo! (+1)

Final scores

Sharp Practice 2 · Rebels and Patriots 0 · This Very Ground 0 · Muskets & Tomahawks -2

Conclusion



I will probably never use *Muskets & Tomahawks*: a weird activation sequence, officers as their own units, the strange ranges, the worst scenario resources, and the “have to buy the expansion” trick.

Rebels and Patriots is a strong candidate for a game with people who don’t know much about the period and with a limited time slot. However, the lack of reloading rules is a serious matter. Based on my reading, reloading provides a critical moment for Indians to rush one of your units. Boats are important too, appearing in some FIW fights, and RnP does not have boat rules. The rules are short and cheap, but I should not have to devise my own troop types.

If I am playing with people who know the period, I could use *This Very Ground*. It is short and cheap, and it has boat and reloading rules. There is just one problem: its unit sizes, in multiples of five, are not compatible with the other sets of rules. But if you don’t switch between rule sets you should be fine. When alternating unit moves with your opponent in a multi-player game, allow each player on one side to perform one activation at the same time. TVG has no points system, which means more work for you if you want to make up a scenario.

Overall, on paper, *Sharp Practice* seems to be the best rule set to use, and I have played it several times. But I need to play the others. First up will be *This Very Ground*. Now I have to get to work on a homemade QRS.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

NUTS! Peiper at the Gates

Stavelot, December 1944: an after action report

By John Cunningham

NUTS! Peiper at the Gates is a scenario book for *NUTS!* covering the actions of small bands of American paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division and other US infantry units during the Battle of the Bulge, facing the elite SS and Fallschirmjäger units of Kampfgruppe Peiper.

Published in 2008 and written by the fantastic Mr. Darby Eckles, *Peiper at the Gates* was the first *NUTS!* scenario book. It is ground-breaking from a *NUTS!* standpoint, since it set the example of how to do a *NUTS!* scenario book and created new rules that added flavor and depth to the game.

It was also while playing one of these scenarios that I finally “got” the Chain Reaction system and became a *NUTS!* nut.

Another element charged the rear of the tank, chucked a demo pack underneath and BOOM! Dead Panther!

The first time I ever used proper infantry tactics against a tank in urban combat, and it worked, was using *NUTS!* In this scenario, set at Stavelot, a Panther pushed into a US-held town, where it finished movement near a squad of mine. Part of the squad, in an upper story, fired from the flank of the Panther, suppressing the TC and forcing the tank to button up, while another element charged the rear of the tank, chucked a demo pack underneath and BOOM! Dead Panther! After that, all players saw the value of combined arms.

This is a recreation AAR of that mission. Prior to this scenario the campaign was mixed. The Germans thoroughly routed the US players in the first scenario, but the US player eked out a bare victory in the second after a series of ambushes and roadblocks in the forest near Stavelot prevented German armor from advancing quickly. Now German forces are barreling towards Stavelot and the important bridge that will let them continue their advance, under pressure to win quickly.

I lost most of the game photos due to a drive failure, so apologies for the few images I have to share.

Mission 3: “Grabbing the Vitals”

December 18th, early morning, outskirts of Stavelot, Belgium



Background

After taking Ligneville on the 17th of December, the tanks of Kampfgruppe Peiper pressed on towards Stavelot, the first city in their path. The roads were steep, narrow and curvy, slowing the advance, and a halt was called for the night after running into mines. The harried Americans continued to pull back, shift forces, and attempt to plug holes and form defensive lines.

Early on the morning of the 18th, advance elements of KG Peiper silenced the guns protecting the approach to Stavelot. To the Germans’ surprise, the bridge over the Amblève River still stood, and the men and tanks of the 1st SS Panzer Division were poised to rush across it.

Situation

German troops and armor have pushed through makeshift US defenses more rapidly than was thought possible. They currently stand to gain a significant prize: an intact bridge over the Amblève. This bridge must be seized for the advance to continue.

American forces are rushing to the scene, but have not had a chance to set up adequate defenses within the city. Regardless, US troops must stop the Germans with what little is available, by either destroying all approaching forces or blowing up the bridge.

US forces

- Player’s squad, Rep 4
- 1 full and 1 half Engineer squad, Rep 4
- 3 rolls on US Table A: infantry squad Rep 3 (“Cooks & Casualties”); ½ infantry squad Rep 4; .30 cal MMG Rep 4
- 2 rolls on US Table B: 57mm ATG Rep 4; 2-man bazooka team Rep 4
- 2 rolls on US Table C: Sherman M4A3 Rep 4; Jeep with .30 cal Rep 3

German forces

- Player’s squad, Rep 5
- 1 PzIV H, Rep 4
- 1 SdKfz 251 + ½ squad pioneers, Rep 5
- 3 rolls on German Table A: SS squad Rep 5; SS squad (Fallschirmjäger) Rep 5
- 1 roll on German Table B: FO with mortars, Rep 4
- 3 rolls on German Table C: 2 Panthers Rep 4; halftrack Rep 4
- 1 roll on German Table D: King Tiger, Rep 5

Objectives

This is an **Attack** mission for both sides. US forces must gain the bridge and either destroy it with explosives or beat off all attacking Germans. Kampfgruppe Peiper must quickly seize the bridge and rush all available forces across it, exiting as many tanks to the west via the road network as possible. It is not necessary to hold the entire city.

The US players deployed to create a series of ambushes designed to slow down the German advance and give the Engineers time to wire and blow the bridge. The US player forward-deployed the 57mm ATG, the half Engineer squad and the bazooka team in a series of ambush points, hoping to shock the German side into deploying early and slowing their advance on the bridge. The US player also placed units to cover areas where German units might swing wide of the ambushes. The German side planned to rush the bridge at top speed and try to blow past the ambushes.



Looking through Stavelot towards the all-important bridge that is the focus of the battle



Stavelot from the side of the German advance

TURN 1

German actions: The German side wins initiative and moves full speed towards the bridge, with a Panther and a halftrack carrying the half Pioneer squad blowing past the US Engineers and bazooka team, who make their Hiding/Ambush tests. The Engineers succeed, but they need to move to close assault, so they remain hidden. The bazooka team and the ATG across the Amblève both force immediate In Sight tests and open fire.



The bazooka team scores a hit on the halftrack, blowing it up. The US ATG opens fire at the front of the second Panther (it blew the Ambush test, remember), doing no damage, and the Panther continues two inches off the road to face the ATG. The German player decides to have the King Tiger also move to face the ATG.



US 57mm ATG engages German tanks

After a brief exchange of fire, the two German tanks destroy the gun and kill or rout the crew. The German player also engages the bazooka team with the Panzer IV, killing them. Continuing movement, the German player has two squads dismount and move to flank the road; another squad moves up next to the King Tiger into the snowy field.

US actions: The US player decides to “use it or lose it” and has the Engineer team close assault the German Panther from the barn they were hid-

ing in, holding other units concealed and having the primary Engineer team start wiring the bridge. The US player succeeds in killing the Panther. Return fire from German infantry kills several figures, and the rest rout away into a stand of trees just off the road.



The US Engineer squad kills a Panther

TURN 2

The German player wins initiative.

German actions: The aggressive US ambushes have shocked the German side, and they decide to swing wide of the ambush points on the road with most of their forces, moving up on either side of the road. Infantry on the left of the road advance up a slope to take a farmhouse. The King Tiger and the halftrack swing wide through the open snowy field, raking the US ATG position with MG fire. The remaining Panther moves up near the bridge, and the PzIV halts; they blast holes and machine-gun likely ambush spots. Later in the game, the German side will deeply regret taking their King Tiger off road. Lots of boom boom bang, but no US units are hit.

US actions: Having spent their forward-deployed ambushes, the US player repositions a bit, moving the Sherman into a possible ambush spot while the Engineers continue to wire the bridge with explosives.



German infantry sweep through a Belgian farm

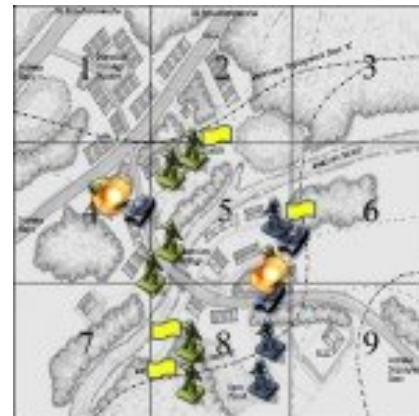
TURN 3

The German player wins initiative.

German actions: Since the King Tiger and the halftrack are moving across mucky, snowy ground they must make bog tests, rolling d6 vs Rep 5 and Rep 4, and they both fail! Their most dangerous vehicle is stuck! The annoyed German player dismounts his infantry and moves them forward, triggering an In Sight test with a US .30 cal MMG positioned on the top floor of the Abbey in Stavelot. Several Germans are killed and the infantry Duck Back. The King Tiger returns fire with the 88mm,

missing a direct hit, but the Outgunned MMG team Ducks Back, fast! This ends that ambush.

The forward Panther decides to hit the gas and speeds across the bridge into Stavelot, where it surprises the Sherman and kills it with one round through the front hull. The Panzer IV attacks and kills the remnants of the US Engineer team, while the SS and Fallschirmjäger squads advance from the farmhouse across some fields towards the bridge. They are brought under fire by US units hiding in the woods. The Rep 3 US “Cooks & Casualties” unit and the Rep 4 fire team are forced back by accurate German fire, moving back from the edge of the woods with a few casualties.



US actions: The US side rallies two of its infantry units from Duck Back, but that .30 cal MMG team is *not* going anywhere while that King Tiger is throwing 88mm shells at it, and remains in Duck Back. The US infantry squad in Stavelot decides it's payback time and attacks the Panther in the town. Part of the squad fires small arms at the TC, forcing the tank to button up. Then a demo section with a satchel charge makes its Close Assault test and gets the explosives under the tank. Boom! The Panther is knocked out! The Engineers are still trying to wire the bridge to blow. Dang those rolls!



TURN 4

The German side wins initiative and gets reinforcements: another infantry squad in a halftrack. And I say, what are those figures there? Oops, looks like they forgot they had an FO team! Better move that up and put it to use!



A slacker German FO team is called into action!

German actions: The German side tests to get that King Tiger back into action. The US side helpfully points out that since the optional Engine Freezing rules are in effect, and neither vehicle has moved for a turn, the German side needs to make that test. The German side rolls 2d6 vs Rep for each vehicle, failing! The halftrack is out of action, but the King Tiger can try again next turn. In annoyance, the Big Cat throws some more 88mm shells at the Abbey. The infantry near the King Tiger move up towards the bridge, staying in cover, while the two SS/Fallschirmjäger units try to Fast Move across the rest of the field, but fall just short of the woods. The Panzer IV moves up cautiously in support but sees no targets.

US actions: The US side continues trying to wire the bridge to blow, and fails again. Such rolls! The US side also rallies the .30 cal MMG team, and moves the infantry squad and the MMG jeep up to cover the Engineers. When the US side moves its infantry in the woods back up, it triggers In Sight tests and a sharp firefight ensues. The Fallschirmjäger drive the Rep 3 US "Cooks & Casualties" squad back into the woods again, while the Rep 4 US fire team lays down heavy fire, forcing the SS squad to fall back into cover.



TURN 5

The German side wins initiative.

German actions: The German side gets its FO into action and drops mortar rounds on the bridge, causing the US Engineers to Duck Back into cover with a few casualties. Supported by the Panzer IV,

the infantry squad close to the road moves up and triggers an In Sight test from the US infantry unit and the .30 cal jeep, which the Panzer IV can't see. In the ensuing firefight the German infantry lose a few figures and are forced to Duck Back. The Panzer IV shells the area where the US Engineers took cover, causing more casualties; they stay in Duck Back. The Fallschirmjäger unit in the woods charges into melee against the Rep 4 US fire team, wiping out the Amis in hand-to-hand combat. The Germans also rush the new infantry squad up the road towards the bridge and dismount, realizing that at some point the US player will get that bridge wired to blow! Meanwhile, with heavy regret, the German side fails again to get the King Tiger moving. It is bogged down permanently! The Germans lost their heavy armor on turn two by taking their Königstiger off road into a mucky, snowy field...

US actions: The US moves its Star platoon commander to the Engineers, who are at 50%, and rallies them! The US player also rallies the Rep 3 unit and repositions the MMG team from the Abbey to cover the bridge.



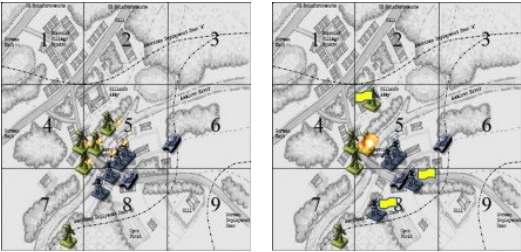
TURN 6

The US player wins initiative.

US actions: The US player rallies the Rep 3 "Cooks & Casualties" unit in the woods, and gets the Engineers back into action with the Star attached... not good enough. They once again fail the Rep roll and the bridge is still not ready to blow! The US MG jeep and infantry unit on the banks of the Amblève by the bridge reposition, winning In Sight against the Panzer IV. They shoot at the Panzer IV and kill the TC, forcing a Man Down test on the crew. The crew fail and reverse away from the heavy infantry fire, no doubt worried about another bazooka attack or close assault.

German actions: The German side fails to rally the Panzer IV, and decides to rush the bridge with their infantry after laying down smoke from their mortars. The smoke rounds end up hitting north of the bridge rather than on the bridge itself. The German player assaults the bridge with four infantry squads and a halftrack. The US Engineer squad and MMG team win In Sight and fire on the

Fallschirmjäger and the infantry supported by the halftrack. The fight between the US Engineers and the Fallschirmjäger is critical, since it is the only German unit after the charge that actually has LOS to the Engineers and their efforts to blow the bridge. The US side wins the firefight and drives the Fallschirmjäger squad back into the woods. The MMG causes the infantry around the halftrack to Duck Back with several casualties, but return fire from the German halftrack kills one of the US MMG crew and the other Ducks Back into cover. Supported by smoke, the other two German squads win In Sight and, after a brutal firefight, kill the US jeep crew and drive off the other US squad.



Things are looking pretty grim for the US player right now!

TURN 7

The US player wins initiative.

US actions: The US Engineer team finally completes wiring the bridge and turns the handle on the detonator. BOOM! The bridge is destroyed in a flash of light and thunder, and the US wins the campaign! All the US had left was a half-strength Engineer squad and an understrength Rep 3 infantry unit. They won by a razor's edge, but that was enough to stop Kampfgruppe Peiper's advance and win the day.



SOLO AFTER ACTION REPORT

East of Weyersheim

American Revenge, 19 January 1945. “Smokin’... until you’re not”: a solo 6mm AAR

By Geoff Nichol

This is an AAR of my play of a scenario from *Anschluss Books’ Forgotten Battles from France to Normandy, January to April 1945*. It is set during Operation Nordwind in Alsace, on the western approaches to Weyersheim, after the almost total destruction of the 43rd Tank Battalion of the 12th Armored Division at Herrlisheim two days earlier, and is one of the few mainly armored engagements of that stage of WW2.

Historically, following the initial US disaster at Herrlisheim, the Germans counter-attacked west from Herrlisheim and Offendorf towards Weyersheim with a Kompanie of Pz4s and two Kompanies of Panzergrenadiers, across the Waldgraben canal. But the fortuitous earlier arrival of two Sherman platoons of C Company, 23rd Tank Battalion, and a few engineers, who had pre-positioned themselves in the Buchwald with strong artillery support, resulted in an ambush of the German armored advance, with devastating results. The scenario differs from history in that both sides deploy at the same time, so the Germans have some chance of establishing themselves on the board before facing concentrated Sherman fire. Maybe.

The Battlefield



The battlefield as it appears today...



...and as it appears from the scenario map on my table

Game Mechanics

I initially laid out three schemes of maneuver, each with four artillery registration points, for the US forces after their entry, and diced to determine which they would follow. I controlled the German forces. As the game unfolded I decided to invoke the Martin England Threat Generation System to control any further moves by the US forces at an appropriate moment. I use the WRG 1925–50 WW2 rules, 1988 edition, with the late Steven Bowns’ draft PIP-based modifications. As I have commented previously, IMHO these rules provide a very

good simulation of WW2 all-arms combat, and really shine in solo play.

Best Laid Plans...

The problem for the German player is that their forces arrive in a disjointed fashion, spread widely, and over eight moves (about an hour using the rules’ timescale). Furthermore, the US has access to very strong artillery support, pre-registered on several unavoidable choke points (including both bridges) and in direct support, so continuously available.

The battlefield as it appears today, and as it appears from the scenario map (1’ = 50m) on my table, are shown here. It is mainly open fields, with the Buchwald to the north along the Waldgraben stream and, for the scenario, some added buildings and low hedges to provide limited cover.

In the scenario, two Zugs, each of five German Pz4s, enter from the east towards the northern canal bridge on turn 1; a PzGrenadier Kompanie arrives on turn 3 towards the southern bridge, followed by the remaining PzGr Kompanie, with three Panthers and two Stummels, on turn 8. The Americans enter through the middle and west of the wood in the upper center of the table on turn 1.

“Rushing” the north bridge, as occurred historically, looked like a disaster, so I decided to deploy the Pz4s in the north as required by the scenario, but use their (admittedly limited) smoke ammunition to cover repositioning to the woods immediately south of the north bridge. They could then hide in cover and join with the Panthers arriving at the south bridge on move 8 for a co-ordinated attack across the south bridge. I had read that a tactic using smoke by one platoon to allow repositioning of an entire Panzer company was doctrinally correct.

The Battle

Initial German deployment: Bounds 1–7 (12:00–13:27 hrs)

For my German Kampfgruppe, this had good news and bad news. The US forces, after one Sherman ditched in the Buchwald (and then winched itself back to mobility), deployed rapidly to cover the entire front from the north to the south bridge, and rapidly enough to have one Sherman in place to knock out one of my Pz4s on the approach to the north bridge. I got my revenge by knocking out a Sherman caught at medium range in the open, heading towards the south bridge area.

I laid smoke in the north and, edging the remaining Pz4s forward, faced a big artillery stonk on the north bridge. Enough already with the north bridge, I thought, and started a methodical “smoke and scoot” process to cover moving all the remaining Pz4s into the wood to their south, to await the Panthers. The entire US front was blinded, but at the expense of virtually all my Pz4 smoke ammo.



So far so good... my Pz4 strike force, blocked by artillery fire on the north bridge, is hiding out of LOS in the woods protected by a (fading) smokescreen, ready to join the Panthers to rush the south bridge. Infantry near the south bridge are faring less well under Sherman and artillery fire. (Figures 6mm Adler, vehicles GHQ, buildings and road Paper Terrain)

From move 3, I deployed my infantry in the open towards the south bridge, with disastrous results. One platoon was essentially destroyed trying to wade and swim across the Waldgraben by Sherman HE and MG fire from the farm near the south bridge (what was I thinking?). The other was caught in the open by heavy artillery fire, and was able to gain cover only by the use of mortar smoke and a break between US artillery concentrations (the rules require a bound's rest after three con-

secutive impromptu concentrations). My mortars also harassed the US forces near the south bridge, to limited effect.

But by bound 7, I was ready to co-ordinate the “Ride of the Valkyries” over the south bridge, although I had used up virtually all my Pz4 and mortar smoke allocation; my only smoke reserves were with the Stummels and the Panthers themselves.

The Ride of the Valkyries: Bounds 8–16 (13:27–14:10 hrs)

You'd think that with nine Pz4s, three Panthers, two Stummels and supporting mortar fire my Valkyries packed a lot of punch. But they are GREEN (so they maneuver poorly and give up easily under the WRG 1988 rules). And the bridge was covered by the American tanks in the south farm that had already destroyed one of my three infantry Zugs, and surely by artillery. Cover is limited, and my smoke was limited and fading across the front.

Hope briefly rekindled...

In the event, my German attempt to rush the bridge was a disaster. I sent the first Pz4 Zug forward first, at 13:27, losing two Pz4s to Shermans at the south farm and one to artillery around the bridge. Minutes later two more were destroyed by Sherman fire, but the Panthers, seeing the Shermans through the HE dust, accounted for two of them (why didn't I lead with the Panthers?). Two new Shermans appeared near the farm, at 13:35 destroying a Stummel; a US bazooka missed an advancing Pz4 and was taken out by Pz4 fire. At 13:45 I lost the last of the Zug 1 Pz4s to Sherman fire, but my Panthers, yet to cross the bridge, saw another two Shermans crossing side-on southward over the road seeking hedge cover, and destroyed them both.

Hope briefly rekindled, I advanced two of my Panthers beyond the bridge along the hedge south of the farm, but both were hit in their side armor by enfilade fire and knocked out. By 14:10 I was withdrawing my two remaining Pz4s and one Panther back over the bridge, through continual artillery fire, past the smoking remains of abandoned and destroyed Pz4s. There was no point in bringing the PzGrenadiers forward, as the remaining Sherman platoon was well placed around the north farm with a clear field of fire southwards to resist any westward advance towards Weyersheim. The Ride of the Valkyries was over. By the terms of the

scenario, a minor US victory, given their losses of more than three Shermans.



High water mark: the wreckage of the Valkyries at the south bridge. After some early success, I ran out of burning markers for my Pz4s and Panthers, shot to pieces by concentrated artillery and Sherman fire.

Thoughts

As a solo player, while I like a challenging game (and hence endlessly experiment with approaches to “play the enemy” in surprising ways), it's the immersion in the narrative of the game that motivates me. The scenario seemed stacked against me, with the US forces well established in cover and my having to maneuver in the open using smoke as my only cover, restricted to two bridges well covered by enemy fire.

But although I “lost,” I join countless German commanders at this stage of WW2 who saw their few attacks broken up by abundant, accurate and responsive artillery and anti-tank fire. My GREEN armored crews, poor at maneuver and tactics, are also true to history, with the German armored force a shadow of its former self. (WRG 1988 allows SKILLED armor to SKIRMISH, which greatly increases their access to cover and imposes no turning penalties, improving their tactical maneuver: for example, they can end a full-distance move facing enemy fire rather than side-on, and often in cover.)

So I count it a win for me on the “immersion factor.” Another advantage of solo play: I always win!

MODELING

Converting 54mm Miniatures

Head swaps, green stuff and a tribute to Les White

By Nick Stern

For me, one of the most fun, and occasionally challenging, aspects of the hobby is converting figures. I always seem to come up with the need for figures that aren't covered by manufacturers, mainly due to my interest in less popular periods. The figures may be available in one scale, but not the scale I am collecting. Back when I was into 25mm colonials, I converted several units of metal ACW infantry into 1860s British for New

Zealand during the Mōori colonial wars. My fingers still bear the scars.

When I began collecting 54mm miniatures about ten years ago, I made the acquaintance of Les White, who lived in Scotland, through the 54mm wargaming site Little Wars Revisited (littlewarsrevisited.boards.net). Most conversions are simply head swaps and paint conversions, but Les White's conversions were inspired and often improbable, like a Mexican peasant into a Celtic war-

rior. I would often ask Les for suggestions for conversions for my esoteric interests. I was lucky to find a set of his Boxer Rebellion Austrian Navy conversions on eBay, and they remain one of my prize possessions.

Unfortunately, Les did not survive the COVID epidemic. I present a few of his conversions here as a tribute to this master of plastic conversions and an inspiration to many.



Les White's African "Askari" conversions



Les White's Mexican Revolution conversions, made from Armies in Plastic figures

My own attempts have been less complex, usually a simple head swap. Sometimes I have been more ambitious, like the time I needed some armored gunfighters for my Ned Kelly game. The real Ned Kelly Gang fashioned helmets and breastplates out of farm implements. I found a reasonably priced metal Ned Kelly from a sculptor in Australia, and I was able to convert his three accomplices using Britains Deetail cowboy gunfighters in dusters, adding breastplates with green stuff and converting medieval "bucket" helmets. Unfortunately for the real gang, their arms and legs

were not protected, and that's where the Australian policemen aimed.



The Kelly Gang, armored up

Another more ambitious project was a model of the soldier of fortune Gustavus von Tempsky, who rose to fame commanding the Forest Rangers during the 1860s M ori colonial wars.



Gustavus von Tempsky

I based his conversion on a Britains Deetail US cavalryman from the Plains Wars.



A couple of my favorite conversions were for a South Sea pirates game based on the Flashman novel *Flashman's Lady*. I needed Dayak warriors and Flashman himself. The Dayak with a blowgun was based on a Zulu holding a rifle.



The Dayak with his blowgun



Flashman began with a sailor from Nelson's Navy.



I added hair and sideburns with green stuff and gave him a revolver.



The finished Flashman (the flesh wash isn't as bright as it looks in the photo)

OPINION

What Is the Right Form of Miniatures for You?

Scale, basing, metal or plastic, and four questions to ask before you buy

By Rich Di Giacomo

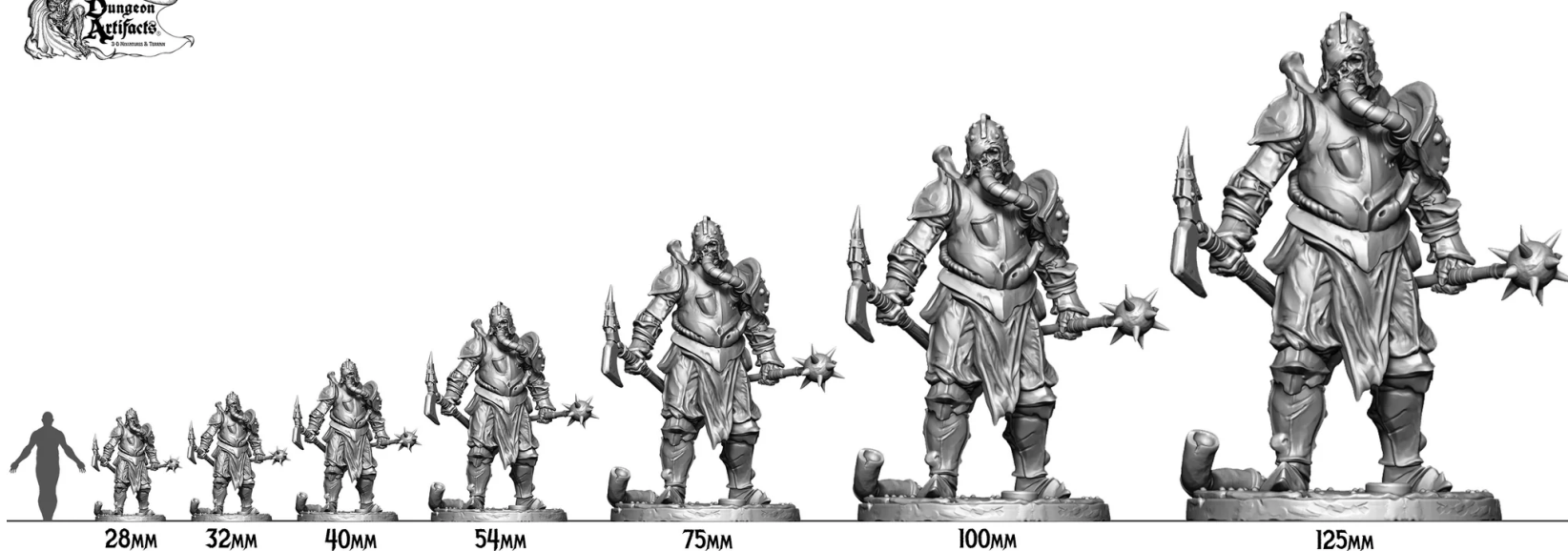


FIGURE SIZE COMPARISON

There was a day when miniatures were relatively simple. There were only a few manufacturers and figures were usually in lead. Later, the lead was replaced with pewter and other metals for safety reasons. Some alloys worked well and others have had problems with corrosion or being too malleable.

Size

Miniatures originally came primarily in two basic sizes: 15mm and 25mm. Then there was what became known as measurement creep. Some miniatures began to be released as 28mm, 32mm or even 40mm or more. Games that feature things like planes or ships tend to use larger figures. Some of the newer fantasy miniatures games use very large figures indeed. Recently, the club ran two events that featured 54mm figures. These were fun because they reminded you of when we played with toy soldiers as kids. If you go into a game store now and ask for *Dungeons & Dragons* miniatures, you will be shown giant plastic figures that are more collectibles than any kind of practical tabletop gaming aid.

Other figures got tinier and tinier. I have seen games with figures as small as 8mm that are nearly impossible to paint. It is basically a game of red ants vs. blue ants. Some of our club members have reported seeing miniatures in play that were even smaller than that.

Some people like the smaller figures because of the decreased table size required. Some people

like large figures because they are easier to paint and more striking in appearance. I prefer an impressive table setup over one that is so miniaturized that it doesn't look good. It is tough to look like a real battlefield when everything is so small. Appearance is even more important to me than a good set of rules. If I don't like the way a game looks on the table, I won't play it. To each his own.

If I don't like the way a game looks on the table, I won't play it.

Basing

Another change that occurred over the years was in basing. Originally all figures had their own bases. Usually this was fine, but some careless manufacturers made the bases too small to support the weight of the figure, and they toppled over too easily. This led to all kinds of creative homemade solutions to add a more stable base under the original built-in base of the miniature. I have seen washers, pieces of hand-cut metal, wood or leather, even defaced coinage crudely glued to the bottom of the figure.

Some people got really creative and started adding terrain elements to the bases, similar to techniques used in model railroading. Finally, manufacturers started selling premade bases for figures. This has become a whole subcategory of the miniatures market. Some of them are quite nice, if a bit pricey at times. Basing can be quite

attractive and helps to standardize an army. It is especially helpful if you want to move large numbers of figures across a relatively flat piece of terrain quickly. There are also trays upon which you can place several figures and slide them across the table easily. They are not so helpful in tight places like buildings, or on rough or uneven terrain, however.

Around the mid-1990s, Games Workshop and other manufacturers began releasing figures in the slotta format, and traditionally based figures went into decline. Some people love them because you just slide the figure in, glue it in place, and it supposedly stays in the base forever. Some players derisively refer to any pre-slotta figure as "Old-hammer." Others, like myself, did not like the appearance of slotta figures and found that the rigid, squarish bases got in the way of narrow terrain and other figures too often. (I do a lot of fantasy wargaming in castles and dungeons.) Sometimes the figures pop out of their slot at awkward times. In recent years slottas have seemingly become less popular and traditional bases are making a comeback. Fortunately, the bases now tend to be larger and more stable than those of vintage figures.

Metal or Plastic?

The last major change has been in the composition of the figures. To cut costs and increase profits, many popular new games now use plastic figures exclusively. Some are affordable, some are

not. I have a hard time shelling out that much money for plastic. Maybe it's the kid in me that still expects to get my bag of green army men for under ten bucks. To me, plastic miniatures feel like an overly fragile rip-off. I won't buy games like Warhammer that charge you a hundred bucks for a box of 40 miniatures that you still have to assemble and paint. They are so soft that if a cat sat on them, they would be toast.

I love old-school miniatures. They just look cooler and last forever. Some plastic miniatures are better made and are still pretty durable. Some are made to fit specific wars or worlds for which no one has made affordable metal miniatures. I feel it is a bit harder to paint plastic miniatures and have the paint stick. I don't want to put the time and energy into painting something that could be damaged or broken so easily. I know that there are much better painters in the club than I who know how to work around this problem. Some have produced fantastic-looking plastic miniatures that may not have been possible using metal figures.

Again, to each his own. Whatever suits your fancy. There are now many different sizes and formats to choose from. There are many more manufacturers, and they are much easier to order from online than in the old days, when you were limited to whatever your local store carried.

I have managed to amass a pretty sizeable collection of figures by purchasing vintage figures at low prices at flea markets, conventions and online auctions. Oftentimes the figures are already nicely painted and far more affordable than buying new ones. I do add in some contemporary figures if they fit my favorite figure size and genre. I have fantasy figures primarily, but I also have some traditional historical miniatures. I collect almost exclusively metal miniatures. I enjoy watching the eyes of young people pop out when they see my old Ral Parthas, Grenadiers and so on for the first time. If they have been raised on cookie-cutter, mass-produced figures and rules with prescribed army lists, they are blown away by the variety and flexibility of old figures and simple, adaptable old rules systems. I use rules systems that allow for figures from several different manufacturers. I don't like to be limited by some game company's

army lists that mandate that you use only their figures at top prices. That's just me.

Tips for buying miniatures

1. What is your budget? Can you afford new figures? Game companies are notorious for coming out with new editions, and then the old figures and rules become obsolete. Do this too many times and your favorite game can become a real money pit. Your expensive and lovingly crafted miniatures are now up for auction online with thousands of others at bargain prices. Games fall out of fashion quickly. They may be hot for a few years and then fall out of favor, and you are stuck with an expensive collection and no one who wants to play the game with you anymore. Will plastic really save you money in the long run? Is the quality or durability as good as metal? Or is metal too expensive and too heavy to lug around?

2. How much storage space do you have?

As with any collectible, you will eventually run out of space to store them. Collecting is fun, but miniatures are really meant to be played with. If you have a ton of figures but no players for your games, is it cost effective to hold on to them? Are you burdening family members with the cost and space requirements of your collection? No one wants to be in the scenario where you pass away and others who know little about your hobby are tasked with getting rid of your collection. They will most likely sell them for far less than you put into them just to get them cleared out. We have all seen that happen too many times.

3. What scale are you going to use? That most likely depends on the size of your gaming space. Does your terrain scale match your figures? It is probably better to pick a single size and stick with it, so that you can use your terrain in multiple scenarios. It is not good to have too many different scales because of duplicate needs, unless you have plenty of storage space. What is more important to you, economy of scale or big, impressive-looking game tables? What do your rule books recommend or require? What do your players prefer?

4. Are you going to paint the figures yourself? Be honest with yourself. Are you really going to paint all those figures, or are they going to sit around unpainted, unassembled or unused? We all know that it is considered bad form to host a game with unpainted figures. Once you open the package, the value goes down. If you try to sell them unpainted or partially painted you won't get much for them, probably a fraction of what you paid. If you are older, like me, your eyesight may not be what it once was, and painting smaller figures may be more difficult than it was before. Some people have more unsteady hands as well. Maybe you are just not that artistic. That's OK. No shame in that. It may be time to hire a painter. We have some excellent ones in the club. Their rates are usually much better than the ones you find online, and these are people you can trust to handle your figures well and do a good job.

So many choices. I am not going to tell anyone how big their collection should be or what to collect or not collect. I am just offering my own observations and preferences. You do what you want. Some of what I have said may not be news to some of you, but it may give you pause for thought. I think it will be especially helpful to people who are new to the hobby.

Whatever you do, have fun, and thank you for supporting the hobby. You are the finest group of gamers and game masters I have ever played with, and I am proud to be a part of this group.

REVIEW

Review of Chinese Figure Painters

Buying painted 15mm Napoleonics on eBay

By Chris Salander

To compare the different painting services, I am using a 24-figure 15mm Napoleonic infantry unit (or 12-figure cavalry unit). The painting services are all companies or individuals in China who sell their painted figures on eBay.

Some of a painter's prices will vary by unit. Not sure why. There is still a controversy about whether just-painted figures should be considered new or used. There are some typos in many titles, but how many US gamers can spell "Württemberg" correctly? These typos can cause your searches to miss listings. Some figures have uniform color mistakes. All of the figures are based the same way (four infantry on 1" x 0.75", two cavalry on 1" x 1").



Young Guard in bright blue plumes. (No such thing.)

Figures are now based on some wood-like stand or a piece of plastic. I don't have a problem with solid plastic, but hollow plastic is a big problem. The figures stand taller, the combination is top-heavy, and the paint flakes off. You cannot glue the stand to anything and you cannot add labels. In the past, many of these painters used hollow plastic stands, but they have been phased out by all but one. (So if you buy someone's used army with units painted in China, a large portion of those units will have hollow stands.)

I describe the color and type of background in the photos of the figures to allow you to tell at a quick glance who painted them. I have noted if cavalry units come as 16 figures rather than 12. This is usually a good thing, because the 16-figure cavalry units are usually priced the same as 12 cavalry or 24 infantry. But you may end up accumulating many extra sets of four figures.

Wargames History Museum

\$35 with bidding, \$40 Buy It Now, \$12 shipping. Listed as USED. "Spain" and "Austria" are used instead of the adjectives. Young Guard in bright blue plumes. Solid green plastic stands. *Photos: light blue table.*

Advance Painting Craft Shop (WGS)

\$59, \$69, \$89; \$39 with bidding; \$9 shipping. Very detailed, "collector" quality. Listed as NEW. They usually have multiple copies of units available. Wooden stands.

26wargamelady2011

\$60, \$15 shipping. Listed as NEW. Uses hollow plastic stands. *Photos: a red table and a gray wall.*

Dragon Painting Service (DPS): 28mm only

\$10 per figure, \$10 shipping.

Professional Painting Workshop

\$30-\$55, \$12 shipping. Listed as NEW. "Bavaria," not "Bavarian." Wooden stands. *Photos: deep blue background, usually framed with graphics.*

StoreThatLovesCollectors

Listed as USED. Cavalry units tend to be 16 figures. "Spain" and "Austria" instead of the adjectives. Thick green plastic stands.

wargames-mail

\$60, \$9 shipping. Listed as NEW. Wooden stands. Only listed on eBay UK; mostly Seven Years War. *Photos: gray table.*

Veteran Wargames Shop

\$40 with and without bidding, free shipping. Listed as NEW. "Spain," "Austria," many "Spanis." 16-figure cavalry units. Stands can be wood, or thin light-brown plastic with white surfaces; the figures come off the stands easily. When I ordered Spanish artillery: wrong coat colors (green), silver gun barrels, single-trail carriages. Saxon artilleryists have infantry uniforms. *Photos: light brown wall and table.*

Late note: This company is changing its name to Desk Model Shop.



Veteran Wargames Shop



Silver gun barrels and a single-trail carriage for Spanish artillery

Verdict

The figures with the most problems are also the cheapest. WGS is higher quality than I need. I won't buy from 26wargamelady2011 because of her stands. Be cautious with Wargames History Museum, and study the photos of Veteran Wargames Shop figures VERY carefully. VWS provides only one front-facing photo, which is how I missed the single-trail artillery carriage problem (the Spanish used two-trail carriages). Some painters don't bother to put the figure count in the title. I included DPS because they used to paint 15mm.

HOBBY TIP

MDF or Plywood?

By Chris Salander

When you are buying a model of a building, there are many nice-looking models made of laser-cut MDF, but almost none are made of plywood. However, when you are buying stands for your figures to stand on, you have the choice of plywood as well.

Buy the plywood. Do not buy MDF. Both are about the same cost for the same stand size, but MDF has one serious problem. I am not referring to its toxicity or its susceptibility to water damage. When figures get knocked off an MDF stand, they take a piece of the MDF with them, leaving a divot. So no matter what glue you use to attach a figure to a stand, the strength of the glue does not matter. The place where the tear occurs is at MDF-to-MDF contact, and unfortunately it takes much less force for MDF to tear apart than to break glue. This does not happen with plywood.



MDF and plywood stands



A figure on an MDF stand

What does “MDF” mean? Medium-Density Fiberboard. It is sawdust and bits of wood mixed with a resin. If you ever drive by the Port of Stockton, you will see mountains of wood chips being loaded into ships bound for Asia, where the resin will be added.

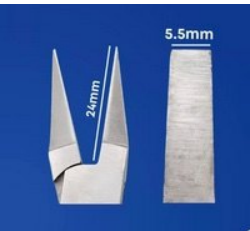
Why do people use MDF? I can think of two reasons. First, it is more readily available in Europe. Second, I think people like the solid dark brown edge on MDF. I have seen many stands with a dark brown edge, with only the top surface painted. Plywood has its layers visible on the edge.

HOBBY TIP

The Tool You Don't Know You Need

By Chris Salander

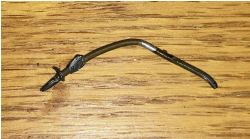
It has various names: flat-faced pliers, flat-nose, flat-jaw, beading pliers, flat jewelry pliers. Essentially it is a small pair of pliers, like needle-nose pliers, but without any teeth (and they usually don't taper at the end). If you work with metal figures, you must have this tool!



What can you use them for? Squeezing things together, or holding them together, without making teeth marks. Straightening crooked weapons. Holding figures by the base, or holding them down onto stands while you straighten them. The photos show each of these uses.

You might find them in a hardware store, but you may have to go online. You may also find them in a craft store. Now that you have a name for them, you can certainly find them online. I found mine by accident years ago. One is the most common brand, “Bead Landing.” The other says “China,” with a plastic sleeve on the handle bearing the name of the hardware store (OSH). There are other brands, such as Bead Smith and Steelman.

You can also use them for holding figures while you paint them, so as not to get paint on your fingers. They are very inexpensive, maybe \$6-\$10. You can get ones with springs that resist being squeezed, and ones without springs.



Crooked spear



Bent figure



Back in the saddle



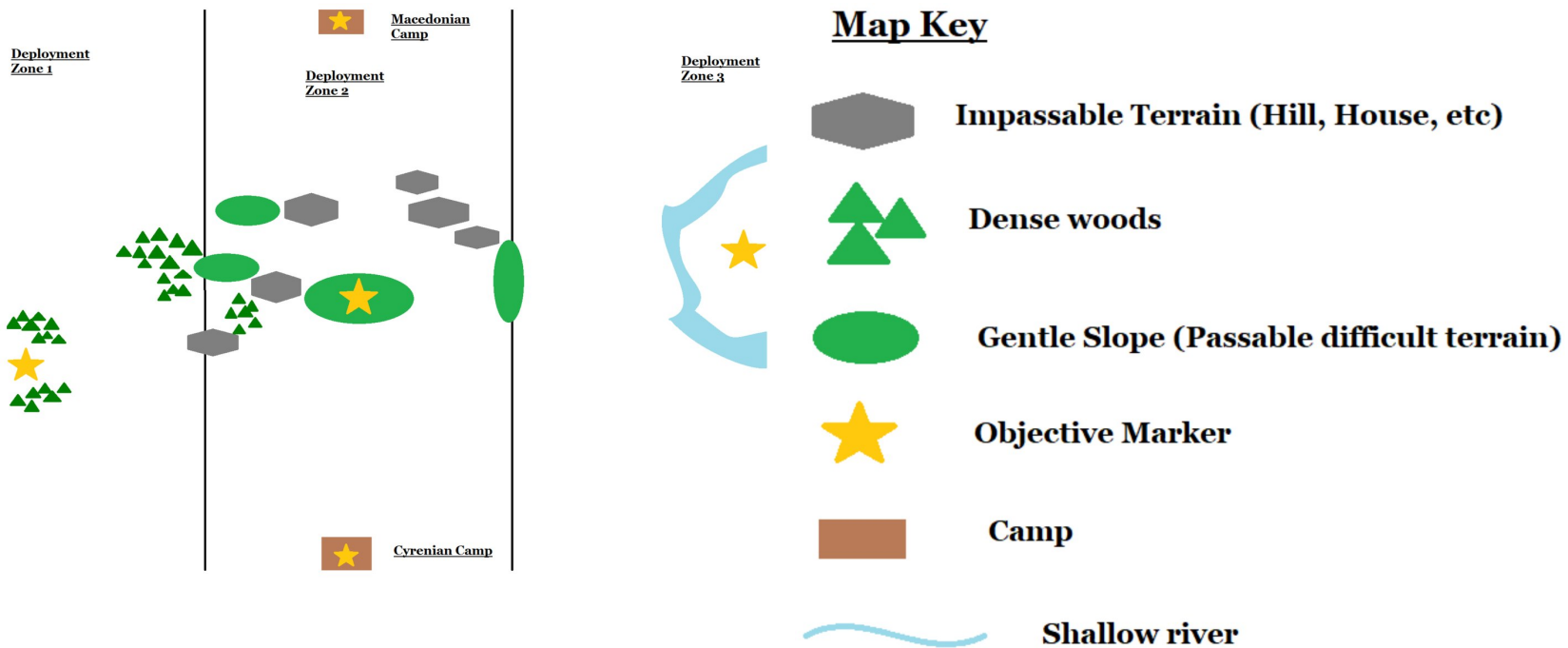
Come to attention

COMING UP

Conquest of Cyrenaica

Preview of a *Tactica II* campaign in which Alexander lives on

By Jacob Monterrosa



The battlefield, with deployment zones, camps and objectives

Today I have a preview of some upcoming articles I will be submitting on a series of scenarios using *Tactica II*. The battles are all part of a fictionalized setting where Alexander the Great did not die in 323 BC, and follow campaigns that might have taken place.

Each article will be a battle report going over the game, some notable units, a bit of fictional context and real historical information related to the scenario, and some engagement questions. Without giving too much of the next article away, here is an outline of the first battle I'll be hosting, around March 2025, and what you can expect from the report.

The Scenario

In my first scenario we have Alexander the Great invading the region of Cyrenaica with the goal of subduing the city of Cyrene. For the game I will be using *Tactica II* as the rule set, with some alterations for the scenario. Rather than slugging it out until one army reaches its breakpoint, the game will be decided by the highest point total from controlling objective points on the map. Control of an objective will grant the player its full point value, while a contested or an uncontrolled objective will not grant any points to either player. The exact measurements of the deployment zones, along with a

rough illustration and photos of the battlefield, will be in the next article. For now, the map above gives some brief context for these special rules.

The two forces facing off will be the vanguard of a Macedonian army led by Alexander himself, and an army from Cyrene made up of Greek colonists, Greek mercenaries and native Libyan tribes. This battle represents a smaller portion of each side's larger force clashing as Alexander looks to get his army into a favorable position to besiege Cyrene.

Some of the notable units that will be featured in this game, and discussed in more detail in my next article, are the thureophoroi units on the Greek colony's side and the experimental mixed "pike & shot" units of Alexander the Great. I'll also be providing some information on the area of Cyrenaica and the city of Cyrene.

Over to you

For some community engagement: is there any standout figure or event from the Hellenistic era you enjoyed learning about, or wish you could learn more about?

SOURCES

Bob's Corner of Obscurities

Where to buy spare weapons and shields

By Bob Burke

If you are like me (and presumably many other wargamers), there are times you wish you had an extra shield for your miniature figure, or perhaps you need an extra sword, or a spear to turn an officer into a standard bearer.

I've been a wargamer for almost 55 years (longer if you count playing chess), and in that time I've put together a list of companies that sell separate weapons and shields, which I wanted to share. The list is probably not complete, but you should be able to find almost anything you are looking for.

15mm

Donnington carries 40mm spears/lances (EQ09), halberds, poleaxes, and a weapons sprue with a sword, a square shield and a buckler (EQ25). They also carry various shields. The weapons are under their "Donnington New Era" listings. Donnington also carries various 15mm Xyston weapons for those who like one-stop shopping.

Essex Miniatures has various shield packs.

Mirliton has 15mm German and Italian pavises.

North Star (Brigade Games is their US distributor) carries wire javelins (NSS101), 50mm x 0.8mm. These can also be used for 25/28mm figures.

Pendraken carries spears and pikes ranging from 40mm to 100mm in length (which can also be used for 25/28mm figures).

Tin Soldier carries Viking round shields (AC1), medieval heater shields (AC2) and ancient chariot wheels (AC3).

Xyston carries 50mm wire spears (ANC20065D), Gallic swords (ANC20185 and ANC20186) and various types of shields.

25/28mm

Alternative Armies has a sprue of artillery gear: a bucket, a match, a powder scoop and a rammer (search "BS12" at alternative-armies.com).

Badger Games has a pack of various medieval weapons (12 per pack), hand axes (12 per pack), 100mm wire spears (20 per pack) and various types of shields.

Black Hussar Miniatures in Germany has an artillery tool set in their Napoleonic line that includes plungers, shovels, axes and a saw (among other items). I'm including the website because it can be hard to find: blackhussarminiatures.de/produkt/artillery-tools-and-crates.

Dayton Painting Consortium (aka RSM) carries several 25mm weapons, including swords and muskets.

Dixon has a variety of weapons for the samurai period: banners, mantlets, naginatas, pavises, a quiver of arrows, swords, tetsubos, yaris and wako screens (something every daimyo needs).

Etsy has fantasy swords and katanas (search for "mini swords").

First Corps has various Asian weapons, including fire lances, crossbows and repeating crossbows, pavises, shields, halberds, spears and lances.

Footsore Miniatures has 50mm and 100mm metal spears/javelins (packs of 20), Dark Age bill hooks (packs of 10) and various medieval shields.

Front Rank Figurines (carried by Triangle Miniatures in the US) has a large range of medieval weapons and accessories. Just click on "Front Rank Figures" in the middle of the home page and then click on Medieval Equipment.

Gripping Beast sells packs of axes, bows, shields and standards.

Minifigs UK has a medieval/fantasy weapons sprue (it's well hidden under their 25mm catalog: Classic Fantasy & Sci-Fi Range / Classic Fantasy).

Mirliton has a very large selection of shields and weapons. Stephen Freedman recently asked me to find him some 16th-century arquebuses and Mirliton has them (along with axes, crossbows, pitchforks, polearms, spears, swords and two different types of trumpets).

Monday Knight Productions has a pack of Moro weapons (four shields in two different shapes, two bolos, two kris, two machetes and two spears) in their Banana War section.

Ral Partha Legacy has ninja weapons, colonial weapons (artillery sprue, Ansar, Pathan and Zulu), medieval hand weapons, fantasy weapons (Dwarf, Giant, Goblin, Ogre, Troll) and a host of others.

Steel Fist Miniatures has a pack of short and long samurai swords (currently sold out).

The Assault Group has a variety of 28mm Chinese and other Asian weapons. They also carry Aztec, Renaissance, WWII, modern and fantasy weapons, and various wheel sets (in case your wagon or artillery limber suffers a broken wheel).

Tiger Miniatures (carried in the US by Recreational Conflict) has a large selection of Asian weapons, including polearms, spears and swords. They also carry various kinds of muskets and rifles. Richard Brooks runs Recreational Conflict and is a great guy to do business with.

Tin Soldier has 25mm longbows, lances, spears and crossbows under "25mm Equipment & Weapons."

Wargames Foundry has crossbows, a variety of spears and shields (including African, Chinese and Incan shields), Aztec, Chinese and Zulu weapons, and Polish lances.

Xyston has a pack of 17th-century steel tomahawks and flintlock muskets (CC-67106). They also have a Matabele weapons pack (NSAwp1) consisting of four knobkerrie clubs, four axes, four muskets and four Martini-Henry rifles, 100mm wire spears (NSS102, pack of 20) and two types of 80mm plastic spears (NSS110 and NSS111).

54mm

Alternative Armies has a pack of 54mm barbarian weapons (NB1W Weapons Set, at alternative-armies.com).

Know another source?

If anyone knows of other companies that sell weapons or shields, please contact me at [Burker1\(at\)aol\(dot\)com](mailto:Burker1(at)aol(dot)com). Thank you and happy gaming.



WRITE FOR ADC

Tips, after-action reports, scenarios, rules reviews and photos of your painted minis.
Every article in this magazine was written by a club member. The next one could be yours.

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