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FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

INTERVIEWS WITH
GAV THORPE
AND
JÉRÉMIE BONAMANT TEBOUL

SKIRMISH
CLOSE COMBAT SPECIAL

FREE
MEDIEVAL WARGAME
RULES

BLOOD AND GORE
TUTORIALS

PATHFINDER NPCS

DARK AGE
CAMPAIGN

ELF PIN-UP

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Editorial

Jason: Well, it's been a year since we started this venture. I was only expecting - or, should I say, hoping - to get around 200 downloads per issue, but the first weekend of issue 1 surpassed that by a mile. With an average of between 4-5,500 downloads per issue, you guys - the readers - have surpassed my expectations and keep doing so with every issue, so I'd like to thank you all. I'd also like to give a very special thanks to all those who have contributed to Irregular over the course of the year. Without those contributions being given for FREE, there would be no magazine, so thanks to all the contributors and all the readers for making Irregular successful.

It's the 1st year anniversary issue and what a packed issue we have - this month we have some great interviews with two of the industry's leading figures. Firstly, we have writer and game designer Gav Thorpe, and secondly a painter who is regarded by most as one of the world's best - Jérémie Bonamant Teboul. We also have an outstanding painting competition sponsored by Dragon Forge with prizes worth a total of $100 dollars. On top of all that we have set of Medieval War game rules, a Dark Age campaign, NPC's for Pathfinder, plus great painting tutorials. We also the start of a new series of art pin ups - yes, I did say pin ups - what started as a joke has now been turned into a series starting with an Elf by Issue 1 cover artist Matthew Mella. By the way, it was Matt who suggested it as a joke, around about issue 2. Since then Nick has been determined to get this idea in to existence.

Other news is that we have entered Irregular Magazine into the ENnie Awards. We will find out if we've been nominated for any awards on July 9th, so we will keep you all informed of that via the website. By issue 6 we will know if we actually won anything. Here's keeping fingers, legs and eyes crossed.

That's all folks - see you next issue.

Nick: I'd like to echo Jason's sentiments regarding this issue - when I was dragooned into helping proof-read and edit the first issue, I thought we'd be doing well to be getting 40 page issues out each quarter, with a circulation of 500-1,000 readers. To see where we now stand, and some of the people we've worked with is simply amazing. I'd like to that everyone who has contributed over this first year, especially our regular contributors - without you guys, we wouldn't be in anything like out current position.

So, what've I been up to this month? Well, I'm writing this editorial on the train back from Gloucester due to starting a new job, which is always a good thing. I've been steadily working my way through painting my Warmachine Mercenaries ready for the European Team Championships at the start of July, with a slight segue when I painted up the Deflector for our Brutal test game during May. Finally, I've been getting my head around the rules for The Dresden Files RPG, and I've been running it for my roleplay group - with a bit of luck, you might be able to see what Sheffield would look like in the Dresdenverse next issue.

Finally, I'd just like to mention a couple of places where you'll be able to catch the Irregular team at in the near future. First of all, we'll be at Figureworld on July 10th at the Maelstrom Games Eye of the Storm centre - both displaying figures and running demonstrations. For those of you who are local, we'll be having a barbeque in Sheffield's Endcliffe Park on July 11th, weather permitting. I've been told that there's some football match on in the evening, so the BBQ will be on at lunchtime. Our last stop in a busy month will be I.M.P v2 on July 31st at Patriot Games and La Perle in Sheffield.

I think I might need to go back to work for a rest after all that.....

News

IMP 2010

The place to be on July 31st is Sheffield, UK for Irregular Miniature Paintfest, fondly known as IMP. This event is run by the Sheffield Irregulars mini painting group and this year will feature, painting workshops, speed painting competition, demonstration games, the Golden IMP Awards plus lots of fun and cake!

Patriot Games and La Perle delicatessen are the locations for the event - and as they are across the road from one another this isn't as awkward as it sounds.

The Golden IMP Awards is a painting competition open to everyone and this year the categories have some bonus sponsor prizes as well! The categories are:

- Single figure

- Unit

- Vehicle

- Open

- IMPling (for 16 yrs and under)

Medals will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd winning entries in each category, and the Best in Show trophy is awarded to the entry with the highest public vote.

Hasslefree Miniatures are providing a prize for the best painted Hasslefree miniature in ANY category.

Warlord Games have donated £100 worth of prizes for the best painted historical entry (and runner up) in both the single figure and unit categories.

The speed painting competition on the day is your chance to have your name added to the Patriot Sword - a genuine Buddhist demon slaying sword. A real honour!

IMP is free to attend, but we ask that you bring your own paints and brushes to participate in the workshops.

Keep an eye on the Sheffield Irregulars website for more information.

FIGOSTOCK

FIGOSTOCK is a series of painting and sculpting workshops taking place this July in Montelimar, France (1 hour 20 minutes from Lyon and 2 hours from Marseille by car).

From July 3rd - 11th 2010 some great names and friendly faces will be making this the perfect alternative summer camp.

Workshop hosts include:

• Jacques Alexandre Gillois (Ilyad Games, Helldorado...)

• Jérémie Bonamant Teboul (Figone, Artefactory, Andréa Miniatures, Kraken Editions...)

• Laurent Mas Exposito (aérographe, table top...)

• Thomas David (Ilyad Games, Helldorado...)

• Alfonso Giraldes (Andrea Miniatures, Knight Models...)

• Jose Manuel Palomares (Andrea Miniatures, Knight Models...)

• Allan Carrasco (Ilyad Games, Kraken Editions, Smart Max...)

An exclusive miniature has also been produced to be painted during the workshops, sculpted by Jacques Alexandre Gillois.

Download the registration form from the website where there is also an FAQ and details regarding accommodation, food, prices and directions.

FigureWorld

The first major discussion - OK, let's call it a debate - that the FigureWorld team had was this – what name do we give to this show we are planning?

A name is kind of important - especially if you have hopes that the planned show wouldn't just be a one-off, but would be the start of an annual event. It would have been a tad embarrassing, in the long term, if we'd decided on my suggestion for a show name, which was " A Gathering of Geeks" - if it was the hoped-for success, and ran each year, then I can just see it now: "Announcing the 25th anniversary of a Gathering of Geeks!" It sounds a bit like a hairy folk rock band - and doesn't tell you anything particularly useful.

Not surprisingly, the sensible and democratic choice turned out to be "Figureworld". It isn't world-shaking, nor in yer face, nor hugely innovative, if we are being truthful. But – and it's a big but – it does what it says on the tin. Figureworld was meant to be a show about figures. Model figures. Model soldiers. Model non-soldiers. Of varying sizes, scales, subjects - historical, fantasy, sci-fi, stock painted figures, conversions, scratch-builds – but through it all the one, focussed theme: figures.

Figures would central to everything. And the reason for this choice was simple: we like figures best. Yes, some of us like making aircraft, tanks, the occasional Titan and probably - though none have yet admitted

to it - trains. But the common ground we have is figures. Yes, some only do historical. Some only fantasy. Some happily work in both camps. Some just make model dinosaurs - which count as figures. But the figures are the thing. One thing you quickly learn is that each facet of the figure painting and modelling world can learn from each other. Just because your favourite genre is Steam Punk does not mean you cannot learn from someone who gets all hot and bothered over French Cuirassiers; or if Space Marines send you into paroxysms of joy, then someone who resolutely paints 1st Century Romans can still pick up hints and tips about how to effectively base your figure, how to do weathering effects, or how to get that eyeball painted without going completely mad with the concentration and effort. In short, Figureworld was an opportunity to gather all us geeks together, focus on the figures that give us so much enjoyment - most of the time! - learn new stuff, swap stories, check out what others are doing, share ideas, share the fun – and most importantly, deepen existing friendships and gain new ones.

So that's what Figureworld is really about - friendships, and sharing in this fantastic hobby of ours.

Saturday 10th July at Maelstrom Games, Matlock Mill, Hamilton Way, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG18 5BU. 10am to 5pm (9am opening for club display / trader set-up)

Be there or be rhomboidal. Come and share the love. Or, at least, turn up and have some figuretastic fun with like minded gee.... fellow hobbyists.

Storm of Arrows

A Medieval revolution for Field of Glory

Slitherine is pleased to announce the release of Storm of Arrows.

Developed by HexWar, Storm of Arrows is the second expansion for Field of Glory. It covers armies of Western Europe from 1300 to 1500 AD. With over 100 unit images and a host of news features including archers stakes and the possibility to deploy troops mounted or dismounted in DAG games, Storm of Arrows adds a new level of game-play to Field of Glory.

Players will now also be able to fight against armies from the same army pack for historical match ups or against armies from other army packs to try "What If?" battles with Medieval Knights against Roman Legions.
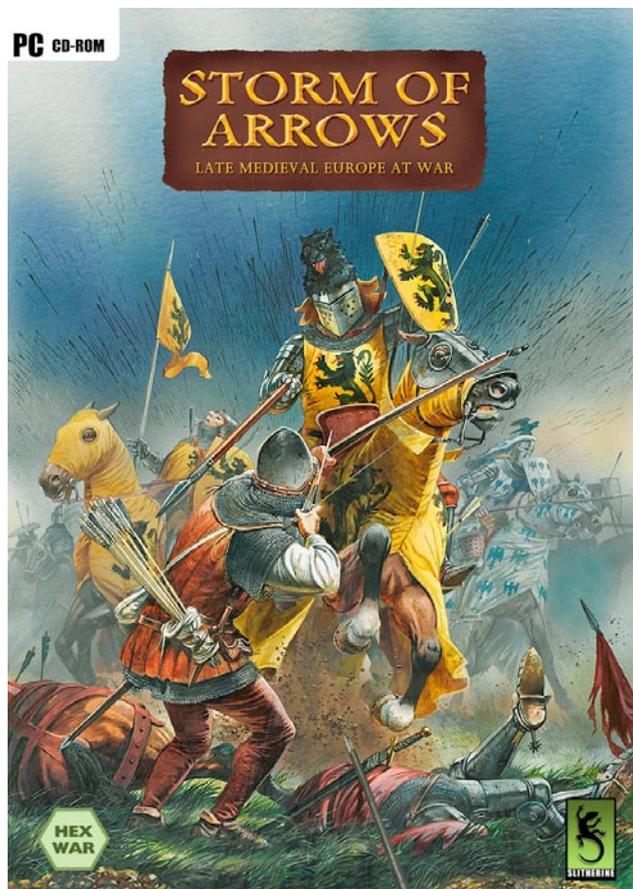
In this Field of Glory Digital expansion set players will find

• Over 100 new unit images

• Archers stakes

• Ability to deploy troops mounted or dismounted in DAG games

• New unit types: Knights, Crossbows, Medieval Artillery, Battle Wagons

Available Armies

100 Years War English (Continental), 100 Years War English (Britain), Wars of the Roses English, Medieval Welsh, Later Medieval Scots (Britain), Later Medieval Scots (Continental), Later Scots Isles and Highlands, Later Anglo-Irish, Medieval Irish, Medieval French, Ordonnance French, Free Company, Navarrese, Later Low Countries, Medieval Burgundian, Ordonnance Burgundian, Swiss, Later Medieval German, Later Medieval Danish, Later Medieval Swedish, Condotta Italian, Medieval Crown of Aragon, Medieval Portugese, Medieval Castilian, Santa Hermandad Nueva Castilian, Later Granadine

An upgrade patch for Field of Glory is also simultaneously released fixing a number of issues reported on the Slitherine forum and improving many areas of the game. The full list of changes can be found here. It includes:

• Improved shooting behaviour that makes foot bows much more realistic

• Improved movement behaviour that forces unit to move in more realistic ways.

• Improved evade & rout moves

• Many bug fixes for issues reported on the forum

Art Competition Results

Back in April we set a challenge to all our artistic readers to produce some art on the theme of Darkness for a chance to win a fantastic poster from Kingdom Death, and you didn't disappoint us.

Our Judge Ricardo Guimaraes had his work cut out looking at each and every entry to decide which one was worthy of being crowned the winner.

Here's what he had to say:"Overall the pieces were ok but I'd like to have seen more 'Darkness' into them. A dark picture and the concept of Darkness are very different things."

In first place is this digitally painted entry by Mariana Vieira. The illustration shows a very nice composition, with a well defined mood. In terms of rendering, you have some very interesting textures and the action makes you feel the character just noticed you.

Congratulations! Our team will be in touch with you to get your address so you can receive your fantastic prize from Kingdom Death.

In second place was a very strong piece with a beautiful graphic treatment. The concept of darkness is very clear and we can see an excellent use of positive and negative shapes. Well done Vyctoria!

In third place is Henrik Pettersson. You have a nice beginning here, but you could have further developed the connection between the girl and the creature, as well as her expression.

Well done to all our entrants, we love seeing what you came up with.

Miniature Painting Competition

Get your brushes ready, we've got a painting competition to keep you busy over the summer. The theme is Skirmish, so interpret that however you like.

The Irregular Magazine team will be judging this one, and we'll be looking for creativity and how well your entry suits the theme, as well as technical competence.

Sponsoring the competition this issue is Dragon Forge Design, who produce some fantastic resin gaming bases and objective markers to improve your armies, or make your display pieces really stand out. The round bases are particularly suitable for skirmish type games! The Dragon Forge store also boasts terrain, display plinths, diorama bases, icicles and power cables!

Dragon Forge Design is run by multiple award-winning painter and sculptor, Jeff Wilhelm, who's been incredibly generous with the prizes on offer:

1st place: $50 worth of DFD products

2nd place: $30 worth of DFD products

3rd place: $20 worth of DFD products

Worldwide shipping is included.

The top three entries will also appear in issue 6 of Irregular (Autumn 2010), which is due out in October, along with any other entries that really catch our eye.

How to enter:

• Paint up a single miniature or a duel to the best of your ability

• Remember, the theme is Skirmish

• Take a photo of your finished entry looking it's best

• Take another photo of your entry in front of your monitor showing the Irregular Magazine website, or your printed copy of Irregular Magazine

• Save your photos as .jpg files at 300 dpi

• Email BOTH files to us at: irregularmagazine@gmail.com , along with your name

• Make sure to get the files to us before the deadline: Midnight, August 29th (London time)

Please read the terms and conditions on our website before entering.

Good luck!
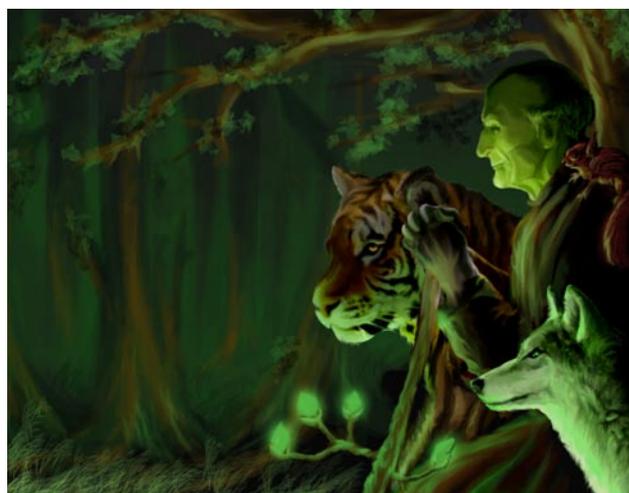
A Very British Civil War

Words: Jason Hubbard & Dave Barker

"I want this country to realize that we stand on the edge of oblivion. I want everyone to remember why they need us!" Sulter, V for Vendetta

A Very British Civil War is an alternative history wargame set in 1938 which is taking the country by storm. The idea behind the setting is that Britain has been taken over by Mosley's fascist party, which in turn has led to a civil war.

Last year Solway Crafts and Miniatures released their first source book for the concept and, as they say, history - or, in this case, alternate history - was born.

The premise is that King Edward VIII didn't abdicate when he married Wallace Simpson. This led to members of parliament and the current Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin resigning. With no one coming forward to form a government Edward turns to Mosley and his Fascist party to form a government.

During the 1930's in Britain there were several different political factions, and in the previous decade two ends of the extreme in politics had risen across Europe. Both of these, Fascism and Communism, received support in Britain.

Oswald Mosley formed the British Union of Fascists in 1932; he wanted to take Britain into a fascist state along the same lines as Germany and Italy.

He wanted to form a one party government, which would have meant the country would have been under the rule of a dictator.

There are several source books published by Solway Crafts and Miniatures, each one containing detailed information on factions, personalities and events of the civil war. This period is quite a exciting and fascinating period in history - it was a time of extreme politics and civil unrest, and most events contributed to the start of the Second World War. It has potential for the wargamer, especially those who like the idea of an alternative history. Events such as the Spanish Civil War, the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, along with discontent stirring around the Empire.

What Solway have done is to provide a setting and idea that can lead anywhere - through forums such as Gentleman's Wargame Parlour and Lead Adventure, the players themselves are shaping the game and background. This was one of the reasons that it captured my imagination, and led me to develop the background for Cornwall. The game doesn't come with a set of rules to learn - what it does instead is allow you to use a rule set you already play, which means that you don't require to learn a whole set of rules to play. Just build a faction or two and get down to the nitty, gritty of playing out your campaign. Most players have tendency to set their games within the local area, creating local factions and units. This has helped in developing a growing rich background for the game.

A Very British Civil War
New Factions for Cornwall

Words & Photography: Jason Hubbard

Cornish Freedom and Liberty League

This is a small independant faction, that was unknown to any side in the Cornish region until the Battle of Stratton. What is now known about the group is that they have a fanatical belief in an Independent Socialist Cornwall. The group carries out acts of terror against anyone who doesn't believe in a socialist Cornwall. They had secretly been planning on a region-wide campaign of terror against both the BUF and Kernow factions. For months they have gathered intelligence, weapons and explosives - most of which have been stolen from local mining companies. They have established terror cells in most major towns and cities in both Cornwall and Devon, linking with socialist groups in neighbouring counties.

Celtic International Brigade

The CIB is made up of foreign nationals who are descended from Celtic stock, such as Cornish, Welsh, Irish and Scottish. The brigade is led by an American, Troy Castine, who is of Cornish descent. His family emigrated to Texas, making their fortune in oil. Troy left the family business to seek adventure and fortune. He has been a mercenary for several years fighting in Africa and Europe. With the use of his family money he funds the CIB with weapons and some equipment.

Most of the members are equipped with modern rifles, shotguns, an assortment of hand guns and Thompson submachine guns. He has also purchased some Lewis guns as well as several BARs. Most members hail from the US, but Canada, Australia and parts of Africa are also represented. All of the men are veterans; either from the Spanish Civil war, or various small conflicts in Africa and South America.

Troy's aim is to set up additional brigades in Ireland, Wales and Scotland all fighting on the side of nationalism. He firmly believes in republicanism, as well as fame, women and fortune. He is often seen with a female companion even in battle and has a select bodyguard of between four and six dangerous women.

Marrack's Marauders

Daniel Marrack is self-styled mercenary who served as an officer with the US military in WW1. His grandparents are of Cornish descent, and he is an adamant and loyal believer in Cornish Independence.

The Marauders are all American, though not necessarily of Cornish heritage. Most will follow Marrack into hell, and have served with him in various wars and conflicts for several years. His second in command, Joshua Hammond, has served with him since the days of WW1.

They are styled on the modern US military and are armed with Springfield rifles, along with Thompson's. Their uniform is similar to the US Army; in fact it is a US uniform, having been "liberated" from US national guard stores.

The Marauders act as a reconnaissance unit, and will operate behind enemy lines. This is mainly so they can loot and fight without any interference. Though Marrack is dedicated to Cornish independence he also has his own self interest at heart as well. The Marauders have, on occasion, robbed banks whilst behind enemy lines, making sure that it looks like royalist's have committed the robbery.

A Very British Civil War
Sheffield : An Overview in 1938

Words: Dave Barker
Illustrations: David Sonderquist&
Jason Hubbard

Overview

Just about everyone on all sides of the civil war are aware of the strength of socialist sentiment to be found in Sheffield and the other cities of the southern part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, not least because of the fame (or infamy) of the Sheffield Brigade of the Socialist Militias.

But, just like everywhere else in the country, the situation in Sheffield is much more complex and messy than simply saying that Sheffield has gone socialist.

Socialists

Most of the city is indeed under socialist control. Socialist militias made a priority of targeting the Hallamshire Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment, who had been based in the south of Sheffield. They have been forced out, with deserters serving with the Socialist or Anglican forces in the city, while those who remain loyal are spread out supporting Royalist or BUF forces from the north of Sheffield to as far away York.

Socialist and Communist leaders, with the assistance of Soviet advisers who are starting to appear more and more often in Sheffield, have taken control of a significant number of the factories and manufactories in most of the south and east of the city. Their focus on changing production over to the war effort, together with an emancipation drive have brought production levels almost back to pre-civil war levels.

Another significant feature of Socialist Sheffield is the appearance of a number of Soviet-sponsored schools that have opened. Run by volunteers from Russia, these schools have begun educating for free the children of workers in Soviet-aligned factories, teaching reading and writing in both English and Russian, together with communist principles, mathematics and technical skills that will be of use to future factory workers.

But the socialist factions are not having everything their own way. Sheffield has a long history of independent craftsmen and artisans, especially in the cutlery industry. These 'Little Mesters', as they are known have not so easily been sold on the socialist ideals and many of them have fled socialist controlled areas of the city and headed, together with their all important trade tools and skills, to the Anglican or BUF controlled areas of Sheffield.

Anglicans

The Anglican presence in the city is a small and precarious one. Anglican forces initially formed around the Cathedral and the streets surrounding it and have managed to negotiate an uneasy truce with the socialists and fascist gangs and militias that surround them. From the City Hall and Barkers Pool on the south side, to West Bar in the north; and from the Sheffield University on the western extent to Commercial Street on the east – this small section of the city has surprisingly remained Anglican, although everyone only half-jokingly refers to this area as the Siege of Sheffield Cathedral. Supply runs from Anglican forces free in the rural north of Derbyshire are still able to make it through, mostly down the Fulwood Corridor, but no-one knows how long this state of affairs will last.

The Fulwood Corridor

The Fulwood Corridor is a stretch of Sheffield heading out of the city towards the west starting from the University and heading out towards the Snake Pass. A number of wealthier people live in this corridor and they have established for themselves a series of non-aligned militias that protect people and property in their local areas, but they want no part in the wider conflict. This means that anyone prepared to pay a series of fees and not cause trouble is able to pass through the Fulwood Corridor unharmed.

Fascists and Royalists

The pro-fascist and pro-royalist elements in Sheffield have been forced to work as one in Sheffield, due mostly to the overwhelming opposition that they face from the Socialists. Only a very small section of the city is under their control in the north-west, with Hillsborough being the deepest point into the city that they control.

There has been a large scale migration of people in this area, with pro-socialist residents in Hillsborough, some areas of Walkley and all the way to Stannington village and across and around the north of the city as far as Grenoside, have been forcibly evicted and made to move into the southern, socialisy areas of the Sheffield. At the same time, pro-fascist and pro-royalist Sheffielders who have chosen to, or been made to, move north have settled in these same areas.

 A substantial number of the people moving into the fascist-controlled areas of Sheffield have been skilled

artisans and workers, and many of these have been given space and resources to work for the war effort for the fascists in the outlying villages to the north. Of particular note is the steel works in Stocksbridge valley. With BUF support from Manchester coming over the Woodhead Pass, which is served by both road and rail, and a good number of skilled workers fleeing socialist Sheffield, the Stocksbridge steel works complex is being expanded as quickly as possible. It is also in the process of being re-tooled to turn out armoured vehicles and weapons. Also, an area of (fairly) flat fields at the top of the hill on the opposite side of the velley to the steel works, outside Bolsterstone village, have been turned into a BUF airfield and this is becoming a de-facto HQ for this pocket of fascist forces on the east side of the Pennines.

But it is the presence of the newly raised police forces in the north of the city that really keep the Fascists strongly secured.

Police Forces

When the Sheffield City Auxiliary Constabulary was raised, the Burdall's Buildings were bought back from the Burdall's Ltd, a chemical company and recommissioned as the Hillsborough Barracks once more. This time, however, it is for use by the Sheffield City Auxiliary Constabulary, rather than by the army.

Located between Hillsborough and Neepsend, the Hillsborough Barracks are a strong fortification that has proven to be impregnable thus far with its strong walls and garrison of greater than 500 auxiliary constables. Such a strong fortification and concentration of men who are closely allied to the fascist cause has proved quite a thorn in the side to the socialist agenda in Sheffield, and it is really the bastion that has prevented them from seizing the whole of Sheffield.

Forces of auxiliary constables are regularly sent out on punitive raids against the socialist forces to seize food, equipment and other resources from their stores and on occasion they also deploy to make joint raids with the regular police forces against criminal elements that are all too prevalent in Sheffield.

However, the regular forces of the Sheffield City Police, unlike their Auxiliary Constabulary counterparts, are largely tolerated and still carry out patrols throughout most of the city, largely unmolested. Increasingly, they have to turn a blind eye to crimes that may have a political element to it. This is very frustrating for the officers, who are now routinely armed with pistols as well as their truncheons, but they make up for this by focusing on the rise in crime that is happening in the Don Valley area of the city, which no-one is happy about.

Criminal Elements

As a result of a substantial breakdown in law and order in the city, there has been a rise in criminal activity associated mostly with cargo shipments - smuggling, and the violent and thuggish behaviour associated with this.

Much of this criminal activity has come about as a result of the power regained by the criminal families that had been suppressed by Sheffield City Police in the mid-1920s during what were known as the Sheffield Gang Wars, which at their peak saw a man beheaded in the street in broad daylight with no apparent witnesses to be found. Although many of those directly involved at the time are still behind bars, some of have found their way out in the confusion and disorder of the civil war, a next generation of these families is now leading their resurgence.

Most of this criminality is occurring in a region extending down the Don Valley from the canal basin and Sheffield Victoria station, down past Lady's Bridge and the Wicker down to Attercliffe and Burngreave and out towards Rotherham.

Conclusion

Sheffield isn't simply a socialist stronghold, it is as complicated and confused a part of the civil war as any other part of the country. It offers great scope for gaming and storytelling and if you're at all familiar with Sheffield - or even if you're not - we'd strongly recommend you consider playing at least a couple of Very British Civil War games set in Sheffield!

Your Country Needs You
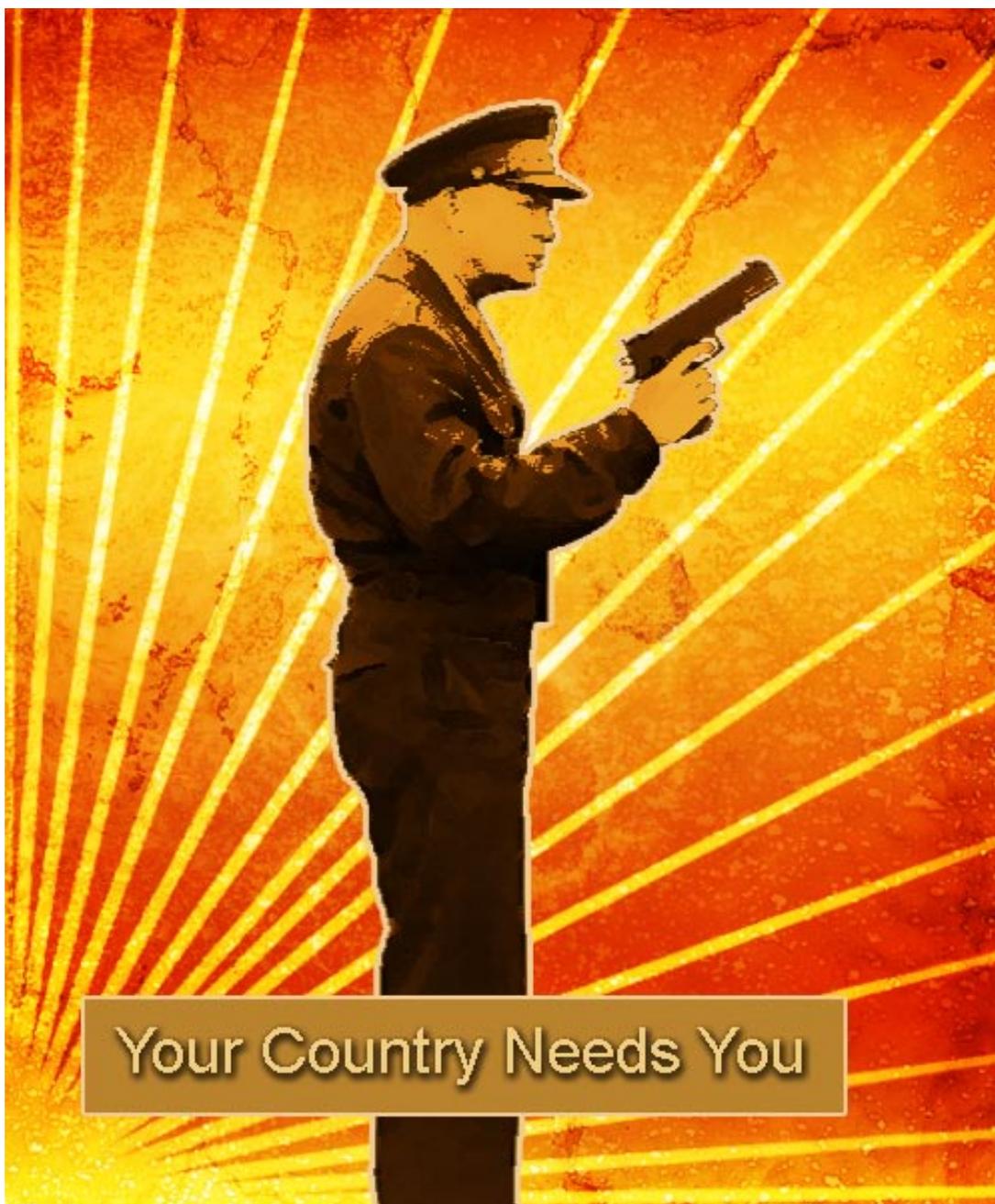
I AM SPARTACUS

WORDS: JASON HUBBARD
ILLUSTRATIONS: MATTHEW MELLA

SPARTACUS WAS A SLAVE AND GLADIATOR, WHO HAS BEEN IMMORTALISED IN BOOKS AND FILMS FOR DEFYING THE MIGHT OF ROME.

Spartacus started life as a shepherd, before becoming a soldier. It is believed that he served in a Roman auxiliary unit, which would explain his understanding of Roman tactics. Whilst serving in the Roman army he deserted and took to banditry, but on one raid he was captured and sold in to slavery.

He was bought by Lentulus Batiatus for his gladiatorial school in Capua, South Central Italy in 73 BC. The school was run by a former gladiator, who had won his freedom. Batiatus ran it with brutal cruelty, which is probably one of reasons which led to the revolt.

Gladiatorial combat was originally a religious rite that was performed to honour the dead, and was conducted in private. It was also generally not to the death, but around the time of Spartacus it was beginning to take hold as a public spectacle.

The special weapons we all associate with gladiators were rare during this period - most combats were fought with the legionary sword, the gladius, which is where the name gladiator originates from.

It seems that Spartacus and another gladiator called Crixus were preparing their fellow condemned inmates to revolt. Unfortunately, the plan had been discovered, so they were forced to break out with only half of the gladiators at the school.

They headed straight to an eatery, where they grabbed knives, skewers and meat cleavers. Newly armed, they attacked the guards at the city gates before heading into the hills around Capua. Once outside the city they came across a wagon delivering gladiatorial weapons and armour.

The ex-slaves made their way to Mount Vesuvius, where they made camp. Word of the breakout spread, which inspired other slaves to desert and join the band of gladiators. Most of the new followers were former soldiers captured in battle and sent into slavery, most of whom were Thracians or Gauls.

Most were probably of a dubious nature because they soon turned to banditry, pillaging the local countryside. This became a problem for those in Rome, and needed to be dealt with. They sent 3,000 soldiers under the command of Appius Claudius Pulcher to clear them from Vesuvius. The Romans soon penned the soldiers in on Vesuvius and began to move in for the kill.

Trapped near the crater on the volcano, Spartacus proved to be an excellent tactician. Noticing one of the slopes had been left wide open, the rebels climbed down the slope unobserved. Believing the slaves to be still on the mountain, the Romans had relaxed their guard. Spartacus and his followers poured over the Romans from the rear. The Roman army was routed, with many of the soldiers being killed.

Spartacus had beaten his first Roman army, which supplied the men under his command with Roman arms and equipment. In turn, once news of his victory spread more followers flocked to his side.

Spartacus was becoming infamous in Italy, not for the victory, but for the amount of followers who were flocking to his side. By the end of 73 BC he had amassed around 40,000 followers. He not only attracted slaves but poor farmers, who had been treated badly by the ruling elite. Most free farmers were being forced from fertile land onto marginal land which was hard work to scratch out a meagre living.

They continued their ravaging of the countryside, with towns of Cura, Nuceria and Nula being sacked. They also destroyed local villas, and were constantly recruiting and attracting new followers to their camp.

Spartacus and his rebel slaves defeated another Roman army, under the command of Glaber, at Salinae. Glaber, in his rush to flee, left behind his warhorse, attendants and equipment that symbolized his rank of Praetor. From this point onwards Spartacus went about in the captured accoutrements of a senior Roman senator.

After one year of being free it was decided they should leave Italy and return home. The biggest problem that faced them was the Roman Army and the Alps. Winter was drawing in and it became too late to attempt a crossing of the Alps. Instead, they retreated south to the regions of Lucania and Bruttium. The rebel forces had grown to around 70,000 strong by this time. They spent the winter preparing for the future confrontations that would come in the spring. Spartacus spent the winter seeking blacksmiths to produce arms and armour for his horde - he intended that they should become a real army, not just a band of bandits.

SPARTACUS HAD BEATEN HIS FIRST ROMAN ARMY

In the spring of 72 BC Rome sent three armies south under the command of a Praetor. This was a considerable force, especially to send against mere slaves, which showed that the Roman elite were fearful of a full scale slave rebellion.

It was at this point that the slave army split in two, one contingent under the command of Crixus, and the other under Spartacus. It is not known why they split occurred, but some think it may have been ethnic in origin, as most of those who left with Crixus were of Gaul descent. The other reason may have been that the army had become too large to administer and feeding 70,000 people would have placed a massive drain on the local resources.

At Mount Gorganus, Crixus and his followers met the army of Praetor Quintus Arrius. Crixus was not the tactical general that Spartacus was - consequently, his faction was defeated. Spartacus had taken those under his command north, where they reached the River Po unopposed. North of the river was an army under the command of Lentulus and to the south, coming up behind them, was another army under the command by Poplicoda.

Spartacus and his followers were trapped between two armies - this should have been the single act that should have finished them off. Instead he fought one of them and then turned round and defeated the second as well. Three armies had faced Spartacus and all three had been defeated by his army of freed slaves.

It was in the aftermath of this battle that Spartacus displayed his cruel nature. He sacrificed 300 prisoners in memory of Crixus, who had been killed. He then made the remaining prisoners fight each other in gladiatorial combat. The writer Appian claims that Spartacus put to death all prisoners taken in both battles.

Spartacus was now said to have commanded an army of 100,000. The largest army that Rome had placed into the field up to this date had been 85,000. I suspect that a large proportion of the 100,000 were made up of families, old people and children, who were unable to fight. How many fighting men he had at his command is unknown, but it would probably have been over 50,000.

Spartacus' next move was to head towards Rome in the hope of drawing the northern troops south and leave the Alps wide open for them to cross. This tactic failed and he was forced into battle with another army camped near Picenum, which he defeated. There was another army stationed at Mutina which was waiting for him, but this time it wasn't a militia army, which all previous armies that Spartacus had faced had been. This time it was composed of veterans under the command of a professional soldier, called Cassius , Proconsul of Spain. Even these superior troops were not enough to defeat Spartacus, as he sent this army fleeing as well.

There was no one to stop them crossing the Alps and to freedom, but they chose to turn south and continue pillaging the countryside. It may have been arrogance, that made them turn south, thinking that they were undefeatable, and maybe they thought they could carve out a nation for themselves in Southern Italy.

SPARTACUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS WERE TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO ARMIES

Rome desperately needed to defeat Spartacus, as they really feared a full scale nationwide slave revolt. We have to remember that slaves formed a large part of Roman life and community, and it has been suggested that nearly half of the population of Rome were made up from the slave community.

No one came forward to take the job of facing Spartacus, until Marcus Licinus Crassus, a former general under Sulla, who was known for his cruelty and butchery. He needed a triumph to help secure his political power base in Rome and the defeat of Spartacus would be ideal - he would become the saviour of Rome. Crassus took eight legions into the field. At this time Spartacus went further south down to Thurii, as he needed to leave Italy, especially now Crassus was taking to the field, and certainly after Crassus had massacred a breakaway group of 10,000 slaves.

Spartacus moved down to Rhegium to arrange transport across the straits with Cilician Pirates, but instead of taking the rebels the pirates fled with the gold. Some of the rebels tried to cross the straits in makeshift rafts and small boats but the currents proved to be too strong and dangerous.

Instead of escaping by sea, Spartacus had to move north again. Crassus had set up fortifications across passes in the southern mountains, which meant Spartacus was trapped. His first attempt to take the fortifications failed and it was reported that Spartacus had lost 1,200 men. The morale of Spartacus's followers was failing, so he made a spectacle of crucifying a roman soldier who was prisoner in front of the enemy fortifications.

The rebels made a second attack, during a stormy night which covered the attack. This time it was successful, allowing Spartacus and his followers to pour over the fortifications, evading Crassus. The rebel army split once more - it is unknown why they split, but some may have thought Spartacus had failed them, especially in regards to the pirates, but also because Rome was closing in for the kill.

The senate were considering recalling Pompey and his army to Italy, but also Crassus was closing in again. Another thought is that it could have been along ethnic lines, as those who left were mainly from Gaul and Germania, under the command of Granicus and Castus.

Those under the command of Granicus and Castius made their way to a town called Croton, where Crassus and his legions fell upon them killing 30,000 - the breakaway rebels needed to be rescued by Spartacus. This win bolstered the morale of the Roman army and sent a message of encouragement to the ruling elite back in Rome. Though it didn't last for long, because Spartacus faced another army under the command of Quintus Scrofa, who had been sent north. Once they defeated this Roman army they turned towards the port of Brundisium, hoping to gain passage out of Italy, but an army commanded by Lucullus had arrived at the port from Greece. This forced the Spartacus north towards the Alps again.

Crassus closed in on Spartacus again, at this point Spartacus sent messages to Crassus seeking settlement, but Crassus refused, stating that Rome didn't negotiate with slaves. Crassus finally managed to bring Spartacus and his rebel army to the field of battle. It was estimated that Spartacus had an estimated 90,000 troops under his command, though a lot of these may have been non-combatants who decided to fight. The discipline of the legions proved their worth - Spartacus was unable push them from the field and the Romans finally defeated the slaves. It was said that Spartacus fought like a demon.

After the battle Crassus had 6,000 of the rebels crucified along the Appian way. Spartacus descended into myth and legend, and the Romans had prevented a full scale slave revolt across the length and breadth of Italy, something the ruling elite feared.
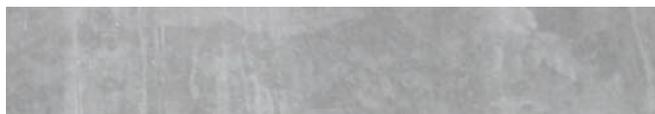
Had Spartacus defeated Crassus, I suspect he would have made his way to Rome in the hope of sacking the city, but he would have had to face Pompey. Most slaves who were in Rome had a better state of life than those who worked the farms and mines in the countryside of Italy, which is the most likely reason why an empire-wide revolt didn't occur. Crassus went on to a massive defeat at the hands of the Persians, he took an army into Parthia in 55 BC, he took mostly infantry with only light cavalry support. He faced a Parthian army made up of horse archers, which decimated his Roman army. Crassus was killed in the battle, and afterwards the Partians decapitated him.

The army of Spartacus would have been armed initially with makeshift weapons, some armed like gladiators, and little in the way of armour. As the revolt continued and they defeated army after army, they would have collected Roman military equipment.

The army of Spartacus would make an interesting conversion project. I would look at using Warlord Celts, mixed with Roman auxiliaries, along with Wargame Factory plastic Romans and Numibians. Spartacus, after his defeat of Glaber, went around in the dress of a senior senator, which meant he would have been dressed like a Roman general. There would also have been soldiers with gladiator weapons and armour - there are several makers of metal gladiators, such as Foundry, which would provide suitable troops.

A slave revolt campaign could be placed in any period of Roman history, as it could become the staging of an alternative history. Spartacus could have defeated Crassus and set up a kingdom in Southern Italy, which leads to a war with Rome.

Further Reading

Barry Strauss, The Spartacus War, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009

Paul Erdkamp (Ed), A Companion to the Roman Army, Blackwell, 2007

Edward Gibbons, Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire,

Dark Age Campaign

Words & Photography: Jason Hubbard

There have been two big releases recently in the historical world of gaming that have really sparked my interest - plastic Vikings and the 2nd edition of Warhammer Ancient Battles, hereafter referred to as WAB. Well, actually there has been a third one as well, though they don't really relate to this article, and they're plastic Hoplites - but anyway, I digress.

With the release of WAB 2nd edition I decided to write and run a dark age campaign set in the tumultuous period after the end of Roman rule in Britain. I choose this particular period of the dark ages because of the chaos that was occurring in Britain. There were raids by the Picts from Scotland, Irish raiders attacking the coastlines of the South West and Wales, incursions by Saxons and Northern Germanic tribes, as well as local warlords rising up all trying to gain power, prestige, glory and gold.

The Dark Ages are full of legendary tales of magic and heroic deeds, from King Arthur through to Beowulf, and so in part 2 (Issue 7) I'll be adding some basic rules for introducing magic for those who want to play a legendary heroic campaign.

The campaign will be in three parts;

Part 1 - Core rules - this article will concentrate on the basic rules for running the campaign and skirmish gaming.

Part 2 - Magic - In part two I will introduce the concept of magic for those who fancy the idea of playing myth and magic within their campaign, along with introducing some legendary characters from the period.

Part 3 - Raiding on the high seas - The last part will concentrate on taking the campaign on to the high seas, with raiding and expeditions of mythic heroics.

In all articles I will also provide a reference section at the end of each article. These will include book lists and web links, along with suggestions on some of the many miniature manufacturers who produce Dark Age minis.

Players will start this campaign with small warbands of between 250 and 400 points. These will be quite small, but the idea is that each player is an opportunistic warrior hoping to gain enough gold, glory and power to become a warlord and ruler. As each player starts to win skirmishes and battles, and carry out successful raids they will not only earn gold, but their fame will attract warriors to their camp.

For this campaign I'll be using WAB 2nd edition, but earlier editions could also be used.

Warhammer Ancient Battles 2nd Edition Review

The new version of WAB is quite a step forward from the last version. For starters, the book has gone from a paperback to hard cover, which is great as this should improve durability. When you open the book you will instantly be presented with glossy, full colour pages throughout, with a plethora of excellent artwork - comparable to Osprey - along with images of well painted miniatures.

The book is well laid out, with the rules at the front of the book in order of game play, which makes searching for rules much easier. Another important aspect is that at the back of the book is a reference of the rules laid out in sections, with page numbers. All of the vital information required for gaming is in the reference section with page numbers for you instantly flick to the page to read the rule in greater depth.

There are in-depth army list for Roman and Celtic armies, along with sample lists for a wide variety of armies, such as Danish Vikings, Anglo Saxons and Egyptians to name but a few. On first glance, it looks like rules for skirmishers have been improved to make them more effective. They now fear formed troops, and only those with the highest leadership scores will stand against a charge.

Some aspects in which I was a little disappointed with were no update or change on the Partian shot. The Roman list could also have done with more changes, as it is very similar to the original list from WAB 1 - essentially, the auxiliary infantry are still poor, and considering that most of the fighting was done by the auxiliary, they should be similar, or a lot closer in ability, to the legions.

Another excellent feature are the selection of new special rules which cover unique doctrines, culture and weapons from the ancient period. This adds additional depth to games played by many gamers.

To those who have never played WAB before, it's very similar to Warhammer Fantasy - though without the magic, monsters and over the top characters, which means that games tend to be more balanced and longer.

On the whole it's a better book than previous versions, and is a much more user friendly especially for those new to WAB. I'd say it is well worth the investment.

Campaign

It is Dark Age Britain, the Romans have gone, some of the towns and cities of the old Roman world have seen better days, buildings are crumbling and falling down. You are an opportunistic warrior with a small band of loyal warriors. You've noticed that there is a power vacuum which could be filled by a fierce and daring to become a leader and ruler of the land. The Roman Empire in Europe has collapsed, barbarian hordes have descended on the civilised land of the Romans. In Britain the Picts, Irish and Saxons are all raiding or settling on British soil. There is a power vacuum, and you have seen an opportunity to place yourself through the force of arms as a leader and ruler.

During this time many a warlord and petty tyrant sprang up and ruled over various parts of the country, can you become one of those, or can you descend into legend and rule over all of Dark Age Britain.

As you gain money, fame and notoriety you will be able to build your forces. The larger your force becomes means you'll be able to attack and occupy larger settlements, make alliances and establish your authority on the local populace.

Starting Warbands

I would suggest that warbands should start with around 300 pts per player. Players may use the points as they see fit - warbands can be built using either the Age of Arthur or Shield Wall supplements.

Amount in Gold	Pts Value
50	50
100	100
200	150
300	200
400	325
500	450

Note: these are not fixed amounts, just recommendations.

Raids

Raids on settlements will yield gold, which can then be used to replace men lost in battle or gain new recruits. The size of the settlement will determine on how much gold is won.

Settlement Resistance

Resistance is settlements will vary depending on size - a hamlet, for instance, may only have a few locals armed with spears, but at the same time will have very little gold. In comparison, a large town will have a local band of defenders who are better armed and trained, but there would be more gold and notoriety to be had by striking such a target.

Any settlement could send a messenger to the local lord to inform them of armed raiders. The lord would respond by sending a force to dispatch the raiders.

Once the game begins, at the start of each round the defender rolls a 1d6 and on a roll of 1, 3 and 6 the local lord has been contacted and a force of warriors is being sent. The defender needs to roll against the war party chart to determine how many troops are to be sent. Once that is done the defender will then roll a 1d3 to determine how many rounds the force will take to arrive at the battle/skirmish.

Settlement Types

The chart below indicates the settlement type, it's gold value and the amount of resistance to be expected in the form of points value. It should be noted that these are not hard and fast values, they can be changed to suit the campaign being played.

Settlement Type	Gold Value	Resistance (pts)
Hamlet	5	25-50
Farm/Villa	8	30-60
Small Village	12	100
Medium Village	15	150
Small Town	25	200
Medium Town	120	400
Large Town	200	500
Small City	300	1000
City/Hill Fort	500	1200 +

Siege

A large number of settlements in this period erected defences, which may consist of bank and ditch, or palisade walls. A number of communities resettled in the old hill forts, rebuilding the defences and thus gaining a defensive advantage.

Laying siege to a hill fort will require a large army, and players should utilise the Siege and Conquest supplement for rule clarification. A hill fort may be the capital for a local warlord or chieftain, and as such it will occupied by a large war band/army, but will also yield a large sized amount of loot for the attacker. Players

should decide how many points should be in the hill fort, it should be of at least equal size to the attackers, though it would realistically be in all likelihood a larger force.

It should be noted that when attacking the following settlements - medium & large towns, cities and hill forts - that there will be cavalry or infantry patrols roaming the countryside. The attackers will need to roll against their Leadership in order to approach the settlement unseen. If they fail then the defender is able to mount a defence between the settlement and the attacker's forces. Thus the raid will become a straightforward battle on local terrain away from the settlement. The attacker will need to defeat this force before approaching the settlement, normal rules for siege will still apply.

Skirmish Gaming

WAB isn't really designed for skirmish level gaming, though Mordhiem and Lord Of The Rings rules could be used in conjunction with WAB. For skirmishes involving 10 or less troops, then count them all as individual characters, using the rules designed for heroes and lords. If you form a unit then unit rules would apply, because raids against a hamlet wouldn't utilise all of your war band. A small group would be assigned to the raid under command of a minor leader.

Vikings

So what do we know about the Vikings? Well, the image of the horned helmet is a myth, based on a bronze Celtic helmet found in the Thames. There is no current archaeological evidence to support the image of a horned Viking helmet. Yes, they did raid the coast, but they were also proficient farmers, crafts-men and -women as well a great explorers and sailors.

The Vikings heyday was between the 8th and 11th century, during this period they colonised large areas of Europe, the UK, Iceland, Greenland and were the first European settlers in what is now known as North America, or as the Vikings referred to it as Vinland.

In Old Norse, the word is spelt víkingr. The word appears on several rune stones found in Scandinavia. In the Icelanders' sagas, víking refers to an overseas expedition (Old Norse fara í víking "to go on an expedition"), and víkingr, to a seaman or warrior taking part in such an expedition. (Wikipedia)

Saxons

The Saxons were a confederation of tribes from the Saxony region of Northern Germania. They started settling in mainland Britain from the 5th Century onwards, though the number of Saxon migrants is not known. It is also known through written documentation dating between the 4th and 5th Centuries AD that Saxon pirates were raiding the coastal region of Britain.

"The Saxons may have derived their name from seax, a kind of knife for which they were known. The seax has a lasting symbolic impact in the English counties of Essex and Middlesex, both of which feature three seaxes in their ceremonial emblem." (Wikipedia)

Picts

The Picts were a confederation of tribes living in the eastern and northern area of Scotland. They became prominent as power in Northern Britain during the Dark Ages, raiding Northern England via land and sea.

"The name the Picts called themselves is unknown. The Latin word Picti first occurs in a panegyric written by Eumenius in AD 297 and is taken to mean "painted or tattooed people" (Latin pingo "to paint"; pictus, "painted", cf. Greek "π " - puktis, "picture"). Their Old English name gave the modern Scots form Pechts and the Welsh word Fichti." (Wikipedia)

Sub-Roman Britain

The late and post Roman period in Britain was a violent and dark episode in British History, which gave rise to the legend of Arthur. The country was beset on all sides by Barbarians raiding, pillaging and all out war. This dark period also saw a rise in warlords commanding small kingdoms, war, pestilence and famine all occurred during the Dark Ages.

It is believed that Vortigern first invited the Saxons as mercenaries to help fight the Picts and Irish who were constantly plaguing his kingdom with raids. Modern scholars now believe that the Saxon were settled here earlier by the Romans, to act as auxiliaries and barbarian mercenaries to protect Britannia from incursions by the Picts and other barbarian tribes.

Most of the raids conducted by different tribes were on isolated rural settlements, such as villas, hamlets and villages. These were settlements that couldn't mount sufficient defence against the raiders, and later in the Dark Age period Christian Monasteries became an easy target. Most were quite isolated and many of them housed highly valuable items, that were prized by the likes of Viking raiders.

Dark Age Britain Timeline

55BC-450AD ROMAN BRITAIN

45AD Most of southern England under Roman control

60AD King Prasutagus dies

The death of the Iceni king sees Boudicca leading the Iceni and Trinovantes in a brutal revolt, slaughtering inhabitants of Cumulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans). Boudicca's army was devastated near Mancetter (Warwickshire) and the revolt ended with the alleged self-poisoning of Boudicca and her daughters.

122AD Construction of Hadrian's wall begins

139AD Construction of the Antonine wall begins

Though the wall is abandoned in 163 and 207.

450AD-800AD THE CREATION OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

c.500AD Seven major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

Succesive invasions by the Jutes (from southern Scandinavia), Saxons and Angles (from northern Germany) begin in earnest shortly after the withdrawal of the Romans. The Heptarchy (seven kingdoms) is established over time by the settlement of the

invaders, with Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria vying for supremacy over Sussex, Kent, East Anglia and Essex.

600-800AD Conversion of England to Christianity c.

790AD Four major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms

Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria and East Anglia now vie for supremacy and the ruler's title of Bretwalda (overking).

795AD Attack on Lindisfarne

800AD-1066AD THE VIKING INVASIONS AND THE EXPANSION OF WESSEX

A more detailed timeline can be found here:

410AD - 598AD

599AD - 900AD

Recommended Books

Rules

Warhammer Ancient Battles 2nd edition

Fall of the West (WAB Supplement)

Age of Arthur (WAB Supplement)

Shield Wall (WAB Supplement)

Siege and Conquest (WAB Supplement)

All of the above books can be purchased from Warhammer Historical.

Additional Rules

Mordheim - this can be downloaded for free from the Games Workshop website, specifically the Mordheim Resources page.

More resources can be found on Musket, Sword and Paint website.

Iron, Steam & Really Short People
Part 1

Words & Photography: Nick Johnson

I've played Warmachine, on and off, since just after Escalation was released in 2004. I started primarily as a Cygnar player, due to the technological bent present in a lot of their background, and the look of models such as the Stormclad, Lieutenant Allistair Caine and Commander Adept Nemo. However, as time went on, I began to appreciate the advantage that using Mercenary units to fill gaps in my army gave me, especially given some of the abilities that the Lkes of Eiyriss, Gorman di Wulfe and Rhupert Carvolo could give me access to.

As time passed, and more Mercenary releases appeared in Superiority and Legends, I picked up additional units and warjacks, and before long I realised I had a fully functional Mercenary army. In fact, I even took the coin-hungry troops to the two Steamroller tournaments that my local gaming club hosted, winning the second one with a Gorten Grundback list, which prompted the infamous line "You mean I just accidentally won a tournament?"

Over the last couple of years, I've not been playing much in the way of tabletop games, though the Sheffield Irregulars have brought me back into the painting side of things. Early in March 2010, I was contacted by an old friend of mine, who asked me if I would be interested in attending the Hordes & Warmachine Team Challenge event at Maelstrom Games' Eye of the Storm centre at the start of July. This grabbed my attention, as it gave me a reason to get back into Warmachine, and to get some serious painting done.

This article will hopefully give you some insight into how I prepared for the event, up to the start of the June. Part 2 of the article will cover my final preparations, as well as a report on the tournament itself.

March 2010

The invitation from Simon came as something of a surprise - as I mentioned above, I was somewhat rusty on playing Warmachine, not to mention wargaming in general. Still, having thought about it for a couple of days I decided I wanted to give it a go - I've got two armies from Warmachine Mk1, though I hadn't played any games of Mk2 at this point. Actually, I didn't even own the Mk2 rulebook yet.

In most systems I've played, I've looked to play Dwarves - I'm not sure why, but there's something about the stereotypical Dwarven attitude to war that grabs me. In the Warmachine game, Dwarves aren't a faction by themselves. Instead, the Dwarves - hailing

from the land of Rhul - form part of the Mercenary non-faction, and can be played within a number of contracts.

My first step was to dig out my figures to see what I had, both painted and unpainted. Two things struck me as I looked at the spread of (mostly undercoated) models - firstly, while I had an array of painted warjacks and solos, units were somewhat thin on the ground. Secondly, most of the units I did have were balanced at eight models strong - while this was fine in Mk1, Mk2 limits you to fielding 6 or 10 of most infantry, with no middle ground. Either I'd be fielding small units, or I'd need to top them up.

In terms of warcaster, if I was going to field an army mostly of Rhulfolk, I only had two real options - Gorten Grundback and Durgen Madhammer. I'd used Gorten to some success in Mk1, while I hadn't really fielded Durgen at all. Gorten's feat, Landslide, provides quite a tactical advantage in the Steamroller style of scenarios that I assumed we'd be playing. After all, a feat which allows you to shove a large chunk of the enemy army towards any table edge, slowing them down and making them easier to hit, is huge when the scenarios tend to involve controlling areas of the table.

On the other hand, Gorten only has 5 focus, which gives him limited resources with which to control his warjacks and use his spells. While the smaller Rhulic 'jacks are focus-efficient, the Driller - Rhul's première heavy hitter - is quite a focus hog, using 4 of Gorten's 5 focus if he wants to run it at it's full potential.

My alternative, Durgen Madhammer, is a warcaster I wasn't overly familiar with - I think I'd used him for a couple of games when he first came out in Mk1, but that was it. On the other hand, what I'd seen of him promoted a "Steel Rain" approach, dropping many area of effect (AOE) templates on the enemy army. While Mercenaries only had limited access to such AOEs in Mk1, previews were starting to emerge showing a new Rhulic unit and warjack armed with an AOE weapons.

As this was a Team Challenge, we needed to rope in another couple of players. We approached three local players, in the hope that at least two of them were interested. While two showed interest, neither were able to commit to attending, and soon they both confirmed they wouldn't be able to make it after all. At this stage we weren't overly worried, as we had three months to go before the event - surely we'd find some people by then.....

Late in March I managed to pick up my copy of the Mk2 rulebook, along with a Mercenary faction deck. Unfortunately, final work on issue 4 of the magazine meant that I didn't have much time to review these or to start planning my march to war.

April 2010

April was more of a month for gaming than it was for painting - I got five games in, but only managed to paint three figures. Looking at the painting first of all, I finished off a Wroughthammer Rockram which I'd been working on when I stopped playing Warmachine. The Rockram is a versatile warjack,

with a powerful - if short-ranged - gun, and a fairly hefty close-combat weapon. The other two figures I completed were a pair of Grundback Blasters, light warjacks which carry large anti-infantry shotguns as their weapon of choice. I wasn't certain if I'd be using any of these three in my final list, but I'd been meaning to get them painted for some time. While I got some work done on an Ogrun Bokur and the human Mercenary Warcaster Magnus the Traitor, they still remained incomplete.

My first three games took place on a Saturday in early April, when Simon came over to my flat to start getting me trained in the arts of Warmachine Mk2. Simon, who will be one of my three team-mates at the Team Challenge, is primarily a Cryx player. During Mk1, Cryx were my personal bête noire - their denial and control aspects really annoyed me, and I found them difficult to play against. This was especially true given some of the skillful players we had at our club at the time. However, I was determined not to just give up because I was facing the undead once more.

We started by playing a pair of 15 point games. In both games, I fielded the same list, as follows:

Durgan Madhammer

- Ghordson Basher

- Wroughthammer Rockram

- Grundback Gunner

- Grundback Gunner

This, I thought, was a fairly flexible 15 point list, with multiple ranged threats, as well as two meaty close-combat jacks. Durgen's spell list would allow me to make either the Rockram or Basher strike from an unexpected distance, and Durgen's Case Cracker special shot would allow me to penetrate a heavy warjack's armour with ease.

The first of these small-scale games same Durgen facing off against Warwitch Deneghra. Deneghra, or Denny for ease of spelling, is the classic Cryx warcaster, appearing as she does in the Cryx Battlebox starter set. Her feat inflicts a massive negative effect on enemy models within her control area, and she has a combination of spells that allows her to attempt to assassinate the enemy warcaster via arc nodes, meaning her opponent must be very careful about blocking any vector she might use to try to attack from. Simon accompanied her with a Slayer Helljack as a bodyguard, along with three arc node-equipped bonejacks, to give him as much flexibility as possible when trying to kill Durgen.

was a Saturday, after all - we played a larger game. Simon fetched a list led by Iron Lich Asphyxious, while I picked a Searforge Commission list with Durgen at it's head - to make things tougher for myself, I limited myself to just using painted figures. This gave me a fairly solid firing line of Dwarves and Ogrun, facing off against one of Simon's preferred warcasters. As we were playing a 'caster kill game, I didn't need to advance too far, and could allow Simon to advance into my gun line. To start with, this plan worked, as I caused large amounts of casualities with my ranged weapons. Unfortunately, as with the previous game, I ended up leaving Simon a vector to reach my caster, which resulted in Durgen getting killed once more.

My last two games were played against another firned of mine, Jon Birkinshaw, on a Tuesday night a week or so down the line. We played a pair of 25 point games. I didn't get off to a particularly auspicious start when I forgot one figure, and the rules card for a second - fortunately, a spectator was able to supply me with a proxy and a copy of the card, which was handy. Jon was also running a Mercenary list, in this case using Magnus the Traitor, the original Mercenary warcaster. Based around a group of a Mariner, Mule and Renegade, accompanied by some tough infantry in the form of Boomhowler and Company and shielded by Gorman di Wulfe's smoke, it proved tricky to take down. In both games, I was undone by the Renegade's Obliterator rocket - while getting caught in it's blast didn't harm Durgen, thanks to his Blast Armour, it still knocked him down, making him an easy target for the other two warjacks.

As against Simon's Asphyxious list, my shooting was highly dangerous once in range, nearly wiping out a heavy warjack in a salvo from my Gunner and Durgen himself. However, it was apparent that I needed to remember that Durgen needed a shield, otherwise he would be vulnerable to return fire.

May 2010

May could be viewed as being the opposite of April - while I didn't get any games in, I did manage to make some painting progress. Every game I tried schedule fell through, which was unfortuate, as the extra practise would've be helpful, not least with my confidence.

Given that I wasn't getting to play, I concentrated on my painting. I completed a Ghordson Basher from scratch, even going so far as to freehand some Rhulic text on it. I also started a number of other elements I thought I'd need for my army. These included a full unit of Hammerfall High Shield Gun Corps, plus their unit attachment, the solos Thor Steinhammer and Master Gunner Dougal Macnaile, a unit of Horgenhold

I opted for a simple refused flank deployment, and followed a simple plan - if a bonejack gets close, kill it. Once her arc nodes were out of commission, Simon would be forced to commit Denny to try to get the caster kill. Surprisingly enough, my plan worked - the first two bonejacks were taken out piecemeal with some very accurate fire from Durgen and my Gunners. Simon used Denny's feat without checking her control area first, allowing Durgen to escape it's effects. I was fortunately to still be able to advance by Basher to set up a slam, something Simon didn't react to in his turn. I responded by casting Redline on the Basher, and using it to slam Denny's Slayer back over her. The collateral damage from a Helljack passing through, combined with the Basher's Flak Field, saw the Warwitch dead without the Basher even having to buy any additional attacks.

After this light, and somewhat amusing, warm-up game, Simon decided to up the ante a little, and re-jigged his list so he could field the standard version of Goreshade. Goreshade causes problems in a Mangled Metal - caster and warjacks only - game, as his feat allows him to put a unit of Bane Thralls into play. As this unit is worth 5 points, and are a powerful unit, this causes issues. And so it proved to be in-game - while I tried what I could to disable or destroy Simon's warjacks, a Bane Thrall charge on Goreshade's feat turn proved to be the beginning of the end, which resulted with Durgen getting blasted into the ground by one of Goreshade's offensive spells.

Following the obligatory food and Dr Who break - this

Forge Guard, Herne & Jonne and a unit of the Horgenhold Artillery Corps.

The majority of the units I was looking at including were Rhulic, so I'd be fine to use them within the Searforge Commission contract. However, have done some reading and building some trial army lists, I noticed that a pure Searforge force at 50 points wasn't taking advantage of their additional Force Allocation slots, and restricted my selection too much - there were a couple of key solos, in for forms of Reinholdt and Dougal Macnaile, which synergised with Durgen that I couldn't access whilst using the Searforge contract.

So it was with a heavy heart I decided to use the Highborne Covenant in place of the Searforge Commission as my Mercenary contract. The Highborne have a much broader range of choices available to them, but I wanted to keep the very Rhulic feel that I'd been developing since coming back to Mk2. Fortunately, I would still be able to select any of the options that I'd been considering if I used Highborne, so I wouldn't lose out in that regard. I'd also be able to Advance Deploy any of my solos, if I felt like it, though the core ones I was looking at wouldn't make use of that advantage.

The final significant preparation that occurred during May was finding the last two members of the Inglourious B'Stards. Andres and Sam from the Guts 'n' Gears podcast were also in a situation of having a two-man team, and had advertised for two more players on their podcast. Simon contacted them as the show aired, and soon came to an agreement that we would merge the two teams. They would be fielding Protec-

torate of Menoth and Retribution of Scyrah armies as their forces, and they mentioned early on that they weren't using many mercenaries - this was good for me, as it would leave my options as wide open as possible.

End of Part 1

Part 2 will appear in issue 6 - Will I settle on an army list? Will everything be painted in time? And just how will I perform at the European Team Challenge? Join me next issue as we both find out the answers to those questions.....

Just Another Day

Words: Taylor Holloway
Illustration: David North

Click. Click. Click.

Scott glanced down at his rifle. The sound every soldier dreads. He can't remember where he heard that before – some military show on A&E no doubt. All that was a distant memory now. No more TV, no more survivalists preaching their shit over the airwaves.

This was the end of the world.

"Piche! I'm jammed!"

A big man wearing a bulletproof vest and a hockey mask looked at him. "God dammit, Frenchie! Here!"

Scott grabbed the shotgun out of the air and cocked it as Piche pulled out two pistols and started firing. He ducked behind some crates and took a deep breath.

Behind him, a shill scream filled the abandoned bookstore. They were in here now, he knew. The ghouls. People had all sorts of names for them; most of them were pretty stupid – screamers, biters, hell, even zombies. Now that was stupid. Everyone knows that you have to shoot a zombie in the head to put it down – these bastards went down just like anything else if you shot them enough times. Doesn't matter where – but damn, were they tough.

Just as he finished that thought, one of them came skittering around a bookcase like some junkie looking for a fix. It was breathing heavy, he noticed. He'd fix that.

BLAM!

The retort from the shotgun deafened him. The ghoul had taken the shot in the shoulder, and all that was left was ground meat.

"Frenchie! A little help, dammit!"

Scott looked over the display in the teen horror section and saw Piche rapidly pulling the trigger. Each muzzle-flash ended another wretched creature. He was good. Almost too good – even for a cop, he was probably the best he had ever seen. It was like watching an action movie – each bullet went where it meant to go.

In their wake was nothing but red ruin.

Piche butted one in the face with the butt of his desert eagle, and retreated back to the best-seller's aisle. "Don't pussy out on me now, bud. We're stuck in here – so either we kill them all, or..." He trailed off and cocked his head.

The unmistakable sound of helicopter rotors kicked up as it gained ground.

"Do you hear that?" Scott grinned.

Piche wiped one bloody hand under his nose and sniffed. "Let's not get too excited. We're still trapped in here, and there is no way anyone out there knows that we're in here unless they take a cue that there are hundreds of these damned things screaming outside of the Starbucks."

Both stopped talking and listened. The screaming had retreated considerably, though experience had taught them both that ghouls, especially under the sway of a herald, were capable of concocting complex traps.

"It seems clear." Scott muttered, while walking over and picking up his AK. "I thought these things are supposed to never jam."

Piche skipped over and took a look at the weapon. "I think you accidently turned the safety on... here." He reached over and flicked off the safety.

"Oh."

The two survivors walked over the front door of the bookstore and surveyed the yard. No ghouls, and no heralds... but also, no chopper.

Scott flicked the safety back on and slung his rifle over his shoulder. "Looks like they left."

Piche nodded and lifted up his hockey mask. He wasn't the clean cut cop that he remembered – where a strong jaw and chiselled chin once was the source of all his manly good looks was now a bearded tangle of black hair.

"Looks like."

Their reverie was quickly interrupted by the unmistakable sound of automatic gun fire. Looking over the horizon, they both noticed strange fleshy spheres in the air.

"Any guesses where the gunfire came from?"

Without a word, they quickly started winding their way through the junkyard that used to be a parking lot.

As Piche and Scott reached the edge of the lot, both began to move a little more cautiously. Staccato gunfire blazed from behind the military helicopter that had landed in the middle of what used to be a busy intersection. Six people, Scott quickly noted. They moved with expert efficiency, each armed with a assault rifle and clad in flak armour. Scott looked to Piche, who had pulled down his hockey mask again.

"They look like military."

Piche nodded. "Did you see what they were shooting at?"

"No." Scott shook his head. "What the hell are those things floating up there."

"How the hell should I know?"

Gunfire ripped through the silence again. From twenty meters away, it left ringing in Scott's ears.

"I say we make a break for the chopper and see if they need a hand."

Piche simply nodded and ran sideways, shooting his pistol while moving, using derelict cars for cover. Scott moved quickly as well, remembering to take off the safety as he unloaded a clip in the direction Piche was shooting.

There seemed to be hundreds of ghouls, all gathered in a tight circle, looking up at the floating pods. They didn't notice they were being cut down – they just stared up at the sky and made strange gibbering noises. Something had them riled up, and Scott knew that couldn't be good.

Piche slid behind the chopper with the soldiers, with Scott right on his rear. A woman, a good looking woman from what Scott could see, levelled her gun at them, then quickly lifted it, seeing that they were human.

"Where the hell did you come from?" She shouted over the gunfire of her companions.

Piche lifted up his hockey mask and pointed behind him.

"The book-store over there."

The woman nodded, as if that was a sufficient answer. "You guys picked the wrong time to be curious. Any idea what those damned things are doing?"

Scott shook his head. "No damn clue. We were hoping you guys knew what was going on."

"That'd be a negative." She extended a gloved hand, "I'm Rebecca Williams."

Scott took the hand and shook it, but Piche answered. "I'm Nick Piche and this is Frenchie."

Rebecca smiled and motioned to her companions, who were busy mopping up the last of the ghouls. "This is Phil Huggins, Pat Louis, Mark Thatcher,"

She paused and pointed at two more that were a way back on a divider with the largest rifles Scott had ever seen. "And that's Laura Willis, and Josh Blake."

"Rebecca!" The soldier named Phil shouted, "They're coming down!"

All of them watched in awe as the massive pod lowered itself to the ground. The few remaining ghouls underneath it were crushed as its bulk

flopped against the asphalt. Rebecca slammed a fresh clip into her rifle. "Whatever damned thing comes out of that thing, give it a good what-for. Let's not take any chances."

Everyone took that as a cue to refresh their own ammo as well. Mark handed Scott a clip for his rifle, and Piche picked up an assault rifle for himself out of the helicopter. No one seemed to object, so he took a few extra clips as well and shoved them into the pockets of his cargo pants.

The wall of the fleshy pod opened up into a wide pink orifice. The creatures that started to emerge stretched the very limits of Scott's sanity. It seemed as though one had taken a reptile and some predatory insect, and merged them into a single entity. They towered above the soldiers, each taking massive steps on strangely clawed feet. They had eight limbs, Scott quickly noticed. The upper two seemed as though they had digits, and in their hands they held strange fleshy looking creatures, with wide orifices of their own. Their lower two limbs terminated in wicked looking claws, and were vestigial in purpose it would seem. Their six eyes were the worst thing to behold, as they gleamed with a sort of malign intelligence.

Their oversized mouths were wide, and filled with long, shark-like teeth and a swishing pink tongue. Along their back and their powerful tails was what only could be described as quills, like those found on a porcupine.

"FIRE AT WILL!!" Rebecca's voice punched through the silence. From that point onward, it would seem that Scott's ears would never stop ringing. Everyone began to unload on the abominations that shambled from the pod. The creatures screeched and began to fire weapons of their own – those strange creatures they held were shooting blobs of some sort of viscous liquid. Behind Scott, someone was unlucky enough to be hit with one of them, and began to scream. He made the mistake of turning his head only to see Josh begin to messily dissolve into a shrieking pile of gore. Laura began to scream as well, and started to stomp the pile that once was her companion. Scott could see from his vantage point that something was squirming around in the mess that was his new-found ally.
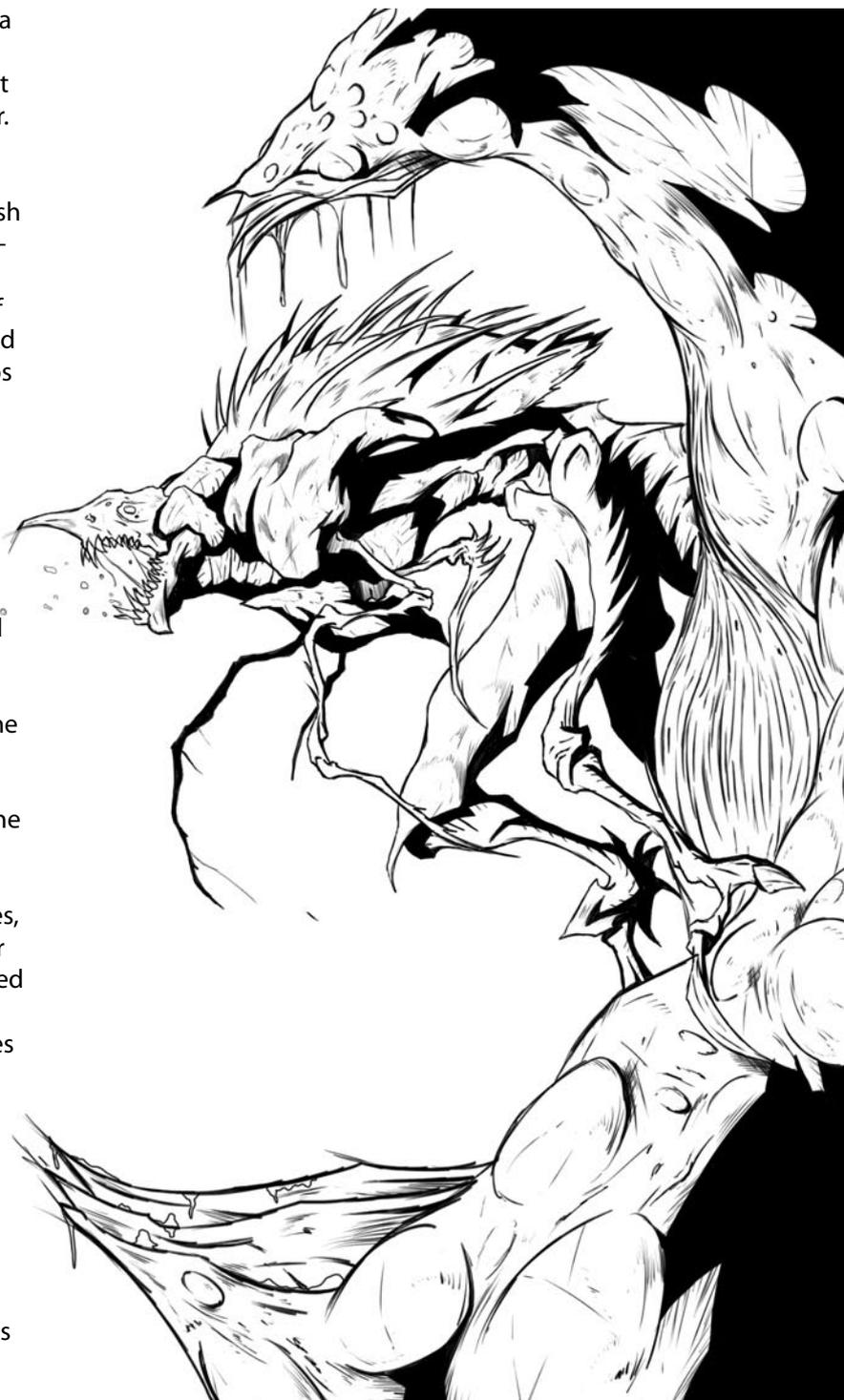
Gritting his teeth, he pressed forward with his assault rifle. Round after round pounded into these creatures, though they continued to press forward as well. For each one that they killed, another seemed to take its place. Dozens of monstrous broken bodies now cluttered the orifice they had emerged from, and the creatures were stepping over their fallen brethren to continue shooting at the soldiers. Mark ended up taking a hit to his arm, and he fell screaming. Rebecca cursed and grabbed a grenade from her belt. Biting off the pin, she lobbed it over the chopper and Scott watched as it bounced in front of the pod and exploded. Piche flinched and dived into a ditch.

An intense humming started to thrum in Scott's ears. He saw the pod begin to hover above the ground and begin to gain height.

Pat began to cheer and unloaded another clip into its soft belly. Rebecca didn't miss a beat – she dove into the chopper doors and emerged with an rpg.

"These bastards aren't going to get away that easily!" she shouted as she flipped up the targeter and began to take aim.

The familiar swoosh that Scott had only heard in movies accompanied the rocket as it sped towards the pod. It bucked and wheeled slightly before disappearing into the fleshy orifice. There was a muffled explosion, and the pod pulled hard to the left, and then to the right before taking a dive. The wet popping noise that echoed across the empty highway made Scott's stomach twist slightly.

Then there was quiet again.

Laura ran over to Mark, who was silently flopping around on the ground. Scott instantly knew that he was dead, and levelled his gun. Rebecca held up a hand in a motion to stop to Laura, and moved cautiously towards the flopping corpse. She prodded the body, and then flipped it over.

Mark's upper body shot forward and he opened his mouth wider than any natural creature could. There was the audible snapping of his jaw as a grub began to work its way out. Phil screamed, and Laura began to be violently sick. Rebecca gritted her teeth and unloaded a burst into her former companion's head. The grub, Scott surely hoped it was the grub, began to squeal.

Piche walked away from the horror show beside the chopper and began to investigate the ruin of the pod. He began to prod the bodies of the monsters that had come out of the wreck.

"So, I suppose we're done with ghouls then, right?"

Rebecca mopped her brow with a red and white bandana, and shouldered her weapon. "We can only hope."

"Yeah," Scott looked to the hundreds of other pods in the sky. "We can only hope."

Riposte

Mith surveyed the dusty arena before him. Servants were still scurrying around, flinging sand over the worst of the bloody puddles. The twin suns of Anvil were directly overhead, reflecting from the steel-clad concrete walls with a ferocity that would have been blinding without the filter in his visor.

Mith could see the nobles and merchantmen taking their seats on the balconies, peering curiously down at him. Even at this distance he could sense their eagerness. Only his patron, Crossus, looked on with his usual calm demeanour.

For the first time in months Mith felt a genuine thrill. Opponents were supposed to be kept secret until the last moment, but judging by the packed arena word had already spread. Mith rarely attracted these sorts of crowds himself but there were fighters who did, fighters who liked to play with their opponents and put on a show for the audience.

Mith took another step forward and unhooked his flux halberd. The gate opposite him creaked open emitting a gush of smoke. The crowd cheered as it cleared and revealed the other warrior - Borraine.

"Ah, Judicator Crossus. I'm not late for the game, am I?"

Crossus glanced at the tall young man who had entered the curtained balcony.

"Not at all, Prefect Lucerus. Your man has just taken to the field in fact. Won't you join me?"

Lucerus accompanied Crossus to the edge of the balcony and looked down.

"Ah yes, Borraine. A fine warrior, is he not?"

"His entrance was a little ostentatious," Crossus sniffed. "Unnecessary."

"That's because he's a showman, Crossus, not like your fighter. I don't know why you bother with him. He's so... uninteresting."

Crossus shrugged as below them the two opponents began to circle each other warily.

"I don't care too much for flair. Mith wins fights, that is why I patronise him."

"Yes, but people want to see something special when they come here." He poured a drink. "I understand Mith is a soldier?"

Crossus's lip twitched. Lucerus had been doing research. The fight today clearly wasn't as random as it should be. Still, it was a common practice. A patron whose fighter was defeated in the arena lost face in the real world, too.

"He was a indentured soldier. A veteran from Nostro."

"Ha! That pointless war?" Lucerus made a dismissive gesture. "A relic, then."

Around them the crowd rumbled with approval as the conflict started in earnest.

Mith readied his pole-arm as he watched Borraine. Mith had heard of him, a newcomer from the south who had already cut a swathe through the arena. He was much younger than Mith, wearing an elaborate mesh cloak artfully designed so as not to hinder the fighter and carrying a beautiful pair of matching sabres which crackled with energy.

The two men paced for several minutes, trying to gauge each other, before Borraine made the first move. His swords flashed out from under his cloak with a speed that took Mith off guard. The blades clashed against the haft of his halberd with a burst of sparks. Above them the crowd applauded.

"He's fast, your fighter. Young, too. Much like yourself, Lucerus. I hear you've already made quite a name, gathering a strong following among the more impressionable statesmen. Some say you represent a threat to the traditional ways."

Lucerus looked at the older man. "And what do you say, Judicator?"

"I agree with them."

"Is that why you tried to pay the magistrates to vote against me?" Lucerus's tone was almost gloating.

"Ah, you are referring to the 'Attervoss' I take it? The ship that was destroyed by pirates?"

"Your ship, Crossus. The 'Attervoss' was carrying enough money to bribe half the magistracy. That was a clumsy mistake - I'd expected more from someone of your standing. But you're like the rest of them, aren't you? Traditionalists, conservatives, unwilling to consider change. A relic, just like your fighter."

Mith gasped as one of the swords sliced along his arm. He found himself backing towards the side wall parrying blow after blow from the flashing blades.

Mith dodged a final strike and planted a solid kick into the cloaked Borraine using the brief respite it granted him to roll away from the wall. Spinning back to his feet he thrust at his enemy but Borraine cartwheeled past the attack, leaping into the air, one of his swords aiming for Mith's heart as he descended.

The breastplate Mith had worn throughout his military service, on both Nostro and Oln, splintered under the force of the blow. Mith heard a bone crack as he was forced to the ground.

On the balcony Lucerus laughed at the spectacle. Crossus turned to face him.

"You take too much at face value, Prefect. A failing of the young. The 'Attervoss' was indeed my ship but the funds it carried were destined not for the magistrates but for the settlements. Funds and colonists."

Lucerus's laughter stopped abruptly. Crossus continued.

"Oh yes. Thirty-three settler families to be precise. Whoever was behind the destruction of that ship is accountable for their deaths, wouldn't you agree?"

Clenching his teeth against the pain Mith flung a handful of dust into Borraine's face. An old trick, but enough to make the swordsman flinch. Mith was up immediately, swinging with the flux halberd, slipping it past Borraine's guard with an electric flash, coaxing

a grunt from the robed warrior. The smell of blood and singed flesh filled the air as Borraine staggered back. Mith thrust again but the pain in his chest pulled him up short. Borraine beat a hasty retreat and the two men went back to circling each other.

"Well, Lucerus, it looks as though your showman is learning some new lessons."

Lucerus looked annoyed. "He'll be fine."

"Perhaps. Now, what about those pirates? We should make an example of them. I'm sure I can count of your support, yes?"

As Borraine dodged a slicing blow from Mith the older veteran used the momentum to swing his weapon around and crack Borraine across the back with the haft. The crowd cheered.

Lucerus shifted uncomfortably, distracted by the noise from the surrounding crowd. Crossus stared at him - he was no longer the confident, arrogant young Prefect who had pushed through the curtains a few minutes ago. Now he looked uncertain.

"Yes of course." Lucerus muttered. "Piracy is a crime that should not be permitted to continue. Only a fool would see otherwise."

"Only a fool." Crossus smiled. "An interesting choice of words. I've done my own research, you see, and the destruction of the 'Attervoss' was not a chance occurrence it seems. The pirates were given it's location by someone in the employ of a Prefect."

Lucerus's eyes were wide as Crossus continued.

"Yes, Prefect Duman. One of your supporters, isn't he? I do recall hearing he was a fellow reformist. I'd hate to think what an association with Duman would do to your rising political career, Lucerus, if he is found responsible for the deaths of those settlers."

Lucerus rallied himself. "You dare threaten me?" His tone was sharp. "I see what you're doing, Crossus, but I won't be trapped. Filling the 'Attervoss' with families was clever but you won't be able to stop me as easily as that. If Duman was connected to the attack then he's a fool for leaving a trail. I'll sever all ties to him and to his money. I may be young but I know how this game is played and I can be just as deadly an opponent as anyone else."

Mith's heart was beating fast and there was pain in his chest whenever he drew a breath. The suns were past their zenith but the heat down in the pit was intense. Borraine was clearly suffering, too, and both men were

beginning to tire. Mith swung at his opponent, the blade grazing Borraine's legs. The swordsman counter attacked angrily, lashing out with a rapid flurry of blows that forced Mith to parry furiously. The veteran smiled to himself as he saw a chance and threw in a couple of quick strikes cutting Borraine's cloak to ribbons. Borraine was furious, not used to being toyed with. His swords clashed against the halberd again and again, the force of the blows cutting chunks out of the metal and sending numbing vibrations through Mith's hands. Mith took two steps backwards and fell to one knee as the crowd above him gasped.

Lucerus and Crossus glared at each other. The older man seemed to crumble first, looking away and down into the pit. Lucerus laughed.

"Ha! You're weak, Judicator. You should stand aside for someone with real power."

Crossus did not speak as Lucerus threw the curtains aside and left with a flourish.

"Prefect Duman?"

A short, boyish looking man stepped through the curtains at the opposite end of the balcony.

"I heard everything, Judicator Crossus."

"So you see now how Lucerus treats those who are loyal to him?"

"I do. I shall make sure everyone else knows it, too. By tomorrow morning Lucerus will have very little support left."

"Very good, Duman, very good." Crossus smiled. "And in return I'll make sure no-one else finds out about the 'Attervoss'."

"Thank you."

"Now if you'll excuse me, Duman, I'd like to see how this fight ends."

Borraine lunged forward as Mith stumbled, his anger mixing with his impetuousness and overconfidence. Both swords were poised to fall but Mith was ready. Lifting his halberd as Borraine jumped Mith saw fear in the warrior's eyes as Borraine couldn't prevent himself from being impaled upon the blade. The crowd rose to cheer as Mith let the heavy body slump to the ground. Borraine may have been fast and skilled, but Mith was far more experience at surviving. Turning to the balconies he spotted Crossus and bowed to his patron.

The fair city of Hydrabad, a bustling port town on the coast of Klem, ruled by the Five Merchant Kings. This is a place where a man might find his fortune.

If he can remember to set his alarm clock....

KINGSTON GET YOUR GOOD FOR NOTHIN' ASS DOWN HERE!

TUK TUK

TRADING COMPANY LIMITED

EST. 1758

Possible reasons for rude awakening;

gurgle

04T

Broken Teas-maid

SPEK

Dirty toilet

KOBALD JAM

gasp!

Jars not priced

jiggle.

DO NOT LOSE

Lost keys

SMUT

evidence.

Smut found under counter

BLINK

drool

NO. NO. DAMN SHOES NO. NO.

Guild of Merchants

GUILD OF MERCHANTS 0722 374 65

A CITY OF HYDRABAD · GUILD OF MERCHANTS

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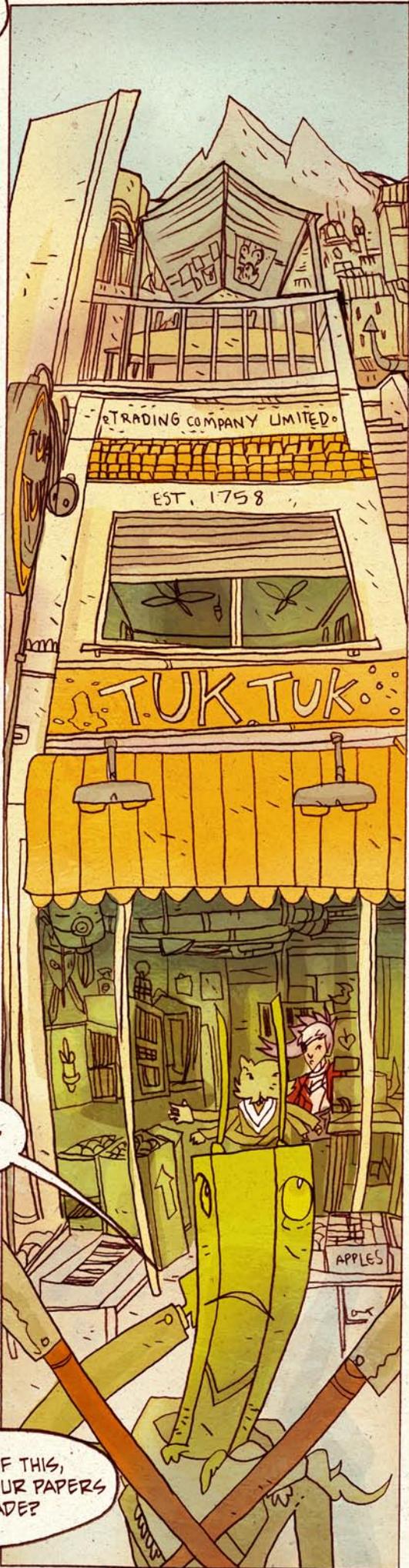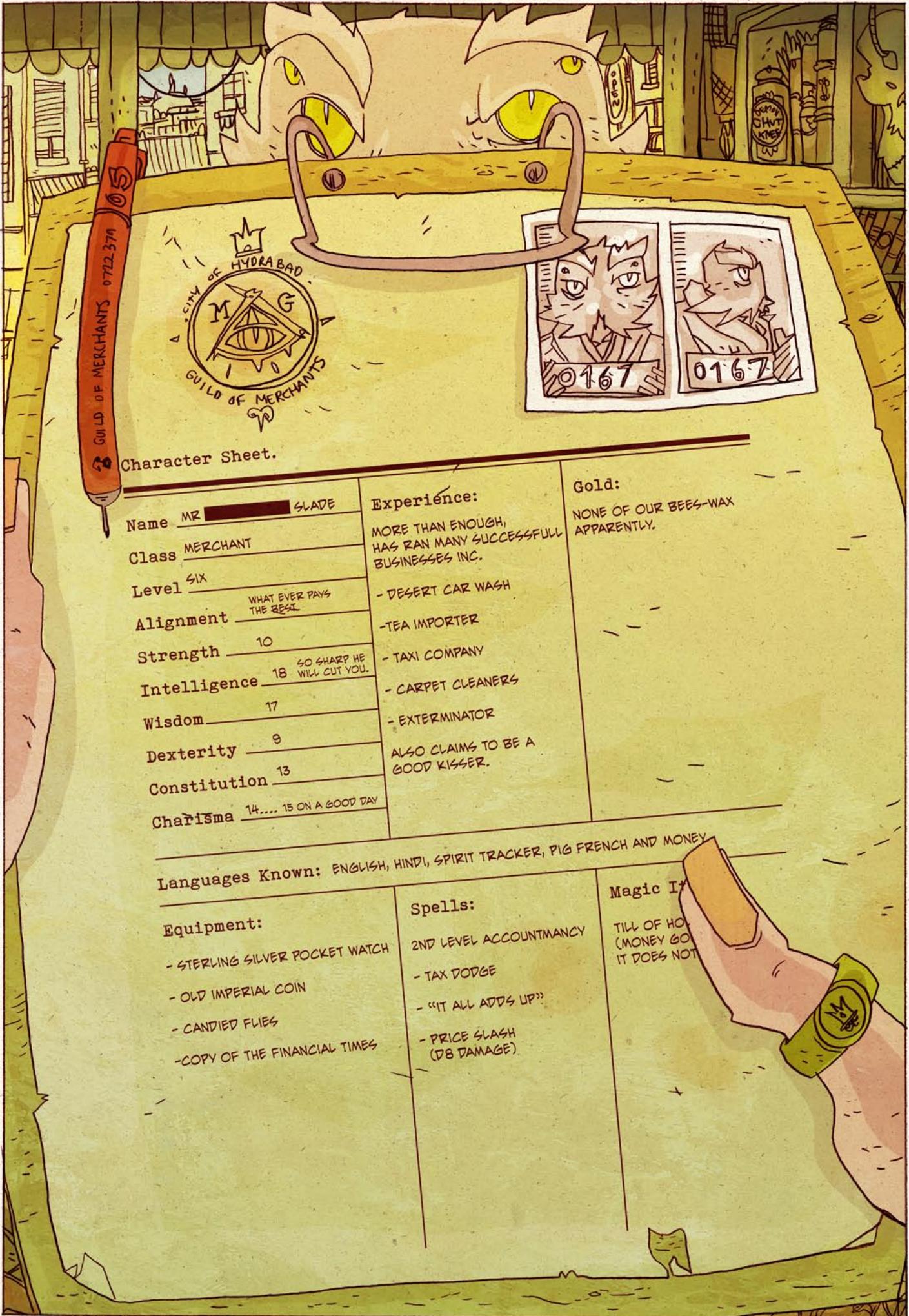
Character Sheet.

Name MR ███████ SLADE

Class MERCHANT

Level SIX

Alignment WHAT EVER PAYS THE BEST

Strength 10

Intelligence 18 SO SHARP HE WILL CUT YOU.

Wisdom 17

Dexterity 9

Constitution 13

Charisma 14.... 15 ON A GOOD DAY

Experience:

MORE THAN ENOUGH, HAS RAN MANY SUCCESSFULL BUSINESSES INC.

- DESERT CAR WASH

- TEA IMPORTER

- TAXI COMPANY

- CARPET CLEANERS

- EXTERMINATOR

ALSO CLAIMS TO BE A GOOD KISSER.

Gold:

NONE OF OUR BEES-WAX APPARENTLY.

**Languages Known:** ENGLISH, HINDI, SPIRIT TRACKER, PIG FRENCH AND MONEY

Equipment:

- STERLING SILVER POCKET WATCH

- OLD IMPERIAL COIN

- CANDIED FLIES

- COPY OF THE FINANCIAL TIMES

Spells:

2ND LEVEL ACCOUNTMANCY

- TAX DODGE

- "IT ALL ADDS UP"

- PRICE SLASH (D8 DAMAGE)

Magic I*

TILL OF HO█
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IT DOES NOT█
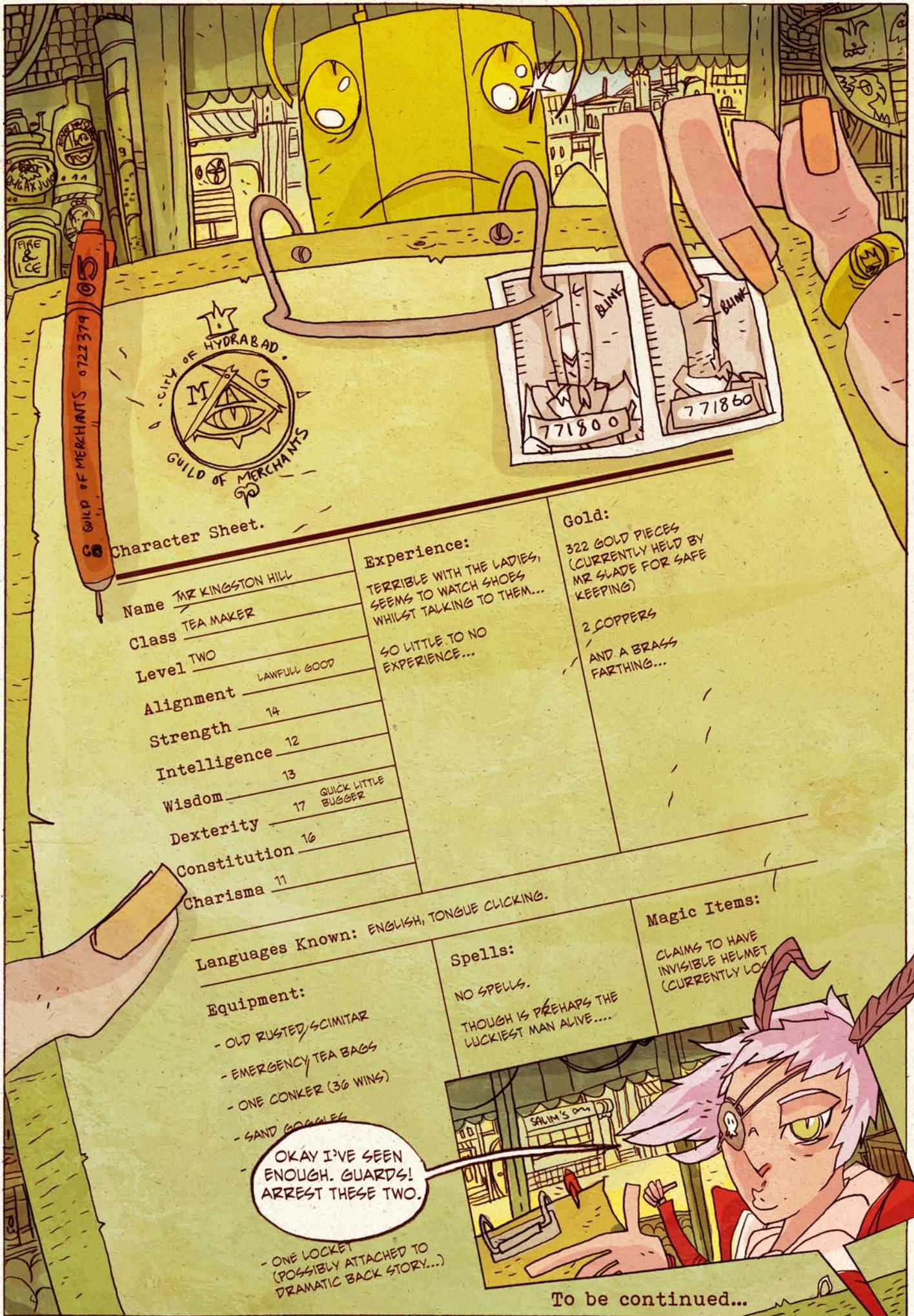
Character Sheet.

Name __MR KINGSTON HILL__

Class __TEA MAKER__

Level __TWO__

Alignment __LAWFULL GOOD__

Strength __14__

Intelligence __12__

Wisdom __13__

Dexterity __17__ QUICK LITTLE BUGGER

Constitution __16__

Charisma __11__

Experience:

TERRIBLE WITH THE LADIES, SEEMS TO WATCH SHOES WHILST TALKING TO THEM...

SO LITTLE TO NO EXPERIENCE...

Gold:

322 GOLD PIECES (CURRENTLY HELD BY MR SLADE FOR SAFE KEEPING)

2 COPPERS

AND A BRASS FARTHING...

Languages Known: ENGLISH, TONGUE CLICKING.

Equipment:

- OLD RUSTED/SCIMITAR
- EMERGENCY TEA BAGS
- ONE CONKER (36 WINS)
- SAND GOGGLES
- ONE LOCKET (POSSIBLY ATTACHED TO DRAMATIC BACK STORY...)

Spells:

NO SPELLS.

THOUGH IS PREHAPS THE LUCKIEST MAN ALIVE....

Magic Items:

CLAIMS TO HAVE INVISIBLE HELMET (CURRENTLY LO[...]

OKAY I'VE SEEN ENOUGH. GUARDS! ARREST THESE TWO.

To be continued...

City Guardsmen

Words: Dave Barker
Illustrations: Jason Hubbard

I have recently bought the PDF version of the Pathfinder RPG from Piazo Publishing. If you've not come across Pathfinder already, it is an evolution of the D&D 3.5 system that was released in August 2009, and it is a breeze to pick up if you are already familiar with D&D 3 or D&D 3.5.

Although there are some differences, the changes seem to all have been made to increase the ease of play, improve balance or simply make the system simpler and faster during play. Rather than try and cram a summary of the changes into the limited space available in this article, if you're interested, then I strongly recommended reading a copy of Piazo's free Conversion Guide, available from their website. I particular like the effort made to keep Pathfinder compatible with older 3 and 3.5 supplements – which I find an especially useful feature, having invested in plenty of D&D 3.5 material in the past!

Pretty much the first thing I do with any games system is try creating a few sample characters, who often end up as NPCs in a future game. I was pretty pleased with the speed of creating my first group of four fighters. All four were created with the '4d6 drop lowest' method and are first level fighters. They would be suitable either as pre-generated PCs or as NPCs for your games, and I have written up some background for them in this article, linking the four characters together. I have also declined to give them any alignment, so you can use them however you want. I hope you get as much use out of these chaps in your Pathfinder games as I hope to get from them in mine!

Brockhurst

Brockhurst is quite a large city which makes most of its money by taxing the trade that goes on within its walls. Being a port, as well as having well maintained road connections with the smaller inland cities and towns, Brockhurst has been a natural trade centre for several centuries.

Run by a hereditary ruler, who goes by the title of Patrician, Brockhurst is an independent city-state that strives hard to maintain friendly trading relations with all of its neighbours. Because of this, Brockhurst is often chosen as neutral ground for negotiations and discussions by it's neighbours, as well as those from further afield who are having trouble maintaining their own friendly relations.

As a result of all of these factors Brockhurst is a cosmopolitan city, and with so many people coming and going all of the time, the Patrician relies upon the Brockhurst City Guard (BCG) to keep order. The BCG has naval, land and magical branches and performs all of the roles of a police force and a military for Brockhurst. Although the BCG is made up of many experienced and veteran members, at least half of its force is made up of young adults native to Brockhurst city or one of the nearby settlements, who undertake at least two years of "City Service" between the ages of 16 and 20. This City Service is undertaken in return for a formal education which they have received for free from the city. In addition, once their City Service is complete, the young person gains their full citizenship of the city-state of Brockhurst.

The four characters given below are typical of Brockhurst City Guard members who have either just completed or are about to complete their City Service. Their training and experience have made them into effective level 1 fighters, although their different skills and feats are indicative of the different roles and experiences they've undertaken during their time in the BCG. However, they are all kitted out with the same standard BCG equipment of brown studded leather armour with the city's coat of arms over the left breast, a light steel shield that also display's the city's coat of arms, a longbow and arrows, a longsword and a dagger.

Harris Bragg, Human, Fighter 1

STR 17 (+3) DEX 12 (+1) CON 15 (+2) INT 9 (-1) WIS 8 (-1) CHA 9 (-1)

HPs 11, AC 15, Init +1, BAB +1, Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0

Longsword Attack Bonus: +5, Longbow Attack Bonus: +2

Equipment: Studded Leather Armour (+3 AC, -1ACP), Light Steel Shield (+1AC, -1ACP), Longbow (d6/d8, x3), 20 Arrows, Longsword, Dagger, 13gps

Skills: Climb (+7), Ride (+5)

Feats: Fleet, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Traits: Speed 35ft

Features: Fighter's Weapon and Armour Proficiencies

Languages: Common

Favoured Class: Fighter

Harris Bragg is the youngest son of a dairy farmer from the town of Bruni, which lies about six miles inland from Brockhurst. Although he intends to return back to work his parent's farm one day, Harris has his parents' blessing to satisfy his wanderlust and search for adventure for a while now he is approaching the end of his City Service.

A big, fast man, Harris enjoys the outdoor life and is more proficient than most of his peers with a longsword. Some of his peers find his enjoyment of guard duty particularly odd, but also find him companionable and true to his friends – Harris tries to keep all of his friends safe in a fight.

Percy Flagstaff, Human, Fighter 1

STR 12 (+1) DEX 12 (+1)CON 15 (+2) INT 8 (-1) WIS 8 (-1) CHA 11 (+0)

HPs 11, AC 15 , Init +1, BAB +1, Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0

Longsword Attack Bonus: +2, Longbow Attack Bonus: +2

Equipment: Studded Leather Armour (+3 AC, -1ACP), Light Steel Shield (+1AC, -1ACP), Longbow (d6/d8, x3), 20 Arrows, Longsword, Dagger, 23gps

Skills: Climb (+5), Swim (+5)

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Catch Off-Guard

Traits: Speed 30ft

Features: Fighter's Weapon and Armour Proficiencies

Languages: Common

Favoured Class: Fighter

Percy Flagstaff is a slight, wiry man that doesn't really look cut out for adulthood, let alone being a member of the BCG. His young life on the streets of the city as a petty thief have given him a strong sense of awareness of his personal space in a fight, and some time spent as a rating on one of the BCG warships have given him some important physical skills.

Percy is a nice enough fellow and most of the BCG like having him around. Though he does sometimes come across as slightly untrustworthy, he has truly put his former life past behind him. His low intelligence and lack of wisdom don't always do him favours though, and too often Percy is apt to say the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Yorr Reuben, Human, Fighter 1

STR 16 (+3) DEX 17 (+3) CON 15 (+2) INT 14 (+2) WIS 13 (+1) CHA 10 (+0)

HPs 10, AC 17, Init +3, BAB +1, Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0

Longsword Attack Bonus: +5, Longbow Attack Bonus: +4

Equipment: Studded Leather Armour (+3 AC, -1ACP), Light Steel Shield (+1AC, -1ACP), Longbow (d6/d8, x3), 20 Arrows, Longsword, Dagger,73gps

Skills: Climb (+7), Ride(+7), Swim(+7), Survival (+5), Intimidate(+4)

Feats: Weapon Focus (Longsword), Shield Focus

Traits: Speed 30ft

Features: Fighter's Weapon and Armour Proficiencies

Languages: Common

Favoured Class: Fighter

Yorr is the son of an influential trader in the spice markets of Brockhurst. Unlike his brothers, Yorr shows no aptitude for being a trader, but he has shown himself to be a skilled fighter. Yorr has also spent quite some time with the BCG cavalry units and developed valuable skills as a mounted warrior. His father hopes he can tempt him back to work for him as a guard crew chief when his City Service is over, but accepts that Yorr will probably want to find himself and have a few adventures first.

A well-built man with a hard face, it isn't difficult for Yorr to appear intimidating. However, only a few of his closest friends know that he's already had two books of his poetry published in Brockhurst under the nom-de-plume "The BCG Bard".

Jax Forosa, Half Elf, Fighter 1

STR 16 (+3) DEX 18 (+4) CON 15 (+2) INT 11 (+0) WIS 11 (+0) CHA 13 (+1)

HPs 10, AC 18, Init +4, BAB +1, Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0

Longsword Attack Bonus: +4, Longbow Attack Bonus: +6

Equipment: Studded Leather Armour (+3 AC, -1ACP), Light Steel Shield (+1AC, -1ACP), Longbow (d6/d8, x3), 20 Arrows, Longsword, Dagger, 133gps

Skills: Ride(+8), Acrobatics (+6), Handle Animal (+5), Intimidate (+5)

Feats: Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Weapon Focus (Longbow)

Traits: Low-Light Vision, Elf Blood, Elven Immunities, Keen Senses, Multalented, Speed 30ft

Features: Fighter's Weapon and Armour Proficiencies

Languages: Common, Elven

Favoured Classes (2): Fighter, Rogue

Jax is the daughter of a noble house of Brockhurst. Her Elven heritage comes from her mother, an Elf from the Far Woods who was an adventuress and wanderer until she eventually settled in Brockhurst and married well. Jax is still very close to her mother, who has gone to great length to ensure that Jax and her younger brother, Amii, are aware of, and can make maximum use of, both their Human and Elven heritages. Her human father dotes on her and finds it hard to think she is a young woman who has almost completed her City Service, but he respects the fact that she is now old enough to make her own decisions.

Jax is attractive and receives a lot of attention because of this, but she is also a fine warrior. She has served in the Patrician's honour guard whilst in the BCG, though she thinks this is just because of her looks. She is mistaken in this, however, as she was selected purely on the grounds of her competence. She hasn't really decided what she wants to do with her life, but has enjoyed her time with the BCG during her City Service.

Executive Protocols
Running a Covert-Ops Campaign

Words: Peter Allison
Photography: Jason Hubbard

Covert operations are the medium of spies, assassins, Special Forces operatives, government agents, counter-terrorist units, and traitors. Fuelled with paranoia, secrecy, and intrigue, it is a rich genre filled with potential for rewarding role-playing experiences and complex story-lines.

Covert Operations are more than a genre of specialist fighters, and as such I will not be focusing upon the statistical aspect of such games. Instead, I will be analysing the techniques, tropes, and atmosphere found within a typical covert-ops campaign, and how best to utilise them.

As alluded to previously, the archetypes inherent in Covert-ops are a universal mix; if only because regardless of where and when, there will always be a need for people of deniable intent. Thus, it can be very easy to set the storyline with the science-fiction or fantasy genre - as demonstrated by Richard Morgan with the Takeshi Kovacs trilogy and Robin Hobb's Farseer trilogy respectively - and this can add an extra layer to your plot.

What follows is a series of general observations and recommendations from writing, running, and playing Covert-ops campaigns. Good hunting.

1. Immerse yourself in the genre

As with all things, before starting a journey, know where you are going. In the case of writing a covert-ops storyline, the best advice I can give is for you to simply immerse yourself within the genre. There are a wealth of books which I sincerely recommend, and nor do you have to be limited to purely literature as a source of research.

My own personal recommendation is Rainbow Six by Tom Clancy, who demonstrated in a singular stroke how covert-ops storylines are not a series of combat-sequences. Other suggestions include 24, Spooks, Burn Notice, and, the Bourne Trilogy. Farewell to Arms by John Carlin (an article from Wired magazine) gives a frighteningly comprehensive assessment on the future of covert-operations.

Roleplay Game (RPG) sourcebooks which deserve an honorary mention are Cracken's Rebel Field Guide (by West End Games for Star Wars, printed in 1991) and A Guide to Covert-Ops (by FanPro for Classic Battletech, reprinted 2007). Both of these are excellent sources of background for your games.

2. Less structure. More plot.

As covert-ops campaigns are inherently investigative based, a more freeform style of play is required. Setting out a rigid structure is ultimately self-defeating, as the players will either feel as if they are led around by the nose, or decide to lead the investigation in an unexpected direction. Instead, develop as much of the plot and background as you can prior to the campaign commencing, and trust the players to follow the clues (and red herrings).

I would further recommend a rough timeline is prepared for the protagonists, giving you an idea of what they will be doing when. While this may add to the amount of time spent preparing the campaign, the resulting satisfaction in simply being able to sit back and watch the players' investigations unfold is an ultimately rewarding result.

You will probably find throughout the campaign that your storytelling style will switch between an active and reactive style; quite often this will depend upon the players' actions, and if they take the initiative. In the beginning, a campaign will generally be actively run by the referee, before translating into a more reactive referee style, as the players follow the plot to it's conclusion. Done correctly, this will be a seamless organic transition. In some cases, the style can switch between active and reactive multiple times, and I have found these to be the most rewarding games.

Plot twists, deceit, blackmail, and intrigue are common narrative tropes for covert-ops storylines. Long-term planning of the storyline, as discussed previously, will pay dividends towards providing a cohesive plot. Always aim to surprise the players, yet reward them if they successfully guess/deduce a plot twist.

3. Maintain drama.

One of the greatest myths surrounding the covert-ops genre is that the basic structure entails a series of fire-fights linked by a tenuously connected plotline. When closely examined, the actual fire-fights involved are fewer in number that they first seem. Often, much of the storyline involves planning, scheming, and plotting. When the actual combat sequences take place, if there is sufficient planning in place, then that the result is often a foregone conclusion - unless the opposition knows of these plans, which can lead into a whole new plot.

While you are indeed free to run your campaign however you so choose, it is my firm belief that ignoring the investigation and examination scenes removes a vital part of the story.

Additionally, covert operations are not fun places to be; the façade of James Bond could not be further from the truth. Such missions are dangerous and paranoia-inducing - which is why they make such great games. Remember this, and amplify the uncertainty and suspicion to the maximum.

Time limits are a simple device in which to maintain drama, and pressure can be maintained by simply counting down the time left until the deadline. When the players suggest a course of action, offer an estimate of how long it will take. The fun really begins when the players debate their next course of action as the deadline draws near.

4. Never so simple as black and white

Life is never simple, and this is especially true for a covert-ops campaign. No one can ever be truly trusted in such a campaign. Each person the characters meet has the potential to be an enemy spy, and their contacts could be double-agents, or even a sleeper agent for the opposition.

As campaigns develop, and the players accomplish objectives, allies and enemies can switch roles: former contacts are revealed to be moles, and enemies blackmailed into being allies. This aspect of the players never being to trust anyone cannot be reinforced enough.

Neither can terms such as 'right' and 'wrong' be given arbitrarily: often in a covert-ops campaign, it is a matter of perspective, where characters can find themselves performing immoral actions for the 'greater good'; and the opposition performing beneficial actions, to disguise an ulterior motive. Insightful referees will realise this, and exploit this moral ambiguity to cause the characters - and players - to question their motives.

This ambiguity can be further deepened through the primary reason of the covert-operation being political

motivation. Rarely are such missions – by their very nature – for purely altruistic reasons. With the increasing number of private military companies (PMC's) - much like Blackwater Worldwide in Iraq – mercenary units can be expected, with corporations becoming involved for capitalistic aims.

5. Talk the talk.

Military and covert-ops have their own – for wont of a better term – dialect which is immediately identifiable, and has become a part of contemporary culture. The use of phrases such as 'Aegis Protocol', 'DieBack Initiative', and 'Prometheus Project' are immediately identifiable in their association. Likewise the names of vessels (from maritime to interstellar) will equally have a distinctive military theme. Rarely will such ships have names such as The Betty or Serenity; instead one can expect such ships to be called The Arbiter or Foe Hammer.

Call signs and naming conventions of characters have a likewise identifiable structure within a covert-ops campaign. Rarely will characters be called by their nickname. Instead, if it is formal, they will be referred to by surname or rank, or if it is informal then their call signs will be used.

Most Special Forces units utilise a signature tactic or item of equipment, an example of this is the British SAS who exclusively use Sig Sauger P228's as side arms. Similarly, Intelligence organisations specialise in a specific field of intelligence. The FBI primarily cover internal security, while the CIA's remit is purely external intelligence gathering. Meanwhile, the British GCHQ (General Communications Head Quarters) manages data protection and encryption/decryption - AKA SigInt.

While this attention to detail may seem excessively pedantic, and the value these considerations contribute appears negligible, the use of these adds a cosmetic veneer of verisimilitude which further draws players into the setting. For an added layer, these can be woven into the plot lines, as players with an appropriate background are able to define which factions the protagonists are a part of - and, if they are on their toes, possibly exploit this information.

A Drink with Gav Thorpe

It is April, and the sun is shining. Gav Thorpe is reclining and enjoying the sun streaming through the windows at Con-Quest. Con-Quest is Derby's role-play convention where he was the Guest of Honour last month, and where I was fortunate enough to meet this esteemed gentleman.

Gav Thorpe is probably best known for his role as Lead Developer on the ground breaking narrative war-game Inquisitor, which revolved around the Inquisitor War first postulated in the Ian Watson novel of the same name. Gav later became a writer for Black Library, Games Workshop's publishing arm for their licensed novels, before branching out into freelance writing as an independent author. He also apparently owns - or is owned by - a mechanical hamster called Dennis.

With his well-deserved reputation as a respected games designer, Gav Thorpe remains a keen gamer and self-confessed geek. Despite the interview running over an hour, I found Gav to be very forthcoming with both his time and his answers, which gave insight into how he became a game designer, and his decision to leave Games Workshop.

Pete: Firstly, can you tell me what first brought you into gaming?

Gav: I come from Stevenage, which is the most boring town in the world. There was one great thing about Stevenage, and that was that the indoor market had a hobby shop which sold toy soldiers and kits. It was my older cousin who got me into gaming, first with role-playing and later collecting miniatures. We started with first edition Warhammer, although we didn't really play a lot, but there
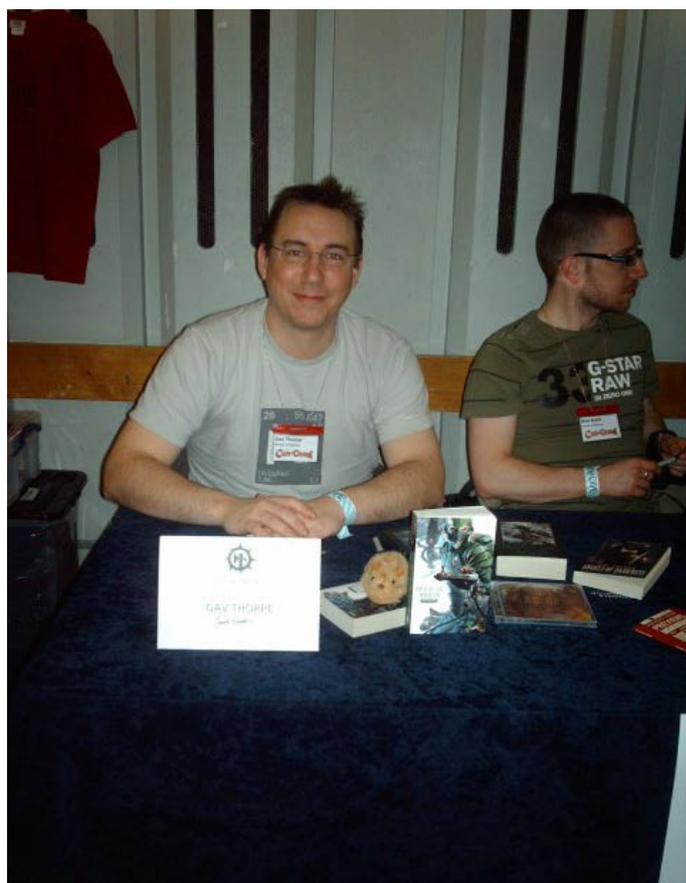
was still lots of painting and collecting.

Pete: Was it the painting that first attracted you?

Gav: I was always a fan of fantasy as a kid; I loved Lord of

the Rings and Airfix style toy soldiers, so there was immense satisfaction in finding these both together. I also enjoyed playing games, and I remember writing my first set of games rules at the age of ten. This basically involved me and a mate with our soldiers, where a six was a hit, with ranges for the guns. From there we would become more sophisticated and say "machine guns have three dice". Actually it was probably one of the slickest systems I've written! I also had friends who were into American Football, so I persuaded them to play Blood Bowl. It's cool being here in the Derby Assembly Rooms, as this was where I first played Second Edition Space Marine in a Games Day demo!

Pete: Have your tastes changed since you first got into gaming?

Gav: My preference is still for those free-form narrative based games, as I am in for the adventure role-play aspect rather than the competition. There's always been a creative relationship in the gaming that I do. It is all about the adventure and the invention of it. Which is great as a Game Developer, as people pay you to do that. As for the gaming I do now, it's back to my roots kind of stuff.

Pete: Have you seen a shift in the industry since you first started gaming?

Gav: It's all quite slick these days with box-sets of pre-built armies, which is good in a way. But I think that free-form way of buying what you want for a game is great – having Ninja's vs. Cowboys. Gaming is not about rigidity, but imagination.

Pete: How do you find current games?

Gav: It is strange, as I did a little bit of work for Battlefront, on their Flames of War booklet for the starter set. They sent me the rulebook and a copy of every sourcebook they had published. I looked at all of these books, but there was just so much there that I didn't know where to start. With Warhammer you have the rulebook, and then you have all these army books which you think are great, but it is a hell of a lot to learn. This is the same with Flames of War, as where do you start? That moment made me feel how people walking into Games Workshop for the first time might feel, seeing all these games, and thinking "Great!", then realising there were all these rules to learn. That is what puts me off games now, as I want to go back to that earlier stuff: where I'm going to have whatever I want on the table and I'm going to have fun. That was always the idea behind Warhammer 40,000, as the army lists were very flexible, but there has been a mentality that has come into the games about them being fair and balanced. There's only so far you can go with fairness, as you have to

balance versatility against restriction, and I will always go for versatility. My thinking has always been that if you want to play competitively, then everyone can abuse it equally. If you choose not then that's fine, but that's the environment you are playing in. I'm a laid back gamer, apart from Blood Bowl in which I am really competitive, as board games are very different. It is not because I am competitive by nature, but because board games are very defined and structured, and not about the adventure. I see board games as a tactical challenge which I have to figure out.

Pete: What games did you play when you were younger?

Gav: I had a real nerdalgia - moment of nerdy nostalgia - the other day when we were talking about D&D. So I dug out my original D&D, and the emotion I had of looking at the cover again: I remembered when my grandparents bought me and my brother this role-playing game out of the blue. Looking at the cover of the original D&D box sets brought back so many great childhood memories and the realisation that D&D was fantastic. No nonsense, just going down dungeons, kicking in doors, killing monsters, and stealing their cash; I mean, how cool is that? I immediately thought about calling around everyone to ask if they fancied a basic D&D Campaign.

Pete: Are you a fan of 4th Edition Dungeons and Dragons?

Gav: Role-playing games are a bit of an odd one, as you have the rules, a cool bit of background, and you do not need anything else. But the way the industry works, and has to work, is they have to sell you something: so here's a Fighter handbook and Mage handbook and so on. AD&D became ever more sub-divided, where you could be a Half-Elf Mage-Fighter-Thief; but I don't care. I just want to kick down doors, kill monsters and steal their treasure. Some of my role-playing is more sophisticated than that, but the basic nature of role-playing and gaming, and the merger between the two, has meant more rules are being written. I do not want rules on how to role-play; I want rules on how to resolve conflict. When you look at the books and ask "Do I really need all these books to play?" and while you may not, you still feel that you need to, because we all have the collector gene. I've managed to avoid 4th Edition far, as I wasn't into AD&D. From what I have heard so far, it seems almost of a step-back to where it is foremost a game, which some people do not like and others do.

for fourteen years.

Pete: You were a staff writer on Citadel Journal as well, weren't you?

Gav: I worked on Citadel Journal for a year. The best thing of working on Citadel Journal was that we actually had to make the magazine. It was not just the writing, but we had to do all the photography and layout. This was a real grounding in the basics of design and production. I was also one of the first people in Games Workshop to have a copy of Photoshop, which I abused. As well as working on the Journal, I was a staff writer in White Dwarf, which was part of my assistant games developer contract. I stayed with White Dwarf for two years before returning to being a Games Developer. Although the title was "Staff Writer", you did everything; this meant I came up with an article, wrote the article, took photography for the article, and laid out the article.

Pete: What were your highlights of working for Games Workshop?

Gav: Writing and working on Inquisitor was awesome, because it was my sort of game in the combination of narrative and wargame. Inquisitor was basically Rogue Trader but with big soldiers. The main driver was that Games Workshop wanted to do a cool range of 54mm soldiers, all collectable in their own right. So I borrowed a load of Wild West game rules from Jervis for inspiration, and decided to focus the game on a divided Imperium, so the relatively small range could be used by everyone

Pete: Has Games Workshop changed over time since you've been there?

Gav: When I joined it was at the start of the big expansion, after the management buy-out. There was a lot of recruitment taking place and stores opening. Games Workshop has changed a huge amount in terms of organisation and business, but also the products as well. It has become very slick. The layout and production of White Dwarf and the miniatures and kits are the best they have ever been. When compared to the original stuff, it was quirky but a lot of that was because it was the first time, and now it is very refined. This maturity is reflected in the imagery that has also settled down. I can't not mention Black Library, as I started working for Black Library when it was still Andy Jones sitting at a desk not far from me doing this magazine of short stories and asked if I wanted to write one.

Pete: What was the teamwork like on Inquisitor?

Gav: John (Blanche) would draw fantastic sketches, while Alan Merrett and I would come up with weird

Pete: What spurred you to find a career within the Gaming industry?

Gav: It beats working for a living «laughs». I intended to be an illustrator originally, as I had studied art. There are quite a few games developers and publishers who come from art-based or engineering backgrounds, as there is the imagery side of gaming and the systems side of it as well. I realised early on I wasn't good enough to be an illustrator, as I applied to a college who said I couldn't do a foundation course and had to study a bridging course first. As I was also planning to study a three year illustration degree at Manchester Polytechnic, I found it was going to be another five years in school, which wasn't for me.

Pete: So how did it happen?

Gav: I went to Games Day in 1993. I had written some Blood Bowl rules for Zoats and Centaurs – quadrupeds in Blood Bowl are great, as you have to work out how to scatter them from two different squares - and showed them to Jervis (Johnson – original developer of Blood Bowl) who asked me to send them to the studio. At the time I had this very boring job in an off-licence which left me with time on my hands, so I typed out all this stuff with a covering letter and sent it in. Fortunately I managed to find a job as assistant games developer, and stayed with Games Workshop

names for stuff. I would then sit down and bring all this stuff together, as well as delve into one of the coolest things of 40K, which was the Inquisition, and introduced the radical and puritan Inquisitors. I went back to the original Rogue Trader, and decided we were having D100 tables and would use web guns and other nonsense that you can't have in your typical battle game. The archetype of Arcoflagellant was the bit that pleased me the most, as their concept encapsulated the game and atmosphere. Working with the rest of the Inquisitor team was amazing, as it was the pinnacle of creative teamwork. In fact, teamwork is probably the biggest thing I miss about Games Workshop. Being a freelancer is great as I do what I want, but it is just me sat at a keyboard.

Pete: What made you decide to leave Games Workshop?

Gav: One of the things I love about freelancing is that whilst I loved working with Games Workshop as I worked with some fantastic people there was also a safety net, as there is this huge organisation designed to not make you fail, but it was too safe for me. The last couple of years were for me quite difficult because the future was more codexes and army books, which for business and the game is great as it is focussed upon support, but for me where I might end up writing a third Dark Elf book I felt my time there was coming to a natural conclusion. I like to be out there breaking new ground. I also felt I didn't need Games Workshop any more as I wanted the excitement of walking the tightrope without the net.

Pete: Do you have any regrets on leaving Games Workshop?

Gav: I miss that raw creative moment where you mutually have inspiration with an artist or sculptor. Afterwards you are then turning it into reality. This is the difference between dreamers who say they want to be writers and game designers who don't do anything, and those who do. I wrote a dozen games before I joined Games Workshop. None of them were published, and were never intended to be, but I wrote games and stories. You do it because you enjoy it, and if you are lucky someone will later give you money to do it, and you'll become better from that point on. Oh, and a regular salary too!

Pete: Where does your inspiration come from?

Gav: Books and games are slightly different, as games tend to be inspired by the schedule. With Inquisitor we realised we would have only a finite range of toy soldiers, so we developed a system everyone could use. We couldn't have alien factions, as there would have been only two models for a race. The solution was to paint the Inquisition in shades of grey with
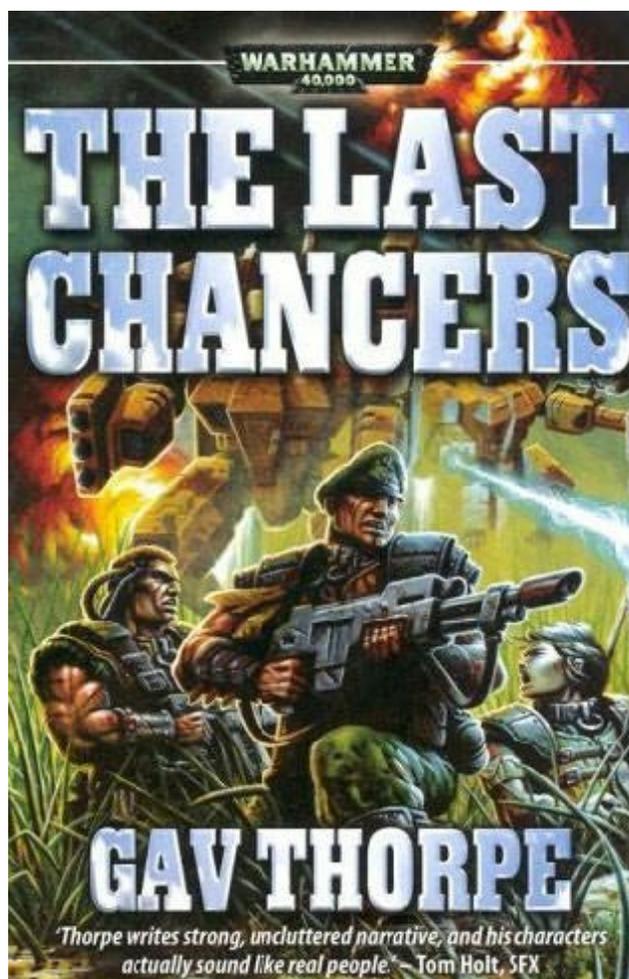
competing factions. The Horus Heresy had the same pragmatic start, where we had Titans and Space Marines and needed to have them on both sides. We took a throwaway comment of the Horus Heresy, and expanded upon it to become The Horus Heresy, until it became the biggest thing in Warhammer 40000, and the most popular series in Black Library history.

Pete: How about books?

Gav: Inspiration comes in two forms. There is the personal inspiration. For example, I love the Eldar and have wanted to write about the Eldar for a long time. I decided to write my definitive Eldar trilogy, and show you why they are so cool. The other source is professional inspiration, such as for Angels of Darkness. It started when I was asked in the Games Workshop canteen if I wanted to write a Space Marine novel, and said no as "Space Marines were boring". Walking away I started thinking "but I could write a great Space Marine story". Space Marines are not boring, but the stories about Space Marines had been boring. By the time I had returned to my desk, I was thinking about which Chapter had the best back-story, and that was it. Being a Games Developer, you do not get to choose what you're going to write about next week, so you have to find what you think is cool about your subject, and channel that enthusiasm into what makes them great for you.
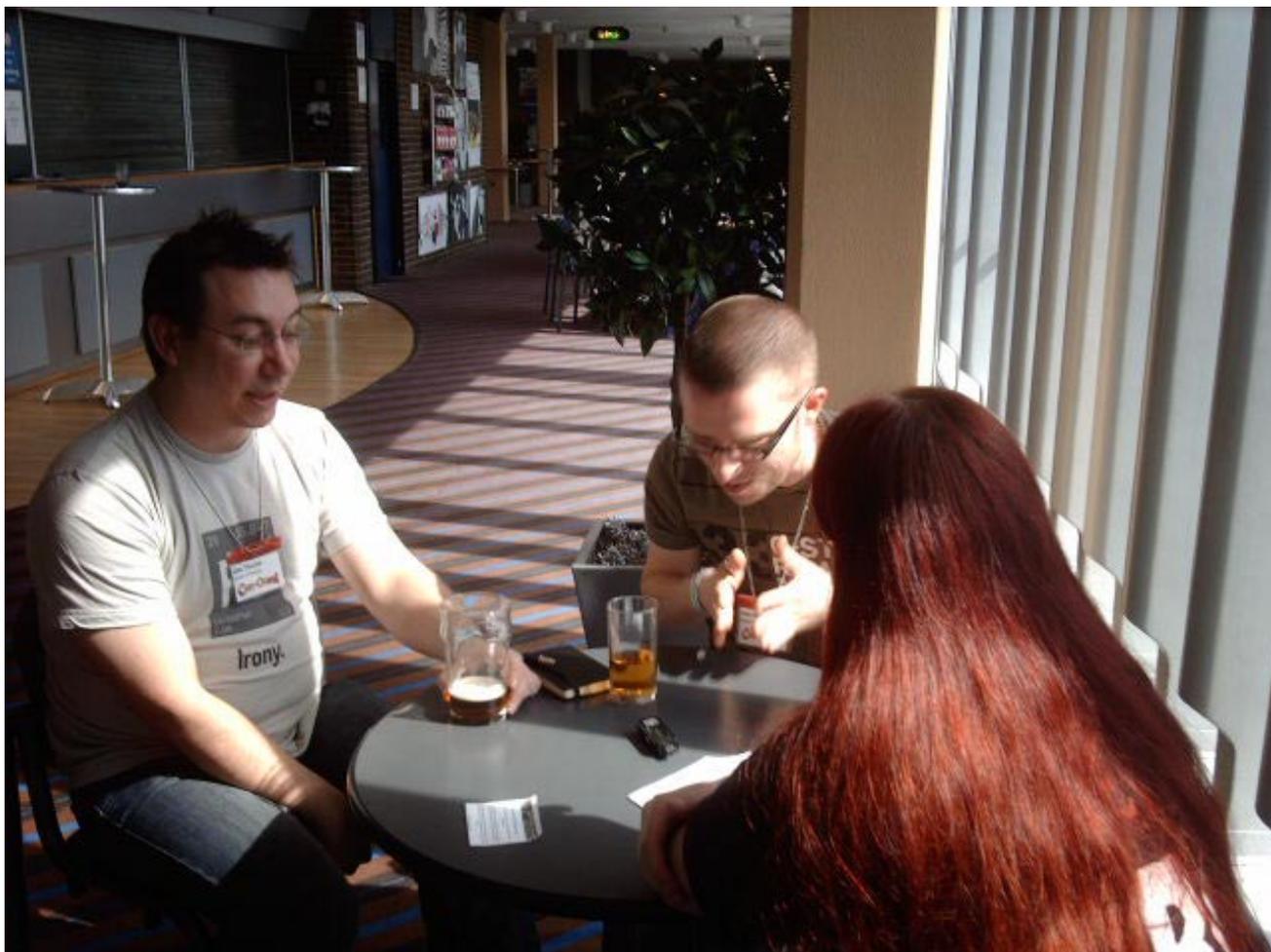
Pete: Passion is the key?

Gav: You have to be enthusiastic on demand. White Dwarf could ask you to write a Battle Report for Orcs and Goblins versus High Elves. When you have not worked on them for two years, you have to reconnect with that race, and remember what you liked about them. That connection is the key, because if you do not write out of genuine passion, then it won't show in your writing, and others won't be excited. There is no substitution for passion, and later on experience.

Pete: What do you see in the future?

Gav: I have a long list of Black Library novels I am supposed to be writing. I also have my first non-Black Library novel, so will be seeing how that goes. At the moment it is all about writing lots of books, about three or four a year. I'd love to write a role-play game one day, mainly because I'd like to invent something fresh. Most of my world building has been based upon physical imagery and whether you can make a toy soldier of your idea, so it's nice to do something without that restriction. I've also been tinkering with other miniature rules in my spare time which might see the light of day in the future.

Pete: What do you foresee for gaming?

Gav: You never know how it will change until it changes. There could be a shift, such as a huge license deal comes up, not necessarily for Games Workshop, which will change the playing field. Games Workshop will keep doing its thing with Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000, Lord of the Rings, and whatever else comes along. In terms of miniature wargaming, plastic will be the material of choice as metal becomes more expensive, but there is not much else we can do. There is lots of cool stuff, but we do not have that surge in wargaming as we had in the 1980's, unless it becomes mainstream - but that is unlikely.
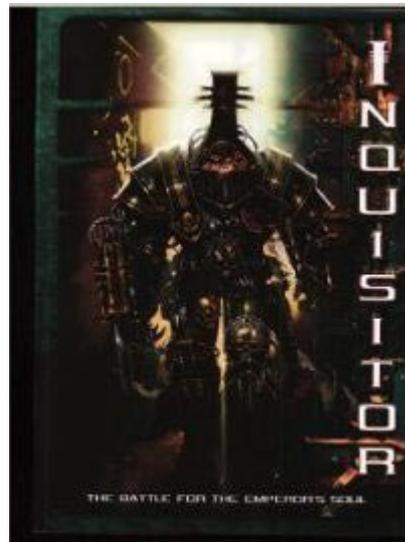
Local Gaming Store

Interview with Andreas, the manager of Fantasia Umeå.

Words & Photography: Sven Jonsson

Growing up in Umeå, and also growing up with the miniature hobby, I've encountered a question that puzzles me somewhat. Why is it that in Umeå, a pretty small town of around 75,000 citizens located in the relatively isolated northern parts of Sweden, our beloved miniature hobby has gained such a stronghold? Is it just the general lack of better things to do? Or might there be something else about all of this?

One key character in the plot is Andreas Bäckström, the manager of our local games store Fantasia. So, obviously he's making a lot of money from all of us here so I suspect something quite sinister, possibly mind control and voodoo. I decided to confront him directly and went to speak to Andreas Bäckström to get some answers.

Now, I already knew quite a few things about the store. Andreas set up "Fantasia" as an independent Games Workshop stockist back in 1995, sharing the space with his older brother who sold sportswear and paintball equipment. Back then the miniatures were then located in a smaller area inside the shop and you couldn't even really see it from the street. There we miniature addicts met to get our weekly or daily miniature related fix. We drooled over the latest Mike McVey masterclass and discussed the merits of the second edition Cyclone Missile Launcher.

In 1997 Andreas took over the entire store and since then things have just kept on falling into place. Now Fantasia stocks miniatures and supplies from a wide range of companies and recently he opened an online shop. Every year he holds at least two large tournaments called Fantasia Danatics and in-between there are several smaller tournaments as well. Painting competitions are held each year, the primary being the annual Golden Goblin competition. He has built a successful business, that makes him lucky, but what makes him even luckier is that he built it around his own cherished hobby.

So is the store of Fantasia the only answer of Umeå's success or are there other factors? Well, the community ought to play a big part as well. F.U.S.K. (C.H.E.A.T.), the big gaming community here in Umeå, came into being a few years ago fuelled by the interest of some gamers that wanted a place where they could gather to play and paint. It has since grown from just a few players and one evening a week, to having people there playing and painting almost every day and F.U.S.K now consists over around one hundred members. The cooperation between Fantasia and F.U.S.K. is intimate, so I started asking him what impact F.U.S.K. has had on Fantasia.

Have you felt any difference for the store since F.U.S.K. started?

In general there are only positive effects - sure, there have been people starting to play games I can't sell, but on the other hand they trigger each other and stay interested in their hobby for a longer time. The biggest thing is that when previously someone entered the store alone and liked the games and miniatures, they sometimes didn't have people to play with and I couldn't do much about that. Now I can always offer a place to where you can play despite not knowing anyone. That's especially true for people moving here having had this hobby before, students and such.

Miniature gaming is really brilliant in that you can play and socialize with someone you don't know at all because you have this common denominator. I mean you have an inexhaustible topic for conversation, you have more to talk about with other gamers then with your wife even - and you do! You can be a crappy painter, a useless gamer, an illiterate when it comes to the rules and still you can make friends and get into the community. In that way miniature gaming is great and therefore local gaming communities are great too. F.U.S.K. has definitely benefited the hobby here in Umeå.

I'm thinking that F.U.S.K. also have helped in that the gaming community of Umeå has become more inclusive, as people kept their gaming in more distinct groups before which were difficult to gain access to.

I think there was a period of time between when I removed the larger gaming tables and when F.U.S.K. was created where people more kept to their own but you've became older as well.
True!

And I also think the original gamers here that were there back in the days have grown up too, and don't feel the need to be exclusive and say that "this is my thing". Of course F.U.S.K. has helped in mixing different people and personalities, and that is all for the good.

I used to think that this was a bit a fringe hobby, dedicated only to nerds, but here I don't feel that nowadays.

I think we are really ahead in that aspect comparing to many other places, and I see a similar thing in Denmark. You can't really tell who's a gamer here and when I visited Denmark several years ago I felt the same thing. There and here gaming isn't this underground hobby any more where you sit at home mucking about with your figurines and don't tell anyone about it, don't invite anyone to it. It used to be like that because people felt it was nerdy or that gamers wanted to exclude other people and say that this is "our" thing.

But that's not how it is any more, I don't know how it is in other places but I now feel that the miniature hobby is the one of the classical nerd hobbies that is closest to the real world.

Yeah, well I think there are a lot of different aspects of the hobby that can interest a wide variety of people, there are strategy aspects etc. Whereas role playing for example, then people only think "Dungeons and Dragons".

Sure and also role playing is a much more exclusive hobby. It's more of my group and my buddies, whereas in miniature gaming you are influenced much more by others. Role playing doesn't have such clear boundaries either - Warhammer is more or less Warhammer wherever you play it, while role playing can look very different in different places.

People develop their own games as well.

Absolutely and the style differs so much. I mean they have dungeon basher styled games which some people frown upon and don't think is role playing, while others who play dungeon basher style think that the pretentious vampire role players are stupid. There are more styles of role playing then there are miniature gaming, as regardless if the game is Warmachine or Warhammer, the principle of it is similar.

It is also easier, on a conceptual level, to come up with the best way to play the game somehow. That it is better with friendly games then...

...to bash each other to pieces and look on each other with contempt when doing bad things, yeah. At F.U.S.K. especially it feels like most people pick up quite quickly how their opponent plays the game, and in friendly games try to place yourself on the opponents level and realise that you don't have to exploit rules etc. As he doesn't do it, I won't either, so to speak.

On tournaments there is of course a difference, you can't dodge the fact there that some people really want to win.

Why do you think this has happened here?

I feel that Umeå as a distinct gaming community have benefited from being relatively isolated here in the north, being allowed to grow at its own pace. As a large gaming community Umeå is pretty unique in that we are so far away from all other gaming communities. To find such a large gaming community you'll have to travel to Stockholm or Uppsala, all neighbouring towns here have really small gaming communities. I have had Fantasia in fifteen years and in the first ten of those we were largely unaware of the other communities. It is just in this last six or seven years that we have had gamers travelling here for tournaments, etc. Many that come here and play are fascinated by the relaxed atmosphere we have, despite that we don't impose many restrictions and balancing. Outside influence is great, but we have had time to create something of our own and now we can digest and incorporate the stuff that is great with self-confidence. This will expand the game and open up for new ways of playing the game, and thus give rise to a more diverse gaming community in the town.

Another thing is that we've had pretty few stores and few gaming communities that instead F.U.S.K has grown really large and that is really the best thing that could happen. Sure, competition is great in some circumstances, but not all. It can divide the community and in the long term mean less people to play with and less interest. I mean how many cases have there been where there has been one store and then another open their doors and people say it's great with competition and two years later there is no store. So it's been good, not only from my perspective of making money, but for the community here as a whole. In fact for the hobby to flourish, I think it's a good idea to have a large major gaming community intimately connected to a large major store.

For example people claim it's bad that Games Workshop are so dominant because of different reasons, but I disagree. It's great, even for smaller companies, that there is one large actor that can attract new gamers. Then when they've played for a while and got the taste for the hobby they will discover all the other smaller companies.

Yeah, it was Games Workshop that pretty much took most of us into this hobby, that's true even for those that now dislike the company. Besides price increases what people also get upset about is that you, for example, can't field an Avatars of War miniature in a WFB battle hosted by a GW store.

Yeah, GW stores do that and I don't think it benefits them at all, it's just silly. Many say that we are lucky up here in Umeå to have Fantasia as we can sell other things then GW...

... yeah and people do get fed up with GW and then it's good to have other companies around, even for GW itself as well. Honestly, I think the competitors to GW benefit the company, as they keep people in the hobby and when a new edition arrives people might go back instead of having quit the hobby entirely when they lost interest with the GW universe or business practice etc.

Sure, but GW never says that officially. I mean I have West Wind heads on GW racks right above the Imperial Guard, and GW knows that. A former executive visited us and saw it and I thought he was going to mention it and he did but instead of saying that this it was bad practice he said that it was smart. He could see that this product would lead to people buying more Imperial Guard.

The painting part, how important is that?

It's essential. If there was only the gaming aspect, I think we would drop seventy percent of the hobbyists, even if some would be hard pressed to admit it. You wouldn't then have this thing that is constantly tying you to the hobby. I feel this myself. I have a kid, work a lot, a house and it's easy to skip that evening game. I've been trying to play a game with a friend for three weeks now, and yes, I think it is great fun

when I eventually play, but I paint almost every night even if it's not a lot. I would argue that even people who say that they don't like to paint in many cases are in the hobby because you paint and convert. When Rackham started making pre-painted figures there were large rumours that GW would do that as well, that pre-painted was the future. I don't understand how they could think that - it is madness! Instead, the future of miniature gaming lies in the painting part. That's what sets this hobby apart from others. I wouldn't game if the miniatures were pre-painted, I would play videogames instead.

Yeah, and sure these are toys that we play with, but it would feel more like playing with children's toys then.

Yes, tin-barbies as some parent said, but I agree pre-painted are just not the same.

However the number of pure painters isn't growing that much I think. It's pretty constant because they tend to drop off for different reasons - many, perhaps, because they get stuck and don't evolve. Most of those that are in the hobby for long are in for the entire hobby as there are many other different creative outlets. The pure gamers quit first though. When they eventually don't have time to play as much as they like they easily get disconnected from the hobby as they don't paint. For them it's easier to just play computer games instead.

How do you work towards the painting part how the hobby?

Well lately we've been focusing much on army techniques, finishing stuff. Of course this is because my interest as a store manager to actually sell armies, as for me the best part is if everyone plays the game as well as painting. It will benefit me and the hobby as a whole more than if everyone were like you and mainly painted single miniatures - nothing wrong with painters of course! But it is of course better with a larger quantity of hobbyists for me.

However, I think the painting part of the hobby here was spoiled right from the beginning with exceptional painters, it's almost ridiculous.

Definitely and it was ridiculous because it was so early, right when you started Fantasia. It was like, where did people get their brushes from? Oh, look, a brilliant copy of McVeys studio Green Knight and Martin Sahlin of course, he was really ahead stylewise

I really think that if we had had the opportunity to send these people to the GD's back then we would have won a lot of deamons. I don't think the Sanguinius that Martin won with 2003 was that much better than the stuff he did before. Look at the Mephiston he

painted in 1995, for example. We still have great painters and a high general level of painting here, but I think those early years were extraordinary. I think that because we were spoiled so early it gave the painting side of the hobby here in Umeå a bit of an artistic touch and has benefited the gaming part as well. I think people get more inspired seeing miniatures in real life instead of in books; even if you perhaps can't achieve that certain standard, it still feels more within your grasp when you can actually see a miniature, and especially an army, painted to a very high level. Painted armies are a great inspiration for people to have on display.

We run beginner courses here in Fantasia but F.U.S.K. helps as well here where people can be tutored by others and discuss painting. We see such a great progress on some people like Wille for example. Actually, and Wille don't usually mention this, he has painted two armies which are displayed in our cabinet right now - not only the beautiful Empire army on the top shelf but also the Tyranid army on the bottom shelf. That difference in level can really help motivate people to become better and is a terrific thing to show aspiring painters.

It's almost more about painting then gaming on F.U.S.K. nights, and for someone new to this hobby he or she can always sit down, make friends and paint, while building up the nerve to have a game.

Another thing with displayed single miniatures, though, is that you seldom hear that someone who paints on canvas is nerdy, but with miniatures you do get that comment, it's just not as accepted. When people have that kind of attitudes it's great to be able show miniatures that are so beautiful that it's almost absurd.

Has your store seen any dip due to the recession?

No, none at all. Even if people complain that the hobby is getting pricy it is still really affordable. Secondly, kids and students haven't been that affected by the crisis and those who become unemployed suddenly have more free time to spend. Most people that cut expenses cut from stuff that actually is expensive and to buy a box of miniatures isn't.

Actually I can see a slight increase again from the dip that occurred around 2004. I mean there was, of course, the eventual dip after Lord of the Rings, but it was really across the board and I had no explanation for it. One month it was a forty percent drop and the two annual Fanatic tournaments went down to, at the lowest, only 72 people attending. We then decided to drop one tournament and people became anxious and started asking what has happened, if everybody would quit playing. I didn't understand what was go-

ing on but then on the fall boom we were back over hundred and from then it has just increased.

No explanation for the dip?

No, I can't provide one.

World of Warcraft?

No, the dip came before, I noticed a slight dip of World of Warcraft but it wasn't it. I could try some digging and see if I can come up with an explanation but as for now I don't really have one.

But it was more general wasn't it? GW's bubble burst around the same time as well.

Yes, everything just took a plunge. Of course we had the Lord of the Rings sales dropping, but there was more to it.

GW was on me already before that there would eventually come a dip. Fantasia has had such an exceptional progress comparing to almost every other store in the world. In 2003 Umeå was the town that had the most hobby related spending per capita in the world when GW compared sales between towns. But somewhere along the line we all forgot about that dip that would come. I think I hit a roof instead and instead of stopping I bounced back, but then the trend changed and now it's steeper. So now I am back at the same levels as 2003 and even above it.

Well, what positive changes have you seen in the industry during these years?

It's become much more accessible. To start playing miniature games even in the mid 90's was a somewhat of a project. Everything was structured differently and more underground. Another factor was the miniatures themselves - they were more difficult to prep because they were all metal. Since then, new techniques of painting armies have arrived and become popularised. Better products and better starter kits. And as we've talked about before, the community is much more open and you can get help from lots of peoples regarding rules or painting techniques. I, for example, started doing demo games eight or nine years ago and, frankly they weren't very inviting back then. More of "learn every rule right away" and "oh you thought it was boring, ah well too bad."

But what makes a good local games store?

To be a bit cocky, Fantasia makes a good local games store. I mean I've been in the business for so long and

I've seen the rise and fall of a lot of stores. The biggest mistake I see is that: yes you need to have an interested hobbyist that runs the store because it's fun, but you also need a salesman who can sell the hobby. To find that balance between the two extremes is the key. There have been many hobbyists that have had such a good chance to live from their hobby but failed because they lacked the sales part. Of course I could stay here and chat with my friends all day long, but in the end I won't survive as a business.

On the other hand I don't feel that there is a clock ticking when we have a conversation, that you feel that you must deliver a sale.

No, I have gone to all these sales courses arranged by GW, but what you need to do is to sort out what's best for your own local community. GW, for example, knows how to sell, to make great demo games and so on, but you need to pick out the best parts that will for you. I mean I can't really bother people for not buying from me all the time. A part of that is time and experience as well. As I've been into this so long the people I speak regularly know that I can stop in middle of a conversation when I see someone that needs help in the store and won't become insulted by it. I think many won't find that balance.

What do you think aspiring stores should do to gain success?

What I think many people do wrong is that they think the game sells itself, but really, if there is one clientele that is a bit tricky it is hobbyists. Many are very comfortable in their niche and if no one is there to spur their interest they might play computer games instead. It's important that there are things constantly happening, such as tournaments and other events - it really is a must.

Another thing people do wrong is that they think a huge space outside of town with lower rents is great because then they can have a dozen tables where people can play and paint. Sure, it's cool to have

tables if people do play there, but they don't always do so. You also get the question of if the store is some kind of club that you need membership for. It doesn't look like a store and isn't recognised as a business. Instead find a space that is as central as possible without it being too small or too expensive and try to get a community like F.U.S.K. to cooperate with.

I mean in the end people will much rather play at a friend's house then in a store because they can take as much time as they like, they don't get interrupted by questions from spectators and can do pretty much as they please, drink coffee and so on. Similarly, everyone prefers playing at F.U.S.K. rather than here, I mean the only thing I could compete with was if I did some super awesome terrain perhaps. Actually when F.U.S.K. became more established people weren't playing here anymore and some thought that people weren't playing anymore, even I thought so for a time, but they had just moved. Many people think you need to be large, have large tables, but what you need is this:

That and you need a painting space and then one or two larger tables to hold workshops and store related arrangements on and that's it. Then you can offer games here for those who want to but it's not the only place to go.

Another thing is promotion. We got the perfect release with the Tyranid codex for Games Workshop, there were lots of rumours and we could keep up the hype. Three weeks before the official release date we had the book and painted some preview models and that was great, an army does not need more time. If the promotion takes longer the hype will have hit it's peak too soon, long before the release. And when you get the release the hype is already for the next release and that will hurt the sales badly.

The problem right now is that all releases are done in the same way, regardless of that if it's an expansion book for Lord of the Rings or the new edition of Warhammer Fantasy Battles.

So, what is going to be the next big thing?

Well, for us it is the new edition of Warhammer Fantasy Battles. Unfortunately we won't be able to promote it as well as we would have wanted because, as mentioned, all releases are done in the same way. Warhammer Fantasy is so much bigger than the odd Imperial Guard release. It's about people contemplating buying new armies but they don't because they have no clue of what will happen. So that hurts the sales for me, and even more for smaller stores.

The new edition will change the entire game and have a huge impact on the community like the third edition had on Warhammer 40 000. I have really high expectations regarding the new edition, but perhaps they would be even higher if GW would have let me know how much the rule book will cost longer in advance.

Well, I think that's pretty much it. Thanks for answering my questions!

You're welcome.

I left the store with a better understanding of what it takes to be a successful local games store and a successful community as well. It's all about balance and growing at your own pace and remembering that what's good for the community is good for the store as well. Why Umeå has been successful in building a community of gamers is probably related to a lot of factors, but I think we've touched on some of the major ones here. Hopefully this can provide a little bit of help and insights to a budding community or someone thinking of opening up a store.

Interview with Jérémie Bonamant Teboul

Two years ago, I spent a while with Jérémie Bonamant Teboul and Allan Carrasco trying to extract information on their game Alkemy and its assorted miniatures.   I refer you to the excellent interview written on that occasion.   Today, I meet Jérémie once more, to unveil his brand new project which some may have been hearing of for a few months now: FIGONE.

Jérémie Bonamant Teboul

Class : Hobbit hippie entertainer explorer

Alignment : Anarchist Neutral

Speed : Still, with impressive peaks in productivity

Special Defences : Couldn't-give-a-damn attitude

Special Attacks : Disconcerting irony (super combo)

Religion : What would Brassens (a French singer) say, again?

Quotation: "The life of a miniature painter is divided into two parts: the one in which you fall behind in your painting and the one in which you catch up." or "When you're spending time on miniatures, you are not doing anything else."

FIGONE, what is it? What for? Tell us all about it.

FIGONE is a gathering of beautiful creative energies. It's participants are in the miniature business and its parallel universes. They see FIGONE as an experimental playground, a free structure to create, distribute, coordinate, organise, develop.

Thus, FIGONE is meant to produce miniatures mainly for painters, but also to develop learning material such as articles and videos, to organise painting master-classes, to provide a legal structure for young authors to be published or for more specialist ranges to be distributed, ranges such as Degra Miniatures or Miniature Factory, Jacques Alexandre Gillois' latest baby...

Well done.   Jérémie, what's your role on this boat? Introduce the crew to us!

If it is a boat, then it is a sailboat carried here and there by the winds and the currents. As in all small projects, everyone must be able to wear any mask and multitask. There are no exclusive domains, even if our skills direct us in one direction more than another.

At least, not at the beginning.

As for myself, I will essentially coordinate artistic wills. Painting, sculpting, choosing what will be produced and what will not, directing designers and illustrators...

As for the crew:

• Born in a boardgame box, Jérôme is a man who lives surrounded by lead and he will essentially dedicate his time to FIGONE by dispatching small parcels filled with resin minis to their new owners.

• Laurent is a sophisticated neural network implanted with an evolved cognitive module! In other words, he will manage the Internet and administrative aspects of FIGONE.

That's all concerning the basic structure, but a swarm of generous contributors are helping out with graphic design, translation, etc.   You will find all our accomplices in the credits on our website.

What will Artefactory and Alkemy become? People are talking about them here and there and would like to be enlightened.

Using the previous boat metaphor, Alkemy would be a liner, you know? It is a big machine, more industrial. I feel more like an artisan; hence FIGONE.

Artefactory will still be part of Kraken Editions. There is little chance for this range to evolve, but it will remain available in both Kraken's and FIGONE's stores. I will remain an active member of Kraken and intend to keep on painting new releases as they keep coming.

Well, now that we are eager to see it coming, the question is: When does it start?

It may have already started when the first issue of FanFig is out. As I am speaking, it is mid-February and
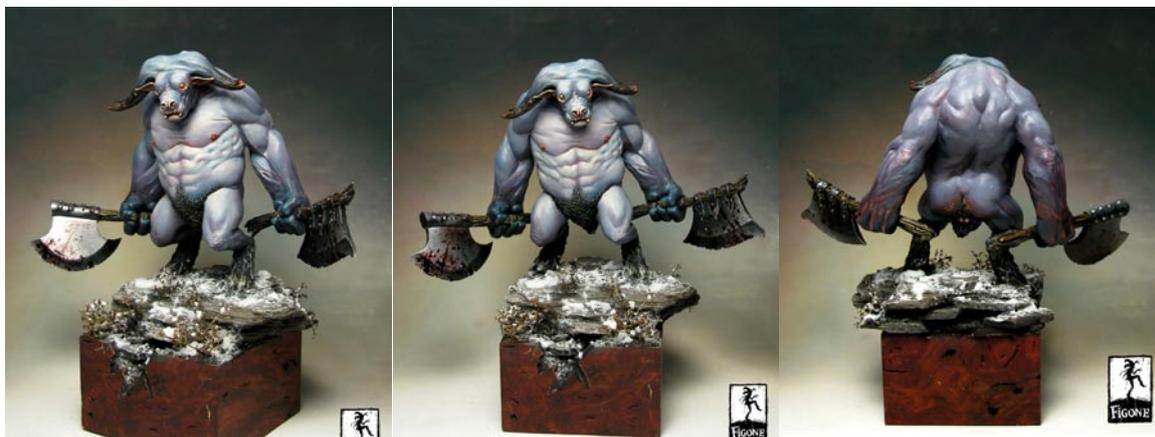
we are a few weeks away from taking off, or rather from casting off the moorings and setting sail. If you type www.figone.fr and it works, then we are ready!

How could a FIGONE miniature be defined?

Gulp. The scope of the range is so wide! Like Artefactory, it will treat all scales and all themes, though with a predilection for imaginary themes. The miniatures will form a crowded melting pot fed with hopes and won't necessarily have any direct link between each other. And a rock 'n' roll attitude!

May we know who is going to sculpt this crowded melting pot of resin minis? I figure you already have contacts and names! Say I'm a freelance sculptor and I want to work with FIGONE? How does it work?

In the painting department, it will be essentially me. In the sculpting domain, essentially others!

Already, the first sculptors' names will sound good to connoisseurs. We will soon be producing miniatures by Allan Carrasco, Romain Van Den Bogaert, Edgar Skomorowski, Thomas David, Jacques Alexandre Gillois, Benoît Cauchies, Maxime Penaud, Sylvain Deschamps and many others.

To have a miniature produced by FIGONE is simple - you need a good idea, a nice touch and the ability to bill us!

Any idea on the rate at which new minis will be released?

It will be utterly random, unreasoned, and maybe even irreverent!

Any clue about pricing?

We think our pricing is a bit lower than average for stand-alone resin miniatures. The makers, from the sculptors to the manufacturer, will be the same as Artefactory. Thus, prices should be similar.

How to get them? Online orders or local retailers?

Both, Captain.

FIGONE is, above all, about miniatures. Right - but you paint with brushes and you sculpt with tools. Will we be able to order any of these through FIGONE?

I'll say that from the start FIGONE is not meant to be a mere non-specialised shop. If we adorn our catalogue with items like the ones you mention, it will be to promote projects we have our hearts set on, or to make specific hard-to-find tools available. And if they are hard to find for a consumer, they will be hard for shops to find too. Yet, we are working on it, notably a magnificent orange-rubber-tip brush, originally used to paint ceramics...

Legally speaking, FIGONE has adopted a cooperative functioning. What is it?

Figone is a link in a cooperative named Oxalis. We work with bakers, farmers, eco-builders, webmasters, even a lady who makes washable diapers - true story! This new experience aims at building new work relationships with no subordination that favour cooperation, solidarity, mutualising means, active participation, creativity, personal development and environmental respect in a really wonderful world with flowers, courgettes and marmots everywhere. Wonderful, isn't it?

This seems well planned and heading for a golden future. But, knowing you, beside FIGONE, I want to ask "What else do you have planned?"

Miniature-wise - you don't care about my personal life, do you? - I am completing the next two books about painting, army painting and scenery, which will complete the famous Grand Livre - The Big Book of Miniature Painting, available only in French as of March 2010. We also organise a giant miniature painting master-class camp answering to the sweet name of Figostock and taking place in Montélimar in July, with nine days of workshops to choose from. Air-

brush here, sculpting there, those who wander on bulletin boards or read this magazine will be informed at the right moment. (Ed - In fact, we've got a news item on Figostock in this very issue.)

On a more personal note but one which will have consequences on my passion, I'm planning a long bike trip. Those who waste their time on my website will know more this summer. But we're planning to have FIGONE be autonomous by that time.

How to support FIGONE and make that boat sail for a long time?

Blow very hard on it, ideally on the sails!

Or simply treat miniatures with originality. That's what Ben Komets (a rather talented German painter) did. He turned the Artefactory miniature King Maulg into a pirate. And there goes Allan making an "official" version of it with an anchor and a bottle of Rum... it will soon be released.

So let's have ideas! Let's be creative! And blow hard on the sails!
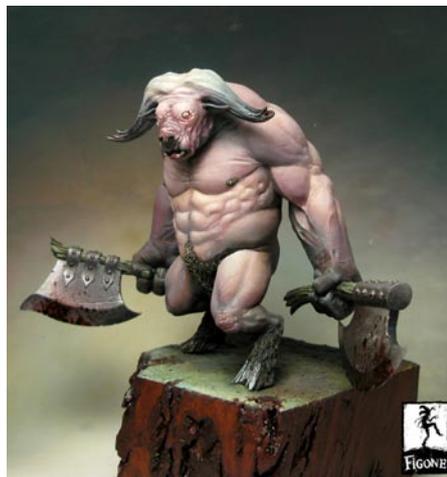
Artist Showcase
Giovanni Castro

My name is Giovanni Castro, but I sign my work as Nigio. I was born 42 years ago in the northern region of Colombia, near the Caribbean. I studied art in Barranquilla, and then moved to Bogotá, where I started my career as an illustrator.

In Bogotá I founded, along with other illustrators, the magazine "ACME", one of the pillars of Colombian comics.

In 1998, I decided to move to Europe, more specifically to Barcelona, the city where I currently live and work.

My love for drawing and painting began with the comics I read as a child, mostly American superheroes, but I also was influenced by movies and Caribbean folk art. A little later, when I was a teenager, I discovered the comic and European illustration. This influence was essential in shaping my style, together with that of the classical painters.

What methods do you use in your work?

I started painting in a classical way, I mean with oils and canvas. Then I discovered acrylics and I switched to them because of their versatility. It was with acrylics that I developed my way of painting, using a lot of the volume and chiaroscuro, in the style of the old masters. Later came the digital methods, and again I had to switch. Making test pieces with the computer, I found I could translate my way of painting with acrylics into a digital painting. Now I do all the drawing work by hand, and the colour on the computer. Sometimes I miss the textures and the improvidence of acrylics, but I have to admit that the computer gives me a range of possibilities which is much broader than the methods of traditional painting.

What size do you prefer to work at?

At first I worked in very large formats - that was the heritage of my apprenticeship with oil and canvas. Little by little, the scale was gradually reduced, until the present time, where there are very few times I exceed the size of an A3. For the cover illustration, for example, I did the drawing on a sheet of A4 paper.

You feature detailed characters and landscapes in your work - is there a story behind each one?

Yes, there's usually a story behind each character or scene I illustrate, but at the beginning it's not entirely clear. It's while developing the painting that the story takes shape. Sometimes I take the care of writing it, but most of the times, it just stays in my head.

Tell us about the Conquistador character on the cover of issue 4?

The Conquistador is a recurring figure in my work. I come from a country and a continent which was

discovered and colonized by the conquistadores. We owe them many good things, but they also brought many misfortunes and problems. Maybe that's why, as a contradictory figure, I have drawn him many times. Moreover, formally, their helmets were extraordinarily beautiful and well designed.

Who and what influences you?

My influences are many, and come from many sides, but to try to summarize, I could say that my two main influences are French-Belgian comics, and the Renaissance masters of painting.

I've seen some of the character designs you have made for Dragonblood miniatures - do you often work for the gaming industry?

I've done some character design work for the industry role-playing games, but the truth is that most important part of the work I do is for the publishing industry.

Are you a gamer?

I'm currently not playing any games, but I've done it at some times during my life, and it was great fun!

Is there someone that you would like to produce work for in the future?

Well, I'd like to do more things for the video game industry, especially character design, but I am also very excited about the comic medium, and I hope to publish something in France.

Which artists do you find exciting at the moment?

There are a lot of talented artists today. New technologies have greatly helped the diffusion of their work. To name a few, I love the work of Sparth, Bobby Chiu, Goro Fujita, Jason Seiler, Sebastian Kruger ...

Show Report
Salute 2010

Words: Jason Hubbard
Photography: Jason & Rebecca Hubbard

My journey down to Salute began on the Friday, travelling first class on the train, which was very nice - more leg room, free tea and coffee and a damn site more comfortable than normal. This what train travel should be like all the time, not the usual cattle truck, where everyone is packed in tightly, with uncomfortable seats - especially when they charge so much.

The journey down to London was smooth, until we encountered London Public Transport - it took us longer to get across London than it did to get down from Sheffield. A 30 minute train journey took us two hours, because of delays and closed lines.

Anyway, we arrived at our hotel, which was very nice - though breakfast wasn't included with the cost, which was a slight downside. After a night out meeting some members of Platoon Britannica (PB), including John, for a couple of drinks, though some had enough to fall off their seats. I won't mention who that was, but they were sporting a hangover the next day.....

We arrived at the event on the Saturday to be confronted by an enormous queue. On the way towards the back of said queue, we bumped into some friends from up north, though the opposite side to Sheffield. We then - well, there is only one term for it - queue-jumped, though no one complained. We stood there watching the already large queue just get even bigger. Finally we started moving and were soon in to the show. I headed straight across to the painting competition area, where I bumped in to some GWP forum members, handed my entry in and headed off to get some pre-orders, including the rest of the wife's birthday present. Yes, I'm one of the lucky few who has a wife that games.

I headed around the show picking up pre orders and generally browsing all the nice new shiny metal crack on offer. My pre orders included the plastic Vikings from Gripping Beast, which I must say are rather spiffy - it is well worth investing in a box or two. I also

popped by Mantic to pick up a 3up of one the new Dwarves for Becky, as well as a quick chat with Chris from Mantic. It turns out that Orcs will be out later in the year, probably around Christmas - they had a 3up on display and they look very nice. So nice, in fact, that I may invest in a small Orc army. I've never been tempted by an evil army before, but the Mantic Orcs look very nice.

There were some traders who I had intended to pick up items from, but by the time I got around to them they had sold out of the items I wanted. Ah, well, there's always postal purchasing at a later date. The

show was bigger than last year with plenty of new traders, including Krakken from France and Kingdom Death all the way over from New York. I picked up models from both of these traders. I must say if you haven't checked out Kingdom's miniatures then I suggest you do - these are very nice resin crack. Talking of which Studio McVey were next door to them, but I managed resist temptation as I still have Vitharr Bearclaw to paint.

There were plenty of participation games to take part in all over the venue covering a wide variety of periods and genres. Instead of joining in, I decided to take a rest, find out where the other half had gotten to and have chat with some of the guys and gals from PB. I wandered over to the seating area to be confronted by a flame-haired mad Welshman with a keg of beer - yes, a keg of beer. David Heathfield, aka Mr.Scream, who did the Face Painting tutorial last issue, was trying to open a keg of black lager. He had dragged up this mini keg all the way from Wales with him and was determined to spend the day drinking ale, which is how all self respecting gamers should spend a show, slowly getting drunk. His persistence finally paid off and he was soon supping the amber nectar from a cup, though he did offer some to other members.

I'm not sure how many partook, and as it was a little early for me and my tipple is a good old fashioned west country cider - being a carrot cruncher from Devon originally - I politely refused.

After a quick chat with folks and finally tracking down the other half I wandered off again. I headed over to inspect the bring and buy, but all the bargains of any note had long gone. The day finally came to point where the painting competition winners were announced, so I headed over there with Becky to see which PB members had picked up a trophy or two. Mr.Scream picked up a 1st prize bauble, along with Conrad (pawnpower), Andy (Donga) and Paul Cox (Prohaniti) who all picked up prizes. Best in show was won by Ali McVey for her beautifully painted Ar-Fie-nel, the new model from them. All the prizes were given out by Jason Salkey, who played Harris in ITV's Sharpe series.

Before I forget, I must mention that by this time David, the mad Welsh painting wizard - and I say mad in that funny, cool way - had drunk quite a lot of his keg and not surprisingly was rather, shall we say tipsy. No, actually we'll say he was slightly drunk. He enthusiastically Huzzah'd all the winners in every category, which was quite amusing, and gave us all some entertainment during the proceedings.

That rounded off the day, so it was time to say bye to everyone. Surprisingly, I had been very well behaved in the terms of purchases. I'd kept them to a minimum, and my stash was rather paltry compared to the horde that a rather well known WAMP-er, not called Dave, had managed to buy. I'm pretty sure he'd bought half of what was on sale at the show, and there were some very happy traders after he had been to them.

That's all folks - I had a good trip and I must say that if you've not been to Salute before it is well worth going.

Top 5 Skirmishes in Video Games

Words: Craig Shaw
Photography: Josh [unemployed IT dude]

I feel like a bit of an imposter in this magazine because my gaming comes from bits, bytes, pixels and sprites rather than rolling for initiative. I'm going to try and not sound like the great Wil Wheaton here, but I do feel as though video games and role playing games go hand in hand with one another. We're all gamers and we all enjoy stepping out of our daily grind to enjoy ourselves. I've been playing games since I was 7 years old. I'm from the golden generation of gamers, or at least I like to think so. I skied with Horrace, crossed the road with Frogger and mowed down pedestrians in Carmageddon as I developed into the level headed 28 year old I am now. The list below are the games that came to my mind when I was asked to write a piece on the Top 5 skirmish's in video games. It's an unconventional list, but one I thought about long and hard...

...THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID!!!

Ahem. Enjoy.

The Secret of Monkey Island

Swashbuckling was the last issue right? So I have the ability to bend time? Awesome. Anyway, why does Monkey Island fit into this top 5? Two words: Insult Sword-fighting.

For those unfamiliar with the Monkey Island series of games - and if you are, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, unless you're too young? That would give you a bit of an excuse - it's a charming tale of a young wannabe pirate (arr!) by the name of Guybrush Threepwood chasing after the love of his life Elaine Marley in a sort of Rom-Com-Point-Click-Walk-The-Plank adventure game by those clever folks at Lucasarts.

Monkey Island, in essence an adventure game, had to deal with elements of conflict, because of you know, pirates and such like. The developers got around this by introducing a rather delightful device, in which you win battles by flinging an insult back at your foe. For example - the enemy scum may say "You fight like a dairy farmer". You're then presented with a list of options to come back with. You could opt for the oft retorted "I am rubber you are glue" but to win that particular round, the appropriate come back would be "How appropriate, you fight like a cow". BOOM! VERBAL K.O.!

Why is Monkey Island in this list? It's wit, it's place amongst gaming history and it's innovative way of laying the smack down.

Power Stone

I'm full of suprises, aren't I? Developed by fight kings Capcom, this was a sleeper hit in 1999, popping up on the much maligned Sega Dreamcast - maligned by people that aren't me, at least. I loved my little white box. but anyway - why Power Stone ahead of other Heavyweight champions? It's simple really. It was fun! Crazy, crazy fun. If Crazy Taxi was a fighting game, Power Stone would be it. Set in a 3D landscape with every conceivable bit of scenery able to inflict damage, rounds of combat were spent running around collecting the titular power stones and hurling chairs, rocks, bombs and frickin' lampposts at your foe. I had a blast playing Power Stone. You can pick it up on the PSP, and I suggest you do so.

WWF No Mercy

Wrestling!? It's fake, it's just choreographed and it's not combat at all right? On your telebox maybe, but in a video game it's as real as any other fight, if not more so. There have been hundreds of wrestling games over the years, so why did I pick this one? It's 100% the best. It's the Bret Hart of wrestling games, excellent in it's execution.

A huge roster of wrestlers, with great graphics for the time and a deep create-a-wrestler mode contributed to this, but the best thing of all was the gameplay. It was technical yet fun, like Lego but with more power slams and less bricks.

The moves were both easy and hard to do and you had a sense that you were telling a story with their bodies, just like what they try and portray in real life. It wasn't balls out, fast paced, get-through-as-many-moves-as-possible-in-5-seconds combat - are you listening, Smackdown vs Raw? It was a battle of wits as well as button bashing. A great reversal system allowed for some cracking set pieces. Also, any game where I can do Rikishi's "stink face" is a good game. Sold.

Target: Renegade

Sequel to the classic Renegade and responsible for my very first gaming tantrum - I loved the game sooo much, that when one day it wouldn't load on my C64 I hit the tapedeck and broke it. I was 8.

I'd never seen anything quite like Target: Renegade. I could flying kick thugs on bikes, pick up hammers and axes and all kinds of weaponry goodness. Sure it was a Double Dragon rip off but I didn't care. The main character didn't have a lame name like Billy or Jimmy. No sir, he simply went by the moniker "Renegade". To me as an 8 year old, that ranked right up there with Mr T.

As I fought my way through car parks, streets, parks and bars. I was on a mission. Mr Big - I assure you I'm not making that up, the main enemy was indeed called Mr Big - had killed my brother, and I was out for revenge. At this point I'd dodged bullets and survived knees to the happy sack from some really pissed off prostitutes - quite why they were mad at me, I'm still not sure. I'd fought for my right to PARTY against a group dressed in caps and hip hop style clothing suspiciously called The Beasty Boys. I had come out on top. I was a vigilante, just like Bronson in Death Wish. It was the classic underdog tale with me against the world and I loved every god damn minute of it.

Street Fighter 2+

If you've never heard of Street Fighter before, then at this point I must direct you towards the door. See that over there, that's the door, don't let it hit you in the ass on the way out.

To define it as a game is doing Street Fighter a grave injustice. It's a worldwide phenomenon that has inspired films, comics, animated series', countless sequels and pretenders. It's a culture in it's own right. The common man (or woman) on the street will have played at least one version of the game and everyone knows how to pull off the "Hadouken" - OK, maybe not everyone, but it's quarter circle forward and punch, got it? Good.

I'll admit it, I'm a Ken man. It's tantamount to blasphemy in certain circles, and I'm aware of this, but I like the brashness and arrogance of Mr Masters. Hell, I like wearing red. I'll stand there and fight with him every time. It's

not just me though, everyone has their favourite Street Fighter character - there might even be someone, somewhere who likes E Honda. [Nick - That'd be me, then.....]

That's the beauty of Street Fighter and why fighting even in a virtual environment is still the ultimate way to settle conflicts. Fire up your console, choose your warrior and FIGHT. Whether you're a tournament master or the epitome of the casual player, everyone can pull off the easy moves and gain satisfaction when Chun Li flips upside down and spinning bird kicks her opponent into oblivion, or when Blanka shocks the other warrior into next week if they get close enough. It's the ultimate proving ground and tests your video gaming mettle. Think you've got skill as a gamer? PROVE IT.

We've created an Amazon List containing all the games mentioned. Click here to go straight to it.

Meet the Irregulars

Name: Ricalope Jesson

Occupation: I do stuff...

Age: 30

Location: Victoria BC, Canada

Years gaming: 18

Years painting: 15

Current army - and for what game? Imperial Guard and Eldar for 40k are the armies that I use regularly.

Current modelling/painting project? Right now? A Hive Tyrant, steam-zombies (for my Cryx Warmachine army), Eldar super-heavy tank, Ungors (for Warhammer Fantasy), and some drop troops with an airplane. That is just what is on my project table at the moment.

Favorite painting challenge? Finding new techniques and putting them to practice is always fun, like painting diamonds on Eldar Harlequins (I was seeing diamonds for days after). Although, speed painting is always a great challenge.

What's next? I have a "Shelf of Shame" in my hallway, it is loaded with unpainted models that glare at me each time I walk by. My goal is to diminish their numbers greatly by next year.

Name: Keith Bevens

Occupation: Self-employed Victorian Sash Window Fitter

Age: Cheeky! 41

Location: Manchester

Years gaming: I don't actually play tabletop wargames, I just paint the miniatures. I find it hard enough to slot in some painting time, let alone play!

Years painting: I started painting when I was 17 when I was working in Scotland - I visited a store in Inverness that sold these little metal figures and little tubs of paint, and thought that looks like something to do, so I gave it a go, and I have been painting ever since. There have been times when I've put my brushes down and not painted for months, but you can bet they always come out again and I love getting stuck in to a nice model.

Current army - and for what game? I don't really have the patience to paint a whole army - I like to do say a five or six man squad but that's as far as an army goes, otherwise I'd have a case full of half finished miniatures, which is kind of how it is now really! :)

Current modelling/painting project? At the moment I'm still painting some space wolves, Njal the Stormcaller and Lucas the Trickster.

They are coming on quite well and hopefully will be finished soon, if I can drag myself off World of Warcraft!

Favourite painting challenge? My favorite painting challenge was the one I won of course!! The hero.. where I painted an converted Ork warboss, a nice Anti-hero :) My second favorite was the one where I came second, Winter's Touch, where I painted a very dead space marine, and you can see it in these pictures.

What's next? I'm going to buy the new Sanguinor, Exemplar of the Host, and try my hand at non metallics. If it doesnt work then I shall just undercoat him and try again :) Watch this space.

I would just like to say thanks to Becky and Jason for putting the SI group together, and for all their hard work on the meetings and the magazine, and the monthly painting challenges - it's one of, if not the best painting group I'm in. I have met some great people and made a lot of good friends.

Keep up the hard work and keep your brushes wet.

Thanks again,

Keith Bevens.

2010: The Con-Quest of Derby

Words: Peter Allison
Photography: Antonia Andrew

Although I have been a gamer for over twenty years, until last month I had never been to a role-playing convention. So when I first saw the flyers for the day-long Con-Quest in Derby's Assembly Rooms I decided I had to go. Despite my lack of experience I still had a set of pre-conceptions, in that it would be quiet and, to a certain extent, uptight. The reality of Con-Quest was vastly different.

The welcome pack included a convention booklet that not only gave a synopsis of each game available, but a map of the convention itself (very useful), background on Derby and information regarding facilities close to the convention. Also included were a couple of articles on good convention playing tips and advice on running convention scenarios - whilst these were interesting, their length meant many would read them after the convention, and thus their usefulness was questionable.

The convention's organisers were always to hand, and were easy to find with their white t-shirts identifying them. Credit must go to these gentlemen for their tireless enthusiasm and their unfailingly friendly demeanour that was always happy to help attendees with their questions - especially impressive when some had been there since 5:00AM.

The Assembly Rooms as the convention's venue was ideal, an airy multi-roomed affair with a well-stocked bar for drinks and snacks. The door price was more than reasonable (£6.00 in advance - bargain!) for the space and amenities that the venue had to offer. Located in the centre of Derby, the convention was ideally positioned for people from out of town due to the short distance from the bus and train stations.

A car park located next to the venue was equally handy especially, I suspect, for many of the traders. My only criticism of the venue was due to its multi-roomed nature: after later finding the map in the welcome pack, I found that I had missed parts of the convention as they were in areas that seemed off-limits. I had not missed any of the trading or display stands, as these were located in the main rooms, but I feel in the future that signs indicating the different areas would be very useful.

My arrival at the convention was also the time that I learned one of the reasons why people come to gaming conventions - besides the obvious of gaming - which is to (re)connect with old friends. I was both stunned and delighted to bump into a friend I had not seen for thirteen years, and since Con-Quest we have arranged to meet up for more games.

I must admit that I was somewhat bewildered and overwhelmed when I first arrived. The convention lay-out was well planned in this regard, as one of the first things you see upon entering was the gaming boards, where attendees could sign up to the various games on offer. One thing I learnt was that arriving on time ensured you were able to play the game you wanted, as spaces went fast!

The selection of games on offer was simply staggering, in terms of number, genre, and system. The games ranged from serious to funny, from science-fiction to fantasy, from horror to comedy, from dice-less role-playing to complex board games. The selection was deliciously diverse, and even before the convention I was poring over the games listing on the convention's website trying to decide which ones to play. I cannot deny the Burning Empires: Fires Over

Omac sounded cool, as well as the Esoterrorist, Dr. Who/Torchwood, Halo, and Modern-day Cthulhu scenarios. What impressed me the most was not only the number of "official games" that had been arranged, as the day progressed I spotted a number of people playing impromptu Collectable Card Games, and generally having fun.

On the subject of having fun, one stand that stood out was that of the Fools and Heroes (AKA FnH) Live Role-Play, who were there to promote the

organisation and sign-up new players. The members of FnH would regularly challenge attendees to duel their champions - in an area cordoned off in order to limit collateral damage to the innocent - for the honour of, well, duelling. The FnH stand added a lot of colour and character to the event as the members came dressed in their full regalia. Whist this may seem odd to normal people, the gamers here knew where the LARPers were coming from.

Con-Quest's Con-Quest Guests of Honour were led by the inestimable Gav Thorpe, a veteran of Games Workshop and creator of their classic war-game/RPG Inquisitor. Also in attendance was Black Library editor, and author of Salamander, Nick Kyme; as well as Alessio Cavatore, the creator of Shuuro. All were incredibly friendly and enthusiastic about gaming, and more

than happy to chat to people. Shuuro was especially intriguing as it is a war-game version of Chess.

Rounding out the compliment of games and guests was a diverse selection of retail stands. From the House Attreidies second-hand games stall (great for finding those out of print games) to Viva La Hates TV and Film memorabilia; from House of Dice's staggering dice selection (including the awesome D10,000!) to Cubicle 7's games stand. All of the stallholders I spoke to were more than happy to chat with me, as I hunted around for a specific game, especially as I could not remember the name of said game, and could only describe it to them – two stall holders

actually went on-line to find the name for me. The bring and buy stand was a good idea, as it provided an excellent place to find the books you have been searching for that nobody else wants.

Mongoose Publishing deserves special mention for their fantastic range of role-playing games. It was not so much the settings that appealed to me, but how the game books were structured and formatted in a modular fashion. Each genre (fantasy and science-fiction) had their own core rules and setting (Rune Quest for fantasy, Traveller for science-fiction) and was indicated with plain black covers. The colour of the cover title indicated the type of book, be it core rules, equipment, character, or source material. This was a neat and well formatted system for searching "at a glance". The rules system was also structured so that they could be adapted for specific settings, such as the Judge Dredd system, which was also colour coordinated. Needless to say, after the number of times I have spent rifling through my gaming bag for a specific book, I was impressed with the idea behind this modular system.

Wandering around the convention, the atmosphere was the right mix of informal and fun. People were here to game and have a good time. What I was surprised to find, whilst the convention was not family orientated, it was nonetheless child friendly. There was lots for children to be interested in - such as the impressive stand by the Derby Wargames Society - and be fascinated by, such as the number of demonstration games available. I was particularly impressed by the attitude of the Fools and Heroes stand who gamely allowed themselves to be repeatedly beaten over the head by various children who ganged up on their champions in the arena, including their president who had his ass whupped an eye watering number of times. Many such children often walked away, with a recognisable gleam in their eyes, inevitably asking their parents if they can go to their local LARPing group and hit more people with rubber swords.

With Con-Quest, Darran Sims and his fellow organisers created a truly excellent gaming convention. They employed an excellent venue to its fullest and found the right balance of games and stands that was complimented by an informal and friendly atmosphere that didn't care whether you were a novice or experienced gamer. As for me, I am already looking forward to next year's Con-Quest.

Blast from the Past:
WWE Raw Deal

Words: Nick Johnson, Richard Tinsley &
Justin Parker
Photography: Nick Johnson

Introduction

Raw Deal was a collectable card game originally published in 2000 by Comic Images, using a license from World Wrestling Entertainment. It was designed to simulate the action in a professional wrestling match, using images and trademarks from the WWE IP to illustrate a card's intentions. On November 14th 2007, Comic Images issued a press release stating that they had lost the WWE license due to declining sales, and the game went out of production in December 2007.

Even though it is no longer available as a new product, Raw Deal enjoys an active player base, to the extent that the fans are designing new sets to allow them to expand the game.

Deck Construction

Raw Deal is played with two decks, the Arsenal and the Backlash deck. The Arsenal (containing exactly 60 cards) has two roles during a game - firstly, it is where you draw your hand from at the start of the game, as well as further cards as the game progresses. Secondly, it acts as a representation of your wrestler's stamina - if, at any point, there are no cards left in your Arsenal and you need to overturn a card, then you lose the game, in what is described as a Pinfall Victory for your opponent - 1, 2, 3!

The Backlash deck is different - generally speaking, it will contain twenty cards, ten of which are Pre-Match cards, and ten of which are Mid-Match cards. Pre-Match cards do exactly what they say on the tin - they are played before the start of the match, adding storyline effects to the match - they can determine the venue the match is taking place at, whether the wrestlers are in a feud, whether there is a stipulation in place for the match, and if your wrestler has a manager, as well as many other effects. While you can pack ten cards for each phase, you are only allowed to play five of them, unless other cards provide you with additional pre-match or mid-match slots. This usually ends up being more of an issue with mid-match cards than pre-match cards - do I play this Reversal now, or hold off so I can play this action in my turn?

When constructing your decks, you can use up to three of any card, with two exceptions. The first exception is that you can only put one copy of a unique card in your deck. Secondly, certain cards feature the logos of some of the wrestler's on them, which marks them as superstar-specific. You are only allowed to field superstar-specific cards with your wrestler's logo

on them. Other than these two exceptions, you're pretty much free to construct your deck as you see as you see fit with, with a mix of Manoeuvres, Reversals, Actions and Hybrids of the other types.

Game Play

The first stage of any game of Raw Deal is the pre-match. Both players reveal their Superstar Card, also known as a Face Card. The Superstar card determines your starting hand size, your Superstar Value and your Superstar Ability. The Superstar Value is a representation of how popular your wrester is, and whichever wrestler has the higher Superstar Value will go first. The Superstar Ability is always available to you, as long as you satisfy the conditions to use it.

Once you've determined who is going first, both players alternate playing their Pre-Match cards, until both players pass - in most games, this will result in each player having five pre-match cards in play at the end of this phase, though certain cards allow extra slots. Once all Pre-Match cards are played, both players draw cards equal to their hand size, then any effects that happen at the end of the Pre-Match phase resolve - Underrated Superstar, for instance, allows certain lesser-known characters to draw additional cards before the match begins.

When the game begins, the players attempt to land manoeuvres on their opponent, who can counter with reversals. Each card has two values on it, a Fortitude rating and a Damage rating, usually shortened to F and D, respectively. In order to play a card, you must have sufficient Fortitude in play - the value of which is calculated by adding up all the Damage from your cards in play. Generally speaking the lower the F rating of a card, the lower the D, or the smaller the effect and vice versa. Superstar trademark finishers tend to start at 25 Fortitude doing 20 Damage and go upwards from there and are designed to end the game.

If a player is unable to reverse an attack from his hand or Backlash deck, he must overturn cards equal to its D rating from the top of his Arsenal. He might over-turn a card which reverses the attack before all damage is resolved, at which point his opponent's turn ends. Any card which is successfully played in this way will remain in play, contributing to it's controller's Fortitude.

The standard win condition in a game of Raw Deal is to inflict sufficient damage to your opponent so that he has no cards left in the deck and can no longer "mill" cards from the top of his deck. This means that you achieve a Pinfall Victory. Certain Stipulation Pre-Match cards add alternate victory conditions to the match - a First to Tap Out Match, for instance, relies on

you being able to play the card Maintain Hold after a large submission move to force your opponent to tap out from the pain.

Resets & Revolution

Raw Deal started as a game where sets did not cycle - any card from its history was legal to use, and there wasn't a ban list. With the release of the Survivor Series 3 set, the thirteenth set, a new tournament format was introduced. This format, Afterburn, limited the card pool to Survivors Series 3, the preceding set, called Armageddon, and the Lethal Library, which was a set of cards that came with a Raw Deal Bag. These sets, plus assorted promotional cards and any sets which came later, formed the new tournament format - the previous format, where everything was playable, was re-named All Axxess.

This was followed in December 2006 by the release of Raw Deal Revolution which was effectively a complete reset of the game and would ultimately lead to its demise. The concept behind the set was simple - release a new base set to try and entice new players in to the game. Unfortunately, rather than releasing a base set in the style of Survivor Series 3, Revolution was a major reworking of the game, with the basic card types recreated under new headings - Actions became Antics, for instance. While the cards were still compatible with the cards that had gone before, this arbitrary change caused vocal dissent from the player-base, who began to drop the game in droves. Even worse, Revolution had not brought in the new players that it was designed to, and shortly after the

the greatest players in the world on our door step - Rob Maslen, two time UK Champion; Matt Hewitt, the first UK champion, also known as Triple HHHewitt - he won everything with his Los Guerreros deck which I had the pleasure of sitting up till 3am one Saturday night, as he repeatedly beat me to death with it and then asked, "How can we make this better?"; Matt Cooper (Flaming Christian); Matt Trindal, founder of the MPA, a group whose existence has technically been erased from history, until now; Martin Cooper (That's my flaming Christian deck); and Steve "Raven/3 Minute Warning" Keenan, amongst many others.

Raw Deal continues to be played to this day and the Comic Images website still exists. In Sheffield there is an annual Royal Rumble tournament where 30 decks are played in a slam down, drag out, card fest which goes on way into the night on Wrestlemania weekend. Not bad for a little card game which was thought to be unsellable because of it's double geek factor of being a card game and about pro wrestling. And that's the bottom line - 'cos Stone Cold said so!

release of Raw Deal Revolution 3: Judgement Day an announcement was made that Comic Images would not be producing new sets for the game any more.

Conclusion

Raw Deal as an active card game died in December 2007 and very sadly was followed by its co-creator, and main driving force, Barron Vangor Toth in March 2008. There is a very poignant blog by one time Raw Deal UK Commissioner Neil Gow, who was good friends with Barron, which sums up the way the whole community of Raw Deal felt at his passing.

The Raw Deal community was the true strength of the game. It was played by a bunch of fun-loving, larger-than-life characters that mirrored in many ways their wrestlers from the squared circle - Neil Gow, UK commissioner and Raw Deal webmaster; Danny Bourne, the first UK commissioner, who was forced to play Kurt Angle for a year after loosing a bet with Barron; Steve Tobin whose Rock deck really did send you to sleep; Craig the T.i.T. (Tobin in Training) who actually turned up wearing a mask and cape; Justin Parker, the leader of Team B'Stard and self proclaimed Fat B'Stard; Jaime Davenport, whose bravado and ego were backed up by his awesome card playing skills; and Mark Armitage, who tried to never sleep before a big tourney if at all possible!

The list is endless and we would run out of magazine before we ran out of people to tell you about. We in Sheffield were particularly spoiled as we had some of

Blood & Gore

Words & Photography: Ian Hale

Materials Required

UHU glue

Tamiya clear red

Matchstick or cocktail stick

Step One

Take a small amount of UHU glue and add it to your palette - I have put mine in an upturned old base, to save cleaning my usual palette.

Step Two

Now apply a small amount of Tamiya clear red to the end of the matchstick - it will hold plenty of ink and will save ruining a paint brush.

Step Three

Add the ink to the glue and mix.

Step Four

Apply the mixture to the part of the base/figure that needs it.

Step Five

Stretch the mixture to another part of the base/figure and keep doing this until the required effect is reached,

I know this does not look like real blood at the moment, but if you apply a little brown or purple ink to the initial mixture you will have a great effect. This method also works for any colour you want - for instance, to do a green acid drool coming out of the mouth of a Carnifex.

Have fun with this guys, it's a great looking effect.

Chipping

Words & Photography: Ian Hale

Painting chips on power armour or tanks can get quite tedious, so here is the lazy man's way.

Equipment

Airbrush and compressor

Hairspray

Salt

Toothbrush or any small stiff bristled brush

Paint brush (For mixing paint in the airbrush)

Primer

Paint (desired colours)

Model

Stage 1

Start by priming the model - for this example I have decided to use grey primer as it shows the rust effect better.

Stage 2

Next choose the desired colours for the rust chips. I am using a 1:1 mix of Vallejo Cavalry Brown and GW Vermin Brown for a nice mid-tone rust.

Stage 3

Using your Airbrush or brush, spray or paint the rust colour over the model. For this tutorial i have sprayed the complete model, but you might decide to only paint part of the model.

Stage 4

Once your paint has dried completely here is the fun bit, get your hairspray, salt and model

Stage 5

Spray the model with hairspray and wait 10 - 15 seconds, then sprinkle the salt on the still wet hairspray. I would do this over a piece of newspaper or the bin, to save on mess.

Stage 6

Once you have a model with what looks like a really bad case of dandruff, prepare your main colour - I'm using GW Ultramarine Blue.

Spray, or paint, the entire model with the chosen colour (or the parts you need)

Examples by Alex Riley

Final Stage

Finally get your toothbrush and gently brush it over the model removing the salt grains from the figure. As you remove the grains you will see that the rust colour shows through, resembling chips in the paint.

Here is a part finished model of mine using this method with most of the extra bits painted. As you can see, it looks very effective for a small amount of effort.

Painting 1/72 Miniatures and the Use of Dip

Words & Photography: Jason Hubbard

I thought I'd write a short article on how I paint 1/72 plastic miniatures - you probably played with this scale as kids, especially Airfix kits. If you've ever painted them, then the main drawback is paint chipping off them really easily, especially the rubbery plastic ones.

I have a technique or two - well, one, in fact - that will prevent that from happening. For starters, the only additional item you'll need from your usual painting kit is either a tin of Army Painter Dip or gloss varnish. It doesn't matter if it's a tin of dip or varnish, as either will work.

The first thing to do is undercoat the miniatures - once this has dried, you will need to apply a coat of varnish or dip, which ever you have decided to use. Note - when using dip I would recommend using a brush on technique, as it is quite gloopy and if you get too much dip on this scale of miniature, you'll end up losing a lot of the detail. You will need to give the tin a good shake, and I have found it better to use the dip which has collected on the lid, rather than dipping the brush straight into the pot, as it is a lot less messy this way.

The next stage once the dip or varnish has dried is to base paint the miniatures, remember to use a thin coat of paint. as detail is easy to lose with thick coat. Once this has been completed then I would apply another coat of varnish/dip to the figures. This will seal the basecoat - and, for those of you who have applied dip, it will at the same time shade the models. It isn't really necessary to paint several layers of shade on figures of this scale or smaller.

Now you will have a base coated figure, and those who have used dip will also have a shaded figure. This is the reason I use dip on gaming models, as I get a shade and varnish in one go. It saves time, especially if you've got a large army to paint.

Next we will paint in the highlights - you don't need to go overboard at this stage, in the same way you would with a 28mm figure. Once this is done, you can add a further coat of gloss or dip. I personally go straight to a coat of matt varnish.

And that, folks, is a quick and simple guide to painting 1/72 scale miniatures, and thanks to the multiple layers of dip or varnish you won't get paint chips. In addition, the extra coats of dip/varnish give strength to those 1/72 figures which are made from a rubbery plastic, making them less bendy when touched.

Reviews

Baccus 6mm Review

Words: Cy Harrison

As normally happens when you agree to these things, I was sat quietly at the Sheffield Wargames club ruing my appalling luck with the dice - actually my opponent's amazing ability to throw way above the odds, to be honest - when Becky walked up with a disarming smile and a plastic packet. "Who wants to write a review?" she said...

I lost and have been wondering how to write a figure review ever since. So, faced with a large plastic packet, I opened it up to find two smaller packets and - surprise, surprise - inside those were even more small packets containing figures. 6mm heaven, or is it?

First things first. This is a review of the new Baccus 6mm range of Sassanian Persians. The range consists of ten different troop types - five different cavalry codes, four of infantry and some elephants. Unfortunately the review samples didn't include the armoured infantry or the elephants.

The cavalry break down into early and late cataphracts, armoured and light horse archers and Arab light cavalry. The two cataphract codes include both command and 'rank and file' types. These are the usual Baccus clean design, emphasising the important elements without being over fussy. There is a mix of barded and unbarded horses for the early type with all the later type being on half-barded horses. However there are two problems, both with the early type. One is minor, the standard on is cast sidewise and will require cutting to turn to a face on position, the other however is major. The command strip has been miscast due to the mould being out of alignment.

One hopes that this is a one off and is not present in the production run.

The armoured horse archers are of the same standard armed with composite bows, but the officer and standard bearer appear to be identical to those for the early cataphracts, including a barded horse, which is a shame - variety is good. The two light cavalry types are of a more generic type, javelins, small shield and composite bow, no shield and are to the same high standard of design.

The infantry received consist of some levy spearmen, including command, light archers and slingers. The levy infantry are nicely done with a large wicker shield, however this shield does not match those in the Men-at-Arms volume by Osprey Publishing on the subject (#175 Rome's Enemies (3) - Parthans & Persians), but who am I to argue with Pete Berry? The light infantry are again nicely done in tunic and trousers, although I think the archers poses are a little wooden this is more than made up for by the nice variety in the slingers.

Overall this is a great addition to the Baccus range. Provided the mould issue is a one off, I would love to see a mass block of cataphracts storming across the table and the lighter types have, as is usual, the potential to be used for many forces in addition to those originally intended.

You can see some pictures of these troops at the Baccus website.

Fantasy Grounds 2

Words: Richard Tinsley
Illustration: Smite Works

Well here we are - another month and another late article! You know that you really have to get cracking when your editor sends you a text at 8am saying "Any chance of that article?"

I was very excited about this month's "assignment", which was to look at Fantasy Grounds II (FG2), an online campaign/character management system. This was a demo style version of the software which incorporated support for both 4th edition Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) and Savage Worlds. Being a supporter of both systems this was a product that I might well look at using at some point. FG2 also has support for D&D 3.5, Role master classic, Call of Cthulhu and Foundation. I'm banned from all serious Call of Cthulhu games due to an incident 20 years ago with an avatar of Yog-Sothoth and a ton of goose feathers, but I do find it slightly creepy that Word auto-corrects me when I type Cthulhu with a lower-case "c"!

Anyway back to the software – the layout is clean and easy to navigate and it has an array of tools to help you run an online game of whatever it is that takes your fancy, including a dice roller so that you can't cheat by rolling them away from the software and having the nerve to try something like "damn I've never rolled this many crits in one night!"

Unfortunately, this is where the whole review goes a bit Top Gear; I didn't really like the product at all. Firstly the character management system aspect of it is woefully lacking and, if compared to something like Hero Labs, is quite pathetic. In order to use it you need to have a fully created character already and then to type in the information. There are no features in the software that help you in this process whatsoever and it lacks even the most basic rules look-up feature.

I also can't help asking myself "Why?" for the whole thing. To take D&D on its own for a second; Wizards of the Coast already has really good online role-playing software available which does much more than this, and is easily accessible to everyone with an internet connection. Yes, you have to pay for it, but you have to pay for this too...

I feel that I should admit, at this point, that I am not a fan of online role-playing in any shape of form. I believe the most important factor of role-playing is the interaction between you and your fellow characters/players and anything that requires you to type every word you want to say is going to lose something in translation. This software is just an instant messaging system with some RPG specific add-ons.
The lack of any real character building features in the product means it is only useful if you want to play with your buddies online – something that is possible to do for free or by other products better than this.

Obviously, everyone is entitled to their opinion with regards to online role-playing, but I am struggling to see how you would manage to successfully create the right atmosphere needed for a good game of Cthulhu over the internet – a good GM will make the players feel actual paranoia assail them as they sit round the table, feeling that creatures who have no place in our world - or even our dimension - are watching them with avarice. Those creeping feelings of doom as you feel the madness infest your soul and bring a gut wrenching cry to your lips...

Sadly, it is an inescapable fact that in cyberspace no one can hear you scream, and this software is not going to help on that front. Please keep reading as next month I will be kicking the Andrex puppy and tying Gizmo between four monster trucks that will then speed off in opposite directions.....

Review: Medusa, by Kabuki Models

Words & Photography: Anthony Barnes

I was very fortunate to be offered a couple of Kabuki miniatures to paint, with the proviso that I write a review of them and document my painting experience with some photographs. This article will cover the Medusa model from the Dark Messiah range.

My first impression of the model was very favourable. It is beautifully sculpted and whilst there is a fair amount of detail, it is not so much as to be overwhelming. The model is cast in one piece, eliminating the chance of losing important parts on the carpet. Poor Medusa does seem to be suffering the kind of wardrobe malfunction a friend of mine regularly experiences at work do's. Luckily for me I try to use Tentacle Pink - a now out of production Citadel paint - on every miniature I paint and an exposed nipple gave me the perfect opportunity, so I won't complain about that. She also seems to have left the house without putting any knickers on, which was probably a bit of an error considering she appears to be wearing the world's least practical dress.

The kit comes with a resin display base-cum-plinth which is a great addition. The miniature is very well cast in white metal with only a small mould line. The resin base has a few pits and spots in the finer detail and isn't quite up to the same standard of the miniature.

The advice I was given on preparing this miniature was to remove the tab and put a thin (0.5mm) pin into the feet, then fill in the slot in the base and pin the model to the base when it was complete. Only having what I thought was a 0.8mm drill bit - but which I have subsequently realised was actually 1mm - I decided to approach this very carefully. My careful approach was justified but completely unsuccessful as I efficiently severed her left foot whilst removing the tab. A short trip to a model shop for smaller drill bits and pinning rod and much swearing and puttying later and the foot was reattached. The join wasn't perfect but some judicious placement of basing materials should hide all wrongdoings. I did however have to leave a small part of the tab joined to each foot which would require a lot of dremel work to be done when trying to attach the miniature to it's base.

Painting this miniature was enjoyable for the most part. The flesh and cloth are well sculpted, having just enough shaping to make shading and highlighting pretty simple. The rest of the miniature, however, has some very fine detailing which caused a little bit of frustration. The face in particular gave me some troubles as I had decided I would attempt to paint some make-up on there. Medusa progressed from looking like Rocky Balboa, through lady of negotiable affection and eventually landed at slapper - at which point I decided to cut my losses and leave her face alone.

The most difficult parts of the model were probably the metallic areas. There are some very fine chains and edging to paint and they were a bit of a headache. This was compounded when I managed to put a huge glob of gold paint on the clothing whilst painting the metallics. I hurriedly attempted to wash it off but was left with a faint glittery effect and had to re-touch a few areas to eradicate this.

When it came to the base I went for a complicated arrangement of layer upon layer of highlights and shading to create something spectacular. This ended up looking like a complete dog's dinner so I went back and used a simple combination of inking and dry brushing instead. I then used some leaf material to try and create a feeling of wind sweeping across the base, but more importantly to hide the join in the foot I had damaged.

This wasn't one of the easiest models I have ever worked on but despite the trials and tribulations of my time with Medusa I did enjoy the experience. Having started my second Kabuki miniature now, and also having read comments from other hobbyists painting them I can say that the difficulties I had with

Medusa seem to be continued with the rest of the range.

These are beautifully sculpted, finely detailed miniatures and as such I wouldn't recommend them to a beginner. If you fancy a bit of a challenge however, you could do a lot worse than a Kabuki miniature.

Painting and Finishing Techniques

Words: Alf Barker

'Painting and Finishing Techniques' is just one of a series of publications by Osprey Publishing, dealing with many aspects of all types of scale modelling from actually building the model, finishing them and, particularly in this title, how to apply weathering and wearing effects.

The author describes how he finished and applied his techniques to four aircraft kits and three military vehicle kits. However, the techniques are not restricted to just these types of models but would be equally useful to boats, railway models and miniatures as well. The text contains many hints and tips on how the finishes were achieved together with descriptions of the paints, tools and techniques used to accomplish them. The text is supported by many excellent and detailed photographs of the effects achieved.

On first reading, it would appear that this is not a book for pure beginners and does in my opinion assume some experience of scale modelling. I do however also believe that it can be useful to most modellers at any stage of their experience giving advice, as it does, on how to apply techniques during and after the building stage.

Good advice is given regarding the array of paints available these days and the various types of finishes and effects which can be achieved by simply using the right paint, together with masking techniques. Of particular interest is the author's description of how to achieve wood grain effects.

The final paragraph of the book deals with painting figures, mounting models and presenting them to best effect. This section contains many excellent photographs of the military vehicles built and the effects that can be achieved to show wear, tear and use of the real things.

The book is not intended to be an in depth description of how to improve modelling technique but more of a reference book for those inexperienced or experienced who would wish to improve their skills in finishing and applying effects to their models.

As a youngster, I built many kits but, I suppose, like many, as family and work life took precedence, the hobby faded. Quickly approaching retirement now, my interest is returning and I have recently completed several models and am not far from finishing the new 'Airfix' Mosquito. I have never had the courage to try to apply weathering, wear and ageing marks to my models, particularly when I have on occasions completed a decent paint job. My next project is a 1/24th Scale 'Airfix' Harrier and this book has encouraged me to think about applying some of the techniques as I build the model.

It is difficult to be critical of any aspect of this title from Osprey. The size is right, the price is right and any publication that encourages and inspires us to try something new or different in our hobby has to be an excellent publication. I would recommend the book to any modeller, of whatever persuasion, wishing to develop their skills.

Spanish Colonial Fortifications in North America 1565-1822

Words: Dave Barker

When I received the packet containing what I knew would be an Osprey book for review in this issue of Irregular Magazine, I was intrigued and a little bit excited to find out which title I would be reading! Osprey have a great reputation and you expect their titles to contain lots of well researched detail on the subject, together with fantastic artwork that depicts the vehicles, uniforms or other aspects of the subject discussed in that particular title.

So, I was slightly bemused and intrigued by the less-than-mainstream subject of Spanish Colonial Fortifications in North America 1565-1822. Although it sounds like a Mastermind subject, as I started reading the book I was quickly drawn into the history of each of the fortifications described and of Spanish Colonial America in general.

For a wargamer, my knowledge of the technical terms for different parts of a fortification probably isn't what it should be and in keeping with other Osprey titles that I have read, the text in this one doesn't hold back on being either technical or precise. This was a little intimidating for the first couple of pages, until I decided to fire up Wikipedia to give me a little assistance and before long I was completely engaged once again.

Ranging from Spanish Florida to California, many different kinds of fortification are discussed: full blown star forts, like the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine; wooden forts and blockhouses like Fort San Luis; the Presidios fortifications that were built all of the way across New Spain to project Spanish power and provide defences for settlers; down to the short-lived defences built by the Spanish on Vancouver Island. As well as descriptions of the fortifications themselves, a history of each site is given, some in more detail than others.

I found myself quite drawn into the subject, even though I hadn't thought I would find it quite so interesting when I started - in fact, I'm rather inspired to try and model some of the fortifications in this book. I guess all I need is to find someone to game with! Now, who wants to be the Spanish?!

If you don't know about Osprey Publishing, then it is worth going and looking at their vast range of military history titles! From ancient to modern warfare, Osprey cover it all.

From the mainstream titles covering topics such as WWII, the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War or the English Civil War, to the rather more esoteric titles such as the one I'm reviewing here, Osprey really have got something for every gamer and every military historian!

Hasslefree Miniatures:
Dwarf with Greataxe (HFD016)

Words & Photography: George Perkins

The Hasslefree miniature's Dwarf with great axe is supplied in two pieces, which are the main Dwarf body and an ornate shield. The shield can easily glue to the back of the body section via a ball and socket joint. Also in the plastic bag the Dwarf comes with a bog standard 25 mm round slotted base to mount the model on.

The Dwarf from Hasslefree isn't your typical World of Warcraft or Warhammer muscle bound Dwarf, but a more realistic proportioned akin to the Games Workshop's Lord of the Rings isn't the over the top sized weapon you can get in other fantasy ranges. The face is a bit hard to see, but this is more due to the scale of the miniature rather than poor sculpting. So my first impressions of the Hasslefree Dwarf are very high.

The preparation time for this model was pretty quick. There were hardly any unsightly mould lines, but where they were you could easily to remove them with a craft knife. There was a bit of damage on the rim of the shield. I could of repair this with some green stuff, but I chose to leave his because I thought it look good as battle damage. Then all I had to do was glue the shield to the back of the model and fix it to the plastic base with superglue.

The model was fairly simple to paint. So what is done is a small guide to the bits I've found fun to paint. So that was the axe and the flesh.

The face was given a basecoat of Tallarn Flesh, then some Badab Black wash added to the Tallarn Flesh to produce a wash to shade the face. The Tallarn Flesh was then reapplied to the raised areas of the face. The face was then given a highlight of the Basecoat and Bleached Bone was applied. A wash of the highlight and Scab Red was applied to the bottom lip and the cheeks. The eye sockets were given a wash of the highlight plus Regal Blue. Skull white was applied to the eyes with a fine brush and black dots were added for the pupils.

The axe was given a basecoat of Boltgun Metal, and then a highlight of Chainmail was added to the edges of the blade and the socket for the shaft of the axe. A wash of Badab Black was applied and once that was dry a wash of Devlen Mud. A final highlight of Mithril Silver was applied to the very edges. The blood effect was created by layering different washes. First a red wash was given to the area near the edge of the axe, then a wash of Leviathan Purple leaving some of the red showing and finally Devlen Mud wash was added to the edge of the blade. To finish the blood effect the axe blade was stippled with Red Gore.

Overall I really enjoyed painting this model and I highly recommend it as an alternative model for Lord of the Rings or War of the Ring as a Dwarf Captain.

Hasslefree Miniatures: Dynamic Tiriel

Words & Photography: Ian Goadsby

This figure is well proportioned and comes with no mould lines. The arms fitted to the body quite well - it just needed gluing, with no filler needed in the joint.

This figure is well proportioned and comes with no mould lines. The arms fitted to the body quite well - it just needed gluing, with no filler needed in the joint.

Having never seen Hasslefree miniatures before having this one, the rest of the range looks impressive, all having been well cast and having some unique figures.

A review of Field of Glory – Digital Version

This game is, in many ways, a traditional PC wargame with a top down view, and movement, unit facing, arcs of fire and ranges all determined by a hex grid superimposed over the terrain map. The hex grid can be made invisible, of course, but it's influence remains. The various units which make up the opposing armies occupy a single hex each and are represented by groups of painted wargame figures, with two figures for light troops, three figures for most other mounted troops and medium infantry and six figures for most heavy infantry units. The troop classes are the same as those used in the table top rules; light foot, light horse, medium foot, heavy foot, cavalry, knights etc. The use of miniatures does help reinforce the feel of playing a digitized table top game, but it also looks a little odd at first when units move by sliding across the terrain accompanied by appropriate marching or trotting sounds - but you soon stop noticing this.

As would be expected, various terrain features appear on the maps to slow units down, disorganize the heavy troops and generally get in the way. These are rendered in a quite low key, unobtrusive manner which does mean that the player can always focus easily on the units but also means that it is sometimes easy to forget that the terrain pieces, and their effects, are there – How were those archers able to shoot over the spearmen? Oh, they're on a hill! The overall effect is to create maps which are quite drab in themselves but which are highly functional, which provides another similarity with many table top games seen at the typical wargame club evening. Having said this, ancient and medieval battle fields tend not to be terrain rich and what terrain does appear is often found at the edges.

As you would expect, Field of Glory comes with a number of ready to play scenarios available. The published rubric for the game mentions 18 battles but more are included as part of downloadable updates, patch releases and also as part of the Digital Army Packs which can be purchased separately from the game. I admit that I did not pay close attention to which scenario came with which update but I can

report that with version 1.2.6 of the game installed together with the Storm of Arrows Army Pack, there are over 40 ready to play battles available. The scenarios are rated by complexity based on the number of units, or battle-groups to use the Field of Glory terminology, and vary in size from the Low Complexity Clastium 22BC with 21 battle-groups and 15 turns, pitting Romans against Galls, up to the High Complexity Lylibaeum 276BC with 132 battle-groups and 20 turns featuring Pyrrhic and Carthaginian armies. Most of the scenarios are historical and based on actual battles, but there are some which feature hypothetical encounters involving various Field of Glory Starter Armies.

Battles can be fought against the computer, against another human player or can even be staged with the computer controlling both sides and the player simply watching the fun. Initial dispositions can either use historical or free deployment.

When playing against the computer the human player can select either side as would be expected and a handicap level can be set to favour the computer or the human player. The computer AI (artificial intelligence) provides a reasonable level of opponent, but it can get involved in unnecessary marching and counter marching, and generally is not aggressive enough to provide a serious challenge to an experienced player. Never the less, the AI is not incompetent and will provide the solo gamer with a satisfactory game, even if the results will always tend to flatter him. It is certainly no weaker than in the majority of other PC wargames.

The game play itself does show a strong relationship with the table top game, and players of the latter will recognize the underlying mechanisms such as the Cohesion Test and the four Cohesion Levels; Steady, Disrupted, Fragmented and Routed. As with the table top game, positioning of generals and their influence over cohesion is a key factor in successful play. The proximity of generals also influences the results of the Complex Move Test, which if failed can cause troops to refuse to carry out a manoeuvre or to charge an enemy without orders. Two sound effects that I particularly like are the cry of 'No!' which goes up when a battle-group refuses an order and the cry of 'Charge!' when it decides that the time for crossing swords has arrived. no matter what you may think. My favourite sound effect, however, is the 'Urgh!' which is heard when a general is killed – especially if it is an enemy general.

The game does not use the table top concept of figures beyond representing the troops. Battle-group strengths are reported as numbers of actual soldiers,

or elephants, chariots, etc, and the results of attacks are shown as losses of actual soldiers. A skull icon does appear against a battle-group for each 25% of it's starting strength which has been lost. The various icons which appear against a battle-group to indicate its status are clear and easily understood after a quick glance at the icons help page, and they do not get in the way of the game play at all.

As mentioned above, you are able to play against other human players as well as the computer's AI. This can involve two of you taking turns at the same keyboard but can also involve you playing against a remote opponent who could be anywhere in the world. To take advantage of the remote play facility, or Multiplayer as it is called in the game, you need to have a Slitherine account which you log into when the Multiplayer function is selected. This account costs nothing to set up and also allows you to take part in the various forums provided on the Slitherine web site. Once logged in you can issue challenges, accept challenges or play a currently active game. The challenges can take the form of an invitation to play one of the scenarios or to take part in a Digital Army Generator based game. These latter are akin to traditional competition or club based games where the challenger selects the number of points to be used for building an army, builds his own army and then invites others to build their own armies and take him on. The game comes with a core set of Digital Armies to be used in this manner and these can be expanded upon by purchasing additional Army Packs – at the moment two of these are available; Rise of Rome and Storm of Arrows. These Army Packs are based on the armies described in the similarly named supplements provided for the table top rules.

The actual play of Multiplayer battles is no different from play against the computer except that after you have made your move an e-mail notification is sent to your opponent and you must then wait for him to make his counter move and pass the initiative back

to you. This does not mean that you must sit at your screen - indeed there may be hours or even days of delay between moves. Instead, when you next log in you will be able to call up the position after your move then replay your opponents move before considering your response. This mechanism works very well and I have been particularly impressed by the couple of Multiplayer games which I have taken part in.

Let me finally mention the in game help menu. The help screens are well presented, easy to read and navigate, and to my mind are very effective. The game plays quite intuitively so there shouldn't be much need to dig around it the help menu, but if you do want some explanation of the underlying rules the information is there and it is easily found and digested.

So at first glance there is nothing very different here from previous PC based ancient wargames, but after taking some time and playing with it you will discover that it is a fine game which is very much like a digital version of the excellent table top rules. If you are a figure gamer or a PC warrior with an interest in the ancient/medieval period, I would recommend that you take a look at Field of Glory.

Brutal - Collaborative Review

Words: Nick Johnson, Jon Griffiths, Dave Barker, Shane Rozzel, Jason & Rebecca Hubbard
Photography: Dave Barker

Figures

True Human: Stinger - Jon Griffiths

She comes if 3 pieces - body & two separate arms - together with resin base, in a type of steel floor design. The model needed minimal cleaning, with the odd minor mould line & very little flash - even between the hair. My first impression was she's been very well sculpted - there are lots of little details, which can be interpreted as desired. The base has two holes which correspond to the plugs on her feet - while a bit of filling was needed, it's a pretty neat idea. I glued her all together before priming, but in hindsight I should have left the weapon arm off, as this caused a me a few problems late on. It might even be advisable to pin this arm, although there is not a lot of metal to play with. My poor painting doesn't show it, but she is a joy to paint, for which I can thank to Becky & Klaus for the opportunity. I shall be picking more up from this range.

True Human: Deflector - Nick Johnson

As with the Stinger, the Deflector came in three pieces - the body as the main piece, with both arms separate. The miniature was accompanied by a choice of two bases - a square, textured resin base, and a generic round slottabase. Given the nature of the game, as well as the fact we'd be using the Deflector for our test game, I opted for the square base - and I understand that the Brutal figures will just be supplied with the resin bases from here onwards.

The model was a very clean cast, with only slight touches of flash on the arms. The weapon arm was trickier to attach initially, but proved to be sturdier when I accidentally dropped the assembled figure onto my carpet. The shield arm was an easier fit, but fell off during the above incident - thinking about it, I'd recommend a small pin to attach that arm, given the size of the shield the bond will be supporting.

When it came time to painting the Deflector, I ran into my first problem - all the pictures I could find of him on the Brutal website were from the front corner, meaning I had to guess at what the detail on his back was meant to look like. As a gladiator, I went with colours that would represent his owner, in this case a blue and gold scheme - they're two colours I find complement each other nicely.

All in all, I'm impressed with the Deflector.

True Human: In-capacitator - Dave Barker

True Human: Bruiser - Shane Rozzell

When I first received this figure in it's blister, I admit that I did put off painting and assembling it for a short while because cyborgs don't usually float my boat. However, once I did open the blister I couldn't have been more pleased with the miniature.

I can't say if the one I have is typical, but it was the first miniature I've had in months that had absolutely no flash or mould lines anywhere! The In-Capacitator is a two part miniature, with left arm from the elbow holding his trident separate from the rest of the miniature. This fitted perfectly first time, locating nicely with the cast pin and socket and a dab of superglue.

The miniature also came with a choice of bases: a regular 25mm round slotta and a 25mm square resin base textured to match the Brutal game board. The miniature itself has a pin on one of the feet that matched a corresponding hole on the resin base so I chose that one and it went together just as easily as the arm had done.

The painting was just as easy as the assembly on this miniature, helped by the miniature being mostly flesh or metal, both of which I enjoy painting. It just needed a little detail picking out before it was done – and for those of you that don't like painting faces, the In-Capacitator has a metal mask over his whole face!

Overall I'd say that I'm really impressed with this miniature, and assuming this is a typical example of the Brutal range, then assembling and painting miniatures for the game shouldn't be seen as an obstacle to playing!

This model comes in three parts. The main body, lower left arm, right arm and pipes. At first glance it's a very complex miniature with a small amount of mould lines. The pieces fit together well with only a minimum amount of filling around the right arm and shoulder joint. There are a few problems with some of the pipes also but again a small amount of filler sorted it out.

The resin base is very good with only a few small air holes and a nice strong diamond plate texture.

Overall the Bruiser is a nice piece but quite complex. I would recommend this mini to intermediate or advanced painters.

7/10 - it would have been an 8, but for the problems with the pipes.

Presentation - Becky Hubbard

From the blister packaging through to the Arena, the Brutal look is bright, gritty and metallic - a modern look with nods to the past. The yellow and back chevrons on the blisters are chipped, battered and colourful, evoking the setting of the game - a bloody spectacle. The arena has a tread plate look floor and the miniatures come with a matching base, which is just one of the small details that has had careful attention paid to it. A lot of thought has gone into the appearance of this game, and although it's still not in a finished state, I was pleased to see that the style was kept consistent across most of the playing elements. The rules and supplements are thoughtfully laid out as well, and I was grateful to find that all the text

was in a clear font and easy to read - this is usually a big gripe of mine when it comes to magazines and wargaming supplements.

The cut out pieces don't line up exactly when you cut them out, which is annoying. However, the graphics match the arena well and don't look out of place, except for the fire/electricity markers - but maybe this is so they don't blend into the board too much. I would like to see them revisited for later editions though.

Overall, I thought the look and feel helped set the scene for the game, without being cheesy or daft, and added an appeal that I didn't expect.

Rules - Jason Hubbard

The graphics and artwork are superb in the rules books - they are laid out in an easy to read format. My main issue with the rules is that there are no guidance on how to create a character - you are provided with a pre-generated fighter, but this really isn't very satisfying. The rules for actual game play quite simple once you start playing, there is sample of play within the rulebook and on the website, which explains how the game works. All of the fighters are described within the rules, though you will need the additional books in order to play more in-depth games or run a campaign. What the rule book does is allow you to jump straight in to a game and bash your opponent to death. It's a very enjoyable game and the models look great.

Game Play - Nick Johnson

We had a little trouble getting started with Brutal - we had the PDFs of the two books, along with tokens and a copy of the arena. Unfortunately, the only character class sheet we had available was for the Bruiser, so we weren't sure how the Deflector and In-capacitator were meant to work. In the end, we decided to run them both as Bruisers, so we could get the hang of the mechanics.

Once we got up and running, the game ran smoothly - if you ignore my damage rolls. As we were running identical characters, Rob and myself found we were playing the same action cards each turn, and the ebb and flow of the game came with who was going first each turn. I made an error by deliberately walking over one of the Chaos Pads, as I knew that there were positive and negative benefits - unfortunately, this merely resulted in me setting myself on file. As this was only doing one point of damage a turn, I initially wasn't worried - and used it to my advantage by setting Rob's character alight, too - but as the game wore on, I found myself using health packs to avoid getting burned to a crisp.

The game played quickly, and we both enjoyed the experience - I'm looking forwards to trying it again when my Deflector will get some use out of his tower shield, and we'll get to see what sort of effect the Events cards will have on the game.

Background - Dave Barker

As with many other board games, the background given for the Brutal board game is rather sparse and vague. It gives a general impression of a post-apocalyptic world several thousand years in the future where the main source of entertainment for an oppressed populace is Brutal – a gladiatorial game where humans, cyborgs and mutants fight to the death to keep the masses happy.

And that is about it. The rules explain a touch more about how each player represents a Lanista (owner) of a troop of Brutal fighters and how this is built, but the rest of the rulebook is pretty solidly about how to play the game instead of dwelling on any background.

There is a little bit more background if you trawl through the Brutal forum which makes it clear that more of this background exists in the head of the Brutal's creator, but it is only a little more defined than the short background given in the rulebook.

I don't see any of this lack of background being problematic, as it is pretty typical fare for a board game, although the wargamer and role-players in me longs for this background to be fleshed out some more and in further detail as the hooks in it are definitely tantalising. I very much hope more of the Brutal background is included in the third book, the Lanista Book, which will cover Brutal leagues and campaigns and is due out soon!

Summary - Jason Hubbard

Overall I really like this game - I feel it has the same potential as Blood Bowl by Games Workshop. Brutal will be great as a one game for an evening play, but league and campaign play will make this game far more engaging and entertaining to play. Dark Arts have hit on a dark horse with this game, I think it's going to appeal to a wide range of gamers. On top of the fact that this is a great game, the miniatures make it even better in my humble opinion. Brutal is well worth checking out and what's even better is that it is currently free to download, so you only need to pay for some figures.

The Dresden Files RPG

Words: Nick Johnson
Illustrations: Peter Szabo Gabor

Imagine, if you will, the modern world. Now, take that image, and add wizards and werewolves; vampires and faeries; ghouls and ghosts. Add angels, both fallen and pure. Add ancient dragons and forgotten gods. And, most importantly, add a lecherous spirit of intellect called Bob the Skull. Mix all those ingredients together, then tell me the roleplaying setting you've found yourself in.

If your answer is the World of Darkness, you and I are going to have to have words.

If, on the other hand, your answer is The Dresden Files, then congratulations - you truly are a person of considerable taste and refinement, and probably very little angst.

Evil Hat Productions have recently released the first two books of their Dresden Files roleplaying game, based on the first ten books of the notable series of novels written by Jim Butcher. Now, it is no secret that I am a big fan of this series of books - in fact, I've lost track of the number of people I've lent the first book, Storm Front, to - so when I heard there was a role-playing game in development I was understandably excited. When the opportunity came to review the game, I called dibs. That was at the end of April, and I've been setting up and running a Dresden Files story since then.

One thing I need to make clear from the start is that I'm not reviewing the books themselves - instead, I've been looking at the PDFs that anyone who pre-ordered the books was supplied with. Given that the books wouldn't be being released until Origins at the end of June, there wasn't time for Evil Hat to let me look at the final product - as a result, I can't comment on paper quality, binding or anything like that. However, the most important aspect of the books - the game itself - is fair game.

Presentation

The concept behind the presentation of the two books is that this game is being written by Billy Borden, a character within the Dresden Files universe. Within the setting, the novel Dracula is viewed as a disguised manual to protecting yourself from Black Court vampires, which helped to nearly wipe them out in the years after it was released. Billy has taken the view that a roleplaying game would be the twenty-first century equivalent. In order to make sure that no information that would be dangerous gets out, Billy has asked Harry Dresden and Bob the Skull to review his work.

The layout of the pages is such that we're meant to be looking at a draft version of the book - there are crossings-out, post-it notes and even wolf drool over the pages. There are numerous instances of Billy, Harry and Bob having conversations in the margins of the pages, which can provide insight into the reason behind some of the design decisions, as well as a large dose of humour. I find this makes the books easier to read, as the notes are just enough to break it up from being the usual wall of text that you get in a roleplaying book.

The roleplaying game is split between two books - Your Story and Our World. Your Story gives you the main rules for the system, including character creation, magic in it's many guises and an pre-generated setting in the form of Baltimore. Our World, in contrast, deals with the adversaries and allies your characters may face - while it starts of dealing in general terms, it also provides detailed entries for the majority of the characters who appear in the novels. Between the two books you'll find nearly 700 full-colour pages, featuring some very nice artwork - some pieces illustrate scenes from the books, like the cover to Our World, while others illustrate key points within the text itself.

City & Character Creation

One of the things that interested me the most about The Dresden Files roleplaying game during my initial read of the PDFs was City creation and Character creation sections, as they differed greatly from what I'm used to in a standard roleplaying game. As those of you who've played in a traditional campaign are no doubt aware, it is usually the Game Master's (GM's) responsibility to create the setting, decide on the themes for the campaign, create major NPC's, locations and so on.

In The Dresden Files it is very different - instead of the GM doing all of the work, it is a collaborative process between him and his players. Both parties have their input, and between them determine what is special about the city - or other location, if you don't want a city-based campaign - that their game is based in.

I feel this has two major benefits. If you pick a city that your players are familiar with - Sheffield, in our case - then everyone can provide facts or suggestions that the GM may not know or have thought of.

This was certainly the case in our game - after I pitched a couple of ideas to break the ice, I got a steady flow of material in from the group, which meant I came away from the session with plenty of material to work with. You won't find yourself using everything in your first scenario, but it's good to have spare ideas in reserve.

The second benefit of this process is possibly less obvious, but I feel it is equally important - because your players have had a significant say in what is in the city, they are less likely to go out of the way to disrupt the running of the game. Equally, there isn't a need to worry about the split between player and character knowledge when it comes to the material from city creation - it is meant to be the equivalent of general local knowledge, and the players are free to make use of it as they see fit.

This isn't to say that it will go perfectly first time - I had two players who, not used to this style of approach, lost interest in the discussion and wandered off to look at the selection of CCG cards in the store in which we play. When I asked them about this later, one told me that he didn't feel comfortable being involved in the setting creation process - he was that used to the traditional process, given how long he'd been roleplaying for, that he found it difficult to adjust to having such a say in what was likely to go on during the campaign.

Character creation is also unorthodox, though maybe not to the same degree as city creation. You don't start by buying statistics or skills, feats or powers - instead, the first thing you do once you've decided on your concept is to take a good look at the character's motivation and history. This is also a collaborative process, as the history of a party of characters will cross over in their background - I think this is a great idea, as it gives hooks for why characters know each other, and hopefully avoids the "You all meet in a pub, inexplicably decide to trust each other implicitly, and set off on an adventure at the behest of an old man in a cloak" scenario that we all know and love....

Characters in The Dresden Files are built around three pillars - their skills, their supernatural abilities &

mortal stunts, and their aspects. While I'm sure we're all familiar with the concept of skills, and I'll come back to powers and stunts in a moment, I just want to take a second to look at aspects. A character's aspects are important to how they interact with the world around them - the player can invoke an aspect to get a bonus or a re-roll, and the GM can compel an aspect if he wishes the player to act in a way fitting with the character's personality. It isn't just the PCs that will have aspects - the city has aspects, as do it's locations and many NPCs.

Supernatural powers and mortal stunts represent the two main types of special abilities that characters can have. If you have a supernatural power, then you are technically a thing that goes bump in the night - and powers range from claws to psychometry, from being able to cast magic to being able to walk between worlds with ease. Mortal stunts are a bit different - in most cases, a stunt allows you to use your skills with a bonus, in a new way, or to replicate an ability from a skill you perhaps don't possess. Stunts represent things that your average Joe could do, with sufficient practise or training - he will never be able to speak with the dead, but he might be a trained forger, or a talented poet.

Game play

Playing the game is a very narrative experience. If you'll excuse the phraseology, it is focussed heavily toward roleplaying, instead of rollplaying - telling the story is more important than rolling the dice. In fact, instead of getting players to roll dice for the heck of it, the advice for the GM is to only make the players roll where it is a, important for the scene; and more importantly where b, both success and failure will be interesting. This doesn't necessarily mean that a failure is good, but that it will have an interesting impact on the scene, and possibly the scenario or campaign.

I've been running the Dresden Files for a few sessions now, and I'm enjoying it - it is a system which I feel fits better with intrigue or investigative scenarios, rather than turning up to do mass property damage. If you've got a wizard in your group, then that might happen anyway, of course, though hopefully by accident.

The Fate system opens a number of avenues for the players to influence a scene. Need a particular tool? Make a Declaration by spending a Fate point, and you had it with you all along. Want to disarm someone, or flip a table to make cover in a fight? A simple Maneuver is all you need. Want to figure out what fencing style an NPC is employing, or case a joint for a future break-in? Make an Assessment, using the appropriate skill. This sort of flexibility gives plenty of options for your players to explore, without needing to send a lance of flame to open a locked door.

Speaking of lances of flame, I'd be somewhat lax in reviewing The Dresden Files if I didn't take a look at the magic system, wouldn't I? Magic is, broadly speaking, broken down into two types - evocation and thaumaturgy. You could look at them as quick magic and slow magic, or making-things-go-boom and everything else, but the principle is the same. Evocation is the type of magic you'll use in a combat situation, or where you're looking for a quick effect. The afore-

mentioned lance of fire would be an evocation spell, but so would a large gust of wind, a defensive shield, a concealing veil or a counter-spell.

Thaumaturgy covers anything that would take longer to setp up and execute, such as a ritual, as well as creating effects you wish to keep for a while, such as wards, potions, enchanted items and focus items. You can use it to track a villain, curse your enemies - though we really don't recommend this, especially if there is a Warden around - or summon spirits of intellect to access previously inaccessible information. This does come with a drawback, however - because thaumaturgy has such a broad reach, I found it trickier to adjudicate on the fly - however, I imagine that as you get used to the system, it would become easier to handle.

Conclusion

All in all, I'm very impressed with The Dresden Files - in fact, I'm hoping that one of my players from this time will look to run it in the future, so I can get to immerse myself in someone else's story. If you're looking for something that plays a little differently, with an interesting and multi-layered setting, which promotes thought over carnage, then I'd definitely recommend The Dresden Files.

After all, it's nice to be able to know that yes, the wizard did it - and that's why the police are now chasing you.....

Gallery: Ian Garnett & Brynn Metheney

Ian Garnet (above), Brynn Metheney (below)

Men at Arms

Jim Wallman

Men at Arms

In the Beginning.

These are rules for playing a war game with toy soldiers. It is intended for several players - say 4 or more. Players control significant leaders . the key lords or knights, who in turn have contingents of fighters under them.

Why 'One Brain Cell'? Well, many sets of wargame rules these days are horrendously complicated, with big thick rule books to read, dozens of additional books to get (at unreasonable expense) and exceptionally complicated rule mechanisms that take ages to work out. My brain is too simple for this, so I tend to write rules that one require a single brain cell to use and understand. This tends to make games easy to learn and play, and, amazingly, are just as much fun as the dense and complicated game rules for which you have to pay a King's ransom. Odd, isn't it? So read on, and, hopefully, enjoy.

Jim Wallman, *Streatham 2003*

Design Layout and Graphics
Jason Hubbard

Written by
Jim Wallman

Proof Reader
Nick Johnson

Setting up the game

To set up a game you need a reasonable sized playing area. A large table or floor area is ideal. Depending on the story you have in mind, this can be laid out with terrain. A green cloth makes suitable ground. Model trees, lichen etc makes woods, hedges and undergrowth. Cottages, hovels, even mansions an be easily made out of cardboard.

This is the playing area.

Next assemble the toy soldiers (sorry, I mean finely crafted military miniatures.). The players should have at least one leader each. They *can* take control of more than one leader each - but this might make the play more difficult in some ways.

Each hero has a **contingent** of fighters that are their followers in the battle.

The way these followers are used is described in the rules below.

I suggest groups of followers should be between 6 and 20 figures strong depending on type. So a group of armoured and mounted knights might be about 6 figures and a group of rebellious peasants would be around 20 figures.

This all depends on what is in your collection of figures and your personal preferences.

Actions

In each game turn every player gets to perform **Actions**. All actions are assumed to happen simultaneously.

The Sequence of working things out each turn goes like this:

1. Players declare what ACTION they are doing (see below)

2. Players can move their personal figure and any followers under their command in accordance with the ACTION they said they were going to do.

3. If movement brings groups of followers into weapon range then work out who killed who. Work out archers and long range effects first. Then work out melee.

4. At the end of the turn, all groups of followers that have been fighting have to take a test to see how they are feeling (called the *Morale Test*)

These are the *actions* you can do:

Hit Someone (usually another specific named

Player). If you choose this you cannot move your followers around that turn because you are too busy concentrating on your immediate enemy to tell them what to do.

Shout "Follow Me, Men!" Lead your followers

towards the enemy (assuming that's where you're heading). All your followers within 20cm of your figure will follow you by the most direct route to the limit of their movement distance (See *Movement* below)

Inspire Your Followers. Sometimes your follow-

ers might get a bit downhearted (especially if they've been taking casualties and their morale is low). You can make them happier by stopping what you are doing and giving them a stirring speech, or hurling insults at your enemies (See *Morale Test*).

Send or Receive a message. Sometimes you

need to tell someone something, or send a message. If you are not within 12cm of that person then you can't talk to them, you must write a note . yes, *really write* with a pen and paper. This is an **action**.

The note is then transported using a messenger from your followers to the person its meant for. Reading the note is an **action** too, so they might not have time to read it when it gets there!

Shout "Attack them!" This is where you can

send your followers to attack a specific, named, enemy group. You don't have to accompany the attack. All your followers move towards the enemy group you pointed at as fast as the can move until they get within weapon range - then they fight. If you are not with them they might not fight as well though (see *Morale Test*).

Movement

Each individual figures move as directed by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

Unit Type	Distance Cm
Peasants, Lightly armed, archers & Crossbowmen	15
Armoured Men at Arms	12
Light Horsemen	40
Armoured Knight	25
Carts, Engines & other slow items	8

Obstacles can't be easily crossed. If crossing a low wall or hedge, take one move delay. Wading though a ford or shallow stream, lose half the movement distance.

Shooting :

In order to shoot, archers and cross bowmen may not move in the same turn.

Archers. Roll 1d6 per figure shooting

Target	Range 25 cm	50 cm	75 cm
Peasants/Soldiers/Archers	4,5,6	5,6	6
Man at Arms	5,6	6	6
Light Horseman	4,5,6	6	6
Mounted Knight	6	6	-

Archers are limited to 30 arrows

Crossbow men. Roll 1d6 per figure shooting

Vs Target	Range 25 cm	50 cm	100 cm
Peasants/Soldiers/Archers	4,5,6	5,6	6
Man at Arms	4, 5,6	5,6	6
Light Horseman	4,5,6	5,6	5, 6
Mounted Knight	5, 6	5,6	-
	Crossbows take one turn to re-load. Crossbows are limited to 30 bolts		

The score in the table is the chance of a hit. One hit kills most people. It takes 2 hits to kill a player-leader figure.

Morale test

Events and circumstances can make your followers less keen to fight. The entire contingent is affected by the morale rules, whatever their type.

Roll 1d6 when:

- The contingent takes a casualty.
- The contingent is surprised.
- If the player in command wants the group to take a test
- Commoners being threatened by nobles for the first time (i.e. when a line of knights starts moving towards a clump of peasants).

Add or subtract the following factors:

-1 for each casualty this turn

-1 for each 10% casualties in game

-1 visibly outnumbered.

+2 having a stirring speech from a friendly leader this turn. (The umpire might increase this if the player actually gives a *real* stirring speech.)

-1 having been directly and specifically insulted by an enemy leader within 20cm this turn.

-1 if the group's leader is not present

-1 Higher class enemy troops moved closer to you this turn.

The check the result in this table:

Score	Outcome
3+	Morale is fine - carry on as desired.
0-2	Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
Under 0	Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.

The figure representing the leader/player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight or run away as desired.

Melee (or hand TO HAND COMBAT)

STEP ONE: Break the combat up into 'fights'. A fight is one fighter vs one or more enemies.

STEP TWO: For each 'fight' roll 1d6 per side, add the factors below and compare the scores

Factors in Melee :

Peasant -2
Archer -1
Soldier 0
Man At Arms +2
Knight on foot +3
Leader +4
On horseback +1
Outnumbered 2-1 by unengaged enemies -2
Outnumbered 3-1 by unengaged enemies -3
Outnumbered 4-1 or more by unengaged enemies -4

The highest score wins

If they win by 1 or more means the loser is pushed back 5 cm

If fighting against Peasants/Soldiers /Archers a win by 2 or more is a kill

If fighting against Men At Arms a win by 3 or more is a kill

If fighting against Knights a win by 4 or more is a kill

If fighting a Leader a win by 4 or more is a HIT (it takes 2 hits to kill a leader)

If the outnumbered figure wins, it can kill/hit *only one* of its enemies that turn.

Winner chooses which one.
This seems complicated, but is, in fact, very simple.

Score	Outcome
3+	Morale is fine - carry on as desired.
0-2	Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
Under 0	Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.

The figure representing the leader/player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight or run away as desired.

EXAMPLE OF MELEE

4 Soldiers fight 2 mounted knights. So, this breaks down into two fights, each of 2 soldiers fighting one knight. We'll ignore morale for this example.

TURN 1

Fight One
Knight rolls 2
+4 for being a knight
-2 for being outnumbered
total score = **4**

Soldiers roll 6
No additions, total score = **6**
Result is +2 win for the soldiers,
which against a knight is a 'push back result.

Fight Two
Knight rolls 1
+4 for being a knight
-2 for being outnumbered
Total score = **3**
Soldiers roll 5
No additions, total score = **5**
Result is +2 win for the soldiers,
which against a knight is a 'push back result

Turn 2

Fight One
Knight rolls 5
+4 for being a knight
-2 for being outnumbered
total score = **7**
Soldiers roll 5
No additions, total score = **5**
Result is +2 win for the knight, which
against soldiers is a kill result. One soldier falls.

Fight Two
Knight rolls 6
+4 for being a knight
-2 for being outnumbered
Total score = **8**
Soldiers roll 1
No additions, total score = **1**
Result is +7 win for the knight, which
against Soldiers is a kill result. One soldier falls.

Turn 3

The knights are no longer outnumbered, so it becomes two one-on-one fights

Fight One
Knight rolls 6
+4 for being a knight
total score = **10**
Soldier rolls 1
No additions, total score = **1**
Result is +9 win for the knight, which
against soldiers is a kill result.
The remaining soldier falls.

Fight Two
Knight rolls 5
+4 for being a knight
Total score = **9**
Soldier rolls 6
No additions, total score = **6**
Result is +3 win for the knight, which
against soldiers is a kill result.
The remaining soldier falls.

Combat over and all the soldiers are dead, and the knights have won.
Not surprisingly.

Personal Combat

Leaders are special cases (nutcases, some might say - though not within earshot).

If they fight just the followers of other leaders, then use the rules above.

If they fight other Leaders . i.e. people of similar standing, then these rules apply.

Leaders *never* outnumber other leaders.

In the event of a multiple fight between leaders, those not involved will watch and cheer from the sidelines until their turn comes.

Each game turn of combat is three rounds of paper - stone - scissors.

The player with the best of three inflicts one hit on their enemy.

Leaders may break off combat and try and run away - but then that wouldn't be very heroic would it? Whatever would their followers think?
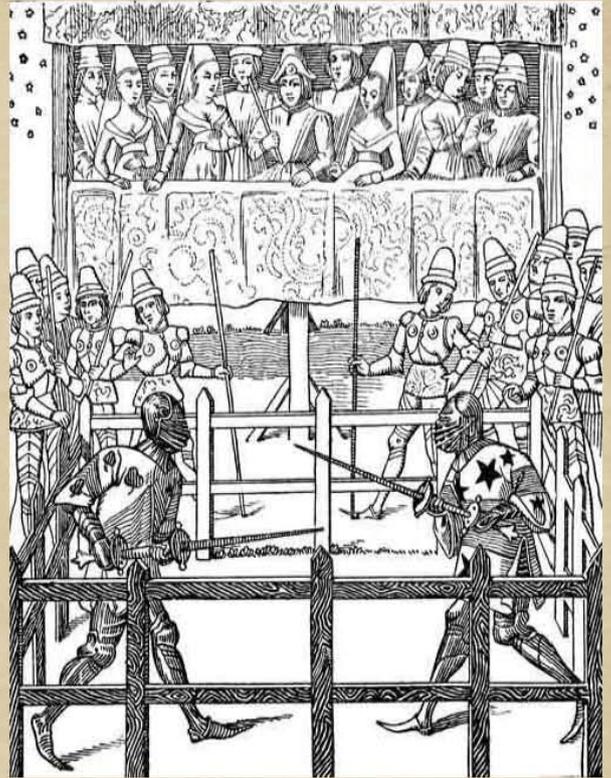
Additional Brain Cells

If you feel like warming up a couple of extra brain cells, there are a few additional, and optional, wrinkles you might like to add.

Personal Development

Each leader can accumulate experience and reputation which can affect their abilities in combat. This is carried over every time the leader is used in action, ideally over a campaign or series of linked battles.

Score nothing for killing peasants.
Score 1 point for every soldier/archer killed
Score 2 points for every man at arms killed
Score 5 points for every knight killed
Score 10 points for every enemy leader defeated in personal combat
Score 20 points for every action where you are on the winning side.

Accumulated Score	Level/Prefix	Benefits
0-100	1: Noble	The basic level, as in the rules.
101-500	2: Respected	Melee bonus increased to +5
501-1000	3: Heroic	Number of hits increased to 3
1001-2000	4: Impressive	Melee bonus increased to +6
2001-4000	5: Fearsome	Number of hits increased to 4
4001-8000	6: Awesome	Melee bonus increased to +7

Quick Reference Sheet

Sequence of Action

The Sequence of working things out each turn goes like this:

1. Players declare ACTION
2. MOVEMENT
3. COMBAT
4. MORALE

Actions

-
- Hit Someone
- Shout "Follow Me, Men!"
- Inspire Your Followers.
- Send or Receive a message.
- Shout "Attack them!"

Movement

Each individual figures move as directed
by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

Unit Type	Distance Cm
Peasants, Lightly armed, archers & Crossbowmen	15
Armoured Men at Arms	12
Light Horsemen	40
Armoured Knight	25
Carts, Engines & other slow items	8

Obstacles take one move delay.
Wading, lose half the movement distance.

Shooting :

May not move and shoot

Archers. Roll 1d6 per figure shooting

Target	Range 25 cm	50 cm	75 cm
Peasants/Soldiers/Archers	4,5,6	5,6	6
Man at Arms	5,6	6	6
Light Horseman	4,5,6	6	6
Mounted Knight	6	6	-

Crossbows. Roll 1d6 per figure shooting

Vs Target	Range 25 cm	50	100 cm
Peasants/Soldiers/Archers	4,5,6	5,6	6
Man at Arms	4, 5,6	5,6	6
Light Horseman	4,5,6	5,6	5, 6
Mounted Knight	5, 6	5,6	-

Crossbow takes 1 turn to reload. One hit kills most people.
It takes 2 hits to kill a leader

Morale test

Roll 1d6 when:

- The contingent takes a casualty.
- The contingent is surprised.
- If the player in command wants the
- group to take a test
- Commoners on first threat

Add or subtract the following factors:

-1 for each commoner casualty this turn
-1 for each 10% casualties in game
-1 visibly outnumbered.
+2 stirring speech
-1 insulted by enemy leader within 20cm
-1 if the group's leader is not present

Score	Outcome
3+	Morale is fine - carry on as desired.
0-2	Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
Under 0	Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.

Melee

For each 'fight' roll 1d6 per side, add the factors below and compare the scores

Factors in Melee :

Peasant -2
Archer -1
Soldier 0
Man At Arms +2
Knight +4
Leader +4
Outnumbered 2-1 -2
Outnumbered 3-1 -3
Outnumbered 4-1 -4

The highest score wins

If they win by 1+ = pushed back 5cm
Peasants/Soldiers /Archers 2+ = kill
Men At Arms 3+ = kill
Knights 4+ = kill
Leader 4+ = HIT (2 hits = kill)

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