

VIEW FROM 'THE TRENCHES

Britain's Premier ASL Journal

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RETURN OF THE KING - the HEROES 2014 tournament

JOURNEY TO A TOURNEY - thoughts from a first-timer

PASSING YOUR PERSONAL MORALE CHECK - how to avoid quitting too early

CRUSADER LADDER - updated

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COVER: A plant pot at the Colwyn Hotel, venue of the HEROES tournament. See if you can guess why.

PREP FIRE

No Prep Fire this time, not really got anything to say! Maybe next time though.....

'Til next issue, roll Low and Prosper.

Pete Phillipps

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is the quad-monthly British *ASL* journal. All comments are welcome. Even better, contribute. Write an article. Design a scenario. Share your *ASL* experiences with others. *VFTT* allows you to communicate with other *ASL*ers. Don't be a silent voice.

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Back issue are now out of print but can be downloaded for free from:
<http://www.vftt.co.uk/vfttpdfs.asp>

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LEISURE GAMES, 100 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London, N3 2DN. Telephone (020) 8346 2327, e-mail them at shop@leisuregames.com or go to www.leisuregames.com.

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PLAN 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen, AB25 1NE. Telephone (01224) 624 467 or e-mail them at plan9@ifb.co.uk.

BATTLEQUEST GAMES, 29 Victory Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 2JF. Telephone 01403 242003 or go to www.battlequestgames.com.

If you know of other shops stocking third party *ASL* products let me know so I can include them here in future issues.

INCOMING

MMP HEAD TO BRIDGE

MMP have announced that an *ASL Starter Kit #1 Tenth Anniversary* reprint will be available in the summer. It will be basically the same as previous reprints, except that the rulebook will be updated to include errata and clarifications, and some rules rewrites based on the rules from *Decision at Elst*. There are plans to make the revised rulebook and errata available separately.

Hakkaa Päälle!, the long-awaited Finnish module, is currently being laid out, as is *Action Pack 10*. Both are both expected to be placed on pre-order at some point during the summer.

The summer will also see the release of *Special Ops Issue 5*, which is likely to contain a pair of ASLSK scenarios and some ASL material as usual.

The material for *ASL Journal 11* is in various states of development, and it is likely to see print within the next 12 months.

Development and layout work is also being

done on *Korean War ASL* (which will contain boards, rules and complete OB for U.S., Korean, Chinese, and U.N. forces), and *Yanks 2* (which will update and reprint *Yanks* and *Paratrooper*, and include additional American ETO scenarios). The former might be available to pre-order this year, but the latter will not be available until 2015. Also expected to be placed on pre-order early in 2015 is the *Overlay Bundle*.

OST FRONT CANADIANS

Ost Front 2 is the latest release from Lone Canuck Publishing, and features six scenarios set during the Soviet Operation Bagration offensive. It is available for \$10.00 (\$12.50 for non-Canadian/US orders) plus shipping.

In the pipeline are a number of Tactical Missions. Playtesting for *Crossing the Moro - the Battle for Villa Rogatti* has finished and it is

expected to be released during the summer.

Planned for a Spring 2015 release is *Drive for St. Lo*, which will contain a 1-day Tactical Mission and five scenarios. This will be followed by *Hell's Highway*, consisting of a 2-day Tactical Mission and five scenarios covering the efforts of the Allied forces to re-open the road to Arnhem north of Veghel. The final Tactical Mission is *Opening the Baltic Gap*, consisting of a 2-3 day Tactical Mission and five scenarios set during Operation Bagration, as the Soviet 6th Guards Army drives towards Daugavpils (Dvinsk/Dünaburg) in Latvia threatening to capture the important railway centre being used to evacuate Army Group North.

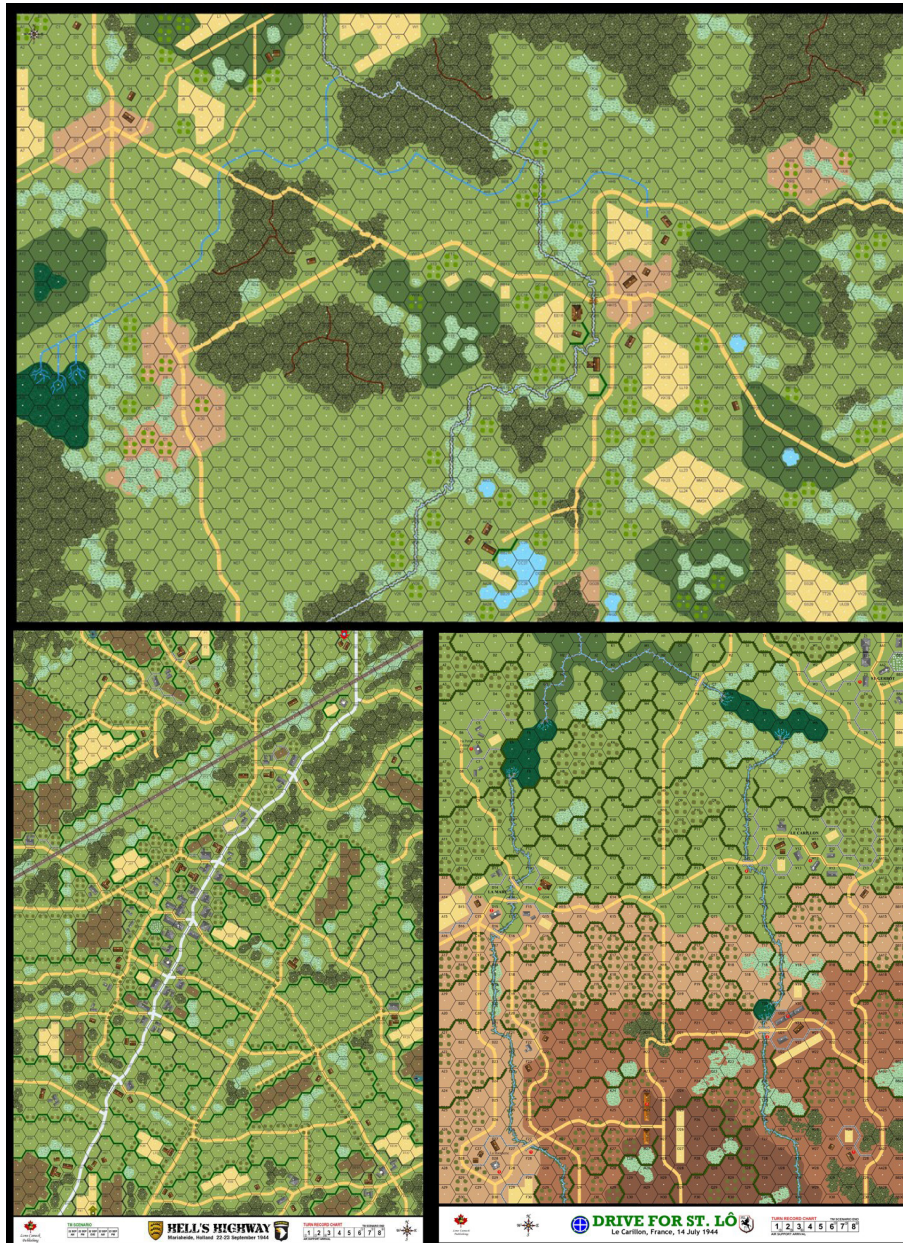
As well as these, a number of scenario packs are also being worked on, including *Grossdeutschland #3*, *LSSAH #6*, and *WinPak #3*.

Lone Canuck Publishing are looking for playtesters – if you are interested, you can contact them by email at georgekelln@gmail.com.

BUNKER 39 BEGINS

Work has begun on *DfIB39*, with 'Mopping Up Kobayashi' being confirmed as one of the four scenarios to be included. Part of the long dormant Philippines Series B (Late War), this scenario sees the Americans attempt to gain control of the road and hamlets on board 7a from remnants of the Japanese Kobayashi Group in May 1945.

A four issue subscription starting with issue 38 is \$15.00, while a 'Digital The WORKS' order containing PDFs of all prior issues plus a subscription starting with issue 38) is \$60.00. Individual PDF back issues are available for \$3.00 each, except for issues 2-8, 10, 13, and 16-19 which have had their material which was reprinted in *Out of the Bunker* replaced and are only £2.00 each. Issue 1 is available for free upon request, by emailing them at aslunker@aol.com. You can pay by PayPal to PinkFloydFan1954@aol.com or by cheques made payable to Vic Provost and sent to Dispatches from the Bunker, P.O. Box 2024, Hinsdale MA 01235.



NORFOLK BUNKER
FY19 For Your Tomorrow Designs Shaun Carter

For Your Tomorrow Kohima 1944

Shaun Carter is looking for people to help play-test the forthcoming HOB Kohima module.

He would also like past and recent play-testers to get in touch with him

Then he can ensure that an accurate list of credits can be created.

Contact me and I shall pass your details on to him.

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The Return of the King

Pete Phillips informed me on my arrival in Blackpool that it had been eight years since I last attended HEROES and played a competitive game in England. I hadn't realised it had been quite so long, but his comment did make me reflect again upon the reasons behind my return.

The fact was that nearly a decade ago I'd achieved all I wanted on the UK tournament scene. I'd decided to focus more on victory upon farther shores and certainly in Europe I'd had much success. Although the garlands of triumph had eluded me across the Atlantic, I had found the NYS Albany tournament – the best weekend *ASL* competition in the world. That satisfied my desire to cross swords against the best of the best – so why return to Blackpool?

Two names really – Craig Benn and Mark Blackmore. They'd emerged on the UK scene around the time I was departing it and each was now a tourney champion; Craig had actually won HEROES the last two years running. However, I'd never played either and was as keen to test out these 'young guns' as it turned out they were to duel with me. Such a clash cannot overlong be avoided, so I had resolved, in my year off from attending the Scandinavian Open, to make the long car journey up to Blackpool once more.

Thursday evening I got a quick, friendly game in against my old Gefreiter from my years in the North East, Neil

Brunger, before I retired for the night.

And then it began...

Round One: Japanese in 'Brigade Hill' vs. Bill Sherliker.

Trev Edwards was at Blackpool this year, as he was eight years ago, and I recognised in him one of the best of the old school – we've had many eventful clashes over the years. My opponent this round was new to me but when I learnt that he was Trev's regular opponent, a lot of things suddenly made sense – like how he was giving me such a tough game.

I normally expect to breeze through the initial round, barring misfortune in a tiny scenario, but such thoughts were far from my mind as Bill mounted a strong attack in a game that I could easily have lost. Some bad dice for me were countered by a perfect '2' sniper attack I achieved upon his kill stack – would then kill the leader, whereupon both other squads also break. As this occurred on his at-start victory hex, he had to divert a leader and forces to rally them, thus taking steam out of his main attack. Some unwise Prep Firing also relieved the pressure, and when I finally managed to destroy all his flanking forces, the defence was in good shape and Bill conceded before his last turn. A good game though and a warning that stern challenges lay ahead.

happily take either side, though I felt like attacking this round. Unfortunately for Sam I cracked open his defence early on and then when he lost his AA gun through a schoolboy error, he resigned. We then decided to play another scenario from Bounding Fire's *Beyond the Beachhead* to pass the time, which was fun. I was really tired though so was not unhappy to hit the sack early.

Round Three: Germans in 'Spittelmarkt' vs. Craig Benn

I've never been a particular fan of the HEROES system of match-up, which usually after the first round consists of finding someone with a similar record and persuading them to play. I'm not one for 'sharking' so have always just let Pete arrange my games for me. Funnily enough, the one guy who did want to play me this round (and I him) was Mark Blackmore, but he'd managed to surprisingly lose in the previous round! We resolved to play a friendly game on Sunday morning, as it became apparent that the winner of the tournament would be decided after the fourth round – not enough players were participating in the competition to warrant the fifth round on Sunday.

Anyway, Pete decided upon a random draw to decide the semi-final match-ups and inevitably, the two strongest players in the field – Craig and I – were drawn together. As I'd travelled all this way to play him anyway, this was fine by me, though it would be a shame for the loser not to end up as overall runner-up.

'Spittelmarkt' was an interesting choice as I'd studied it pre-publication for Xavier Vitry whilst doing some play-testing for LFT. Peter Bennett, my regular opponent, had also done so and some of our comments are useful to relate in advance

Round Two: Brazilians in 'Collechio' vs. Sam Prior

I'd played Sam many years ago and he related how it had been quite a learning experience for him. Since then he'd steadily built up a decent win-loss record.

I really like this scenario and would

PLAYER RESULTS

Here are the individual win/loss records.

PLAYER	P	W	L
Craig Benn	5	4	1
William Binns	5	3	2
Mark Blackmore	7	6	1
David Blackwood	7	3	4
Nigel Blair	10	2	8
Neil Brunger	1	1	0
Gerard Burton	4	2	2
Shaun Carter	1	0	1
Andrew Cochrane	3	2	1
Michael Davies	4	2	2
Trevor Edwards	5	3	2
Gareth Evans	2	0	2
Brian Hooper	4	2	2
Martin Mayers	7	4	3
Ian Morris	4	2	2
Pete Phillipps	4	3	1
Toby Pilling	4	4	0
Ian Pollard	2	1	1
Ray Porter	5	1	4
Kieron Potts	1	1	0
Sam Prior	5	4	1
Nick Ranson	4	1	3
Ulric Schwela	1	1	0
Bill Sherliker	4	2	2
James Short	13	3	10
Simon Staniforth	6	2	4
Neil Stevens	1	0	1
John Tait	5	1	4
Chris Walton	6	3	3
Miles Wiehahn	2	1	1
Ian Willey	8	6	2



The Kohima play-test team hard at work.

– we sent them on the 16th of January 2012.

Basically, whilst one of the cheesy tactics we'd identified (an OOB Hero surviving upstairs in a rubble building winning the game) had been dealt with, the mini-game of rubble placement had not, as Pete elucidates well here:

“I have two areas of concern that may require special rule additions. These areas are the victory conditions and the placement of rubble.

The victory conditions combined with placement of rubble could encourage some players to try some cheesy setups. For example, a defender seeing that his tanks would not survive against the Russian armour could rubble parts of the Z4 building to create a hex wall of rubble/building and hide his tanks out of LOS in the centre within 2 hexes of Z5, so forcing Russian armour to drive into rubble and risk bog/melee/panzerfausts. 36FP kill stacks could also lurk here.

I don't know whether these tactics would work without play-testing, however it would be better for the scenario if the SS were not able to do anything unrealistic. I understand that there was plenty of rubble around in Berlin at that stage of the war, so suggest that the players must roll randomly (1D6) for placement of rubble. Although then the Russians couldn't rubble the stairwells in building Z4 and the SS could conceal the hero up there on level 2 (a hero cannot be encircled in a building), block up the stairwells with half squads and fire smoke on his own units to protect them, making it tough for the Russians to win. Perhaps the Victory Conditions could say 'Good Order/ non encircled German MMC within 2 hexes of' or perhaps the hero can be removed from the SS OOB.”

As I say, Xavier wisely amended the VCs to avoid victory by Hero, but the rubble placement survived. As the Germans (and giving up the huge balance of an extra Russian turn), I duly took advantage of the 'fortress rubble' tactic (after warning Craig that I had issues with the scenario – it wasn't my first choice).

Despite all I've said, this turned out to be an excellent game – a supreme test of skill against a hugely talented player. It was probably my most memorable and close (in terms of skill) game I've had in UK tournaments. Craig is simply a superb player who only needs to venture to foreign tournaments to raise his game to world class. His attack was measured and aggressive, without being rash. We both made a few



The action gets underway on Saturday morning.

errors but as the end game approached I remained ensconced within my bastion of rubble and on my last turn pumped smoke into my final hex using the SN and then got the Stug in motion. I could build up the suspense but suffice to say I won it in the end through the withdrawal from melee of a measly second class, CX half-squad.

I told Craig that I think if he ventures to Copenhagen he would have a real chance of winning the Scandinavian Open. Hopefully he, Mark and others I similarly encouraged, will decide to compete at a higher level and reap the benefits. It would be great if next year an English contingent descended on Denmark for *ASL* – a true 'Band of Brothers'. Time will tell.

Round Four British in 'Firestorm in St Manvieu' vs. William Binns

I was through to the final and looking forward to this scenario which I'd played and won as the Germans against another good British player, Derek Cox, years before. In the event, the game was completely dominated by my pre-fire moving creeping barrage, that my opponent consistently retreated before until about turn four or five. It was a very strange game as a result – neither of us had fired a single shot after several turns. A few Crocodile shots and a flurry of activity around turn six brought the game to a premature end, as my foe realised he now had to attack me to regain some buildings. In truth, my game had mostly been one of manoeuvre,

maintaining the pressure as best I could and grabbing the few opportunities I could to damage the defenders.

Sunday morning: Germans in 'Panzer Spirit' vs. Mark Blackmore

I'd already won the tournament but my final ambition of playing against Mark was about to be fulfilled.

Mark quite rightly loves the *Crucible of Steel* pack from Bounding Fire so we came up with this one, which I'd prepared a set-up for but never played. Both of us were somewhat worse for wear through – exhaustion was taking its toll.

Basically Mark went for a hook



The final round underway on Saturday evening.

THE SCENARIOS

Here is the table of Scenario Win/Loss records:

SCENARIO	ALLIED	
AXIS		
14 Silence that Gun	0	1
A Guards Counterattack	0	1
A32 Zon with the Wind	0	1
AP65 Baw Drop	0	1
AP74 Batty-P	1	0
AP82 Coriano	1	1
BC09 Contact Front	1	0
BC11 Gunter Strikes Back	0	1
BFP-20 Bypassed Lehr	1	0
BFP-30 Melee Near the Coast	1	0
BFP-93 Klein Stalingrad	0	1
BFP-97 Renewed Pressure	0	1
BB4 Firestorm in St Manvieu	2	0
BB6 Men Against Tanks	3	0
DB104 The Police Station	1	2
ESG18 Exceeding Expectations	1	0
FrF60 A War of Their Own	1	0
FrF65 War Ensemble	2	1
FrF66 Between The Devil And The Deep	1	1
FrF67 Collechio	4	3
FT137 300	0	1
FT167 Wasp Sting	0	1
FT196 Spittelmarkt	4	2
G35 Going To Church	0	1
J102 Yelnya Bridge	1	0
J103 Lenin's Sons	0	1
J104 Flanking Flamethrowers	0	1
J106 Marders Not Martyrs	1	0
J116 Brigade Hill	0	3
J128 Opium Hill	1	0
J130 The Art of Dying	3	1
J140 All Down the Line	1	1
MK9 Hitler's Little Helpers	1	0
O3 A Frosty Morning	1	1
T16 Strayer's Strays	0	1
TAP #21 Last Message Home	0	1
TAP #22 Last Outpost	1	0
U31 The Front In Flames	2	0
WO13 All the Stops	2	1
WP12 Rock The Casbah	1	0
TOTALS	70	39
		31



Winners and Losers: Toby Pilling (far left) once again receives the Tournament Champion award, while William Binns (left) was the runner-up. John Tait came all the way from Germany to take home the loser prize!



around my right with his tanks, whilst his infantry advanced on a broad front. I thought he played well, particularly with his tanks, though in truth I was expecting him to be even more aggressive with them than he was. There were some extreme incidents of fortune and misfortune on both sides, with much AFV destruction – it was a good, hectic game. Unfortunately though, Mark had to leave somewhat early, so was forced

to concede. In fairness, I retained the edge, but he certainly had a chance. Anyway, I'm sure we'll play again sometime.

For that indeed is my resolve – in some form or other I shall return to UK tournament play on a regular basis, perhaps heading to Blackpool on the years I don't attend Copenhagen. Though it was very tiring, I had some very challenging games

against some excellent new opponents who promise yet more.

I shall return.

Ω



TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Here are the individual win/loss records for the tournament

POS.	PLAYER	P	W	L	RND	CRUS
1	Toby Pilling	4	4	0	0	3412.5
2	Craig Benn	4	3	1	0	3316.7
3	Mark Blackmore	4	3	1	0	3116.7
4	William Binns	4	3	1	0	2990.0
5	Sam Prior	4	3	1	0	2715.0
6	Gerard Burton	4	2	2	0	3342.5
7	Ian Morris	4	2	2	0	3042.5
8	Bill Shertiker	4	2	2	0	2950.0
9	David Blackwood	4	2	2	0	2905.0
10	Trevor Edwards	4	2	2	0	2765.0
11	Chris Walton	4	2	2	0	2530.0
12	Ray Porter	4	1	3	0	3000.0
13	Nigel Blair	4	1	3	0	2355.0
14	Nick Ranson	4	1	3	0	2355.0
15	Simon Staniforth	4	1	3	0	2060.0
16	John Tait	4	0	4	0	No Wins

RND is the round in which the player first lost – if players have the same W-L result, the one losing in the later round places higher.

The CRUS column is the average Crusader Ladder rating of the opponents beaten.



Turning Japanese: the Kohima play-test had a strange affect on Ulric Schwela.



Nigel Blair receives an award for being the first player to play 200 Ladder rated games.

Double One 2014



Friday June 27th to Sunday June 29th

The London ASL tournament "Double One" is set for the weekend of June 27th to 29th, returning to the regular venue, Writtle College, and with continued support from our main sponsor, Leisure Games - www.leisuregames.com.

Double One's college venue offers excellent value for money bed and breakfast accommodation, large gaming rooms, open for extended gaming times across the whole weekend, and is located close to Chelmsford, Essex, with easy access to London via a 40 minute main rail link, the M25, and Stansted international airport.

The weekend

The tournament starts on the Thursday evening with a meal off campus. We will be returning to the local Indian/Chinese restaurant about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile walk from the college, which does a superb buffet deal.

The gaming room opens at 8.30am on Friday 29th June. We will be running several one day minis (consisting of 4 participants, straight knock out) but players might like to consider tackling one of those big monster scenarios that you never get chance to play in a morning or afternoon.

On Saturday morning, players will have the option to continue open gaming or enter the main tournament. Participants that want to take part in the latter will be entered approximately according to their ASL ladder rating.

Players will be organised into groups of 4, and will play each other on a round robin basis. Round 1 commences at 9.00am, round 2 by 2.30pm, and round 3 on Sunday morning at 9.00am. Details of the tournament scenarios will be released in published on the website in early 2014.

The venue

The tournament's venue will be the Writtle Room, Writtle College, Lordships Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3RR - www.writtle.ac.uk. Room opening times are 8.30am - midnight Friday, 8am-midnight Saturday, and 8am-3.00pm Sunday (prize giving circa 2.30pm)

The venue is less than 2 miles outside Chelmsford and is easily accessible:

- By car - the college is less than 15 miles from both junction 28 of the M25 and junction 7 of the M11.
- By train - Chelmsford station has a regular direct service on the London Liverpool Street line. Free pick ups and travel between the station and college can be arranged with the organisers
- By plane - London Stansted airport is less than 30 minutes from the venue, and for those flying into Stansted, free pick ups and transportation can again be arranged with the organisers.

Participants intending to stay overnight should book their B&B accommodation directly with the college (£30.00 plus VAT per person per night). Contact the organisers for a booking form and T&Cs. Further information can be obtained by contacting the college (phone +44 (0) 1245 424200 ext 25645)

The college has a licensed bar which will be open during the weekend. Sandwiches and snacks will also be available. Writtle village is a very short walk from the college, with a varied selection of pubs, restaurants and a mid-sized supermarket.

Attendance fees

The attendance fee for the weekend is £15.00. Payment can be made by either Paypal or cheque.

For further details, please either visit the tournament's website at www.doubleone-online.net or contact the organisers as follows:

Derek Cox, 25 Cramphorn Walk, Chelmsford, Essex. CM1 2RD. United Kingdom. derek.cox@dsl.pipex.com

Brendan Clark brendan.clark@virgin.net

You can also keep up to date with developments by joining the London ASL Yahoo Group - <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/LASL>

We look forward to welcoming you to Double One in 2014!



Passing Your Personal Morale Check

Mark Pitcavage

This was originally published by Mark on his blog at <http://desperationmorale.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/passing-your-personal-morale-check.html> and is used with his permission – Pete

Some ASL players never surrender. As long as they have a mathematical chance of winning a scenario, no matter how astronomical the odds against them, they will keep playing, even if it means hours of additional play with no meaningful chance of victory. I'm not crazy about such die-hard play, because it can often be discourteous to your opponent. If they really, truly have beaten you, be a man and acknowledge it – don't continue to play for hours because of that .0000001% chance of victory.

However, more common than unrealistic play-to-the-enders are the players who give up the ship when they still have not merely a mathematical but even a very real chance of winning a scenario. They may still have the time, resources, and position to win the scenario, but what they no longer have is the will. Psychologically, they are already beaten.

Some ASLers are inveterate capitulators. I know several ASLers whom I've played multiple times but have never really finished a scenario with them – they have always thrown the towel in early, even sometimes far too early. Some of these ASLers have "glass jaws" – an early setback, such as a run of bad luck or a play mistake, causes disproportionate demoralization, to the point where they lose the will to continue. Some ASLers let themselves get too "psyched" when playing a more experienced player and mentally set themselves up for defeat. And there are some ASLers out there who very simply are horrible judges of their own relative position in a scenario, gauging the scenario as lost when in fact their position may be substantially stronger than they estimate.

Most ASLers don't routinely concede early defeat so routinely, but virtually all of us have some incidents in our gaming past in which we accepted a loss when we ought not have. Moreover, the less experienced we are, the more we are likely make such a concession. Sometimes, later, we realize we should have fought on. Most likely, we never do realize that mark in the loss column could have ended up in the win column had we not been so ready to concede. In other words, we all occasionally misgauge our chances of winning a scenario.

For some reason, players seem most likely to underestimate their position when they are attacking. Perhaps this is because defenders may often be able to avoid personal morale checks by simply hoping for some good luck with defensive fire shots – that this will help them salvage their situation.

All this raises the question, then – how then—how can you minimize the chances of failing a personal morale check? Or, to put it another way, how can you accurately assess your chances of winning a scenario that seems to have been going badly? This question is especially important for novice or journeyman ASLers, who may not have yet evolved a more sophisticated ability to gauge mid-scenario positions. How can you make sure you don't needlessly gack a personal morale check?

Well, it turns out that if you don't necessarily trust your own instincts, there are actually some measures you can take to help you judge whether the scenario has slipped from your fingers or you still have a reasonable fighting chance. In other words, there are some things you can look for to help you double-check your own instincts.

Let's go through some of these mid-scenario self-assessment measures from the

attacker's perspective.

1) Check the Victory Conditions.

By this I don't mean read the Victory Conditions, but rather assess them. Leaving aside things that your opponent might do, just how far are you from achieving the needed victory conditions. This assessment is short and simple; basically, the question you want to answer is whether your chance of victory at this point is more than mathematical. All you need is a rough sense of how many "ifs" there are.

For example, if you have to exit 20 CVP in order to win, 1) how many points do you still have to spare, and 2) how many of your points need astronomical luck to make if off the map? If it turns out that you can't spare any more casualties, and 10 of your 20 CVP clearly have to have astronomical luck in order to survive the trip to the map edge, then you may be well and truly screwed. On the other hand, if you have a few points to spare, and/or if enough of your forces can get off the map as long as they have reasonable or even unreasonable (but not astronomical) luck, then perhaps you should keep the helmet on.

Similarly, if the VC require a certain number of buildings to be taken, you can make a list of how many "ifs" need to be accomplished. How long is the "if" chain? "If I can break this unit and take that building, and bypass freeze this unit to do that, and move to here so that I can advance to close combat in that building and..." If your "if" chain becomes so long that you have trouble even keeping track of all the things that need to go exactly right in order to win, with no margin for error at all, then you may be right to be a bit demoralized. But if your "if" chain is well under two digits long, and if there even a small margin

where something can go wrong and not mean defeat, then perhaps you should soldier on.

2) Assess Time and Space.

Closely associated with #1 above is the need to assess where you are in your scenario in terms of time and position. How much time do you have left in the scenario and how far do you have to go to accomplish your goals? When many players try to do this assessment, they approach it the wrong way, taking only negative inferences away from it. For our purposes, time assessment is simple. Does the time remaining in the scenario confer more than a mathematical chance of winning? If so, then you are good to go. Even this is usually important only when scenarios have exit victory conditions or big building control victory conditions (since it can take time to clear out a large multi-level building). Space assessment is similar: all you really need to know is (taking terrain into consideration) whether you can get to where you need to go without having to CX your entire force at every opportunity for the rest of the scenario, doing nothing but moving and ignoring enemy fire? If you can, you are good to go.

The reason – for the narrow purposes of avoiding a personal morale check—that you don’t really typically have to worry overmuch about time and space except under these extreme circumstances is that it turns out that it is possible to cover quite a bit of ground very fast in *ASL* (considering typical scenario sizes) and it is also possible to recover quite rapidly from setbacks. In other words, a lot can happen in a turn, so if you have any time to spare, then your position is stronger than you might have thought it was. The corollary to this is that unless a scenario is more than half-way over, then you should rarely ever let yourself take a personal morale check. As we’ll see below, there is a lot you can do to help yourself or hurt your foe in a single turn. If you have time to spare, then you have time to care.

3) Assessing your resources.

Now we get to the nitty gritty. It is my opinion that, in the majority of cases where a premature surrender occurs, they occur because of the friction of war. “Everything is very simple in war,” the famed military theorist Clausewitz wrote, “but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction, which no man can imagine exactly who has not seen war.” You will understand *ASL* a lot better if you read this brief chapter. Everything Clausewitz says applies to *ASL*. No matter

how perfect the plan, reality imposes its own imperfections.

Take this example. An infantry company starts an attack against two enemy platoons in an *ASL* scenario. But here a unit is broken. Over here a leader is pinned, meaning the squads stacked with him cannot move the extra hex they were intended to move. And over there a hidden Wire counter entangles another unit. After two turns, instead of an entire company sharing the brunt of an attack, some units are in the lead, others are further back, their progress having been hampered in some way, while still others may even be stopped, temporarily or permanently. The defending enemy platoons find themselves facing not an entire company but rather only a platoon or so worth of attacking infantry. Is it any wonder that this attack stalls?

And this sort of situation happens in *ASL* **ALL THE TIME**. Units get separated, strung out, diverted from their purpose, surprised, incapacitated, thwarted. No *ASL* player can be a Montgomery, lining up every duck in a row; they have to be able to improvise, to work with what they have where they have it. But sometimes the mere friction of war results in a player not necessarily getting there “firstest with the mostest,” or even the enoughest. Attacks in *ASL* can stall due to nothing more complicated than the friction of war just as easily as they do in real war.

So, here’s the thing. Friction in *ASL* is inevitable. To greater or lesser degrees, it always occurs. But some *ASL* players don’t know how to handle friction. Instead, they survey the cardboard battlefield and see an attack that failed. They see that they only have three Good Order squads in the vicinity of four enemy squads. Now things have gone so bad that the attacker is even outnumbered at the key point of contact!

But the secret to friction in *ASL* is that it can largely be managed. Friction can slow an attack, or even cause it to stumble, but friction itself cannot usually stop an attack unless the attacker lets it. When the attacker realizes that friction has diluted his forces to the point where they are not sufficiently effective, he must regroup.

That’s what this section header (“Assessing your resources”) asks you to do. Has your attack seemingly failed? First, assess what tools you really have at your disposal. Are there units a bit further back who can be brought into the fray? Are there broken units that can be rallied? Sure, your 9-1 may look great stacked with some machine gun toters, but he may be of more use rallying some squads back into action. Are there weapons that can be fixed? Are there units or vehicles or other resources that you haven’t yet adequately brought to bear?



Some players are so aggressive in *ASL* that they feel they can’t spare a turn to regroup, yet attacking with insufficient forces is no more likely to produce success. So the first thing to assess is what you can bring to bear that is not in action right now. Veteran *ASL*ers know that the squad that broke on turn 2 may actually be the squad that eventually rallies and later wins them the scenario in turn 7. But if you give up on turn 3, you never get a chance to see that happen.

The other thing to consider is whether or not you can use what resources you have in a different way. In other words, make sure you have not developed tunnel vision. Some *ASL*ers can sometimes unconsciously lock themselves into a form of tunnel vision, perceiving only one route to victory or fixating on one obstacle. For example, an attack may stall because of an enemy machinegun position and the attacker comes to think that he cannot succeed unless he eliminates this position first (the Stalingrad mindset, perhaps). To make sure that you have not unwittingly fallen into this mindset yourself, when performing your resources assessment, also ask yourself whether or not you can use any of the resources you have in different ways. Perhaps you can bypass an obstacle rather than try to take it. Perhaps you can divert its attention with a sacrificial unit in order to allow other units to make more fruitful moves.

Taking a fresh look at the battlefield is key to salvaging your personal morale. Demoralized players often fail to see options potentially open to them, focusing more on perceived obstacles instead. They lose sight of their own strengths and their own potential and overestimate the potential of the enemy. This creates a powerful feedback loop to which players can sometimes completely succumb. The key is to get out of the loop and try to look at your position fresh. This can be hard to do sometimes. Let me offer one suggestion. Sometimes a five minute break can work wonders. It seems like a silly little thing, but sometimes getting up from the table, stretching, getting something to drink, whatever, can reset your brain a little bit, like a breath of fresh air. If the scenario is halfway over and you are feeling a personal morale check come on, take that little break, get up, stretch, move around. Then and only then come back to the table and do your assessment of your resources and how you can use them. Sometimes, you discover that your position

may not be great at all, but it was not as hopeless as you were starting to think it was.

4) Assessing Your Opponent.

Just as you may have underestimated your own resources, sometimes you come to view your opponent's position as invulnerable and you despair of ever having any effect on him. However, defences fail all the time in *ASL*. A key weapon breaks, a key defender cowers, a helpful sniper breaks or pins somebody, or drops a leader – all these things routinely happen. Every veteran *ASL* player has at times seen a position collapse because a key unit in a key place somehow failed to do or was prevented from doing its job.

So the first thing you need to do is to try to see your defending opponent's position as it really, realistically is. In this assessment phase, you don't necessarily need to come up with a specific plan to defeat a particular enemy unit or position, you only have to see that it can be defeated, because if it can be, then the scenario may be worth playing on. Keep in mind that in *ASL* scenarios, by their very nature, the defender will have limited resources. He will be weaker than the attacker, at least at the outset. Rarely does an *ASL* defender have a ton of redundancy.

One of the first things to do, then, is to examine enemy defensive positions. Basically, what you are looking for (always keeping in mind your specific victory conditions and how defeating enemy units can help you achieve those conditions), is enemy brittleness. Brittleness in *ASL* can be defined as a combination of vulnerability and lack of redundancy. In other words, an enemy unit may be powerful, but there are circumstances in which it may be rendered much less powerful. Similarly, an enemy position may look strong, but perhaps the loss of a key unit might make it far weaker. It is the lack of "backup" units or mutually supporting units that make an enemy position brittle.

Looking for enemy brittleness can help you understand your strengths versus his true strengths or weaknesses. Brittleness comes in many varieties. Any unit that can cower is to some degree brittle because a bad die roll can sacrifice much of its ability to project fire onto an attacker. Cowering can also mess up Fire Lanes or even prevent support weapons from ever having a chance to be used. Low morale units are brittle, especially if not in protective terrain like stone buildings, because they can be broken easily (and may possibly double cover). Support weapons with low breakdown numbers are brittle. Low firepower units can be brittle because they can bring less

fire to bear on an enemy, especially in high-TEM terrain (it is not much of a risk to use non-assault movement to move into a stone building adjacent to an enemy 3-4-7 squad).

Examples of less brittle units include units stacked with a leader (no cowering), elite or 1st line British units (also no cowering), elite or 1st line Japanese units (who are stealthy, who step-reduce, and who have more flexibility in terms of Final Protective Fire) and 8- or 9-morale units (which also can more easily take the risk of Final Protective Fire).

Enemy positions are most brittle when they are not supported by other enemy units or positions. This makes them extremely vulnerable to bad luck (such as a sniper) and also may make them overwhelm-able (either to assault them or to bypass them). Often a defending position may look strong, especially if it is a squad with a machinegun and a leader, but if that stack is not supported by other units which can also fire on key hexes, the position is not as inherently strong as it might look at first glance. And if that position falls, or is neutralized or bypassed, your opponent's entire defence might seriously be compromised.

Because of this, it is important for any assessment to examine enemy brittleness. If every position is mutually supportive, if there are backup defending units everywhere, well, things may not look so great. But few defenders have that sort of luxury and most defenders will be spread thin somewhere. Discovering these brittle points may give you the heart to carry on.

I should note up front that there is one sort of defender situation which can rightly make an attacker quail, and this is a defensive position situated such that, in order to win, the attacker must brave a true gantlet of fire. For example, you need to capture building X in order to win, but the only way to get to building X is to somehow move through a large number of open ground hexes, all of which are subject to substantial enemy fire and/or residual fire. It is extraordinarily difficult to survive such a gantlet and it virtually never happens. If your only chance to win is to brave such a gantlet of fire, then your opponent definitely did outplay you, defending well enough not only to have surplus forces, but to have all these forces positioned to thwart your suicidal charge up the street. Some attackers console themselves with the thought, "Well, I made it to the last turn, but couldn't get that one building," but they are fooling themselves. They had their ass handed to them; it just took until the last turn for that ass-whopping to play itself out. If, in your assessment, you realize that you must face that dreaded gantlet of fire, things are not

looking good for you.

On the other hand, one thing that often does paralyze players when assessing things for a personal morale check need not really do so. Here I'm referring to HIP units. Some players, especially less experienced ones, when assessing the battlefield, will also think to himself, "and beyond all that, he's still got that HIP AT gun. I'm doomed!" Part of the problem is that, because the unit is invisible, they see it **EVERYWHERE**, giving it a reach and danger that it simply doesn't possess. Regardless of where it is, that HIP gun is not everywhere, it is **SOMEWHERE**, and although that somewhere may be very good, it may quite possibly be somewhere quite bad, somewhere where it has little chance to affect the scenario at all. The attacker, when making a self-assessment, simply cannot assume that the HIP unit is optimally placed and, in fact, he can effectively leave it out of his personal morale check assessment altogether. Concern yourself with what you can see, not with what you can't.

That's really all there is to it. It is not rocket science. When the scenario hasn't gone your way, and you are wondering whether to continue, this is what you need to do. First, clear your head. Second, do a quick check to confirm that the victory conditions are still achievable without needing astronomical luck (even if you will require a fair amount of luck). Third, assess your own forces, and ask what more you can bring to bear and whether or not there are additional avenues by which you can bring to bear your forces. Lastly, assess your opponent's forces, looking especially for brittleness (whether units or positions) against which you can deploy your resources.

Often, by making this assessment, you can see that the light at the end of the tunnel hasn't winkled out altogether just quite yet. Often, the scenario is actually worth playing through. You may, in the end, still not win, but you'll have made it a much closer fight and you'll have given your opponent his money's worth. And if, after making this assessment, you realize that you truly do have no options other than hoping for astronomical luck, well, then you can tip your chess king over and shake your opponent's hand, knowing that it was a sober assessment of the situation and not a psychological collapse that motivated your decision to concede. But if you learn how to do a sober mid-scenario assessment, the odds are that you'll be playing a lot more of those scenarios to the end than you were before.

JOURNEY TO A TOURNEY

Jackson Kwan

This was originally published by Jackson in several parts on his blog at <http://hongkongwargam-er.com/>, and is used with his permission – Pete

I did it.

I registered for my first *Advanced Squad Leader* tournament, the Malaya Madness (Feb 21 to 23 2014) in Singapore. I bought my plane ticket. I booked my hotel.

At the end of 2013 I never would have even thought about it. (Flying to Singapore for a weekend to do what?!!) A year and a half ago, *Advanced Squad Leader* wasn't even a blip on my radar.

Before I go on, I want to make one thing crystal clear:

1 – If you are a relatively new player,

2 – If you are a “dormant” *ASL* player who's quietly learning and playing *ASL* by yourself,

I am writing to you.

I know there are a lot of you out there and I care to guess that doing *ASL* by yourself is not the easiest hobby to do. I am writing to you. I would like to share my rationale for some of the decisions I made along the way.

I hope this helps you with your choices.

So there I was, working through the Infantry rules in my room, flipping through the massive 2nd edition *Advanced Squad Leader Rulebook*. I was highlighting important texts and I was noting important ideas in the margin. I was studying hard. When I got tired, I played a few rounds of *ASL* solo, planning to play through each scenario in turn.

Even playing was slow going, I found myself re-reading the rulebook more than I was playing.

Part 1: Decisions

Question 1: Do I keep on studying the rulebook or do I dive straight into a game?

I looked for live games. I found the folks at the Hong Kong Society of Wargamers who have face-to-face games very weekend. Getting experienced players to take you through *ASL* games shows you the rules in action. It gives you context. The rulebook becomes much easier to read.

Oh yes, in case no one told you:

1 – Don't wait to read and study the rulebook and “be ready” before you play your first game. Just go look for live games and attend. I have never met an *ASL*er who's not willing to teach.

MALAYA MADNESS



21 - 23 FEBRUARY 2014
SINGAPORE

2 – No, you don't have the read the whole rulebook. You can start playing infantry only scenarios after Chapter A.

Question 2: Do I keep on dabbling solo or do I get on a regular play schedule?

I attended live games with the Hong Kong *ASL*ers, but I couldn't have joined them every weekend. *ASL* was still a solo affair for me. Had it continued in this fashion *ASL* might have become another of my passing fancies.

It never did.

Out of the blue Don Lazov emailed and asked me if I want to learn *ASL* from him. I was going to keep my “*ASL* hobby” on a personal level. but here I was, there's an experienced player offering to teach. Do I keep it a private and low pressure affair or do I get serious about this?

Anything worth doing is worth doing seriously.

I stopped thinking and said “yes”. That decision changed my *ASL* life. *ASL* went from a private study to a social affair. Playing intelligent and thoughtful human beings makes *ASL* come alive from that moment on. *ASL* becomes the complex and rich experience that it's designed to be. Having a regular play schedule helps me internalize the rules.

Question 3: Do I stick with PBeM or do I play live?

I play *ASL* via PBeM using *VASL*. What I mean is that I play *ASL* via

exchanging logs generated from Rodney Kinney's “Virtual *ASL*” software. I was up to 9 concurrent games at one stage. PBeM saves me from having to be at appointed places at appointed times. With my work travel schedule that was simply beyond the realm of possibilities. I step through my opponent's moves from the logs they send me. I interject my responses and I send my logs back.

What I lost was the social interaction. What I have was perhaps too much time to consider and to reconsider my moves. PBeM games allow for methodical and well thought out games, perhaps too well thought out.

So I started having more live *VASL* games where I see my opponent's moves real time and we interact via Skype. Often times another friend(s) drop by and it becomes a virtual club night! I still travel as much but I keep a regular live *VASL* schedule now.

My other mentor, Witchbottles, a man who's a lot busier than I am, said it's a matter of time management.

I am learning to play faster. I also learn to give up the notion of playing a “perfect game”. I am learning to square up a situation, structure a solution on the fly and execute!

Play, laugh and have a great time.

Question 4: Do I stay “in the shadows” or do I go signed up for a tournament?

I heard there will be an *ASL* tournament in Singapore for a little while before it was announced. I have to admit I didn't give it any thought. The idea of paying for flight and hotel to Singapore by myself just to play boardgames was crazy. I didn't even join the one in Hong Kong last year (I hadn't turn Fanatic then!)

Both of my mentors said I MUST go. One of them had even said in the past that he doesn't go to tourneys anymore. He said I should go and decide for myself.

I gingerly broached the topic with my family. I have to admit, it feels like telling them that I am joining a motorcycle gang. My beautiful family was incredulous at first but quickly came around and gave me the support I need.

I signed up for my first *ASL* tournament.

Do I have a chance in hell of winning anything? No, but that's not the point, although they do have a prize for the one who lose the most games.

To me the points are:

1 – This is my gesture to myself

that I want to do *ASL* well. Anything that's worth doing is worth doing well. I might not become a world class player but I want to be wicked good and a lot of fun to play.

2 – This is me reaching out and to be part of the Asia Pacific *ASL* community. These are the core group of guys I'll be playing countless hours of *ASL* with for years to come.

3 – This is me supporting efforts to foster and to grow the Asia Pacific *ASL* community. Today I already count among my regular opponents, a player from Singapore and a player from Japan. I look forward to a lot more!

Part 2: The Battles

I am here!! I got into Singapore last night before and found my way to a bunk that I rented at a "capsule hotel" called "The Pod". It's a little hotel where they have bunk beds in big comfortable rooms (with lockers), clean bathrooms and a nice common area. After that I met up with Peter Palmer.

Today I went to the Malaya Madness venue early this morning.

By early I mean I got up at 0530 this morning and met Peter at 0615. We met up with tournament organiser George Bates at 0645 at the Bugis MRT (subway station). George had a cab lined up, which was quite fortunate as both Peter and I had a big load of gear to haul over.

Round 1: AP8 A Bloody Harvest Maik Brinkmann



Maik Brinkmann is a methodological player with a great personality. He stores his counters in boxes of little white envelopes which hints at an equally efficient and practical mind. We decided on playing 'AP8 A Bloody Harvest' through email correspondence before I arrived at Singapore.

The Germans started from the top of

the board and their goal was to clear the area I got marked at the bottom of the board clear of "Good Order" Poles.

I played the Poles. I decided to place my medium machine gun on the 1st level of the stone building that faced the grain field. From the Pole's angle there were three possible approaches.

There was the right side that is heavily lined with trees where the German could very well approach. I placed 2 trenches within those woods to delay the Germans. I made sure that the two trenches upfront can support each other (and not be able to shoot at each other).

There was the grain field in the middle that my medium machine gun (MMG) covered from the first level of the stone building. I also had a squad in a trench that covered the road leading up to the grain field.

There's also the left side that's less wooded and was the longer way around. I had a trench with a squad on the immediate left of the village, plus another squad in a stone building on the left covering that approach. If needed, they could move back to the village to help.

Maik divided up the Germans and attacked down both flanks. He was bogged down on my right as the Poles withdrew into the village. He made better progress on my left but couldn't converge onto the village in time.

The funny part was a stubborn Polish half squad that kept running retreating through the grain fields while harassing the Germans on the left. It absolutely refused to be broken.

It was a great game that introduced me to a new friend.

Round 2: J103 Lenin's Sons Mark Humphries



Mark Humphries need no introduction in Asia or globally in the *ASL* world. He runs the *ASL* Ladder from the Philippines. We decided on 'J103 Lenin's Sons' and he gratefully allowed me to play the defending Russians.

The Germans attacked down the length of the board looking to capture most the buildings on the bottom of the board. From the Russian point of view, the left side of the board is open ground. The German had a big wooden building at their jump off point. The Russians had a hedge and an orchard in front of the buildings they are to defend. On the right side were the woods.

From Mark I could see how *ASL* is really a game of movement. The Germans would always move forward in every turn. I failed to create a cross fire on the left and the SS was able to process across the open ground without breaking much until their rifles came into range.

In the woods on the right side Mark was constantly looking to encircle the retreating Russian troops. The Russian had a demolition squad hidden in the woods and were able to channel a leader and a squad towards them but my timing was wrong. The demolition squad sprung out, got shot, and the demolition pack went flying harmlessly through the air.

It was a slow game but Mark made progress in every turn. By mid game he was already in the orchards in front of my buildings.

Another great game! Mark showed me how it's done : attacking in open ground and in the woods alike.

(PS: if I play this scenario again, the 10-0 commissar will go into the woods and the Russians will do a fighting retreat like IJA in the jungles.)

Round 3: 145 Shanghai in Flames Jamie Lee



Jamie Lee is an experienced war gamer who is a newbie with *ASL* rules but is very well versed tactically. The Singapore *ASL*ers warned me about him. On the other hand, he's very unassuming and can easily disarm the unwary.

The scenario was '145 Shanghai in Flames' and I played the Chinese. I played this a while back with Erwin Langlois before and I enjoyed it immensely.

The large building on the bottom left of the map was the Sihang Warehouse (factory). The IJA were to clear the factory of all "good order" Chinese squads. Squads in the factory were fanatic (a point I forgot at the tourney).

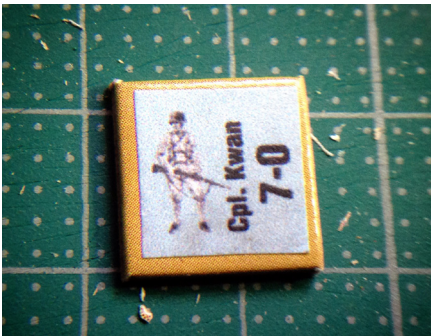
From the Chinese point of view, the likely angle of Japanese attack would be down the left side of the board along the line of buildings. The big stone building in the middle of the board was a good jump off point for the final attack as well.

The row house along the right of the factory was an important landmark. As long as it stayed in Chinese hands, it allowed them skulk and to rout safely. Once it fell into Japanese hands it became a beautiful fire base for the IJA

The Chinese got 3 fortified hexes and instead of fortifying the 3 top hexes of the factory to prevent the Japanese from charging directly in, I only fortified the middle hex the hex to it's right. With the risk I took from not fortifying the left, I exchanged that for a tunnel that linked the building on the left to the row house on the right in front of the building.

My plan was to fight a delaying retreat down the left side while a leader and a squad start a fire on the building to the left in front of the factory. They could use the tunnel and go to the row house on the right and start fires there too, thereby denying the IJA of jump off points.

There was also a Chinese MMG team together with a protective squad and a 7-0 leader all the way down the street on the right side of the board. Given there were two long streets, I plan to cover the first with a long fire lane, and move to the street closer to the factory when the IJA broke through. Guess what? The 7-0 overseeing the operation was none other than "Corporal Kwan" recently designed by the talented Sava Toufexis.



As it turned out Jamie was a lot faster than I expected in fighting through my retreating squads on left flank. A dare death half squad made its debut by playing dead for a while and finally snapping off its concealment and delivering point-blank fire into a stack of passing IJA squads and a 10-0 leader. The shot wounded the 10-0 and decimated the IJA squads. Another volley from a squad between building killed the 10-0 and further amplified the misery. The Chinese managed to set fires to the building and woods on their left flank and routed to the row house on the right. By that time the IJA forces had already arrived to prevent further acts of vandalism.

By mid game the IJA was in the row house along the right of the factory. I

lucked out in that the building to the left of the factory was on fire, denying its use to the IJA and making my unfortified left factory hex less of an issue. After a few turns the IJA broke through into the factory from the right but the Chinese squads had spread themselves out on the factory floor, promising another 2 to 3 turns of close combat. The IJA simply ran out of time.

Jamie is very strong tactically. He's also very fluid in his thinking, making him a very tenacious opponent. This scenario went for 7 hours before we called it.

Round 4: J116 Brigade Hill Vladimir See



Vlad has been *ASL*er for a while. He was one of the first guys I came into contact with when I got into *ASL*. I remember one of my first chats with him was about how he felt about his *Kampfgruppe Scherer* purchase.

We agreed to 'J116 Brigade Hill' with me being the IJA.

I adopted Chris Doary's setup.

There were four hill tops on the map. The Australians started the scenario owning the hill-top on the top left of the map (approached by concealed IJA at the time of the photo). They were to control, three or more hill tops out of the possible four.

Starting from the general direction from the foxhole on the top left of the map, the Australians probed both sides of the big hill before moving onto the first hill top. That might have burned more time than the Australians could afford. While I had the hill top bore sighted, I forgot to use the die roll modifier in the excitement. However when an Australian half squad, a squad, a leader and a machine gun moved into a nice clump

of woods to set up a fire base on the hill-top, I remembered to spring forth a hidden IJA squad! The IJA initial triple point-blank fire on the stack didn't have any effect but the Australian advance fire striped the IJA. They reduced the Australians in the *mêlée* and ultimately killed them all in the next close combat phase.

The Australians made a bit of headway chasing a mop of IJA half squad rabble through the woods on the right flank beyond the first big hill. They cornered and killed off a half squad and the 9-0 IJA leader and one of the Aussie half squads went fanatic. When the Aussie reinforcements appeared from the bottom right encircling the "bottom right hill" it looked bleak for the IJA. The Australians who killed the IJA leader jumped another IJA half squad in close combat and got ambushed instead. The Aussie half squad got slaughtered and I was going to infiltrate the victorious IJA half squad back closer to the "bottom right hill" but suddenly I had a thought.

I moved the IJA half squad behind the pursuing Australians.

That IJA half squad then eliminated a stack of routing Aussies!! When the leader and a squad among the incoming Australian reinforcement broke, I double-timed a squad of IJA through the orchard behind them as well, a lone surviving Aussie squad defensive fired through the orchards but IJA squads had ever been stopped from going wherever they wanted to go. The IJA squad was in a position to eliminate the routing Aussies against the board edge in the following turn.

The small IJA reinforcement found the Aussie foxhole on the top left guarded by a lonely squad. They advanced up the hill and did a one hex banzai charge into the foxhole. The "score" between the IJA and the Australians went back to 3 hill tops to 1. The Australians had two more turns left and decided to concede.

Vlad is a meticulous and a very fair player. Throughout the game he kept reminding me of repairs, missed negative die roll modifiers (on my shots) and (my) SAN etc. It is an honour to play him.

(PS: Vlad reminded me that I can't boresight if the attacker didn't start off-board.)

Later at Singapore Changi's Airport

I wrote Don Lazov and Witchbottles, my two *ASL* mentors from the airport. Don wrote back and said:

"I sincerely hope you not only had a lot of fun, learned a bunch of new things, ideas and concepts, but most important (beside/or next to having fun) made some new friends, and many memories. To me that is what *ASL* is really all about. Playing a great game but playing that game with great friends and making memories."



usual stable of PBeM (“Play By eMail”).

I play a little faster.

I play differently too, having seen different styles of play. For example, I know I should be more aggressive with my movements. Moving and encircling is way more effective (and time efficient “turn wise”) than sitting and shooting.

I know what establishing a tempo as an attacker feels like.

I don’t care about the die rolls anymore. “Reversion to Mean” dictates that it will all even out at the end. Good decisions win the game not die rolls.

I overheard Ian Percy and George Bates say (and this is far from an exact quote) : “it’s not so much about what you do, it’s more about presenting your opponent with a series of tough decisions and one way or the other, he’s going to mess a few up. Make him do all the work.”

It’s important to plan out where you should be on the map and also when you should be where on the map especially as the attacker so you don’t run out of time.

There was an earlier poll on GameSquad asking whether folks are more comfortable attacking or defending in a scenario. I can’t find it now but someone said “Is there a defence?” This thought rang in my head during my last round as the IJA (Imperial Japanese Army) defender in J116 Brigade Hill. The IJA were infiltrating and cutting the attacker’s rout paths. My understanding of Book VI (“Defence”) in Clausewitz’s “On War” echoes the thought: defence is just a different form of offensive action - counterattack!

Now I am getting ready to support the Hong Kong Society of Wargamers (<http://hksw.org/>) Advanced Squad Leader Tournament this year!!

I had seen a lot of new tactics. Whether I had truly internalized them remains to be seen:

- 1 – Jamie Lee’s aggressive and effective use of half squads
- 2 – Mark Humphries’s constantly flowing half squad amoeba attack through the woods
- 3 – Vladimir See’s tactical planning and creative movements that made great use of available cover
- 4 – Ian Percy’s comment I overheard about him not “doing things” to his opponents but “constantly presenting tough choices to the opponent” and “making HIM do all the work”. Given enough choices his opponent is bound to make the wrong choice and choke.
- 5 – The power of IJA behind the enemy and the horrific efficiencies of eliminating the stacks of enemy squads for failure to route.

3 – I played quite a few people around the world too on *VASL*. I can lose games equally well on *VASL* without having to travel, thank you.

Face to Face games carries a dynamic that just doesn’t exist via other mediums. The chatter, the shrieks, the comments, the groans and screams of delight over die rolls, make the FTF experiences second to none. Besides, it’s even more fun to play people over *VASL* (afterwards) when you know who they are.

There are a lot of *ASL* tourneys every year. If it’s within your realm of possibility to go, go. Go at least once. And tell me how you feel. It might just change your *ASL* life too.

Part 3: The Aftermath

I never expected this, but there IS an “aftermath” to having done a tourney for the first time:

Having prepared for all 25 tourney scenarios, I read a lot more of the rulebook and the scope of scenarios I can play expanded.

I met some great folks around the region as well. I have a few more regular “Live” games now on *VASL* apart from my

A Quick Note to Fellow Newbies

I wasn’t going to pay for a plane ticket to go to Singapore for the Malaya Madness. The thought of putting up the time and the expense to go to Singapore to play *ASL* when I can play games with anyone over *VASL* was simply too crazy to consider. However, my two mentors, Don & Witchbottles, both advised me to go see for myself. My family, surprisingly was easier to convince than I myself.

My initial thoughts were :

1 – I don’t know anyone there but a lot of the *ASL*’rs must know each other already. They are just going to talk and to play with each other.

NEVER HAPPENED.

2 - I am just a newbie. What’s the fun in losing all my games?

The Tourney Director matched players based on their skill levels. Besides, everyone I met was a total pleasure to play with or without the competition.

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It's Ours, Guys... It Lives And Dies With Us

Dade Cariaga

Dade originally posted this to his blog in July 2009 (<http://dadecariaga.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/asl-its-ours-guys-it-lives-and-dies.html>), but with the recent passing away of Christian Koppmeyer and Fred Ingram, I feel it is more relevant than ever – Pete

Boy, I'll tell ya, that ol' river just keeps on rollin'.

Just the other night, Friday night, Dave Hauth and I quit – that's right, up and quit – a game of Sowchos 79 just as the scenario was at its crux. Dave had his Germans halfway into the board 3 village and his armour on the hills drawing a bead on my machine-gun nest, but my big KV tanks were lumbering onto the board to try to salvage the situation. And then, midway into Dave's player turn 5, right after his Prep Fire Phase, we just quit.

To repeat: we stood down from a contest with the issue still in doubt. Can you believe it?

Granted it was 2am, and we were both dog tired after each having had a full work day. Still, there was a time, say 15 years ago, when we would have powered on through 'til dawn or beyond 'til one or the other abandoned all hope.

Getting old, I suppose.
Got me to thinkin'.

Advanced Squad Leader came out, when? Back in '87 or '88? Twenty-five odd years, now.

Remember the old Avalon Hill Game Company? There is a certain demographic of men, age range roughly 35 to 65, for which the Avalon Hill Game Company was the fount of boundless hours of entertainment.

That's us. That is we. We're those men. All of us amateur historians who probably lacked the discipline to be really good at chess, but who loved to play games. History geeks who could spend hours speculating about how the entire flow of human events, all its grandeur and squalor, might have been altered into something entirely different if only, say, Napoleon had opted to commit the Old Guard at Borodino, or if Von Paulus had disregarded Hitler's order and pulled the Sixth Army back from the banks of the icy Volga.

Over the years, we've formed a community, an identity.

When *ASL* came out I was all over it. I took the rulebook to class with me in college, held it in my lap, beneath the desk, and read while my professor lectured about something not nearly so important. (You know? Sociology or electronic theory or some such.) As I read, I knew that I had found a system that fulfilled all my desires as a complete and comprehensive game. A game that could recreate the mythic historic period that had occurred roughly 20 years before I was born. The great global conflict that we, in the United States, call World War II.

In college, my friend Mark Hoyt and I spent – not just hours – day playing the game. Neglecting our studies, ignoring our friends. Mark Hoyt, who, had it not been for this game, I would probably never have befriended, he being a conservative and a Christian, and me being a godless liberal. Engineering students that we were, toward the end of our senior year, Mark and I calculated that, in aggregate, we had spent a full month of 24-hour days over the previous two years of college playing *ASL*.

After I graduated, I moved from my hometown in southern Oregon up to the (relatively) big city of Portland and met many more guys who, just like me, loved to play the game. In fact, *ASL* has introduced me to some of my very best friends. Andre Danielson, Dave Hauth, Stewart King, Sonny Hayes-Eberts... The list goes on and on. In Portland, we eventually formed our own club, the Berserk Commissars that, in its heyday had a dozen dedicated *ASL* players. But we were more than a club of game-playing geeks. We were a community of friends. We saw each other through marriages and divorces, growing families, aging parents.

And nationwide, of course, there is an *ASL* community. I have been to Maryland exactly once in my life: when I went to Bowie to participate in the Winter Offensive tournament back in 1996. I have good



Left: Jeff DeBaal and Dave Hauth at Wild West Fest '99.

Right: Tom Repetti awards Andre Danielson the Horse's Ass Trophy for going 0-6 at Wild West Fest '99

friends from all over the country. Hell, from all over the world! When I went to Sweden in 1999, I took a train ride from Stockholm to Gävle with the express purpose of getting in a game or two with Patrik Manlig.

Well, I guess I'm straying pretty far into my reverie, but the point is this: Boys, we're a dying breed.

The kids these days, they're all into their PS-2's and their Wii's and their first-person shooters. Try getting a teenager to sit down at a hexagonal-grid geomorphic board map and explaining "This little cardboard square represents a PAK38. If you place it with the depiction thusly, its Covered Arc is defined to be thus-and-so." Said teenager's mind is far, far away, fighting *World of Warcraft* Forest Trolls before you can finish the sentence.

There's no future in games that have you sitting hunched over a table for 3 to 10 hours, mumbling cryptic phrases to each other, then dropping dice into a tower and discerning an outcome from the result. Take a look around, the next time you go to an *ASL* tournament. How many young faces, say people under 30, do you see? There aren't any new recruits, boys. It's just us.

And we're getting old.

We've had a few casualties already. Remember Carey Cardon? Or Kent Smoak?

Well, it's inevitable. But I like to look at it this way: *ASL* is ours. It belongs uniquely to us. It's our thing. When the last *ASL* player rolls his last MC, *ASL* will have passed into the foggy ruins of time with him. But, if we're lucky, there'll be a well-lighted game room up there in the celestial other-world, with dice towers and well-organized counter storage systems.

When we get there, I wanna play Pleva.

"Six up two."
 "Roll it."
 The dice drop. Clack, clack.
 "That's a one check."
 "And my sniper... (clack) Pin. (clack)
 Break. (clack) Break. (clack) Heat of battle!"
 "Roll it."
 Again, the clacking.
 "Minus 1, elite. Plus 2, Russian.
 Berserk!"
 "Sucks. Don't forget your sniper roll."
 "Gotta love this game, man."
 "Yeah. Gotta love it."



Top: Bob Oppen takes on Tim Hundsdorfer at Wild West Fest '95
 Above: Berserk Commissars at Wild West Fest '97
 Front seat: Bruce Billett, Stewart King (driving)
 Back seat: Carey Cardon, Andre Danielson, yours truly
 Below: Mark (Snav) Evans, myself, and Timbo Wilson at WildWest Fest '98



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ON THE CONVENTION TRAIL

There are more and more *ASL* tournaments cropping up all over the world. In fact, it is possible to be involved in an *ASL* tournament at least once a month, often more, if you were so inclined (and had the financial means to live such a life - I wish!).

If you plan on holding an *ASL* tournament, please let me know and I'll include the details here, space permitting.

If you contact anyone regarding these tournaments, please tell them that I sent you!

JUNE DOUBLE ONE 2014

When: 27 – 29 June.

Where: Writtle College, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 3RR. On-site facilities include en-suite and standard bedrooms, free car parking on application, mini market, cash points, a self-service cafeteria and licensed bars. Bedroom rates start at £30.00 for a single room and breakfast.

Fee: £15.00 if paid before 30 April, £20.00 thereafter.

Format: A two day tournament with two rounds on Saturday and one on Sunday offering a choice of scenarios. A number of mini-tournaments are also planned for Friday, and friendly games will also be available.

Contact: For a booking form contact Derek Cox, 44 Pines Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2DL or by email at derek@doubleone-online.net. Check out the web site at <http://www.doubleone-online.net/1.html> for the latest details.

OCTOBER ASLOK XXIX

When: 5 – 12 October.

Where: Holiday Inn Airport, 4181 W. 150th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44135, phone 216-252-7700, fax 216-252-3850 or visit www.holidayinn.com/cle-airport. 201 room rates are to be confirmed but in 2013 they were \$76.00 plus tax. Check the ASLOK web page for the hotel discount code to book on-line.

Fee: \$25.00 in advance, \$30.00 on the door.

Format: Same as always. Weekend tournament plus numerous mini-tournaments. There is also an informal USA vs. World Cup where everyone keeps track of their games and a plaque is presented to the winning side.

Notes: T-shirts are \$10.00 ea (XXL \$13.00, XXXL \$15.00, 4XL \$18.00)

Contact: Bret Hildebran, 17810 Geauga Lake Rd, Chagrin Falls, OH 44023-2208 or by email damaivs@alltel.net. Check out the web site at www.aslok.org for the latest details.

NOVEMBER INTENSIVE FIRE 2014

When: 6 - 9 November.

Where: The Travel Rest Hotel, West Hill Road, Bournemouth, England, BH2 5EG. Telephone (01202) 555 889 or fax (01202) 789 567 to arrange accommodation. Single rooms are £45.00 per night, double rooms £35.00 per night per person if booked prior to 1 November – thereafter normal rates apply. Remember to mention INTENSIVE FIRE when reserving to qualify for the special rates. You can also

Darren Kilfara, 68 Wilson Place, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1GG (26 Sep 2013)
Alan Sheffield, 1 Barns Ness Terrace, Innerwick, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1SF (09 Sep 2011)
Lauchlan Brown, 20, Union Road, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 6hr (03 Feb 2013)
Stewart Thain, 77 Birrell Gardens, Murieston, Livingston, West Lothian, EH54 9LF (25 Oct 2007)
Bill Finlayson, 19 Taymouth Road, Polmont, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, FK2 0PF (16 Jun 2001)
John McLintock, B25 434 St Georges Rd, Woodside, Glasgow, G3 6JW (30 May 2012)
Andrew Kassian, 7 Burnbrae Road, Auchinloch, Glasgow, G66 5DQ (18 Feb 2014)
Hamish Hughson, 15 Esmonde Gardens, Elgin, Moray, IV30 4LB (21 Mar 2010)
Steve Mackintosh, 54 Firthview Drive, Inverness, IV38QE (27 Jan 2013)
Oliver Gray, 117 Upper Dalgairn, Cupar, Fife, KY15 4JQ (04 Feb 2009)
Garry Marshall, 24 Allardice Crescent, Kirkealdy, Fife, KY2 5TY (21 May 2001)
Pete Phillipps, 9 Pier Rd, Kilchoan, Argyll, PH36 4LJ (23 Mar 2014)
Neil Stevens, Linton Mill Farmhouse, Morebottle, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 8AE (16 Dec 2013)
Jonathan Swilliamson, Da Croft, Bridge End, Burra, Shetland Islands, ZE2 9LE (01 May 1998)

Wales

Andrew Whimmet, 6 Aquilla Court, Conway Road, Cardiff, CF11 9PA (03 Sep 2008)
Paul Jones, 9 Cwm Nofydd, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 6JX (22 Nov 2002)
Martin Castrey, 1, Thomas Cottages, The Highway, Hawarden, Flintshire, CH5 3DY (03 Sep 2008)
Kev Sutton, 1 Gorphwysfa, Windsor Road, New Broughton, Wrexham, LL11 6SP (25 Feb 1999)
Nick Rijke, Aneddffa, Cellan, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 8HY (06 Sep 2010)
C. Jones, Deer Park Lodge, Stepaside, Narbeth, Pembrokeshire, SA67 8JL (31 Dec 1995)
Emyr Phillipps, 2 Cysgod Y Bryn, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 4LR (27 Aug 2002)

If there are any mistakes, please let me know so I can correct them for the next edition. If you have Internet access you can also correct your details on the *VFTT* web site at www.vftt.co.uk/my-account.asp.

book online at <http://www.travelrest.co.uk/Default.aspx?pagename=Bournemouth-Travelrest-hotel>.

Fee: £10.00 if registering with the organisers before 1 November, £15.00 thereafter and on the door (entry is free for those only able to attend for one day). In addition to a discount on the entry fee, players pre-registering will receive a tournament program in September.

Format: Three round Fire Team tournament (two rounds on Saturday, one on Sunday). There will also be some single day mini-tournaments on the Friday. Open gaming is available for those who do not wish to take part in the tournament.

Contact: For more details or to register contact Pete Phillipps, 9 Pier Road, Kilchoan, Acharacle, Argyll, Scotland, PH36 4LJ. Phone (01972) 510 350 (evenings only) or email if@vftt.co.uk. For up to date information check out the UK *ASL* tournament web site at www.aslournes.co.uk.

Grenadier 2014

When: 13 – 16 November.

Where: "Gästehaus Heimbach", Schulstraße 6, Hergarten. Hergarten is a little town in the German part of the Eifel. It is 10 Km to Zulpich and around 40 Km to Cologne. There is a railway station in Heimbach which is the neighbouring town and you can reach it from Cologne by train, which goes every hour. From Heimbach you need to take a taxi to Hergarten which is about six kilometres. The location offers sleeping rooms nearly 60 persons, a huge kitchen (where our Marketenderin Andrea will continue her cooking business for us), a big playing area and an additional separate big room which we will use for eating. Rooms are mostly three and four bed rooms with shower (you will need to bring a sleeping bag or blanket and pillows). Bed and breakfast is €45 per night – single rooms are €6.50 extra.

Fee: €5 per day.

Format: The tournament will be again a Swiss style five Round tournament. We will offer again an event for players who don't want to participate in the tournament.

Contact: Michael Koch, kochemic72@gmail.com. Check out the Grenadier web site at www.asl-grenadier.de for up to date information.

2015 MARCH HEROES 2015

When: 5 – 8 March.

Where: Colwyn Hotel, 569 New South Promenade, Blackpool, England, FY4 1NG. Tel 01253 341 024. Room rates to be confirmed, in 2014 they were £31.00 for a shared room or £34.00 for a single room and include breakfast. Bar meals and good beer are also available at the hotel.

Fee: £10.00 if registering with the organisers prior to 1 March, £15.00 thereafter and on the door (entry is free for those only able to attend for one day). In addition to a discount on the entry fee, players pre-registering will receive a tournament program in February.

Format: Four or five round tournament beginning Friday morning (arrangements will be made for those unable to arrive until Friday afternoon), with three scenarios to choose from in each round. Players will be expected to have knowledge of the first half of the Chapter G rules to play in the tournament. CG and friendly games can also be found throughout the weekend. There will also be opportunities for new players to learn the game and friendly games available.

Contact: For more details or to register contact Pete Phillipps, 9 Pier Road, Kilchoan, Acharacle, Argyll, Scotland, PH36 4LJ. Phone (01972) 510 350 (evenings only) or email heroes@vftt.co.uk. For up to date information check out the UK *ASL* tournament web site at www.aslournes.co.uk.

Red Army Day An Article Correction

Martin Hicks

I'm just reading Craig's great article on *KGS* and had a rules correction RE: his suggested use of the T60's. Since T60's are tankettes, they cannot take riders.

These are the standard rules, and we didn't find any exception to that rule in the *KGS* rulebook when we played the winter campaign game.

LASL L o n d o n ' s Advanced Squad Leaders

London's Advanced Squad Leaders (LASL) welcome *ASL*/*ASLSK* players or potential players. If you're passing through or staying over in London, you're welcome to come along and take part. There's no fee for taking part or spectating.

We usually meet on the second Saturday of each month from 10.30am until 5.30pm. LASL's venue is located in the lower ground floor of Starbucks, 32 Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1AA. It's quiet and has space for up to 20 games.

If you want to come along send your name and contact details to brendan@doubleone-online.net to arrange a game and ensure there are no last minute problems.

INTENSIVE FIRE 2014

5 - 9 NOVEMBER 2014



INTENSIVE FIRE is the UK's longest running tournament dedicated to the play of Advanced Squad Leader. 2014 sees us celebrate our 20th year and players of all standards are invited to attend.

FORMAT

The well-established Fire Team Tournament is the main event and offers the chance for competitive play on the Saturday and Sunday. In addition, the Friday mini-tourneys offer the chance for glory in more specialised fields of warfare. There will also be a Training Camp for inexperienced players.

For those not interested in tournament play, or not able to make it for the whole weekend, there is always room for pick-up games and friendly play.

VENUE

Centrally located in Bournemouth, the Travel Rest offers both excellent gaming facilities and reduced accommodation rates (£45 per night for a single room or £35 per night per person for a double room). The hotel is within a short taxi-ride of Bournemouth rail station and ample parking is available. To book contact the hotel on (01202) 555 889 (+44 1202 555 889 from outside the UK). You can also book online at <http://www.travelrest.co.uk/Default.aspx?pagename=Bournemouth-Travelrest-hotel>.

For foreign visitors, lifts can often be pre-arranged to and from major airports. For those contemplating an extended stay, Bournemouth offers an excellent base for the military historian, being within easy reach of important military museums at Bovington Camp, Winchester, Portsmouth and Aldershot.

COST

Weekend registration for the tournament costs just £15, or just £10 if you register before 1st November. The tournament program listing the weekend's scenarios and events is available from the start of October to anyone registering in advance.

FURTHER DETAILS / REGISTRATION

Contact Pete Phillipps, 9 Pier Road, Kilchoan, Acharacle, Argyll, Scotland, PH36 4LJ. Telephone (01972) 510 350 (+44 1972 510 350 from outside the UK) or email if@vftt.co.uk.