

# VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

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**COVER:** A US Army Sherman battle tank in the destroyed gateway to Intramuros, during the Battle of Manila, 1945.

# PREP FIRE

Hello and welcome to the latest issue of *VFTT*.

There's no Crusader Ladder update in this issue, in part to make space for Michael Davies' T-37 article, but mainly because I still haven't got round to entering the result chits from DOUBLE 1! I'll get them done soon (though I've been saying that to myself for two months now!)

With the recent rise in the energy cap, and inflation rising, I'm sure I'm not the only *ASL*er who's thinking about cutting back on non-essential purchases. Increased production costs will no doubt lead to new products costing more than they do at the moment, but with few new products confirmed for the next six months this may make it easier for people to continue buying new stuff as they have time to spread out their purchases. I suspect the biggest effect will be on tournaments, which are likely to become more expensive to attend, as venues start putting up their prices to cover their increased costs, and travel costs rise. For though who only attend one local tournament this may still be affordable, but those who attend two or three may well find themselves having to reduce the number of days they attend, or even cut down the number of tournaments they attend.

I'm still looking for material for future issues of *VFTT*, so if anyone has an article they're thinking of writing, now is the time to get started.

'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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All issue of *VFTT* can be downloaded for free from:  
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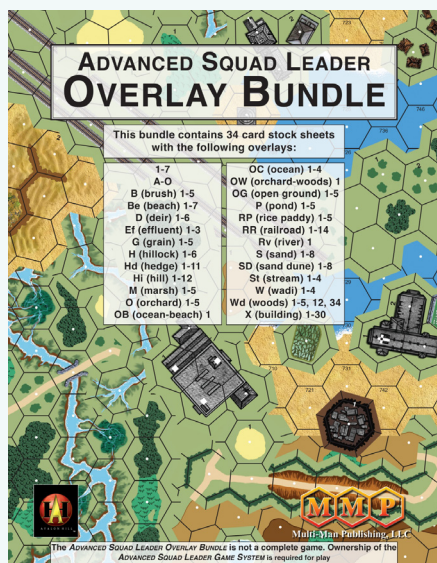
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# INCOMING



## REPRINTS FROM MMP

The *ASL Overlay Bundle* has reached its pre-order number, although no date for its release has been announced yet. The pack contains 34 cardstock sheets re-printing every overlay produced by Avalon Hill or MMP except those from *Red Factories*, the Deluxe overlays (which can be found in the *Deluxe ASL Redux* module), the Gavutu-Tanambogo overlays from *ASL Annual 93b* (which was re-released as a paper map in *Rising Sun*), and Overlay E1 from *West of Alamein* (which was re-released as board 25e in *Hollow Legions 3rd Ed.*) The pre-order price is \$36.00; it will retail for \$48.00.

The reprint of *Hakkaa Päälle* is on pre-order. A straight reprint (with minor errata corrections incorporated), it contains map 52, four countersheets, 17 scenarios, revised Chapter A pages covering the new Finnish squad types, Chapter H notes for the Finnish vehicles and ordnance, and four



updated Chapter Dividers. The pre-order price is \$90.00; it will retail for \$120.00.

There has been no update on the status of the Normandy *HASL Drop Zone Sainte Mère Église* and the Marco Polo Bridge *HASL*, although MMP have stated that they expect both to be placed on pre-order later in the year (the latter may also be done as a *Starter Kit HASL*.)

## HAZARDOUS MOVING IN STALINGRAD

Hazardous Movement have releasing *Scenario Pack 3: City of Steel*. This latest scenario pack contains ten scenarios that cover the battle of Stalingrad, and are designed to be played individually or chronologically as part of a 7-game mini-campaign - or a 10-game "mega-mini" campaign which incorporates the related operations Uranus, Wintergewitter and Saturn. A free PDF of one of the scenarios can be downloaded from their website at <https://www.hazardousmovement.com/>. The pack costs \$34.95 and can be ordered from their website.

## LFT'S 12th CELLAR

Le Franc Tireur have released *From the Cellar 12*. Priced €35.00, it contains 11 scenarios, mostly large or very large, with a couple of medium-sized scenarios; there are no small or tournament-sized scenarios. Most are set on the East Front, with just one set during the Battle of the Bulge, and a solitary PTO action set on the Philippines in January 1945. Following on from Toby Pilling's extensive article on defending in the previous issue, it also includes several articles on attacking in *ASL*.

## BUNKER BACK

*Dispatches from the Bunker 54* is expected to be released late September 2022. As usual it will have four scenarios, with 'Recon on the Kokoda Trail' being a tournament-sized PTO meeting engagement, 'Not Diggin' Potatoes' seeing American paras trying to clear 2nd line Germans from their defensive positions, and 'The Last Day' being set on the last day of the battle of Stalingrad. The final scenario, 'Pothus Bridge' is a large scenario set in Norway in 1940 with the British trying to blow a bridge and the German trying to capture it intact, with air support available for both sides.

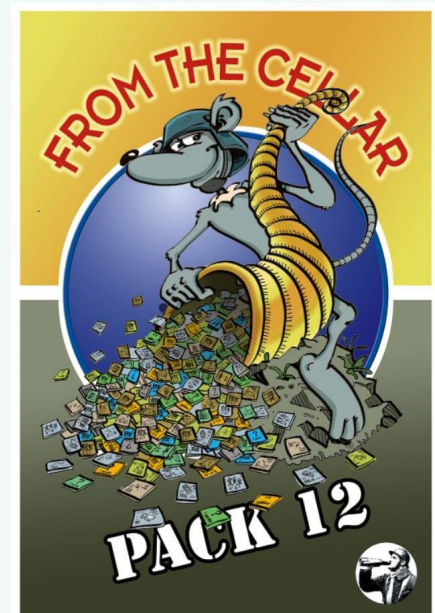
Out now is *Dispatches from the Bunker 53*. 'Blow That Bridge!' sees Soviet partisans attempt to destroy a rail bridge, while 'What's Up Yours?' has the kilted infantry of the Queen's Own Cameron



Highlanders attempting to reduce the Rommel's bridgehead across the Meuse. 'Sternebeck's Sortie' sees Panzer IVs from Kampfgruppe Peiper clash with American tank destroyers, and 'One War's End' is a three-player scenario featuring a clash between the Chinese 2nd Commando, Chinese bandits, and Red Chinese forces.

A four issue subscription is \$20.00 (\$18.00 if renewing an existing subscription), while a 'Digital The WORKS' order containing PDFs of all prior issues plus a subscription is \$75.00. You can pay by PayPal to [PinkFloydFan1954@aol.com](mailto:PinkFloydFan1954@aol.com) or by sending a cheque/money order payable to Vic Provost to Vic Provost, Dispatches, 20 King St, Pittsfield MA 01201. If you wish to contact them they can be emailed at [aslunker@aol.com](mailto:aslunker@aol.com).

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# Sword and Fire Manila:

## Early Impressions

Andy Bagley

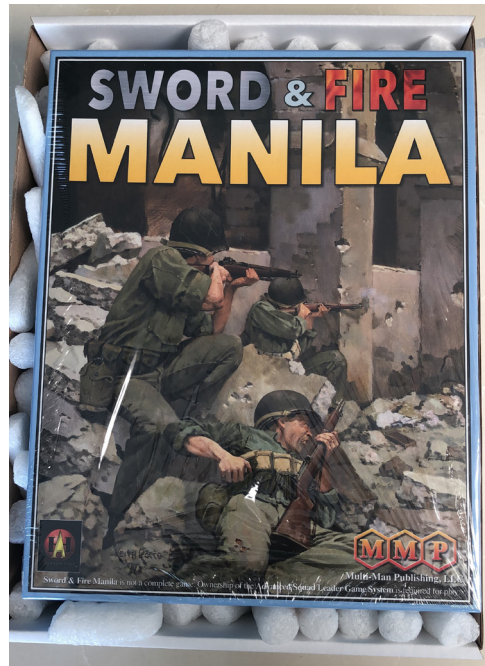
Good heavens, it's arrived at last! After a wait of almost 18 months from pre-ordering (it felt even longer), MMP's latest historical module finally reached me here in the UK in late July. So what have I got, and was it worth the wait – not to mention the cost?

This review is intended as a bit more than “what's in the box”, and may give *ASL* devotees who are still undecided some thoughts on whether to add *Sword and Fire Manila* to their collections.

### Historical Context

General Douglas MacArthur fulfilled his famous “I shall return” promise in October 1944, and the battle of Manila formed part of the subsequent Allied campaign to reconquer the Philippines. The game takes episodes from this battle; all scenarios and campaign games take place in February 1945 in the centre of Manila, with the American 37th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Division fighting their way into the city centre from the north, east and south. The game includes a succinct but very useful historical background that puts the scenarios and campaign games in context and explains the wider picture.

Compared to some other Pacific Theatre battles, Manila was a fairly small affair; the Americans lost around 1,000 killed, although Japanese losses were around 20 times that number. The effect on the civilian population was catastrophic



however, with between 100,000 and 200,000 dead. And the city, once described as ‘The Pearl of the Orient’ was left in ruins.

The map below shows a contemporary map of Manila with the central area covered by the game map outlined in black (please ignore the red dots!).

### The Map

Probably the best-known feature of this module is the size of its map. It comes

in six sections, which when put together about total 183cm x 188cm in size. That's 98 x 86 hexes, and these are slightly larger than standard size, though not as large as some other historical modules.

I've seen a few humorous suggestions as to how players might deal with this, but the sensible option is of course *VASL*. In any case, it isn't really a problem for the scenarios, because all of these use relatively small areas of either one, or at most two, of the six map sections.

Helpfully, two smaller versions of the map are also included. A 59cm x 61cm map is useful for planning and figuring out where the scenarios take place. There's also a single-page map on the rear of one of the dividers which can be copied and used for campaign game purposes.

For me, the other very noticeable feature of the map is the huge number of shellholes on it, many of them sharing the hex with other terrain (rules cover this). It looks almost as though the map might have caught some unpleasant disease, but in reality it's just the effects of American shelling prior to the timescale of the game. Plenty of printed rubble and debris for the same reason.

Despite all the damage, this is no Stalingrad. Urban certainly, but the terrain includes narrow streets, wide city boulevards, ancient walls, some open ground (particularly around the Intramuros – the old walled area of the city) and water to be crossed in two of the scenarios.

I have to say that I really like the map; colourful, clear, some interesting terrain and a pleasure to play on.

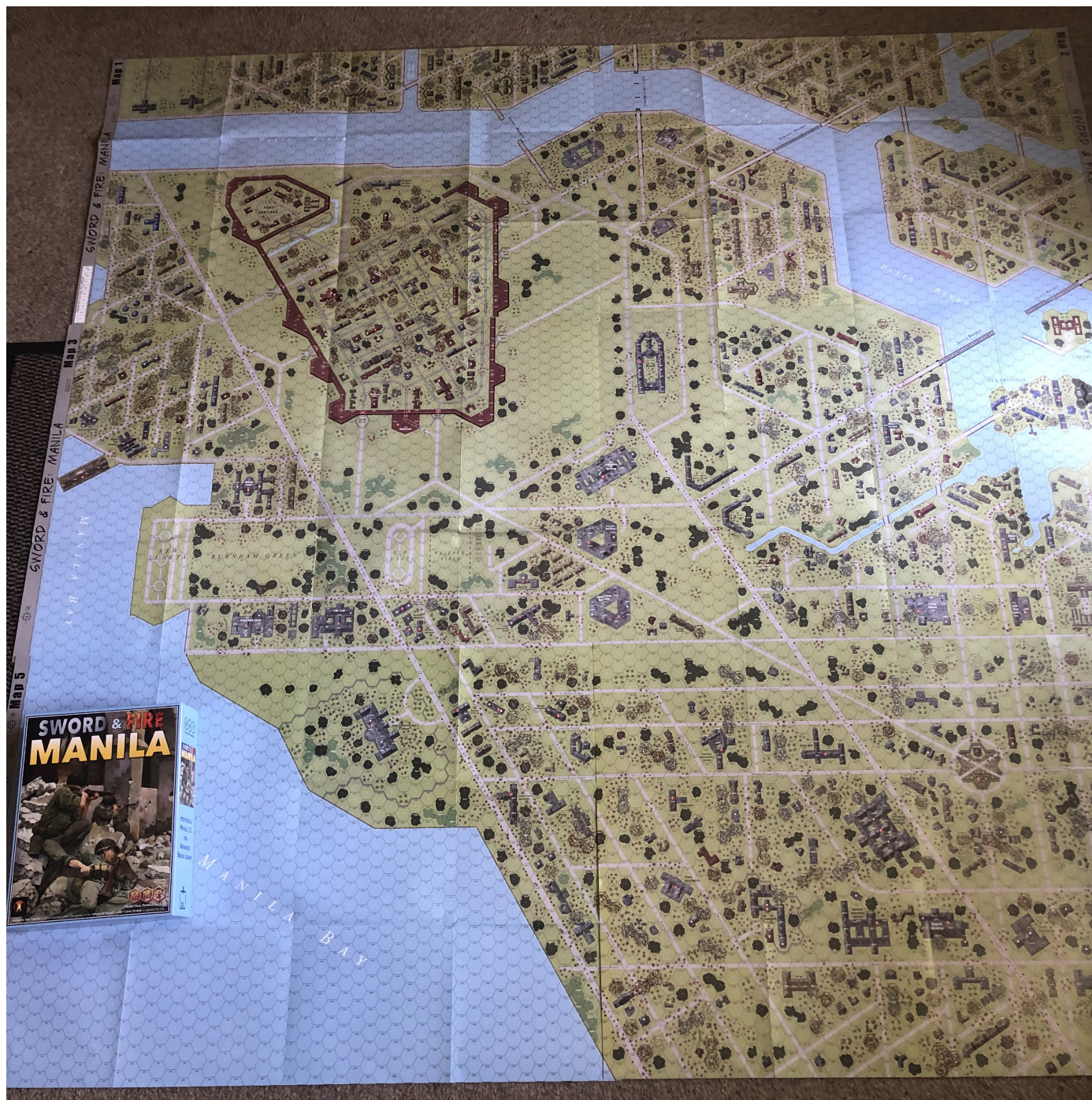
### Counters

The game includes four counter-sheets with a total of 964 counters (if I've counted correctly). The vast majority of these replicate counters from earlier modules.

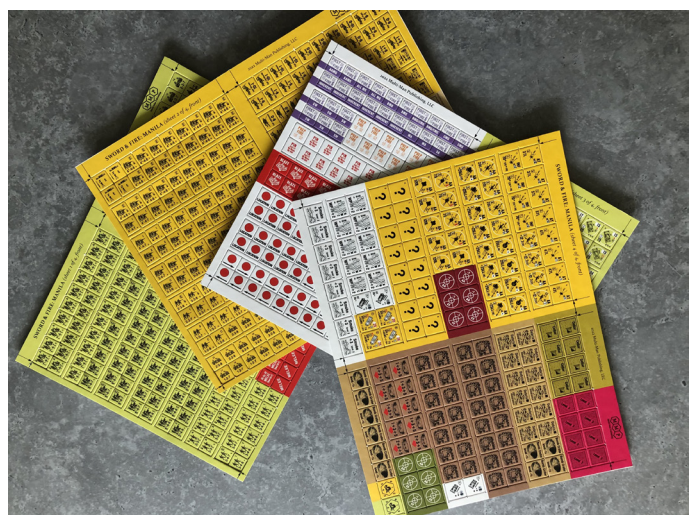
The Japanese defenders of Manila comprised an eclectic mixture of army, navy, marines and conscripted foreign personnel. Rather than invent any new Japanese units, the designer has represented these with a mix of the existing 4-4-8, 4-4-7, 3-4-7 and 3-3-6 squads. No new American infantry either, although both sides now have assault engineers with their higher Smoke exponent shown on the counter. And although some vehicle counters are included, none of these appear to be new with the exception of M3 halftracks captured and used by the Japanese; these are the only additions to







Above: the full map laid out on the author's hallway floor.  
Below left: the counter sheets.  
Below right: some counters, which may or may not be new.





I would like to say that *Sword and Fire Manila* can be played just with the units included in the box, but this isn't the case. As well as needing some game markers (EX: Residual, TI, Stun/STUN) the Americans need to use boats from earlier modules in two of the scenarios. And curiously, whilst some scenarios call for American flamethrower tanks (see US Vehicle Note F), the only flamethrower tank counters provided represent a different M4 model and are labelled as *Forgotten War* Errata Counters. No problem if you're using *VASL*, but if you need real counters, I only found the correct ones from a *BFP* module (apologies if I've missed something here).

## Scenario Rules

There are thirty pages of rules, but only six of these are non-Campaign Game rules. This doesn't sound too daunting but careful reading is required. First, there are a lot of new terrain types that deal with the unique features of Manila: there are several new building types (EX: adobe, steel-walled, warehouses, open-air workshops) and other new terrain types (EX: monuments, coconut groves, restricted roads, the coal pile, and Intramuros Walls – essentially battlements). Second, there are subtle but significant changes to existing

rules, again to address particular aspects of the battle (EX: sewer movement, cellars, HIP fortifications). Also, a few Campaign Game rules apply to specific scenarios as well, so these need to be checked too. And finally, if you're not familiar with some of the less commonly-used standard rules, such as rain, rooftops, scaling and booby traps, then get revising! All of these nuances are justified in the detailed footnotes to the rules.

I would have appreciated a new Terrain Effects Chart to help handle some of this, but unfortunately one isn't provided. (By the way, this isn't PTO terrain, although all rules relating to the Japanese, plus a few new ones, apply normally.) There is a comprehensive list of all the many named buildings, confirming their height and number of levels, although this doesn't clarify which buildings are Factories for ASL purposes; an erratum has just appeared to cover this.

## The Scenarios

There are 25 scenarios included in the game. These vary in length from 5.5 to 11.5 turns, the average being about 8. You might guess from this that not many of them are small enough to be tournament-sized, and you'd be right. I reckon though that most of them can be completed in a full day's FTF

play.

A few other things to note about the scenarios:

- All are Americans vs Japanese, and all have the Americans attacking (even where the Japanese move first)
- All use parts the historical map – no extra mapboards are required
- All except one have fortifications for the Japanese, some of them the 'full set' of wire, mines, roadblocks, trenches, pillboxes and fortified buildings (though no A-T ditches or panjis – this isn't the jungle!)
- Most scenarios, though not all, involve the Americans trying to capture/clear particular buildings. How this works in terms of Victory Conditions varies considerably however, so apparently similar scenarios can play quite differently.
- Weather is often Moist/Wet and sometimes raining. This can limit the Americans' use of SMOKE and reduce the spread of fires. Spreading fire will still be a factor in some scenarios though, particularly where buildings are burning at scenario start (by SSR).

This is primarily an infantry battleground, although the Americans have a few AFVs in many of the scenarios. The Japanese have no AFVs apart from a couple of captured American halftracks, but have a decent number of Guns.

## A Summary of Each Scenario

What follows is a very brief 'capsule summary' of each of the 25 scenarios, intended to give a flavour of their content and variety. I can't comment on balance (only a few playings recorded on ROAR or ASL Archive so far), although the credits and designer's narrative imply that they have been well tested.

### SF1 Race to the River

8.5 turns, large scenario. A large and well-equipped American force tries to reach the river bridges before well-dug-in Japanese defenders can blow them up. Includes a buried bomb which creates a large crater when it goes off!

### SF2 Power Struggle on Provisor

8.5 turns but fairly modest forces on both sides, infantry only. The Americans have a foothold on this Japanese-held island, but have to use boats to get more troops across. Terrain includes the coal pile and open-air workshops (roof but no walls).

### SF3 The Grim Reaper's Lair

7.5 turns, medium sized infantry fight with a variable OOB for the Japanese. Action in on the south-east part of the map, centred around the Paco Cemetery (which



Japanese setup for 'SF14 The Price of Postage'.



has very high walls, so special rules apply).

### SF4 Light 'Em Up

5.5 turns, smallest scenario in the pack, and one of the only two I've played so far. 12.5 American squads versus 9 Japanese fighting for the Tabacalera Cigar Factory and its warehouses. This proved very close and exciting, particularly as the cigar factory was steadily being consumed by fire as the game progressed! In the end the Americans just failed to force the last Japanese squad out.

### SF5 No Safe Refuge

11.5 turns, very large scenario. The Americans must fight their way into and past some large building in the University area of the city. Random Japanese reinforcements may emerge from the sewers!

### SF6 Deliver Us From Evil

8.5 turns, fairly large, and the only night scenario in the pack. The Americans are trying to capture major buildings in the city's University-Hospital area and free civilian hostages that the Japanese are holding there.

### SF7 Breakin' Into the Slammer

9.5 turns, large scenario. The new police station is made of reinforced concrete and further fortified by the Japanese, who can also give covering fire from nearby buildings. A tough nut for the American forces to crack.

### SF8 Meeting at the Elks Club

Up to 7.5 turns, but – an interesting idea – players can shorten this by bidding for the American side if they believe they can win more quickly than this. We're now on the west side of the city, with the Elks Club and High Commissioner's Office, surrounded by what would be mainly open ground but for all the shellholes.

### SF9 First, Do No Harm

8.5 turns, large scenario. The title alludes to the hundreds of civilians still hiding in the University-Hospital battle area, although the scenario only reflects this through Civilian Intelligence (special rules). The Americans are still trying to capture major buildings.

### SF10 High Rent Hooligans

7.5 turns, fairly large scenario. In this scenario, the Japanese occupy several high-rise (Level 3) hotels and apartments towards the south-west with dangerous fields of fire. The Americans may have to clear these floor by floor.

### SF11 Venture Into Carnage

8.5 turns, fairly large scenario. The chronological sequence of the scenarios is becoming evident: the Americans have



*The playing area for 'SF19 Fortress within a Fortress', including Fort Santiago and part of the Intramuros with the Pasig River to the north.*

now reached the City Hall building, a Level 2 building with a Level 3 tower, and need to take this. Lots of American assault weapons including tanks, variable Japanese reinforcements and an LV hindrance due to dusk from turn 5 onwards.

### SF12 Checkout Time

10 turns, large scenario. Different terrain here, as the Americans must cross some open ground to reach their target, the Manila Hotel, on the western side of the city. They have OBA, AFVs and a 10-3 leader to assist with their mission.

### SF13 You Can Fight City Hall

7.5 turns, large scenario. Back on the East side, the fight for city hall continues. Both sides have powerful OBA and Japanese in the City Hall building (most of them 4-4-8 anyway) are fanatic. I'd expect a bloodbath with plenty of CC fighting here.

### SF14 The Price of Postage

6.5 turns, medium-sized scenario, and the other one I've played. The General Post Office is a large Level 2 building, heavily fortified and entirely surrounded by shellholes. The Americans win by controlling more building locations that the Japanese, and there are 60 of these in all including cellars and rooftops. It proved too tough for them an assignment in our game, with stiff Japanese resistance plus rain preventing SMOKE outside buildings. This held up the American advance so that when they reached the Post Office, it was too late to spread out and capture sufficient locations for victory. Fig.8 shows the Japanese setup I used.

### SF15 No Greater Love

7 turns, medium-large scenario. Quite a small area of the map is in play as the American fight to clear the South Port area of the city, most of which is already rubble. They have a flamethrower tank to assist, although the Japanese have a set DC which they can use in an A-T role.

### SF16 Struggle Without End

6.5 turns, fairly large scenario. Fierce fighting (both sides get heavy OBA and the Japanese have a buried bomb), as the American try to clear pockets of Japanese resistance in smaller buildings in the south of the city which they thought they had advanced past!

### SF17 Assault Across the Pasig

11.5 turns, very large scenario. A large American force attempts an amphibious assault to attack the Intramuros area from the north. They have LVTs, SMOKE and other OBA, but the main Japanese positions are heavily fortified (and they have a SAN of 7!).

### SF18 And the Walls Came A-Tumblin' Down

7.5 turns, fairly large scenario. A witty title but not strictly true as the walls were more bypassed than broken. The Americans are now within the walls and fighting through the narrow streets of the Intramuros area.

### SF19 Fortress Within a Fortress

6.5 turns, medium-sized scenario. Fort Santiago is the fortress within the Intramuros walls. The Americans have breached the wall and need to exploit this gap against the usual determined Japanese



opposition – but no fortifications this time.

### SF20 Through the Breach, Into the Fire

6.5 turns, small-medium scenario. Following their successful river crossing, the Americans continue to attack the Intramuros area from the North. An infantry-only action with no mines or wire.

### SF21 A Mass for Humanity

7.5 turns, medium-large scenario. The Americans having entered from the north, parts of the densely-packed southern area of the Intramuros had still to be cleared. American 1st line infantry with support including a flamethrower tank are assigned this task.

### SF22 Bamboo Spear Banzai

6.5 turns, medium-sized scenario. The title refers to conscripted and poorly-armed foreign workers forced by the Japanese to defend the South Port area, and represented in the game by conscripts. This scenario depends on CVPs rather than VP locations, so could be quite fluid.

### SF23 Iwabuchi's Sarcophagus

6.5 turns, medium-large scenario. This is a fight to the death for the Japanese in one of their last strongholds, used by Admiral Iwabuchi as his headquarters. 1st line American squads with tanks including a flamethrower are up against well-equipped Japanese defenders.

### SF24 Dash for the Stairs

6.5 turns, medium-sized infantry only scenario (including one American "super-hero"). The legislative building is one of the larger ones on the map, and both sides control parts of this building at start (possibly even starting in the same location due to Japanese HIP). Expect short-range fighting with plenty of close combat action.

### SF25 Change in Government

10.5 turns, very large scenario. The culmination of the battle as the Americans try to take the last Japanese-occupied parts of the city. Large, heavily-armed forces on both sides including a variable element for the Japanese, which can either set up on board or enter as reinforcements with an equivalent number of dummy counters added to their starting OOB.

## Campaign Games

In addition to the scenarios, *Sword and Fire Manila* offers five campaign games (CGs), each covering a different phase of the battle. Because these take place in different parts of the city (for example, CG1 covers the initial American drive to clear Japanese forces from north of the Pasig River), there is no mechanism to link these CGs together to form one giant campaign covering the

whole map – possibly just as well!

However, each CG breaks down into a number of connected scenarios, the number depending on the number of days involved. Each scenario within the CG last between 5 and 9 game turns (variable depending on drs), and between each scenario is a Refit Phase when both sides can gather themselves, purchase reinforcements and so forth. In fact the bulk of the rules – some 14 pages – are concerned with the many detailed steps involved in each Refit Phase, including reinforcements that can be purchased and how the perimeter (front line) is determined. A two-page Example focuses on identifying this perimeter for each side, and what happens to isolated enemy units who may be on the wrong side of it.

I'm not an expert on Campaign Games so can't really comment on how these CG games compare with those from other modules. I'm sure the idea of a short periods of action with pauses between each is a common one, although there will certainly be a Manila-specific flavour here. And whilst a good deal of record-keeping is involved on the CG-record sheets provided,

they certainly look interesting.

## Conclusions

So was it worth the wait? For me, yes absolutely. Impressive production (I particularly like the attractive and detailed map), lots of high quality content, and despite a few late errata it looks as though a great deal of research and development has gone into this product, particularly from designer David Roth.

I don't get the 'feel' of PTO from this game, nor does it feel like the urban battlegrounds of Stalingrad or Hatten. It feels like something between the two, with each scenario posing different problems and challenges to both sides.

OK, so this is all early impressions and I've only played two scenarios thus far, so I might change my mind. But I really like what I've seen and played, and I have a feeling that *Sword and Fire Manila* will be keeping me occupied for many months (years?) to come.

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The one-page map provided with the module.





# Bounding Fire Blackpool 2022 The Headlands Hotel November 16th - 20th

The scenarios to be used in the main tourney have been supplied by BFP, fully play tested, from upcoming releases .

The tournament will be run with 2 rounds on Friday, 2 rounds on Saturday and a Final on Sunday.

Time limits for play will be generous but also enforced to be fair to all participants.

Regular visitors to the existing Blackpool tournament, HEROES, will know our welcoming host Charles and his staff.

The venue offers a large gaming area with separate restaurant and bar.

The hotel is easily accessible from the M55 and the train station is a 10 minute walk away.

BFP have been a strong supporter of the ASL scene for many years and we gratefully acknowledge their support of this event. Further information on BFP and their products is available on their website: <http://www.boundingfire.com/>

## Contact Us

Do you have questions about the Tournament? Send us a message to [boundingfirstfire@gmail.com](mailto:boundingfirstfire@gmail.com), and we'll get back to you asap.

**Thank you for your interest.**



# The T-37 Amphibious Tankette

Michael Davis

This is a brief history of the development of the T-37A Series amphibious tankette and the T-38. I will look at armament, suspension, amphibious capability, and a few other technical details. I will also look at the importance of tankettes between the two World Wars, outline platoon organisation and how the T-37A was used in combat. There will also be a brief mention of the Vickers-Carden-Lloyd ILight Amphibious Tankette and the Soviet T-27 tankette that was based on its design.

## Tankettes

The British Mark IV, French Saint-Chamond and Schneider CA1 tanks' primary role was to cross no man's land, crush enemy and friendly barbed wire to create a path for the infantry to rush through. Past the wire they would use their machine guns and cannon against enemy strong points. They could cross trenches and would do so to move deeper into the enemy lines. As you might expect the defending Germans did their best to frustrate the tanks by digging wider trenches, developing mines, using artillery fire, and having anti-tank rifles and field guns dug in and well-hidden covering the front line. Using extensive planning and well-developed combined arms tactics an armoured attack in 1917/18 was much more likely to succeed than those made without armoured support earlier in the war. Awfully expensive German defences could be breached, and an incredible number of German troops killed, wounded, or captured. The tanks were a success. Their designs emphasised mobility, even though they travelled at between four and five miles

an hour that was fast enough to move into position before an attack then lead the Infantry across no man's land. Armament was reasonable for the close-range work they were expected to do and mounted to cover all around the vehicle. Probably the greatest weakness was protection; armour was resistant to rifle bullets, but was rivetted with gaps for vision which meant bullet fragments could enter. The crews accepted this as a hazard but felt safer than being outside. It was well understood that a direct hit from a German 77mm field gun or anything bigger was going to penetrate and severely damage the tank, and this was used as an argument against very thick armour. Armament was optimised to engage enemy infantry expected to be in a trench or pillbox. Light cannon and machine guns were favoured by the British, with the French making a sustained effort to get the Soixante-Quinze (75mm) gun into action.

Post war, slightly improved heavy and medium tanks still had thin armour, moved slowly, and were armed to be able to deal with attacks from any direction.

After breaking through the enemy's defences, the attacker had to consider how to move as quickly as possible towards the enemy gun line, supply, and headquarters areas. It was not practical for the medium tanks to do this as their crews would be exhausted, ammunition low and mechanical issues as well as combat losses and driving incidents reduced the initial force. So, armies tried a mix of cavalry and armoured cars. In almost every battle, armoured cars proved to be useless, slowed by mud, unable

to cross wire, with limited trench crossing ability and struggling in cratered terrain. Cavalry generally coped with the terrain better, they did struggle with barbed wire, unless this had been removed by teams of tanks using grapnels to clear a path. Working as mounted infantry they could penetrate the enemy rear areas and stall enemy counter attacks. Lacking armoured support, they could be stopped by machine gun fire and wire or other obstacles.

Here British and French development differed. The French deployed a light tank, the Renault FT, also known after the war as the FT17/FT-17, a light tank with a turret and two-man crew. It was slightly faster than the medium tanks; more importantly it had better cross country and trench crossing capability. The intention was to use the tank in numbers, and overwhelm the defences, with reserve FT units held back to exploit any breakthrough. In Britain, the Whippet tank was designed, capable of 8 MPH compared to the 4/5 of medium tanks, it was machine gun armed and although cramped and lightly armoured popular with its crews. Working with the cavalry it could push into the German lines and threaten rear areas. It had a severe effect on German troops and led to the collapse and surrender of some.

Post war the idea of a lightly armed and armoured tank to work with the cavalry or to exploit a breach of the enemy's defences led to the development of several lightly armed and armoured small tanks. Another idea was to use light tanks for reconnaissance, liaison, and scouting roles like those performed by armoured cars, but with better cross-country mobility thanks to their tracks. Yet another promising idea was to develop an exceptionally light tank as a weapons carrier for infantry support, moving a medium machine gun and a decent amount of ammunition in a lightly armoured tracked vehicle giving fire support.

Several countries went on to develop small two-man light tanks, including France, Italy, Poland, Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union, and several minor powers. Britain led the field with the Carden Lloyd Tankette.

## Carden Lloyd Tankettes

The tankette idea was developed by Lt. General Giffard Le Quesne Martel, better known to his colleagues as "Q Martel" or just "Q", who served in both world wars and who combined technical knowledge with creativity. During the Great War he was involved in the first use of tanks on the Somme in 1916 and wrote about using armies almost entirely composed of Tanks. His ideas were picked up on by J.F.C Fuller,





the noted tank innovator and theorist.

After WW 1, Q constructed a one-man tank in his garage in the mid-20s. Details of this were published with his ideas of modern armoured warfare with several companies tinkering with the idea of making similar vehicles. Carden-Lloyd Tractors Ltd developed a series of tracked light armoured vehicles. The company was founded by Sir John Carden, a talented engineer, and Vivian Lloyd, an engineer who excelled as a salesman. They saw tankettes as capable of breaching wire, carrying support weapons across difficult terrain, and providing direct fire support. They were also struck by the mobility of light tracked vehicles considering them viable for reconnaissance and liaison. They managed to get the British Army interested in using their designs for tankettes, machine gun carriers, artillery tractors, and mortar carriers. Tankettes were also sold to Poland, Japan, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Canada, Greece, Thailand, China, Finland, Portugal, and some other countries. Five made their way to Bolivia and were used in the Chaco Wars fighting in dense jungle. The Poles developed the TKS series from their initial purchases, the Soviets the T-27, and the Italians the CV-3. It is likely the Germans examined Carden-Lloyd Tankettes in Russia and that the Panzer I owed something to the design.

The tankette was fast, fifteen to twenty miles per hour cross country, and around thirty on roads, which compared very favourably with Great Wars tanks that could at best manage four or five miles per hour, and the Whippet around eight. The decent cross-country mobility argued for using the VCL in roles performed by armoured cars, liaison, and reconnaissance as well as close support. The VCL was effective fighting against infantry with few anti-tank weapons, better yet spears and swords. It became less popular after the Spanish Civil War when tankettes were shown to be very vulnerable to the next generation of light tanks armed with 37-47mm guns and slightly thicker armour.

Carden-Lloyd further developed the tankette as a weapons carrier, eventually leading to the Universal or "Bren" Carrier that offered a lightly protected vehicle with decent cross-country performance.

## Vickers Carden-Lloyd Amphibious Tank

Vickers experimented with the idea of a small amphibious tank, able to wade, cross small streams and ponds. It presented several engineering problems, including a dual propulsion system, watertight hull, buoyancy and steering. This work resulted in the A4E11/12 (also known as the L1E1/2), which was sold to China, the



Dutch East Indies, and the Soviet Union. Poland was interested but went on to design their own experimental vehicles.

On land the A4E11/12 could do a respectable 20-27 miles per hour, in water around three but was easily swamped, and struggled with any sort of current. To remain buoyant armour was extremely thin, barely resistant to small arms. It was capable of deep wading, using fords and moving in swamps, but like all amphibious vehicles struggled to get out of the water. It lacked the power to force its way through reeds, climb a steep or muddy bank or leave a canal.

The idea did not excite the British military, but the Soviet Union were much more interested seeing value in an amphibious tankette for infantry support and reconnaissance.

## Soviet Tankettes

After the Russian Civil War, the Soviet Union had planned to defend its borders by exporting the Revolution to neighbouring countries. That did not work too well so other ideas were embraced. Broadly speaking there was an intention to develop an industrial base, form an enormous conscript army and equip it with the best modern weapons. The main external threats were Poland and to a much lesser extent China. This led to a series of border clashes and occasionally open warfare. Usually both sides claimed some sort of victory even if they had clearly been slapped around a lot.

China, Poland, and the Soviet Union all bought tanks and tankettes from Vickers. The Chinese tended to make extremely limited modifications to the armament whilst the Poles and Soviets wanted to buy a licence then manufacture redesigned vehicles. Vickers insisted on some vehicles being purchased and these were used for trials.

The Soviets did make some significant changes resulting in the T-27.

The vehicle was slightly larger than the original. Armour was very thin ranging from 4 to 10 mm rolled plate, rivetted with some welding. There was an attempt to waterproof the vehicle using sacking and sealant to allow for wading and reduce water ingress when pushing through snow or marsh land. It was not a perfect seal but could keep the worst of it out. The engine was a GAZ-AA 40 HP, adapted from a Ford design. The VCL suspension and tracks were adopted though criticised for the narrow tracks and uncomfortable ride in rough terrain. The original VCL was armed with a Vickers machine gun, much like the Soviet Maxim but the designers decided to instead adopt the DT1929 7.62mm machine gun. This was an air-cooled weapon saving space needed to store water for cooling. Further the DT1929 was designed for dismounted use and could be taken out of the vehicle and used with a bipod. It's fair to say that the Vickers was a much better weapon for long range and sustained fire, the DT1929 was much more portable and cheaper as well as being easier to maintain. Initially 2,520 rounds were carried in sixty round drums, this was reduced to 1,764 to reduce space taken up by ammunition stowage. For almost any firefight you would expect two or three hundred rounds to be enough, and anything over a thousand rounds expended would be very unusual. The DT1929 was air cooled, capable of 550 RPM for a limited time, more likely 150 RPM sustained fire.

Something like 3,328 were built in two factories in Leningrad and Gorky, most being used by the Red Army and 60 being exported to Turkey. Maybe 187 flame throwing variants were built. It was mass produced between 1931 and 1934 after which parts were mostly used for repairs and maintenance and production switched to more modern vehicles.

Although crews were happy to be in a tank, particularly one that could achieve 26 MPH, the cockpit was cramped and uncomfortable as the engine was positioned between the driver and commander/gunner. In summer, the crew sweltered and in winter the noise and fumes were still unpleasant.



In action firing the MG would add cordite fumes to the mix. Another issue was limited visibility caused by the small vision slits and the tank being low to the ground, most tankers operated crew exposed for better visibility and comfort, buttoning up when shot at. Signal flags were used, and I do not think any vehicles were fitted with radios.

Some experiments carrying a T-27 under a medium bomber were successful and led to this being done during manoeuvres and on at least one occasion during a war time operation.

T-27 were fielded in three to five vehicle tank platoons. These were attached initially to cavalry divisions, then as more became available infantry divisions. The T-27 saw limited action in the 30s, fighting in Central Asia against insurgents and providing valuable service patrolling the borders.

Although a decent tank comparable to others entering service in the 1930s it was not good enough to serve alongside the next generation of Soviet armour. Some T-27 was converted to use as an artillery tractor by fitting a tow bar. Some were used for tank driver training, others dug in as fortifications, and a handful used for experimental designs carrying rockets. There was an attempt to create a properly amphibious tank that was stopped after the T-37 was designed. Undoubtedly some were used during the Great Patriotic War as tankettes for Infantry support though by 1941 a German infantry platoon was equipped to deal with light armour and would have handled them roughly.

## T-37 Amphibious Tankette

The Red Army saw some value in the idea of an amphibious tankette mainly for reconnaissance, scouting and liaison. It tinkered with a few designs of its own and strove to improve the wading characteristics of existing tanks.

The project was helped by the purchase of some VCL Amphibious Tankettes. Although the British Army was not enthusiastic the Red Army decided it could use a similar tank and started development work along the lines of VCL design.

The Soviets agreed to purchase a small number of amphibious tanks from Vickers, likely only eight for trials after which they might produce their own vehicles. Two VCL Amphibious Tanks were shipped in June 1932 being used for trials and studied in detail. There is a historical debate about the extent to which the T-37/37A and T-38 were influenced by the VCL design but there was some influence and that the Soviets did make significant changes to the design. Limited production started in 1933.

The Russians used a GAZ-AA 40 HP engine. It was reliable, easy to maintain and powerful enough to drive a light tank at 20-22 MPH on land. Further it has already been produced in numbers and readily available. The Vickers water cooled machine gun was replaced by a DT1929 MG, saving weight and the need for a water-cooling system. Early on the suspension was strengthened for cross country movement. Several other design choices were made changing the general appearance of the tank compared to the original Vickers design. There was an attempt to make the T-37 move through water and cope with small waves or splashes.

Along the way several serious issues were encountered, the most serious being difficulties producing stamped cemented armour and assembling this to create a water-tight hull. Although armour ranged from only 4-10 mm and small sized plates the technology and skills required were not available. This led to hulls that leaked or had badly fitted or defective armour plates. In six months only one workable hull was

produced as well as another 29 which were OK if you did not put them in the water or shoot at them. By the end of the year about 126 had been produced including two fitted with radios.

Pretty much everyone involved wanted to produce more and better tanks, with new machinery and management in 1934, slightly thicker armour, and attempts to use cork and balsa floats for buoyancy. The main problem continued to be the hulls, as the light engineering required to assemble the rest of the vehicle was well understood. The resolution was moving production to Leningrad where the plant was more familiar with naval building and armour. In Leningrad, the skills were there to produce welded hulls; previously they had been riveted and spot welded when manufactured at the Podolsk plant in Moscow. Welding saved weight though not much, and improved crew protection though again not by much.

By the end of 1934, the Soviet Union was able to produce hundreds of light amphibious tankettes, several of which could float. Much had been learned in the process about the production of armour and watertight hulls, as well as logistics and planning the mass production of tanks. Another important lesson was that welded armour provided a better watertight seal and saved weight as vehicles did not need a sub frame to rivet plates onto. It was clear the T-37 needed further work to result in a mass produced amphibious tankette, and the opportunity to scrap the project was passed over. Instead, the T-37 went into mass production as the slightly improved T-37A, with work on the next generation T-38 starting.

Between 1933 and 1936 around 1,909 line tanks were produced, as well as 643 T-37TU radio tanks equipped with 71-TK-1 sets and frame antenna. Another 75 BkHM-4 "Chemical" tanks were built most fitted with flame throwers and possibly smoke generators. Chemical tanks were also used for decontamination and had the potential to deploy chemical agents. Towards the end of their service lives some T-37 were converted to line tanks by removing the radio, which was refitted in a newer model of tank. It was hoped to have one radio equipped tank in each platoon of three or five tanks for communication within companies. The 71-TK-1 set was solidly built but required some skill to keep it working. Within the platoon signal flags were used, with hand signals, headlights, or torches, shouting and horn signals also used.

The T-37 crew of two were a driver and a commander. The driver had to be familiar with both land and water operations and how to act as a loader when the DT





machine gun was deployed outside the tankette. The commander had a much wider skill set operating the machine gun, commanding the vehicle, and possibly operating a radio and commanding a platoon or company. The crew were expected to understand how to provide infantry or cavalry support, and in many units also be able to perform reconnaissance, liaison, and screening. All sorts of other skills ranging from map reading to morse code, maintenance of the engine and tracks, as well as domestic and mechanical skills would also be desirable. I guess swimming would be on the list as well.

In the field the T-37 proved to be an improvement on the T-27. Crews were slightly more comfortable and had a better view when driving. There were still serious issues with the transmission and tracks. Although later models were truly amphibious a mild swell could be extremely dangerous, and buoyancy was an issue. Adding any weight to the tankette could also swamp it. A load of 120-150 Kg could capsize the vehicle with serious consequences.

Overall, the T-37 series was an improvement on the T-27, but it was felt the design had not reached its full potential and there was scope for improvement.

## **T-38 Amphibious Tankette**

Work began in 1934 to improve the T-37/37A but make use of existing production facilities and the bits that worked well. In June 1936, the T-38 was unveiled. To improve buoyancy the hull had been widened, and the driving position moved to the left of the vehicle to improve visibility on road, with the turret moving to the right. The engine, transmission, clutch, and other engine details were improved. Although better than the T-37, the performance was still poor. Cross country performance in difficult terrain was restricted as the vehicle had a low power to weight ratio, simply because the 40 hp Truck engine struggle to power a tankette on tracks. A larger engine would have solved the problem but at the expense of losing amphibious capability. Low power also led to engine overheating and maintenance issues. The army still wanting a lot of light tankettes for reconnaissance was frustrated with the continuing performance problems. In 1939 the T-37/38 series were declared unfit for combat and production suspended. Existing vehicles were still used mainly for driver training but also as combat vehicles mainly as nothing better was available. Eventually a new design the T-40 would enter service as a replacement.

Some efforts to improve the T-38 armament were attempted. Early on a 20mm cannon was fitted in front of the driver;

this added weight to the design, required stowage for ammunition and cramped the driver's cockpit space. It also made driving and fording more difficult, and the idea was quickly dropped. I have only seen one photograph of the configuration and it has been heavily retouched. Squeezing in a 12.7 mm machine gun for the commander again hit the problem of space, and cordite fumes. A shortage of 12.7 mm machine guns put paid to further testing. There is a T-38 in the Armed Forces Museum in Moscow with a turret mounted 20 mm cannon, but nothing suggests this was a widespread modification or that it was ever used in the field. Some trials involving flame throwers, and radio control were attempted, and a 45mm SPG considered but no mature designs entered service.

T-38 production was paused in 1937, then ended in 1939 when a final batch of 112 was produced possibly to use remaining chassis. Close to 4,000 T-37 and T-38 had been supplied to the Red Army. About 1,400 T-38 were built with some 165 having radios fitted. Although production ended T-37/38 were rebuilt using spares and salvaged parts during the Siege of Leningrad.

## **Amphibious Tankette Platoons and Companies**

It would be very unusual for just one tankette to be assigned a mission, typically at least a platoon would be ordered to attempt a task. In the early thirties as T-37 were coming into service three tanks would form a platoon, as production increased the unit size was increased to five tankettes. Ideally one tankette per platoon would have a radio fitted but some had none, because of shortages or equipment failure. Within a platoon, flags, shouting and klaxons would be used for signalling.

Three platoons would form a

company, with a command element likely to be a T-37/38. A full-strength company could be ten or sixteen tankettes. Exceptionally the command element would be two vehicles, likely to be the same tankettes type as the rest of the unit, and more likely to have a working radio.

Companies would be assigned to infantry, cavalry, or mechanised divisions or to several types of armoured unit brigades, divisions or even corps.

In most units the company role was primarily reconnaissance. They would perform traditional light cavalry or Cossack roles scouting, screening, liaison, and light escort duties. Although they could take on light enemy forces, they tended to avoid combat and hide from or evade the enemy.

In infantry and cavalry divisions some tank battalions did have an amphibious tankette company. They were used for driver training, did perform reconnaissance roles, but were sometimes used in action as fire support vehicles closely following infantry or cavalry as an MG team with reasonable mobility but poor protection. If used in numbers, with artillery support that could work well.

Rather too often tankette units were split up and used for combat roles faring badly against any enemy forces with even modest anti-armour capability.

## **Amphibious Tankettes in Action**

The T-37/38 Series were most effective when used for driver training partly as the vehicles were easier to maintain with smaller engines and tracks than other AFVs, also the driver and trainer could sit side by side shouting to each other.





Tankettes were used for patrolling in areas where roads were extremely poor or non-existent, and where environmental conditions were extremely harsh.

Although amphibious it was rare to use tankettes for river crossings. More often they would use their waterproof hulls to operate in shallow water, snow, mud, or marsh. The T-37 could enter rivers easily, once in the water issues arose from currents, submerged obstacles, and it was exceedingly difficult to exit a water obstacle due to reeds, slippery banks and the power needed to raise a vehicle out of the water.

In the early thirties tankettes were useful as machine gun carriers, transporting a machine gun into battle with a reasonable amount of ammunition, some crew protection and mobility. Infantry platoons at the time were mostly equipped with rifles, a small number of light machine guns and maybe a light mortar and/or grenade launchers.

Small number of T-37/38 were used in several border conflicts and wars. There are no recorded instances of major river or water crossing actions during any conflict in the 1930s. It is also worth noting that no T-37 or T-38 were sent to Spain in support of the Republicans, instead armoured cars were used for their roles. Tankettes were overshadowed by increasing numbers of gun armed armoured cars, BT series and T-26 which were much more effective in combat. Soviet aviation also began to replace scouting being able to cover more ground much more quickly.

As tankette production was reduced in favour of the newer T-40 it became harder to maintain the existing T-37/38. In combat units spares were in short supply with units cannibalising vehicles to keep others going. Tankettes requiring factory maintenance likely would not get it.

## Soviet-Japanese Border Conflicts May-September 1939

The Soviet Union had a series of border conflicts and some serious combat with China in the 1930s. Small numbers of T-37 and possibly some T-38 would have been present as reconnaissance units, and as part of the tank battalion assigned to infantry and cavalry units. Mostly they would have been used for infantry/cavalry Support and the usual scouting and liaison roles. At least 17 T-37 were damaged during the Battles of Khalkhin Gol either by infantry assault or artillery fire; details are limited and even less is available for the Battle of Lake Khasan at which small number of T-37 could also be expected. In both cases the bulk of the AFV losses would be T-26 at Lake Khasan,

and a mix of BT and T-26 tanks at Khalkhin Gol.

The rest would be armoured cars and small number of tankettes. It is unlikely T-37 were used for any amphibious operations and rather more certain that they acted as close fire support for the infantry as it approached Japanese defences. Given the considerable distances travelled by Soviet armour to get to the battlefield, the dusty steppe terrain and time spent in combat, even armour that was not damaged in action wore out tracks, engines, and armament. That said fighting Japanese infantry with aging and almost obsolescent armoured units was necessary and arguably the best use of them.

After the action, the Red Army still considered the fast, reasonably armed but lightly armoured BT series tanks were still valuable, that the T-26 was approaching the end of its service life and the T-37 was almost useless. There was a clear need for thicker armour, heavier armament, and radios for reconnaissance units. The role of the T-37 had largely been taken over by armoured cars, aircraft and even local cavalry troopers.

## Soviet Occupation of Poland September-October 1939

In the summer of 1939 Stalin approach France and Britain with a promise to defend Poland with a substantial force, in exchange for sovereignty. It is possible that a combined Polish and Russian force might have been strong enough to deter a German attack or significantly delay it, but the offer was rejected. Stalin's next move was to approach the Nazis and agree spheres of influence and a non-aggression pact. A week later on 1st September Germany invaded Poland and the Red Army started to mobilise on the Polish border.

The Soviet Union signed a cease fire with the Japanese on 15th September, before moving against Poland on 17th. The Soviet view was that Poland was descending into anarchy and that only the Red Army moving into the country would save the people, some of whom were Russian, Ukrainian or Poles who would welcome the return of law. It was a poor excuse to start a war.



In peacetime the Polish border was defended by the Frontier Defence Force, about thirty-four infantry battalions, twelve cavalry squadrons, two light artillery battalions and four engineer companies. These formed four infantry divisions and three mountain brigades. Generally, their equipment was close to establishment and better than average. However, most of the artillery, engineers and cavalry were sent to fight the German invasion, leaving a mostly infantry force to guard the border. On the eve of the Soviet attack the force was reduced to 20,000 troops, who were being withdrawn into Poland as more troops were raised and other units moved into the theatre. The Poles had hoped Russia might remain neutral in the event of a war with Germany. Faced with an unwinnable war on two fronts the Poles tried to delay both invasions while withdrawing some troops through Romania to France and continue the fight from there. This meant the Soviets would face small but well-trained border forces supported at times by regular army troops heading for Romania but prepared to fight anything that obstructed them.

The Red Army formed two army fronts each containing several infantry armies, a mechanised corps and six infantry brigades. Total tank strength in the armoured units was about 200 T-28, 1,500 BT series, 1,500 T-26 as well as around 400 armoured cars and some T-37/38. Calculations of the number of tankettes are low, probably less than 100, the lowest only four in one armoured unit. Some infantry and cavalry units also had their own tank battalions, which would add to total numbers of BT, T-26 and T-37/38. It is not clear why armoured units used so few T-38 in the conflict as much greater numbers would be used in Finland and during the Great Patriotic War (WW 2). Additional forces did reinforce the Soviet attack, or to assist with the occupation. Dozens of T-37 may have taken part, but it is doubtful hundreds, or thousands did.

Soviet casualties are disputed with the Poles claiming to have destroyed close to 100 tanks and 30 armoured cars. Soviet





sources acknowledge smaller numbers and report no combat losses due to mechanical failure and driver error which makes no sense. Most losses could be recovered and repaired.

The invasion gave the Red Army valuable experience of modern warfare. It allowed tank crew to experience route marches, maintenance, and combat, and tested equipment in a live fire environment. Unfortunately, most of the crews gaining that valuable experience would leave the army at the end of their conscription period before the German invasion. The campaign did take its toll on the tanks. Most had worn tracks; some engines were damaged or exceeded their run time and most of the equipment used needed factory or workshop attention. These issues were compounded by a shortage of repair and maintenance capacity, limited availability of spares, particularly for tanks that were no longer being produced, and the need to find barracks for the garrison forces 500 Km into Poland.

Although the invasion of Poland was considered a success by the Soviet Union, it made less sense than the occupation of the Baltic States in that it weakened the Red Army tank forces. Diplomatically the invasion made relations with the Allies much more strained for decades.

## The Winter War November 1939-March 1940

T-37 saw fierce combat during the Winter War with Finland. Initially they were used for scouting and flank protection for road bound columns. Although the Finns were extremely aggressive the main problem for armour was the terrain. Deep snow, ice, extensive forest, lakes and marsh restricted off road movement even for fully tracked vehicles. As a result, scouting was awfully close to the main column and marginally useful.

The Finns main tactic was to create a series of defended roadblocks, primarily to slow Soviet columns. Although there would be combat and casualties to clear the

defences the main aim was to impose a delay, which would create a long traffic jam. The delays gained time and used up Soviet food, fuel, and exposed troops to the weather. Over a period of days tanks would be immobilised by running out of fuel, over heating engines or other mechanical failures.

An immobilised tank could work as a dug in strong point, but it could not move from one part of the column to another. Once a column slowed significantly or ground to a halt the Finns would continually launch harassing attacks. These inflicted some casualties, but their object was to complicate vehicle recovery, food distribution, the building of shelters and frustrate the Soviets. The Soviet response varied. Some simply dug in, trying to defend a perimeter, and launching localised counter attacks which made use of any armour that could still move. Elsewhere the Soviets would attempt an organised breakout, falling back towards their main defences. The Finns proved more capable and most Soviet forces were badly mauled. About fifty T-37/38 were captured and used by the Finns, with some more obtained in later fighting. Initially they were used for driver training, and to demonstrate armour to infantry in the rear areas. A few were used in or near the front line for transporting personnel and equipment. Tankette radios were particularly prized as the Finns never had enough of their own. Other vehicles were stripped of their DT machine guns, ammunition and any other useful equipment. The Finns liked the DT1929 as it was light and worked well in a harsh climate. One T-37 was eventually gifted to the Arsenalen Swedish Tank Museum after the Winter War, but not before it had been used as a latrine by several people or one person several times. It does make sense to make use of the cover when fighting in sub-zero temperatures, but if you are giving someone a tank it is a nicer gesture to clean it out before you pass it over.

## Soviet Occupation of the Baltic States Summer 1940

The Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had been created during the Russian Civil War. They served as a buffer between the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe. In 1939 Stalin expected to be at war with Germany as soon as France and Britain had been defeated. Stalin through Molotov asked for land and naval bases in all three countries to help contest any attempt by Germany to control the Baltic

Sea or move through them to attack Russia. After some discussion, all three assented to Soviet occupation as the alternative would have been war. About 75,000 troops and some ships were deployed. Shortly afterwards Poland was occupied, and the Winter War started. In June 1940, the Soviet Union made plans to occupy the region, commencing with a naval blockade and amassing an incredible 430,000 troops, 3,000 tanks and 500 armoured cars, plus naval units, artillery and air support to the tasks. Resistance would have been futile, and there was no alternative but to assent to an occupation. As the troops crossed the borders local Communists rose to claim control of the countries. Little fighting took place. There was a skirmish between Latvian Border Guards and the Red Army which did result in loss of life. In Estonia, a signals unit took on elements of the Red Army and local communists later reinforced by six tanks probably T-26s, for several hours before a negotiated surrender. Mostly the occupation was not contested, with armed forces surrendering being disarmed and disbanded.

Despite the lack of opposition several Soviet tanks were damaged or destroyed in driving accidents and through maintenance issues. Beyond that the action served as a month long 300 kilometre road march giving tank crews an outstanding training opportunity to learn driving, communication, maintenance, map reading, and other useful skills shortly before half of them ended their period of conscription. Some damage was done to the tank fleet by wear and tear, increasing the demand for factory refits and overalls as well as spare parts.

It is hard to say if occupying the Baltic States helped the Soviet Union prepare for an expected German invasion, but Stalin certainly thought it was necessary. Germany did not give a monkeys.

There is no precise figure of how many T-37 were used in the actions, probably small numbers were used for reconnaissance and liaison, others would have been ready to act as fire support platforms, but there are no recorded instances of specialist River crossings.

## The Great Patriotic War June 1941-August 1945

Stalin expected that Germany would be fighting France and Britain for a few years, that the front would stabilise and both sides would exhaust themselves in a protracted war of attrition. This would give the Soviet Union a three or four-year window to completely reorganise and upgrade its armed forces, build fortifications along its frontier, and position itself to deal with the victor.



In June 1941, the Soviet Union owned about 23,000 tanks, and 4,800 armoured cars. The requirement based on Tables of Establishment for known units was over 29,000 tanks, and 7,400 armoured cars. To reach establishment the Soviet Union would scrap 500 obsolescent T-28, and any remaining T-32/35, select the best 6,000 T-26 for use in armoured units, field a further 6,000 BT series. Another 10,000 T-34, and 3,000 KV Tanks would be built.

There would be a shortfall of at least 1,800 BT series tanks which would need TOE to be cut back, as production had ceased. There would be a 3,000 vehicle shortfall of armoured car requirements which would be dealt with by scaling back TOE and using smaller platoons for some units.

Light tank numbers were scaled back dramatically. T-40 tank production was underway with around 962 built or building. The requirement was for considerably less, under 500 tanks. T-37/38 production had already ceased with about 3,260 still in service. It was likely they would be scrapped, retained for driver training units, or used as a stop gap by units waiting for T-40s to be supplied.

There was a phenomenal amount of work to do moving vehicles between units, scrapping obsolescent vehicles, and cannibalizing some for spares to keep others running. To complicate the tasks there was a

shortage of trained drivers, limited spares in place for older tanks, and a chronic backlog of maintenance work. An estimated 29% of the Soviet tank park needed a factory overhaul, 44% needed some rebuilding that could perhaps be completed by the owning units, and the remaining 27% were pretty much good to go, needing fuel, oil, and munitions, and nearly forgot, a trained crew.

Throughout 1940 and the first six months of 1941 sustained efforts were being made to catch up on maintenance and get vehicles where they should be. It is likely that by 1942 or early 43 the Red Army would be ready.

On the eve of the German invasion the Red Army still had 2,331 T-37, and 1,129 T-38 Tankettes. Of those 1,371 T-37, and 629 T-38 were in a good state of repair ready to fight. Most of the vehicles were in infantry and cavalry divisions, with a further 250 tankettes assigned to the five Red Army Air Assault Corps. A small number were in the reconnaissance elements of armoured units, gradually being replaced by armoured cars and T-40 light tanks. Red Army units has some warning of a German attack, not the exact timing but for several weeks there had been efforts made to repair and maintain vehicles, arm, and fuel them. There was a shortage of some shells but the small arms ammunition and magazines for T-37 were available. Fuel supplies varied with most units only having one and a half

units of fuel for their vehicles. It really was not enough and there are many pictures of intact Soviet armour abandoned when the unit ran out of fuel. "Blitzkrieg" forced defenders to relocate and created logistical issues rendering units combat ineffective or leaving them away from the action. Another issue for the Red Army throughout the war was a shortage of drivers. Few units had enough and very few crewmen were able to substitute for an incapacitated driver. Crash driving schools ran throughout the war, and there were frequent appeals for tractor or car drivers to serve with armoured forces. Some Soviet women answered the call and served in front line combat units. Undoubtedly some tanks were lost in June 1941 for want of drivers.

From the outset Soviet armoured units opposed the German invasion. Some T-37 were used as scouting units, trying to identify which roads the Axis were using and skirmishing with reconnaissance units. The light armament and lack of radios made the task difficult. The majority of T-37 were used as infantry support tanks, stiffening the defensive line, or shooting in support of counter attacking infantry. They did their best but were frequently overwhelmed by superior German forces. A fully equipped German infantry platoon would have a 5cm Mortar, anti-tank rifles, and several machine guns all capable of damaging a T-37 as well as further resources at company and battalion level that could be asked for in an emergency.

The T-37/38 Fleet was almost destroyed in 1941 with between 200-400 vehicles still serviceable. Their sacrifice slowed the advance of the German Army and inflicted some casualties in the process.

The Red Army attempted two river crossings using significant numbers of T-37/38 Tanks. The first during the siege of Leningrad in September 1942 used tankettes from disbanded cavalry regiments, these were repaired and serviced using parts and labour in Leningrad then used to cross the River Neva near Nevskaya Dubrovka. An independent light battalion of twenty-nine T-37 made the attack, some were sunk during the crossing, most of the rest were destroyed or disabled on the far bank. The attack failed but did prove that tankettes could cross a river under fire to engage enemy troops.

In 1944 the last operational T-37A and T-38 tankettes were organised into the 92nd Independent Tank Regiment. Barely forty vehicles remained to be used to swiftly cross the Svir River on the Karelian Front supporting a larger crossing by infantry and heavier armour. The tankettes were supported by about 100 Ford GPA amphibious jeeps from the 275th Independent Motorised Special





Forces Battalion. A crossing site close to Lodeinoye Pole was selected. The river there ranged from 250-400 metres wide and was 5-6.5 metres deep; wide enough for it to be crossed quickly, and deep enough to avoid underwater obstructions. The current was 0.4 m/s reducing drifting. The site was surveyed, and the plan formed in less than 24 hours. The attack started on 21st July, with a heavy bombardment. Part way through the artillery assault the tankettes and Jeeps drove into the river, with three ISU-152 Regiments (sixty-three vehicles), giving direct fire from the bank. The amphibious force flattened a belt of wire then rapidly secured a 4km bridgehead. Only five tankettes were lost in the action. The success was reinforced by infantry units and a tank brigade, and further units crossing over the next two days.

The success showed the potential of amphibious units for river crossings, and the extent to which the Red Army had developed into a much more combat effective organisation.

Exceedingly small numbers of tankettes remained in service till the end of the war. Some were used for transport and liaison roles as most reconnaissance was undertaken by aircraft and armoured cars. It is doubtful any were used for infantry support. It is more likely that some remained at tank schools for driver training.

## German Use of Captured Vehicles

Most of the immobile tankette fleet and any destroyed in action or abandoned in occupied territory were captured by the Germans. Most were stripped of equipment that could be used, radios, machine guns, ammunition, and magazines, before scrapping anything that could not be repaired sending scrap metal back to Germany and using some parts for spares. The Germans did make use of captured BT, T-26, KV and T-34 tanks, in small numbers, but struggled with maintenance and supply. From the outset Soviet light tanks were seen as poorly armed and armoured, with very few, likely less than twenty seeing front line service. This contrasted with the Germans eagerness to use heavy Soviet armoured cars for as long as they could keep them running. Tankettes were used for secondary roles, as tows and tractors, till maintenance issues arose. Some operable tankettes slowly found their way into the hands of police and anti-partisan units. Others were used for driver training, and at infantry combat schools to give a foretaste of armoured combat. There were several constraints on using captured tanks; acquiring spare parts and maintenance were significant, drivers and other crewmen were also difficult to train. The war booty the Germans did gain in Russia could have been reduced by the destruction of abandoned or inoperable equipment but in

the chaos of war that was not done.

## Conclusion

Tankettes were an interesting idea in the early 1930s. They offered a fast tracked, lightly protected vehicles, that could carry a crew, machine gun and a considerable amount of ammunition over rough ground. Able to flatten wire, give fire support, and boost the morale of nearby troops as well as providing modest protection during armoured assault. Where there were few anti-tank weapons on the battlefield, they could race around scaring the enemy and killing them. Unfortunately, if any enemy tanks, field guns, or even a light mortar or machine gun were present these could counter the tankette. Certainly, tankettes were used effectively by the British, Italians and some minor powers in battle with some limited success. The move towards heavier tanks with more powerful armament led to tankettes being replaced by heavier, better protected, and armed vehicles. The tankette did not immediately disappear. Instead, production switched to new vehicles and existing stocks were gradually depleted by mechanical breakdowns or in combat. In Britain, the tankette slowly became the Universal or Bren carrier, whilst several countries developed armoured halftracks, and light tanks, or made greater use of armoured cars.

The greatest asset of tankettes was mobility; being able to move across rough terrain that would be impassable to vehicles kept the idea alive longer than perhaps it should. They also made use of production lines not able to manufacture heavier armoured vehicles. In Russia, the T-38 was followed by several better armoured and armed light tanks, though only the T-40 attempted to provide amphibious capability. All these struggled to survive a massive increase in the number and potency of anti-tank weapons. The T-70 was probably the best of the lot, with decent protection and a hard-hitting gun but the trend was towards

ever more powerful armament and increased protection. The T-70 was used as a platform for developing the SU-76 assault gun and existing light tanks were slowly withdrawn or destroyed in action.

The tankette never really appeared again. During WW 2, the Germans used the Panzer II Luchs as a lightly armed and armoured vehicle for similar work, and much later during the Cold War deployed the Wiesel (Weasel) lightly armoured tracked weapon carrier system. Beyond that the Americans developed the Ontos, a tiny armoured vehicle that was intended as an air transportable weapon system carrying six 106mm Recoilless Rifles. It proved marginally effective as an anti-tank weapon and was used during the Vietnam War in built up areas to quickly drive into a firing position then fire six 106mm Shells at an enemy location.

The T-37/38 was not a successful vehicle. It was disliked for its modest armament, low mechanical reliability, thin armour, and extremely limited amphibious capability. Its contribution to Soviet armoured forces history was that it helped industry develop mass production techniques, provided engineering problems that were challenging and influenced later tank design, further the T-37/38 were useful for driver training being easier for new drivers to learn on and saving wear and tear on other more valuable vehicles. Its main fault is it remained in front line service too long, being thrown into battle against the next generation of armoured vehicles and against infantry that were equipped to counter light armour. Most tankette losses were of abandoned and in many cases inoperable vehicles, but it is to the credit of the crews that did try to fight that they slowed the German advance and gave encouragement to Soviet infantry by providing fire support.

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# "THIS IS THE CALL TO ARMS!"

This is the latest edition of the *ASL Players Directory*, and includes all UK ASLers whose information has been confirmed within the last ten years (as shown by the date [in dd mm yyyy format] at the end of each entry.) It is broken down by country and then by postal code region.

## England

David Turpin, 24 Chestnut Rise, Bar Hill, Cambs (14 Mar 2022)  
Martin Castrey, 32 Swallowfield, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7SG (02 May 2020)  
Craig Ambler, 5 Ambledon Way, Queensbury, Bradford, W. Yorks., BD13 2DZ (10 May 2017)  
Wes Hope, 16 Wakely Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH11 9EE (15 Jul 2017)  
Mat Haas, 8A Farcroft Road, Poole, Dorset, BH12 3BQ (26 Oct 2012)  
Dave Schofield, 11 Longfield Drive, West Parley, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 8TY (31 Oct 2014)  
Shaun Carter, 3 Armside Grove, Brightmet, Bolton, Lancs, BL2 6PL (02 Nov 2019)  
Mike Standbridge, 31 Hunstanton Drive, Bury, Lancs., BL8 1EG (15 Sep 2012)  
Bernie Flint, 58 Coventry Street, Sussex, BN1 5PQ (15 Feb 2018)  
Ian Kenney, 53 Withean Crescent, Brighton, W. Sussex, BN1 6WG (02 Dec 2018)  
Marc Hanna, 17 The Lawns, St. Marys Close, Eastbourne, Sussex, BN20 8HB (10 Sep 2018)  
Martin Barker, Tradewinds, Wrattling Rd, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0DA (06 Feb 2022)  
Gareth Evans, 29 Hillfield Road, Little Sutton, West Cheshire, Cheshire, CH66 1JA (25 Oct 2019)  
Ian Ainsworth, 23 Lyneal Avenue, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 2HX (24 May 2022)  
Miles Wiehahn, 37 Nursery Rise, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1XW (19 Mar 2014)  
Derek Cox, Whiteways, 77a St Nicholas Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 2JE (16 Mar 2022)  
Nick Ranson, 31 Ashlong Grove, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2QH (03 Oct 2021)  
Joe Arthur, 33 Cedar Close, St Peters, Broadstairs, Kent, CT10 3BU (10 Jul 2022)  
Paul Osborne, deliberately missing, Littlebourne, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 (30 Aug 2014)  
Paul Treslove, 10 Kings Ave, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1RZ (24 Apr 2017)  
Aaron Sibley, 79 Dane Road, Margate, Kent, CT9 2AE (04 Oct 2014)  
Ian Pollard, 19 Doria Drive, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4HS (23 Mar 2022)  
Richard Webb, 2 Boundary Close, Burton-On-Trent, Staffs, DE13 0PG (06 Jun 2022)  
Simon Staniforth, 131A Radbourne Street, Derby, Derbyshire, DE22 3BW (16 Mar 2022)  
Sean Pratt, Bankside Cottage, Duffield Bank, Belper, Derbyshire, DE56 4BG (28 Jan 2014)  
Neil Brunger, 72 Penhill Close, Ouston, Chester Le Street, Co. Durham, DH2 1SG (30 Jun 2021)  
Brian Hooper, 1 Beaconsfield Street, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 6EP (25 Feb 2020)  
Georgios Kiokpasoglou, 51 Chesterford Road, Manor Park, London, E12 6LD (03 Apr 2015)  
Paul Healey, 19 Beechfield, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 9QQ (17 Aug 2021)  
Lee Bray, 16 Admiral Way, Exeter, Devon, EX2 7GA (11 Nov 2015)  
Ulric Schwela, 18 Stuart Road, Thornton, Lancashire, FY5 4EE (09 Jan 2022)  
Richard Munroe, 104 St. Andrews Road South, LYTHAM ST. ANNES, Lancashire, FY8 1PS (04 Mar 2020)  
Michael Davies, 36 Heyhouses Court, Heyhouses Lane, Lytham St Annes, Lancs., FY8 3RF (25 Nov 2021)  
Paul Currie, 18 Rogerley Close, Lytham, Lancs, FY8 4PL (13 Jun 2017)  
Russell Gough, 'Bellare', New Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL52 3NX (06 Oct 2016)  
Malcolm Hatfield, 336B Alexandra Ave, South Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 9DB (03 Apr 2019)  
Chris Walton, nb Burgan Pod, Aylesbury Canal Society, Canal Basin, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP21 7QG (12 Feb)  
Neil Andrews, 40 Barnshaw House, Coxhill Way, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP21 8FN (17 Aug 2020)  
Mike Bingham, 6 Bittern Close, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU4 6SQ (15 Mar 2022)  
Mark Furnell, 123 Roycraft Avenue, Thames View, Barking, Essex, IG1 0NS (03 Apr 2013)  
Malcolm Harlock, House, High Street, Laxfield, Suffolk, IP13 8DU (03 Apr 2019)  
Paul Legg, 21 Grimsey Road, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4BW (17 Mar 2022)  
Denis Read, 21 Clench Rd, Holbrook, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP92PP (30 Jun 2016)  
Gerry Crowe, 1 Abbey Meadows, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 8RA (18 Jan 2013)  
Sam Prior, 19 Beresford Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 6LP (27 Aug 2020)  
Andy Smith, 31 Egerton Road, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4AP (29 Oct 2013)  
Ray Porter, 38 Bishopgate Street, Wavertree, Liverpool, Merseyside, L15 1EW (21 Jan 2020)  
Craig Benn, 29 Leybourne road, Gateacre, Liverpool, L25 4SW (01 Apr 2022)  
Damien Maher, 21 Cresttor Road, Woolton, Liverpool, L25 6DN (23 Feb 2020)  
Mark Wickens, Haven Lea, Queens Drive, Windermere, Cumbria, LA23 2EL (29 Sep 2015)  
Brett Lyness, 2 Church Row, Little Stretton, Leicester, LE2 2FT (14 Mar 2020)  
Andy Bagley, Four Pines, Elmete Croft, Scholes, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS15 4BE (15 Feb 2022)  
Rob Bywater, 66 Firs Road, Sale, Cheshire, M33 5EJ (19 Sep 2016)  
Daniel Ryan, 110 Maidstone Road, Bounds Green, Enfield, London, N11 2JP (28 Aug 2015)  
Greg Stroud, 96 Mercers Road, Flat A, London, N19 4PU (01 Feb 2015)  
Stuart Brant, Flat 37, Penrose House, 16 Newsholme Drive, Winchmore Hill, London, N21 1TW (04 Sep 2020)  
David Lincoln, 200a Tufnell Park Road, London, United Kingdom (+44), N7 0EE (10 Oct 2021)  
Andrew Cochrane, 20 Scott Avenue, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 1HE (18 Sep 2016)  
Ian Willey, 17 Strawberry Bank, Huthwaite, Sutton-In-Ashfield, Notts., NG17 2QG (12 Mar 2014)  
Colin Bell, RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincs, NG34 8hb (24 Jan 2017)  
Nigel Ashcroft, 5 Grasmere Way, Thornwell, Chepstow, Gwent, NP16 5SS (20 Feb 2018)  
Pedro Santos, 4 Park Avenue, London, NW11 7SJ (13 Sep 2018)  
Tom Jackson, 40 Keyes Rd, London, NW2 3XA (09 Feb 2015)  
Martin Mayers, 41 Frank Fold, Heywood, Lancs., OL10 4FF (23 Nov 2020)  
Toby Pilling, 51 Wensum Drive, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7RJ (28 Feb 2022)  
Stefano Cuccurullo, Flat 46, Room 4, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX3 (16 Mar 2022)  
John Turpin, 18 Mallard Way, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 9HT (14 Mar 2022)  
Simon Horspool, Osborne House, High Street, Stoke Ferry, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE33 9SF (03 Dec 2016)  
Keith Bristow, 39 Carronade Walk, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO3 5LX (12 Oct 2017)  
Simon Prior, 29 Burgoyne Road, Southsea, Hampshire, PO5 2JJ (23 Jan 2014)  
Justin Key, 25 Hilary Avenue, Portsmouth, Hants., PO6 2PP (07 Mar 2017)  
Jeremy Howison-Haworth, 15 Balcares Road, Leyland, Preston, Lancashire, PR25 2EL (20 Jul 2017)  
Bill Sherliker, 16 The Heathers, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancs., PR5 8LJ (06 Mar 2014)  
Paul Sanderson, Flat 4, Russell Street, Reading, Berks., RG1 7XD (03 Apr 2019)  
Nick Rijke, 59 York Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7NR (28 Nov 2020)  
Inuka Jayasekera, Flaxman Close, Reading, RG6 5TH (13 Apr 2015)  
Kevin Croskery, 4 Beechey Way, Copthorne, W. Sussex, RH10 3LT (09 Aug 2021)  
Tom Rodwell, Sheepwash Farm, Copsale Road, Maplehurst, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6QY (12 Jun 2022)  
Gerard Burton, Flat 7 The Beacons, Beaconsfield Road, Chelwood Gate, East Sussex, RH17 7LH (23 Apr 2022)

Joel Ayres, 8 Wordsworth Rise, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1TW (09 Sep 2015)  
Mark Tomlinson, 12 Briar Road, Sheffield, S7 1SA (10 Dec 2018)  
Michael Essex, 1B Wrottesley Road, London, SE18 3EW (03 Apr 2019)  
David Ramsey, 9 Pollards Way, Lower Standon, Bedfordshire, SG16 6NF (09 Jan 2022)  
Nic Greacas, 6 Western Way, Letchworth, HERTS, SG6 4SE (08 Sep 2019)  
Matthew Ellis, 201 Dialstone Lane, Stockport, SK2 7LF (04 Mar 2022)  
Andrew Campen, 15B Mauldeth Close, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 3NP (08 Feb 2018)  
Andrew Dando, 26 Constable Drive, Marple Bridge, Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 5BG (03 Apr 2019)  
William Binns, 20 The Warren, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 4EH (20 Nov 2019)  
Adrian Catchpole, Flat 1, 19 Bank Street, Melksham, Wilts., SN12 6LE (04 Jul 2019)  
Martin Lane, 52 Oaktree Road, Southampton, SO18 1PH (08 Apr 2016)  
Peter Catchpole, 8 Skintle Green, Colden Common, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 1UB (20 Dec 2021)  
Dominic McGrath, 129 Archers Road, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO50 9BE (02 Jan 2016)  
Jerome Hoffman, Graemar House, Graemar Lane, Sherfield English, Hampshire, SO516FW (12 Jan 2022)  
James Crosfield, Lower Langham Farm, Langham Lane, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5NT (18 Jun 2022)  
Jonathan Smith, 3 Lingdale Avenue, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR6 8AZ (18 Sep 2016)  
Simon Church, 7 Beauchamp Terrace, Putney, London, SW15 1BW (15 Oct 2015)  
Simon Taylor, 81 Valley Road, London, SW16 2XL (30 Sep 2014)  
Frazer Greenshields, 231 Staplegrave Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6AG (26 Jan 2022)  
Steven Hall, 43 Millstream Gardens, Tonedale, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 0AA (01 Aug 2021)  
Paul Case, 4 Brymas House, Rockwell Green, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 9BZ (25 Jan 2015)  
Nick Carter, Burnette, New Works Lane, New Works, Telford, Shropshire, TF6 5BS (19 Sep 2016)  
Michael Clark, 25 Ravenswood Avenue, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3SG (24 Feb 2021)  
Gerard Linehan, 8 Gander Green Crescent, Hampton, TW12 2FA (06 Oct 2017)  
Mick Allen, 107 Gresham Road, Staines, TW18 2FB (25 Oct 2020)  
Richard Dagnall, 480 Chertsey Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 6PS (08 Aug 2017)  
Christopher bourne, 52 horsenden lane north, greenford, middlsex, ub6 0pa (04 Dec 2014)  
Daniel Leon, 4 Luxemburg Gardens, London, W6 7EA (15 Feb 2020)  
John Kennedy, 2 Hawthorn Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9RG (14 Mar 2022)  
Dave Booth, 47 Dunnoch Grove, Birchwood, Birchwood, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6NW (24 Jan 2018)  
Matt Dean, 64 Northfield Lane, Horbury, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF4 5JL (13 Jun 2019)  
Matt Blackman, 10 Alfred St, Wigan, Lancs., WN1 2HL (03 Apr 2019)  
Greg Jameson, 86 Fulbeck Ave, Wigan, WN3 5QL (23 Jan 2020)  
Peter Burbury, 18 Charles Way, Malvern, WR14 2NA (14 Mar 2022)  
Wayne Bamber, Cherry Trees, Danes Green, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR3 7RU (18 May 2020)  
Ian Morris, 5 Coltman Close, Lichfield, Staffs., WS14 9YS (14 Jun 2022)

## Scotland

Paul Saunders, 2 Devenick Way, Portlethen, Aberdeen, AB12 4PP (07 Feb 2019)  
Tony Gibson, 107 Queen's Den, Hazelhead, Aberdeen, AB15 8BN (18 Dec 2021)  
Steve Cook, 199 Hilton Avenue, Aberdeen, AB24 4LD (17 Feb 2022)  
Martin Vicca, 14 Leslie Crescent, Westhill, Aberdeen, AB32 6UZ (11 Feb 2022)  
Alan Hume, 62/2 Bryson Road, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH11 1DR (26 Jan 2022)  
Rod Lobban, 3 Mortonhall Park Loan, Edinburgh, EH17 8SN (26 Jan 2022)  
Pete Philipps, 19 Main Street, Kirkliston, Midlothian, EH29 9AE (10 May 2022)  
Darren Kilfara, 68 Wilson Place, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1GG (09 May 2017)  
Lauchlan Brown, 20 Union Road, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 6hr (03 Feb 2013)  
John Martin, 85 Pyothall Road, Broxburn, West Lothian, EH52 6HW (14 Feb 2022)  
Bill Finlayson, 19 Taymouth Road, Polmont, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, FK2 0PF (26 May 2021)  
Andrew Kassian, 7 Burnbrae Road, Auchinloch, Glasgow, G66 5DQ (06 Oct 2016)  
Oliver Gray, 117 Upper Dalgairn, Cupar, Fife, KY15 4JQ (04 Feb 2019)  
James O'Neill, Flat 73 Woodside Tower, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, ML1 2HX (16 Jul 2020)  
Hugh O'Donnell, 11 Rossbank Road, PORT GLASGOW, Renfrewshire, PA14 5AD (28 Dec 2016)  
Neil Stevens, Linton Mill Farmhouse, Morebattle, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 8AE (14 Jun 2021)

## Wales

Alex Ashton, 94 The Spinney, Brackla, Bridgend, Bridgend, CF32 2JE (28 Jan 2022)  
Chris Dalgety, 4 Library Street, Canton, Cardiff, Cardiff, CF5 1QD (30 Dec 2014)

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](http://www.vftt.co.uk/my-account.asp).

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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!

## OCTOBER ASLOK XXXVI

**When:** 2–9 October.

**Where:** Four Points by Sheraton, 4181 W. 150th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44135, phone 216-252-7700, fax 216-252-3850.

**Fee:** \$30.00 for those pre-registering, \$40.00 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 each (XXL \$13.00, XXXL \$15.00, 4XL \$18.00)

**Contact:** Bret Hildebran, 17810 Geauga Lake Rd, Chagrin Falls, OH 44023-2208 or by email at [BretHildebran@gmail.com](mailto:BretHildebran@gmail.com). Check out the web site at [www.aslok.org](http://www.aslok.org) for the latest details.

## NOVEMBER BOUNDING FIRST FIRE 2022

**When:** 16–20 November.

**Where:** Headlands Hotel, 611 New South Promenade, Blackpool, England, FY4 1NJ. Tel 01253 341 179. Room rates start at £40.00 for a shared room or £45 for a single room and include breakfast. Bar meals and good beer are also available at the hotel.

**Fee:** £20.00.

**Format:** Five round tournament beginning Friday morning, with an unpublished scenario in use in each round. Players will be expected to have knowledge of the first half of the Chapter G rules to play in the tournament. A mini tournament will run throughout the Thursday, and there will be similar minis throughout the weekend for later arrivals who cannot make the main tournament but would like a structured tournament setting. There'll be plenty of opportunities for friendly play for those who would prefer it, and Starter Kit mentoring sessions/refereeing for anyone interested in attending who is relatively new to the game.

**Contact:** For more details or to register contact Martin Mayers or Simon Staniforth by email at [boundingfirstfire@gmail.com](mailto:boundingfirstfire@gmail.com). For up to date information check out the web site at <https://boundingfireblackpool.blogspot.com/>.

## 2023 MARCH HEROES 2023

**When:** 1–5 March.

**Where:** Headlands Hotel, 611 New South Promenade, Blackpool, England, FY4 1NJ. Tel 01253 341 179. Room rates start at £40.00 for a shared room or £45 for a single room and include breakfast. Bar meals and good beer are also available at the hotel.

**Fee:** £15.00 if registering with the organisers by 20 February, £20.00 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 mid-February.

**Format:** Four round tournament beginning Friday morning, with three scenarios to choose from in each round. There will be an additional round on Friday afternoon if the number of participants warrants it. Players will be expected to have knowledge of the first half of the Chapter G rules to play in the tournament. Opportunities for 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, 19 Main Street, Kirkliston, Scotland, EH29 9AE. Phone (1031) 629 1260 (evenings only) or email [if@vftt.co.uk](mailto:if@vftt.co.uk). For up to date information check out the UK *ASL* tournament web site at [www.vftt.co.uk](http://www.vftt.co.uk).

## SCANDANAVIAN ASL OPEN

**When:** 1–5 March.

**Where:** Danhostel Ishøj, Ishøj Strandvej 13, 2635 Ishøj, Denmark. Contact the organisers for information on accommodation; in 2020 accommodation was available at a cost ranging from 615 Danish Kroner (about €82) per person for a single room to 205 Danish Kroner (about €28) per person sharing a four person bedroom including breakfast, lunch and dinner – check the website or contact the organisers for a price.

**Fee:** Range from 1800 Danish Kroner (about €240) for those arriving Thursday morning to 700 Danish Kroner (€95) for those arriving on Saturday morning – check the website or contact the organisers for full information.

**Format:** The tournament is a five round Swiss style affair, running from Friday to Sunday with one or two days of optional friendly gaming Wednesday and Thursday.

**Contact:** Michael Hastrup-Leth, Tofthoejvej 14, 3650 Olstykke, Denmark, or email at [hastrupleth@gmail.com](mailto:hastrupleth@gmail.com). For the latest information visit the website at <http://www.asl-so.dk/>.

## JUNE DOUBLE ONE 2023

**When:** 24–25 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 are likely to be similar to 2021 (EX: £39.60 for a single room and breakfast).

**Fee:** £15.00.

**Format:** A two day tournament with two rounds on Saturday and one on Sunday offering a choice of scenarios. A number of mini-tournaments will be run on Friday, and friendly games will also be available throughout the weekend.

**Contact:** For a booking form contact the organisers by email at [lasl.double.one@gmail.com](mailto:lasl.double.one@gmail.com). Check out the web site at <https://londonasl.siterubix.com/> for the latest details.

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# LASL

L o n d o n ' s  
A d v a n c e d S q u a d  
L e a d e r s

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 first Saturday of each month from around 9am until around 5.30pm. We are located at The Penderel's Oak, 283-288 High Holborn, Holborn, London, WC1V 7HP. More details can be found at <https://londonasl.siterubix.com/>. Send your name and contact details to [lasl.double.one@gmail.com](mailto:lasl.double.one@gmail.com) to arrange a game and ensure there are no last minute problems.



# HEROES 2023

## ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER TOURNAMENT

2<sup>ND</sup> - 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH (THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY) 2023

HEADLANDS HOTEL, NEW SOUTH PROMENADE, BLACKPOOL, ENGLAND

### THE EVENT

Following its success in previous years HEROES continues in 2023 to fill the gap for UK ASL action in the first half of the year. As normal the action starts on Thursday and continues through to Sunday so you can play in an ASL tournament and/or play friendly games (or even try your hand at a campaign game if you can find an opponent). The focus of the weekend will be the main tournament, in which players of like record are paired off to allow us to determine the winners - depending on numbers attending there will be four or five rounds. The first round will start on Friday morning and each round sees players choose from three carefully selected scenarios. Main tournament entrants are to be familiar with the rules through to the first half of Chapter G.

### BOOT CAMP

Don't worry if you are a new player (someone who has only ever played five or fewer games against a live opponent), as there are plenty of chances to learn the game with an experienced player nearby to offer advice on rules. There will never be a better time to try your hand at ASL!

Remember, you can also drop in just for part of a day if you can't make it for the full weekend.

### THE VENUE

The Headlands Hotel is familiar to those who have attended in recent years and offers plenty of gaming room for the whole weekend. Meals and good beer are also available in the hotel, and numerous alternative food outlets are close by. The hotel is easily accessible from the M55 and the train station is a 10 minute walk away.

Room rates will be confirmed closer to the date - in 2022 bed and breakfast was available from just £40 per person for a shared room or £45 for a single room, but this is expected to be higher for 2023 due to the cost of living crisis.

### THE COST

The weekend, whether you enter a tournament or just play games with the people you will meet, is fantastic value at only £15.00 if you register before 20 February 2023 (entry is £20.00 after that date).

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## HEROES 2023 HOTEL BOOKING FORM

To book your room simply fill in this form and send it with a cheque for £10.00 to cover your deposit (payable to HEADLANDS HOTEL) to Headlands Hotel, 611 New South Promenade, Blackpool, England, FY4 1NJ. You can also telephone them on 01253 341 179 to book your room.

NAME							
ADDRESS							
NIGHTS ROOM REQUIRED FOR (tick each one)							
THURS		FRI		SAT		SUN	
SINGLE ROOM				DOUBLE ROOM			
NAME OF PERSON SHARING WITH							