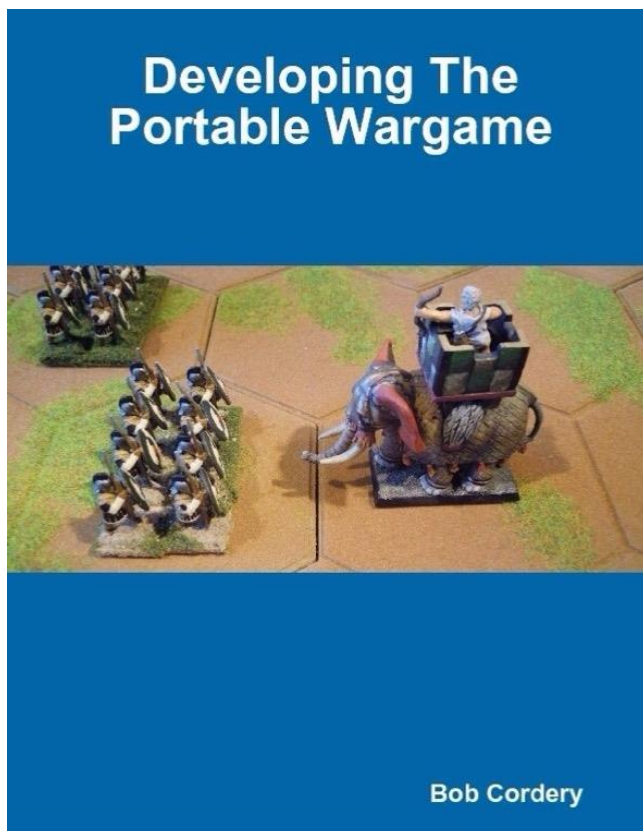


# ***Developing The Portable Wargame* by Bob Cordery**

## **Reviewed by Arthur Harman**

*Developing The Portable Wargame*, as its title suggests, offers several refinements of the Early Twentieth Century rules in Bob's original book, *The Portable Wargame*: it provides clarifications of some of the rules; requires the presence of a separate Transport unit to move some Artillery units; adds Heavy, Medium and Light categories of Tank, Anti-tank and Anti-aircraft guns; introduces Armoured Transport units for infantry and support weapons; gives additional rules for 'pinning' units, firing gas or smoke shells, and presents a completely new set of rules for Air Combat, which can be used either to add strafing and bombing of ground units to the basic game or as a simple, stand-alone game of aerial combat in its own right.



The revised rules, presented in full in this volume, so that players do not have to refer back to the original version, are now really more suited to World War II than the earlier part of the twentieth century, but there are suggestions for adapting them for World War I or the Spanish Civil War, and for combining them with some of the aspects of the Late Nineteenth Century (including Colonial) rules from the previous book to portray actions on the North-West Frontier or during the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

Ideas are also offered for creating balanced and unbalanced forces using a simple points system and die rolls that could be used in almost any period, which might be particularly useful for solo players wishing to create opponents for the army they will command themselves. Representing Unit Quality by adjusting the number of Strength Points (SPs) assigned to units by player selection or randomly is explained.

Fortifications, fieldworks and prepared defences such as mines and barbed wire are assigned also SP values per grid area for purposes of generating forces within a predetermined or random Strength Point total.

The chapter on Simple Mini-Campaigns shows examples of campaign maps using area and point to point movement and then describes a map-less linear campaign system, with a detailed example set in a fictitious, early twentieth century revolution, featuring all the necessary maps for the different scenarios, from a Regional Capital to the Capital City itself.

Then there are suggestions for scenarios, ranging from using the Battle of Hook's Farm, from HG Wells's *Little Wars*, by adding a square or hex grid to converting the Sittangbad scenario, from *Charge!* by Young and Lawford, into a fictitious Rusland Civil War scenario on a hex grid, complete with suggested forces for both sides, followed by a short list of sources of ready-made scenarios suitable for use with Portable Wargames that are available in published books and on the internet.

But this volume is not confined to developing and refining the original rules. In addition, there are the completely new Portable Wargame Rules: Ancients, using the same game turn sequence and the same Morschauser-inspired principles to resolve Shooting, which includes both engines such as the *ballista* and personal missile weapons, javelins, slings and bows, and Close Combat.

The author explains his assumptions about Ancient troop types that underpin the rules and provides Army Lists for the major nations/races from Ancient Egyptians to Romans, totalling between 40 and 45 SPs, with brief notes on typical tactical deployments and illustrations of them on both square and hex grids.

Rather than the turn-by-turn account of a battle that accompanied the original rules in *The Portable Wargame*, there are detailed explanations of how the rules work in specific situations: a Roman *ballista* in action; Light Infantry; Barbarian Heavy Infantry; Heavy Cavalry versus Phalingites, and – of course! - the use of War Elephants. All the examples are illustrated by black and white photographs. A colour photograph of the War Elephant attacking some Heavy Infantry also graces the front cover of the book.

A two page Bibliography and six pages of footnotes complete this entertaining little book. It will be available as both a hardback and softback or as an ebook.

The relative simplicity of the rules makes them easy to 'tweak' to reflect one's own beliefs about the combat effectiveness of different troops or vehicles, and to experiment with additional rules or variants thereon. Two complete sets of rules, together with ideas for scenarios and mini-campaigns, make it excellent value, both for youngsters embarking upon the wargaming hobby and older, experienced players who have had enough of lengthy, complex rules that take too long to learn and desire the pleasure of playing simpler, 'old school' style wargames.

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