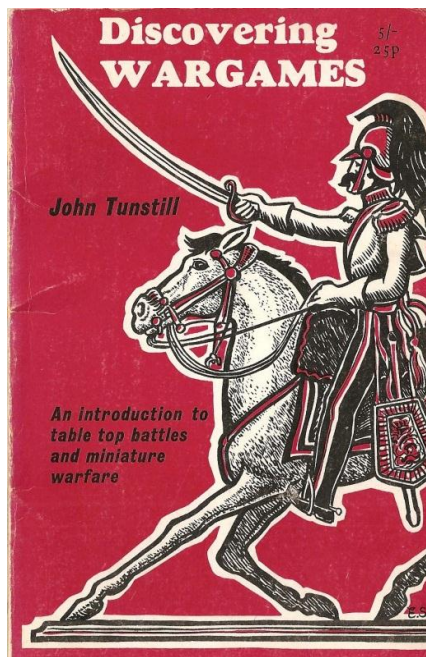


# 'Discovering Wargames' by John Tunstall

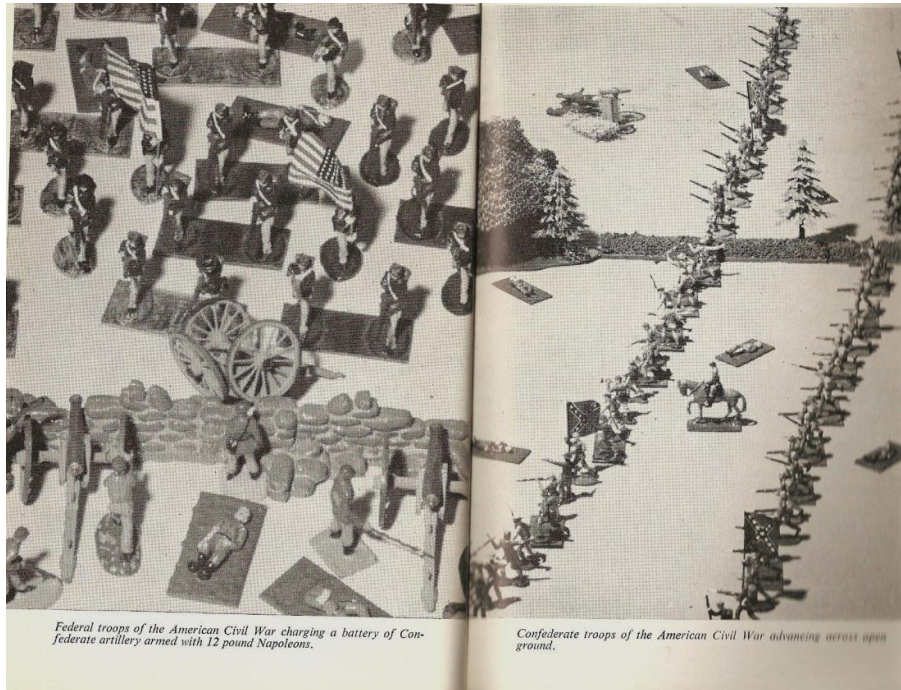
## Review by Jonathan Aird

Regular readers of these reviews will recall the previously reviewed "Rules for Wargaming" entry in the Discovery books series. This book – "Discovering Wargames" – was designed very much to act as the companion volume to the rules book, giving more background on wargames in general and also doing an example sift through the sort of data that allow wargame rules to be developed. It's an interesting feature of many of the books of this era – the author wants to show you some of their research in order to convince the readership that there is some science and real-world rational underpinning the rules that are put forward for use in play. Whilst this hasn't disappeared completely, more modern writers don't seem to feel quite the same need to win the reader over to their point of view with a detailed analysis of the reasons for every rule. So, in "Discovering Wargames" the approach is to spend the majority of the volume developing a universal set of rules. Starting with ancients and the fundamentals of movement rates, hand-to-hand combat and archery, it then steps through later periods, adding in the rules that become necessary to represent developments in armour and weapon technologies -- as well as the development of mass standing armies of trained troops. It's all nice and logical, and reads very well. Each new development is linked to a period of warfare – ancient, medieval, the firearm era, Napoleonics and then in the last few pages a survey of what lies beyond Napoleonics.



All such books (like all book reviews) will reveal something about the author, and in this case we can draw the conclusion that John Tunstall didn't have a lot of time for modern games. And to qualify that statement -- modern is anything after the final exile of Napoleon. The Crimea is brushed aside as a grubby war, the wars of colonial expansion are dull as the natives will always lose in the end, WWI and WWII introduce vast complexities of weapon types, aircraft and tanks ... and how, he asks, are we to game tactical nuclear weapons on the average dining table? No, it is far better to stick to the "pre-industrial" eras. Additionally, it should be clear by now, that when John Tunstall talked of wargames he meant land battles -- there is nothing at all dealing with the large subjects of naval wargaming or aerial combat. Since the vast majority of the readership would have been predominantly interested in land battles, and almost certainly (with the exception of the ACW and WWII) having a predominate interest in events pre-1815, neither of these biases are by way of being fatal to the book. Neither is any real harm, done by the multiple approving mentions of the London Wargames Section rules and Mr. Tunstall's own wargaming magazine *Miniature Warfare* -- the LWS rules were nationally recognised at the time, and if you didn't read *Miniature Warfare*, well then what did you read?

Alongside the text are several pages of photographs, and these are very much of the era – Airfix plastic armies battle it out atop plain cloth table coverings. It would be a hard-hearted gamer indeed who couldn't find it in themselves to smile kindly at the D-Day game with its modroc hills, wildly mismatched scale vehicles and the paper terrain buildings. It was all they had – and they were jolly keen to play wargames.



*Federal troops of the American Civil War charging a battery of Confederate artillery armed with 12 pound Napoleons.*

*Confederate troops of the American Civil War advancing across open ground.*

Overall – it's a good read, there is a decent set of simple rules at the core of the book, and it certainly deserves a place on any gamer's bookshelf (it won't take up too much room!). Shire Books don't seem at all keen to bring their wargaming books back into print – but Amazon UK have copies from £1.75 (About \$3), so it won't break the bank either.

Shire Publications, 1969

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