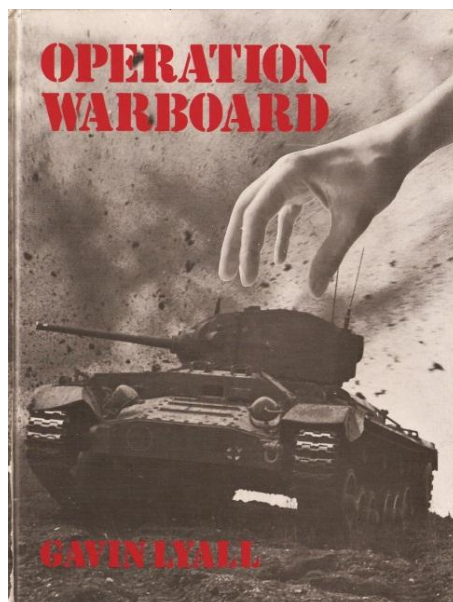


'Operation Warboard'

By Gavin & Bernard Lyall

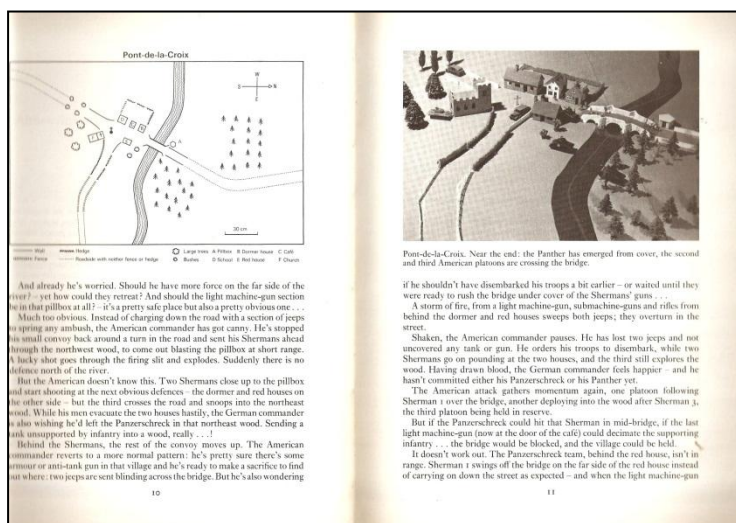
Review by Jonathan Aird

Has a wargaming book ever had a better first chapter? Pont-de-la-Croix is a blow-by-blow account of a small battle which successfully melds the minds of the German and American commanders with the players moving their forces on the table. Each move provokes an unexpected response and the players continually wish they'd made a different deployment or activated their troops a little sooner or a little later. Feelings that anyone involved in this world of plastic and metal miniature men can readily identify with.



"Operation Warboard" is built around a full set of World War II battlefield rules for 1/72nd scale figures developed by Gavin Lyall (a successful writer of thrillers) and his eldest son Bernard. They cover everything from engineering works up to ground attack aircraft. The rules run to about 50 pages and are laid out in sensible sections

with numbered rules and a full rule index, and there are about another 50 pages offering a justification or explanation of almost every rule -- quite a radical approach for the time.

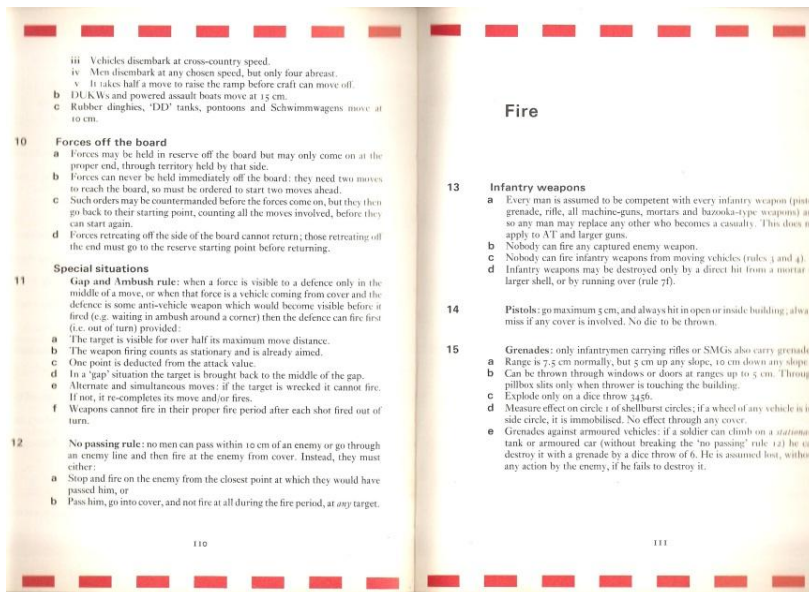


The rest of the book gives some background on the hobby, and guides to terrain construction and where and how to go about making models -- with two main things to consider emphasized: can you recognise what a model

represents and is it sturdy enough for the gaming table? Two very important points when you're using plastic kits as a source for virtually all vehicles -- in many ways, it's better to check in your modelling credentials at the door and leave all the fragile bits off a kit rather than super detail. Otherwise, you can look forward to a lot of repair work!

There are also additional game walk-throughs, again benefitting from the thriller writer's touch, which serve to illustrate the kinds of thing the battlefield commander needs to consider and emphasizes a particular approach to the game -- neither player should know exactly what the other player has by way of equipment and men. This is absolutely spot on, but also gives the only real weak point of the rules -- no points system. Practice will tell players that a hidden 88mm gun in anti-tank mode with crew and a handful of supporting troops is roughly equivalent to two Shermans,

an armoured car and some mechanised infantry -- but on paper it looks like the chap with the tanks has a hell of an advantage! A good hint to the new gamer is to start small and build up -- a few tanks, trucks and a platoon or two of infantry are plenty to get going with -- and add in rules as you need them (so if you're playing a desert battle you don't need to know the snow rules for example !). It's a good sensible approach from gamers who recognise that they have developed comprehensive rules of which only the core are required.



The rules play very smoothly because of this care in making them both very readable and well explained. They give a good, believable and fast-moving game which is ideal for modern warfare -- who wants to be bogged down with endless calculations and factors? This is another book that it seemed every wargamer I came across had purchased -- and I can't help wondering whether,

had the Lyalls wanted to make more of their wargaming and pushed things a bit, this might not have become a de facto standard for at least a few years. However, these were the days where you put your rules out there and if they sold enough the book got reprinted, and if they didn't, then they didn't.

Another classic book that anyone interested in the period should really consider purchasing -- a good, solid, introduction with a good, solid and well play tested set of rules right at its heart.

Adam and Charles Black, 1976
ISBN 0 7136 1646 6

