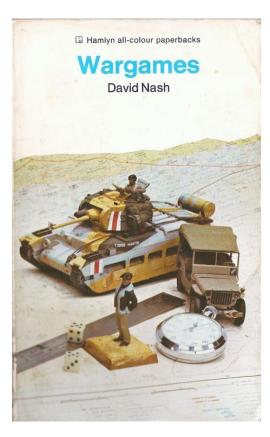
## 'Wargames' by David Nash Review by Jonathan Aird

Hamlyn books produced a series of colour-coded paperback books which were, in many ways, the "Dummy's guide" of their day. They ranged far and wide over science, gardening, history and other topics -- and included this volume under an even broader "general information" category. These books had a common format --126 pages with a colour illustration on nearly every page, and several full-page illustrations per chapter -which made for an attractive combination alongside the quite dense written information and as subject primers were an excellent source of information (they produced several interesting titles on warships, uniforms, great battles -- all very handy sources in those far-off days of limited military history publications).



The uniform plates and battle scenes are beautifully painted, and the painting of a wargame in progress is my Old School dream of how a game should look.



This introduction to wargaming took quite a novel approach -- these books were meant to be serious and to inform the reader. It's quite strange to have our hobby written about in the same way as other books in the series might discuss atomic energy or the evolution of life! There is a history of wargaming from early times -- with illustrations of Louis XIV being instructed in the principles of warfare through the use of a set of silver soldiers, and a wonderful illustration of Moltke playing *kriegspiel* with Turkish army officers. The story is then traced through military staff colleges, the development of strategies in the two world wars all the way up to modern military

wargames. Then the book turns to the "amateur game" and we're back in the world we all recognise -- little men marching across tabletops.

The principles of rules are discussed, with example data on marching rates and weapon ranges offered to illustrate how real research data is turned into game mechanisms. This is expanded on in chapters on the Napoleonic Wars, American Civil War and WWII -- with a synopsis of the armies involved, their uniforms and weapons and other equipment and how available information can be used to develop better and more realistic rules. It's a compact treasury of just the sort of information you might need when starting out in one of these periods of gaming. However, no actual playing rules are presented -- the information is put across very much in the sense of "the dedicated wargamer spends hours scouring the historical record for the information he needs before transforming this data into highly accurate and allencompassing sets of rules."

The dedicated wargamer busy at the work bench. He may have rolled up his sleeves but his collar is buttoned and his tie is still respectably in place.



The terrain can be defined as the area upon which a The latter is, however, the most popular, and it is generally

The latter is, however, the most popular, and it is generally mounted upon a table top.

Table size is sensibly governed by the distance that an arm can be extended so as to reach figures in its centre, and a table width of some six feet results. Length is not covered by any such considerations, but if the table is very long the game tends to become unbalanced. Thus, in normal circumstances, one is more or less forced to adopt a table which is about six feet by nine feet, a size which fits conveniently into most rooms.

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The ground scale of the terrain is of supreme importance since it determines the accurate rendering of weapon ranges and, when coupled with the time scale, of troop movements. In determining a ground scale, several factors must be borne in mind – figure scale is the most significant, and this is explained on page 28; suffice it to say for the moment that there must be a link between the area occupied by a formation and the chosen ground scale. The obvious scale is one in which a model soldier represents its own size, but this is usually considered to be impracticable since it calls for units of up to a thousand figures and prohibitive weapon ranges reaching from one side of a table to the other.

Since two armies are to be marshalled on the table top, and room is obviously required for manoeuvre, the scale is, of necessity, relatively small. Popular ground scales amongst players are 1 inch to 25, 33, or 50 yards, a convenient alternative to the first being 1 millimetre to 1 yard. All these scales produce units with a manageable number of figures and ample space on a normal table to manoeuvre. However, other scales should not be disregarded. On a game employing markers, the scale can be very much smaller and there are times when the actual figure scale, noted earlier, may be preferred.

Determining a ground scale does not necessarily dictate the kief of terrain features since it is only the ground area which related to this scale. For aesthetic reasons a vertical scale in proportion to the type of figures employed is usually adopted when adding buildings and other features to the game area.

This title is also unique, I think, amongst books discussing wargames in that there is no general survey of available rules, figures and models. The closest to such advice to the gamer is contained in the bibliography, which does list a number of other wargaming texts that could be consulted (Featherstone, of course, features heavily, but Arthur Taylor's wargaming rules are also mentioned). This is by no means an essential read in the modern age of relatively easy access to detailed information, and very much a book about wargaming rather than a book to send the reader off gaming -- an important distinction. It is interesting, though, to think that there was a time when a publisher would commission a book that primarily exists to satisfy a general reader's curiosity about what wargaming is.

However, with all those caveats, it is still very attractive to flick through and as already mentioned, there is a lot of useful data on march rates, weapon ranges and armour penetration ability that it is very handy to have all in one place. All in all, it's a window into a vanished time of gentlemen gamers, so also scores high on nostalgia value.

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