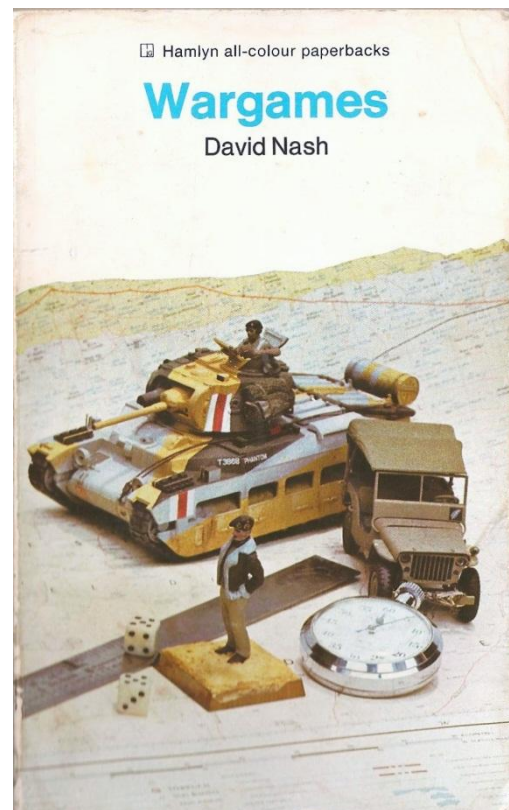


‘Wargames’

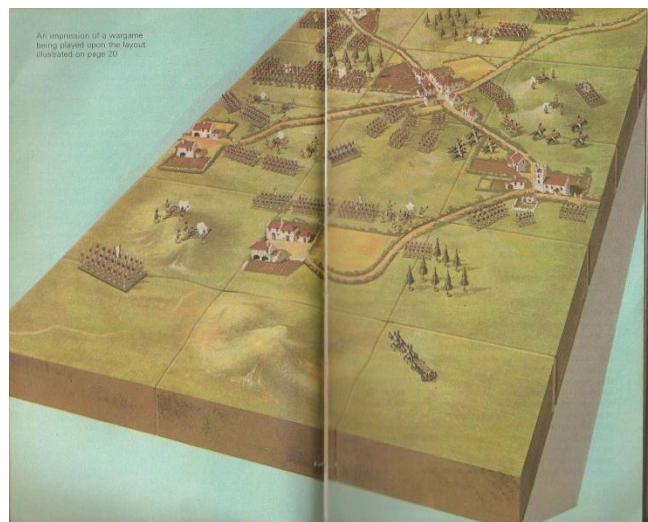
by David Nash

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.

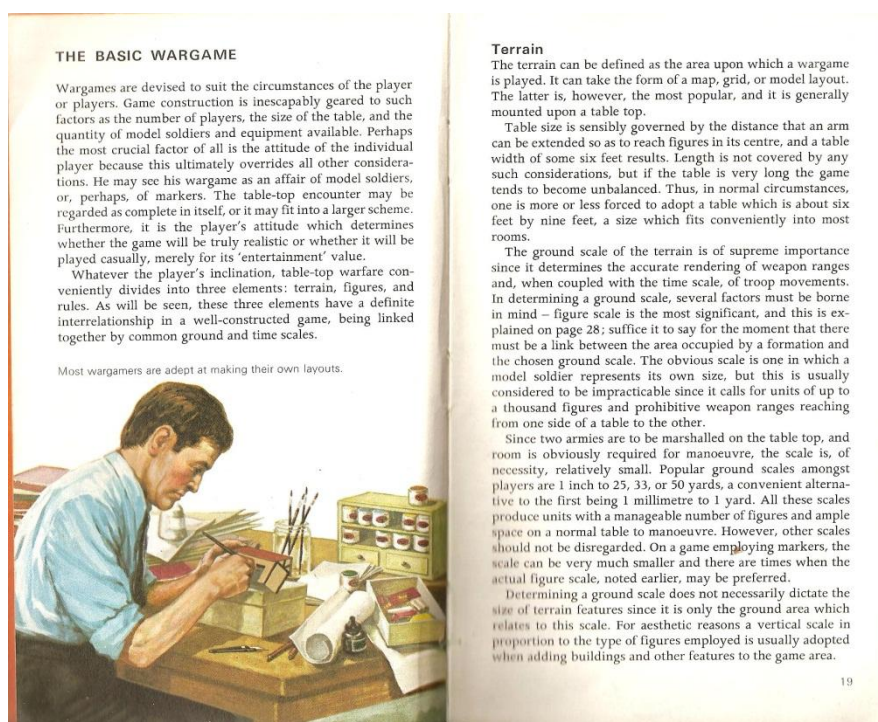


This introduction to wargaming took quite a novel approach -- these books were meant to be serious and to inform the reader. It's quite strange to have our hobby written about in the same way as other books in the series might discuss atomic energy or the evolution of life! There is a history of wargaming 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 all-encompassing 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.



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.

Hamlyn All-Colour Paperbacks 1974

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Currently available on Amazon for US\$5.