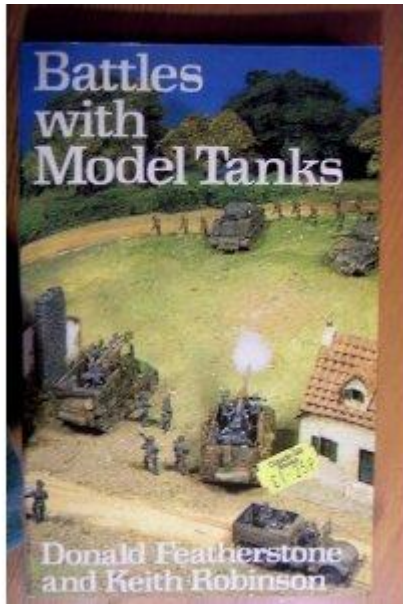


‘Battles with Model Tanks’

By Donald Featherstone and Keith Robinson
Review by Paul Le Long

What I’m reviewing here is the original book which came out in 1979 – there is a reprint available from John Curry’s History of Wargaming Project but since I don’t have that I will confine myself to the original.

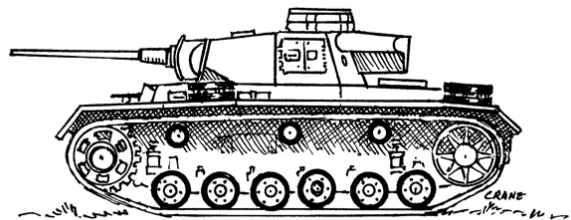


Let me start by saying that I think this is a very good book; there is a nice blend of advice, rules, theory, scenarios and even a chapter on solo tank battles. It does not, however, have data on tanks like the “Tank Battles in Miniature” series or like Bruce Quarrie’s “Armoured Wargaming” but is no poorer for that – in fact I would advise anyone interested in armoured warfare to buy all of these as they are all good books in their own right and make excellent companions on your bookshelf.

So what do we get? Section One is “Wargaming” where we have short chapters on campaigns, supply, movement, recovery

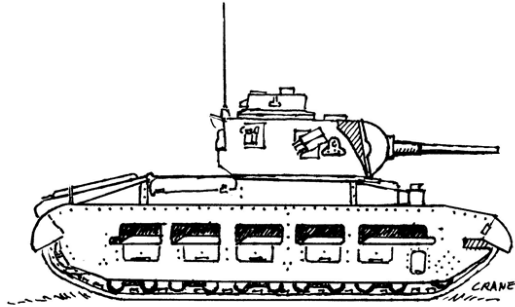
operations, solo battles (I’ll come back to this later), terrain, availability of models, scales, painting and rules. Some of these chapters are extremely short – 1-2 pages only and some (like the availability of models) are very dated now. Nevertheless, it is all nicely written, interesting and in places thought provoking. By far the longest chapter in this section is the one on rules (15 pages) which provides rules for World War I and World War II and beyond (up to the 1970s). The emphasis here is on movement, morale and armour penetration, but the rules cover infantry fighting as well, recognising that tanks do not fight in a vacuum, isolated from infantry – many rules seem to forget this. The morale angle is interesting too – tanks don’t just fight on until destroyed, unconcerned with what’s happening around them, and nor, of course, do infantry.

Section Two is scenarios, all nicely laid out with attractive maps. My favourite is the first – an armoured car action in 1914 where British armoured cars battle German infantry and cavalry while searching for a crashed plane. This is so evocative and easily adapted for soloing. Then we have WWI tanks destroying German strongpoints in 1917 (again a perfect opportunity for solo play), a WWI tank duel, armoured cars on the North West Frontier in the inter-war years, Spanish Civil War, a tank recovery operation in the Western Desert



in 1942, D-Day (another very good one), Russia 1944, Korea, Arabs and Israelis in 1967 and Bangladesh in 1971. These scenarios are very good indeed and worth buying the book for alone.

Section Three, "Armour and Other Arms," looks at how infantry tackle tanks – this is an excellent chapter – before going on to look at aircraft, minefields, communications and artillery. This is all interesting material and well worth a look.



Returning to the chapter on solo tank battles, the author talks briefly about solo wargaming generally before giving advice on adapting a couple of the scenarios in Section Two for soloing (NW Frontier & WWI destruction of strongpoints). Then we have a longish discussion of tanks in urban street fighting with tank hunters or defenders being represented by cards, some of which are blinds. The solo

mechanisms outlined here are simple and will come as no surprise to readers of this blog but it is nevertheless refreshing to see a whole chapter (albeit only 4 pages) on solo wargaming in a book of this type.

I would heartily recommend this book. The scenarios (about a third of the book) are excellent and evocative with several being obvious candidates for solo play. Section Three is also very good with interesting discussions about infantry and artillery, and so on. Section One is more of a mixed bag but the campaign elements are nevertheless thought provoking. And the rules? I suspect many readers will find them a bit too "old-school" and clunky but I would recommend them for their originality alone – especially the morale systems. You might not end up using the rules in their entirety (or at all) but I think you might find some inspiration in them.

Details:

- **Paperback:** 150 pages
- **Publisher:** Macdonald & J.; 1st edition (19 April 1979)
- **ISBN-10:** 0354012282
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0354012287

The original is available on Amazon for £3.20.

There is a John Curry reprint available for £12.56
Or US\$21.95.

