

# **‘Wargaming in History: Goths, Huns and Romans’**

## **By Simon Macdowell**

### **Review by Paul Le Long**

The Wargaming in History series came out in around 1990 and comprised five books, all on different periods and by different authors. The series editor was Stuart Asquith. Argus Books produced the series, all of which were in a very attractive A5 format and were well priced at £5.95. The back cover of all volumes in the series said that the purpose of the series was “to offer, in detail, hints, tips and advice on specific periods and wars that are wargaming favourites. All the necessary information – campaigns, battles, weapons, tactics etc. – is included and the books are illustrated with tactical diagrams, maps, contemporary illustrations and photographs.” And I have to say that the series succeeded in its aims.



In this volume, the author, Simon MacDowell, presents us with the fall of the Roman Empire, covering the years (more or less) 300-500AD. And he does it extremely well, I think. We start off with a chapter describing the characteristics of the period and sketching out the history, all nicely done in 14 pages with enough detail to give you the flavour of the times and a basic outline of the history. This is followed by another really good chapter on the armies of the period with a discussion about arms, armour,

tactics and so on, as well as some sample armies – essentially the author is examining Roman, Germanic and Asiatic armies from either the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. What becomes abundantly clear from all of this is that the period is an “anything-goes” one – Roman armies comprised mainly German soldiers; Huns and Germans served as mercenaries in armies other than their own and pretty much everyone was out to get everyone else!

This makes good reading and the author really succeeds in bringing out the flavour of the period. That, however, is where the problems start from the soloist point of view. The next chapter describes some battles (Strasbourg and Adrianople), ideas for skirmishes and a small campaign. All of which are extremely good but they do lean towards a multi-player approach in order to recreate the back-stabbing nature of the period with shifting alliances and double-dealing. The chapter on pencil and paper games for instance concentrates on a (very good) committee game of Adrianople. Nevertheless, these chapters are good and well-worth reading, even if not really aimed at the soloist.

The book is rounded off with some wargames rules (there are basing suggestions too to make your units look right for the period) which I haven't played but which look OK and certainly bring out the flavour of the late Roman age.

All in all I think this a great little book which really brings the period alive and provides solid good advice on wargaming it. If you are new to the period, then this book is a must. If you're already an expert then you won't learn anything new here but the book remains interesting nevertheless because of the way it evokes the "soul" of the period and for its sound wargaming advice. Highly recommended if the Dark Ages is your thing.

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