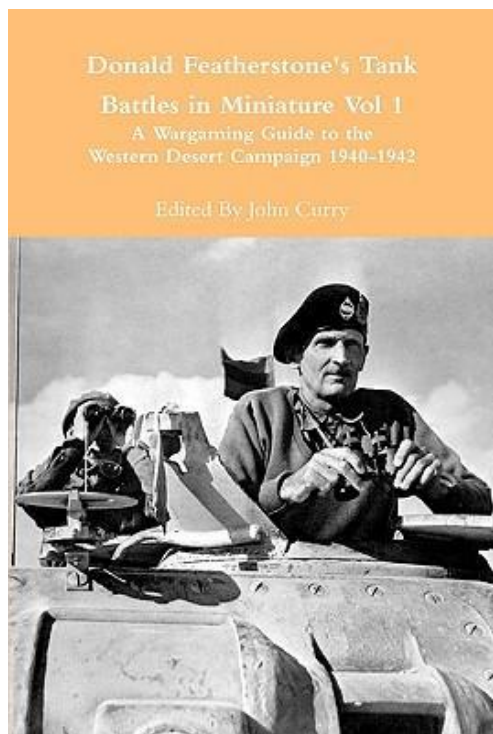


‘Tank Battles in Miniature, Vol.1 A Wargaming Guide to the Western Desert Campaign 1940-1942’

by Donald Featherstone

Review by Paul Le Long

If you are interested in the Desert War, then you should buy this book. Do it right now; you won't regret it. Quite simply, this has everything you need to wargame the conflict.

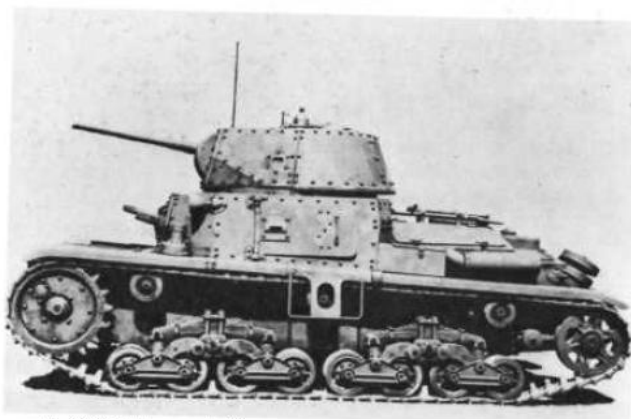


We start off with an introduction covering the major themes – the most important of which is the fact that this was a battle between tanks rather than infantry; in some respects, the desert battles resembled naval encounters rather than land warfare. Chapter 2 ‘What it was Really Like!’ is possibly the best in the book even though it runs to just six pages. This chapter gives you a real soldier's eye-view of the campaign and presents things like movement, visibility, communication and combat in a very clear and immediate fashion.

Then we have 30 pages or so on the campaigns themselves, from 1940 to 1942, broken down into sub-sections – the British destruction of the Italians 1940-41, followed by the German counterattack March-May 1941, and so on. This gives you a nice potted history in an easily accessible style which is valuable in its own right. What makes it better still though is that in each sub-section we are told what vehicles and equipment were available to both sides at that particular period – which means you

won't have to worry about whether your tabletop forces are anachronistic or not. I found this very useful.

There are chapters on terrain, tactics, visibility, communication, navigation, supply, air operations, LRDG, minefields and recovery – some are more detailed than others and some are more interesting than others – it depends upon your tastes, I expect, but all are clearly written and I found most of them interesting and enjoyable. Together, they do certainly provide a pretty comprehensive picture of the conflict, mostly from a soldier's eye-view (unsurprising since the author served in the campaign).



M 13/40 late production

There is also a long chapter on the tanks and vehicles used in the desert war – I don't know if the list is comprehensive but I don't think you will find any obvious omissions. Each vehicle is examined with a set of stats – weight, speed, armour, armament and so on and some have a bit of discussion attached. We have a similar chapter on anti-tank guns, full of data for lots of weapons and a discussion on hitting the target and the damage done. All very useful. There is



a great table on page 129 showing the chance of hitting a target at various ranges – at 1,000 yards, for example, you will only hit a tank 37 percent of the time, but your second shot will find its mark 90 percent of the time. Nerdy? You bet; but useful if you are writing your own rules for the period.

All in all, this is an excellent book – part campaign history, part data-book, but overall an invaluable guide to the desert war. If you have an interest in the period this book should be on your shelf; if you are writing rules for the desert war then I don't see how you could do without it. Highly recommended.

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