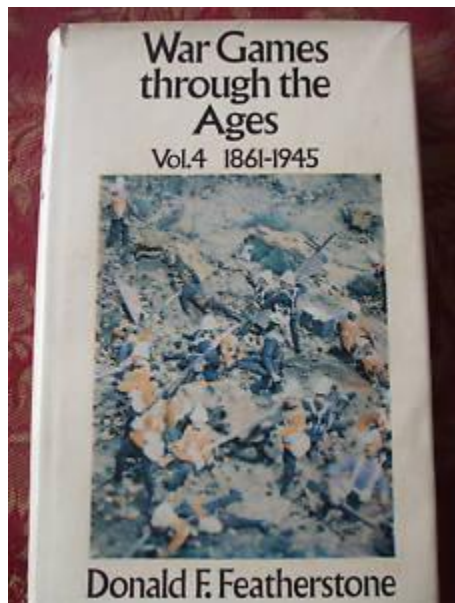


‘War Games Through the Ages Vol. 4, 1861-1945’

By Donald Featherstone

Review by Paul Le Long

Let's start off by saying that all my comments relating to volume 1 of this series (which you can find in that review on this blog) apply to this present volume. Basically, what I said there was that although the analysis was dated and old-fashioned, and a bit simplistic, these volumes are a very useful overview of their respective periods and provide a good starting point if you want a more detailed analysis.



So what do we get in this particular volume? The first 30 pages or so provide an introduction and offer advice on formulating rules for the period, classification of commanders (a much-repeated Featherstonian topic) and a very interesting discussion about the diminishing role of cavalry. The book ends with appendices covering figures, magazines and further reading, all of which are, of course, out of date. The chapter on cavalry is interesting and, as with all analysis in this series of books, represents the traditional historiographical opinion – old-fashioned opinion would be a less charitable description. That doesn't make the analysis wrong across the board, far from it, but you will need to exercise some caution when reading this, as modern scholarship will (as you would expect) have overtaken this analysis since this book was written in 1976. For

example, the author states that increased infantry firepower in the American Civil War was the factor that condemned the cavalry charge to suicidal failure. I'm not sure I agree with this since for most of the war most infantry were little better armed than were soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars.

The heart of the book is a series of chapters outlining a particular conflict: American Civil War, Wars of Italian Unification, Rise of Prussia, Franco-Prussian War, Russo-Turkish War, Rise of Japan, Spanish-American War, Boer War, World War One, Spanish Civil War, World War II.

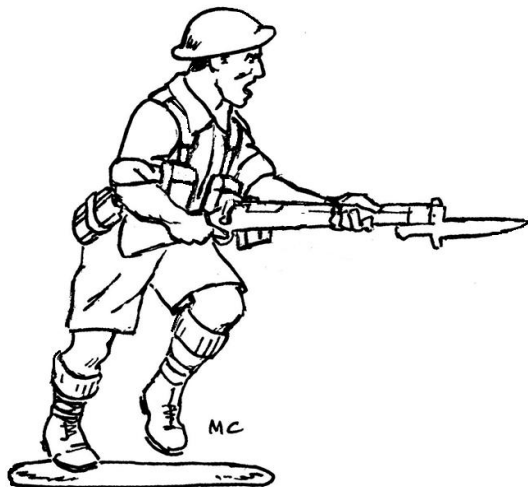
As with other volumes in the series, each chapter is headed by a rather evocative line drawing of a typical soldier from that conflict.



Then you get a discussion of the history of the conflict under review and suggestions on how to wargame it. The text is well laid out, clear and interesting. You also get a Fighting Assessment Chart for the main armies featured in each chapter – the chart covers things like morale, training, discipline, tactical system and much else and gives a score for each with a total at the bottom. For some reason, you don't get this for WWI.

In a nutshell, this book is an overview of modern warfare from 1861 to the end of WWII. The larger chapters (like WWII, for example) are divided into sub-sections focusing on particular campaigns within that conflict. If you are an expert in the period as a whole or one of the particular conflicts, then you will have read it all before, but if you are a casual reader or a beginner in this era then the book is valuable and informative. It is also very interesting to read a discussion focusing on the entire subject of modern warfare.

Recommended.



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