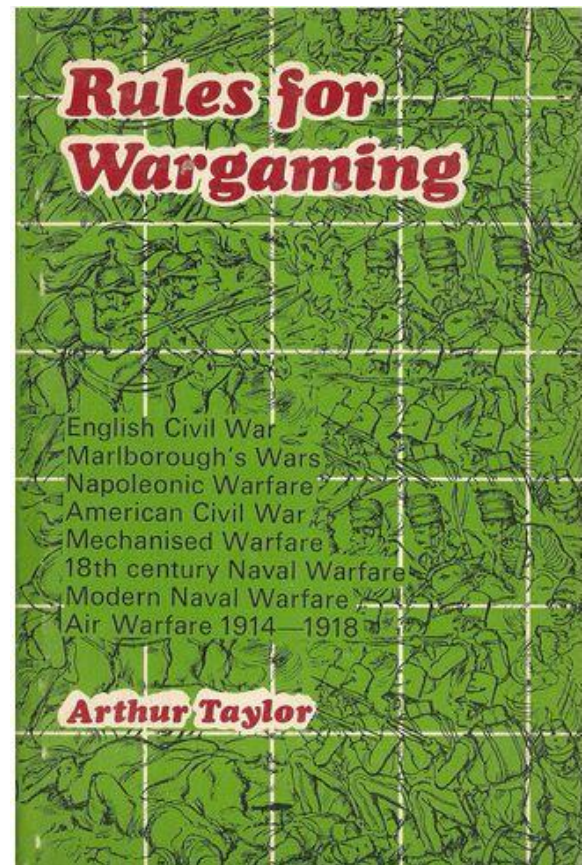


## ***Rules for Wargaming* by Arthur Taylor**

**Reviewed by Jonathan Aird**

This slim volume is a lost classic of the early wargaming boom - originally issued in 1971 as part of the "Discovery" series from the niche publisher Shire Books whose titles covered a diverse range of hobby topics -- from military subjects such as uniforms and artillery, through various titles on Country Walking to Discovering English Folk Dancing! A selection of their diminutive (4.5" by 7") paperback books would generally be available from places such as museums, as well as the more obvious book shops. Fortunately, within their catalogue they found room for several books aimed squarely at the wargamer, and none more so than this particular volume which seemed to have been purchased by every third wargamer in the UK! Being so small -- truly pocket sized -- made it very handy for carrying around for surreptitious consulting when one should be more gainfully employed (such as paying attention in class).



The book was exactly what it said it was -- it is assumed that the reader is already a wargamer and does not need the hobby explained, and so eight sets of rules are presented covering the English Civil War, Marlborough's Wars, Napoleonic Warfare, American Civil War, Mechanised Warfare, Eighteenth Century Naval Warfare, Modern Naval Warfare, and Air Warfare 1914-1918. Mostly Anglo-centric topics, and mostly serving the periods for which a reasonable number of figures and models existed. Arthur Taylor's philosophy for wargame rules is succinctly given in the introduction -- "The chess player has a few basic rules, which become second nature. He is free to concentrate the whole of his attention on the events of the board ... the chess-player feels the flow of the game, the tempo, and is aware at all times that he is imposing his will on his opponent or vice versa. Wargaming should be like that!" The rules that follow implement this philosophy. There are a set of core rules covering movement and combat ("a few basic rules, which become second nature") to which "period specific" modifications are made -- quite an innovation for the time. The key elements of the rules are deterministic in nature and eschew random elements -- which means that movement, morale and combat results are predictable, leaving the wargamer free to concentrate on tactics ("imposing his will") whilst being able to accurately predict outcomes. Morale effects are

mostly dependent on casualties taken – and, when challenged, certain reactions will occur. A low-morale unit that has taken a fair number of casualties that is charged by double their number will always retreat, for example.



The general rules for land warfare cover not only movement and combat but map movement and weather -- not as options but as standard. This assumption that games will be linked is carried forward into the morale rules, which reflect how a unit has performed in a series of battles, thereby giving a system of tracking morale through a campaign of many encounters. It's wonderfully neat and straight forward. Each of the period-specific rule tweaks is introduced with a page of text describing the tactics of the era. Some of these special rules reflect the author's particular concerns -- transmission of orders in mechanised warfare, for example, becomes highly dependent on the maintenance of radio contact, which is simulated through a random method using playing cards. Also in mechanised warfare, the value of anti-tank fire is reliant on the firer getting the range right -- by announcing an estimate before shooting. This led at least this wargamer into regular "practice sessions" with tanks and guns scattered around the table whilst increasingly accurate estimates were made -- quite a handy skill!

The non-land rules also emphasize certain features -- the Eighteenth Century Naval Warfare rules are very much about sailing and sending signals, whilst the modern naval and aerial rules both use a system of off-table manoeuvring by counters on a gridded map, with only those who manage to spot each other (in the case of ships) or obtain the same altitude (in the case of aeroplanes) actually transferring to the table top. This combination of grand tactical (not quite strategic!) as well as engagement-level features in the same rules is elegantly handled.

I don't think the influence of these rules can be overestimated -- they offered a leap in the level of sophistication over, say, the Featherstone-style rules prevalent at the time and they must surely have influenced many later writers. Sadly, Shire Books have no current interest in wargaming -- and this disinterest predates by some years their becoming part of the Osprey publishing empire. This book is therefore out of print, so if you find a copy at a reasonable price then snap it up!

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