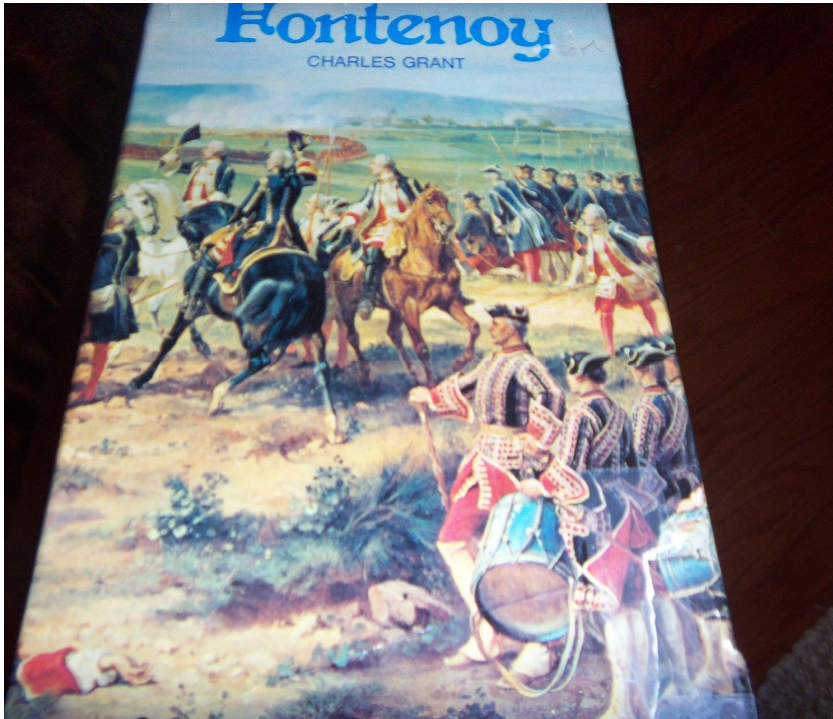


'The Battle of Fontenoy'

By Charles Grant

Review by Paul Le Long

This is part of a series entitled 'Background Books for Wargamers and Modellers'. There's nothing for modellers in this volume, but for wargamers, I think this is a good book. The first half of the book is about the battle itself, tactics, background, history and context. The second half is about how to wargame the battle, how it was refought on the author's table and how to run a campaign set in the mid-18th century.



I've checked and I can't find an Osprey Campaign volume for this battle – otherwise I would advise interested readers to take a look at both. Nevertheless, this does the job nicely. Fontenoy (1745) is not a battle with which I was familiar, so I found the book interesting. The strategic background and campaign are all well explained in a brief but lively style. Also explained are weapons and tactics

for the period. Again, this is quite light and I would encourage anyone really interested in linear warfare to read Brent Nosworthy's excellent 'Anatomy of Victory' for a thorough description of how battles were actually fought in the 18th century. Once again though, this book provides enough information to get you going.

The background to the battle, dispositions and consideration of commanders is interesting – the (victorious) French were led by the excellent Maurice de Saxe, who set up in a very strong defensive position. The British, by contrast, were led by the hapless Duke of Cumberland who the author clearly despises! It is clear that Cumberland had lost the battle as soon as he decided to attack so strong a position.

The wargame section of the book is weaker than the historical section but is nevertheless entertaining enough. There is no discussion of rules; readers are assumed to be familiar with the author's rules published in other books. We do, however, get advice on terrain, dice, umpires and so on, plus a chapter right at the end on painting. There is also a

chapter on campaign games set in the 18th century generally; this doesn't fit terribly well with the rest of the book ó being generic, while the bulk of material elsewhere is Fontenoy specific ó but it is nevertheless worth a look for some of its fairly novel ideas. All of this is pretty old-school material but that's what this author is famous for.

Then we have a chapter on the battle as refought by the author and another chapter analysing the game. These are interesting in their own right but more so because the refight proved that the British were doomed to failure from the start ó the only sensible option for them being not to fight in the first place.

All in all, a good book which is entertaining and informative. Since Osprey seem not to have produced a Campaign book for Fontenoy, this book fills the gap nicely. If you want detailed information then you will have to look elsewhere but this book will get you started well enough. Recommended.

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