

## Salute 2018 – A change is as good as a rest ...

By Jonathan Aird

This was a bit of a different Salute for me ó arriving about 11AM well after the queue had already dispersed and so I just walked straight into the exhibition hall. One thing that was consistent with a lot of previous Salutes was that the weather was glorious, probably the warmest day so far this year. Oh well ó at least I hadn't needed to bring a coat. Again this year, the entry was by pre-paid ticket ó and the Warlords really do want on-line pre-sales as these tickets were priced at £10 whilst the cash purchases on the door were offered at £20. Ouch!

So, it was straight into the hall and almost immediately straight to the first ówowö of the show ó a superb game presented by A Few Brits & The Hobby, representing Operation Taifun ó The battle for Leros 1943. This was the first glimpse of what would be a recurring theme at Salute this year ó really big display games with ships in them, and big ships at that.



And if things don't get much better than an E-boat with a floatplane, well it has to be said that there's something about a Junkers 52 floatplane that is rather special! This was a truly stunning layout ó and I felt that there were several such ówowö games this year which was great to see.



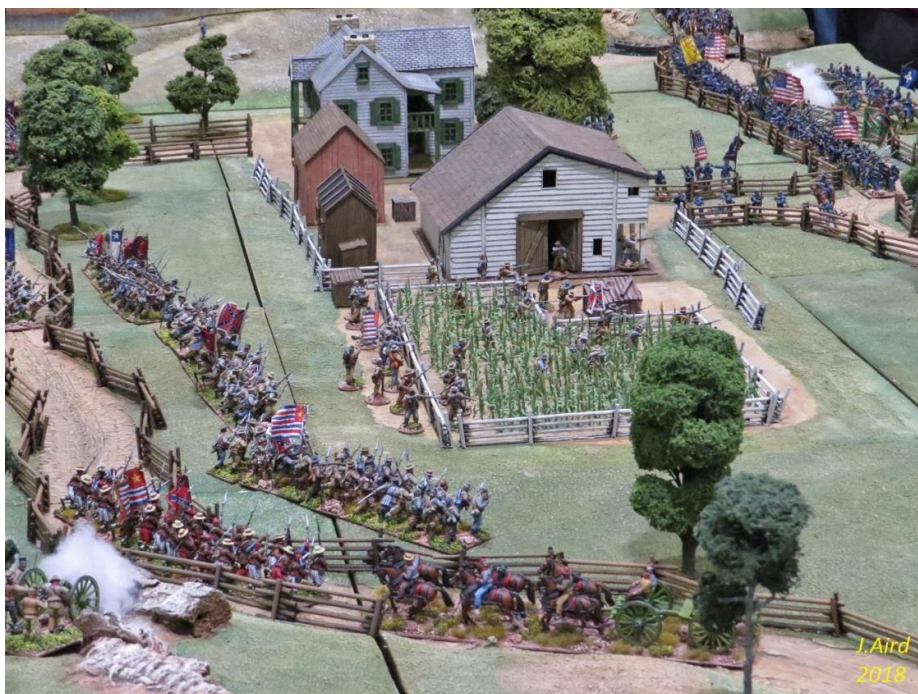
A stunning layout of but one that was perhaps overshadowed just a little by that presented by Ian Smith and friends which had as a centre piece a rather impressive ACW artillery fort. And yes, at the top of the photograph there is, just visible, an ironclad which was bombarding the fort. And if I liked the fort, well, the ironclad was just perfect!



And here it is! And after that there's a picture of just a section of the landward side of the battle which took up a lot of space and was full of beautiful terrain and superb miniatures.



This was my game of the show ó there was nothing to not like about it, and very much to like about it!



There is simply no denying that Salute is not just big ó it is huge. Hundreds of traders. Hundreds of games ó albeit many of them are run by the same traders as part of the õshop front.ö To explain to someone who has never been to Salute at the Excel centre, I think I can offer nothing better than this example: I had undertaken at least a couple of circuits of the traders and the games, and I had been at Salute for about 90 minutes. It was only then that I noticed that one of the re-enactor groups had brought a WWI tank with them. It may have been scaled in length, but height-wise it looked to be about right and it was hardly parked out



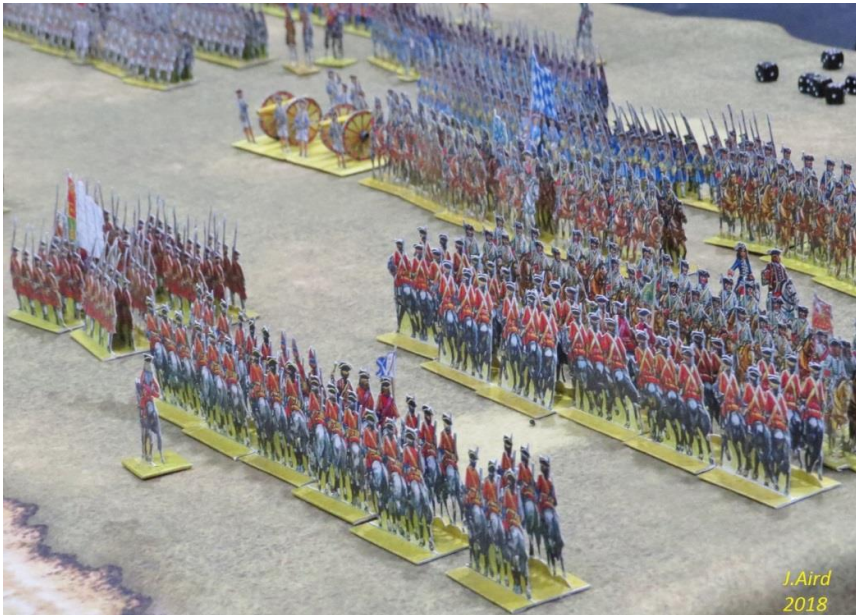
of the way! How could I possibly have missed it earlier? Well, there are just so many other things to look at!



It was by now well past time to be rolling some dice, and I had a go at Tiger Tiger Burning Bright ó a tank hunting game put on by The Crawley Wargames Club. This was a very similar game to one Iød tried at a much smaller show a couple of years back ó with tanks whizzing around the table, looking to set up shots. I do find it odd when the barrels of guns are touching enemy turrets and the shells still miss, but it was quite fun, fast-paced and also looked good.

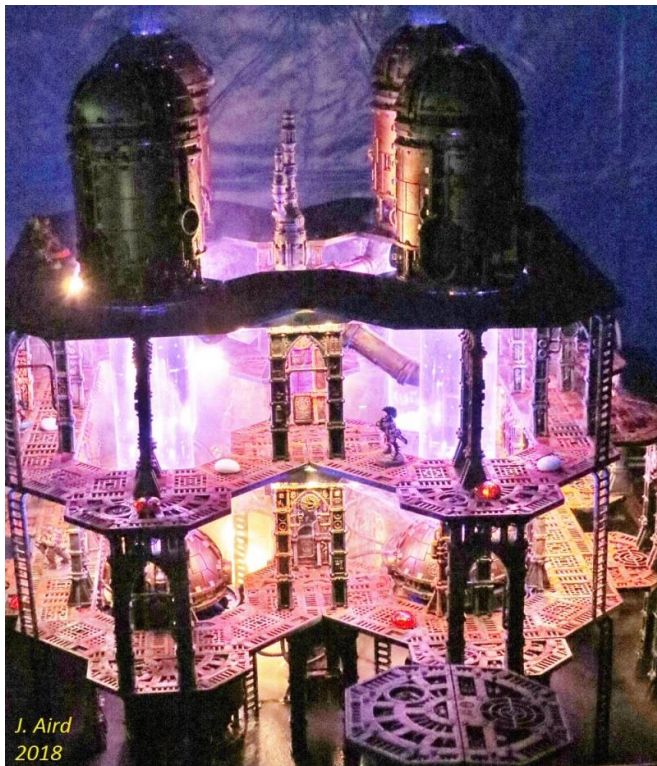


I'm always attracted to games that are a little unusual, so it was very nice to see the display of paper flats put on by Andy Callen. This style of figures has a charm all its own, and in paper has the added attraction of being pre-coloured and easy to assemble so a regiment can be put together in an evening by the practiced hand so or so it was claimed. These figures come from the introductory wargame books published by Helion covering topics as diverse as Dark Ages, ACW and Armada fleet battles.



A very innovative display was the new Star Wars miniatures game which recreated a couple of night-time encounters. These games were put on in a darkened booth so making the games quite hard to see but also making them very atmospheric. A setup in a factory/research plant was particularly good, with bubbling liquids and ever-changing coloured lights





Another game that caught my eye was an impressive Geo-hex setup using 10mm figures to recreate The Battle of Varna 1444. Not only was the overall sweep of the table very impressive, but the figures themselves were beautifully painted. The hex terrain really works well with these smaller figures.





The theme of Salute 2018 was the Armistice of 1918 & this was represented through the entry figure given to the first 5000 people through the door. This was a nice 28mm vignette of a German, a French and a British soldier meeting after the conclusion of hostilities. As seems to be the case quite often though, the theme hadn't really been widely picked up by those running the games & there were as many, if not more, gang versus gang games in various urban settings as WWI-themed games in any context. It was a slight surprise to see not one but two games based on the Zeebrugge raid of 1918; the Naval Wargame Society had a nice looking setup for the whole naval side of the attack whilst the Maidstone Wargames Society concentrated on the combat around HMS Vindictive & which in 28mm had, unsurprisingly, a huge presence on the table.



This was the biggest ship of the day I think, although some sailing vessels came quite close & there were several pirate themed games also on display, this one by the Leicester Phat Cats was the most impressive in terms of sailing vessels!





Another WW I game that stood out was Amiens 1918 by Scarab Pals ó this had a wonderful selection of tanks and armoured cars, alongside hundreds of excellent figures and several very nice artillery pieces. Very nice indeed.



Also fitting into a broader WWI theme was The Battles for Lake Tanganyika run by the Peterborough Wargames Society. This used a long table, mostly representing the lake with a little land at either end to allow the club to run three participation games on the same board. What an excellent idea. There was a land-based skirmish, an encounter between gunboats out on the lake, and also The African Queen weaving her way through swamps ó and it was this last I had a go at. Suffice to say that the random twists and turns of the channel through the



swamp did not deter Bogart and Hepburn, and we made it through past natives, wildlife and floating mines with time to spare (it was run against a clock of 20 actions maximum) and without recourse to the gin bottle. All the games were at the simpler end of display standard but they were fun games and the kind of thing that the non-master modeller can aspire to. I enjoyed it. I went off thinking that there must be other uses for a randomly selected hex terrain path.



Another simple looking game that proved popular (unfortunately I didn't get a chance to play it) was By Crom!, a Conan skirmish by Skirmish Wargames. The figures were all low-budget finds and the terrain -- well, yes it *is* Lego bricks! Simple, looked fun and was popular all day.



Also popular all day was this lovely little demonstration of ArcWorlde. The figures were what was supplied in their kickstarter campaign for the game starter set, but the way of displaying these in this small setup was inspiring ó everything about the game (which emphasizes missions over combat) was appealing to look at.



Ah yes, Kickstarter. Now that was a strange thing going around the show. There were quite a number of Traders who were actually there primarily ó or solely ó to promote their current or upcoming Kickstarter campaigns. This seemed to be particularly true for the Laser-cut MDF terrain cohort, but there were also a number of games that were there to look at but then to be purchased under the Kickstarter after the show. Is this the way of the future, or just a blip? I'm not sure. It's certainly a way to sell large price tag and bulky items without loading the purchaser down.



It's quite amazing, by the way, what can be now got as Laser-cut MDF models of this Battletech setup was impressive and these two weren't even the biggest Battle Walkers on the table. It looked great and to a Science Fiction fan it is very tempting.



In recent years, one wargame club whose table I've always made a bee-line for is Dalauppror and they didn't disappoint this year with a huge table for the Russian versus Swedes battle of Baggenstaket 1719. No table with this many galleys on could be anything less than a treat for the eyes!





A few other games that were good to look at were The Battle of Soggy Bottom ó a fictional BCW encounter by Simon Miller and Friends, Wargame Illustrated's game Druid, complete with stone circle and imposing Wicker Man, Newbury & Readings Battle of Ipsus and a huge Samurai battle by Loughton Strike Force.









Now anyone who has read one of these show reports before (many thanks if that's you ó I'd be wasting my time here if nobody is reading!) may be wondering when I'm going to talk about the purchases. It's the burning question ó *what goodies did I take home with me from Salute 2018?* The strange thing is ó and I was as shocked as anyone ó that I left the show after six hours of wandering around gazing at beautiful games and wonderful offerings from the traders with absolutely nothing. I have been to many Salutes ó I'm not sure quite how many but it must be thirty-ish at least ó and I have never left with absolutely nothing new before! What could explain this? A number of things ó there is not a single trader carrying 20mm soft plastic figures anymore. There are very few old board wargames on offer and these aren't priced to sell! Many of the demonstration games by traders were for skirmish rule sets ó often fantasy or science fiction ó and these only really become attractive if one also invests heavily in the accompanying miniatures. At one point, I went through the offerings from several favourite resin terrain sellers and realised everything I wanted from them I already had ó and most of it hadn't been painted yet. I have, it would seem, got enough stuff! That shouldn't have been a surprise to me really, so one resolution I came away with was to make an inroad into my collected pile and get more of it ready for the table. We'll see how that goes. One item that I was quite taken with was an MDF Venice from TTCombat ( <https://ttcombat.com> ). There was a painted display version but in the background can be seen several of the £200 for £100 (including postage!) city deals on offer, one of which was a variant of this. I really was tempted ó maybe if I make that inroad into the existing pile I could justify it to myself next year.





The leaving with no goodies aside ó and it really was an odd feeling ó I thought this was a very good Salute. There seemed to be a couple more really impressive games than in recent years, and that's nice to see. There were more participation games from Traders ó and these seemed to be harder to get a go-on than one might imagine, but surely reflects the level of interest. A lot of them are skirmish games ó and I suppose that only needing to finish a few dozen figures, or less, has an obvious attraction. So, skirmish seems to be winning at the moment. MDF terrain has won, all other formats seem to be in retreat. Kickstarter is now a big part of the show. And with hard plastic figures having made big inroads into the metal figure market it looks like the 3D printing of figures is going to have a similarly revolutionary effect. As someone once said ó the times they are a changing. Will I be there next year? Barring disasters it's a yes.