

WWI Austria-Hungary 20mm heavy weapons figures

Review by Rob Morgan

If there's a range of 20mm polystyrene figures which I'd love to have seen on the market 40 years ago, it's Hat! So many excellent quality sets, some a little pricey, as in this case, but all interesting and often unusual figures, many portraying armies longed for and unattainable back in the '70s and '80s. This is one such set. Now, I bought it, not because I'm an avid World War I Italian Front wargamer, nor because I'm greatly concerned with Austria's bumbling war across the steppes, at least until 1918. I actually wanted to add some different firepower to one of my post-WWI insurgent armies, sometimes Hungarian, or Ukrainian, Czech, whatever. So I picked up this Hat WWI Austrian Infantry Heavy Weapons Set, No. 8081 in the range and in dark grey decent quality polystyrene.

The pack is substantial, priced around the eight pounds mark; I've seen it more expensive in some outlets. There are four sprues, identical, each containing a tripod-mounted HMG, which seems remarkably similar to the .30-caliber Browning, and a 37mm trench gun, which was used in similar design by the Japanese, Poles and Czechs and sundry Red forces in the post-war period. The Japanese were using the design into World War II, and the US Marines had them as a training weapon at the time of Pearl Harbor. There's a big handle at the breech end of the gun, that needs to be trimmed away, and you can add a thin card shield if desired.

There's a two-dog cart, with uses in many theatres of war from Belgium to Poland and beyond, with a dog handler. The troops provided are good crew figures: field telephone operator, officers, spotters and so on, but the last weapon of all deserves some comment.

This is a 20cm, M16 *Luftminenwerfer*, a pneumatic mortar, which took some researching! The Austro-Hungarians used a number of these, and four in a pack gives some unusual firepower. The French also favoured pneumatic weapons in their trenches and the designs were similar though the guns, or mortars, ranged in caliber from 50mm through 60mm, and on to 8cm, 12cm and up to 20cm. I discovered four French and five Austrian versions in all. All can be made from this single three-piece example.

For any typical set-up or game, the contents of two sprues would be adequate. Four is too many, but of course you can swop them with other gamers!