

***One-Hour Skirmish Wargames* by John Lambshead**

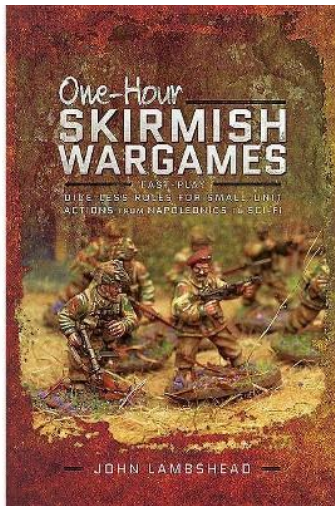
Pen & Sword Books Ltd, Yorkshire-Philadelphia, 2018.

<https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/One-hour-Skirmish-Wargames-Paperback/p/15346>

12.99 pounds (about \$15). Pages: 101/Illustrations: 30/ISBN: 9781526700049

Review By Jim Rohrer

This book (Lambshead, 2018) is a follow-up to Neil Thomas' *One-Hour Wargames* (Thomas, 2014), fondly known as OHG by many. The rules were simple, the battlefield was small, and the game could be played quickly. Lambshead put it aptly when he wrote that OHW "very much captured the mood of our times." [Note: I have a kindle copy of the book I am reviewing, and page numbers are not shown.]



At the outset, Lambshead defines a skirmish as "a brief, unplanned encounter between small units of troops, ships or aircraft – especially by advanced or outlying detachments of larger forces." Furthermore, a skirmish wargame usually uses one model as one soldier or vehicle rather than a multi-solder unit. Contrast this with the Thomas system, in which a unit can represent as few or as many soldiers as the player desires, with the understanding that the unit can withstand exactly 15 hits (Thomas, 2014; p.233 in the kindle edition).

This seems to be to be the essence of the difference between OHW and OHSW. By treating one figure as one person, personal qualities become more relevant. Lambshead accordingly builds unique traits into the game system. The net result is reminiscent of roleplaying games (RPGs). In fact, I suspect that people who began gaming with RPGs might find OHSW to be a useful transition to more traditional wargaming. Featherstone (in Curry's edited book on solo wargaming) opined that one figure usually might represent ten soldiers in a typical wargame (1973).

Lambshead wanted his game to move at the pace of a Hollywood movie. That requires elimination of complicated rules and look-up tables. Believing that random elements should loom large in a skirmish game, he concluded that the six points on a standard dice cube were not sufficient. Using multiple dice results in a normal distribution of outcomes and thus predictability increases and randomness declines. He finally settled on using a standard deck of playing cards rather than dice. His system for doing this was new to me and seems workable for anyone who is familiar with suits and face cards.

The rules chapters are organized in similar fashion to OHW with appropriate modifications for skirmish situations and the use of playing cards. No event cards are used. Special capabilities of individual models include traits such as the following: dead shot, bruiser, inspiring, lucky, fast, tough, scout. Motivation and leadership are taken into account. The reader can see why I said earlier that this has the flavor of an RPG.

The book includes a number of skirmish scenarios, one for each era (musket, rifle, wars within peace, WWII, the Cold War, and pulp action – which includes scifi). Most of these are based on historical situations. The book concludes with points system and additional rules.

Overall, I felt the book was worth the purchase price, even though I am not currently persuaded to use the rules system. Getting my head around the Thomas idea of “one unit=15 hits” was not easy for me when I first began reading rule sets. However, having made the transition, I am not interested in going back. On the other hand, the scenarios offered in OHSW are interesting and I found them to be informative about the relevant historical situations. My own scenarios will no doubt be subconsciously influence by what I read in this book.

References

- Curry, J. (editor). (1973). *Donald Featherstone's Solo Wargaming*. London: Kayle and Ward.
- Lambshead, J. (2018). *One-Hour Skirmish Wargames*. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.
- Thomas, N. (2014). *One Hour Wargames*. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd.