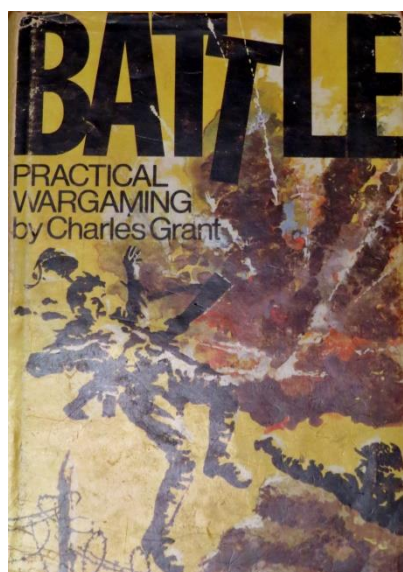


BATTLE: Practical Wargaming

By Charles Grant

Review by Jonathan Aird

Charles Grant was a prolific author of wargaming books and in *Battle* and, after they merged, in *Military Modelling* wrote the monthly On Matters Military column, which frequently covered wargaming, as well as wider topics. To many, he is probably best recalled as an exponent of Ancient wargaming and particularly – through his book “Charge!” – of the regimented warfare of the 18th Century. However, like most of the early wargamers, there were actually very few periods that he didn’t play (I recall that in one *Battle* magazine column he wrote a very fond recollection of different Fantasy Wargames he’d seen, played in and seemingly enjoyed!). So it shouldn’t be any great surprise that amongst everything else



he was also a World War II gamer, and it is this which is the subject of “BATTLE: Practical Wargaming.” It is a book with an interesting history as it put into a single volume of 26 chapters most of a series of articles written for *Mecanno* magazine and which had provided a very slow primer for the hobby – *Meccano* magazine was published monthly!

The book opens with a dramatic infantry deployment – with a Panzer IV emerging to shell them as the officer in charge wonders how to best attack this with his attached bazooka section. It ends with the question – what would you do? – and the invitation to try your ideas out through wargaming! The rules in the magazine articles were presented in a piecemeal fashion, and the book version sticks to the format presumably to minimise any additional work for preparing them for the book format. The individual chapters are

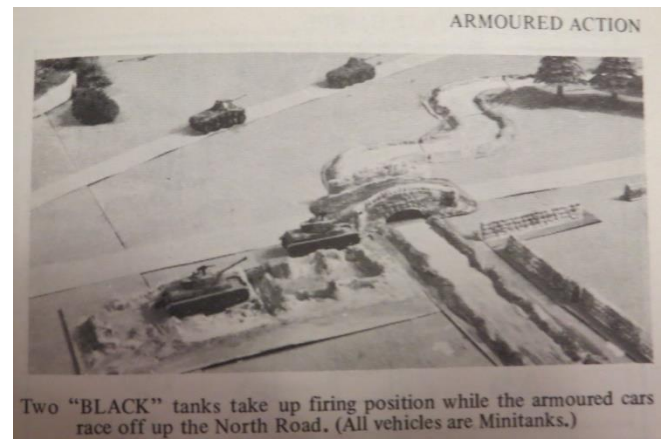
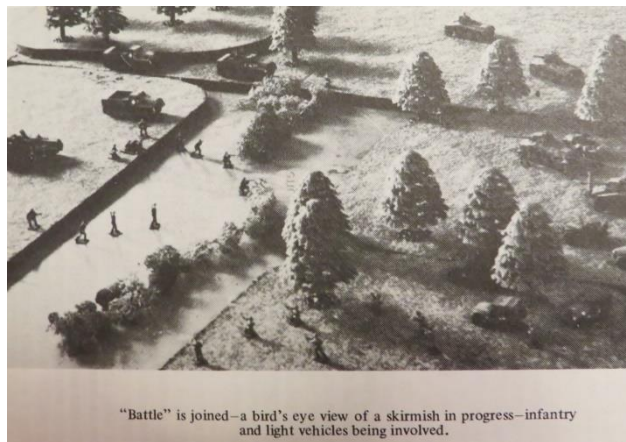
naturally quite brief as they tackle the intricacies of movement, weapon firings, a method for representing tanks and anti-tank fire and the use of artillery and mortars. Pitching at a market of boys mostly in the 8-14 age range, Charles Grant adopted an avuncular tone – the chapters often feel like a conversation between the author and the reader, with the latter making tacit agreement with all the suggested approaches of the former. It makes for an engaging and easy read, which was surely the point.

The rules make use of a plethora of gadgets and templates for calculating effects from automatic weapons (which can “spray” an area), the burst area of hand grenades and mortar bombs and a rather nice anti-armour protractor. This is used to calculate the angle of impact of an anti-tank shell against the side of a tank to come up with modifiers for the Armour Piercing calculation. And if this all sounds quite “old school” it is also very modern – Games Workshop, for example, have long used weapon effect templates in their games!

Interspersed with the chapters on the rules are examples of play, including a battle report on the “Action at Twin Farms” in which two mechanised infantry forces meet and engage each other. It’s quite a thrilling read!

The book is chock full of photographs of Airfix figures – which are the infamous first German and British figures, quite terrible as sculpts but wonderful in the variety of support

weapons included – and mostly Roco Minitanks, all alongside scratch-built terrain, as well as the latest in vac-formed plastic scenery items.



"BATTLE: Practical Wargaming" has one big thing going for it – the rules are simple but well thought out and they play easily and satisfactorily. And really that is all one can ask for from a wargaming book and ruleset. The original edition from 1970 can be found quite cheaply – my copy was £2.50 second-hand in a bookshop only a few years ago, but on eBay and Amazon it seems that around £20 (\$27) is the usual price. There was an expanded edition in 2012 which is credited to Charles Grant & Charlie Grant (the main author's grandson), but this is also Out Of Print and is listed at silly money on Amazon - £50 for a used copy, £200 for a new one. Perhaps not.

BATTLE: Practical Wargaming
Charles Grant
MAP 1970