Military Muddling

Volume 10 Issue 1 **Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group's Newsletter** **December 1998**

Editorial

This Mil Mud has been half-edited for a several weeks and I keep missing my personal deadlines. I find it hard to explain, well, I know why but I find the reasons a bit pathetic, especially when seen in print. Maybe I should take the example of an previously unknown politician and say it was a brain-storm (I wonder if he will rise from the ashes like the awful Mr Mellor did?) or maybe I should just come clean and admit it, I have been seen in the company of a small furry animal over endowed with cuteness. But enough of this... you'll just have to speculate....

I am looking forward to the response to Jim's rousing cry for change in the affairs of CLWG. I have my suggestions but I will let <u>you</u> have your say first, yes you!! Write to me damn you. I was trying to work out how to make it easier to respond to pieces in Mil Mud. Using me as an example: I often find a bit of paper and write some notes down - and then loose it or forget it or some such - maybe I thought I could send every e-mail empowered member (all of us now, I think) a short summary of the articles, to which they could lift finger to keyboard and respond back to me... Then I thought, I'd get one liners, half-uttered thoughts that were not maturely reflected, cc'd mail to all and sundry etc. Maybe I should aim for an extra page (left blank intentionally) for you to write your notes to type up later. But then again, I thought, heck, I've been editor for over a year now I know what to expect.

Surprise me!

Contributions for Military Muddling

Please send your contributions electronically if at all possible. Text files are best. I will attempt to re-type hard-copy if necessary.

If you have any images, pictures or maps please send them as hard copy if you can.

E-Mail contributions are welcome:

nick_luft@compuserve.com

Normal Mail:

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Deadline for next issue

5th December 1998

Club Business

Events Organiser's Bit

Jim (Drunk With Power) Wallman

Having wrestled the job from Dave Nilsson in a blood-soaked power struggle at this year's business meeting, I now have the Ultimate Power to organise Events.

As you may read in the minutes of the business meeting, I made a number of points about the state of events at CLWG. We have something of a malaise, I feel, with the weekend events. I'm not sure I have a complete handle on why, and I think it is important that the membership speaks - preferably through MilMud - as to what it is that puts you off from coming to a weekend event.

In the meantime, I would like to think about how we can reinvent the weekend event to make it more sexy and exciting. Well, maybe not literally sexy, but you know what I mean.

Let us look at it from the game design point of view - what is the objective of a weekend event. I can only speak of my own feelings at present, about what makes me want to take out a valuable free weekend and spend it with CLWG. I can express quite selfishly it in terms of what I want (not in any particular order):

1. I want to have an amusing sociable time with friends (I guess that's what being in any club amounts to).
2. I want to discuss, and possibly even play games of the sort that I can't play anywhere else, or at any other time (In other words, maybe something more than just a longer ordinary club meeting).

In addition, there would have to be a strong feeling of 'miss it, miss out' - and event that is so much fun, or so stimulating, that I would clear my diary a year in advance to ensure I got the weekend free to do it.

At present our games weekend, and annual conference just don't cut it - and I suspect from the attendance at this year's conference, most of you must feel the same way.

Right - so that's the problem - what are the solutions. No idea. Well maybe I have a few ideas, but at the moment I feel that we need to brainstorm a bit right now - step back from what has become a tired formula and try setting up an entirely new feel and format. What things might we do? Here is a brainstorming list of possible routes we might try -

* Do away with weekend events and concentrate on making regular meetings that much more exciting.
* Shorten the weekend to a very full day event.
* Invite illustrious speakers to give an address (this might cost money).
* Include a film, or something.
* Include a social event like an organised meal.
* Take the conference to a residential venue for the weekend.
* Take the conference to a residential venue abroad for a weekend.
* Include a battlefield tour or visit to a famous historical landmark in the weekend.
* Include a large game or megagame in the weekend.
* Make the weekend include a wider invitation to other gamers, or even hold it jointly with another club or group.
* Improve the venue.
* Changing the timing to a different time of year.

Now like most brainstorming lists, this is not exhaustive, neither are all the ideas necessarily practical, or what I would plan to do. The aim is to get you (yes you) thinking around the problem. I need feedback and ideas before I even start thinking of the sort of thing to plan. So....

RESPOND YOU BASTARDS!

(and do it to Nick at MilMud, not direct to me by email please).

CLWG

MINUTES OF ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING HELD AT EARDLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL, SATURDAY 3rd OCTOBER 1998

Members present:
Dave Boundy, Brian Cameron, Jon Casey, James Kemp, Nick Luft, Dave Nilsson, Mukul Patel, Jonathan Pickles, Andy Reeve, Jim Wallman.

The meeting opened at 17.53.

Brian Cameron chaired the meeting in the absence of the Admin Officer (John Rutherford).

ADMIN OFFICER's REPORT

Brian reported that the main problem continued to be venues. Riggindale church hall was still available for Saturday meetings at a cost of £50 and there was no problem getting bookings, but the hall might soon become unavailble as work was needed on the building. The upstairs room in the Bedford Park presented problems in getting firm bookings as the manager there changed so frequently; the last meeting there had cost £50 for an official booking, compared to the £15 paid for earlier unofficial bookings, and this seemed expensive for a small room.

John Rutherford was exploring other possible venues in the Streatham area. Jim was exploring the possibility of using a venue in central London. All members were asked to let the officers know of any possible suitable venues of which they might be aware.

ACTION: All members

EDITOR'S REPORT

Nick Luft reported that he had produced 9 issues compared with his target of 11. These comprised 168 pages, and issues had varied in size from 10 to 34 pages. After editorials, admin notices, features and reviews were excluded, only 60% of the material (16% letters and 44% reports) was generated by the club's core activities. There had been a noticeable fall off in the volume of reports since March. The total cost of producing Milmud had been £81.18. 6 copies were now being sent by e-mail and 31 by post.

Mukul Patel offered to write a piece on what he wanted to see in Milmud.

ACTION: Mukul (*see letters column*)

GAMES AND EVENTS ORGANISERS' REPORTS

Dave Nilsson reported that organising events continued to be difficult because of the lack of timely responses and offers of games from members.

Organising games was less of a hassle; there was a small problem wiith last minute drop outs but generally this side ran fairly smoothly.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Brian presented the year's accounts (attached), which showed a surplus of £617.71, mainly due to the Editor's success in holding down costs of producing Milmud. He proposed that in view of this surplus there should be no increase in fees for next year. He announced that he would not be standing for re-election.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Admin Officer - John Rutherford (proposed by Jim Wallman, seconded by James Kemp) was re-elected unopposed.

Editor - Nick Luft (proposed by Jon Casey, seconded by Dave Nilsson) was re-elected unopposed.

Treasurer - In the first contested election in the Club's history, Dave Boundy (nominated by Brian Cameron, seconded by Jon Casey) defeated Mukul Patel (proposed by

Andrew Reeve, seconded by Dave Boundy) by 7 votes to 3 and was declared elected.

Games Organiser - Dave Nilsson (proposed by Jim Wallman, seconded by Jonathan Pickles) was re-elected unopposed.

Events Organiser- Jim Wallman (proposed by Nick Luft , seconded by Dave Boundy) was elected unopposed.

OTHER BUSINESS

EVENTS

Jim said that he felt that there was a falling off of enthusiasm for the Club's weekend events, as indicated by the low attendance. The present formula seemed a bit stale. He thought that over the next year the Club should reconsider what it was aiming at with its events and seek to rekindle enthusiasm for them. Possibilities for a new format included: having a single weekend event instead of two, perhaps devoting one day to design and one to games; making the events more social in character, perhaps by organising a club dinner; holding residential weekend events (eg at Lodge Hill, at a Landmark Trust property or in Holland); inviting guest speakers; combining the event with a trip to a battlefield or a museum); or involving other clubs in CLWG events.

The meeting considered that despite a vicious spiral of low expectations and low attendance, weekend events were still viable. It was agreed that the should plan on the basis of a single weekend event next year, but look at ways to engender more enthusiasm for it. He should begin by conducting a survey through Milmud on what members wanted from a weekend event and why attendance is so low.

ACTION Events Organiser

Meanwhile members were asked to send any ideas or views to the Editor for publication in Milmud NOT to the CLWG Mailer.

ACTION All members

MEETINGS

Dave Nilsson reported that it had been suggested to him that a number of members were in favour of returning to afternoon rather than all day meetings. The average attendance at meetings this year had been 9. In discussion, the possibilities of starting Saturday meetings later (12 or 1 o'clock) and running them into the evening, perhaps combining this with activities of a social nature, and of holding midweek evening meetings were canvassed and considered to be worth exploring.

It was agreed that Dave should seek members' views through Milmud.

ACTION: Games Organiser

PRIZES

The Editor apologised for not having selected the winner of the Editor's Prize yet but promised to announce this soon.

ACTION Editor

I hearby award the Golden Chestnut prize to John Rutherford, for being a good chap, and reviewing books to commision and regular contribution to Mil Mud.

Please cut out and colour in picture below and place on mantlepiece.

The Games Organiser announced that he had awarded the Games Organiser's prize to Dave Boundy.

The meeting closed at 18.57.

I dispute this record of the timings. The clock was faulty and the convener was tired and over emotional, later to be found wandering a South London Common.

Frank Dunn (URL updated by Nick Luft)

Letters

A Genrle

I am a Genrle!
I can do everything?
I like?
Yes I can
Yes I can?
Yes I can

Katy Rutherford (Age 5)

Second-hand Books on the Internet

If you are looking for a hard to find second hand book then you may want to try "www.abebooks.com"

Andy Reeve

There is a meta site which includes such as ABE plus Interloc and other sites which host multiple book catalogues. Its fast and has good search options.

BookFinder:
http://www.bookfinder.com/

My ideal Mil Mud

I listened to the report you made about being editor at the recent conference and the breakdown as to the content of Mil Mud, into letters/reports features, admin. That report was prompted me write about what I would like to see in Mil Mud.

I would ideally like to see reports on games from two or three people who participated in the game, and especially the people or person who put on the game. I like reports of games more than I like features, I also would like to see more of those very rare debates and discussions that arise in Mil Mud from people having problems with particular parts of a game design. I don't think this onerous or very difficult to do. But I suspect that this ideal is unlikely to be achieved very often because I guess ?? the rest of the club doesn't agree with me and would like other things in milmud like features and reviews.

Mukul Patel

Breakdown of 1998 Mil Mud

Issue	Total Pages	Letters	Reports	Features	Reviews	Misc
1	22	1	13	3	2	3
2	34	6	19	3	4	2
3	28	9	8.5	5	3.5	2
4	20	1	11	4	2	2
5	14	1.5	3.5	0	5	4
6	19	2	8	3.5	4	1.5
7	15	1.5	5	4	2.5	2
8	16	4.5	6	0.5	3	2
9	10	1	0.5	3.5	3	2
Total	168	26.5	74	23	26	18.5
Av per issue	19	3	8	3	3	2
% per issue	100	16	44	14	15	11

Onside Reports

Some Thoughts on Political Systems.

James Kemp

Overview

This really needs to be krieg-spieled to some extent. My vision is of a hidden board tracking the views of three (or more) main groupings of the electorate: The Rich (~10%); the middle classes (~25%) and the manual workers (the remainder).

Tracking Support

Each track will have three areas where counters indicating support can go. There will be a Labour area, a Conservative area and an Undecided area. In practice the Undecided area will be reported as Liberal/Others.

Actions by the government and political activity generally needs to be assessed by the umpire on how they would affect the groups represented on the support tracks. The umpire would then move support counters as appropriate. Where support is lost by one party the counters should be moved from that area into the undecided box, where support is gained it should come from the undecided box into the party area. In no case should support counters move directly from one party to the other (although the net effect of any political activity may be that one party gains support exactly equal to that lost by the other party).

Support counters should be equal to the number of parliamentary seats available when a general election is called. The changes in support only affect the numbers of seats when elections are necessary, at other times they should be invisible to the players except through opinion polling. (If I decide to include random by-elections in LCH then it will be apparent in the result).

Opinion Polls

I want to have the player teams have an eye on how popular they are. In the modern age politicians take actions with their eye on how popular these actions are likely to be. This is such an important factor in political decisions that I do not feel that it can be omitted, and should not be compromised overly. In the timescale of LCH there will be at least two general elections, players should have a feel that they may be out of a job if their actions are too unpopular. Likewise players should be able to get away with more or less anything provided that they retain their support. Easier said than done though.

The other key factor in opinion polling is that it isn't accurate and sometimes has a bias. There are two ways round this. The first is quick and dirty where the political umpire simply looks at his track and makes up some plausible numbers. As opinion moves he adjusts the numbers in the most appropriate direction. This option is simple, involves no mechanisms and is very quick. The downside is that it could be really quite far out, perhaps further out than real opinion polls, which could lead to it being unbelievable, which renders it useless.

The other option would be to craft a finely tuned system which detailed every nuance of movements in support in order to produce some figures. Although the easy way is undoubtably to add up the support counters (with 2d6 added for a random inaccuracy) and convert the total to a percentage, which would probably involve a calculator for the umpire.

Elections

Elections are pretty straightforward. Each of the parties produces a short manifesto (two to three main policies) and decides how much money it wants to spend on the campaign. The umpire decides the

effect of the manifesto promises on the overall support. Dice are then rolled to see what effect the publicity campaign has on the undecided. For each œ10,000 spent the party gains 1d6 support. For fractions each œ2000 under œ10,000 attracts -1 on the last dice.

Labour gain their support initially from the manual workers track then the middle-classes track. The conservatives gain their additional support first from the Rich track then the middle-classes and lastly the manual workers.

The resulting position is the number of seats each party has. As in real life the party with the most seats will be asked to form the government. In the event of a tie then the party leaders will have to negotiate with the other MPs to see if they'll throw in their lot with them. If not then there will be another general election the same year. No new funds are distributed.

After each general election 10% (rounded down) support is lost from each party and put into the undecided track. This represents floating voters etc. and allows a pool of undecided support to move to either party.

Party Funds

These are generated by supporters. Each manual classes supporter gets the party œ1 per year, each middle-class support œ10 and each Rich supporter œ1000 per year. This is kept track of separately by the political umpire and the total allocated to the parties as funds are required.

Table showing possible start position using 1945 general election results. Allocation of parliamentary seats

	Labour	Float	Tory	Total
Rich	10	5	41	56
Middle classes	35	4	61	100
Manual workers	348	3	111	462
Total	393	12	213	618

after 10% goes to undecided

	Labour	Float	Tory	Total
Rich	9	10	37	56
Middle classes	31	14	55	100
Manual workers	313	49	100	462
Total	393	73	192	618

I am a bit unsure about James' mechanism that moves lost support into the undecided box. Perhaps this is where he needs his third party - the middle ground - who did so well out of the Tories misfortunes in the 1997 election. Obviously some disillusioned supporters will not vote and become undecided but others will register their protest by voting for the middle party.

I would like to see a more gradual loss of support from a newly elected government. Would this system simulate the close result of the 1992 election, the errosioni of which lead to a complete collapse of support for the Tories, in the 1997 election. Some argue that they would have been better to loose the 1992 - maybe they were right.

This Is LA!

A rather rough design session.

Mukul Patel

This was meant be an after dinner game, except I forgot some of the game components. The game was meant to be a card game about the manipulation of 1980s Los Angles Street Gangs by Crime Lords. (Who says the Yanks havn't got an aristocracy!). The game structure was kind of, well maybe a lot cribbed out of a game called 16thrity something.

The game turned pretty quick and unbelievably into a very fruitful desgin session. The ideas expressed and comments upon the game structure have definitely given me heart to go on and put more effort into the game, and surprisingly hit upon some the flaws from the original game. I was really quite surprised at the acceptance of the idea of a card game about a fairly odd subject..but hey that just shows how broad the club can in its tastes and support of odd ideas. Should be (95% certain) ready for a run at the November meeting. I think it will take about 60 to 90 minutes to play.

(Thanks to Jim Wallman for letting me displace his pirates role-playing game.)

In the commercial game world there is a trend for games played with cards. This has something to do with the success of Magick the Gathering and its spin offs; but also something to do with the relative cheapness and ease in which a game can be packaged and marketed. I am unsure of the figures but a large "bookcase" game the actual box and the folding playing board represent a large proportion of the cost.

Mukul's game looked like a good game, easy to understand, with lots of interaction though I would have to play it to see what game strategies are possible.

My favorite comment of the session was from Jim, declaring that the police were just another gang

Armageddon 2000

Mukul Patel

I do not want to challenge, discredit demean anybodies religion or belief systems, including atheists.

With the approach of the year 2000, some people think the world may end with a fight between the forces of Good and Evil. It was suggested that this subject might make a game and possibly a megagame. I wanted to put on a session that explored the viability of such a game.

The session involved a lot of talk about Hell, Heaven the Earth God and a wee bit of theology and this both interesting and entertaining. All in all it was a very different discussion. What we concluded is that it was possible to put on a game, that it might not be a megagame. That we wanted to represent Both Heaven Hell and Earth. Players would represent Angels and demons The biggest conceptual challenge is how to get Heaven and Hell to interact with Earth, and how to therefore represent Earth.

Conclusion
Researching this subject has a been a rather stimulating exercise. It has made me appreciate art and literature and the ancient philosopher/scientists far more than ever before. It has made me appreciate far more just what a central and important and interesting role religion has occupied in Western Europe for the last 2000 years. It also seems rather odd that religion seems to play such a small part in modern art.

The problem of such a game is that God will always win. Somehow God has to be kept out of the game - rather like he does with life - and let us get on with it.

There again a success for the "evil" side would be to get as many souls like unbelieving Dwarves at the end of "The Last Battle" by C S Lewis. In fact you could argue that if no one believes in God and can rationally explain all His phenomena, God has lost. A bit tricky this free will thing.

Invasion of the West

designed by James Kemp

Mukul Patel

This was as described in the Umpire Notes "a quick dirty game intended to do groundwork for a game looking at what happens when all the fancy kit runs out". The scenario is a surprise from summer manoeuvres attack by Soviet Forces in East Germany on the West.

The game was very rough and ready but that's fine, its a tryout not the meant to be the bees knees. Its what one of the strengths of the club should be, to try and develop ideas and games not just put on polished punctuation perfect games.

The subject was very interesting a huge What IF? the Soviets had invaded? I had recently just read a book about the background factors to this question called Confrontation. That book made me wish to a do a game like James, but I couldn't see how it could be done and it would be conjecture or even fantasy anyway. It seemed quite clear to me as I read the book that the Soviets did not, by 1986, possess the amount of forces needed to attack successfully

unless they could count on surprise and big political friction in NATO's responses.

A comment on the scenario, I would think it next to impossible to catch NATO with total surprise and this was reflected in the game, but also I consider that Soviets would have a very good idea of NATO's readiness and preparations and locations, just as NATO should have a very good idea of what the Soviets have in East Germany and were it is.

The mechanisms were simple and easy to use and understand. I think they were too brutal and one sided. It does not have to deliver such horrific results so quickly. They need to be developed further.

Much to the annoyance of other players I argued with James about his mechanisms, but this was only because it didn't meet my expectations and more usefully because I loved the idea behind the game , the huge What If ? and admired James for addressing a subject that I had felt impossible to do.

Whoever starts to loose will get that itchy finger for the nuke. Players like big weapons and nukes don't come much bigger. I always feel that the ground attack would have been a precursor to a nuclear exchange - and it is the political crisis leading up to that sort of brinkmanship that would be interesting.

Some have argued that NATO spent nearly 50 years planning for a war that it eventually fought against Iraq. Maybe James' mechanisms would be more relevant fighting that?

Rheinubung

Dave Boundy

When I first joined the club, I was keen to put on a U-boat game. The resulting attempt ('The Only Thing That Really Frightened Me') was a real learning experience about game balance and game pace. There was a lot wrong with the game, but it still got quite a good press because some of the players enjoyed it and because, I think, it had a reasonable period feel. Rather than just revise that game, I looked for something which could extend the concept and add more elements so that I could build a more balanced game. What I was really interested in was the way in which even small sea actions of the time had major strategic impact. At one point in the conflict, the battle between about 30 boats and two or three escort groups resulted in Doenitz pulling back from the Atlantic offensive - although there were a number of factors there, the battle between those few individuals crystallised the issues.

I decided, therefore, to design a game including German surface units as well as U-boats. Having made this decision, the choice became easy - the Bismarck breakout had all the elements I was looking for. It had strategic significance, with Crete going on at the same time, there were large numbers of convoys at sea, including troop convoys being escorted by capital ships and the U-boat force was heavily involved (it was diverted from attacks on convoys to attempts to assist Bismarck). Added to this, the individual decisions made in a number of different places had a significant effect on the outcome.

The conference session was very useful in developing the basic ideas. We worked through the scenario and the general approach and confirmed/decided to start the game with the sinking of Hood. At this point the options are wide open - particularly with a decision that the other forces available might well not be in the same place or the same state. Scharnhorst/ Gneisenau might not be kept in Brest by damage, Hipper might be ready to join the German task force etc. etc. We also talked through the involvement of RN forces from the Med and decided to limit the scope here to the historical one of the availability of force H. We decided on an accelerated timescale game, with a 1:12 time (i.e. 1 hour of real time in 5 minutes of play) with continuous action

At this point we hit the only real stumbling point - the tactics adopted by the local force commanders had an effect on the outcome and I felt strongly that the tactical options needed to be gamed rather than treated abstractly. The question then was - would it be possible to resolve a 2-hour sea battle in 10 minutes? After working at it, I think we came out with a system that will resolve the action fast enough to keep to the spirit of the game. The actions might take longer in the game than they should, but it will be near enough to assume that the time they take is the time for the rest of the players - there is no need to restrict it artificially.

I had previously realised that early C20 naval warfare holds a special appeal to Mukul - it appears to be the only way of stopping him talking about Hell or the Eastern Front (similar things really). Mukul and I took a while later in the evening to trial the tactical system that we evolved on a number of reruns of the Hood engagement and, despite including all sorts of guesses and short-cuts, it seemed to work well and had a reasonable feel to it.

Thanks to Jon, Mukul, Pickles and several others (eer..sorry, I can't remember who) for the help. Yes, Dave, I promise to put it on as a club game - soon - honest!

Features

Info Warfare

James Kemp

I'd like to follow up John Rutherford's bit on Information Warfare which I found quite interesting. While digitisation has some inherent problems for battlefield security, and dangers of providing commanders with too much information it is unlikely to prevent individual soldiers from getting information about the enemy.

It doesn't matter whether the enemy captures information you have on them unless it compromises the source of your intelligence, and even this is only a factor at the strategic level. The individual grunt knowing where a sniper is doesn't fall into that category. I mentioned in my WWI article that I had a trench map of Beaumont Hamel. This British map has all the German trenches marked on it but none of the British one - although the rear area maps have both.

'The Americans must have a spy.'

The main thing digitisation is likely to bring to the battlefield is a good idea of where everyone is and what logistic support they require. It should help reduce blue-on-blue engagements and assist the loggies get people what they want when they want it.

It does have a danger though. Commanders are likely to share information because it is easy to do so. They are also more likely to accept what the system tells them without being too critical of it, mostly because with all that extra information they don't have time to analyse everything. But perhaps the biggest danger is that commanders will get used to having near perfect information and will wait until they have that picture before acting. Those that assess the situation and act with their gaps will then win - as follows the old adage "it is better to make the wrong decision than to make no decision".

Anyway, that's my tuppence worth on information and the battlefield.

I keep attempting to look at texts on Info Warfare and I am always put of by the genres use of abstract but woolly concepts and the focus on semantics. I have commented before that the field officer is also trying to get a grip on what it will actually mean for them too. One interesting comment made was that the future soldier might become so expensive and difficult to train that they will become rathe like modern strike aircraft- very few, very expensive and very effective.

I agree that logisitcs will be and are the greatest beneficiary from the control of information - their only problem will be the integration of legacy hardware and interoperability of multiple systems.

I wonder how future soldiers will cope if they are deprived of their perfect vision of the battlefield? Maybe doctrine will change emphasising the use of full information for planning and the intial contact moving to fuzzy logic in decision making aids, when the information becomes less reliable.

Great war Trenches

James Kemp

I've just got my copy of MilMud which was a bit late due to technical difficulties as the train people would tell you. I was struck by the article from "New Statesman" and Andy Grainger's bit on poetry.

Last January I spent a freezing cold day in Ypres (or Ieper as the locals call it). I wandered round the town which has been largely re-built in its pre-war image and has some excellent Vauban-era walls. I also visited Sanctuary Wood and Hill 60 and saw the preserved trenches there, my one regret was that I hadn't brought a torch to see inside the tunnels and bunkers that were still there. I also visited the Menin Gate and was overwhelmed by the names on it, especially from some of the colonial units where it is obvious that all the casualties are from a single battalion - I counted a Canadian battalion that had nearly 400 men, including a Lt Col, go missing in the Ypres salient.

I also did a battlefield tour, in August, with a friend who is a regular army officer. We started off at Eben Emael and drove back through Waterloo, Mons, Cambrai, Bapaume, to Albert (just behind the British line in 1916) where we spent three days driving around looking at the battlefield and the many memorials, museums and cemeteries. After that we drove down to the coast to see the site of the counter-attack at Abbeville in 1940 and to Dieppe for the failed raid by the Canadians in 1942.

Anyway, the itinerary is more or less irrelevant. I saw a lot of the 1916 battlefield on the Somme, and some of the 1914, 1917 & 1918 battlefields on the way to and from the Somme. The one thing that struck me most was the sheer number of large cemeteries. It's easy enough to look at a war cemetery and rationalise that men get killed in wars, but when you get to your third or fourth cemetery with 3,000+ graves in it within a mile of each other all that breaks down. I could not rationalise it away, especially not when I reflected that I might well have been in one of those graves if I had been around then.

In some ways it is made worse when you see the ground and realise just how short the distances are. OK they are now grassed over and not churned up by artillery, covered in wire and swept by small-arms fire, but even so they are pitifully short. I visited Beaumont Hamel (of which I have a trench map) where the Newfoundlanders bought the land after the war for one of their national memorials. It is also the site of the 51 Highland Division memorial as well, which is what drew me initially, 51 Highland being my local formation and one of the many I trained with. The Newfoundland Regiment was in the second wave on 1 July. They lost about 800 men killed, wounded or missing and failed to get as far as the German wire, which is only 200-250 metres away (the Newfoundlanders had a single battalion - full strength was around 1,000 men). 51 Highland eventually took the German frontline on 13/14 November.

Not far from Beaumont Hamel were two other single battalion cemeteries that we visited, the Dorsetshires and the Gordons (my friend being in The Highlanders (Gordons, Seaforth & Camerons). In each of these were the 1 July casualties that had been found on the battlefield (i.e. not including those that were evacuated and later died of wounds). The Dorsetshires were buried in the front-line trench they had occupied which bore the legend "The Dorsetshires held this trench, and the Dorsetshires hold it still".

In the Gordons cemetery there were 84 Highlanders and 6 Officers. The Highlanders being buried communally and the officers with their own segregated plot at the side of the cemetery. Again this was one of the places which brought it all home to us as we had a link to the Gordons and because all the casualties were from a single day's fighting. And to hammer the point home was the fact that this had been one of the successful sectors where the front had moved. The Gordons had got off lightly by the standards of other battalions.

It all made me think a lot.

I'm not of the impression that we all see the war through the eyes of the poets, in fact I was surprised on my return by how few people knew who Wilfred Owen was (I had visited his grave and seen the canal he had been trying to cross when he was killed). Most people don't really think of WWI at all as far as I could tell, and when you mention it to them they see it from the few famous photographs of churned up mud, splintered trees and flooded shell-

holes. Very few of them wold be able to quote you more than a couple of lines from a war poet, and fewer still would be able to then explain what those lines conveyed in terms of a description of the war.

One of the exhibits at Sanctuary Wood, in the museum attached to the cafe there, is a number of stereoscopic slide viewers. Each of these 1920s looking viewers has around two dozen stereoscopic views of WWI battlefields, fortunately in black & white. I use fortunately because the photographer has taken the photographs on the battlefield when it was still being fought over, or shortly afterwards at least. There are also photographs from casualty clearing stations and the like. Not for the squeamish. Yet I believe that we ought to see images like this a lot more, it makes the well-used images look tame by comparison, and therefore brings the horror of war closer to the forefront.

I realise this is rambling a bit, but the summary of my thoughts is basically that we should be taking people out to see the battlefields more often now that the veterans are gone. It is the memory of war that stops us from having other wars, and we are in great danger of forgetting the wars recent generations fought. It ought to be a mandatory part of the school curriculum for older kids, perhaps 14-15 year olds to spend a week being reminded of the horrors of war, and no holds should be barred. The worse it seems to them the less likely we are to fight another war, and that must surely be a good thing.

P.S. This is all written from memory and without checking any facts presented, any errors are therefore errors of memory rather than deliberate attempts to mislead.

PPS We had a copy of Martin Middlebrook's "The Somme Battlefields" which covers all the battlefields in the Somme Department from the 15th Century to 1944. It is an excellent book and I would recommend it to anyone going to the area looking for battlefields.

I could pick up on many of the points made here, so I will try to concentrate on two.

James' remark that

> *The worse it seems to them the less likely we are to fight another war, and that must surely be a good thing.*

causes me problems. I suppose I agree with the sentiment but worry about the implications. A short answer is "so long as they play by the same rules!

What is worrying many soldiers and politicians is the "body-bag factor" in modern war. If we cannot fight wars because of the worry over our casualties, will this leave conflicts open to those who do not have similar political agendas, and can accept casualties?

I also wonder about this nit picking mentality. None of our soldiers lives are worth expending to save a Bosnian or a Somalian. This is the morality of the bank clerk. So presumably they can tell me how many of our boys lives were worth expending for the Falklands, or Gibraltar.

It's a nice sentiment, but.....

MegaGame Reports

Berserker 0101

Richard Hands.

Honour Among Thieves - the true story of the Great Berserker Caper, by Captain 'Israel' Hands of thegood ship Deep Fear (as opposed to the especially good ship Good Ship - but that's another story).

1. Freeport

Call me Israel. 'Twas in the year of '98 that we heard that there was a great prize up for grabs - Berserker Brains aplenty for them as had the courage to get a crew together and go for it, while it was drifting dead in space, and hopefully before (a) it powered up or (b) the Navy found it. Of course, a ship that big would take more than one pirate ship - I mean Independent Trading Vessel. And so it was that five of us agreed to go - my own ship the Deep Fear, as well as the Dark Boar, Dead Kenny, Good Ship and Crazy Joe. Time was of the essence, so Freeport was a mad scramble for equipment and personnel. Strangely, there were

no medics to be found - but I'm getting ahead of meself - the crew sportingly ante'd up fifty credits apiece and I bought four APGWs and reloads and took custody of em. Our first snag was discovering that following our somewhat disorganised recruitment we now had a crew of 64 on a 60 man vessel, but after I ordered my four officers to kick out a crewman apiece were were on our way to the Berserker...

2. The Plan

The pirate ships held a conference, to elect an admiral and decide on a plan. I had my doubts about cooperation between pirates, but the other captains seemed determined to prove me wrong. We all knew it would be a tough nut, and the captain of the Dead Kenny, a rather physically imposing Dutchman, made a persuasive case for ignoring the fact that we were pirates, and trying to run this one cooperatively. My own contention was that cooperation would only last until someone found something valuable, like a Berserker AI unit. I had therefore put forward a plan that required a minimum of cooperation and coordination. The Berserker had six modules. It stood to reason that one AI would be in each module - since they were known to be able to detach and reform - so we should each just pick a different module, hit them all at the same time and so divide their effort, each go individually for an AI, and if some crews got picked on and others had an easy ride and got out with lots of goodies, well that was the luck of the draw - like Venerian Roulette. But this was shouted down by the other captains. We all stood together or we would fall separately, etc etc. The Dead Kenny's captain argued for teamwork so persuasively I almost felt ashamed for doubting my fellow captains. He proposed a far more focused assault - we would strike at two modules, cooperatively - one ship team on point in each attack, the other in support, and one ship hanging back as a strategic reserve. We agreed to this with a minimum of bickering, outvoting my lone objection. Now all we needed was an admiral. The Dead Kenny's captain had come up with the plan. He was also a very large man and seemed to be very self confident. He was clearly the alpha male among us, and only I felt up to butting heads. Furthermore, and more ominously, it was he who had bought up all the medics in Freeport and if we wanted any medical attention HE would have to be admiral. We agreed that this latter at least showed forethought and cunning, if not the kind of cooperative spirit he had been preaching, and he was duly elected Admiral by four votes to one (me). We then parceled out the roles for the assault. It seemed natural that the Admiral would be the reserve ship, and surely it was mere coincidence that I, his sole critic, was one of the lead elements. After all, was I not one of the most experienced? We even managed to agree on articles of Association, which I here repeat to illustrate the giddy optimism of that meeting:

- *1. The Admiral shall be the Captain of the Dead Kenny.*
- *2. All IFF settings shall be coordinated so that no pirate may fire on another.*
- *3. We are all in it together, and each will take the loot we gather back to Freeport, where it will be divided equally among the survivors - split equally between the ships, after first paying from the pool for any lost equipment.*
- *4. Any crew that tries a more 'individualistic' approach to getting loot will have its ship fired upon by the other four ships.*

That last clause was one of mine, and the others were reluctant to admit it, as it went so much against the spirit of cooperation that we seemed to be enjoying. I had a feeling that it would not last, but at the time we were carried away with how this would be different - we would all work together and win!

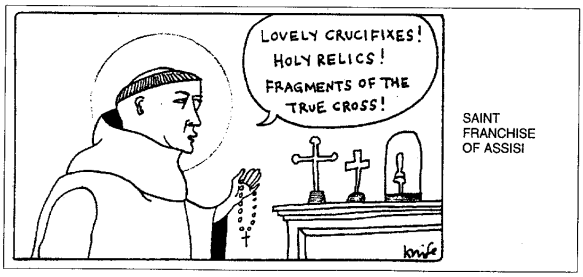
3. "Lets Go To Work" - The Berserker

The assault went very smoothly at first. My crew moved into Module 3, and the Bad Dream penetrated Module 2. The Good Ship's crew followed mine in, and the Crazy Joe duly supported in the other module. In Module 3, we were soon down to the second deck, one away from the centre and the AI core that was our prize. Waves of clankers poured at us, interspersed with combat robots. We fought them off and the Berserkers seemed dismayed at our coordination (inasmuch as implacable robot foes can be dismayed...). But some alarm bells were ringing. Troopers from the Dead Kenny arrived to collect the dead robots and other technological items we had been collecting. I had been loading them onto my shuttle, but the Admiral was insistent that they should go to his ship. We had sort-of agreed to use the Dead Kenny as a central repository, but in the heat of battle it suddenly seemed less sensible than it had at the cosy captains' conference. Besides, if it would all be divvied up at the end, did it matter which ship it went

to? The Admiral's insistence seemed jarring. As a gesture of good faith, I gave him some of the loot and in return his men went down to help out the battle against the Berserkers still raging in the module. In addition, it seemed that the Bad Dream and Crazy Joe, over in Module 2, were having a much easier time than us. Three hours into the assault and we were still pinned, unable to advance, with waves of robots still rushing us and half our men down, while they had cleared their module and were advancing into another with only two casualties. Little did we know that we were attacking the only module with a functioning generator and robot repair factory (aka the 'Stalingrad Tractor Factory', as Berserkers came off the production line straight into combat), and that the Berserkers had no option but to defend it to the last. Tragically unlucky for us, but there were always going to be winners and losers... typical that we should be the losers!

4. The Heist Goes (Inevitably) Wrong...

Finally, as I had suspected, the plan came apart, but for a reason I would never have guessed. It seemed that the Admiral trusted his own crew far less than he did the other captains, and had rigged up a suicide circuit to blow up his fusion drive that needed his constant signal to prevent it from triggering, to make sure they kept him alive. Of course, as these things do, his paranoia fed their paranoia, and they all evacuated the ship, leaving him aboard, and got a robot to try and disable the circuit. Of course, it was booby trapped, and suddenly a huge explosion ripped through the Dead Kenny, crippling it. Now the equation had changed. We had four ships, none of which was the Admiral's. In an attempt to stay in control, the Admiral took a shuttle full of men over to my ship, the Deep Fear, saying he now wished to use it as his command vessel, and also as a lifeboat for his crew (pure coincidence he picked my ship, of course...). At the time we had no idea about the internal struggles on his ship, only that it had suffered an internal explosion, and the inexperienced officer who I had left on the ship while I led the assault had incautiously let the Admiral's shuttle come alongside. But when I overheard on the radio that the Admiral had turned off his IFF I just told my crewman to get clear of the shuttle and start shooting. Too late. The shuttle docked and the marines poured into my ship. Just then, the Berserker got an energy weapon on-line, and fired at the nearest target - the Deep Fear (my luck still running true to form...). A spectacular shot tore through the Admirals shuttle, blowing it up and killing him and three of his men, then proceeded straight into my control room and destroyed it, killing my own officer. His marines subsequently captured my ship, but it was now also crippled. The other pirate ships fired at the working energy weapon and the Berserker fell silent again. At this rather dramatic juncture (ie, while we were all distracted), the Dark Boar abruptly hyperspace jumped, amid rumours that two of its officers had got one of the valuable AIs back to the ship and decided to flee with the loot, leaving their comrades trapped in the Berserker. It was clear that it had all gone Horribly Wrong...



5. The Denouement

The hard fight in Module 3 had one positive effect. Men fighting side by side against a common enemy develop a common bond, and although three ships were now gone or crippled and one of the other's intentions uncertain, the men in Module 3 were still very much a team. My men and the men of the Good Ship had developed a good 'working relationship', and even the officers that had been sent from the Dead Kenny had thrown in with us. I had a chat with the captain of the Good Ship, and he was happy to stay in a business partnership. We decided that we had to get out fast - the tide of Berserkers seemed to be endless, the weapons seemed to be coming back on-line, and the pirates were fleeing (little did we know how close to collapse the Berserker was - still, 20-20 hindsight and all that). The plan was that we would pool our supercharges, blow a hole down to the AI and make one last stab at grabbing it, then any survivors would head back to the Good Ship to be taken off. Priority for getting out would be given to survivors from the Good Ship's original crew, then other ships' officers, then crewmen from the Deep Fear, then crewmen from the Dead Kenny. And any that got back to Freeport would split the loot evenly. This seemed more than fair under the circumstances. It was a hard fought battle,

but eventually the combined pirate forces, supported by shuttles standing off firing weapons (and occasionally having to fight off yet more massed charges of clankers), looked to be getting the AI out. I was anticipating that a new game was about to start; the 'who gets on the ship?' game, but as a veil was drawn over the proceedings the captain of the Good Ship said he reckoned only about 60 pirates were still up and moving in Module 3 - handily, exactly the same number as the life support capacity of his ship (one reason we had pressed on with the assault was to thin the ranks out a bit, knowing we had a limited number of spaces on the ship - I don't think our officers were told that, but I'm sure they guessed). Would the Good Ship have picked us all up? I think it would - we still had a good working relationship, it was his men as well as mine who had taken and still had hold of the AI, and just in case he developed doubts I had made sure that I had control of two of the shuttles, one now my 'gunship', filled with 6 men with SCA 3s and 8 APGWs aboard. Back at Freeport of course would come the next game - the 'who gets the money?' game. A scenario made for Tarantino? Again, from discussions with the Good Ship's crew I saw no reason to doubt that our alliance would have held together, although I doubt that we would have shared anything with the Crazy Joe - but then they might well have come back carrying the remaining crew of the Dark Boar, and the deserters from that ship who had fled with an AI would probably also be due for a reckoning... Still, if the heist didn t go wrong, it wouldn't be much of a movie, would it? Or as Michael 'The Italian Job' Caine put it: "Now hold on lads... I've got a great idea..."

And stepping out of narrative for a while; an interesting day as a study of how command and control is easy when things are going well, but is simultaneously both very fragile and vitally important when you hit a snag. There had been a very deliberate attempt to cooperate at first and I think we probably all went into the plan with good faith (at least among the captains), and to begin with it was working far better than any of us expected, in spite of some umpire 'stirring'. But there was psychology at work - we had been told we were pirates, not marines, so the players were not expecting to cooperate. Co-operation was only going to continue as long as everyone trusted each other, and trust is a very delicate commodity. It is far easier to trust other Marines - they are with you by virtue of orders, not greed, and probably have no reason to backstab you. But criminals on the other hand... it makes you realise why the Heist Gone Wrong is such a prolific film genre. And as soon as the doubts set in, so did the rot in our plans - mistrust is a positive feedback loop. In the final analysis I found a pleasing irony that the man who had argued most strongly and persuasively for cooperation, and hence been made our leader, was brought down (and hence brought us all down) by his own suspicions. Truly a Tragic Flaw worthy of Shakespeare!

Reviews

Saving Private Ryan

Andy Grainger

Most of you will know the plot of this film, even if you haven't seen it. Three brothers in a family of four are killed in action in June 1944. Within about 48 hours General George Marshall, no less, has ordered Tom Hanks's squad of Rangers to go behind German lines to rescue the fourth, Private Ryan.

The incident is based on a number of real ones in World War 2. There were occasions in which surviving sons in a large family were withdrawn from combat, although not by dramatic rescue missions such as feature in the film. What has also not been publicised is that several countries operated such systems. The German Armed Forces, for example, operated a number of exemptions, including (I think) fathers with only one son and did not oblige the youngest sons in large families to serve. As the war went on these exemptions tended to be lifted as the manpower shortages became more acute but it is fair to say that most countries with conscript armies had been aware of these types of personnel issue for many years - and particularly since 1914.

Whilst watching this film (during which I dozed briefly) I felt that Spielberg had found what he thought was an interesting idea but did not really know what to do with it. There is a debate as to whether it is worth risking the lives of many to save the lives of a few - but then what? Is Spielberg perhaps making a point about the increasing reluctance of American society (or is just the media?) to see body bags from far flung parts of the world? Or is he drawing our attention to the vast sacrifices made by the wartime generation, compared to any required of our own?

So, is the film worth seeing?

Well, yes it is. It is worth paying your money to see the opening 25 minute sequence of the Omaha beach assault. I only had two minor quibbles. Firstly, there is an absence of backdrop as the landing craft run in which makes them seem a bit isolated and not part of the greatest invasion the world has ever seen. Secondly, whilst most of us have not been shot at, we have probably all been sick. Some coloured water is produced from the mouths of some of the soldiers in the landing craft - but they don't really look sick. This seems a rather sad point to make but I find it odd that a film that makes such a remarkable job of the combat footage can't produce a convincing image of someone throwing up!

I remember reading an account of an attack in the Great War in which the participant explained that his senses were so overwhelmed that he felt he was being carried forward as if he were a character on a film. You get this feeling in the combat sequences as Spielberg uses hand held cameras and seemingly a filmstock with a coarser texture (I'm sure Terry knows the details). I visited Omaha Beach on a grey, stormy day in April and spent some time thinking about the desperation of those thousands of men on that stretch of beach. All I can say is that the film, in my opinion, does the best job I can imagine that it is possible to do.

Unfortunately, thereafter, the film degenerates completely. The plot is almost non-existent anyway, the characters are cardboard and most unfortunately of all, from the perspective of a wargamer, the military credibility collapses completely. I accept the necessity to suspend disbelief over the historical aspects where sizeable American airborne units are cut off for days after D-Day and whose junior officers complain about Monty failing to take Caen!

Tom Hanks has a double chin so I confess I have trouble imagining him as a battle-hardened Ranger captain. The squad wander around German occupied Normandy like a bunch of boy scouts on a nature ramble. There is an absurb incident in which they make an abortive effort to save a French child - from what is not entirely clear. They hole up in a ruined church lighting candles and torches that would have brought Germans visiting from miles around. And so it goes on... filmmaking from the days of Jack Palance in the 1950's or that old TV series "Combat".

The final battle takes place around a small bridge. The combat sequences are as spectacular as the Omaha sequence but the battle procedures, unfortunately, are down to the standard of the middle part of the film. Incidentally, the real film of a small group of soldiers defending a bridge, in my opinion, was called simply "The Bridge" and made in the 1950's by a German director. It was about a group of German schoolboys defending a bridge from the Americans in the last days of the war. Spielberg's effort did not move me a tenth as much as that film.

So what should Spielberg have done? Well, the real story, as so often, is, in its way, more dramatic. The real Private Ryan, as in the film, was resistant to leaving his buddies. He went home but could not settle and endured the pangs of guilt suffered by many returning veterans of "Why did I survive"? Ryan's problem was even worse in that the war was still going on and his friends were still fighting it. As almost the only fit young man in the town he felt even more isolated. If I recall the article in the Guardian supplement, he died in the early 1960's after a series of illnesses related to depression and alcoholism.

Now that story would have been a brave film.

Saving Private Ryan (15), dir - Steven Spielberg, 1998, 270 mins

Liberty

Mukul Patel

This was a series of hour long TV programs covering the origins course and end of the American Revolution. I thought the programs were very good. The programs were a very nice a blend of learned historians, battle re-enactment's, terrain shots, maps and especially good diary readings to produce. I think they looked carefully at three aspects of the revolution, its military course political course and its social ramifications. It was also a balanced production in that did not totally crap on the Evil British and eulogize the heroic colonists. I especially liked the last of the programs that dealt with the political and social consequences of the revolution and the way the Americans forged their new constitution and bill of rights. This was subject I knew diddly squat about, unexpected but enthralling.

I enjoyed the programs and only very little was grating or jarring.

A commentary on the new film about the early reign of Elizabeth I

Andy Grainger

Brian Cameron and I went to see this much-heralded British film. I don't think it will break box-office records but it did encourage me to obtain a biography of The Virgin Queen from the library. This article discusses the historical events portrayed in the film in the light of two books:

- *Elizabeth I, by Anne Somerset, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1991 (biography)*
- *Elizabeth I, Religion and Foreign Affairs, by John Warren, Hodder & Stoughton 1993 (Access to history series for A level students and an excellent primer).*

I am not intending to criticise the portrayal of the historical events in the film, the object of which is, of course, to reveal something of the character of the young Elizabeth but I thought others might be interested in knowing "what really happened".

The Film
The film starts in 1554 with Elizabeth's sister Mary on the throne, busy burning Protestants and just having married Philip II of Spain. She is convinced that Elizabeth is aiding and abetting conspiracies against her and has her imprisoned in the Tower. Although Norfolk and other advisors recommend Elizabeth's execution, Mary stays her hand, partly on grounds of kinship and partly because there is no proof.

Elizabeth ascends the throne of a country at war with both France and Scotland, split by religious dispute and endowed with an empty treasury. Against her better judgement she is persuaded to have an army sent to face the French in Scotland - only for it to be crushed by Mary of Guise (she is the mother of Mary Queen of Scots and played by the eternally delightful Fanny Ardant). It is not entirely clear how quickly this crisis is resolved but it is concluded by the unexpected death of Mary of Guise, seemingly at the hands of Walsingham, who very much plays the part of an *eminence grise* throughout the film.

The religious dispute in England is resolved when the House of Lords is persuaded to pass the Act of Uniformity which will place Elizabeth at the head of the Church, as her father Henry VIII was. This is achieved partly by a virtuoso display of charm and wit in the Lords by Elizabeth and partly by the detention of five bishops during the vote (again by Walsingham's hand).

The major political plots, however, revolve around suitors from both France and Spain and their interactions with Catholic conspirators. Robert Dudley, the Duke of Anjou and others vie for Elizabeth's hand against a background of a Catholic conspiracy. These lead to a (very public) assassination attempt against the Queen and much plotting between powerful aristocrats, papal envoys and European diplomats although, oddly, Mary Queen of Scots never really features - it is simply "an international Catholic conspiracy" masterminded by John Gielgud's pope.

The film ends with the uncovering of the plot, the inevitable purge of the conspirators and Elizabeth's overnight transformation from flirtatious princess to Virgin Queen.

The Historical Events
As is usually the case, the historical events are much more complex - and occasionally much more dramatic than fiction. Also, whilst the viewer would infer that the film would seem to cover only a few years, history reveals that Anjou did not press his suit until 1571 and Norfolk was not actually executed until 1572 so the film does actually cover some of the events of the first sixteen years of the reign and the four years before.

Mary's Reign
The opening scenes of the film appear to downplay slightly the support for Elizabeth before she ascended the throne. Her life was certainly in danger, although in fact from Mary herself rather than her advisors. They were conscious that Mary's marriage to Philip was deeply unpopular within the country (not because he was Catholic but because he was foreign), as were the burnings of Protestants.

Once it was clear that Mary would not produce an heir most politicians began to work on the basis that Elizabeth would ascend the throne and knew, as Anne Somerset remarks, *"that undue severity might one day have the most unfortunate consequences."* There was simply no proof that Elizabeth was involved in treason against her sister and she enjoyed too great a degree of support for its fabrication to be credible. The historical issues seem to be depicted reasonably accurately at this stage.

The coronation is another costume drama spectacular although there is no depiction of Elizabeth's progress through the streets of London in what we would now call a "royal walkabout". A contemporary witness said that the new Queen *"graced* [the spectators] *with many witty formalities of speech"* and left them *"wonderfully ravished"*. Elizabeth certainly had the gift of the common touch and many contemporaries refer to her popularity with the common people.

The Act of Uniformity

Perhaps for budgetary reasons the film displays Elizabeth's charm and quickness of mind in the House of Lords rather than the London streets. At the outset of her reign she needed to persuade or cajole the Lords to pass the Act of Uniformity. As shown in the film, this was indeed an important issue although it is not explained very well. In the eyes of Catholics Elizabeth was both a heretic and illegitimate and therefore not entitled to sit on the throne. And their allegiance in religious matters was to the Pope, not the monarch. On the other hand, Protestants were uncomfortable at the idea that a woman could possibly be Supreme Head of the Church. In order to secure her position it was essential that this issue was resolved.

"There was only Jesus Christ, and one faith, and all the rest they disputed about but trifles" said the real Elizabeth to the French ambassador much later in life. This is certainly the tenor of Cate Blanchett's appeal to the bishops but I don't suppose it cut much ice in 1559! Anne Somerset says that the bishops represented about a third of the total membership of the Lords but that in debates on religious issues their greater learning gave them a disproportionate influence. However, a recent illness had killed off a good many bishops and many seats were vacant. Nevertheless Elizabeth won her vote by three (five in the film). Two bishops were actually in prison at the time, two were ill and another was away for an unknown reason.

Walsingham's involvement in the manoeuvre must be fictitious as he only entered royal service in 1568 but I think it does capture the style of Elizabeth's government - an outward charm fronting a ruthless, and often vicious determination to get her way.

The War with Scotland

At the beginning of the reign England was at war with France, which has troops in Scotland, although peace talks were underway at Cateau-Cambrésis. The Dauphin had married Mary Queen of Scots and so England faced the danger of a two front war. Initially Cate Blanchett is not convinced of the threat and Mary of Guise invades, destroying a hastily raised English army. In reality matters were more complex. Many Scots were hostile to the presence of the fanatically Catholic Guises and a faction had rebelled against them. Elizabeth and Cecil secretly subsidised them. The danger of French reinforcement was considerable, however, and in December 1559 an English fleet successfully disrupted French shipping in the Firth of Forth to try and preclude this. It was at this point that Elizabeth refused to sanction the despatch of an army, hoping that the Scots would expel the French themselves. Cecil, knowing this would not happen, threatened to resign and Elizabeth agreed to send an army. But she vacillated and the army sustained 1,500 casualties in an abortive attempt to storm Leith, near Edinburgh. But, in June 1560, Mary of Guise did indeed die unexpectedly and peace was made with France at the Treaty of Edinburgh in July.

It is clear that Elizabeth's leadership during this crisis was wavering and erratic. The army clearly suffered from a lack of direction. She was saved by Cecil, not Walsingham, who was not on the scene at this time. However, it must be said that Richard Attenborough's depiction of Cecil is really far too cuddly and perhaps that is why the sinister figure of Walsingham is introduced early.

Again, the film does not really explain how the crisis was resolved and contrives to lay the blame for failure on the Privy Council rather than Elizabeth. It also shows the Guise court in Scotland as taking place around a kitchen table. Whilst this seems unlikely Anne Somerset notes that a contemporary writer described Scotland as *"the arse of the world"*.

Elizabeth and her Suitors

This issue is naturally a big part of the film, as it was in reality. Elizabeth's relationship with Robert Dudley is suitably dramatic; certainly tongues would wag if our own dear Queen were to dance a *volta* in public with one of her entourage. As to the nature of Elizabeth's sex life, the director permits of no speculation - it was energetic and Robert Dudley was the lucky fellow. Oddly enough, though, the jealousy felt towards Dudley at court rarely comes across. Further, his attempt in the film to try and persuade the Spanish ambassador to support his suit does appear to have been true although it becomes mixed up with "the international Catholic conspiracy".

The Duke of Anjou, aged 19, arrived in England in 1571 by which time Elizabeth was 37. He does appear to have been an immature youth and was apparently not enamoured at the thought of marriage to an older woman. Anne Somerset reveals that *"later in life he became renowned for his transvestism and homosexual tendencies but at this period he was more noted for his promiscuity with the opposite sex…"*. The film could have illustrated this rather more explicitly, I thought, but something of Elizabeth's skill in extricating herself from these difficult negotiations is illustrated.

Indeed, I detect a 1990's feminist agenda over the question of marriage. Elizabeth's decision not to marry is seen as a purely personal matter. Contemporary society then saw it as essential that a monarch produce an heir, in order to prevent the realm subsiding into civil war, as England could have done in 1569. The royal marriage and the production of children were therefore matters of essential public importance. The idea that a ruler (particularly a woman) should submit to marriage in these circumstances is unfashionable today but could, literally, be a matter of life and death to her subjects.

The Catholic Plots

The impression in the film is that the relationship with Dudley and the various courtships last only a few months rather than two decades. The same is true of the Catholic plot which is discovered at the end of the film. Various plots concocted throughout the 1560's and early 1570's are all treated as one event so that the events are, indeed, as Brian Cameron complained - often very melodramatic. Norfolk was indeed executed in 1572 although Arundel and Sussex appear to have survived. There is no mention of the revolt of the Northern earls in 1569 followed by Elizabeth's bloody suppression of the north or that the presence of Mary Queen of Scots was so dangerous because of her claim to the throne. The two CIA style assassination attempts with crossbows in one case and a poisoned dress in another appear to be dramatic fabrications, as is Cecil's assassination of the Spanish ambassador.

My Conclusion

Anybody who knows anything about the period or politics in any era may well find the events in the film unconvincing. But, in fact, given the complexity of the subject matter, I think the director has made a valiant attempt to draw out the important issues. I also think he has provided a reasonable picture of Elizabeth as a person, although the portrayal is rather wart free.

Elizabeth is therefore something of a jumble of costume drama, political thriller and tragic love story but although it is well acted the characters are sometimes rather stereotyped and the plot is not always easy to follow. Certainly Eric Cantona should have stuck to football. If you want to see a superbly crafted Renaissance period political thriller then I recommend that you get La Reine Margot from the video store which is set at the same time. No doubt Elizabeth will be out soon as well so you can compare the two.

Elizabeth (15), directed by Shekhar Kapur starring Cate Blanchett, Richard Attenborough, Geoffrey Rush, Joseph Fiennes and Eric Cantona (!); 1998

CLWG Meetings

Date	Venue	Game	Author	Blurb
December Sat 19th	Riggindale	• Xmas Quiz and other entertainment.	• Pickles	• I should be doing the quiz, but I'll almost certainly be lying around with severe jet-lag. Fear not, I will be supplying Pickles with erudite and learned questions.
January Sat 9th		• Impudent Lords	• Nick	• Preparation and playtesting for Nick's War of the Roses Megagame later in the year.
February Sun 7th		• Invasion of the West	• James Kemp	• The reds are coming, the reds are coming!
The Pending Tray.		• Flushing the Wolf • Suez • Battle of Britain 3 • What is to be Done? • B3.1 • WW2 • The Lion Comes Home	• Mukul • Terry • Dave Boundy • Neil • Pickles • Trevor/ Mukul • James Kemp	

Games Organiser's Notes: - Contact Dave Nilsson (01737) 645067

- *Games in italics are provisional only and subject to change with no notice whatsoever.*

- Riggindale = Riggindale Methodist church hall, Riggindale Road, Streatham. Entry by entryphone, keys held by John Rutherford (0181) 677 5427 and Jim Wallman (0181) 677 5756.
- Bedford Park = Upstairs room at the Bedford Park pub, Streatham High Road. (Just along from Streatham station). Entry before opening hours by rear door - go down the alleyway to the right of the pub, come into the beer garden through the tatty back gate and go up the stairs.
- Eardley = Eardley School, Fernthorpe Road, Streatham. (Off Mitcham Lane). Entry by entryphone.
- Richmond Park = Richmond Park

All meetings aim to start by 1030-1100 - Cost of meetings: £3.00. (£1.50 for unwaged.)

Draft 1999 CLWG Diary

NB: do not diarise these dates until they are PROVISIONALLY CONFIRMED by the Admin. Officer. Even then, they may be subject to change nearer the date.

- Sat. 9 January
- Sun. 7 February
- Sat. 6 March
- SALUTE 24 April
- Sun. 25 April
- Sat. 1 May
- Sat. 5 June (a suitable date for a Normandy planning game!)
- Sun. 4 July
- [August - picnic?]
- Sat. 4 September
- [October - Games Weekend?]
- Sun. 7 November
- Sat. 18 December

John R (Admin. Officer)