

# MINIATURE Wargames with BATTLEGAMES

## CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES 2013

### **Ethos of the magazine**

It's about wargaming as a hobby. At first sight, that's a facile statement, because all wargaming magazines have that as their subject, but we like to focus especially on the practical table-top experience. Wargaming as it's done for real, warts and all. That doesn't mean poor quality painting and rubbish terrain, but it does mean a broader range of styles. Think of it as the standard we try to reach when we're doing our best for an important game, and then upwards, but not necessarily award-winning exhibition quality.

### **Commissioning articles**

Traditional practice is to submit one or more articles to a magazine and then wait to see if and when they are published, by which time the contents may have gone stale and you've also been inhibited in offering them to other media. We like to do things differently, so expect to submit articles only after discussion with Henry, during which a clear idea will have emerged of what you're going to be doing, when it's due and when it will be published, which will save you wasted effort. But if you've agreed a deadline, please stick to it!

### **Target audience**

Largely English-speaking adult males, though we pride ourselves on having some female readers. They're likely to have a strong interest in military history and may own an impressive collection of books, magazines and DVDs, so assume that they have at least a basic knowledge of the historical period in question unless it's very obscure. *Miniature Wargames with Battlegames* doesn't ignore the question of how we broaden the appeal of the hobby and sustain its future, and we warmly welcome children and beginners, but assume you're talking to an established wargamer with some years of experience. Articles specifically targeted at beginners will be signposted as such.

*Miniature Wargames with Battlegames* is produced in the UK, and inevitably has a British flavour, but caters for an international audience. We use British spelling, so colour, not *color*, aluminium, not *aluminum*.

### **Subject material**

Instead of writing a military history article and then tagging a paragraph about wargaming on the end, do it the other way round. Assume your audience already knows when and why the war kicked off. A few sentences to set the scene and then straight into the wargame, the scenario, the battle report, the figures, the rules etc. The more obscure the period or campaign, the more introductory background material is justified, but the sooner the article gets into how to wargame it, the better.

The bottom line? *The game's the thing!*

We also love articles that discuss wargaming *per se*, such as writing your own rules, comparing different rulesets covering the same period, building wargame armies, and giving us confidence to try things that we thought might be difficult or expensive – such as painting miniatures to a high standard or making terrain. In short, if it's about the hobby and the gaming, it's in; if it's pure military history, with no relation to gaming it, then it's out. Military history is certainly of great interest to the majority of wargamers, but the fact is that there are other magazines that cater for this, as well as all those

publishers we know and love, such as Osprey, Casemate, Pen & Sword and others, who do a far better job of packaging high quality military history for the hobbyist.

In certain circumstances, if we think a particular historical submission has potential, we might put you in touch with a Features Editor whose job is to help inject more of the wargaming aspects into what might otherwise be a purely historical treatise.

### **What about sci-fi and fantasy?**

Absolutely, yes. *Miniature Wargames* and *Battlegames* have both had proud associations with this kind of material, and long may that continue. We decided to no longer corral non-historical material into what some saw as a 'ghetto' in the "Darker Horizons" section. Instead, fantasy, sci-fi, steampunk, pulp and other non-historical genres will be presented simply as other 'periods' alongside the rest. After all, a large proportion – perhaps even the majority – of gamers who play historical wargames also play non-historical games. And that includes your Editor! So we're happy to see *Battlestar Galactica* alongside Borodino and goblins next to Gaugamela. In fact, let's be honest, with the upsurge in imaginations gaming, the line between fantasy and history has become very blurred indeed!

### **So what's your bottom line, Mr Editor?**

**Quality.** If the writing is good, and the author manages to convey his or her sense of excitement about the hobby in an entertaining way, it's in. If it's dull as dishwater, regardless of its academic credentials, it's out. And an article accompanied by good quality photos/illustrations rises to the top of the pile, simply because it makes our life easier. That may sound harsh, but if you put yourself in the shoes of a one-man-band editor/designer who may be sent an article on something rather obscure, just imagine the logistics of trying to source suitable photos. Better, therefore, to club together with a friend or two, one of whom might be a good writer, another who paints figures nicely or makes nice terrain, and yet another who knows where to point a camera, and share the glory and the proceeds. Happy editor, happy contributors and, most importantly, happy readers.

### **What about reviews?**

Both *Miniature Wargames* and *Battlegames* have reputations for fiercely independent reviews of books, rulesets, miniatures and other wargaming products and services. Reviews are a good way to get practice writing for the magazine, and we're always on the lookout for reliable reviewers who can turn a phrase. We're drawing up a list of 'officially approved' reviewers, so that we can supply this list to the trade and have them send items direct to the people best qualified to comment on their goods and services – far better than having everything arrive here at MWBG HQ, only to then have to re-package and ship it out again.

If you are sent items to review, then: 1) actually WRITE the reviews of items sent to you – there's nothing more annoying than discovering that someone has simply been hoarding review items like secret Christmas gifts – the Recce section is meant to be newsworthy, so after a couple of months, opinions seem stale; 2) make your reviews honest, and don't be frightened to criticise, but do so diplomatically if you can – wargaming tends to be supplied by cottage industries, not multinationals; and 3) keep your reviews brief, pithy and to the point, which usually means just a couple of hundred words unless the review item is agreed to be of special importance.

A note about wargame rules. We have introduced a new system to indicate just how in-depth your review is, so make sure to indicate at the head of the review one of the following:

- **Readthrough** – you've only had time to give the rules a thorough read, but haven't had the time or opportunity to do more. This category should not be dismissed out of hand, since an intelligent reviewer who has read and tried many rulesets may be very good at distilling the essence of the rules to help the reader make an informed decision.
- **Dabbled** – not only have you managed to give the rules a thorough read, but you've also managed to try out some of the rules mechanisms, perhaps solo, to see how (or, indeed, if) they work in practice. It's the kind of thing most of us would do given a couple of hours and a handful of dice and a few figures and constitutes a perfectly acceptable level of review.
- **Playthrough** – you've managed to find the time to play a complete game with the rules, perhaps solo, or with a friend, or down the club. It's unlikely to be a large game, but it's been sufficient to give you a real flavour of the rules, with most mechanisms receiving repeated attention, such as command and control, movement, terrain effects, firing and morale. Anyone should be more than happy with this level of review.

- **Multi-play** – you, with or without companions, have found the rules sufficiently intriguing/exciting/exasperating that you've made the time to play two, three or several games, giving the rules the most complete workout possible. For a rules review, this is the luxury end of the scale, and neither the editor nor, indeed, the person who wrote the rules, has any right to expect this, but it's nice when it happens. Sometimes, such a review might be 'promoted' to become an editorial feature (especially if there are nice photos alongside it) and the contributor would be paid accordingly.

And finally, if your review doesn't appear in the magazine, that doesn't necessarily mean that it wasn't up to scratch, it simply means that there probably wasn't space. We're trying to get things organised so that where this happens, the review will appear on the website instead.

### Remuneration

For editorial features, £20 for every full page published, including photographs. Contributors can be paid direct to their bank account via BACS or Swift: payment by cheque is also possible if preferred. If you prefer electronic payment, please supply us with the name of your bank, the name of the account, the sort code of your bank and your bank account number. Overseas contributors should also supply the SWIFT and /or IBAN number (ask your bank if you don't know what this is).

For reviews in the Recce section, the goods received count as your remuneration. This is why we don't permit reviews to be submitted willy-nilly; we only review items that have actually been submitted by manufacturers, publishers and so on.

### Methods of submission

E-mail is preferred. If you have large files to send, we have DropBox and YouSendIt accounts and we thoroughly recommend WeTransfer. CD-ROMs are also acceptable.

Obviously, we'd like it typed, but we're not too fussy what software you use. Basic Microsoft Word documents are fine, but we can deal with a variety of programs and it's platform-independent – Windows or Mac can be handled. Contact the Editor if you're not sure. Spelling will be checked and sorted at proofing stage, but extra brownie points go to writers who know their grammar and have the courtesy to run a spell-check before submission. The fact is that if you don't care about the quality of your article, we won't care about rejecting it.

Text-only articles are welcome. Although there will be a significant amount of illustration in the magazine, we don't shy away from publishing plain prose if it's interesting or useful, and we can always add images from our own sources.

Please do not use clever or complex formatting in your submission. A simple indication of headers, sub-headers and photo captions will suffice and save us a great deal of time.

### Photos

Use the highest resolution your digital camera can handle and in one of the popular formats (JPG, TIF etc). Ideally, the image should be *at least* 200dpi at the published size, preferably 300dpi, so expect your images to be a minimum of about 200k up to as much as 5 or 6Mb (which may equate to the maximum resolution of your digital camera). Please do not compress your images any further, as this will impair their quality. If you're an expert photographer, you will be hailed as the god you are. If you're not so expert, please ensure your photos are in sharp focus and well lit: whilst the Editor can pull off minor miracles, having a decent image to start with really helps!

See issue 361 for the Editor's tips about digital photography. But the five basic rules to which you should pay attention are:

- **Lighting** (make sure there's plenty coming over your shoulder onto the subject)
- **Focus** (keep it sharp – use a tripod if you can and the timer to eliminate shake)
- **Depth of field** (short depth of field for individual figures, deep for big battle scenes)
- **Composition** (find interesting angles, diagonals and other ways of making the scene 'active')
- **Output** (72dpi may be fine for your blog, but we need 300dpi for print)

### **Other graphics**

We can accept .eps and .ai (Adobe Illustrator) files. I'm afraid that raw CorelDraw files are not acceptable, so 'Save As' one of the other formats. Illustrations done in things like Microsoft Office, such as PowerPoint, are generally hideous and best avoided. Other formats already mentioned such as JPG, TIF and PDF, are also acceptable. Please don't submit graphics done in Microsoft Excel under any circumstances, unless it is literally a graph or table!

For maps, we really do prefer a hand-drawn sketch, just attached to an email as a scan. Henry will then work from this to create a more elaborate rendition using Photoshop. Give an indication of scale, different terrain types and so on, but don't waste ages fiddling on your computer to create something that we won't use anyway.

### **Illustrations**

We can accept any form of traditional media for scanning, such as watercolour, acrylic etc. However, please ensure that the artwork is well packaged for protection and that you pay for additional postage insurance. Whilst we will make every effort to ensure its safety whilst in our keeping, we cannot take responsibility for any artwork submitted in this way. If you wish the artwork to be returned, please enclose sufficient postage for its return. This also applies to 'old-fashioned' photographs.

### **Special note about ALL images**

Indicate in the text where pictures are intended to be placed, but **keep the graphics as separate files, not embedded in the text.**

Photos, maps and other illustrations should enhance and inform the text – relevance is critical; so, for example, if you are describing a 15mm game, the accompanying photos should feature 15mm figures. And don't forget to include captions for the images, please!

### **House style tips**

Here are a few tips that will make your submission even more attractive to the Editor:

- Leave only one space, not two, after a full stop.
- Write numbers in full (one, two, three...) up to twelve; thereafter, numerals are acceptable. Because wargaming tends to refer to numbers in many different ways, there are exceptions, such as regimental numbers (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons); die rolls (he rolled six 6s); and game turns (turn 3). Obviously, use numerals in charts and tables!
- We use 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc. for dates.
- We use Roman numerals for the World Wars, so WWI, WWII.
- When discussing historical events, use the past tense.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations and ampersands (&).
- Learn the difference between a hyphen (-) and an emdash (—).
- Learn how to use commas (:), colons (:) and semicolons (;) to break up long sentences.
- Learn the proper use of apostrophes.

### **Contact details for submissions**

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