

MOLLWITZ

The War Gamers

In 1971, a book was published that made the biggest splash in the hobby since Brigadier Peter Young's *Charge! or How to Play Wargames*. Whilst the spirit of *The War Game* was similar in many ways to the earlier book, and indeed Charles Grant and Brigadier Young were good friends, its pages enshrined a different personality entirely.

Where Young was whimsical but rigid, Grant was academic but imaginative. The Brigadier's earlier rules were very much an amalgam of mid- to late-18th century warfare, with Tarleton-helmeted Royal Horse Artillery figures happily trotting alongside tricornered dragoons and infantry in the legendary encounters of Sittangbad and Blasthof Bridge. For Grant, on the other hand, this would not do, and the columns of *Military Modelling*, *Battle for Wargamers*, *Slingshot* and *Wargamers Newsletter* resounded with his erudite exposition of a more scientific approach to wargaming. Many of us recall with fondness his long-running series *On Military Matters* in which he pondered such things as "The practicalities of wargame rules", "A consideration of musketry" and "The chance element in wargaming". It is interesting to speculate, indeed, whether Charles Grant would have been 'old school' or 'new school' were he still alive today.

But for many of us, *The War Game* represents the apogee of a particular kind of approach to wargaming. Not only is it visually stunning – whether in colour or black and white, those magnificently smart double lines of Spencer Smith infantry marching across the battlefield, accompanied by massed squadrons of charging dragoons, cuirassiers and hussars, are a joy to behold – but it is at one and the same time steeped in the real history of the period, yet endlessly entertaining because of the author's predilection for campaigning with fictitious states.

Those of you who haven't been asleep for the last year or so will know that I was inspired by this book to create my own spurious countries, endlessly warring over little more than spilt milk, and in this, I am not alone. Quite what we find so captivating is hard to explain, but there is a kind of child-like joy in transposing the quarrels of history into an entirely fictitious arena, which I can only ascribe to the literary twinkle in the eye that I detected in the work of Charles Grant during my formative years.

Here, however, we are dealing with 'the main event' from the book, the historical encounter of Mollwitz, which took place on 10th April 1741, and in which the troops of Frederick the Great covered themselves with glory, even if he himself did not! In reality, Frederick was scared witless by the onslaught of the powerful Austrian cavalry and made a prompt exit from the battlefield, leaving his deputy, Marshal Schwerin, to patch things back together and win the day.

In true Grant fashion, the encounter in the book featured the forces not of Austria and Prussia, but of those great and good peoples, the Grand Duchy of Lorraine (in white) and Die Vereinigte Freie Städte. As a lad, however, I was in no doubt that these forces were being commanded in a strictly historical fashion.

We are extremely fortunate today to have with us Brigadier (Ret'd) Charles S Grant OBE, son of the late Charles Grant. Not only has he gracefully acceded to our request to participate, but he has also brought with him all the figures originally used in that stirring re-fight of the battle that featured so prominently in *The War Game*. Amazingly, he has also brought with him the original buildings! Now retiring from a long and distinguished career as a serving soldier, Charles is also the author of many well-known wargaming and military history titles and the ever-popular series of "Table top teasers" which we have revived in *Battlegames*.

As if that weren't enough, we have also managed to persuade Stuart Asquith, formerly Editor of *Practical Wargamer*, author of a large number of well-known wargaming books and long-time friend of C S Grant, to take part in our game. A re-fight of Mollwitz featured prominently in his magazine more than 15 years ago, which makes it doubly appropriate that they should be re-united across the table here and, as Editor of *Battlegames*, I am naturally proud and delighted that they are both regular contributors to my own magazine.

We hope you enjoy the game. Team members Steve Gill, John Preece, Phil Olley and I have been looking forward to this day enormously. For me personally, it's a dream come true. We hope that you find our display evocative and entertaining and we shall, of course, be delighted to answer your questions.

Henry Hyde