



Winter Warfare In Blackpool

Thursday

Did my usual, and arrived at the hotel first, looks like I am Recce Troop again. After getting my room sorted, I went to the bar, got a non-alcoholic drink (too early for me, but made up for it later), and read a book. After about 1/2 hour, reinforcements turned up, in the shape of Neil Brunger. A bit later, Ian Pollard turned up with his moral support, Chris. Whilst we all sat in Reception, Chris said that her sister, Jan, thought that the Hippy looked cute. Naturally, we being the decent people we are, were not going to let that lie, so the Hippy's name from then on was 'Cutie'. Some of you may of wondered why, so I thought I would tell you. Others started to show up as the afternoon went on, including Shaun Carter, whom I owed a beer (which I bought him). If you did not know, Shaun is involved in the design and playtest of a new module from HOB about Kohima, and I can not wait to see it released (I have a special interest in that area, as my Step-Father served in Burma), and shall buy it. Shaun play-tested the scenarios with his willing victim, Brian Hooper, and so, that took them out of the tourney.

Thursday ended with your hero drinking too much, talking a lot of ASL, and other things, then going to bed.

Friday

Woke up with a mouth like Ghandi's flip-flop, had breakfast, and then went to war.

First battle was against tourney newcomer Phillip Jones, in the Western Front drama 'A37 Dreil Team'. I was the boys from Somerset, naturally. Turn 1, and not a lot happened, just my mtr loses his smoke, and I lost a sqd to a Double-Break. Turn 2, and a 1/2 sqd gets HOB on a morale check, which they promptly Battle-Harden and a Hero shows himself. We have Gusts for the second half of the turn, in which Phil breaks the BMG on his one and only Panther, that with his second Boxcars in a row.

Turn 3, and the Panther crew do their best at wrecking the BMG, and succeed. With a lot of shooting from the SS, I have come to the conclusion that this bunch cannot hit a barndoor at 1 inch with a 105mm howitzer. They also manage to break a LMG. Turn 4, and true to form, Hitler's finest promptly total the broken LMG (they cannot fixed anything, either!). I manage to roll my first Boxcars of the weekend, luckily on a PTC. Two bits of bad luck happen for the West Country boys, first, they somehow manage to total a PIAT, and then, a broken sqd is reduced to a broken 1/2 sqd by the Panther Interdicting them.

Turn 5, and again we get Gusts. This is my finest hour, as at 3 hex range, my boys manage to hit the Panther's frontal armour in a weak spot (I rolled a snakes), and with the TH now doubled to 30, barring a Boxcars, it would kill it. I rolled the cubes, they roll a 9, whew!!, and for the crew, well, they die as well (that will teach them to shoot at my routing guys!). Turn 6, and Phil rolls a Boxcars on a PTC, but when I roll a Boxcars, it is on a MC, to reduce, and ELR, a 458 to a 237, just my luck! The Close-Combat ends with my 247 being victorious, but the other one has my pinned 248 is killed in Ambush by his 467.

Turn 7, and I manage to rally 2x 1/2 sqds. In a shoot, one of my LMGs breaks, and I roll another Boxcars on a MC. A 1/2 sqd that runs for the finish-line does not get there, he dies. My 'good' luck continues with Boxcars, with yet another 1/2 sqd dying on a MC. I offered the towel during this turn, because I have not got enough movement points left. I have decided to shoot that Sniper of mine, as though-out the battle, he did nothing (SAN 3 times, but rolled 5 each time to see if he was awake, he was not!). This makes me 0-1 for the tourney, but I do not mind, I did kill his Panther with a PIAT from the front, how many can say that?

Two things of note; first, it is nice to see 'Berserk' organiser Trevor Edwards back playing ASL again, welcome back Trev (but, where is Steve Thomas?), and secondly, our own book writer, Ian Daghish, sold me a signed copy of his newest book (he could of given me it!). His next one, he tells this writer, will be on Operation Epsom, again in Normandy.

The second battle of this years event, was set in 1945, with me playing Hitler's finest in 'SP96 Husum Hotfoot'. The advancing British were played by Paul Legg. On Turn 1, nothing of any importance happened, but Turn 2, and one of the Wasps rolls a Double One, thank God you can not get a CH with one of those things, but wastes it. In the first Close Combat of the game, my Pinned 237 Ambushes 2x 457s (each with a LMG), and kills one of them.

Turn 3, and a bloody Wasp Preps at my guys in a wood (12+1, due to hinderance), DR of 3 = 3MC, so my guys promptly break and ELR. I manage to roll another of my Boxcars on a Morale

Check, to make a SS 447 into a broken SS 237. At last I have a sniper, who breaks one of Paul's squads. I lose two 1/2 sqds in the CCPh, one was ambushed in CC, the other was the guys in the melee from last turn to a snakes. My mortar hits one of his Comets five times, but has no effect at all, what a waste! Paul rolls a snakes on a MC and Battle-Hardens plus creates a bloody Hero, but loses the broken 1/2 sqd with them (that will teach them). The Comet on the west flank shoots at my guys in S9, hits them, but to no effect, then he Intensive Fires at them, and misses.

Turn 4, and my sniper is awake again, as he stuns the east Wasp. The east Comet does the dirty, and KIAs one of my SS 447s. When a 457 makes a dash across the road, my HMG kills the sod, and retains ROF (I knew I would get my own back). Another 457 makes a dash across another road, only to get clobbered by my MMG combo, changing it to a broken 247. Paul's Mr Fanatic is not that good, as he wets his pants when my HMG combo shoot at him. Another one of my 1/2 sqds goes down in CC.

Turn 5, and a 247 dies in the RPh (can not remember which side, there is a war going on, you know!). The west Wasp toasts my MMG combo, rolling a snakes, I should think so! An 8-0 Ldr dies in CC, again, can not remember which side, what with so much fighting going on. Now the following was becoming quite common by now, another 1/2 sqd SURRENDERS, the yellow-bellied cowards. Turn 6, and with Husum mainly in British hands, I do my best to salvage something from this mess. With my Mtr crew leaving their mortar and making a dash for the victory area, they end up in a wood. They are then attacked by the east Comet, who goes into bypass of their woods. The crew promptly find a Panzerfaust, and burn the thing, creating smoke in their hex. My HMG combo does wonders, breaking a Ldr and ELRing a 1/2 sqd, but HOBing another 1/2 sqd. One of them 1/2 sqds dies. Eventually, my HMG guys break. Paul then turns his attention to the crew. This crew survive the fire placed on it, and when Paul fired the Wasps Flame-Thrower, laughed when it rolled a Boxcars. My win, as I had a GO MMC in the Victory area. PHEW!! This makes me 1-1 in the tourny. Unusual thing today, no booze consumed by me!!!!

Saturday

After breakfast, and I ready myself for round 3 of the tourny. This is against Steve Cook in 'SP130 The Tiger's Whiskers', with me as the Russians (or, to use the correct word, Soviets), now that the PC crowd are happy, we shall continue. The only thing that happened on Turn 1, was that my 3/4 inch dummies were exposed as fakes. So, on to Turn 2, and my T34 'D' loses this APCR, but still manages to kill a PzIV with normal ammo just before it tried to cross the bridge. My 57LL loses APCR (I shall have to have a word with that supply officer next time I can kill the git!), but, as with the T34, it kills it's target, a Tiger, with a shot up the rear end. In my PFPh, the same 57LL (not hard, theres only one) shots at a M/C, TH DR 3, less then half, so a CH, effect DR 4 = 3MC. Breaks those guys, then shoots again, I retained ROF, and the effect DR is snakes, so they die. One of the Tigers gets a CH on a PillBox, but it comes to nothing. Turn 3, and Steve decides to do a board-edge creep down the western edge, with one of his Tigers destorying one of my KV-1Ss, and the crew as well.

Turn 4, and a Tiger goes driving in the woods today, and bogs, but does manage to burn a KV-1S I had stationed next to the woods in the hope of catching the unwary, some hope! The 45LL crew are attacked, and they break. When they try to surrender, those Hitlerite pigs murder them, so I tell the rest of my boys, not to surrender to those pigs, but to fight and, if necessary, die for Mother Russia. The troops that were in Melee, go and get themselves killed. The concealed guys run in the open for some unknown reason, and are turned into conscripts (the only good thing is that now I can play with Conscripts). Turn 5, and that blasted (I wished it was) Tiger manages to unbog itself. Steve then drives a Sd250 off the board, and I stop the game. I then count up the amount of points he can get off, way more than he needs too, so I give the field to him. This makes me 1-2 for the tourny, but hey, I have killed 4 tanks so far, I do not mind.

Game 4, and we find ourselves out in the Far East. The Burmese jungle to be exact. This little round of 3 scenarios feature those guys from Nepal, whom I have a great respect for, the Gurkhas. My opponent for this round is a South African serving in the British Army as an Officer, Ivor Gardiner. I get the Sons of Nippon, in the scenario 'SP95 Burn Gurkha Burn'. Turn 1, and the start of the 'Too Hot To Handle' Flame Thrower for me, yep, my FT toting 1/2 sqd dies. I get a sort of revenge, by killing one of his sqds with one of mine in Final Fire. Ivor does his best chicken act, and declines CC.

Turn 2, and a 1/2 sqd (237) HOB, get the usual for the Japs, berserk, but , with no Brits in sight, it goes and decides to be Elite (238). Both of my mortars get smoke, but one brings enough for just this round, stupid sods. I lose a 238 1/2 sqd on a Boxcars MC. My left wing Reduced sqd makes a grab for the FT, then dies. The Ldr then grabs the FT, and dies (see what I mean, 'Too Hot To Handle' FT, wretched thing!). I then create a DC-Hero (this is 'Heroes', after all), and he makes it to one hex short of the target hex, then gets killed. 9-1/448 Banzai towards his HMG combo, surviving numerous 1MCs. The HMG then fires at them using FPF in their hex, and promptly breaks. I massacre his cowards. I loses a Reduced sqd in HtH. One of my sqds reduces to a 1/2 sqd, then goes and breaks.

Turn 3, and lo-and-behold, we have Gusts, thats my smoke gone. The fatal flaw with Jap Ldrs rallying their blokes comes home to haunt me, when a 1/2 sqd rolls an 11, and is Cas-Red, ie. dies. A broken 458 routs in the open, and is interdicted down to a 248. Two of my sqds die in CC against one of his. Now my HMG/MMG open fire for the first time, and roll Boxcars, the Random Selection dice are just as bad, two blinking 6s, flipping typical! The last Brits on Hill 526 die, one down, two to go.

Turn 4, and the wind DR is Snakes, but still no wind, this light jungle is getting a bit stifling. I lose a 1/2 sqd whilst crossing the bridge, and my last DC bloke dies. Ivor breaks his MMG on Hill 507. the other MMG snakes my guys crossing the bridge. I Boxcars my LMG, whilst my mortar shoots at the 9-1/MMG(brkn), and breaks the 9-1 (glad to see the Ldr is like the MMG). Turn 5, and I break a mortar trying for WP. My 9-1/448 Banzai team die one hex from their target, in a 8-2 PB attack, DR 3 = 2KIA, what a flipping shame. At this point I concede, my Japs have not got enough blokes to complete the job. This makes me 1-3 in the tourney, but no tanks killed in this game, there was not any.

During the evening, before 'Cutie' went on the pull, it was decided that 'Cutie' and me would play each other, as we have not played for a few years.

Sunday

After scran (one of many Army terms for food) I prepared to faced down 'Cutie' (God, he is ugly!!!). This game was played in our usual way, who-cares-who-wins-as-long-as-theres-beer-afterwards, the way it should be played.

The scenario of choice is a fairly short one, SP118 'Seizing The Sittang Bridge', with me taking the Sons of Nippon again. Turn 1, and I lose a 1/2 sqd whilst it does 1/2 sqd things. I also lose one of those tin cans they laughingly call an Armoured Car, to a LMG no less, and the result is a burning wreck (rolled a snakes for the effect!).

Turn 2, and in the first Banzai of the game, Pete manages to cower three of his guys, the target then fired FPF, but to no effect, now it is 'punch-up time' or them. The Chinese mortar rolls a CH on my last A/C, but it is a wasted round. The mortar eventually kills the A/C, and the crew die as well. Banzai CC, and I lose a 1/2 sqd, so now it is a 1-1 minus 1 for me. The other CC carries on with abysmal DRs on both sides.

Turn 3, Pete fires on my 447/LMG, I roll a snakes on the resultant MC, and the 447 goes berserk, but only just. There are four CCs in progress in my part of the turn, so each in order as follows:- 1/ 348/DC and 237/mtr Ambush and kill a Chinese 337. 2/ 448 vs. 337, both die. 3/ 10-1 and 238 vs. 337, both die. And 4/ my berserk guy kills the moron who made him berserk in the first place. The Chinese 8-0 Ldr rallies, and the grunts with him feel ashamed, so they rally as well. Turn 4, and my advance starts, a bit late as it turns out. With every-one advancing, Pete retreats.

Turn 5, and a HOB on a Chinese 447 makes him go Fanatic. My Ldr/MMG/MMG stack move from 17CC3 to 40Z8 ready for the final push. I create a DC Hero, and with 8MF, he has enough to reach the Chinese bridge defence, but gets himself wounded, cutting his MF to 3. The Engineer squad he came from then charges, and dies next to the 9-1/MMG (bridge defence), and a 1/2 sqd goes and breaks next to them. My two crews both reduce, and a 348 dies in CC. The Chinese Fanatic guy goes and breaks, so much for being Fanatic! Pete moves a lot of his blokes to be next to the bridge defenders (they love each other). Turn 6, and I have totally no luck with my Prep Fire. The wounded DC Hero dies in a hail of gunfire, and with his death, I withdraw from the field (give-in, but hey, got to make it sound good, aint I).

That makes me 1-4 for the tourney, which is about my usual level. As I said earlier, at least I killed 4 tanks, one of them with a PIAT Critical Hit shot through the frontal armour of a Panther, the only

way to do it through the front, old chap. And most of all, I enjoyed all my games, which is the whole idea, I think!

Now, with any game of ASL, there is a few rule errors. So, here are some of the ones in my games:- 1/ In game 1 (GT 4), we forgot that the PIAT did not 'X' on a DR of 11, but was only broken, and could be fixed. 2/ In game 2 (GT 6), my HMG fired too many times, no ROF in the AFPh, just got carried away with it all, old chap. 3/ In game 3 (GT 2), when I killed the Tiger with my 57LL, it should of missed. You can not Bore-Sight any hex when your opponent starts with any troops on board. 4/ In game 4 (GT 4), Ivor, my opponent, forgot that units on Level 2 hills with a Level 2 obstacle between them, can still see each other. As with all errors, A.2 old boy! And, just a reminder when you play the Japanese in any 'Schwerpunkt' scenario when they are attacking, you must move quickly, I did not!

During my last game, we had to stop for a few minutes to give out the prizes. No need to guess who came first, yep, Mr ASL in the UK, Toby Pilling, choosing the figurine with two Japanese soldiers on it. In second place, the long-time-no-see original organiser (minus his co-organiser, Steve Thomas) of Blackpool ASL, Trevor Edwards, choosing the figurine of a Yank MP. In last place, came relative newcomer Chris Walton, getting a scenario pack (Friendly Fire 1, I think). Now for the decent prizes, Snakes and Boxcars (I was in with a chance of the last one), both of which were won by Paul Legg, getting 13 snakes and 9 boxcars in the same game, which he still lost! This is the best prize because, instead of trophies, you get money. With £2 for snakes and £12 for boxcars, thats £14 Paul walked away with, and he nearly won the last prize, as well!

Now, this is going to be of interest to you lot, Toby announced that he has now retired from competative ASL (his mantle piece was complaining about the weight of all his trophies), so that means that all you lot who have come second, behind him, now can not blame Toby for not winning first place!

For something totally different, I asked two newbies what they did not like about the event, and both Phillip Jones and his mate, Jaz, both said that they enjoyed it very much. The only thing that they said could improve was the choice of some of the scenarios. This is a very difficult thing to do, as in any tournament, people will always have a complaint about this. I believe that no matter what Derek Tocher does, he will always lose on this matter, that is why you are provided with three to choose from. I can not see how it can be done any other way. Plus, each year, Derek has to provide different scenarios, otherwise 'Heroes' and 'Intensive Fire' would become very boring, something that this writer would not enjoy. If you have any suggestions, drop Derek a line. You never know, your suggestion might appear in a tourny. But do not be upset if it does not.

Next years 'Heroes' has already been booked for the same place, same weekend, so get the time off work/cleared with the missus etc. sorted out, and get yourselves to Blackpool.

Please note that the title of this piece came about because it snowed on Saturday night, hence Winter Warfare (if it coincides with any other tourny title, HARD LUCK!).

After our game, 'Cutie' and me did our usual, and went to the Pub to watch the Football. Nigel Blair and Ian Pollard joined us, but they watched the Rugby, which England lost, as the French had an extra player, the ref! Both Manchester United and Arsenal won their matches, with Arsenal's being the sweetest, what with Liverpool fans sitting next to us, YES!!! Then it was off to another pub for a meal. All in all, a very good weekend. See you all in Bournemouth in October.