

# SALUTE 2004

by Chris Scott



**W**hat a day to be inside! A really bright, sunny, spring morning and half the country's wargamers, along with a fair proportion of other Europeans and Americans, thronged Olympia. I don't know the visitor numbers but 'Salute 2004' seemed busy to me and everybody appeared to be having a good time. There are bound to be a few gripes and niggles – OK I have a couple – but overall the Warlords did an excellent job from their fluid entry organisation to their spacing of stands, games and re-enactment stations. People go to shows for a variety of reasons and to try and cater for all of them is ambitious if not usually doomed. There was no sense of failure at Salute 2004 and I think everyone who wanted to play in a participation game, watch games, look at beautifully painted figures and crafted terrain, meet people, or to buy magazines, books, figures, rules, buildings, scenery, DVDs, dice,

etc., or just have a great day out dabbling in the lot, got more than a fair chance. Salute was the usual cornucopia of wargames equipment and accessories and everywhere I looked there was something fascinating to see.

One of the things I also like about Salute is that it attracts people from all over and from all ages. The hobby is alive with plenty of youngsters, dads with sons and 'even the more intelligent sort of girls'. It is also the place to meet people. I met friends I'd not seen in ages, including 'original Devereux's' from re-enactment days, Peter Hofschroer and Dave Ryan from Publishing and John Sharples who runs the excellent Wargames Forum on the Web; and many more who you just miss like Tim Myall who escorted my hussar brigade into hopefully-glorious exile. Other people told me that for them too, bumping into those they've not seen for years was an important part of April in London.

A great time was had by all, although there was one trader who didn't, and who was heard

moaning about the lack of business while packing up early. Funny, but both stands on either side of him were fighting to sell their stuff as quickly as they could snatch notes and hand over figures. Elsewhere Dave Baker, serving for Bicornie, reported that they were run off their feet and were only too pleased to help several Italian

wargamers, who'd flown in that morning, to several hundred pounds of figures each. I trust most traders had similar experiences. Every time I went back to the Miniature Wargames stand Iain, Helen (Iain's daughter and legal advisor), David Drake from the States who was signing books and the chaps looked veritably besieged.

Near the Miniature Wargames stand was the South London Warlords' super 'Back of Beyond' game set in revolutionary Russia. Staged by Chris & Max Thompson and Mike Popay, it's scenario involved the kidnapping of the Tsar by some mad Commissar Chubski Cheka and featured a beautiful period train and armoured cars made by the Honourable Lead Boiler Suit Co., with Copplestone and Pulp figures; all beautifully painted. They had a good idea for creating explosion makers – teased-out wire wool, shaped and sprayed black, with sand thrown over it when wet-varnished. The turn of the century seemed a popular theme this year, as Whitstable & Hearne Bay brought their prize-winning 'Shifting Sands' to the show. Under the vigilant umpiring of John Nicholson, and Paul's Barnett & Turner a succession of players got to wear a selection of hats and wigs to help role play explorers and indigenous inhabitants and move Copplestone, Foundry and Redoubt miniature masterpieces through a series of adventures set in a variety of lavishly recreated 'movie' locations. Craig Boorman's team had created the dream of a back lot. I spotted a temple, a desert fort, a jungle, a lagoon, a grand canyon, a native village and even an erupting volcano, all under the amazing presence of a giant zeppelin. This looked loads of fun; one guy even thought it amusing to

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# SHOW REPORT



encounter a bout of prickly heat. Dressing up too was the order of the day next door where Ad Hoc Games paraded about in jibbabs and the occasional fez.

In total contrast to this was the Dortmund Wargames Group's 'Henderson Field, Guadacanal 1942'. Here was a first class attempt to reconstruct and play a historical WW II action. The research must have been arduous for the figures and the table were both accurate and a delight to see, with a lot of scratch-built items including several detailed landing craft and many of the palm trees. The game sprang from Willi Schutte Ebbert and Thomas Schater having lots of Pacific War figures and their club's wish to create an easy-play, rapid fire role play game based upon the US and Japanese commanders. This enthusiastic group had driven from Dortmund to Calais, ferried over to Dover and then up to London just to be at Salute, one of them (whose name I cannot read on my crib sheet) told me, "We didn't know why we were invited

but it's a great honour to come." It was great of you to bring the game, lads!

Other games that caught our attention were 'Achtung! Achtung!' based upon the Carenton scenario. Crazy Bear & Ragged Staff had brought in their usual wargaming equipment and terrain – impressive multicoloured use of drybrushing over PVA and fish-tank gravel. Third time at Salute, Sebastian Rogers told me that they had run Kelly's Heroes last year and people kept returning to their games. Then there was the Napoleonic 'Teugn-Hausen 1809' from SSWG with long lines of Old Glory Austrians and French battling it out across a rolling hillside. John Woodham told me the club was already working on next year's project – a model of Krak de Chevaliers, which will be eight feet high! I can't wait! I was very impressed to see the amount of time given to talking to people and answering questions especially as

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several of the team, Trevor Brown and Andrew Finch, seemed to sense what level of answer to give. This was true, too, at Deal Wargames Society's 'Korea – A Warning from History' where Andrew White and Richard Blacklock were on hand to chat anyone through their imaginatively constructed cliff-side action. I liked their very informative flyer which not only told me about the battle they were displaying but also the source of every item on the table and how to make the terrain. There was also a very impressive 1/300 game, the details of which somehow disappeared, but it looked magnificent and gave the scale of real battle.

The 54mm boys were also out in force, especially Skirmish Wargames' 'Italian Job 2004' which traced local Mediterranean gangsters' attempts to redistribute the wealth of Puglia and seemed to have everybody both enthralled and laughing. Chris Felton and Chris Roope put this baroque extravaganza together

spectacular as did most of the others too numerous to mention here.

A couple of the traders' stands were quite dramatic in their displays. A sheer wealth of militaria was on display at the print-sellers, but for interesting items you couldn't beat Scheltrum's array of probable and impossible contraptions. I loved Kraken the mechanical squid. They also had their new-for-Salute range of 25mm Yi Dynasty Koreans including archers, swordsmen, handgunners and artillerymen plus a wonderful assortment of guns and improvised defences. Front Rank had a remarkable set up with two, six foot high folding cases displaying their range of painted and unpainted figures. Nice to see the wares put out so considerately and well lit. Visually superb too was the Ian Weekly Buildings stand which made everybody drool, even those, forced by poverty, to just pass by. Donnington Miniatures were doing a deserved roaring trade. I'm pleased to say they were really helpful and prepared to sell me separate ACW limbers to go with all the spare draught horses in my 15mm white metal box. One manufacturer, whom I asked if I could buy limbers without the horse teams, curtly snorted and told me not to be daft, others just refused. Thanks Donnington.

So far it's been all praise but now the downside elements of Salute – I missed the collapsing table disaster but I thought the entry ticket and the catering prices a bit steep even for

London and a captive audience; I took exception to the announcer who appended each microphone statement with a bellowed NOW; then there are idiots who cannot manoeuvre their backpacks. That's it. Even the Bring & Buy was well run and the two people who served me were both extremely efficient and polite. There was some good stuff changing hands and I got a couple of bargains. There was also some over-priced rubbish, including slap-painted, Napoleonic Russian, home-casts, thrown in a plastic tub



and labelled £25. I'd have thrown them out. The stamp world has a philosophy that collectors leave the dealers to deal, but among themselves they price to sell. As a hobby, we would do well to emulate this and not try to rip each other off – unreconstructed socialist speaking!

Anyway exit grumpy old man, and re-enter enthusiastic 55-year-old school-kid. Salute was everything I wanted it to be. I've not been to Historicon but I gather comparisons are very favourable. I only wish I'd have had more time to work round and look at everything. I'm already looking forward to next year, so to ALL those who worked hard at Salute to make it a very enjoyable day out – well done and thanks!



and it was good to see old friend Mike Blake still in the thick of it. The Romans too seemed to be in the thick of a barbarian horde on the 'Imperial Frontier' by Roger Prendergast and Ian Capstick of the Aylesbury Wargames Group. Allan Fleming's and Phil Viverito's warriors were pouring over the excellently scratch-built, lollystick, Roman wooden bridges, through the broken gates and even across the ditch before the fort could be alerted. The skilful gluing together and flocking of model railway track bedding, enabled the creation of stepped embankments, fosses and ramparts, while the rules, Classical Hack, got their first outing in the capital after becoming very popular with our friends in the US at Historicon and Cold Wars. This game looked

