

ISSUE 13 / AUTUMN 2012

irregular

AIRBRUSHING
IS IT FOR YOU?

CREATING
SCENARIOS

TROJAN ENGLAND
ALTERNATIVE HISTORY SETTING

THE COST OF LIMITED
MINIATURE RUNS

PLUS MUCH MORE

**MYSTERIES
OF THE EAST**



Editorial	Jason Hubbard	3
Trojan England	Jason Hubbard	5
Creating Scenarios	Dan Lee	8
The Persian Empire	Jason Hubbard	14
Robo Basho - Giant Robot Sumo 2115	Gavin Syme	20
The Cost of Limited Miniature Runs	Sally White	26
Good Vs Evil	Richard Tinsley	29
The Airbrushing World: Is It For You?	Hugo	34
Clone Troopers in 15mm - A Painting Guide	Dave Barker	37



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Editorial

Jason Hubbard

Well it's another bumper issue. Nick will be back with us next issue. He's been working on some exciting projects which required time out from the magazine. I'll let Nick explain all about it when he returns next month. It's been a funny old few months. I've found it difficult to put brush and paint to a miniature having been distracted with some great TV such as the second series of The Walking Dead and Game of Thrones. Plus, I started watching Torchwood which I missed the first time around.

Over the next few months I'm also going to be painting 15mm for the first time in ages which should be quite a challenge. On the gaming front over the next few months I'm going to be working on developing some simple rules for a motor racing game (Grot Racing) and a modern skirmish rule set, both of which will be published in Irregular.

A lot of readers will have noticed that this issue is late...the reason for this is because we have had staffing issues and a computer that gave up its last breath. We need help with contributions, this includes articles, artwork and painting tutorials.

I'm looking for articles on the following subjects;

Fantasy and Sci Fi RPG - any system
Skirmish Wargaming from any period

Painting Tutorials - these can be how to paint units quickly or specific techniques.
Short Stories

Articles on wargaming shows

Artwork - Fantasy, Historical, Sci Fi, steam punk, pretty much any genre is required.

All contributions should be submitted to the following email;
irregularmagazine@gmail.com

Well that's all for now folks see you next time...



Trojan England

Creating Scenarios

The Persian Empire

Trojan England

Words: Jason Hubbard

Illustration:

In the twelfth century a Welsh cleric wrote a book entitled the History of the Kings of Britain. He made claims within the book that stated that British kings were descended from the Trojans, and that ancestors of the Trojans landed in Britain some time after the fall of Troy, creating a Trojan/Greek state in South West Britain.

Geoffrey of Monmouth

Geoffrey was a Welsh cleric born around 1100 AD and possibly born in the Monmouth region of Wales. It is believed he was Welsh or due to his poor knowledge of the Welsh language, that he was Cambro-Norman and belonged to the French speaking elite on the Welsh border.

It is also possible that early in his career he served as a Benedictine monk in Monmouth, though between 1129 and 1151 his name appears on six charters in the Oxford area. His writings indicate that he has an excellent degree of knowledge of the Monmouth area and that it is well known to him.

Geoffrey wrote several books, but what he is most well known for was *Historia Regum Britanniae* or the History of the Kings of Britain. He is also credited with making the King Arthur Myth popular. The book starts with the first settlement in Britain of the Trojan descendants by Brutus and his people, through to Cadwalader in the 7th Century.

He claims it is a translation of an ancient book written in the British language, though much of the book

is based on earlier writings, such as Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* and Gilda's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britannie*.

Geoffrey's book is more a fictional account peppered with popular history rather than a genuine historical factual piece of literature. It is recognised today as a literary work of national myth. Many of his contemporaries dismissed his work as 'made up'. However, his work was popular across Europe where it helped to shape and structure the Arthurian myth. He is regarded by many scholars as the major establisher of the Arthurian myth.

He is also responsible with History of the Kings of Britain for bringing Merlin to the attention of the public. Then around 1150 he came into possession of some new source material relating to the bard Myrddin (Merlin). These sources didn't line up with what he had published in the History of the Kings of Britain. This may have been because he had attributed acts carried out by another Royal Advisor, to Myrddin or had just fabricated them.

Thus Geoffrey wrote the Life of Merlin in order to place Merlin within the context of his History of the British Kings. He gave long life to the myth of Merlin and made him an immortal figure of the Arthurian legend.

Brutus and the Trojans

After the fall of Troy, the Trojans flee and settle across Europe. Aeneas and his people settle in Italy. Brutus was the grandson of Aeneas. It is said that Brutus accidentally kills his father whilst out hunting. As a result he is exiled from Italy so he leaves with a large group of warriors and families. They sail and wander around the Tyrrhenian sea and up to Gaul. Whilst in Gaul campaigning, he founds the city of Tours. He leaves Gaul because the fighting was becoming too difficult, he was facing more Celtic tribes than he and his warriors were able to beat. So they travel across the channel to Britain, which is called Albion.

He heads for the South West of Britain, this region is well known to the Trojans due to its tin production. The Mediterranean region has been purchasing tin from the tribes in the South West for a number of years as it is a vital ingredient in the production of bronze.

It is believed that Brutus lands at the modern town of Totnes, named New Troy, and renames Albion after himself (Brutain). They settle in Cornwall, though they are harassed by local giants, one in particular named Gogmaogg. A Trojan hero named Corineus challenges the giant and defeats Gogmaogg by throwing him off a cliff.

They quickly subdue the local tribes living in the South West peninsula and start to create a Trojan/Greek state.

Move on a few years...

A hundred years after the Trojan invasion and settlement, the Greek state of Kernow has become prosperous and extremely powerful from the production of tin on a large scale. Several towns, cities and villages have been built and settled.

Using local material such as granite, buildings have been fashioned in a Greek/Mediterranean fashion. Ports are built at key points along the coast of Kernow creating a bustling business in trade with the continent, especially such places as Rome, Greece and North Africa.

The Trojan elite have become quite powerful and are eyeing the rest of Britain. The local British tribes have become weary of their new neighbours over the last 100 years, though as yet there have been no moves by the Trojans for conquest. They have traded with Kernow for goods and there has been, to some degree, an uptake by Celtic tribes for Greek-style goods.

Some of the tribes in the South East have developed pseudo Greek cultures along with strong trade ties

with Gaul, Ammorica and Italy selling grain and other produce to them. It is these cities and small kingdoms that the Trojan ruling elite have their eyes on.

Kernow Trojan Army

Infantry

The Trojan army consists of elite Hoplite units that are only manned by those who are of Trojan descent. These are well-armed and are equipped with only the best Bronze armour and iron weapons. Other units include Celtic-Trojan auxiliaries. These troops are of Celtic/Albion descent, they are equipped with some Greek-style armour and Celtic weapons.

Cavalry

The Trojans soon take to the British/Albion use of the chariot. They now have two types, a light chariot used for skirmish purposes and generally driven by Celtic-Trojans and a heavy chariot unit which uses a more Roman-style chariot used for breaking up ranks of infantry.

The Kernow Trojans also make use of local ponies for scouts and have light horse cavalry as well.

Officers are generally of Trojan descent, though local elites are also given command though never of a Hoplite unit. They can only command auxiliary and cavalry troops.

Fortifications

Along the border of Kernow, what is now modern Devon and Somerset border, are a line of small forts. These are to protect the Trojans from attacks by local tribes, though it has mainly been cattle raids and small skirmishes rather than any large scale attacks.

The coast is also well-protected with watch towers at key points to spot any potential seaborne invasion.

Naval

Over the last 100 years the Trojan elite have built up a substantial naval capacity of both military and merchant vessels along with numerous fishing boats. This has given them a strong presence both around the waters of Britain but also in the Mediterranean, allowing them to build strong trade links with many countries in both regions.

More recently they have set up a small port on the coast of Ireland. This is, in part, to establish trade links

and also to combat a growing pirate presence operating from the Irish and Welsh coasts. Using small ships, raiders/pirates attack trade vessels destined to and from Kernow Trojan ports.

Kernow Celts

After the settlement of the Trojans the local tribes became second class citizens. A hundred years on, it is possible for citizens of local descent to rise in station, especially through trade. The Trojans have become the noble elite and at first were responsible for most aspects of life. Now, a hundred years on, education, trade, military and local government has become accessible to local inhabitants. There are still some areas which are barred to locals, such as the elite Hoplite regiments, Royal Guard, the Senate and ownership of tin mines. Within the military, senior command is still only open to those of Trojan Descent, no local would be considered to command a Kernow Army.

Expansion

The Trojan elite have started to look at expansion into southern Ireland, having now established a port and small town called Nesos in what is now modern day Cork. Nesos has become a small, bustling town, bringing goods in and out of the country. So far, they haven't had any problems with the local Irish tribes, in fact most have welcomed them because of the luxury goods the Trojans have introduced to them. Most of the Irish nobles have accepted the Trojan lifestyle very easily, building villas and houses in the Trojan/Greek style.

They have also looked at setting up a similar port/town in Wales to help establish trade links.

Though their main aim was the conquest of Britain, they first moved into the southern area of the country tackling the Celtic tribes there.

Celts (outside of Kernow)

The tribes beyond the borders of Kernow have been influenced by Greek/Trojan culture but have not relinquished their Celtic roots. Some tribes have built stone structures and developed military along similar lines, but they are still deep-rooted in a Celtic warrior culture, living in hill forts and fortified settlements.

Those in the South East of the country have developed strong trade links with the continent and still have a strong Celtic culture, though in the last 50 years they have also developed links with the Mediterranean and in particular Rome, which has had influence on these tribes. Roman culture can be seen in the goods traded and in some cases the building structures being

developed, though they're still using local traditional materials rather than stone, concrete and marble.

Tribes in the North of England are still strongly Celtic in culture. They live in the same manner as they did prior to the Trojan invasion. They fight amongst each other and carry out raids on their southern rich neighbours.

Roman Influence

Rome expanded in the same manner as they did historically, though conquest of Gaul was completed in a much quicker time scale. The Roman army has moved through Gaul with a larger army, their main aim was and still is the invasion of Britain. They see the Trojan state of Kernow as a threat to Roman expansion.

The Romans are having to compete for trade in the Mediterranean region. Kernow has much better trade contacts in the region and is exploiting them at a cost to Rome. The senate have their sights firmly set on the growing wealth of the Trojans.

So far they have sent emissaries to the tribes along the South East of Britain offering aid if the Trojans attack. They know that if they are to become the dominant force in the region then they need to curb any expansion by the Trojans.

Northern Europe

The tribes of Germania are stirring, the Trojans have seen that Rome could be a problem and so have sent emissaries to the most influential of the Germanic tribes offering support and aid for an invasion of Gaul. If the German tribes overrun Gaul, then the Romans will be delayed or even prevented from interfering within Britain thus allowing the Trojans to continue with expansion plans unhindered.

Creating Scenarios

Words: Dan Lee

Illustration: Ian Garnett & Jason Hubbard

When it comes to wargaming there are many different types of scenario that you can play. The different types each have their own strengths and weaknesses, and by playing a wide variety of scenarios you can get much more enjoyment out of your gaming. But it appears to me that many gamers seem to get 'stuck' playing the same sort of scenario and I think that is a great shame. It doesn't take a lot to create a scenario, and with this article hopefully I can make the job even easier and allow gamers to branch out a little. It's worth pointing out that the scenario categories I use in this article aren't clear cut. Many scenarios fall into more than one category, but these categories remain useful nonetheless.

The Pitched Battle

This is perhaps the most common gaming format, at least amongst the mainstream games such as Warhammer and Warmachine. This is understandable, as not only are they the easiest to set up and play, but they are invariably well-balanced, allowing the outcome to be determined solely by player skill (and luck). It is for this reason that they dominate the tournament scene. In essence a pitched battle is symmetric; both players have forces of equal strength, both obey the same rules and both have

the same victory conditions. In some cases the terrain may even be symmetric so neither side gains an advantage over the other. That isn't to say that a pitched battle can't be spiced up a little. A few extra special rules (applied equally to both players), some interesting terrain or an unusual victory condition can drastically change how players have to play.

Strengths

- The game is a 'fair fight' - the outcome should be based purely on relative player skill
- Less special rules make them more suitable for beginners

Weaknesses

- Players often get stuck playing this type of scenario and can grow bored as a result

How to design?

Writing a pitched battle scenario is simply a matter of ensuring everything applies to both players equally. The deployment zones should be symmetrical, and terrain should be set up with no major advantage to one side or another. The victory conditions should be the same for both players and equally feasible. Special rules should affect both players equally.

Examples

The six main scenarios in Warhammer 8th Edition are all pitched battles. They tend to differ mainly in how opposing forces are forced to deploy. They also have examples of a few different victory conditions, such as eliminating enemy standards or capturing a central building. The six scenarios in Warmachine Prime MkII are also all pitched battles, with the main variation coming from victory conditions and once from army selection restrictions. All twelve of these scenarios are excellent examples of how to alter a pitched battle to change how you play the game.

Tutorial Scenarios

These aren't very common. Most gaming systems will have one at best, and most have none. I actually think they are one of the most important types of

scenario. A good tutorial scenario can help get people playing the game and helps to bolster the entire gaming community as a result. They can take a bit of thought to create, but by their very nature are easy and quick to play. You can usually play a couple of tutorial games in the space of time it would take to play a normal game. This can help out if running introductory sessions for a gaming system.

Strengths

- The rules should be easy to remember, as there should be no special rules and some normal rules should be stripped out where possible
- Games will be quick

Weaknesses

- The stripped-down version of the game can prevent players from getting a true feeling for the gaming system
- Smaller games can make it harder to field the more expensive units that you may want

How to design?

With a tutorial scenario simplicity is the key. Keep army selection simple if possible, but be aware that



you may need to put restrictions in place to keep the game fair at small game sizes. Deployment and terrain should be brutally simple (e.g. both sides deploy in symmetric deployment zones and there is no terrain). Don't add any special rules unless they are needed to make the game work for small battles. If there are any complicated parts of your gaming system which could be pulled out without disrupting the game too much or destroying its character, remove them. These elements can always be reintroduced one at a time as players learn the rules.

Examples

The Cruiser Clash scenario from *Battlefleet Gothic* is a good example of a tutorial scenario. Players can only use cruisers (stripping the scenario of multiple unit types and their rules). There is no terrain, and the special rules for teleport attacks etc. aren't used either.

Re-enactments

In a re-enactment scenario you are trying to recreate a battle to follow a story, either historical or fictional. These are the norm in historical gaming systems, but there is nothing to stop them being used in any wargame. The key point is that since you're trying to recreate a battle rather than stage one, so to speak, it is unlikely that the battle will be fair. They usually take the longest to create as you have to do some background reading to accurately re-enact the battle, but they can also be the most interesting to play.

Strengths

- A strong story can add a whole extra level of excitement to the game

Weaknesses

- They can take a long time to prepare
- It can be difficult to recreate the battle while still allowing both players a decent chance of winning

How to design?

Start by finding an account of the battle you want to recreate and read through it. Decide how accurate a re-enactment you want to create. Will you be happy to just use similar terrain and armies, or would

you also like to restrict the armies to more closely resemble the forces used in the original battle? Do you want to design special characters to lead the armies? Will special rules be necessary to adapt your gaming system to allow the battle to more closely resemble the story? As you read the account of the battle, note down any information you will need to answer the above questions (such as units involved, feats performed by key characters, where the battle occurred, etc.). Using your notes you can now set up terrain and write some army list restrictions, being as thorough or as loose as you want. The hardest part will be determining victory conditions. It should be possible for the battle to end as it did in reality (or in the story), but it must also be possible for the other player to win, although the chances need not be 50:50. If you want to design special characters bare one thing in mind: special characters don't need to be more powerful than normal characters to be special. A good background, some unique war gear and a special rule or two is more than enough to make a special character stand out.

Examples

The old Warhammer campaigns released in the 90s, such as *Circle of Blood* and *Grudge of Drong* are full of re-enactment scenarios. Each scenario has terrain to match the story, a special (not necessarily powerful) character or two and suggested army composition guidelines. Although I don't own any myself, I'm sure most historical games will contain good re-enactment scenarios as well.

Underdog Scenarios

In an underdog scenario one player is deliberately handicapped in some way. They may be outnumbered, be suffering from a debilitating special rule or have a very poor deployment. This means that the handicapped player is unlikely to win if you use conventional victory conditions, but by setting some unusual victory conditions, (such as the player simply having to survive for a number of turns, the game can become fair again with both players standing a chance of victory.

Getting this balance right can be difficult though, so underdog scenarios often need thinking through a lot and thorough play-testing.



Strengths

- The in-balance can make for a very intense and closely fought battle

Weaknesses

- Striking the correct balance can be hard (and time consuming) to achieve
- Some players don't like scenarios that aren't a fair fight

How to design?

Begin by deciding how the underdog is to be handicapped as this defines the whole scenario. Common examples include being outnumbered, the enemy receiving endless reinforcements, being forced to deploy very unfavourable conditions (e.g. ambushed), or a rule preventing the player from controlling his forces properly (usually in the early stages of the game only). Take the time to ensure any handicaps given to the underdog (or any bonuses given to their opponent) are meaningful. For example, endless reinforcements are generally of little use in a game of Warhammer where a unit walking onto the table is unlikely to get into close combat with the enemy before the turn limit is reached.

Next, determine victory conditions for both players that are achievable given the special rules you've already come up with. Usually in underdog scenarios the underdog has a condition under which they win, and any other outcome is a win to their opponent. Common examples include surviving for a certain amount of time, killing a critical enemy unit, or escaping off the opposite board edge. Victory points can still be used as long as you account for the underdog's handicap (e.g. they need only get half as many victory points as their opponent to win, rather than more than their opponent's total victory points). Alternatively, you can devise a way of rating a player's success and then have the players swap sides and repeat the scenario to see who the winner is.

Examples

Battlefleet Gothic contains several underdog scenarios. In Blockade Run a fleet must attempt to escape off the opposite board edge while being outnumbered 2:1 with their enemies deploying between them and their escape route. The underdog can score additional victory points for each ship that escapes. In Surprise Attack the defender's fleet starts with a numerical advantage but most of their ships cannot act until they pass a leadership test. If the attacker strikes quickly they stand a very good chance of victory.

Specialist Warfare

In a specialist warfare scenario you attempt to recreate rarer types of battle, such as a siege, guerrilla warfare, tunnel fights, etc. They are another type of scenario that requires quite a bit of preparation, but again the extra level of rules and detail can create very interesting games. They have the potential to be the most demanding in terms of terrain requirements too, possibly making them financially harder to run, but then again they look better for it.

Strengths

- Trying out specialist forms of warfare can lead to very different gaming experiences
- The battles can often look very good visually as you use unique pieces of terrain, such as castles, entire settlements or cavern complexes

Weaknesses

- The rules will require a lot of development work
- Terrain requirements could be time-consuming and/or expensive

How to design?

The first thing to do is lots of research and brainstorming about your chosen form of specialist warfare. What forces are usually involved? What tactics are used? Where are such forms of warfare practiced? Now decide what terrain is necessary to represent the battle (and get modelling while you finalise the rules). Write army restrictions for both sides that are in-character for the form of warfare used. In guerrilla warfare for example, the attackers would probably consist of only fast and/or stealthy units. In tunnel warfare, fliers perhaps wouldn't be allowed. Now you need to create special rules to make the scenario play out like your chosen form of specialist warfare, and not like a normal battle with some different terrain. Should one side be permitted some form of special attack or deployment rules? Where possible, simply give units special rules that already exist within your gaming system rather than create entirely new rules. Finally, set victory conditions. These probably won't be too difficult, as normal victory points or route the enemy conditions will suffice if you've got everything else right.

Examples

The Blood in the Badlands supplementary rulebook for Warhammer contains two types of specialist warfare scenario. Their cavern fighting rules primarily consist of special rules to represent the environment along with unusual gaming table shapes to represent the tunnels. Their siege rules go into much more detail. Special units and rules are provided for both attacker and defender, rules are given for the castle sections themselves, and victory conditions are established based upon seizing key parts of the castle.

Asymmetric Scenarios

An asymmetric scenario is defined by the fact that both sides are fighting under different conditions (be that deployment, army selection or special rules) but the fight is still balanced i.e. it's not an underdog scenario. Achieving balance while doing completely different things is quite hard, so the scenario needs a lot of careful thinking through and preferably some play-testing.

Strengths

- Asymmetric scenarios are a great way to have a really memorable battle
- They are also good as part of a narrative campaign

Weaknesses

- The rules will require a lot of development work

How to design?

The best starting point is to have a narrative in your head that you want to turn into a scenario, such as an attack on an enemy camp or a particularly unique confrontation between two rivals etc. This should help you to establish terrain and army list restrictions (if they are needed). Give each player a few advantageous or hindering special rules. The key thing is to remember to try and maintain balance – if one player receives a big advantage, then the other player must also receive a big, but different, advantage. Once you have written down all your special rules go through them checking how they work together, including how they interact with

deployment and army selection restriction, to check for particularly good combinations. Tweak the rules slightly to maintain balance if needed. Victory criteria can probably be kept the same for both players as the differences will have been well-established by special rules by now.

Examples

Asymmetric battles are fairly rare, but there is one in Tamurkhan The Throne of Chaos (a Warham-

mer supplement produced by ForgeWorld). In The Conquest of Giants scenario, one player is trying to subdue some wild giants. This entails some very restrictive army selection for one player (they can only have giants!), but the battle is still balanced as the other player is trying to subdue, rather than kill, the giants. Victory is determined purely by how many giants are subdued.



The Persian Empire

Words: Jason Hubbard
Illustration: Pamela McBride

Rome's obsession to conquer Persia dates back to around 55 BC when Crassus needed a victory, and the plunder that would come with that victory, for political ends in Rome. He looked to the Persian empire to provide both. Crassus took a Roman army into Persia near the town of Harran and met with a Persian army under the command of Surena. It was at this battle that the Roman army met a new type of soldier, horse archers and heavily armoured cavalry very similar to medieval knights.

The horse archers armed with laminated bows could loose an accurate shot from 300 yards and it would punch through Roman armour from 150 yards away. Another devastating feat these horse troops could perform, was called the Parthian shot. They could fire the bow from behind and whilst being pursued were able to turn in the saddle and loose accurate shots at their pursuers.

Crassus lost the battle of Harran, along with around 30,000 legionnaires, whilst a further 10,000 were captured. Only around 500 soldiers returned home to Rome.

The captured forces were brought into the Persian military within Central Asia. Chinese records state

that two generals encountered a strange army in a city 500 miles east of Margiana. They had a fortified position in the form of a double palisade and were being drilled with large rectangular shields to form a defensive screen. The only soldiers during this period who used these tactics, fortifications and large rectangular shields were the Romans.

Persian Frontier

The frontier with Persia became a constant conflict. Rome's professional army consumed 80% of revenue gained from taxes. The empire had become a military state whereby the army could appoint or dethrone an emperor. It had reached the point where the only way to feed itself was from plunder gained from military action. By the time of Severus Septimius the most lucrative place to conquer was the vast Persian empire.

Severus managed to capture Ctesiphon and gained two new provinces, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia. The amount of gold, silver and commodities gained from that military operation kept the Roman empire's treasury from going bankrupt for a couple of decades.



During the third century the border between the Roman empire and Persia's was in a constant state of conflict and war, from cross-border raids and skirmishes to small-scale military actions.

In 295 AD Rome was repelled in an attack in Ctesiphon, but they captured the Persian king's harem. The capture of the harem was a massive coup, not only did it contain thousands of concubines, but it also housed the entire royal family along with the royal children.

Rome returned the harem for control of the Persian lands in the North West which included Northern Mesopotamia. A treaty was brokered. The defence of the border was becoming a massive full-time job that drained the empire of money annually. In 312 AD, Constantine came to power in Rome after a bitter civil war. He decided to shift the seat of power to Constantinople away from Rome. Another change he implemented was to make the Roman empire Christian, which led to persecution of Christians in the Persian empire. On the death of Constantine, Shapur II moved to retake the lands Rome had previously taken, so from 337 to 350 Rome and Persia were in a state of war for the land of Mesopotamia.

The ongoing conflict against the Persians during the last two centuries had drained both the Roman economy and military. It placed a constant drain on resources of other frontiers within the Roman empire reducing manpower along the Rhine and Danube. This led to larger incursions by Germanic

and Gothic armies. It probably also led to the hiring of Germanic mercenaries in the later stages of the empire and the payment of tributes to the Huns, Goths and Vandals.

At the same time the same was happening to the eastern borders of the Persian empire i.e. the Persian army was also slowly being drained of resources. This led to the Huns on the Kushan frontier being able to move into Persia and across to the Roman empire.

Sassanians

Septimius Severus's campaign against the Persians had weakened the Romans and this had allowed the Sassanian movement to take power. The old feudal style of government that the Persians employed was obliterated by the Sassanians and replaced by a centralised system of government. This was very similar to the Roman system of government.

Another change they made was to develop a professional army. Troops were placed on salaries, which meant that the Roman army was no longer the only professional standing army in the ancient world.

From the Sassanians, Iran was born, and all non-Iranians were considered to be from the Kingdom of Lies, which generally meant anyone from the Roman Empire.

In 231 AD a Roman army was sent to Antioch under the control of the Emperor Alexander Severus. The aim was to try and start negotiations with the Sas-

sassanian emperor Ardashir. Ardashir sent four hundred envoys, who were richly dressed and outfitted, to the negotiations in Antioch. The aim of this was to show the Romans the wealth and power that lay within the Sassanian empire, with a subtle message that the Roman army should leave Syria and hand back all territory in the east.

Alexander sent the troops into what became a stalemate. The Romans lost large quantities of soldiers, whilst the Sassanians lost land in Mesopotamia. Alexander was murdered two years later by his own army.

King Shapur

By 220 AD Persia was now 400 years old and it had been in conflict with Rome for most of those 400 years.

Shapur was crowned in 241 AD following the death of his father. Shapur needed and looked for new conquests to cement his coronation. His first military task was to invade the Kushan Empire and in doing so he destroyed the Kanishka dynasty. Once that campaign was completed, he turned his focus on the Romans by pushing deep into Mesopotamia. Once in Mesopotamia he came up against the Roman Emperor Gordian 3rd (238-244 AD).

Gordian was an inexperienced 17 year old and was no real match for Shapur. Gordian was being advised on military matters by the Praetorian Prefect Gaius Timesitheus. Shapur and his army met the Romans west of the Euphrates near the town of Reshiana. Here Shapur received a setback. Gordian also received a setback when Gaius took ill and died from disease leaving Gordian to campaign without him.

Gordian marched his forces to Babylonia. They clashed with Shapur's forces at Misikhe. It was during this battle that Gordian was killed and the Roman force destroyed. Philip the Arab, who had succeeded Gaius as Gordian's military advisor, desperately needed to return home to Rome now that the Emperor was dead. He was eager to finish the campaign against Shapur so that he could return without delay. He paid Shapur a large sum of gold to effect a peace treaty.

Philip was succeeded by Decius as the new emperor in 251 AD. He died the same year whilst on campaign against the Goths who had inflicted a terrible defeat against the Roman army. This defeat allowed, or prompted, Shapur to begin a new

campaign against Rome. He knew that the Roman army was weak because of defeat at the hands of the Goths. Shapur took his troops along the Euphrates into the province of Syria. At Barbalissos the Roman garrisons stationed there were destroyed, Shapur claimed 60,000 Roman troops were killed, though this is probably a slight exaggeration. This now meant that Shapur had control of Syria and the capitol Antioch. At this period Antioch was one of the largest and most prestigious of the Roman cities within the Empire.

It was because Antioch was such a prestigious and wealthy city that Rome responded immediately by sending troops under the command of Publius Licinius Valerianus (Valerian) to relieve the city. The initial campaign went in favour of the Roman army. They forced Shapur to fall back, though this campaign by Persia was more in keeping with a raid than a serious military campaign.

By 253 AD Valerian managed to win a small victory on the outskirts of Edessa, then bad luck struck in the form of disease and plague breaking out within his army. The disease decimated the army and Valerian was forced to retreat behind the city walls of Edessa. Once inside, Shapur saw an opportunity to exploit and moved to besiege the city. It wasn't long before Valerian offered terms and decided to negotiate in person alongside his senior officers. This was an unusual tactic, and not one Shapur would have contemplated, even though within military and noble circles in Persia there is a great sense of honour and code. Valerian may have also thought he was safe due to this high honour, but the negotiators and Valerian were taken captive.

It was said that Shapur used Valerian as his mounting block when getting onto his horse. Valerian lived another two years. After he died, Shapur had Valerian's skin stripped from his body and stuffed with straw to make him look lifelike. He then placed it on display in a Persian temple.

The ruler of Palmyra, Odaenathus, saw an opportunity to make an alliance with Persia and sent envoys to Shapur suggesting such a move. Shapur sent a message back stating that Odaenathus, was a vassal and insolent to suggest an alliance. This insult was a mistake, because Odaenathus was an excellent field commander with a small highly mobile force. Odaenathus attacked the Persians. As they were retreating from recent victories laden with plunder, he managed to send them scattering. He then used his power as a Roman magistrate to command the forc-

es of the East. Suddenly Shapur was on the defensive against a Roman army who were commanded by a competent and experienced general. After five years of campaigning Shapur was driven from the Roman provinces he had conquered. Odaenathus even managed to drive his troops to the outskirts of the Persian city of Ctesiphon.

Shapur remained in a wary stand off with Rome. He had lost as many battles as he had won, though he had gained a vast amount of prestige for capturing the Roman Emperor Valerian. Problems were growing along his own borders. Those with India were now presenting problems he could no longer ignore. He was also having to deal with Nomads from further east who were also proving to be troublesome. So his focus on Rome was switched to internal and eastern borders. Shapur continued to reign until 272 AD when he died from natural causes. This was unusual for a Persian monarch.

Palmyra and Queen Zenobia

Palmyra was part of the Roman province Syria Phoenice. It was a very wealthy trading city with its population dedicated to import-export between East and West. Most of the trade between the Mediterranean, Persia, India and China went through the city, which made its inhabitants extremely wealthy. With its wealth they had street colonnades built and the city had a Romano-Greek style and feel. They trained an army of horse archers to protect their investments and provided a constant supply of troops to the Roman army.

Yet the ongoing conflict between Persia and Rome was having a detrimental effect on trade which meant lower levels of wealth. It became so bad that around 250 AD the ruler of Palmyra sent word to Shapur offering to become an ally. Shapur refused saying he had no allies but subjects.



Emperor Valerian offered the ruler of Palmyra, Odaenathus, the governorship of Syria, in return for troops in Valerian's campaign against Shapur. When Valerian was captured, the new governor continued a campaign against Shapur. The new emperor Gallienus named him Supervisor of the East.

In 267 AD the governor was assassinated. His wife claimed the title on behalf of her son and became Queen Zenobia. She was an accomplished hunter and fought alongside her husband against the Persians.

Gallienus decided to announce that the authority of Zenobia would be limited and Palmyra would become a client state. She decided otherwise and set

herself up as an independent state. She even went as far to mint her own coins with the term Augusta, mother of the emperor, and gave herself the title Queen of the East.

Aurelian replaced Gallienus as Emperor and set about bringing those provinces who had rebelled, which included Palmyra, back under military and central control. The Roman army fought two battles against Zenobia and her army, winning on both occasions. Zenobia was captured and sent back to Rome, with her reign ending in 272 AD. In 273 AD the city of Palmyra was flattened and its inhabitants were either killed or sent into slavery.





R.P.G.

Robo Basho - Giant Robot Sumo 2115



Robo Basho - Giant Robot Sumo 2115

Words: Gavin Syme
Illustration: Sam Croes

In the twenty second century direct warfare between the powerful Cyber Daimyo of Japan is outlawed and instead all conflicts are settled in the Mega-Dohyo between Giant Roborikishi. Fortunes, Honour and Lives can be won or lost in the huge circle of destiny.

Neo-Japan in 2115

A brief and bloody internal war saw the nation of Japan, which had strove for so long to leave its legacy of struggle behind, torn apart in the middle of the twenty first century. Though the government in the Tokyo Yokahama combine sought to contain the ambitions of the self-styled Cyber Daimyo, they failed. This failure came from corruption and a weakness not least caused by Japan's massively swollen and largely unemployed populace, but it also came about due to the wider world situation. The global Resource Wars were in full swing and the older nations of the Western World were employing any and all means to make sure that they got their share of what the globe could provide. This often came at the expense of other weaker countries and indeed continents.

With the old system broken down and casualties numbering in the low millions, Japan gradually split into armed regions each ruled by a victorious Cyber

Daimyo. Though they had overthrown the central government these new warlords found themselves weak and so restricted themselves to raiding and skirmishing among themselves while they sought to consolidate their own positions.

Faced with the same problems that the Tokyo government had not managed to deal with, the Cyber Daimyo needed to focus the energies of the poor and hungry into a spectacle that would fill their bellies with the rice of awe if not the rice of the fields. The new rulers also needed to avoid another war that might engulf Japan and then destroy her utterly a second time around.

The answer was to take the wrestling art of Sumo, abandoned in the new times of leanness and war, and to turn it into something more. To turn it into an event that could satisfy both the people and the ambitions of their rulers. The massive war machines of the western world were the answer. Not with missile and cannon but with fist and gripping lifts. The Roborikishi and the Mega-Dohyo were summoned into a tense and vital creation.

Roborikishi and their Stables

Formed in 2096, the new Robotto Makuuchi league

saw the removal of the last of the armed forces of Japan (at least internally on the home islands) and the creation of the Hanaga Treaty.

The treaty was signed by all those in positions of power and as well as restricting war to the circle of destiny it saw to the funds needed to construct both the Roborikishi and the places they would both fight and reside.

Taking their lead from the designs of Greeson and Sebrenka developed on the other side of the world the mechanics of Japan set about the construction of forty two giant robots. Each of these machines would be guided by a Chonmage, a specially trained pilot who would be selected from hundreds of those qualified to bring the three hundred feet tall machines to glory. The name given to the pilots is honorary and also humorous as the term Chronmage refers to the hairstyle worn by human Sumo, but as the pilot is housed in a cockpit in the top of their machine's head it makes perfect sense. Under the terms of the Hanaga treaty there may only ever be forty two Roborikishi in existence and a penalty of death awaits any who try to break this rule. The Roborikishi are kept in seven closely guarded massive stables dotted all over the main island of Honshu. Each stable has a staff of thousands many of which are armed Ashigaru dedicated to protecting the very valuable robots from the curious and from those intent on sabotage. Each stable is a self-contained town where the pilots and their trainers along with the inner circle of the owning Cyber Diamyo reside. Often sealed from the outside world, the only time the people of Japan see the inside of a stable is when its main doors open and a Roborikishi strides forth to do honourable combat with its opponent.

It is traditional now for Roborikishi to make their way on foot to the Mega-Dohyo surrounded by a small fleet of skimmers and other vehicles. This change was made for several reasons. Foremost of them was to impress the subjects of the ruling Cyber Diamyo but also for security after the Shimane Incident which made the original thousand ton tracked crawler carriers obsolete.

The Mega-Dohyo and the Baying Crowd
The build up to a contest in the Mega-Dohyo can often last for many hours as the supporters of each side parade in the circle of destiny and attempt to stir up the legions of loyal followers who fill the huge stadium.

There are two Mega-Dohyo, both in re-built Tokyo, but the layouts of both of them are identical.

At the centre of the stadium is the Dohyo itself which is a circle six hundred and ninety feet across with a surface of hard packed clay. Outside this is a ring of building-sized boxes within which officials and media crews watch and report upon the ritualistic battle between the two giant machines. The stadium itself then comprises an outer circular area with banks of towers housing spotlights and enough seating for more than one hundred thousand people.

Fuelled by hot saki and other intoxicants the crowd can become very loud and often have to be restrained by security patrols lest they leave the seating areas and attempt to enter the Dohyo itself. It is the legal right of any Chonmage, or other official, to shoot dead anyone who enters the Dohyo without permission.

Entering at either side of the stadium through massive arches, the two Roborikishi go through a complex ritual of preparation which sees the robots sprayed with hundreds of gallons of salt water while several air-rafts drop billowing clouds of rice over them. With the ritual complete the pilots bring their machines to the edge of the inner circle and then bow to each other before turning to the crowd and giving a display of lights or even low calibre live weapons fire. The pilots are never seen at any time during the contest and often do not leave their cockpits for several days if having travelled far to the Mega-Dohyo.

Once the Gyoji or referee has floated to the centre of the circle at a strict height of five hundred and twelve feet in a specially outfitted air-raft, the match begins. With that the offensive systems of both Roborikishi are remotely activated and honour can be settled.

Robo Sumo Contest

Both Roborikishi are allowed to make their initial attack upon their foe once activation has been granted. Initial attacks must be made using ranged weapons with set limitations. Weapons are limited to lasers of less than 35kw output and projectile weapons of 14mm calibre or less. Exotic armaments are allowed, for example dazzling magnesium light displays and chemical sprays. This exchange of ranged fire is limited to sixty seconds before automatic cut offs remove each pilot's ability to use his

weapons.

It is not uncommon for upwards of four to five hundred in the crowd to be killed by stray rounds and beams in some finals for the title of top machine in the Robotto Makuuchi league. This is seen by some traditionalists as necessary to appease the spirits who are upset at a sport of man being carried out by machines. With the weapons fire suspended, the contest proper begins. Typically, neither machine will have been critically damaged up to this point but it has been known on occasion for contests to have ended due to damage from bullet and beam. Some Chonmage leave the impact marks of previous fights on their machines as a point of honour. With arms raised, the Roborikishi advance looking for a way to overcome the others guard and gain a solid hand hold.

A common feature to all machines is their thick frontal armour and massive arm actuators ending in human like hands designed for grabbing and lifting. It only takes moments for the giant wrestlers to come to blows. The Mega-Dohyo then echoes to

the thundering impacts of metal on metal. There are dozens of different recognised holds and techniques which are given in the kimarite manuals and all of these are put into play.

Skilled pilots can end a contest in less than two minutes while those of lower standing can take upwards of seven. Once one machine manages to gain a hold that is virtually unbreakable a series of pushes and shoves moves the gripped Roborikishi to the edge of the circle. There, unless fate intervenes, one massive robot topples to the sand of the outer arena. Remaining standing the other machine is victorious.

Robo Sumo is not as intricate as the ancient human sport, it is not as filled with mystery and history, but it is very loud and unlike anything else on earth. It is adored by the crowd. The winner of the contest is rewarded and out in the crowd and beyond them in the lands of the Rising Sun bets are collected or lost and heads taken when monies cannot be covered.

The Kuroboshi MkIII

The finest design yet developed for a Roborikishi is the ironically named Kuroboshi MkIII. Ironic because in traditional human Sumo the term means 'loser of the match' while the huge machines bearing this name that translates into english as 'Black star', have won more contests in the Robotto Makuuchi league than any other. While the inner working of the Kuroboshi are a closely guarded secret, many think that its three hundred foot tall skeleton is based on the Behemoth II developed by Richard Fitzcoming for the British government.

The Behemoth II mecha skeleton is among the best to be found upon which to hang a lot of armour and while the Kuroboshi does not carry the large calibre cannons or missile racks common to the western robots, it is indeed very heavily armoured. The machine has more than eight feet of armour around its waist and upper legs with the rest of the skeleton being covered as much as possible at the expense of speed and secondary systems not needed in the Mega-Dohyo.

Kuroboshi types boast some of the largest electroservical muscle groupings of any giant robots allowing them to lift vast amounts of weight up to and including other machines of equal size. As you would expect this is vital to Robo Sumo. The MkIII carries several ranged weapon systems for the first stage of the mecha-basho including three 12.5mm belt fed machine guns and two 30kw lasers for



pinpointing weaknesses in an opponent. Current Kuroboshi MkIII machines have an unloaded weight of approximately two thousand seven hundred tonnes.

Role Playing Possibilities

The world of the Roborikishi is filled to bursting point with potential for role play in a wide variety of systems and settings. You could approach the circle of destiny within and without it with a sense of humour or in all seriousness or even with a bolt on module for your normal RPG system. Here are some ideas to follow up on.

One of the best 'realistic' near future systems I have come across is the 'Corporation' system by Brutal Games which elegantly handles big business and its wiles and has settings and components for Tokyo and Japan. Creating characters and assigning them to the Stables is easy enough and many missions involving protecting and demolishing Roborikishi are also easy to create with these rules.

If you prefer the more animé orientated approach such as that seen in the Gundam and other franchises then you can get your teen heroes and Roborikishi pilots from many sources including GURPS. I prefer systems like the great 'Big Eyes, Small Mouth' by White Wolf publishing. For giant robots these are great and you will be smashing tons of metal together to the sound of pop rock in no time.

Assuming that you wish to go beyond characters in and about the Mega-Dohyo and instead wish to play out the conflicts between the Roborikishi themselves then I can suggest a simple course of action. Take the person to person combat system in your chosen RPG and upscale it. Use the pilot's ability in hand to hand and any relevant wrestling skills to direct a melee between your 'robots'. Record damage as wounds and try to force an opponent out of the circle. This article and the rules of real Sumo will tell you all you need to know here.

Next Time - Wargaming, Scenario Seeds and the Greats

This article is part one of two but with the second part being held for another issue of Irregular Magazine.

In the second part a simple set of rules is outlined which, using cut out silhouettes of Roborikishi in approximately 15mm scale as well as a deck of playing cards, lets you fight your own battles in the Mega-Dohyo. In addition to this, a set of sample scenarios are given for roleplayers and wargamers to use in this setting with any game system as well as accounts of the great stables, pilots and robots of Neo-Japan.

* Gavin Syme is the creative manager of Alternative Armies and its sister brand 15mm.co.uk and alongside this he has had a life long interest in wargaming and science fiction in general. You can learn more about what he is currently up to on his blog at www.gavinsyme.co.uk







Community

The Cost of Limited Miniature Runs

Good Vs Evil



The Cost of Limited Miniature Runs

Words: Sally White (Hasslefree Miniatures)

I know sometimes when we announce the price for something you ****gasp**** or think "Sheesh they must be making some serious cash on that one". It would be a very natural reaction.

However, we don't make a lot of money on these runs. We do them because we want to push the boundaries on what is in the marketplace. We do it to see what can be achieved if we 'think outside the box'. We do it because that is what Hasslefree (HF) does i.e. something different to everyone else. Some of you who may be new to HF might think 'Well what's the point if you aren't making any money?'. The point is that if you don't do these things then the hobby will stagnate, it won't grow and progress. Kev will get bored just thinking of how to make something to be cast in metal instead of getting excited about a new type of resin or a new production process. If we do something new maybe we will inspire others to try new things as well and life will be a bit more fun!

So next time you see a fantastic new figure from any manufacturer, remember some of the costs involved as shown here and hopefully this information will help you understand their pricing structure. Obviously some of the costs will vary according to each manufacturer and the standard of the casting they use or even if they do it in-house. These are prices from the top-end casters who take pride in their work and who do justice to the sculpts Kev produces.

If you want something that looks and feels cheaper but is a nightmare to put together with millions of air bubbles to fill then I am sure Mark can point you in the direction of some of the dodgier resin casters in the industry!

By the way, in case you hadn't noticed, making toy soldiers isn't a licence to print money even if you are married to the sculptor and are busy breeding your own team of packers!

Example

Kev has changed the gun to make it more in keeping with his inspiration. This gun will later be available on a weapon sprue but I wouldn't hold your breath as to exactly when as there is a very long list ahead of it in the casting queue!

There have been a number of discussions about getting this figure cast in clear resin. We have looked into this in detail. We like to keep you all happy and want you to know that we do take your suggestions seriously. The idea is to cast in a clear resin so that the painter can make her 'invisible', 'partially visible', 'visible' and anywhere inbetween. This is one-piece casting, no assembly required!

There are limitations to this kind of resin casting though:

1. The clear resin itself is very damaging to the silicon mould. For a standard HF blue resin casting

of this kind of size and level of detailing we could maybe get 45-50 castings before the mould starts showing signs of wear or damage and the quality drops. For a clear resin piece we are looking realistically at 35-40 castings per mould.

2. The resin itself is a variable entity. It is a specialist material that can have slight variances in transparency from batch to batch. This means we may get 15 crystal clear castings and then 10 or so not so clear, then another 10 or so slightly less clear from each mould.

What the two variances above mean for us and for you is that we can't guarantee how many of each transparency we will get per mould until we physically get the castings in our hands.

Our plan is to use three moulds for the limited run. We will use one mould until it is unusable and then grade the total castings from this mould and sell them in two price brackets depending on the clarity. As the stock from this first mould is nearly sold out we will commission the second mould, and so on until all three moulds are finished. That will then be the end of the run in clear resin. This means we will have for sale over a period of time between 90 and 120 castings.

Now for the nitty gritty.

It has been a long time since I have shared any costings with you all so this is as good an example as any to let you know how the cost of raw materials has affected costings and profits over the last few years. I have broken down for you the costs we incur in getting a figure of this kind of specification from starting point to in your grubby little hands to admire and cherish. I have colour-coded the two quantity variables to (hopefully) make it easier to follow.

Grey Matter Figures have quoted us the following. Just to clarify, we have no issues with their costs. You basically get what you pay for and their casting is top notch - clean, virtually no mould lines and lovely to handle. They do Kev's work justice. We don't often get a chance to use Fenris for figures but I should imagine his charges would be similar as his quality is on a par with Grey Matter.

Moulding

Each mould is going to cost £50 plus VAT. With VAT at 20% each mould will cost £60.

If we break this down to the amount of castings per mould, we get a cost of between £1.71 per figure (with 35 in mould) and £1.50 per figure (with 40 in each mould). NB. This is not the total cost, just the cost of the mould per figure.

Casting

They estimate £5 plus VAT per casting. That works out £6 per figure cast.

Total cost per figure to cast = £7.50 - £7.71

Packaging

This will work out per figure for blistering/insert card to approximately 40p per figure.

Postal packaging

As this figure will need to be packed in a box with a depth of greater than 25mm, it will add an extra £1.50 to the packaging costs of sending a normal figure through a PIP box. This brings a total cost of producing the figure to the point of sale to between £9.40 and £9.61

Sales cost

Web sales costs/commissions for processing the payments average at between 8-10% depending on the provider. We usually estimate 10% to make it easier. Now Kev White suggests a selling price of £20 per figure which would mean our selling costs





amount to £2 per figure. The taxman will take 20% of the selling price which amounts to £4.00

So to total it up:

1. Point of sale costs between £9.40 and £9.61
2. Add on payment costs takes us to between £11.40 and £11.61 per figure
3. Add on VAT and this takes us to between £15.40 and £15.61 per figure.

So with a RRP of £20 per figure we get a profit of between £4.60 and £4.39 per figure.

However, this isn't net profit, this is gross profit. We haven't yet paid Kev for his work. He averages, for a freelance piece, between £250 and £350 for something this size. So let's take the middle ground and say we pay him £300 for it. £300 divided by 120 castings gives a payment to Kev of £2.50 per casting.

Add this to the above and you get a total production cost per figure of between £17.90 and £18.11, giving us net profits of between £2.10 and £1.89 per casting.

If we sell all 120 castings at £20 each then we make a profit of between £252 and £226.80 for the whole run. That assumes there are no breakages during transit and that all of the parcels arrive where they are supposed to be. If it is a month like November or December during the snow or the Icelandic volcano

earlier in the year, we re-shipped 25% of parcels at our expense as they were missing or delayed. For each order of this figure that we had to reship we lost between £17.90 and £18.11 for the figure cost plus shipping charges of between £3.00 (UK recorded) to £6.00 (EU) to £7.00 (Non-EU). If we have to reship even 10% of figures (12 figures) then we are in trouble.

To illustrate this point, if we reship 12 figures (4 from each of the postal groups) we lose between £17.90 x 12 plus £64 (postal charges) = £278.80 and £217.32 + £64 = £281.32. This means we make no profit at all and instead incur a loss of between £54.52 and £26.80.

If we think positively and assume that we will get no breakages and will not have to re-ship any castings then the profit from this run will go into the general pot to pay Mark's wages, rent and utilities for the workshop (heating, phone, internet, tea/coffee etc.), rent for the storage unit and general running expenses (paper, toner, consumables, upgrading equipment, insurances, packaging, petrol). Everything basically we pay out from sweets to sending out free figures as prizes for competitions.

Does this open anyones' eyes or are these the kinds of figures you expected to see? Bear in mind that the initial outlay for this figure is higher than usual because of the resin type, however the other expenses are the same.

Good Vs Evil

Words: Richard Tinsley

Illustration: David Soderquist

'Whatever happened to all the heroes? All the Shakespeares? They watched their Rome burn...' – The Stranglers 1977 No More Heroes.

I had a discussion with the editor way back at the beginning of the year about his desire to have a regular Magic the Gathering (MTG) feature in the magazine, whether I would like to do it or not and what the theme of the next issue was going to be. Once he told me that it was heroes and villains I was sold even if I had not been already.

MTG is the originator of collectable card games (CCG). It was the first and continues to dominate across the world nearly twenty years after it first came out. This is due to a number of factors. One which quite often gets forgotten but has actually been driving the last two sets and is the flavour of the whole thing.

You are a Planeswalker, traversing the planes of existence drawing on the raw magical power of the various lands' mana to summon allies and creatures and devastate your enemies with powerful spells. That sounds pretty neat really. The MTG backstory has been full of other Planeswalkers and supporting characters since its beginnings most notably with the brothers Urza and Mishra. There are currently 21 cards in the game with Urza in the title and eight with Mishra in the title and many others featuring the brothers as artwork or in flavour text. The backstory of these brothers has them as hero and villain facing each other in a war at the end of which Mishra dies.

Urza realises his brother had been corrupted by the real villains of the piece, The Phyrexians. Urza becomes obsessed with destroying the Phyrexians and their leader Yawgmoth. Yawgmoth intended to invade Dominaria. The story goes on for a long time and eventually introduces us to Gerrard Capashan, a near perfect human genetically manipulated by Urza and his bloodline project to create an army to fight the Phyrexians. Gerrard is the protagonist of what is known as the Weatherlight saga which spans 13 magic sets (Weatherlight, Tempest, Stronghold, Exodus, Urza's Saga, Urza's Legacy, Urza's Destiny, Mercadian Masques, Nemesis, Prophecy, Invasion, Planeshift and Apocalypse) from June 1997 until June 2001.

After the epic of the Weatherlight Saga, Wizards of the Coast (WotC) decided to have singular contained storylines based around each year-long block of cards and each would feature its own heroes and villains such as Kamahl, Akroma, Phage, Memnarch, Glissa, Venser, Toshiro Umezawa, Argos Kos and Teferi. Although a number of the characters that are portrayed in the backstory (Teferi, Venser and Urza himself) are beings known as Planeswalkers, it is not until 2007 and the Lorwyn block that we are introduced to the Planeswalker as a card type (although there is of course a tantalising hint in the text of the legacy/modern staple 'Tarmogoyf').

Most of the WotC magic books of recent years have been based around these cards/characters and they have become a mainstay in competitive and fun magic decks since their introduction. The images



have become a large part of WotC's advertising campaigns and pack art often features the Planeswalkers available in that set of cards. WotC have also given us a computerised version of Magic in Duels of the Planeswalkers which features all of the major Planeswalkers including:

- Chandra Nalaar
- Garruk Wildspeaker
- Jace Beleren
- Liliana Vess
- Ajani Goldmane
- Gideon Jura
- Sorin Markov
- Sarkan Vol
- Nicol Bolas
- Tezzeret

Planeswalker cards are like having another player join you who can cast a spell each turn to aid you against your opponent. Each Planeswalker comes in with a number of loyalty counters on them. Their abilities either add or subtract from these loyalty counters which represent the casting spells on your behalf. The online card database gatherer (<http://gatherer.wizards.com/Pages/Default.aspx>) currently listed 28 Planeswalker cards in the game which represent 15 different characters (some characters have two or three different versions). Rather than go through every single Planeswalker card I thought I would go through my top ten and why I love them:

1. This guy is my second favourite card of all time (the first being Counter Spell). Still retailing at £50 despite being banned in everything but legacy and Elder Dragon Highlander (EDH), this guy was just so good there was no reason not to play him. Best known for his bounce a creature back to your hand -1 ability and of course his Brainstorm - draw 3 cards put 2 back 0 ability. Jace 2.0, the mind sculptor has become the MTG version of Marmite, everyone either loves him or hates him in equal measures. Ironically, Jace 2.0 did not win the game on his own but was a fantastic enabler for any form of deck and as such was a 4 of in every deck in the format when he was legal in standard.

2. Gideon Jura, he's a Planeswalker, he's a guy who takes no damage (0 ability), he shoots that pesky tapped creature (-2 ability) and he tanks all your opponents guys (+2) - what's not to love? Funnily, in the top tier decks of the time he was Jace 2.0's best friend as he stopped your opponents from battering Jace to death if you could not protect him. However, unlike his little friend, WotC did not consider him too

powerful and reprinted him in M12 instead of Ajani Goldmane. Still seeing considerable play in standard, he's an all-rounder with massive potential.

3. *Sigh* same old story I always go for the wrong type of girls and Liliana of the Veil is no exception. This is Liliana 2.0 and she is a bad girl. From wrecking everyone's hand to reducing a player's entire board to rubble, she is a card which makes your opponent's face fall as she hits the table. 3 mana is very cheap for a Planeswalker card and the worst thing she can do as she comes in is kill one of your opponent's creatures. Sadly, WotC decided that the basque/stockings and suspenders version of the artwork was too risqué for the MTG audience. However, we have no such limitations so here she is in all her finery! Steve Argyle we salute you sir, I really must ask the editor, with his knowledge of miniatures, if there is any chance of someone doing a figure of Liliana's extremely fine figure.

4. Now here is a girl you could take home to mother, Elspeth, Knight Errant is just nuts. With 2 +1 abilities it is not going to be impossible to get her loyalty counters up to 8 enabling you to make all your creatures, artifacts, lands and enchantments indestructible. Originally from an unknown plane dominated by the evil Phyrexians she planeswalked away at the age of 13 and eventually came to reside on Bant. We can be very happy that she was not legal in standard at the same time as Mirron Crusader (she comes in, gives Mr Crusader +3/+3 and flying before he smacks you in the face for 10)! The price has come down in price thankfully since she was reprinted in the Elspeth Vs Tezzeret box set.

5. Yes I know he looks like David Tennant in a funny outfit. No I don't think it is a coincidence. Venser is a combo card - he is at his best when working with another card that has an 'enters the battlefield' ability like Acidic Slime or Stonehorn dignitary (I blow up a land each turn or you never get to attack, ever). Although not as instantly game-breaking as Elspeth, his -8 ability will make your opponents cry as you play spell after spell and exile their entire board and they lose the game. Counter spells become removal as you go 'no you can't have that and oh I cast a spell, Venser's emblem says I get to exile one of the things I let you have earlier...' This looks to be the only version of Venser as a Planeswalker due to what happens to him in the storyline. I am saying no more as I don't want to spoil it for you, it's safe to say it has something to do with the next guy on our list.

6. This guy would deserve his place on the list even if just for the fact that every time he gets played in standard, one of the players does their best impression of William Shatner shouting "KHAN!!!" into his communicator from Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Khan. Not forgetting that somewhere in that tin man body is Urza just waiting to kill a few more Pherexians! This guy is truly out there. If you can get him to resolve and you don't need to instantly remove your opponent's best threat you can +4 him and steal one of their cards from their hands! Liliana loves this guy and his interaction with you and your opponent's hands. Not to forget that when we get to -14 this guy we restart the game with all the cards we exiled with him back under our control. When we first saw this guy spoiled on the internet we thought it was a fake: "he does what?" "Really he can do that too?" and "don't be ridiculous he just restarts the game with Blightsteel colossus in play and BANG – game over?"

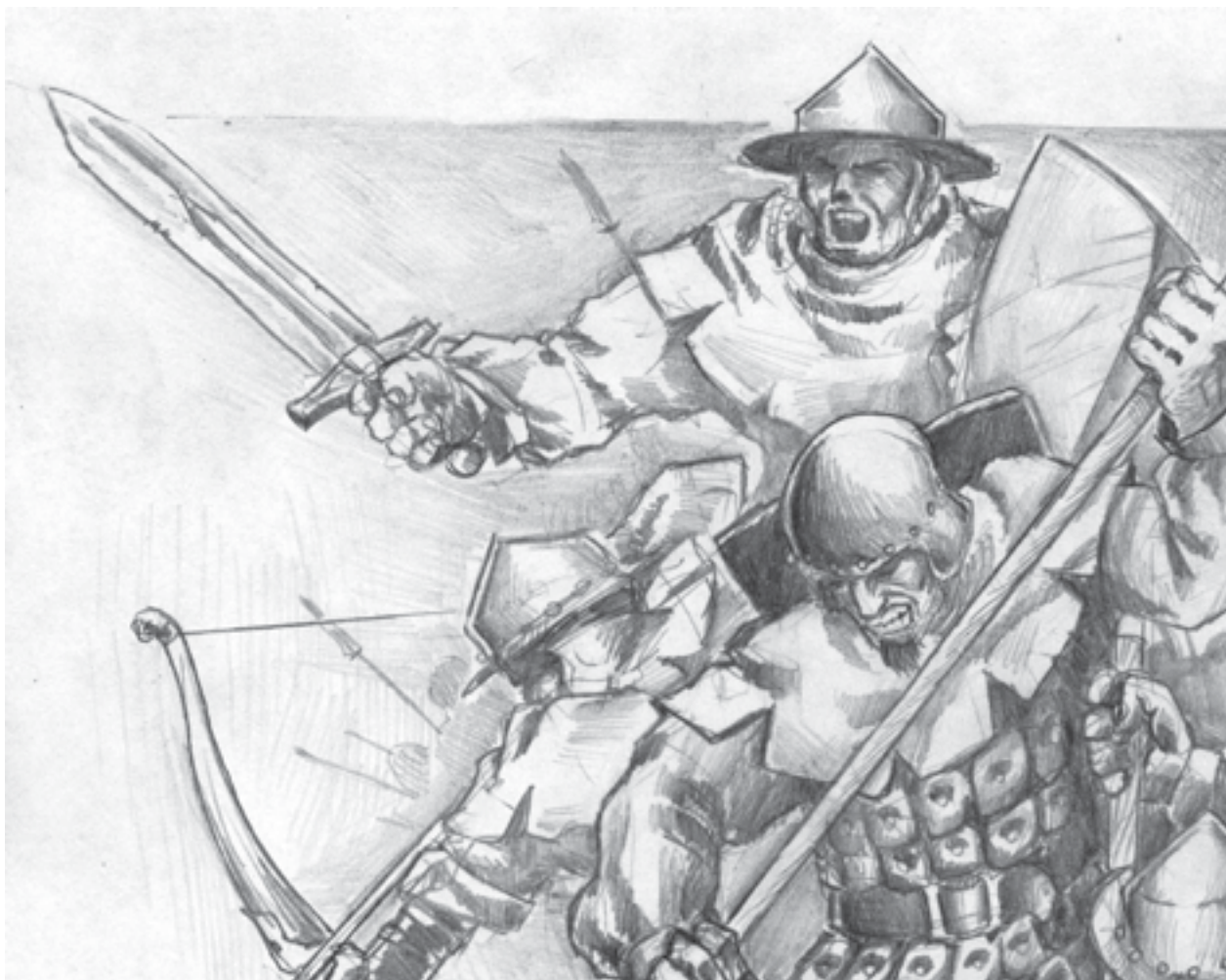
7. OK while we are on the subject of Planeswalkers there is one name you just can't leave out – Nicol Bolas. This is the bad guy, the top villain, the dude. Nicol Bolas originally appeared in the Legends expansion as a creature but story-wise, he is the most feared of Planeswalkers. At 8 mana in Grixis colours (RBU) you are not going to cast this guy too often but when you do oh my... he blows up a land/enchantment/Planeswalker/Sword for 2 turns and then bam, say goodbye to your hand, your board and your life – awesome. I struggled massively to get hold of one of these when I started playing again in 2009 but good old WotC printed a new version in the Ajani Vs Nicol Bolas Duel Decks in September 2011. These continue to be a great way for people (who don't want to spend stupid amounts of money on single cards through traders) to access Planeswalkers.

8. Koth is a native of the plane of Mirrodin. He leads the fight in the Scars Block storyline against the infection of the Phyrexian oil and the rise of New Phyrexia. As you may have guessed by the title of the third set of blocks it is a fight he does not win. He enlists the aid of Elspeth Tirel and Venser in his struggle and they all go in search of the silver golem Karn who created the plane of Mirrodin in the first place. Koth sees plenty of play in dedicated red burn decks and has a number of key abilities – see this mountain? It's now a 4/4 beat you in the face guy (+1) he is also, apparently, very good with Devil's Play – double my red mana on turn 5 and burn you for 9. It also features yet more amazing artwork from Jason Chan who also did Jace 2.0 and Karn.



9. Tezzeret is another of the villainous Planeswalkers, in this case under the control of none other than Nicol Bolas. Tezzeret is a master artificer and his abilities represent that. There was a lot of excitement about him when he was first spoiled and his initial price tag reflected that. However, a year on and his value has plummeted as players struggle to find a home for him among their artefact-based decks. Having said that, Shouta Yasooka of Japan managed to finish 16th at the recent Pro Tour Honolulu with a deck based around Tezzeret. He earned himself \$3,500 dollars and 15 pro points into the bargain so maybe Tezzeret deserves another look. A lot of focus originally was on Tezzeret's ability to turn an artefact into a 5/5 man (-1). My favourite interaction with this is something my son came up with when he turned Jace 2.0 into an artefact with a liquid metal coating before turning said artefact into a 5/5 man and hitting his opponent with him. Boy there is nothing worse than watching Jace 2.0 do all his shenanigans and then come and crack you in the mush for 5 as well.

10. There was a reason that Jace 2.0 was so very good and that is that it needed to be to make people play it instead of Jace 1.0. Jace Beleren is a



blue Planeswalker for 3 mana. So turn two you mana leaked your opponent and now you play this guy on 3 and draw a card. Has great synergy with both Liliana of the veil and Liliana Vess as he draws each player a card and then Liliana makes them ditch it again. He gives you card advantage for a couple of turns or works as a kill in a mill deck, all good solid stuff. I ran him in my Eldrazi deck when WotC banned Jace 2.0 to draw me the card on top of my deck when it wasn't the land I invariably needed. Still very playable in modern and extended if you can find anyone playing extended these days.

So that is about it for the summary of heroes and villains in the MTG universe for now. Despite this being a fairly long article I feel I have only had the chance to show the tip of the iceberg with regards to the characters which make up Magic the Gathering. However, I felt I could not end this without mentioning the current block of MTG cards - Innistrad. For those of you who didn't read last issue's review of Innistrad, it is a gothic horror block with as many horror themes in it as you can think of. It is also the first ever magic set to be flavour led - every card is dripping with blood and horror.

This has been followed up with Dark Ascension where the monsters have the upper hand and it is revealed that the Archangel Avacyn was created by the Planeswalker Sorin Markov to protect his home plane from the creatures of the night. Sorin has returned to find out what has happened to his creation and to stop the monsters of Innistrad from hunting the humans to extinction. Although we do not know the final part of the story we do know it will be called Avacyn Restored which will hopefully restore balance to Innistrad.

Until next issue, when hopefully we will bring you both a Dark Ascension/Avacyn Restored review/preview. We will also continue to explore the multiverse of MTG in line with the theme of that particular issue, remember to keep on slinging spells wherever you are.



The Airbrushing World: Is It For You?

Clone Troopers in 15mm - A Painting Guide

The Airbrushing World: Is It For You?

Words & Photography Hugo of Ichiban
Painting Studio

Right now airbrushing is a hot topic in the miniature wargaming world. Most of the professional painters and big contest winners in the modelling scene rely on the wonderful tool that is the airbrush. We want to find out if it's worth the investment.

First of all, we have to take a look at what kind of miniature painter you are. You have to decide what traits define you. Considerations may be different if you have 'New Army Syndrome,' or if you are aspiring to become a commission painter. Many people strive to win a big painting contest. There are many personal considerations when buying an airbrush.

Whatever goals you have will determine whether you buy an airbrush. If you are the type of painter that is happy with one army and doesn't really paint many models in a year, then I would be honest and tell you that investing in an airbrush isn't really for you. Of course, if money isn't a problem, then you might not mind having your airbrush gather more dust than it sprays paint.

On the contrary, if you see yourself as more a part of the other categories I've mentioned above, you should consider an airbrush. Yes, particularly 'Mr. New Army Syndrome' who has more models than he can ever hope to paint. Even you out there that wants to risk it all in a big contest and have the best possible results. In my opinion you should think about investing in an airbrush.

Buying an airbrush is an investment. Getting started in the mysterious world of airbrushing isn't cheap. It can also be a bit confusing.

With that in mind, let's try to clear up that confusion

and make things easier. Following is the basic list of things you'll need to get started:

- Compressor
- Airbrush
- Hose
- Respirator or paint mask
- Airbrush cleaner

These are the very basics of what you will need to get started. Most likely you'll need to purchase other items that will make it easier for you to get started. Here's some optional gear you might consider picking up:

- Airbrush stand
- One or two water traps
- Spray booth
- Airbrushing paints
- Latex gloves

Let's look at these items in a little more depth. The basic airbrushing kit will consist first and foremost of a compressor. The compressor will deliver air to your airbrush which makes it invaluable. There are many types of compressors. The two main types are diaphragm compressors and piston compressors.

Diaphragm compressors are rather small in size; they don't deliver a lot of pressure. They can run for a long time without overheating. They are normally favoured by people who paint nails or do cake decorating since they are very portable.

The second type is the piston-driven compressor. These are more suited to the modeller's needs since they can deliver higher pressure and can be cheap-



er. The piston compressor type is available in many variants. There are oil-lubricated compressors as well as oil-less compressors. Some come with an air tank and others without it. Making a decision is easy though, as the oil-less requires no maintenance and is the way to go. The second thing to look for is that the compressor has a tank. Without a tank, the compressor will overheat after 30 to 60 minutes of use. Therefore, the real solution is to go with a piston-type compressor with at least a three litre air tank. This will allow you to be able to use your airbrush for a longer period of time without having to stop to let your compressor cool down.

The airbrush itself can also be pretty confusing. There are so many options out there, it can be challenging for a newcomer. Airbrushes come in single-action, double-action, side-feed, and gravity-feed. They also range from very cheap to extremely expensive.

First let's look at a single-action airbrush. Single action means that the action of the trigger will require only one push for the airbrush to spray paint. This type is not very precise. It is mostly for people that want to use an airbrush to apply a base coat or primer.

Conversely, double-action is the type you want to buy. The trigger has two actions. If you press it down air will come out, and the more you press the more air that will come out. Then, if at the same time you pull the trigger back you will start mixing paint with the air that's already spraying. This will allow you to have really good control of the paint. It also gives you the opportunity to do more detailed work when you are comfortable with the tool.

Now let's look at where the paint cup will be. A siphon or side-cup-feed airbrush is a type of spray gun that will have the paint cup either on the side or under the gun. They tend to use more air pressure. They are more aimed towards people that need to spray heavy amounts of paint or that have to spray upside down. They can be used upside down since the paint cup is closed and sealed. For a modeller these types aren't really the best, but they will definitely spray well enough to get the job done since the only difference is in the cup and feed system and not in the needle or nozzle.

However, as a modeller you should look more at a gravity-fed brush airbrush. This type uses gravity to put paint from the cup into the airbrush. It runs using less pressure and will run with just a drop of

paint; the other types will require a large amount of paint. Let's face it, in the modelling world we will sometimes only paint a small thing with barely any paint needed.

Lastly let's compare cheap and expensive airbrushes. That's the question everyone has been asking about. Airbrushes are like anything else, if you buy an airbrush you'll get what you pay for. The prices for an airbrush are starting at about \$5 on eBay and go up to \$400. You should spend as much as you're comfortable with, as prices follow a fairly linear scale with quality.

Let's take a moment and look at airbrush size. Airbrushes come in different sizes. Normally sizes are 0.15mm, 0.2mm, 0.3mm, 0.4mm, 0.5mm and 0.6mm. The most standard size is 0.2mm or 0.3mm. If you have to choose only one I would recommend the 0.3mm. It will give you the best flexibility for modelling applications. It is fairly easy to use as with a 0.3mm needle and nozzle size you'll be able to do base-coating of a single miniature or vehicles. It will also be possible to use the airbrush for detailing. This size will give you the ability to have flexibility. Cheaper airbrushes normally are only one size, meaning that you won't be able to buy an extra needle and nozzle of a different size and put it on the airbrush. Higher-end airbrushes will have interchangeable needles and nozzles which means that you can have one airbrush but still get two or three different size options. Personally, I use two airbrushes, the Harder and Steenbeck Infinity with sizes 0.15mm, 0.2mm and 0.4mm and the Harder and Steenbeck Evolution with sizes 0.2mm, 0.3mm, and 0.4mm.

Apart from your compressor and airbrush you'll need two more things. You'll need a hose, which is simple to procure and install. Most airbrush kits on the market do have a hose included. It might be good to get a braided hose if the kit you purchased has one of the spiral-style cords. The second thing you'll need is a respirator or a mask that is made to protect you when spraying the paint. A particulate dust mask won't cut it. Even if you think that spraying acrylic paint is safe since they are non-toxic you are mistaken. When spraying with an airbrush the paint will be flying everywhere in extremely fine particles which then will go directly into your lungs. This isn't toxic per se but it's still bad for your health. So, please get a respirator that will filter those harmful particles. I suggest a respirator with a NIOSH-approved filter that is categorised to protect against paint particles.



I personally use a 3M Series 6000 respirator with the 3M 6001 filters.

Another accessory you might want to consider is a moisture trap. Having one or two of these traps will prevent you from having water and moisture mixing with the air from the compressor. There are two types of traps. One that is placed near the compressor and one that can be attached to the gun. Both work fine, and even better in a combination.

Now you have the information you need to buy your first airbrush kit. There are many shops on the web and also modelling shops that sell airbrushes. Where you shop of course all depends on the budget you allocate yourself for your kit.

My first suggestion is if you want to go with a kit that's cheaper, then go with a kit that has a no-name airbrush in it but still has a good compressor with an air tank. This way you have a nice compressor and tank, and can upgrade to a nicer gun when the time comes. You will also still have the older, cheaper airbrush to use for utilitarian applications. Conversely, if you buy a cheap compressor, then once you get the need to upgrade to higher end equipment you'll need to upgrade everything.

If you don't mind spending a little bit more, then getting a branded entry-line airbrush like an Harder

and Steenbeck Ultra or an Iwata Eclipse with a good compressor will actually have you set correctly for a long time. This way you can go a while without feeling like you need to upgrade your airbrush.

Lastly, if you want to go all-out and get a very good quality airbrush in your kit right off the bat. This option isn't really a good one if you are just starting out, since you might not like airbrushing at all or might not use your airbrush much and you'll end up losing a lot of money. If you did have airbrushing experience in the past and for some reason don't have any equipment anymore, this option might be good.

In conclusion, airbrushing is an extremely invaluable skill. If you want more information on airbrushes and airbrushing there is tonnes of information and tutorials available on the web, particularly on YouTube. You could also visit my YouTube channel where I have a pretty good collection of airbrushing videos. I have videos targetting all ranges of skill. You can find me at <http://youtube.com/ichibanpainting>. Thank you for taking the time to read this article and I really hope I did shed a little bit of light on the world of airbrushing.



Clone Troopers in 15mm - A Painting Guide

Words & Photography Dave Barker

I must start this by saying thanks to my pal, lestin, my friends' six year old son who is a big Clone Wars fan!

He has persuaded his Dad to convert and make him some 15mm Clone Troopers for his Star Wars games, along with a number of other Star Wars races at the same scale. When my kids saw them, I immediately received a request to make some for them too. They currently love all things tiny such as 15mm minis - and who can blame them! So, here I present how I created Clone Troopers for my kids too.

When starting a project of this kind it is important to find the right base models for the conversion. I had a helping hand here as I could just ask lestin's Dad what he had used and why. So, our Clone Troopers are based on Arc Fleet Recon Troopers from Critical Mass Games. I knew I'd want quite a few, so I just bought an ARC Fleet Recon Platoon, as it contains 43 x 15mm miniatures for just £14.99.

These minis, when you look at the painted examples on the website, don't look much like Clone Troopers - in fact, Master Chief comes to mind more quickly than Star Wars! However, they do have the advantage of being sci-fi soldiers in plated armour with a nice, flat faceplate that allows us to add some detail with paint.

A lot of detail is not seen on a 15mm miniature that is four feet away on the tabletop in the middle of a game, so a general similarity is all we need for our clones.

Step 1

Once the minis arrived, I quickly got to work. The

casts were pretty good, they required very little effort to clean them up, just a bit of flash needed removing. A couple of the miniatures had suffered some minor mould slip which was quickly cleaned up with a needle file.

I decided to use 15mm circular bases for these miniatures as I like a base width that is approximately the same as the height of the miniature. Also, the kids will be gaming with them as individual troops. My friend had used plastic 15mm slotta bases for his Clone Troopers, but I found these to be too tall for my tastes. So instead, I went with 2mm deep laser-cut plywood bases. Either of these bond to metal minis nicely with superglue.



Step 2

I then primed the miniatures with an undercoat of white. If I had used my brain for a minute instead of getting all excited about working on a Star Wars project then I could have combined steps 2 and 3 by using a grey primer. Oh well, maybe next time I'll save myself some effort!

However, I did explicitly choose not to use a black undercoat. This is because the main colour of the Clone Troopers armour is white which is often difficult to paint directly over black. I also wanted to control exactly where black appears on the miniatures. I'll explain this later. I happened to use Citadel Skull White spray primer, but any white is just fine.



Step 3

Next, I painted their armour grey - Citadel Codex Grey to be exact, but any mid-grey should do the job well. Why grey? Well, a Clone Trooper's armour is white and shiny, reflecting a lot of light. Since we can't paint anything lighter than pure white, we need the 'shadow' areas of the white armour to be a 'darker' white and if you bend your mind a bit, grey can be considered to be a 'dark white'. Yeah, I know that is a bit odd, but it works. Jump to the photo at the end if you don't believe me!

Why not black? Well, a Clone Trooper's armour shows their black body gloves in places and their guns are black. I wanted this to be in contrast to the white (even the 'dark white' parts) of their armour. But we'll get to black in step 5.

No, really, why not black? Some people are quite serious about the base colours they like to paint on. All I can say is that if it works for you - use black. I can't stop you!



Step 4

Now we get to the main colour - white (again!). At this step, I used a heavy drybrush of white - Citadel Skull White for me this time, but any pure white will make for good clone armour, the whiter the better!

Whilst a heavy drybrush is needed at this stage so that the grey is only left in the corners and recesses, be careful not to end up just painting the miniatures white again - we had that effect at the end of step 2!

Also, pay special attention to ensure that the shoulder armour and any other obvious large armour plates are painted fully white on their outer surface. When the miniatures are finished, people's eyes will be drawn to flat surfaces like these and we want these to look properly white and not streaky to get the best armour effect.



Step 5

Finally, the armour is at last starting to actually look like white armour! But now it's time for the black highlights as well as the 'paint conversion' on the helmet. The black on the helmets is what, for me, really makes these miniatures into Clone Troopers.

The first and easiest black parts are the weapons. I considered adding a grey highlight to these as an extra step, but once they were done I didn't feel that they needed it.



Looking at reference photos of Clone Troopers on the internet, you can see that under the white armour plates, a Clone wears a black body glove that peaks out around the armour. There is no way I was going to pick out lots of tiny bits of black on a 15mm miniature, but I wanted to give an impression of it, so I chose to just pick out certain areas where they are most visible on the miniatures i.e. the backs of the knees, the inside of the elbows, the palms of their hands and around the sides of their shoulder plates.

Finally, there is the detail on the faceplate. It is perhaps not particularly accurate detail, but I feel it gives a good impression and converts that flat faceplate of the ARC Recon Trooper miniature into a Clone Trooper. Using my thinnest 10/0 sable brush and with a steady hand as I could manage, I simply painted a flat, thin line all the way across the top of the faceplate, quite a short downward stroke in the centre, over where the nose might be, then two diagonal lines going down and outwards from the bottom of the 'nose', at more-or-less 45 degrees.

For real Star Wars devotees - this faceplate is based on the Phase I Battle Armour worn by the first Clone Troopers.

You might also have noticed that Clone Troopers' fingers are usually the black of their body glove and not white since their fingers are not armoured. However, this just didn't work against the black of the gun, so with the knowledge that it isn't accurate, my Clones have white fingers so that you can see their hands on their guns!

Step 6

The final step is not for all of the miniatures, just for those holding a rank higher than Trooper. The Wookieepedia (<http://starwars.wikia.com/>) entry on Clone Troopers (<http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/>



Clone_trooper) gives some good information about the colours worn by Clone officers.

Since there were just fifteen Clones in this first batch that I painted, I chose to add yellow (Commander) stripes to one of the miniatures and olive green (Sergeant) stripes to two of them. These stripes run from the top of their shoulder armour down the outside of their arms to the backs of their hands. There is also a stripe of the same colour that runs from the back of and over the ridge on top of the helmet and down the centre of their faces.

Step 7

As with any miniature, the Clones are only complete when their bases are finished. I filled in the irregular gaps between their wooden and pre-cast bases with



DIY filler, painted over this, carefully avoiding their feet with a dark brown (Citadel Scorched Brown is my preferred colour) and then used PVA glue to add a green flock. I let my girls do this bit as they love doing the messy parts of miniatures!

End Result

I hope you're as impressed with the end result as my kids are, they are for them to play with after all and with suitable supervision so that I get to play, too, of course!

And as my kids pointed out to me this evening before bed "We could pretend the just white ones are Stormtroopers as well if we want, can't we Daddy?" Which, of course, we will do so just as soon as I've painted something for them to fight!





-SAMUEL GROES-

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