THE MAKING OF SEVASTOPOL-ISH

or TAKING A WALK AROUND THE TABLE By Dave Bodley of Grand Manner

After the success and critical acclaim from our showcase Lone Pine table displayed at Salute and HISTORICON 2011 (and featured in WI283), we decided to ask Dave Bodley, of Grand Manner, to build us another table for the two big shows in the UK and US. This time around we decided to tackle a "what if" scenario set in a section of the Sevastapol siege lines during that hellish time in 1854-55. Over to Dave...

Following on from my work on last year's Lone Pine "feature table" for the *WI*/Battlefront booth at Salute (and for the WI283 theme content), it was great to work with Dan again on building another big display piece for the magazine.

This time around the task was a little different. Rather than working from maps of a particular section of a battlefield, I was going to be creating an un-named area of the defensive works around the besieged city of Sevastopol. The idea was to present the terrain of the Crimean peninsula, the depth and style of the defences, and still provide a satisfactory gaming surface.

The plan for the battle would see a British force advancing steadily against the Russian guns and defensive positions, while supported by artillery of their own. With all those things in mind, I began my research.

Above: The 1st Battalion of the Mohilev Regiment (right) charge forward in attack column against the initially stalwart 55th Regiment.

Left: Our Sevastopol-ish table in all its glory during the game we reported on in WI295.

Below: During that same game, the Highland Brigade and Guards Brigade reached the defences of the Russians at roughly the same time. It was the brave men of the 42nd, however, who would be the first to gain a foothold in the trenches.

INSPIRATION, RESEARCH, AND PLANNING

There are a number of accounts that describe the siege and defensive positions around Sevastopol. There are also lots of photographs and paintings from the period that tell the story well. The best of these has to be the commemorative panorama that captures the frenzied activity of an assault during the long siege. Inspirational stuff indeed!

From the research I was able to see that the surface of the terrain was very uneven, covered with small rocks and boulders, with patches of grass scattered around. Rocky outcrops, gullies and long, sloping ridges form the base for the terrain. This challenge was to simulate this look and still provide a smooth surface for miniatures to move across.

We first decided on the size of the panels for the board (remembering we needed to move and store these but also, most importantly, to be able to reach the centre of the board!) I used two 5' x 4' panels that would bolt together to give an 8' x 5' game table. One key element was the long slope, there's a rule I use with this so that your figures don't fall over and it still looks right: 12" rise = 36" length.

At this stage it was important to have a sketch of the initial plan, including:

KEY ELEMENTS:

• British start lines, including artillery battery positions
• Long, sloping hill to ridge-top fort
• Comprehensive artillery/infantry defences on ridge top fort

TERRAIN FEATURES:

• Rocky gully/ravine
• Rocky outcrop with low lying shrubs
• Small stream
• Small redoubt

THE PANORAMA *(seen above and below)*

*The Panorama "**Defense of Sevastopol in 1854-1855**" is a well-known work of art, and a monument to the heroic defenders of Sevastopol during the Crimean War. It is the work of Franz Alekseevich Roubaud (1856-1928), an outstanding military artist and the founder of Russian panoramic art. The canvas and life-size plan for the panorama were created over three years in a special pavilion in Munich, where Roubaud lived.*

*On 14 May 1905, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the heroic defence, the panorama was opened. The iconic work was nearly destroyed during World War II when, on 25 June 1942, bombing caused a fire in the building housing the panorama. Eighty-six segments of the canvas were saved, carried from the besieged Sevastapol by the destroyer **Tashkent**.*

After World War II it was decided to restore the panoramic painting. Unfortunately, the original canvas had suffered badly and it was deemed impossible to restore the saved fragments. Under the direction of academics V.Yakovlev (1893-1953), and, after his death, P.Sokolov-Skal (1899-1961), 17 Moscow-based painters recreated the panorama in three years. At the same time builders reconstructed the ruined panorama building. To mark the centennial of the first defence of Sevastopol on 16 October 1954, the Panorama was re-opened.

BACK DROP

BACK DROP

Hi.fi

MAIN ASSULT.

BREACH.

DITCH

GATE

SUNKEN TRENCH FOR INFANTRY   5' x 8' BOARD   2 x PANEL

water featur.
Low water on Rocky Bed.
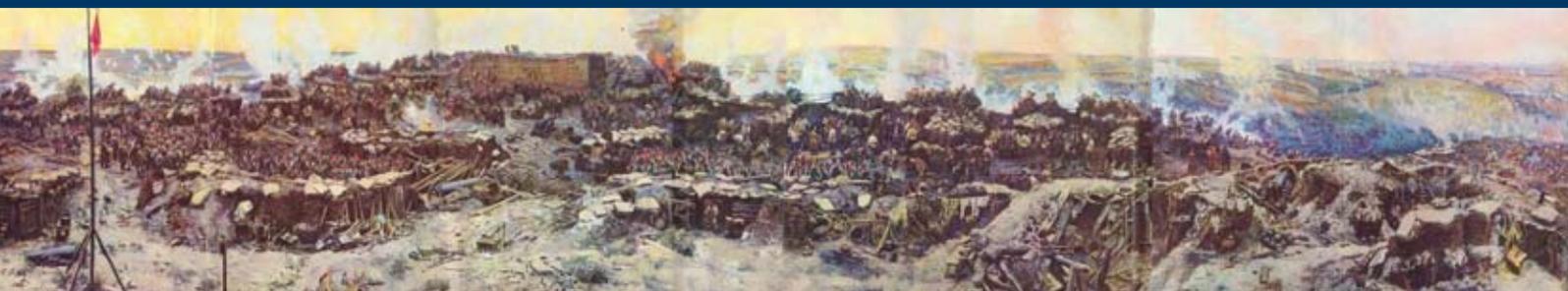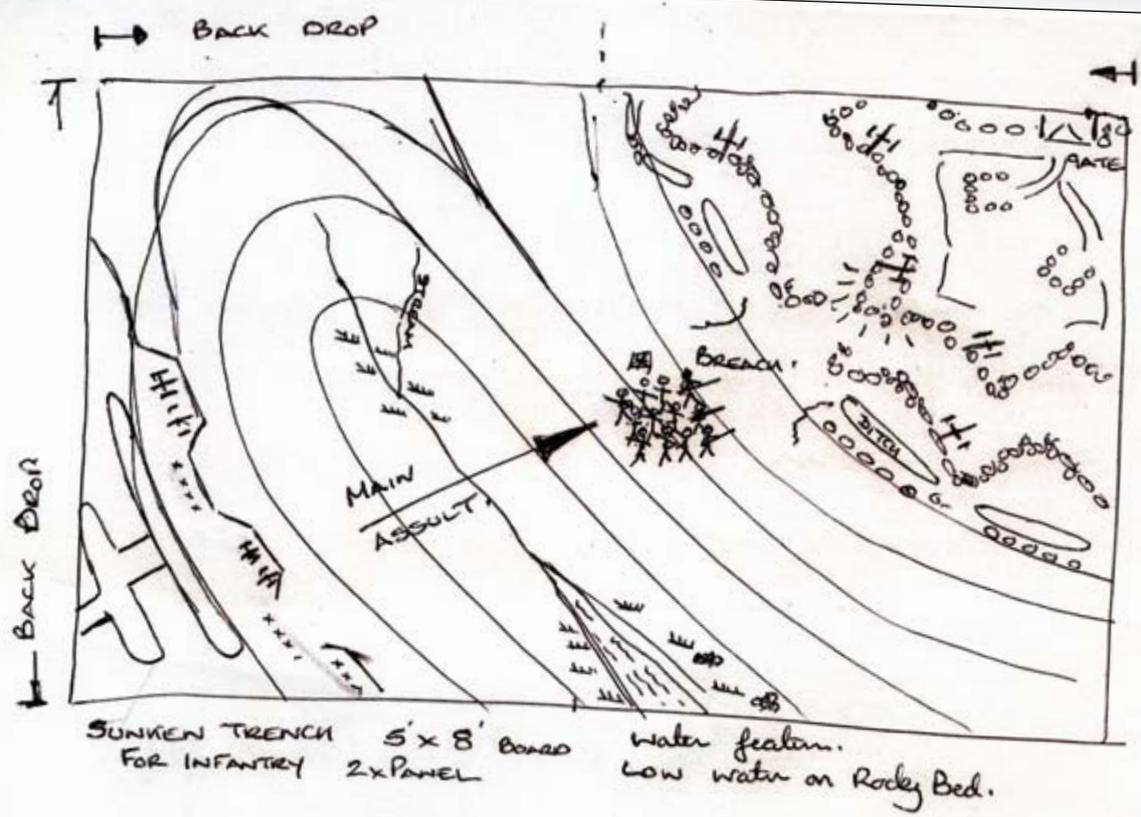
The landscape is rocky moorland!

HARD LINE

SEA
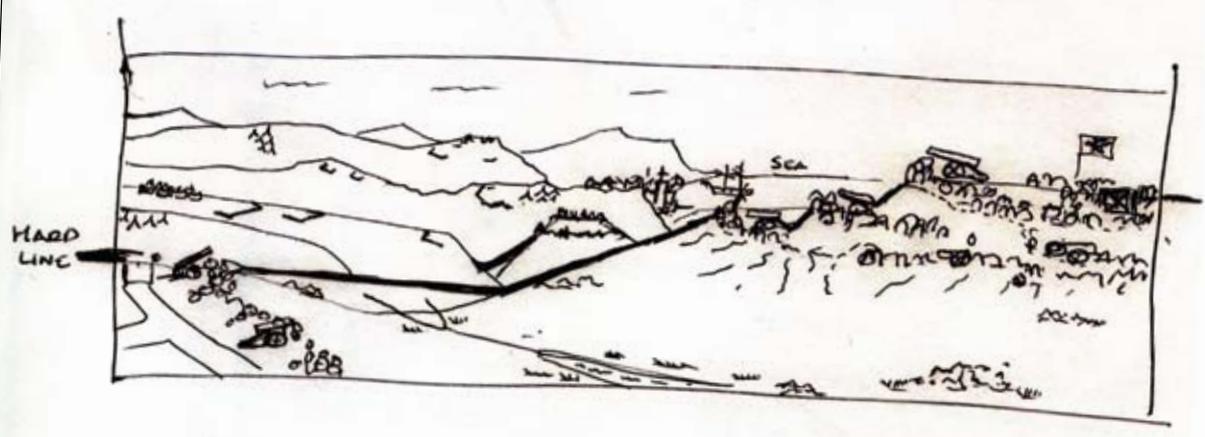
Dave Bodley
Grand Manner

Above: The original proposal sketch by Dave Bodley. Seeing this helped everyone involved to get a better idea of what the table could look like. Additional suggestions were incorporated into the final table design.
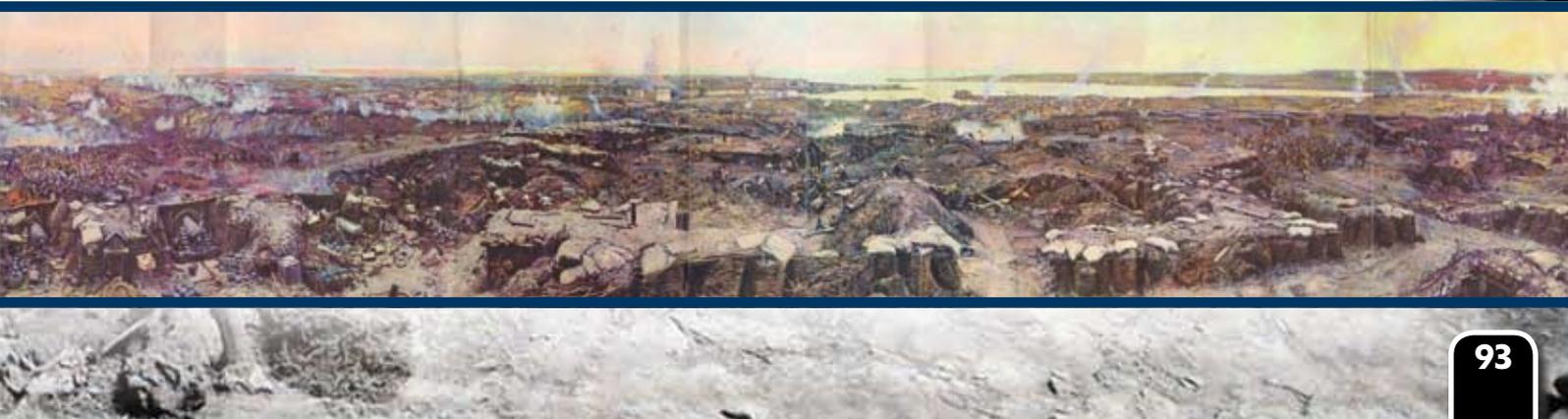
MAKING THE TERRAIN

Once the landscape height and features had been decided (after a bit of discussion with Dan) I glued down polystyrene panels/sheets with No Nails adhesive (AKA Liquid Nails). Once dry and set, I used an old wood saw and hacksaw blades to carve out the sheets, smoothing off the surface with a 40 grit sandpaper. The extra smooth areas were finished off with a 120 grit sandpaper.

After the carving and sanding was complete I fixed a thin plywood border around the panels (1), trimming the top edge with a jigsaw to follow the contours of the board. This gives a great, clean line to the panels which can then be painted or varnished.

Once the sculpting was finished, it was time to put the "hard landscaping" on - including the large rocks, boulders, gabions and fort structure (2 and 3). A selection of the gabions and defensive position's used can be found in the Grand Manner range. These were all glued down with a hot glue gun or PVA glue.

The next stage was coating and texturing the surface (4, 5, and 6). I saved a bit of time by adding the base tone paint to the texture material (in this case fine sand) before I applied it. I typically use a brown - either chocolate or raw umber is a good start - and mix it with PVA glue and the sand, to create a very sturdy surface texture. You could also use a product called Artex, or any pre-textured paint, really.

Below: The table is fully textured and, when dry, is ready to be painted.

Above: Here are two 'work in progress' shots of the backdrops. While various elements of the table were drying, Dave would work on these.

I painted the table in much the same sequence as I always do. I first painted all of the brown tones, drybrushing successively lighter layers, and using different browns in areas for variation. Then I moved on to the greys, then the greens. To add some more contrast, I finished off the painting stage with the "fine detail" colours.

Adding flock and grass tufts to the terrain was one of the final stages and really lifts the overall effect. Random patches of low grass and spots of tall grass, by rocks and boulders, works well. The odd clump of coloured sponge foliage or lichen, amongst the rocky outcrops, created some great looking shrubs and bushes.

The painted backdrops were the final touch. After spending so much time looking at images from the panorama, I felt compelled to paint them, and figured it would help Dan when photographing for the final articles. An example can be seen in the photo below, as the Highlanders grab a foothold in the Russian redoubt.