

DEVAST-O-POL! OR CARNAGE IN KRIM!



By Barry Hilton

A CRIMEAN WAR BATTLE REPORT FOR FOUR EMPIRES

This month's Crimean War theme concludes with this battle report, in which Barry Hilton shares the action from a recent *Four Empires* game. It not only proved to be highly entertaining but also rather unique..!

Sometimes you just get lucky. When *WI* UK editor Dan asked me if I would like to play a *Four Empires* game on custom made terrain built by Dave Bodley the answer was pretty obvious. Dave has built an astonishing model representing a non-specific section of Sevastopol's Crimean War defensive works. I will let the accompanying shots do the talking.

My job was to construct a wargame to set off the terrain and then write up a battle report.

I discovered the Crimea as a gaming period a long time ago and did some of my favourite painting and diorama work for the collection I started in 1994 and still have. I have almost sold it twice,

once I gave a flat no to an extremely tempting offer at Partizan and wondered whether I had done the right thing. On the second occasion, serendipitously, the buyer never turned up to collect and although mad at the time I look back and think 'oh what a lucky day that turned out to be!' The League of Augsburg took the Crimean set up around several shows over a couple of years in the early part of the Century, but the ultimate reason it went into stasis was an inability to find a rule set that we liked. It was one of those

The Wargames Illustrated Sevastopol (ish) table in all its glory, showing the deployment of troops for our game.



collections that frustrated me as much as it pleased me. It looked so nice and I had put so much into it but, I never ever got to play with the toys and despaired as they languished in boxes under my gaming table for 12 years with the odd breakage here and there just to ratchet up my misery.

Those who have read my scribblings before know I am part of an occasional wargaming group who put on very large games over a weekend. One of the gang who could be described as possessing missionary zeal for the Crimean War has been collecting for about 15 years. He owns about 5,000 painted Foundry models and has the entire British Army and most of the Russian unit for unit. Actually, he is a bit short of French and Turks! Give him a B minus on his report card for being a lightweight. Until recently he had beavered away on this life work without ever mustering it for a game as it lives in about 100 box files in various locations. So, last year we had the chance to assemble it and fight the Battle of the Alma. The game was huge and hugely enjoyable, not least just to see Bob's face glow with achievement on seeing all of his collection on a table 28 by 12 feet. This was also a chance for me to bring my meagre muster to the party and although lost in a tiny corner of the battle, I got to command some of my own troops. My love affair with Victoriana was rekindled!

I had already been working on Crimean War amendments for *Republic to Empire* by request and the Alma game was a fantastic chance to max out on some of the new mechanics. The general verdict from the lads was favourable. The guys had played *R2E* (in fact they helped develop it over five years of massive Napoleonic games) and so we concentrated on the impact of the amendments and what they added or didn't. The resultant *Four Empires* is what was used to play out the game on the Bodley terrain. It is due for publication in the first half of 2012.

The set up necessitated a focus on the rule sections dealing with fighting amongst fortifications. FIBUA (Fighting in built up areas) has caused me some sleepless nights over the past couple of years. I was happy enough with the innovations created in *R2E* but not truly content. Our weekend extravaganzas through Napoleonic France, Germany, Russia, Spain and Belgium located and prized open some fissures at the hands of *R2E* gaming regulars compelling me to return to the nightmare subject. I am still trying to reconcile whether these fault lines represent holes in the mechanics or mathematical gamey-ness and the overwhelming desire to win whatever the consequences in logic or historical accuracy terms. Needless to say, for our *WI* game on the meisterwerk we employed some alternative mechanisms which may finally find their way into *Four Empires*.



**“IS THAT THE FRONT LINE?
HOLD PLEASE, I HAVE A
CALL FOR YOU...”**

The game was due to be played by Bob Talbot, Adrian Howe and myself at WI HQ, Nottingham. Various days off work had been arranged, hotels were booked and then literally as I was getting in my car the night before to drive the 350 miles to Nottingham, pressing personal circumstances demanded that I be at home - disaster! Necessity is the mother of invention. After about 20 minutes staring at the floor a plan meandered into sight. What if I set up a table in my gaming room that mirrored the table in Nottingham? We could fight the game by telephone with Bob and Ade moving troops in Lenton and me moving troops in Scotland.

I got on the phone to Bob, we worked out a system and walked through the rule amendments. Dan had already emailed me a sexy shot of the terrain sans figures and from that I constructed a rather passable likeness of Dave Bodley’s boards in East Kilbride with my own stuff. We worked out the orders of battle and then at 0900 next morning the mobiles began to buzz. We decided it would be easier for me to play the Russian defenders and for Bob and Ade to be the British attackers. As *Four Empires* is alternate phase moving, we phoned each other (on speaker phones) established initiative, hung up, did a move, phoned back and explained where troops now were then repositioned



Above: Harnessing the power of modern technology Barry was able to take part in the game from 350 miles away from the table!

everything on the ‘mirror’ table. Next came the shooting, fighting, resolve and then we swapped! All during the game Dan and Ian from WI were taking shots in Lenton and firing the pix by email to me so I could see what was happening! Curiously, even without these intermittent despatches we had cross referenced so many terrain points between the tables that every unit was actually almost precisely in the right location on the mirror table at all times! Honestly, you couldn’t make it up. Occasionally into

the room in Nottingham would walk Nick Eyre or the Warlord chappies, shout a bit of banter down the phone, throw a few ‘guest’ dice and leave. I think they thought we were nuts. We gamed (with a break for lunch and a hospital visit) for about five hours and got seven turns completed and a conclusion to the game. You can read about our adventure now.

The scenario is like the assaults on the Redan and the Malakoff, but is not specific because Dave has built the table ‘in the style of’ rather than as an accurate

Below: Meanwhile in Scotland... Barry mirrored the WI studio’s setup as closely as possible.



reconstruction. The objective is for the British to achieve a breach in the Russian defences, thus marking the beginning of the end for the defence of the city. For those who are not Crimean fans but like the idea of this game I am sure you could find an appropriate substitute in your period of choice whether that be earlier or a little later; The Schellenberg and Badajoz come to mind as two starters.

FOUR EMPIRES – THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO R2E

The basic turn structure and mechanics of *Four Empires* are those used in *R2E*. Where the differences kick in are at a more granular level. The armies are generally of compatible quality. The British are slow and restricted in their available attack formations.

Psychologically they are advantaged by modifiers, but in fighting terms, unless equipped with Minie/Enfield rifles, they perform no better than their opponents. The Russians are massive, lumbering and almost robotic in their drive forward. It takes a lot to stop a regiment or brigade as modifiers encourage them to attack with the bayonet at all times. A veteran Allied unit equipped with Enfields or Minie ammunition is strong in attack and almost unassailable in defence. Russian columns advancing with support will need very unlucky dice if they are to be halted before contact. The French are overall the strongest army with a larger number of tactical options and looser formation which should minimize casualties. They will feel lightest to handle and more robust

than the Sardinians who themselves are a sort of ‘skinny latte’ version of the French. Cavalry has lost the dash of the Napoleonic era and may be somewhat of a liability if numbers or terrain are not favourable. Overall they play a far less prominent role. Artillery will feel a little different from the Napoleonic style. Bigger guns, longer ranges, but tactically a little more restricted. Fighting amongst fortifications and the various weaponry used there will also feel somewhat altered. If you get a chance to use mortars you’ll enjoy that, but maybe less so if your crews are inexperienced! Provision has been made for trenches and sapper usage. Remember if you plan to use *Four Empires* you will need your copy of *R2E* for many of the core mechanisms.

ORDER OF BATTLE

BRITISH ARMY

(Divisional commander acting as C-in-C)

Highland Brigade

(dice for brigade quality)

Four battalions of 24 models. V,V,V D (All Elite) Minie rifles

Guards Brigade

(dice for brigade quality)

One battalion of 24 models. D (Elite) Minie rifles

Three battalions of 24 models. V,V,V (Superior) All with Enfield rifles

One unit of 12 rifle armed skirmisher. V (Elite) Enfield rifles

3rd Infantry Brigade

(dice for brigade quality)

Two battalions of 32 models. D (Elite) Minie rifles

One battalion of 32 models. D (Elite) Old pattern rifles

Two battalions of 32 models. R (Elite) Old pattern rifles

Naval battery of two 68 pdr models. V

(dice for ammunition quantity)

Naval battery of two 68 pdr models. D

(dice for ammunition quantity)

Mortar battery of two 10 inch mortars. D

(dice for ammunition quantity)

Great War Miniatures Highlanders.



A Foundry Russian Naval gun.

RUSSIAN ARMY

(Admiral Nakhimov as C-in-C - rating SKILFUL)

1st line trench works

Two battalions of 24 models. D. Smoothbore muskets

One battalion of 24 models. V. Smoothbore muskets

One battery of four 6pdr guns. D (dice for ammunition quantity)

2nd line trench works

Two battalions of 24 models. D. Smoothbore muskets

One battery of six 12pdr guns. D (dice for ammunition quantity)

3rd line bastion

One battalion of 24 models. V. Smoothbore muskets

One battery of one super heavy naval gun. D (dice for ammunition quantity)

Left wing redoubt

One battalion of 24 models. V. Smoothbore muskets

One battery of three 24pdr guns. D (dice for ammunition quantity)

Independent command

Twelve infantry skirmishers. D. Smoothbore muskets

Reinforcing Brigade

(dice for brigade quality)

(arrive down road at Russian T1 or T2 phase)

Two battalions of 40 models. D. Smoothbore muskets

* V = Veteran. D = Drilled. R = Recruit

HOW IT PLAYED

The British are mounting an attack with a division and a half of troops. These are deployed in three brigade columns which must advance up a steep, open slope with undulations offering some shelter from the enemy. Support fire will be provided by extremely heavy naval artillery and mortars positioned in the British siege lines. This sector of the city's defences is manned mainly by shore battalions of Russian sailors, supported by some infantry and a variety of guns. The Russians are outnumbered about 2:1 in troops and are generally inferior in quality. They have 14 guns which are a mix of 6pdr (4), 12pdr (6), 24pdr (3) with one 68pdr equivalent naval gun. The British have four enormous rifled 68 pdr guns and two giant 10 inch mortars. The range for these pieces exceeds the entire table length.

DEPLOYMENT AND QUALITY

On the British left the Highland Brigade stand ranked in a brigade column of four battalion lines with the 42nd in front, the 1/92nd next, then the 79th and finally the 2/92nd at the back. In the centre a composite brigade, mostly Guard units, is to be led off by the 57th followed by the 1st battalions of the Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Fusilier Guards. Out in front of this column is a skirmish screen of three companies from the Rifle Brigade. The right hand column is in three lines with the first two each having two battalions. In the first line is the 55th and the 13th, the second has the 1st and the 44th, and at the back are the 28th.

I was generous with the quality ratings of the British units as the game is set

late in the campaign. All carry the Elite suffix, providing a +1 on Resolve, except the Guards who have the Superior suffix, providing a +2 Resolve modifier. Three Highland battalions are classed as Veteran, as are the Guards and Rifles. All others are Drilled except the 28th and 44th who are arbitrarily rated Recruit just for some variety and not because I dislike the men of Gloucestershire or Essex! One battery of naval guns are classed Veteran. All other artillery is Drilled. The brigade quality was diced for on the day by Ade and Bob. The Highland Brigade got Intuitive whilst the others got Seasoned. The Divisional commander who is also the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) is classed Competent on a die throw.

The Russians have most of their troops within defences. In the first line of trenches are three battalions and a battery of four 6pdrs. In the second line of defences are two battalions and a battery of six 12pdrs. The final bastion houses the enormous naval gun and a single battalion. Out on the Russian left is an earthwork containing three 24pdrs and a garrison of sailors. The only other Russian troops on the table at that point are a half battalion of skirmishers in the valley between the two fortress points. The Russian troop quality is mainly Drilled, with two Veteran battalions in the main earthworks. The British start with three brigade dice. The Russians get one brigade die for the garrisons (no matter how few are left) one for the reinforcing brigade when it arrives and always get +6 Manoeuvre points per turn for Nakhimov. Originally we were going to divide the defended area into smaller built up areas using the classification

system of *Republic to Empire* but it was easier to simply treat each defence line as linear hard cover and the small redoubt as a '2C' built up area. Visibility up and down the slope for artillery fields of fire was good, but quite a lot of dead ground existed for the British, which was just as well as the open terrain and their density created a very target rich environment.

TURN 1. INITIATIVE: THE BRITISH

As it was a British attack we automatically gave them the initiative on T1. All three brigade columns moved off with Advance! orders across the river bed and began climbing the steep slope. A penalty of minus D3 inches was randomly generated for each battalion whilst on the convex slope. To cover the advance the artillery beasts roared overhead. The naval guns pounded the frontline trenches, taking out half of the 6pdr battery, whilst the mortars dropped with uncanny accuracy on the 24pdr redoubt. Two of the guns were hit but my saving throws of 5 and 6 brought an involuntary whoop of delight from me and stony silence from the speaker on my mobile. I think Ade and Bob were at that point trying to get a fibre optic camera through it to verify my honesty! In the lacklustre Russian response my guns were only able to hit the Cameron Highlanders as they conveniently stood atop a knoll and were the sole British unit in view. The battle had commenced!

The deployment of the British forces

- A** Guards Brigade
- B** Highland Brigade
- C** Infantry Brigade
- D** Mortar Battery
- E** Naval Batteries



Above: The main British force lumbers forward.

TURN 2. INITIATIVE: THE BRITISH

The British brigades continued up the slope, covered by the devastating power of the big guns and mortars. One section of 68pdrs destroyed the remainder of the 6pdr battery with their second salvo, whilst the other began pounding the infantry of the frontline trenches. The mortars continued to rain down on the redoubt and this time my saving dice did not live up to expectations. A 24pdr was blown to bits, but the crew themselves were luckily saved.

In response I decided to use my large naval gun in the bastion to commence counterbattery fire on the British naval guns. My first salvo hit the target, killing

Below: The British Mortar Battery. Figures by Great War Miniatures and Foundry.



some Tars! The 24pdrs were able to range in on the 44th Foot who, on taking casualties, wavered and halted as their brigade mates marched onward into the teeth of the Russian fire! At this point the head of a Russian column appeared down the road between the defences and began to deploy into column of attack. The Mohilev Regiment had arrived from within the defences.

TURN 3. INITIATIVE: RUSSIAN

I got the initiative at a very opportune point. The central column of battalions had breasted the convex portion of the slope and the 57th at the head of the brigade had hove into view of my 12pdr battery at canister range. All six guns

erupted, causing 10 casualties on the men of Middlesex. As they had taken more than 25% losses in a single turn this automatically threw them into disorder - but they kept coming! My counter battery fire continued to cause problems for the Royal Navy. The skirmisher screen had used a couple of single unit actions to double down the slope and engage the advancing 55th who were leading the right hand British brigade. My final move was to send forward the 1st battalion of the Mohilev Regiment to attack the 55th. The 2nd battalion of the Mohilev were now forming up where the 1st had previously stood. As a finale to a good turn for the Russians my 24pdrs again smashed into the wavering recruits of the 44th, who turned and bolted back towards camp. This caused their neighbours the 13th, to hesitate and pull up. So the 3rd Brigade was now reduced to three effective battalions who were now well clear of the struggling 44th and 13th!

I was clearly annoying the British! Their infantry lumbers forward and by now the Rifle Brigade companies were within 50 yards of the outer defences and sniping at the gun crews and garrison. The 68 pdrs tore into the defenders of the frontline having already silenced the battery. Ade had halted the 55th on the right. They were now using their Minie firepower to push back my skirmish screen. In another chapter of the *Empire Strikes Back*, the mortars once more landed their shells in the redoubt destroying another 24pdr and causing the battery crews to flee. The sailors jeered as the gunners ran and now 50% of my guns were out of action.

TURN 4. INITIATIVE: RUSSIAN

My luck was in again! The 12pdrs ripped into the 57th and the Rifles who were screening their approach. Total casualties from this barrage took the losses of the 57th to 66% and the Rifles to nearly 50%, but still the redcoats marched into the very jaws of the guns braced by the three Guards battalions following. My naval gun was winning the attritional competition with the Royal Navy battery as one of the British guns fell silent. This exchange was taking place at a range

of about 90 inches! As a final piece of bayonet-driven Russian aggression I successfully ordered the dense column of the 1st Bn Mohilev to charge the 55th. The British passed their resolve check, delivered a volley and stopped the attacking Russian column who failed to charged home against a steady enemy (this is a new rule amendment in *Four Empires*). There followed lots of back slapping and self-congratulatory 'playing fields of Eton' jingoism from the chinless wonders in charge of the British!

With the boot now on the other foot the British swung into action. The mortars were off target, landing their cargoes in dead ground between the fortifications; but the 68pdrs continued masticating the defenders of the front line trenches. This covered the deployment of the first battalions from the Highland and Guards brigades as they lined up to assault. Ade decided to counter charge the Mohilev with the 55th! His charge, led by the brigadier, was successful, but the Russian mass stood steady, fired and the 55th faltered, failing to close. In fact, they were pretty shaken up by the experience, falling into disorder and wavering in the face of the enemy! Not cricket by any manner of means ... those damnable Wussians!

Below: Scenes from Turn 5. Including the 42nd breaching the Russian defences.



TURN 5. INITIATIVE: RUSSIAN

Having as C-in-C, Admiral Nakhimov who was rated Skilful and providing +1 on initiative throws, really helped. In the see-saw on the British right, the 2nd battalion of Regiment Mohilev had moved up in support of the 1st. They in turn girded their loins for another charge on the now wavering 55th. The disorganized Brits had no stomach for it, starting a domino collapse the impact of which I had to imagine via a mobile phone conversation.

Barry: Bob, how far do the Mohilev go now that the 55th have legged it?



Bob: Just checking, hmm, they will hit the 1st!

Barry: OK, the 1st need to check for being charged, what's their score? Hello? Hello? Bob?

Bob: long pause... Ade rolled a one.... Will that be a rout?

Barry: Yup, if they have no support and are out of brigade command. How near are the 13th?

Bob: Near enough. Ade rolled a one again... (swearing from Ade in the background)

Barry: Ooops, I think that is bye bye too.

No, actually, we found a couple of positive modifiers and so the wavering 13th stood alone, with four battalions evaporating around their ears in a single turn. What rules were these Johnny Foreigner types playing by anyway?

All of that just made the British even angrier, so immediately I was subjected to the revenge of Professor Mortar-iarty. Ade chose to try and drop his shells straight down on top of the massed columns of the two battalions of the Mohilev. And that is just what he did, no deviation to the shots from directional dice so one column took 13 casualties and the other 16 from the massive bombardment. It was like the Somme! The previously jubilant 1st battalion turned tail and ran back up the valley towards the city, whilst the 2nd stopped, wavering and disorganized trying to work out why a mountain had just fallen on top of them. Of course I could not see the faces of Bob and Ade at that point, but I suspect there may have been some moustache twiddling, port decanted and cigars lit!

To make themselves feel even better, on the British extreme left the 42nd took their section of the first trench line at point of bayonet and under heavy fire. The Russian defenders streamed back into the safety of the second defensive line. No doubt, bagpipes skirled, cabers were tossed and nips were taken from hip flasks full of Glenfiddich. The Jocks were strapping!

TURN 6. INITIATIVE: BRITISH

Things were hot now and Vodafone shares had gone up 10% in the time we had been playing the game. The British were in the trench line and their artillery was pounding the battery of 12pdrs in the second defensive position. Mortar fire now dropped into the works facing the Highlanders to soften them up. A 12pdr disappeared, as did many defenders. The 1/92nd surged forward into the first trench line to the right of the 42nd. The Russians fled before contact, leaving the



EXCELLENT MINIATURES

We'd like to give a big 'Thank you!' to Great War Miniatures and North Star, who loaned us the bulk of the figures for our Crimean War articles.

www.northstarfigures.com



Above: The forward Russian line is in tatters, but there's still some big guns in the second line.



Above: The 42nd Highlanders continue to drive the Russian gunners from their trenches.

entire section attacked by the Highlanders free of enemy. Way back down on the right, the 44th had managed to steady themselves and reassemble, but they were far too distant from the action to play any further role.

With about 700 Highlanders milling about in the trenches less than 30 yards in front of the muzzles of the Russian 12pdrs the guns gave tongue! Two

hundred and forty Highlanders fell from both regiments. The 42nd with less than 150 men around the colours broke and fled back down the hill, whilst their comrades, the Gordons, hesitated in a state of paralysis. The Mohilev regiment was in tatters on the Russian left and the skirmishers had been steadily driven back by the relentless fire from the Rifle Brigade's Enfields.



TURN 7. INITIATIVE: BRITISH

The British attack was making ground, but had been extremely disrupted by enemy resistance. Of the 14 units who jumped off, only seven were in a position to continue offensive manoeuvres. The last desperate effort fell on the shoulders of the 1st battalion Coldstream Guards who thrust over the first trench work and into the second on the angle at point of bayonet. Despite taking heavy artillery and small arms casualties on the way in, they ploughed on, reducing the enemy to a handful of gibbering survivors, until they themselves had fought to the last man without taking a step backward or their resolve score falling below 8! The entire battalion and their brigadier lay between the first and second trench line. This was a mammoth effort, the kind from which wargaming legends are laboriously constructed, but it received only raspberries from my wabble of wowdy Wussians!

Unimpressed by the Queen's soldiers, the redoubtable Russians thumbed their noses and continued to pour fire from within their citadel. Although they had lost most of their guns and more than two thirds of their strength, Sevastopol was still for the time being theirs and the events of the Redan and the Malakoff were clearly yet to come.

CONCLUSION

This was a very tight game and could have gone either way. The British definitely needed the 2:1 superiority in numbers. I was doubtful about the high quality ratings applied to a large number of their units, but without that the attack

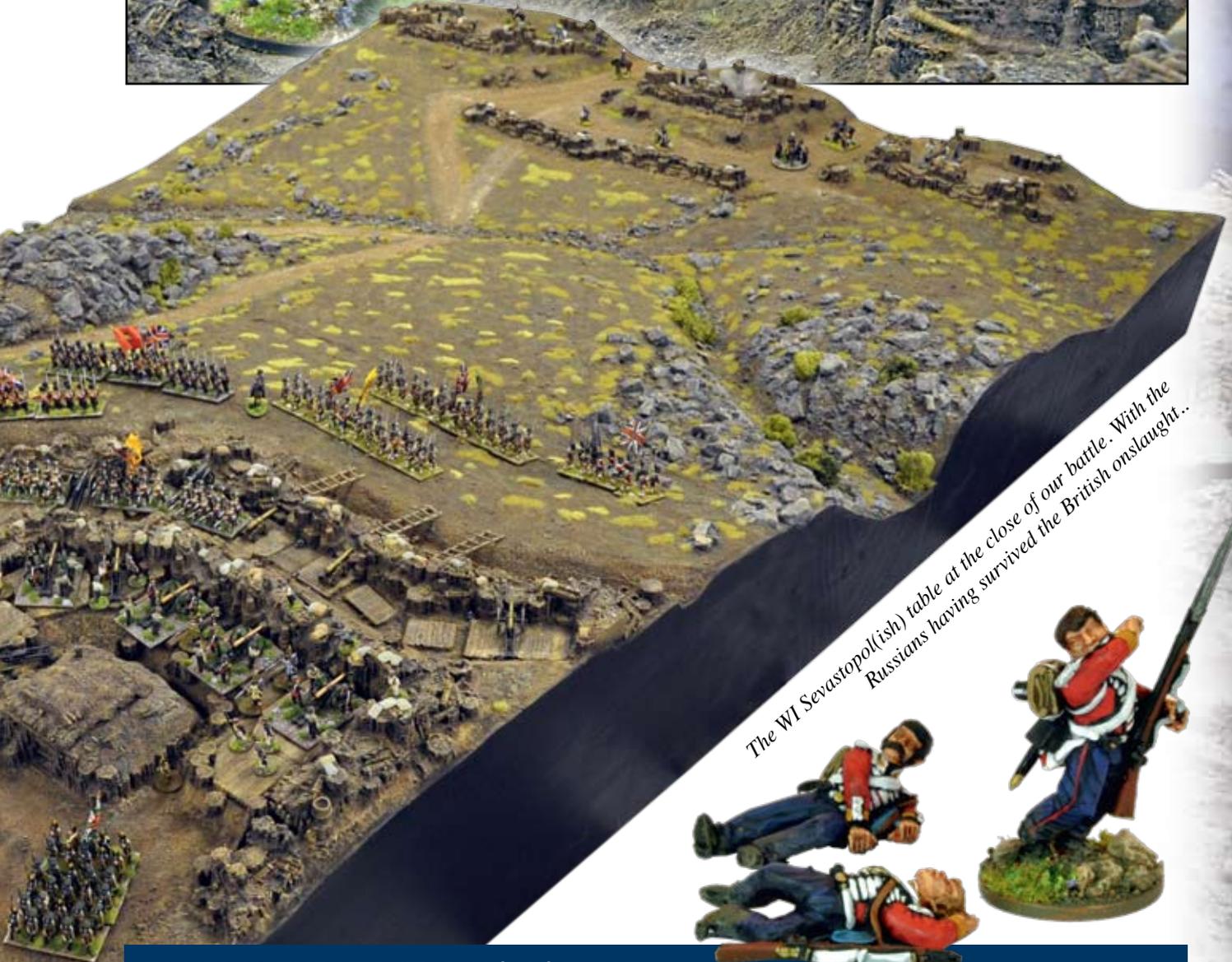
would have broken up long before the point we managed to reach. The Highland Brigade suffered 29% losses, but one battalion was unscathed and the Camerons took only three hits. The Guards Brigade suffered an horrendous 46% loss with two battalions completely untouched and the Coldstream Guards wiped out. The 3rd Brigade, although completely neutralized, lost a

of the unsuccessful but very bloody British assault on the Great Redan. It was immensely enjoyable, looked brilliant and was, as Bob comically paraphrased Mr Brian Potter of Phoenix Nights fame..... 'The future!'

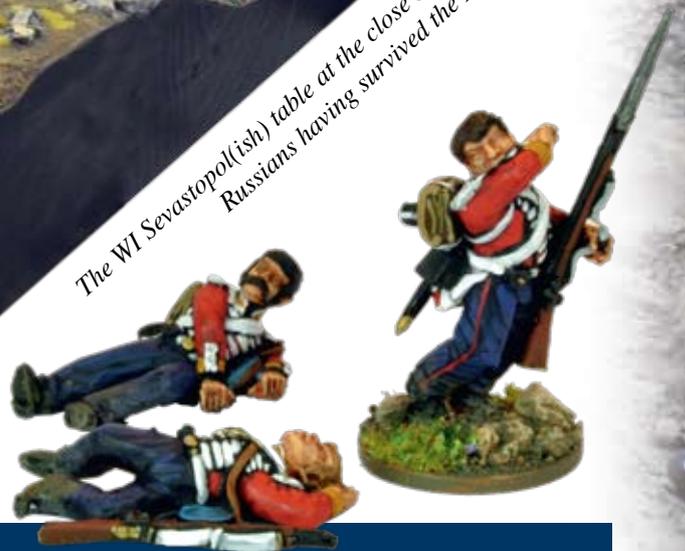
mere 5% of its fighting strength. Its cohesion was ripped apart through adverse resolve checks. The British also lost two naval guns.

The Russians lost 113 casualties and seven guns (equivalent to 2,260 men and 14 guns). This equated to 39% of their total strength. They partly lost their first line of entrenchments (the final section nearest Sevastopol was still manned), but held on to everything else. We thought the game closely reminiscent





The W1 Sevastopol(ish) table at the close of our battle. With the Russians having survived the British onslaught...



TOURING THE SEVASTAPOL(ISH) TABLE

There is no way we could do this wonderful model justice in a single article. That's why we'll be talking to Dave Bodley of **Grand Manner** in next month's issue about how he developed the table from a few rough sketches into the fantastic creation you see before you. This table will also be our centrepiece at Salute 2012, and a few other shows this year. Keep an eye out for it, and if you see Dave at a show, make sure you tell him how great it looks!