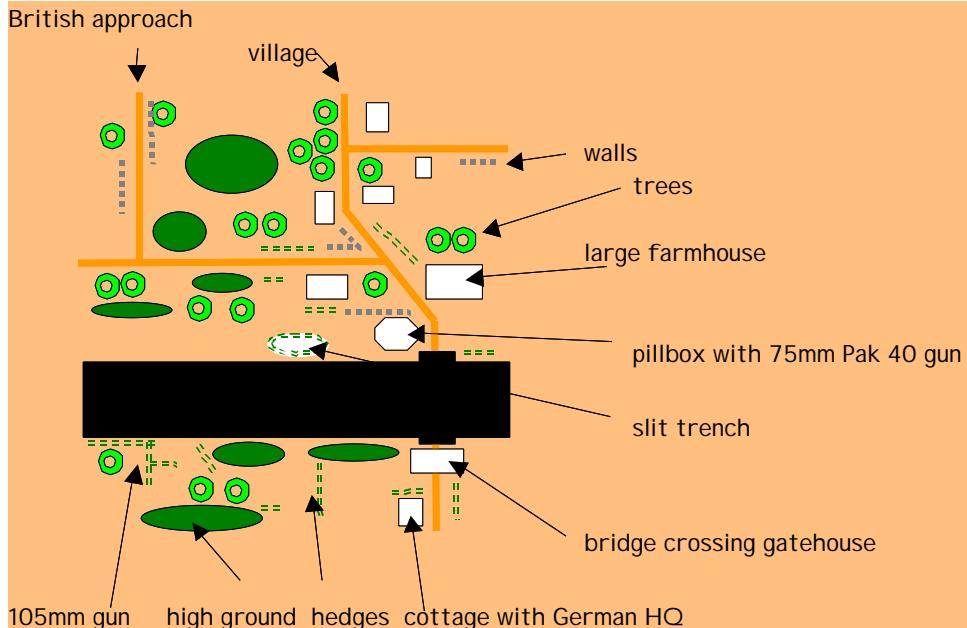


The Neu Bridge Game



Scenario

The British 33rd Infantry Brigade are given the responsibility of crossing the Neu River bridge and securing the position so that following armoured units can cross the Neu River. German defences are known to be of battalion strength with artillery from the 13th Panzer Division.

ORBATS are:

German

1st Battalion 13th regiment - 3 companies of 8 figures
 1 company with MMG
 2 company with MMG
 3 company with 81mm mortar
 4 (weapons) company distributed as above
 Reg Hq - CO + 5 figures
 2 x Panzerschrecke teams
 2 x 37mm Flak 37 AT guns
 1 x 75mm Pak 40 AT gun
 1 x 105mm FH18 howitzer

British

33rd Brigade HQ - CO + 2 figures, Humber scout car, radio truck
 Inf Battalion HQ - CO + 2 figures, 15cwt truck
 A company - 8 figures with MMG
 B company - 8 figures with 2in mortar
 C company with PIAT
 D company
 Carrier platoon - 2 Bren carriers, 6 figures, 3in mortar, PIAT
 OP team - 2 figures in Humber scout car
 Battalion AT platoon - 6pdr with 3 man crew, Loyd carrier
 Tank squadron - Sherman Firefly, 2 x Sherman 75mm
 Brigade artillery - 2 x 25pdr guns

Deployment

The German defence was deployed on either side of the bridge up to a maximum of 6 inches from the North bank. The 75mm Pak40 was sited in the pillbox covering the approach road with 1 Kompanie giving support in and around the slit trench. The 105mm infantry gun was located on the south side amongst the hedges with 2 Kompanie covering. 3 Kompanie guarded the gatehouse on the south side of the bridge. HQ was set up in the nearby cottage. The two 37mm AT guns covered the south side of the bridge and the flank of the bridge. The German Commander who was rated Above Average deployed his 2 Panzerschrecke teams at either end of the bridge.

The British were allowed one full move to deploy onto the table before the game began. This avoided a protracted set of moves when vehicles arrived and the defenders had no activity. Having set up Brigade HQ in the village, A company was ordered to advance cross country to the east of the village whilst C company took the west road supported by the Carrier platoon. The 6pdr deployed defensively in the village and B company were held in reserve in the low hills to the north. The Tank squadron, supported by D company advanced to the bridge along the main road. The OP team, controlling a battery of 2 x 25pdr guns advanced cautiously through the village on foot. The British CO was also Above Average.

How the game went..

The opening stages of the opening move were nothing if not spectacular! The German infantry spotted the Shermans approaching and watched as the Firefly scored a hit on the pillbox. Recovering their wits, the Pak 40 hit back knocking out the Firefly with it's first shot. The 2nd Sherman then reduced the pillbox to ruins.

In infantry clashes to the East of the village, British small arms fire took care of a Panzerschrecke team. Elsewhere, the Carrier platoon and the OP team both advanced towards the river.

Bounds 2 and 3 were mild by comparison as shots fell wide or short and the British advance towards the bridge continued. The crew of the Pak 40 had been taken out by the Sherman's HE fire and in Bound 4, the gun itself was destroyed leaving the way clear for the tanks to storm the bridge. However, as the infantry clash continued, the German Momentum scores remained high so British progress was slow. In the west, the 105mm had caused casualties to C company and they pulled back to the cover of the copse.

In Bound 5, the German infantry defensive screen on the north side of the bridge started to crumble but it was not beaten! Although a Panzerschrecke team failed a Heroic test to tackle the leading Sherman and the fire from the 105mm gun was poor, German Momentum held up and the tanks were reluctant to move onto the bridge leaving German defenders behind them.

Bound 6 gave a real pivotal moment. The German 3 Kompanie survived 18 Momentum tests in the face of a fire onslaught whereas the British A company failed a similar number and had to withdraw to the cover of the large farmhouse - where they remained for another 5 bounds!

The slit trench defenders were finally cleared in Bound 8 but not until the Panzerfaust of 3 Kompanie had inflicted light damage on the second Sherman. Now the tanks could cross the bridge

supported by D company (who had stuck to their supporting role bravely under tremendous fire) and B & C companies that had arrived from rear positions.

By bound 11, the German defenders were nearing the end. HQ defence troops were out of the cottage whilst 1 Kompanie had abandoned their duties protecting the artillery to dash across to the bridge where they were forced to man the 37mm and 20mm AT weapons - their crews had fallen victim to the weight of infantry and artillery fire raining down on them.

On bound 12, staring defeat in the face, the German crew of the 105mm gun finally managed a hit - possibly their first of the game!! Their target was the leading Sherman that had advanced halfway across the bridge. Could there be a final twist? The Tank squadron failed it's Momentum test and the third vehicle was forced to withdraw leaving the infantry to complete the assault.

The end of Bound 13 saw the German defence finally crumble as HQ staff and the crew of the 105mm gun retreated.

Conclusions

The game admin took place on one large table and this speeded up the process greatly. At the outset there were 27 elements on the table but each bound ran smoothly.

The revised Momentum test rules were used and whilst these are more severe than the originals, the German throws allowed them to remain in their defensive positions and hold out - even when their AT capabilities looked poor. Had the German artillery been more accurate, the tanks may have been stopped. British artillery fire was hampered by poor deployment of the OP team whilst the German artillery and AT guns were almost useless having been positioned behind the high ground on the river banks. The British did not call on the engineer company to build the pontoon bridge but could have done so if the original assault had failed.

Rule changes

As the game unfolded, it became clear that elements more than 12 inches apart should be using radio contact to identify targets and determine objectives. I was lapse in not specifying objectives for each element before the game and this could have added an extra dimension where radio contact was not established. I also felt that the OP team should be making radio tests when the artillery were called on to change target - especially after the OP team had moved. Rules will need to be clarified here. Furthermore, when suppressed, rallying could be affected if the element did not have radio contact. Rules need to be clarified here not forgetting the lack of radios in the early war years.

The British merged 2 elements together at one point and a rule is required to clarify the new Momentum Score of the larger unit. I took an average (rounded up) and this seemed to work fine. Both elements needed to have Action orders to merge and a new radio/authority test was undertaken. Neither element was allowed to fire on the bound in which they merged and this felt right.

Counters were used to denote elements with suppression or reduced abilities as a result of poor Momentum scores. This avoided constant cross-referencing or situations where (at one point) a gun fired but actually had no crew!

One of the tanks ran out of shells - this should be reflected in their Momentum scores. Rules to be produced to cover this.

The German infantry were forced to take over the 37mm and 20mm guns when the original crews had become casualties. The rules need to state that the Momentum Score of the weapon is then derived from the original Score of the new crew. If there are infantrymen continuing to fight in their original role, those lost to become gun crews should be treated as casualties for Momentum



The British Carrier platoon on the move