

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Storm Over Arnhem	★★★★★
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Period	WW2	Publisher	Avalon Hill
Conflict	Arnhem	Designer	Courtney F Allen
Force Size	~ 1 bde vs ~ 1 bde	Date	1981
Mvr Units	Coy	Grid Size	Areas, 1"=100'
Turn Dur.	~ 6-8hrs, Game = 8 turns/3 day	Map Size	c.500m x 1000m ~6 x 4 areas, (30)+5 outer zones
Players	2		

Introduction

Subject of the game	The "Bridge too Far" at Arnhem. Once British established in the town, and just the town centre.
Scope	City centre, with outer reinforcement zones
Presentation	Good quality think card/board concertina map and counters. SPI style rules, so some repetition. No QRS, but a simple one on line at BGG.
Components	~A2 map, 2 counter sheets, ~220 counters, 10pp rules. 1pp designer notes, 2pp historical notes
Designer's focus/objectives	"a game that allowed its participants to concentrate on the strategies of <i>playing the game</i> rather than memorising endless rules and charts." "was designed with playability foremost in mind".
Overall system description	Area based movement and combat. Players take turns to move/fire groups of units, so constantly involved and right sequencing is vital. Limited Arty. Movement is typically only 1-2 areas, dependent on the presence of the enemy. Firing compares attacker score (best unit + supporting units + integrity 2D6) with defender score (worst unit+distance+2D6), and casualty point taken as retreat (1) or loss (3) – no step losses. Close combat is delta of AV + D6, with KO on 6+. British regenerate 1 counter for each 6 (or part by D6) lost per turn. Victory based on how soon the Germans take and hold the central areas. Obvious how Christmas in Hell was inspired by it.
Real Battle Notes	A bloody attritional fight as the cut-off Brits held out every increasing numbers of Germans.

The Game System

<p>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</p>	<p>The area model covers terrain nicely, follows layout but no concept of different levels of protective cover.</p> <p>Combat does tend to encourage point-density attacks, but certainly need to think about sequencing.</p> <p>Fires there but not overpowering. Need ot have HQ adjacent to area and from right battlegroup.</p> <p>AFVs tend to be just powerful counters and can hang around, no explicit attack bonus. There is a bonus for integrity between companies though.</p>
<p>Important abstractions</p>	<p>Attack Factor and Defence Factor differentiates units and represents combination of size, weapons, morale, training, doctrine etc.</p> <p>No representation of Mortars, limited for Arty (4 missions per turn for Germans, one for Brits)</p> <p>Whilst areas follow map divides are typically along main streets, and no differentiation of protection value.</p> <p>No C3ISR really at all.</p>
<p>Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play</p>	<p>Area based movement and combat. Players take turns to move/fire groups of units, so constantly involved and right sequencing is vital. Limited Arty. Movement is typically only 1-2 areas, dependent on the presence of the enemy. Firing compares attacker score (best unit + supporting units + integrity 2D6) with defender score (worst unit+distance+2D6), and casualty point taken as retreat (1) or loss (3) – no step losses. Close combat is delta of AV + D6, with KO on 6+. British regenerate 1 counter for each 6 (or part by D6) lost per turn. Victory based on how soon the Germans take and hold the central areas.</p> <p>All pretty straightforward and no need for QRS really for common actions.</p> <p>All just 2D6 per side rolls.</p>

Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation	<p>Very playable. All brits would have been killed by ~ Turn 9 or 10, so 8 is about spot on. Took ~4 hours from first sight. Not much need to refer to rules for main actions after first few turns.</p> <p>Given the relatively simple nature of the real battle there may not be too much to model but I don't feel that some of the things I associate with the battle (mainly from ABTF) are there – link the landing and initial fight in, and the fight over the bridge.</p> <p>No real sense that this was <i>urban</i> fighting, could have changed the board graphic to fields and a key defile and would have been no different.</p> <p>Ought to replay after I've read a couple of books.</p>
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	<p>Given how relatively early it is (1981) I'm sure it must have spawned many imitators (not least CiH), and the use of an areas system really works well for urban. Many people have commented to me how good a game it is and how fondly remembered.</p>
Improvements?	<p>Not many, it plays well on its own turns. Any changes would move it in the direction of CiH v1.5.</p>

The Game in Play

Play time	4 hours for first play from first sight, would probably do in ~2.5 to 3.
Player roles	Germans, British
Types of decisions required	Where to deploy troops, strategy of attack for the Germans, how to sequence activity within a turn.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	Sequencing, particularly how units when committed have a lower DV. And having one low DV unit in an area gives attacker an instant advantage so make some "false" choices.
Evaluation of the player's experience	Very good, flows really well.

Overall Evaluation

Does the game work? (Veracity)	Yep, very playable
Does it have real world validity?/Insights?	Not really sure, may be too abstracted from the urban – no rubble, no PV
Is it a good game?	Yep, very playable
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone who enjoys wargames or looking for a 2 nd game. Perhaps people who really want to understand the bigger picture at Arnhem would want one that starts with the landings and shows the situation beyond the town centre.
Is the game good value?	Yep, really well constructed and plays well. Worth the s/h price.

MECHANICS

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	None, just alternate group activation
Movement	MA, with MP based on proximity to en not terrain. Area based. Nice "zones" beyond main map, but really just become reinforcement points.
Direct Fire	AF+2D6+DMs vs DF+2D6+DMs. No allowance for terrain (according to notes built into British defence factors)
Damage	CP based on delta, 1 CP = retreat, 3 CP = KO.
Assault	D6 + AF vs AF + # supporters. Paired off. Simultaneous.
Indirect Fire	Treat as DF but to area adj to HQ. Limited missions per turn. Brits need to roll 4- to call in.
Air Support	NA
Engineers	NA (although Engr counters, treated as inf)
CEMA	NA
Comms	None
UxV	NA
ISR	None
Morale	None
Civilians	None
Subterranean	None
Urban Specifics	None
Other Notable	

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	22 Jul 22	Scenario	Default
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

Very well, took couple of turns to really get to grips with the rules but then fine. Put too many German troops on East side, so many couldn't get through to the fight and few reinforcements in West. Very attritional but lots of scope to work out where and how to seize the sectors. Big gun fights seemed more effective than close cbt.

My comments from play:

- If one side fires then en fires back at an advantage as def now typically has a lower DV
- Worth keeping one unit out of the fire to occupy vacant areas if en doesn't move straight back into them
- Need to remember to use (and position) HQ's to direct fires, before spending them by moving or firing
- Don't move troops in to reinforce an area before its been fired as the committed DV again lower than normal, so gives en a +1 or +2. Seems very odd, but I suppose if you do move you gain the ability to soak up more damage, but still seems odd.
- Seems to favour giving up HQs due to low cbt ability! (and Coy HQs can't bring down fire – would abstract them out)
- Not sure about always using the lowest DF for def in cbt
- I'd like the edge zones to mean more, eg for break-in battle
- The random events and reformed units work well
- Better to have AFVs in pairs so that if get a -2CP can just retreat both rather than lose 1

RESULTS

Decisive British win as Germans only had ~10 VP as relatively late getting to the VP areas

THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN)

Perhaps people who really want to understand the bigger picture at Arnhem would want one that starts with the landings and shows the situation beyond the town centre.

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I think that CiH certainly made a good improvement to this with rubble and CA, then I think my 1.5 added again with better zones and protection value for areas. Might add back in some bits of Arnhem (eg Arty) and should end up with a racking but still playable set.

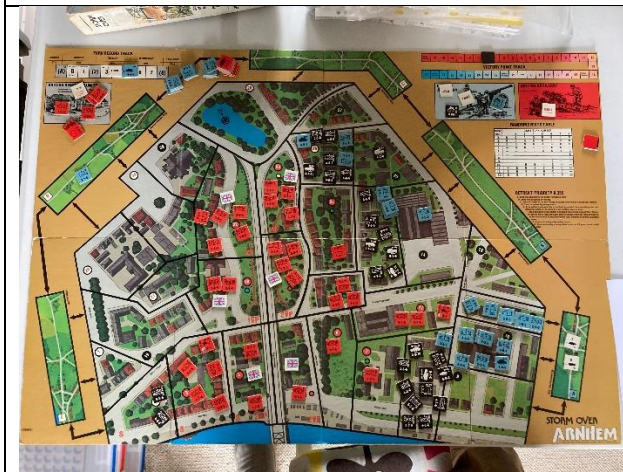
IMAGES



Initial Set-Up



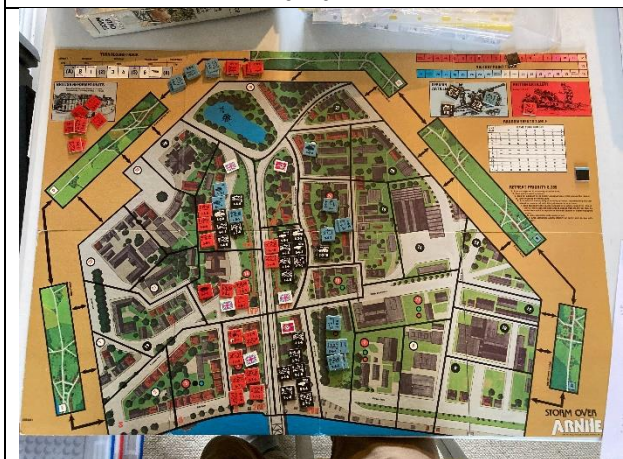
End Turn 2



End Turn 4



End Turn 6



End Turn 7



End Turn 8