



## A WEE DRAM OF NAPOLEON (SECOND GLASS)

Onside Report  
by Tim Gow

This year's DRAM session was a re-fight of the battle of Ligny (for those few of you whose grasp of this period is more tenuous than mine, the original took place a couple of days before Waterloo). The game included the many small modifications and tweaks which in the opinions of my "hard core" of Sheffield play testers have transformed the playability of the game (for the better!).

The latest and most significant such addition is the initiative roll phase which occurs after new orders have been revealed. Each corps rolls a D6, which is then placed on the corps HQ stand. During the movement phase which follows, those corps who rolled a "1" move first, then those who rolled a "2" and so on. This, together with the existing command and control rules creates enough of a "buggeration factor" to prevent the clairvoyant demigod approach to wargame generalship.

As a game, Ligny will accommodate between three and eleven players, the former being The Emperor, Grouchy and Blucher, the latter including all of the corps commanders. I was somewhat astonished (and daunted) when no fewer than 10 players showed up for the game at Knuston!

In the event, the game progressed briskly to a fairly historical conclusion: Blucher escorted from the field bleeding profusely, Prussian Army withdraws in largely good order minus a fair few casualties, French too knackered for an immediate pursuit but fit enough for another battle in a couple of days...

The prize for most memorable quote of the game went to Blucher, who having had an

aide point out to him the presence of a large body of cavalry\* scarce half a mile from his command post, was heard to exclaim "Bloody hell! They're French!" Ah, isn't German education wonderful?

I reckon that the rules are approaching a publishable state (I anticipate 40 pages of A5 including several scenarios for around a fiver). Meanwhile, I still have a few copies of the 'COW' edition (which includes orbat and map for Ligny). Say £4 including postage - ring me on 07711 337529 if you want one.

\*Two divisions of Cuirassiers actually!

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### Offside Report by Ian Russell Lowell

Having been selected to play Napoleon in this game, I feel that there is at stake an issue for the Trades' Description Act as there is no way at all I can be described as "wee". It would be best to point out as well that the "dram" entitled one to Deploy, Reserve,

Attack or Move one's troops and there was never any whiff of any brandy throughout the session (and the bar was closed).

This said the game set out to recreate the Battle of Ligny, 1815 with Napoleon's reconstituted Grande Armée fighting the Prussian Army under Blücher - Richard Madder uttering "Vorwärts, meine Kinder!" - using Tim Gow's rules, suitably entitled *A Wee Dram of Napoleon*. The essence of the rules system is two-fold. Firstly, the scale is divisional: so that there were four German players and six French players, two being the overall commanders-in-chiefs. This does away with the minutiae of much Napoleonic figure gaming - the Anorak's delight in changing column to line - and concentrates on the tactics. Secondly, much of the activity of the divisions is deployment, which recreates the problems of large scale operations. Played on a map of the territory, the divisional blocks soon got into conflict, with the French Guard in reserve. The centre



became very messy as did the French right-Prussian left flank, but after initially bogging down the French left flank broke through the Prussians, but were stopped from a completely outflanking by Prussian redeployment. By this time the French heavy cavalry had broken through the Prussian centre and the Guard stormed across as night was falling, nicely echoing historical records.

The game was fun and interesting, although as Napoleon I had nothing really to do. This might have been my lack of dominance, but as the initial deployment areas were given and the French commanders knew what they were to do, implicitly it seemed, that was not an operational deficit, but it could have been a personal one. Blücher seemed to be in the same position, except he was shot at numerous times in the front rank and kept sending various missives to at least one of his commanders (Will Whyler).

The system of inflicting casualties was fast and efficient with dice added for various factors and the resultants dependant on what state of organisation the division was in. So an attacking unit would score casualties on a 5 or 6 on a deploying unit, the other way round the attacking unit suffered casualties only on a 6 from a deploying unit. The numbers of dice assessed for each side were handed over in suitable (plastic ex-film) containers and the opponents worked out how many casualties they had suffered and these were sorted out through decreasing attached fighting strengths, that were face down on the base. Once a unit had dropped 50% it was exhausted and had to go into reserve. Similarly commanders had strength points enabling them to control a certain number of decisions as well as similar charisma points, which were literally blown away if they were in line with their troops. Most Prussian commanders seemed intent on creating a new millinery fashion of holey hats!

I would like to be involved again and see how

the higher command system could work, as I felt that this was entirely absent from the French side. It might be that either an earlier battle of Napoleon, might be suitable for this, say the Italian Campaign, or even the Peninsula Campaign, where the lesser experience (in historical terms) of the commanders might require a greater direction. Real drams of Napoleon might help in this?

Thanks, Tim, for a great game and for interesting gaming mechanisms. I look forward to sharing a future dram with thee.

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#### Offside report by Allen Curtis

I recall playing the first go-round of this a few years ago. I also recall that we took so long setting up, and being distracted by floral foam boats and spud guns on the lawn, that we (I anyway) didn't get far into the game. So I had no recollection of the game mechanisms from the first try. But I was impressed by this session. On the Prussian side, we did get our corps a bit intermingled, but the game moved along rapidly to a reasonable conclusion in the time allotted. I was happy to acquire a copy of the rules from Tim Gow, and hope to try it out soon with 2mm. Now if I can just figure out how to mount the blocks on metal bases for Phil Barker's "Horse, Foot and Guns", and make sure they'll work on magnetic DRAM bases as well!

