

## Crehan After Action Report

Or .....*"When L21 is long enough"*

We play-tested Andy Parkes' & Bob Hart's Crehan Part 1 scenario using 1:200 models and "standard" BFWW2 15mm ground scales.

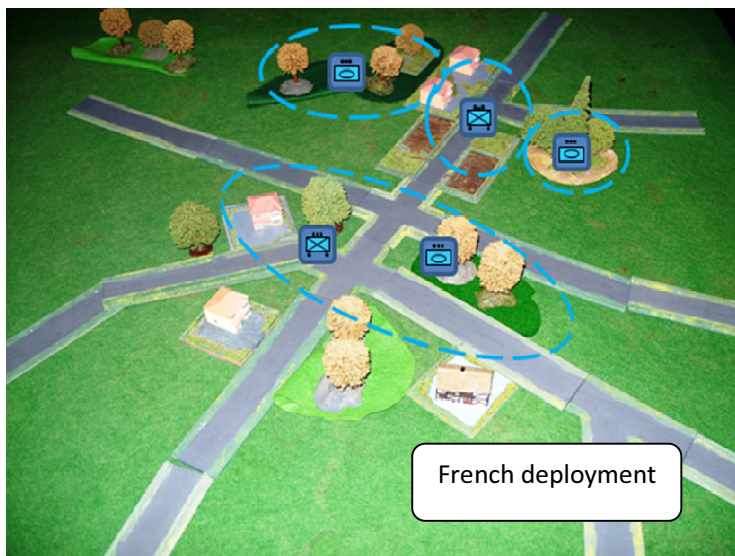
The scenario is set during the German drive through Belgium in 1940. The French have set up a blocking position at Crehan, which the Germans, who are chasing broken Belgian units, need to crash through or outflank as quickly and cheaply as possible.

Mark Flanagan commanded the French, with one Company of Dragoons Portee and one of Cuirassiers in H39s. This was his first game of BFWW2.



Mark strikes a confident pose!

The French deployment was hampered by their poor communications and lack of anti tank guns. Although the Dragoons had plenty of LMGs, their lack of anti tank weapons meant that the accompanying Cuirassiers had to deploy forward to provide anti tank defence. Mark was forced to split both his Companies, holding back a reserve equivalent to a platoon of infantry and tanks at the rear of Crehan. The main body was deployed with the Dragoons holding the built up areas in Crehan and the Cuirassiers in the woods either side. Unfortunately this would mean that the tanks would mostly be outside of their command radius, hampered by poor communications. French positions are shown in the pic below:



French deployment

All French troops were deployed hidden in dug in or hull down, and they were backed by off table fire from two batteries of light artillery and their own integral mortars.

Paul Davison commanded the Germans, but his far greater experience in BFWW2 was to some extent balanced by his just coming off a 12 hour shift, so fatigue was a factor – as can be seen below!



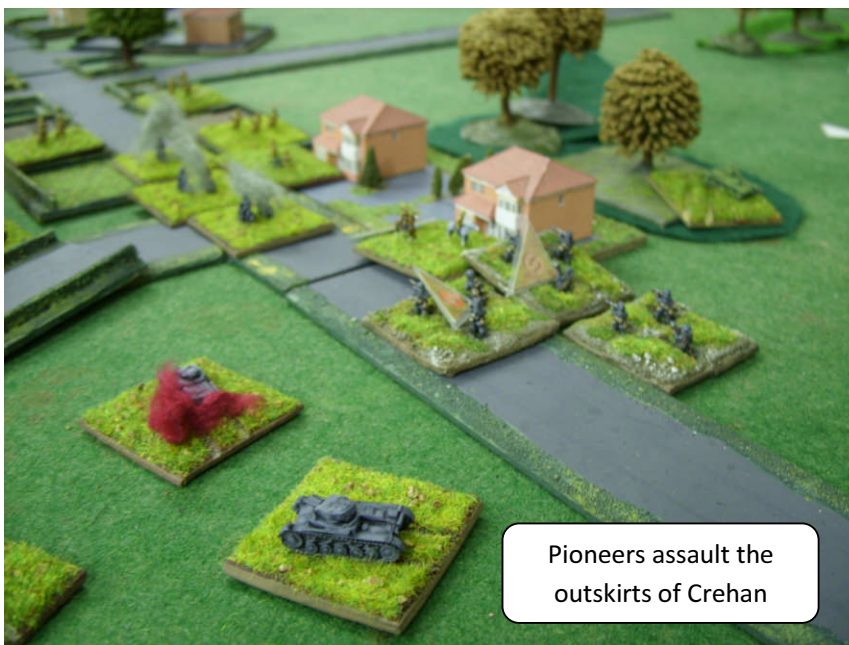
The Germans also have their own problems, specifically an embarrassing lack of infantry. Two Light and one Medium Panzer Companies are supported by only a single platoon of engineers and a platoon of recce mounted on motorcycles. Paul was very aware that he had the wrong tools for the job at hand. He was also hamstrung by his deployment options, as his units would arrive piecemeal over the first six turns.

#### Turn 1 & 2

Turn one started predictably, as the German 6<sup>th</sup> (Light) Company, with both Recce and Pioneers attached, approached Crehen down the road. Andy's scenario stresses that the German needs to "keep his sabre in the back" of the retreating Belgians, so Paul sighed and drove his recce Zug forward. Predictably they died in a hail of MG fire as they entered Crehan, however Mark failed to cause any damage to the leading Panzers.



Paul responded by rapidly assaulting the outskirts with his Pioneers and forming his Panzers in a gun line on the French right to engage the H39s now shooting from the wood. The Pioneers eliminated the French troops including FOO holding the first buildings without difficulty, but they could not risk pushing into the village where they would be outnumbered three to one. Meanwhile the Panzers found that their MGs and 20mms were of little use against the thick frontal armour of the H39s, while the short 37mm could punch through a Pz Is with alarming regularity.





### Turn 3-5

Help was at hand for the Germans, as on turn 3 the second (5<sup>th</sup> Light) German Panzer Company arrived. This immediately headed for the left of the French position, only for this move to be stalled when taken under fire by more H39s.



Paul attempted to flank one of these with his Pioneers, taking advantage of the woods to approach unseen, but his close assault was driven off.

### Turn 6

At last the German Medium Company arrived, containing the PzIIIs and IVs that could shoot it out with the H39s on something approaching equal terms. Paul sent these to follow the 5<sup>th</sup> Company engaged to his right. On the German left Paul decided to try and outflank the H39s in the woods, arguing that although they would get flank shots at him as he passed, this made no difference when his front armour was as thin as his side! This may have worked, except that in doing so he fell foul of the French “back-stop” position of the remaining three H39s, and lost a couple more PzIs. This proved to be enough for the now depleted 6th Company, which retired in disorder.

We ended the evening at that point. The French player was happy with his situation. His troops had suffered very minor losses and were still holding their ground. The Germans too were not too unhappy, as they had finally got all their troops on table. To the umpire's eye the French position was starting to look decidedly threatened. Although the H39s had not yet suffered any losses, the accumulation of Suppression & Disordered markers on their troops (rated as Trained), and enemy proximity meant

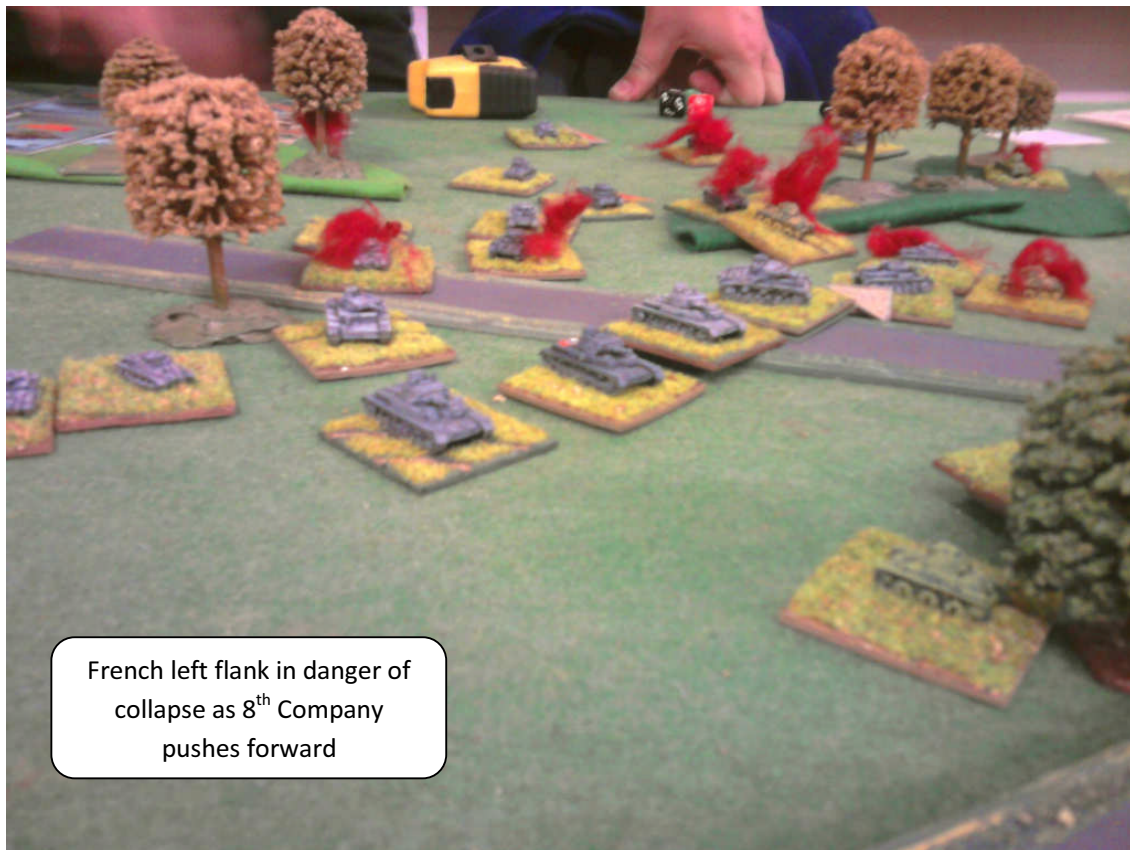
a bad Manoeuvre die could see the vital tanks start to fall apart. The Germans were looking slightly better off, with 6th company mauled and retiring, but they were rated as Experienced and once clear of French troops could be expected to rally.

#### Turns 7-11

Next evening and both players were ready to start with renewed vigour. Sadly this did not extend to Pauls dice, and his mauled 6<sup>th</sup> Light Company rolled poorly and retreated off table. This was a disastrous result, as it not only scored victory points for the French, it also meant the French right flank was now not under threat, allowing Mark to redeploy tanks to the centre and left.... and they certainly were needed because on that flank the situation had taken a dramatic turn for the worse.

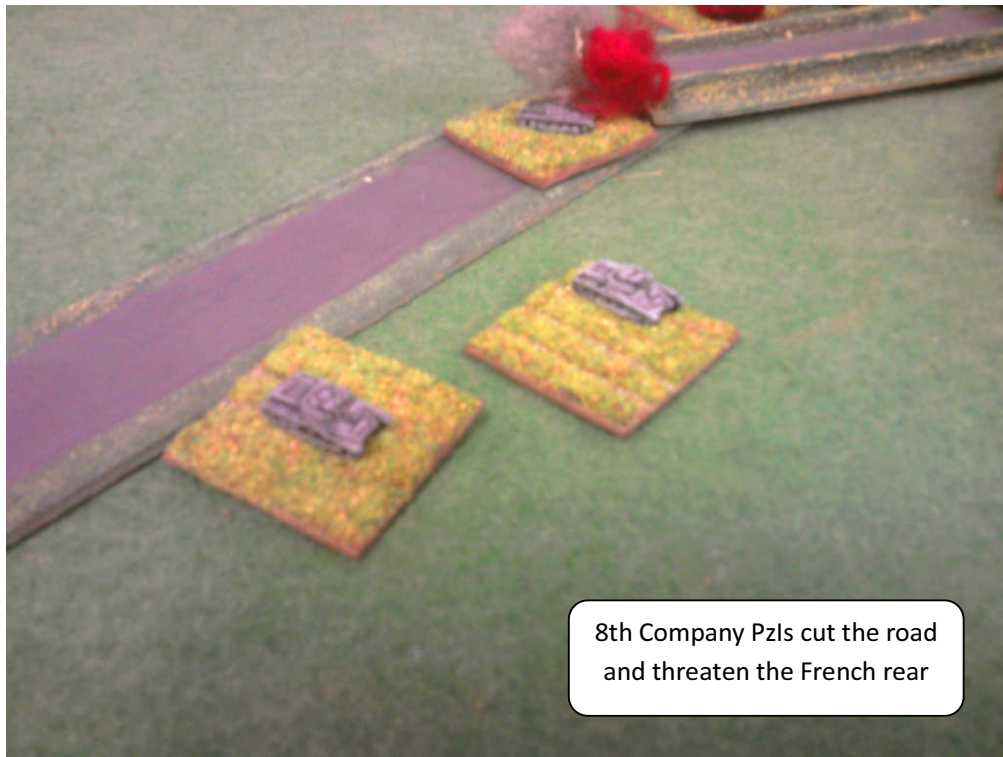
Previously Paul had been trying to shoot it out with the French tanks. Paul is an experienced BFWW2 player but he usually plays late war Germans, so he is used to having a certain level of armoured superiority. The idea of close assaulting with tanks is not a winning tactic in these circumstances. A good night sleep had given him the chance to rethink tactics and as a result his Panzer Is & IIs from the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Company threw themselves forward to engage the H39s in point blank close assaults. Here the German poor armour and guns were would be balanced out to some extent by better training and control. He was immediately rewarded as 2 H39s burned and another withdrew in disorder, leaving the French left horribly exposed. This forward lunge also cleared the way for the 8th Medium Company to advance to effective range of the French positions. It was looking as though the Germans would be able to interdict the road through Crehan and cut off most of the French infantry

Mark responded quickly, helped by some excellent Manoeuvre checks. He redeployed his H39s from right to left, and his infantry began a rather precipitous retirement to their transport and then back through Crehan. The H39s gamely tried to shoot it out with the PzIIIs and IVs, but this time it was their turn to suffer in the uneven shooting exchange, losses included their CO. Their sacrifice was not in vain, as this had allowed the Infantry to withdraw.



German pressure was starting to tell. The PzI platoon from the Medium Company moved forward and started to threaten the road leading to the French rear. They were taken under fire by the hard pressed H39s but the writing was on the wall. The

H39s were still in the fight, but only by virtue of above average manoeuvre dice. It seemed only a matter of time before the Cuirassiers either broke or were destroyed.



Then disaster struck the Germans.

A lucky hit from a H39 at long range killed a PzII, taking Second Light Company past 50% losses, and achieving the French victory condition of inflicting 50% or more losses on 2 Companies. As the Germans could no longer achieve their victory conditions, it was agreed to call a halt at the end of that game turn. The Umpire decreed the French would have to abandon their position, which would in all probability involve the Cuirassiers being overrun as they fought to cover the withdrawal of the Dragoons, but the Germans had suffered significant casualties that would render II/Pz Regt 35 combat ineffective for the following battle.

In the final assessment the scenario played very well and was balanced, with interesting challenges for both players and the overall result in doubt until the last turn. Thanks to Andy & Bob for the scenario, Mark & Paul for playing, and Mark for use of his “toys”.





A note on the photos

The game was played on a normal club night in the Hartlepool Wargames Society, so the photos are not of a demo game standard. We used Marks lovely 1:200 scale models, and club terrain (hence the rather modern looking buildings – somewhere there's an Estates Agency model with some missing houses!

And I forgot to take the camera stand, so some were a bit too blurry to use

And then on the second night I forgot the camera so we had to use camera phones

And I am a rubbish photographer

Ken Natt