

Blitzkrieg – Boulogne

An Introductory Scenario for BFWW2

May 23rd 1940

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Historical Overview

The Schlieffen Plan of 1914 had demonstrated the vulnerability of France's borders to an outflanking move through Belgium and, given how close the Germans had come to victory in 1914, everyone anticipated that this would be their battle-plan once again. Soon after the war had begun in 1939, Britain and France manned defensive positions from Switzerland to the Channel coast, later refined by a controversial plan to move forwards into the Low Countries should Germany fail to respect their neutrality. The month of May 1940 was the month when everything changed. At the start of May 1940, the war was still being called "The Phoney War". The Germans waited, perfecting "Plan Yellow" – the *Blitzkrieg* offensive that would destroy France. By the end of May 1940, the world had been stunned at the rapidity of the fall of France. The "miracle of Dunkirk" was drawing to a close as the remnants of the British army were evacuated. Hitler's Panzers had achieved even more than he had believed possible, but it almost did not happen.

Many of us perceive *Blitzkrieg* as a doctrine developed by the Germans throughout the inter-war years. It was in fact very much in its infancy when they invaded Poland in September 1939. Yes, the Germans had worked hard at developing excellent integration of infantry, armour, artillery and air-power. But *Blitzkrieg* took this a step further – armoured divisions sweeping forward en-masse, creating breaches in the enemy line so wide and so deep that open flanks became irrelevant, using air-power as mobile artillery. During the attack on Poland, the Panzer Divisions had led the way, maintaining a pace of advance that allowed the Poles no chance to regroup. Despite this success, the German High Command remained fixated on the Schlieffen Plan, ignoring the views of the vociferous proponents of *Blitzkrieg*, especially Manstein and Guderian. Slowly, these radicals gained ground with Hitler. In "Plan Yellow" Guderian was to lead his three Panzer Divisions in breaking through the mid-point of the Allies line at Sedan. Situated opposite Luxembourg and the Ardennes forests, the Maginot Line extension in his area was weak – surely no sizeable force could mount a credible attack here? High Command still envisaged the Panzers in a role of opening the door for the Infantry Divisions. Guderian had more than that in mind.

The war in the west began on 10th May 1940 when the Germans, showing contempt for Holland's and Belgium's neutrality had poured across the borders. The Schlieffen Plan appeared to be unfolding once again. The BEF, together with large elements of the French army, moved into Belgium to block the German advance. Then, on 13th May, the second hammer-blow fell. Alongside Hoth's Panzer Korps, Guderian's three Panzer Divisions had moved over 40,000 vehicles through the Ardennes and on 13th May they reached the River Meuse at Sedan. By 15th May, the French defences had been breached wide open and the Panzers started to roll across northern France. The fall of Amiens on 20th May made it clear that the all Allied forces to the north (including the whole BEF) were now in a very vulnerable position.

In London, the War Office struggled to comprehend the magnitude of the disaster that was unfolding. One matter was patently clear – the Germans were within reach of the Channel coast and all of the Channel ports were unguarded and vulnerable. On May 21st, a counter-attack by the British forces at Arras succeeded in giving voice to some of the doubters in German High Command. But would it be enough to save the situation? Orders were hurriedly dispatched and 20 Guards Brigade arrived in Dover, destination – Boulogne. But ominously it was late on that same day that troops of 2nd Panzer Division reached the Channel coast at the Somme estuary.

The following day, after an overnight crossing, amidst chaos at the quayside, the Guards disembarked and marched to the outskirts of Boulogne to take up defensive positions in one last desperate attempt to keep the link across the Channel open.

British Player Briefing

I went with the Company commander down a little passageway; Brigadier Fox-Pitt was there as well, and we looked out and saw some tanks. We thought that they were British tanks! We could not believe that the Germans had been so quick. They had come round from Number 3 Company and they were already moving down as fast as me motoring down the road. They were belting out as fast as they could, it was all smooth fields. There was nothing to stop them..... They were very bold.

Lt Col Sir Alexander Stanier Bt., MC. CO 2 Welsh Guards

Situation

Major Windsor-Lewis, 3rd Coy, 2nd Btn. Welsh Guards; 07:30 23rd May, Mont Lambert Crossroads

It is almost a year to the day since you took command of this company of guardsmen. You had left the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and accompanied Lt Col Stanier back from Gibraltar in May 1939 to establish this Battalion. Built on a backbone of experienced NCO's and junior officers from the senior Battalion, you were justifiably proud of your command. The last 12 months have been an unusual mix of training and King's Guard duties in London – a more sinister duty in a time of war. Soon after the war started last September, you were disappointed as the British Expeditionary Force sailed for France but you remained in reserve in England, with 2nd Btn. Irish Guards, as 20 Guards Brigade. When action finally came 2 weeks ago, it was the predictable disorganised mayhem! Many of the Battalion had been granted their first leave in a year when the Germans invaded Holland. A desperate SOS came through for a force to secure the evacuation of the Dutch government and royal family. You had taken a composite company of Welsh Guards with some Irish Guards as part of Harpoon Force into Holland for 48 hours as the Dutch defences crumbled under the German onslaught. Casualties had been light and at least some of your guardsmen had received their first taste of action.

You had scarcely made back to your camp when the orders came through to move back to Dover. German Panzers had broken through in France and were racing towards the Channel. You were heading back to war – this time the Brigade was complete. Your task was to secure the port of Boulogne and then to be the reserve for the big counter-attack that would throw the Germans back. Dover was chaotic. Three small cross-channel steamers and 2 destroyers were the Brigade's allocated transport. The holds of the ferries were still half-full from unloaded stores from previous runs. Three hours was allotted to loading all equipment and men before the overnight crossing; inevitably most of the Battalion's equipment was left in Dover, not only all transport, but also essentials like tools, barbed wire and mines. If Dover was chaos, then Boulogne was pandemonium. The quayside was crowded with wounded soldiers from all nationalities, civilian refugees and hundreds of military non-combatants (lines of communication soldiers who were now "useless mouths to feed"). It was almost impossible to unload the precious few stores and equipment that you had managed to take with you.

It soon became clear that the military position was far worse than anyone imagined. German Panzers were known to be less than 20 miles away. The French Division that was meant to be providing the main defence for the town had been unable to pull back across the Somme River before the Germans captured the crossings and less than two functional battalions remained. They would garrison the static defences of the town – the old military forts. The two Guards Battalions were to try and set up a defensive perimeter outside the town.

The cliffs and hills rose rapidly from around the small docks. It was up these in the hills around the outskirts of the town through which your men marched against the endless streams of refugees making for the docks. The British forces were far too few to form a continuous perimeter and so were organised to defend the major roads into the town from the lightning quick attacks of the Panzers. Your company had drawn the short straw – being allocated a cross-roads on the eastern outskirts of the town where the main road into Boulogne came down from Mont Lambert through the village of St. Martin. At least being on point earned you an allocation of the Brigade's precious anti-tank guns. However, you really miss the heavy equipment left behind in Dover. Your men have nothing more than personal entrenching tools to try and dig themselves and the guns into the hard chalky soil. In the mid-afternoon you had seen a few lone vehicles appearing on the crests of hills across the shallow valley. The Germans were closing in. Late evening brought the unmistakable noise of battle from the south-west. Some of the Irish Guard's outposts were obviously in the thick of it. As dusk gave way to night, occasional tanks crossed the open fields ahead of your positions but rapidly withdrew when they came under fire. In retrospect, all they had been doing was giving away your positions. Darkness brought a few hours of quiet before stand-to at 03:30. From then on, you were waiting for the inevitable.

Mission

Hold your ground. There are precious few defensive positions outside of the town itself and the Brigade is nowhere near strong enough to hold the town in street-fighting. If you give ground, then you expose the flanks of the neighbouring companies making a withdrawal into the town inevitable. If your Company, your Battalion, your Brigade, hold ground, then you can show that Hitler's Panzers are not invincible. Perhaps you can keep the door ajar and allow the Allies to find a way to continue the war in France.

British Deployment, Notes & Special Rules

The scenario duration is 8 turns and the German player moves first.

British units are all rated as experienced.

German units are all rated as veteran.

• Initial Deployment

All British forces start the game on the board and deploy west of the blue line on the map.

The German player enters anywhere on the east board edge

Transport is in very short supply. Once brought into position, the anti-tank gun transport leaves for “other duties” and the guns may not be redeployed.

• Pioneer Points

There has been limited time to prepare defences. You have 15 “pioneer points” to spend:

Basic improved position	1 point per unit/ gun
Enhanced IP (dug-in)	2 points per unit/ gun
Road block	3 points
Command post	3 points

Note that a stone BUS gives the same benefit as basic IP (improved position) for free and that improved hard cover gives the same benefit as enhanced IP (dug-in) for 1 point

A road-block must be placed on a road and creates an obstacle that requires a “breach/ bog-down check” for any vehicle that crosses it. It cannot be removed during the scenario. They may be placed anywhere on the board (not limited to the British deployment area)

A command post increases the command radius for the company commander from 5” to 10” and counts as an Enhanced IP for the Company CO.

• Off-board Artillery

The Battalion mortars have been sited off-board so that they can lend support to all 4 rifle companies

Due to limitations in communication equipment, only the Company Commander may call for fire support and they are classed as **Direct Fire Support**.

The mortars have three fire plans available:

1. Basic battery shelling Align three small templates side-by-side and resolve at -1/0
2. Concentration mission Place a single small template and resolve at 0/+1
3. Smoke mission Place between 1 and 3 small templates and place smoke in this area

All mortars (off-board and on-board) may each fire smoke for one turn only. With the off-board 3” mortars if one mortar section fires smoke, on that turn the remaining mortars in the battery are restricted to their smoke mission or no fire

British Forces



German Player Briefing

"When the tank goes round the bend there is a flash and the tank is hit. The tank commander, who has seen the well-concealed anti-tank gun, wants it shot and stops the tank. But the tank keeps rolling forward without anyone at the wheel – the driver down below is dead. He was shot in the head by the first shell. His foot however is still on the accelerator, but eventually it stops. Other shells hit the tank, partly tearing it apart. "Get out".... The men scramble out. Only the radio man cannot make it out – he was nearly out when he was hit in the head by a machine-gun."

Oberleutnant Rudolf Behr, 2nd Panzer Division

Situation

Oberst Gustav von Vaerst, 2 Schützen Brigade, 2 Panzer Division; 07:30 23rd May, Mont Lambert

After the disastrous betrayal at the end of the last war, you had just about managed to salvage your army career and had found yourself stagnating in the 1st Cavalry Division. And then the transformation started when you crossed paths with General Guderian. At the start of 1935, every soldier had greeted the cancellation of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles with delight. Within months, change was blowing through the army. Generals Lutz and Guderian had delighted the Führer with the demonstration of their improvised 1st Panzer Division and before the end of the year you had left the cavalry to join the cadre of the embryonic 2nd Panzer Division. It was almost three years later, on 10th March 1938, that you had your first opportunity to take centre stage. 2nd Panzer Division had the honour of leading the triumphal entry into Austria for the Anschluss. The nucleus of the Division remained in Vienna and built itself up to full strength, volunteers came in by the hundreds. You now had a command, one of the Division's Schützen Brigades.

In the Polish campaign, your division cut across 250km of southern Poland finishing the campaign just north of Lemberg. It was exactly what the cavalry had failed to do in the last war - a door was kicked open and your men accompanied the Panzers as they cut through Polish positions, never giving them a chance to reorganise.

And then the real battle – France. It is scarcely believable how much has happened in the last 2 weeks. The pride when you learnt that, together with 1st and 10th Panzer Divisions, the Division was to form the XIX Army Corps under command of none other than General Guderian. Three Panzer Divisions with the Motorised Infantry Regiment Gross Deutschland. Unprecedented and unstoppable. At the briefings, you learnt that your Corps had been tasked with crossing Luxembourg and southern Belgium before reaching the French border close to River Meuse and Sedan. Once Sedan had been taken and the Meuse crossed, you were then expected to hand over the advance to the follow-up infantry divisions. Guderian had smiled. "No firm orders once the Meuse is crossed. Just let them try and stop us. Paris. Amiens. The Channel. We'll take our pick!"

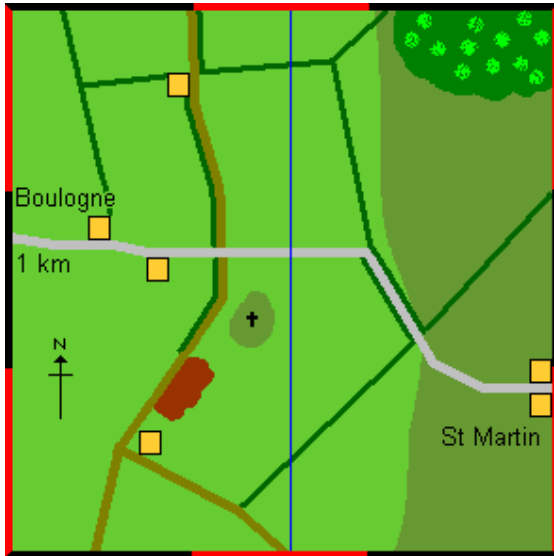
10th May and the start of the invasion was almost an anti-climax. It took three long days to cross through the Ardennes. The narrow roads were mined, bridges were blown, Belgian and French troops fought delaying actions but eventually you reached the Meuse. The fighting there had been bitter. The race to secure the first crossing had been won by 1st Panzer Division but on 14th May, your Brigade forced a crossing at Donchery, west of Sedan. Your men watched as the Panzers crossed the Meuse and then turned west deep into France.

Nothing could, or should, have stopped us. The three Panzer Divisions, line abreast, covered 20-30-40 km every day. But unbelievably, not comprehending what had taken place and worried about counter-attacks on our flanks, the German High Command ordered a halt. General von Kleist berated Guderian but agreed to "reconnaissance in force". Guderian was with us at the front and saw the chaos that paralyzed our enemy. He knew that there was no organized force that could mount a counter-attack and spurred us on again – "stop for nothing". 19th May - we crossed the Somme battlefields. 20th May – past Amiens to Abbeville and then late in the evening, the pride as one of your battalions reached the cliffs above St Valery and was the first to look out over the Channel. "Not bad" Guderian had said to you. "But we wasted two days" was your reply! Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. Three ports and the British army would be finished. High Command was jumping at shadows again and removed 10th Panzer Division into reserve. 1st Panzer Division closed the net around Calais, whilst your men moved north up the coast towards Boulogne. Dunkirk would have to wait.

Mission

One Combat Group is approaching Boulogne from the south. Your Combat Group has edged further north and is approaching from the east. Last night, you had come forward with the lead elements and seen the hurriedly prepared defensive line on the outskirts of the town. Apparently the enemy has been identified as Battalions of British Guards – perhaps your men will have a real test of strength? The main objective must be the port installations so you know that you must cast this defensive position aside and get your men down into the town. You have taken a leaf out of your General's book and given orders to Oberleutnant Durkes from your 2nd Battalion to carry out a "reconnaissance in force". If he's making good progress, then why wait?

Map & Terrain



- The playing area is 3' x 3' and north is the top table edge
- The land slopes uphill from west (level 0) to east (level 1)
- All buildings are stone all are single story buildings
- Grey roads are considered paved roads
- Brown roads are considered unpaved roads
- The area of woodland at the north-east is cleared woods
- All hedges are low hedges

- Adjacent to the cross-roads there was a small monument on a mound – this is higher (level 1) terrain
- The red/ brown area is a small quarry pit and is considered a wide and deep gully

Historical Outcome

The British attempts to hold onto the Channel Ports were, in retrospect, doomed to failure before they had even started. The Allies had seriously under-rated both the power of the German armoured forces, and the tactical freedom that they operated under. The Guards' positions outside Boulogne held for a few hours but soon they were out-flanked and the British were forced back, first into the town and then into the quayside area. Under direct fire from German forces, British destroyers succeeded in evacuating a large part of 20 Guards Brigade but inevitably there were many left behind.

Major Windsor-Lewis was amongst the Welsh Guards who failed to find a place on the destroyers. His 3rd Company had held off the initial German attack but were forced to withdraw to avoid being outflanked. Once in the town, communication steadily disintegrated. The 3rd Company never received orders to withdraw to the quayside and most of the survivors were rounded up and taken prisoner. Major Windsor-Lewis evaded capture and was one of a number of British soldiers who made long and eventful trips back to England in the months that followed. He rejoined the Welsh Guards and had risen to the rank of Brigadier in the newly formed Guards Armoured Division by the time that they crossed back to France in 1944.

Gustav von Vaerst also went on to higher command. After the campaign in the west, he took command of 15th Panzer Division in the Afrika Korps. Temporarily taking command of the Afrika Korps when the commander, Walther Nehring, was injured in September 1942, Generalmajor von Vaerst was given command of the 5th Panzer Army in early 1943. He was still in command when the German forces in Tunisia surrendered to General Omar Bradley in May 1943. He spent the rest of the war in a British prisoner-of-war camp.

Victory Conditions

The British player earns VPs solely from losses he inflicts on the Germans, as per table below

The German player earns VPs from both losses he inflicts on the British and also strength of ME exited

Victory Points Table	
1VP	Each enemy manoeuvre element with 25% casualties OR one knocked out armoured vehicle / gun.
2VP	Each enemy manoeuvre element with 50% casualties OR two knocked out armoured vehicle / guns.
3VP	Each enemy manoeuvre element with 75% casualties or greater OR 3 KO'd armoured vehicles or guns.
1VP	Each additional knocked out armoured vehicle or gun.*
2VP	German ME exiting off west board edge with less than 25% losses.
1VP	German ME exiting off west board edge with 25 - 50% losses.

* If, for example, the German Panzer Company had 4 tanks destroyed, this would earn the British player 4 VPs. He earns 3 VPs for KO'ing 3 tanks in the same ME (even though losses have not reached 75%) and he earns an additional VP for the 4th tank

	<i>British</i>	<i>German</i>
Major	Double the German player VP	Double the British player VP
Minor	More VP than German player	More VP than British player
Draw	Equal VP earned	

Bibliography

Battleground Europe – Boulogne	John Cooksey
Dunkirk – Fight to the Last Man	Hugh Sebag-Montefiore
Panzer Leader	Heinz Guderian