



Butlin It Out

Euro GT Tournament report

By Ian Davies, with loads of help from Alan Vowles, Arjan van Krimpen, Lex van Rooy, Nik Harwood, Stu Cresswell and Wayne Rozier

Good morning campers!

Way back in 1936, South African-born William Heygate Colbourne Butlin opened the first of a new generation of holiday-camp. In post-war Britain these camps thrived, offering a self-contained holiday experience for the mere price of a week's wages. As well as providing basic accommodation and meals, Butlin's Holiday Camps offered a string of packaged entertainments including - legend has it - "glamorous granny" competitions and "knobbly knee" contests.

And as well as these highbrow pursuits, for one weekend last March, the Butlins camp at Bognor Regis offered bickering goblins, belly-flopping giants and limb-removal in general; and not a little drunkenness and debauchery. Folks, the legendary EuroGT circus had rolled into town.

For those of you not familiar with EuroGT, here's the low-down. EuroGT (the GT stands for "Get Together" by the way) is a six-year old event that attracts players from all over Europe, nay the world.

During its brief but glorious life it's been around a bit too, having previously found itself in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. And this year it made it's way over to Britain for the first time, settling down for a weekend in England's sunniest town - Bognor Regis (although it should be said that the sun, suspecting that its efforts would probably be wasted on a host of daylight-shunning gamers, decided it really wasn't worth showing up).

Apart from its international flavour, what really sets the EuroGT apart from most other tournaments is the culture of camaraderie amongst the players. Winning comes way, way down the list of priorities, finishing well behind such activities as meeting old friends and new, trying out daft games over a bowl of pretzels and enjoying a beer or two at appropriate times (and anytime after breakfast may be considered an appropriate time).

Wayne, Brian Anderson (GWUK Events) & a certain Mr Priestleystand around a Warmaster table



The games played are - in order of popularity at Bognor - Warmaster, Mordheim, Warhammer and, for the first time ever, Man O'War. But here's the clever bit...instead of battling it out for individual prizes the glory instead goes to team-based Empires, comprising players from all four games. So the various systems rub shoulders with each other, as the players within each team work together to achieve their aim of global domination (well what did you expect?).



A game of Mordheim near some docks.

This combined system is known as the meta-game and is the source of much plotting, gloating and head-scratching, not least by the marshals.

Amid all these shenanigans are sprinkled especially written scenarios to reflect the various armies' missions, much plotting over how best to spend the teams' resources, pairs-based games of Mordheim and lots & lots of coloured pins being stuck in maps. And, late in the evening, some of the longest games of snooker on record.

Best of all, because it's not about winning, everyone goes home with a prize - including the losing team who this year also received a brand-new set of dice to replace the duds they'd brought with them.

After the event I fired a barrage of questions at some of EuroGT's finest specimens. Unfortunately none of these replied so we had to make do with Stu, Nik & Arjan instead.

Name: Nik Harwood

Nationality: British

Role: Mordheim player and general rabble-rouser

First EuroGT: 2005 in Belgium

Name: Stu Cresswell

Nationality: British

Role: Chief Man O'War dude and occasional Mordheim dabbler

First EuroGT: 2006 in Bognor Regis

Name: Arjan van Krimpen

Nationality: Dutch

Role: Marshall and all-round good egg

First EuroGT: 2000 in the Netherlands

Q: *What were you expecting from this EuroGT?*

Stu: Originally I had thought that GT was an acronym for "Grand Tournament". I soon discovered that, in the case of EuroGT, it appropriately stands for "Get Together". I hoped that delegates would be gaming for the love if it, rather than the sake of winning. I wasn't disappointed.

Q: *From your experience what would you say distinguishes EuroGT from other gaming events that you've attended?*

Nik: Well one of the first things is that the event's location tends to be a bit more adventurous than most. Last year, at my first event, it was held within a rather swish Belgian hotel. And this year we had the peculiar Britishness of Butlins, somewhere I hadn't been since climbing the fence at Minehead as a young lad.

The fact that the entire event - playing, sleeping, eating and drinking - is held at one site gives it much more of a "get-together" feel.

Arjan: I would say that the EuroGT developed two major artefacts: (i) a rule-set which makes it possible to play a friendly tournament combining several game systems and (ii) a core group of gamers/enthusiasts that are involved in organising, developing and of course playing.

The development of the meta-game rules is a saga of mythical proportions. The first tournaments always started out with nightly sessions on rules changes that had to be implemented/tested during the next day's play. The organisers' claim that "the rules did not change, they were just made a little simpler" became a well-known catchphrase in those days.

The result, the infamous meta-game, is now a proven, even documented system that can be used to manage a tournament with a minimal number of staff and a maximum amount of enjoyment.



Some Happy Mordheimers!

And the same goes for players: it's up to you how involved you'll get in the meta-game; on one hand you can be a team captain; on the other you can just play your games and see what happens. Both these extremes will fit in.

What stays the same though is that rather important bit: It's still a Get Together and not a tournament. The atmosphere is still very relaxed and friendly. Games are played for fun, not for winning at all costs.

Q: *What was the highlight of the weekend for you?*

Nik: Well, highlights for me included:

- Lots of great games with great gamers (again)
- Beer. Lots of beer
- Furry trousers (best not ask)
- Some truly excellent Mordheim tables with the right amount of scenery
- A much-needed break from work
- Time to talk with friends old & new
- Being voted best-painted warband by my peers
- Pulling off more than one successful diving charge (old habits die hard)

Stu: I got to meet Rick Priestley in an informal gaming environment. He created the Warhammer Fantasy Battle game so I suppose this makes him one of my heroes. Rick was very friendly, as were all the other attendees.

Q: *And what did you bring back from the EuroGT experience?*

Stu: Since coming back from Euro-GT, I have been inspired to paint two new Mordheim warbands, read-up about the Warmaster game, work on Warhammer terrain for my local veterans gaming club at GW Bournemouth and help out with a mini-campaign for Mordheim.

Nik: I learnt that the word "doofah" is multi-lingual and will cover an amazing amount of eventualities - and is indeed a global standard password for access into all manner of otherwise restricted areas (as in "I've forgotten my doofah" - "That's OK, come on in").

Q: *If you had to give any advice to a EuroGT virgin, what would it be?*

Nik: Don't worry too much about the intricacies of the meta-game; it's merely a distraction for the organisers - something for them to do while the gamers roll some dice.

Stu: Bring something to get drunk with, something to get washed with and a great sense of humour.

Nik: Oh, and if offered a German Pilsner at 9am, drink it slowly...

Having quizzed the new boys we turn our attention the more seasoned (some might say pickled) EuroGT'ers. Later on we talk to EuroGT XII organiser Wayne Rozier but first of all let's meet the daddy of the EuroGT, Lex van Rooy, the man to blame for the whole damned thing.

Name: Lex van Rooy

Nationality: Dutch

Role: Chief Culprit

First EuroGT: 2000 in the Netherlands

Q: *Lex, how did the EuroGT concept begin?*

In the late nineties of the previous century my fancy was caught by a J-files article in White Dwarf and I managed to nag Jervis into giving me a full copy of his rules-package (which then covered WHFB only). With a "Get Together" done in the USA by the Direwolf group (a Yahoo-based WHFB chat group), I thought it would be a nice idea to do something similar in Europe.

I got some local (i.e. Dutch) players interested in helping me set up, and so the first EuroGT was

born. Held in March 2000 in Bergen op Zoom, with Tuomas Pirinen as guest of honour and already with eight or nine different nationalities present!

Back then it was just WHFB and Mordheim, and there were not as many links between the systems but it was fun anyway, with tables set up to actually represent bits on our map.

Q: *How has EuroGT evolved over the years since its humble origins?*

Well, as I said earlier, the first EuroGT was just WHFB and Mordheim. It did not use the meta-game, but was played using a map where each region was actually represented by a table (which is a nice enough concept, and one that I would love to evolve some more, but it needs way too much tables and scenery).

The second EuroGT - in October of the same year in Austria - was map-based, using the same Mighty Empire tile-set that is still in use today.

After EuroGT III, I had a very productive summer vacation that produced the seed from which the current meta-game has evolved. Essentially the contest is now about resources, both by exploiting areas that creates income and by holding locations of strategic benefit to your Empire.

And whereas the earlier versions of the rules determined the eventual winner based simply on the "size of empire", the later incarnations use a system derived from Settlers Of Catan [the award-winning German boardgame] where points come not only from the areas controlled, but also from how these areas have been developed in terms of townships, ports, etc.

Another area we did a lot of work was in tying the systems together. We needed a way to tie activities and results in the three separate games into a cooperative team-play system. We devised a form of currency called Intelligence, or Intel for short. Each system has its own ways to gather that, and it is used to 'pay' for certain types of orders such as Defending, Attacking, Foraging and so on.

These orders translate into special scenarios; we don't play pitched-battle scenarios but instead have a number of (sometimes amusingly unbalanced) missions based upon the armies' orders for that turn.

Q: *What are your ambitions for EuroGT in the years ahead?*

Well I loved the way that Wayne managed to incorporate the Man-of-War seafaring game into this EuroGT, and it would be great to keep this up as long as we can get the players to support it.

We all would love to see the event grow and next year's venue in Austria could very well mean double the attendance we had at Butlins.

One thing we missed this year was our youngbloods. The way the meta-game system accommodates both WHFB Border Patrol missions and also the Mordheim skirmishes allows for even beginning players to participate in the fun, with smaller forces than the full 2000pts needed for the big battles.

And a big personal ambition for me is trying to reach ALL the past players that have ever visited EuroGT to join us for EuroGT XV, to be held in the original location in Bergen op Zoom. Sure I know that is still three years from now, but heck, we've had to learn how to plan ahead when running a EuroGT.

Q: *Thanks Lex. Now for the last question: What's the best thing about EuroGT?*

Arghh.... me laddy... that is a hard one ... but on the other hand, I guess it is the easiest question to answer.

In 1999 I was a lonely gamer... I had a small group of gamers in my local area and a very restricted gaming environment. Various

The gaming hall



places on the internet allowed me to talk to like-minded souls ... although 'talk' should be taken in a very liberal sense.

For me the main ingredient in the original concept of EuroGT is not about game systems played, or even about the games themselves, but the "Get Together" part of EuroGT. The ability to meet the people I communicated with daily over the years in the flesh; to put faces/bodies to the nick-names and their viewpoints in the forums; to have a drink and to talk about the things which join us in friendship, even kinship.

In 2006 the EuroGT was held in Britain for the first time. And with the new territory came a new head organiser, Wayne Rozier, fearless organiser of the UK's Warmuster events.

Name: Wayne Rozier

Nationality: British

Role: Chief Organiser of EuroGT XII

First EuroGT: 2002 in the Netherlands (giving Wayne the status of repeat offender)

Q: *Wayne, you were the chief organiser of the first ever British-based EuroGT. How did the amount of work required compare to that which you were expecting?*

Oh, I always knew it would be a lot of work but I have to admit as the date of the GT drew closer the level of work went through the ceiling.

Finalising the venue layout, collecting fees, last minute cancellations, last minute marketing, last minute bookings, getting prizes and gathering terrain all takes effort. And then with three weeks to go somebody said "are the rules published yet?" Arggghhhhhh!

That's when I took the weekend off from all things GT and came back to it fresh.

I have to say I needed all the help I could get and I lent on anybody and everybody to help finalise the rules. It is, after all, a get-together not a tournament and the GT veterans rallied round.

And to make things even more challenging, I did not want it to be the same rule-set as last year - it always evolves. So that meant more work.

At the event the most unexpected bit was acting as chaperone for many of the arrivals; escorting people to registration and site services then guiding them in to our gaming hall on mobile phones like some air-traffic controller.

Our booking reference was 'Euro GT' but for some reasons the guards at the gate knew nothing about this so that necessitated a 3a.m. visit to the gate to talk the Camp Guards into letting the late arriving Austrians on-site; felt like I had fallen into the board game 'Escape Into Colditz'!

As for the actual system mechanics during the event: well you work hard between rounds pairing people off and refereeing the empire development phases but then as soon as players have settled into their games us refs go chill.

Q: *With hindsight, what would you have done differently?*

The night before the event I still didn't know if I had done enough and I was getting e-mails and phone calls from all corners. People wanting directions, last minute bookings, confirmations with the hotel, pick up arrangements, whilst having all the paraphernalia of a GT to pack myself; terrain to borrow, prizes to fetch, maps and order sheets to print, rules, game pieces, glue, paper, pens, rulers, scissors, etc.

We were still sorting out the system integration rules on the Friday - and to be honest that was the first time the Ops team ("Ops" = operations - the guys who muck in and run the event) had the chance to discuss it in front of the assembled map. The way we did this, and the rules of hex control gave the bigger systems a role in the central hexes of the map - the strategically important Thaumaturgical University of Mandrala - whilst not undermining the role Mordheim plays.

You can plan to leave some things to last minute but you need to know what they are and what you have to have in-place to allow those things to be done quickly.

My recommendations for any would-be organiser are:

1. Have lots of helper pixies local to you and/or the event venue
2. Get them to sign contracts of "helpfullity", in blood, and witnessed by the Keeper of Secrets.
3. Maybe run a mini GT at a local club over a number of club nights to play-test things and iron the wrinkles out. But that would mean being organised!
4. Keep a list of things to do - check it each week.

Q: *In what ways would you say that EuroGT XII differed from previous EuroGTs that you've attended?*

Well...

1. It wasn't in a 4 star hotel, but that impacted the veterans more than the virgins.
2. We kept the campaign map in an open area allowing all players access to it.
3. All three systems had a tighter interdependence this year, and I have to say that ...
4. The standard of Ops/Marshalling was probably the best yet!

Those changes did make a difference and perhaps contributed to the sense of community that the GT aspires to - Get Together not Grand Tournament. All of the GT virgins have responded to me personally saying they would like to come to the next GT in Austria; which is the usual response as everybody gets hooked after one GT.

You'll note that I didn't add...

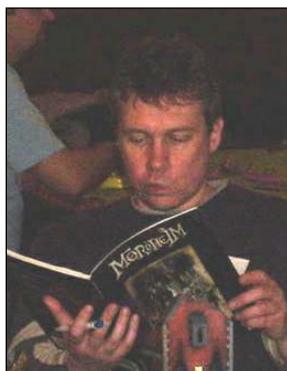
5. Evolve the rules. We always evolve the rules of the GT - every year we try to make it better and change the meta-game rules and the game scenarios; keeping it fresh is crucial to bringing back the veterans.

Q: *Is there anything you'd like to add?*

Actually - if there is one thing - it's to pass on my thanks to all the players and helpers. The Euro GT is probably the most easy going event on the calendar - any rule disputes are usually settled by the players - and they never argue with the ref; and nothing ever gets out of hand.

By the way, I think I have just about recovered.

The Rogue's Gallery



Ian Davies



Lex Van Rooy



Arjan Van Krimper



Stu Cresswell



Nik Harwood



Wayne Rozier