

Speaker and Chair biographies

Dr. Jeff Appleget is a retired Army Colonel who served as an Artilleryman and Operations Research analyst in his 30-year Army career. He began teaching at the Naval Postgraduate School in 2009. He teaches Wargaming Applications, Introduction to Joint Combat Modeling, and Advanced Wargaming Applications courses at NPS. Along with Dr. Rob Burks from the NPS Defense Analysis Department, Jeff teaches week-long Basic Analytic Wargaming Mobile Education Team (MET) courses and workshops for U.S. and international sponsors around the world. His research interests include Irregular Warfare and Stability Operations modeling, Amphibious Operations modeling, Wargaming, Combat Modeling, and Integer Programming. Jeff served on the Military Operations Research Society (MORS) Board of Directors from 2000-2004. Jeff joined forces with Rob Burks and Fred Cameron to write the book “The Craft of Wargaming.”

Ali Ansari has wargamed for as long as he can remember. He is Professor of Iranian History & Founding Director of the Institute for Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews; President of British Institute for Persian Studies (BIPS); Senior Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute. In 2016 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In 2020 he was awarded a two-year Knowledge Exchange Fellowship at the FCDO. His publications include Modern Iran since 1797, 3rd updated Edition, Taylor and Francis, London, 2019, Iran, Islam & Democracy - The Politics of Managing Change 3rd updated Edition, Gingko, London, 2019; Iran: A Very Short Introduction OUP, 2014, The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran CUP, 2012; Iran Under Ahmadinejad, Adelphi Paper, IISS, January 2008, Confronting Iran: the failure of US policy and the roots of mistrust Hurst, London, 2006. His latest book is a short history of Iran for Polity Press, published in 2024.

David Banks is Senior Lecturer in Wargaming at the War Studies Department at King’s College London, and the Academic Director of the King’s Wargaming Network. At King’s College he teaches two MA wargaming modules. His current wargaming projects focus on the foundations of wargaming, how to evaluate wargame designs, and the role subjective and objective models in wargames’ production of knowledge. In addition to his wargaming research, Dr. Banks also studies diplomatic practice in international society. He has designed wargames on a variety of security and diplomacy topics for clients including NATO, the Marine Corps University, Accenture, the Ax:son Johnson Institute for Statecraft and Diplomacy and others. His wargaming research has been published in International Studies Review, with Georgetown Press, and with the Center for Long-Term Cybersecurity. He is also published in International Studies Quarterly and Security Studies, a variety of academic edited volumes, and media outlets.

Patrik Björkholm is an Analyst at the Swedish Defence Agency. His work is focused on developing and playing War Games at the operational level for the Swedish armed forces and NATO. Specific focus areas are Naval Warfare, Hybrid Warfare and some Red Teaming. He also owns and has operated a small Indie game development studio that releases tactical computer games for entertainment. He has MSc in Engineering Biology and PhD in Bioinformatics.

Dr. Ruby Booth is a leading expert in cyber risk analysis, experimental wargaming, and ethical AI development. She currently serves as a principal researcher at Sandia National Laboratories in California. She also is a Non-Resident Fellow at the Berkeley Risk and Security Lab. Prior to her career in national security, Ruby worked for more than a decade in the hobby game industry, where the money was significant less, but the players equally obstreperous. Her current work focuses on the digital assurance of high consequence systems, integrated deterrence and analytic gaming, and the impact of emerging technology on global stability.

Dr Nick Bradbeer RCNC is a naval architect working for the MoD, currently posted to University College London as Associate Professor of Naval Architecture and Director of the UK Submarine Design & Acquisition Course. He holds a PhD from University College London on the topic of ship structural

survivability, awarded in 2013. He has worked in defence for twenty five years, first as a naval architecture desk officer then as an academic teaching structures, stability, survivability, operations analysis and design. His publications cover novel concept designs, early stage design methods, structural survivability and the use of wargaming as a tool for engineering education. Since 2016 he has been using Wargaming as an integral part of UCL's MSc naval architecture and marine engineering programmes, developing a series of technically-focussed naval wargames to allow students to explore and evaluate naval design concepts and has begun exporting these games to a wider group of customers, including DE&S, Damen Naval, and NATO groups.

James Buckley has been wargaming with cardboard since 2016. After a career that spanned journalism, management consultancy, politics and financial services regulation, he alighted on his dream job as a board game developer. He spent two and a half years at PHALANX, a hobby wargamer publisher where he was the Head of Development, and the Lead Developer on Purple Haze and Unhappy King Charles, among others. He then left to establish in 2024 Sapper Studio, a games publisher and consultancy focused on bridging the divide between professional and commercial wargames.

David Burden has been a wargamer and wargame designer for around 50 years – although ironically not for the 10 years he spent in the British Army! For the last 20 years David has run Daden Limited, helping organisations explore and exploit the social and commercial potential of using conversational AI and virtual worlds, delivering over 100 projects for clients across the globe, including over two dozen projects for UK MOD. David spoke at the inaugural TEDxBrum, on Digital Immortality, has authored over a dozen papers and book chapters, including co-authoring the book Virtual Humans. David's interests in wargaming and technology collided when asked to generate social media synthetic wraps for an MOD urban wargaming series. David started his part-time PhD on wargaming urban conflict in early 2022, under Dr John Curry at Bath Spa University. He is currently researching and designing games on the urban conflict, and has a particular interest in civilian representation in wargames, and the links to Just War theory. David is an ex-Royal Signals officer, a Chartered European Engineer and is also series co-editor for Taylor & Francis on their Metaverse Series of books, and co-author of both The Metaverse: A Critical Introduction, and The Military Metaverse.

Colonel (ret.) Robert E. Burks, Jr., Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Defense Analysis Department of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the Director of the Naval Warfare Studies Institute Wargaming Center. He holds a Ph.D. in Operations Research from the Air Force Institute of Technology, an M.S. in Operations Research from the Florida Institute of Technology, and a bachelor's degree in Aerospace Engineering from the United States Military Academy. He is a retired logistics Army Colonel with over thirty years of military experience in leadership, advanced analytics, decision modeling, and logistics operations. He served as an Army Operations Research analyst in multiple command organizations and has led multiple analytical study teams responsible for Army Transformation (organizational change) issues, and his work includes applying analytical methods to develop solutions for complex problems in support of the Combined Arms Support Command, the Army's sustainment think tank, and premier sustainment learning institution. He has served as the technical expert on studies involving deployment, equipping, manning, training, and logistics operations of military forces in multiple theaters of operation and the NATO Technical Team of SAS-130 on Course of Action Analysis for the 21st Century. His research interests include Irregular Warfare, Hybrid Threat and Resilience Operations modeling, Information Operations modeling, Wargaming, and Agent-Based Modeling and Simulation. His recent significant awards include the NPS Military Leadership Award, the NPS Joint Service Warfare Award, the Military Operations Research Journal Award for developing analytical methods for solving the Theater Distribution Problem, and the Omar Bradley Fellowship for the Study of Mathematical Sciences.

Matt Caffrey has designed and executed wargames for, and taught wargaming to, a wide range of US Department of Defense and international organizations for over fifty years. He developed major wargame concepts such as 3rd Generation Wargaming, the Caffrey Triangle and the Caffrey Pyramid. A special

interest is how wargaming can reduce the overall casualty rate by supporting deterrence, and if deterrence fails, by reducing the human cost and duration of conflicts. As a US Air Force strategic and operational planner he developed the concepts of Crony Bombing and the Innovation/Strategy/Caffrey Cycle. He is the founder of the long running family of international Connections Wargaming Conferences. He is widely published, his four hundred page book "On Wargaming" is available from the US Naval War College Press and the US Government Bookstore. He is currently working on a second edition.

Philippa Cawdell has been wargaming professionally for 2 years since she joined Dstl in 2023 and was thrown into the role in her first week. Philippa is also a member of the Women in Wargaming team and is eager to show that wargaming is for everyone. While wargaming was a new topic for Philippa, when she joined Dstl, international politics was not after studying PPE at Lancaster and Foreign Policy and Diplomacy for her MA. Philippa has a keen interest in the role of economic statecraft and security in conflict and how to best represent these economic tools in wargames. She also focuses most of her wargaming work on strategic cross-government wargames working with partners across Whitehall.

Andrew Crooks is an analyst within the Defence Wargaming Centre at Dstl. He has also previously worked at the Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub at MOD Southwick Park. Andrew has designed and run table-top exercises and wargames on a variety of topics, including climate change, cyber security, deterrence, and the maritime environment for both domestic and international stakeholders. He holds Master's degrees in Geography as well as International Security and Terrorism.

Dr John Curry is a reader in Professional Wargaming at Bath Spa University. He has authored/ co-authored/ edited over 125 books on wargaming, including seminal works on Matrix Gaming and Confrontation Analysis. In the hobby space, he was Donald Featherstone's editor; in the professional space he was the editor for the 2nd edition of Peter Perla's Art of Wargaming. He also works for MORS in Washington, including co-editor for the MORS Wargaming Journal. He is the chair of the DSET Wargaming Committee. His last major research project was for the FCDO and Cabinet Office. He currently supervises 10 PhDs in wargaming related areas. He is an ex- infantry officer.
www.wargaming.co.

Evan D'Alessandro designed his first wargame at age 7 and has been designing games ever since. He currently is a PhD Student at King's College London studying immersion in professional wargaming. He has designed and run games for groups at King's College London, the UK Defence Academy and the Baltic Defence College and has helped run games for the UK MoD and the UK government. His portfolio is online at evandalessandro.com.

James Darnton began as a teacher of Latin and Greek, before moving into journalism, working at Engelsberg Ideas. In 2023, he joined the Civil Service Fast Stream, working at the Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office. In 2024 he won the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs Sci-fAI competition, writing on Sino-American AGI hegemony. For almost two years he has been chair of the Fast Stream Crisis Simulation Network, running and designing wargames for Fast Streamers and beyond.

Stephen Downes-Martin is an independent scholar and consultant analyzing the use and abuse of decision support tools at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of warfare and business. His current research focus is how to manipulate decision support tools such as wargaming to deceive decision makers, how decision makers deceive themselves and allow themselves to be deceived, how to detect such manipulation and how to protect decision makers from them. He works with a wide variety of government, military, aerospace, academic and commercial organizations in the US and internationally. His formal education includes a PhD in Relativistic Quantum Field Theory from King's College London University, an MA with Distinction in National Security and Strategic Studies from the US Naval War College, and a Master of Advanced Studies in Mathematics from Cambridge University. He has

two US Navy Superior Civilian Service Awards. His full bio with downloads of papers is available at downesmartin.com.

Georgina (Georgie) Eckersley is a wargamer at the Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub and joined the team in August 2024. She brings over a decade of experience from academia, where she worked as a Lecturer. Georgie holds a Master's degree and is a Senior Fellow of Higher Education Academy. In her current role, she applies her research expertise to design, facilitate, and analyse wargames that inform defence strategic decision-making. Alongside her work, Georgie is pursuing a PhD, employing mixed research methods to examine the factors that support or hinder the transition from military service. Outside of work, she enjoys open-water swimming.

Al Edwards is a Senior Wargaming Adviser at the Ministry of Defence, where he is responsible for conducting strategic wargames to provide analysis for the Defence Secretary and the senior leadership team of the MOD. He is particularly interested in exploring how wargaming can be used to explore the interplay between military, diplomatic and economic actions. Prior to this, he held various roles in security and international corruption investigations at the MOD and other government departments. He is also a hobby gamer.

Toby Ewin read history at Cambridge and then worked at the Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office and Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre. In 2009-10 he was a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism & Political Violence at St Andrews University, and from 2014-2025 a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at King's College London, latterly in the Laughton Naval History & Maritime Strategy Unit. An occasional wargamer, he has published articles on naval history, biological terrorism, local history and (in the MORS Journal of Wargaming) on the Royal Navy's wargames from 1900-1915. Among his books in preparation is one, due for publication by the History of Wargaming Project, on the Royal Navy's wargames before and during the Great War, that includes several rule-sets (from 1902-1913), pre-war scenario plans, write-ups of major pre-war and wartime games, summaries of other Great Power navies' wargames in the same era, and various chapters providing background material.

Iain Farquharson is a Lecturer in Global Challenges at Brunel, University of London and a 26-year veteran of (mostly) losing at various types of wargames. He completed his PhD at Brunel in 2021 looking at the reform of staff training in the interwar British Army. He is the programme leader of the MA Wargaming and Resilience Planning which is entering its second year. A military historian with a broad range of interests, Iain's primary research focuses on education and training in the British and Imperial Army of the twentieth century. He has published in the British Journal of Military History, War in History and The Conversation and is currently working on the publication of his thesis as a monograph.

Dr James Halstead has been an analyst and wargamer with Vedette Consulting since 2019. He has a PhD in military history from Brunel, University of London. James has worked with a variety of military, wider government and academic clients both nationally and internationally throughout his career. His research interest is in the history of wargaming, especially on improving the quality of the debate around the topic by understanding the historical evidence and appropriately contextualising historical wargames. He has begun to publish this in professional journals, most recently the British Army Review and has multiple forthcoming publications on the topic.

Mark Herman discovered his passion for military history during the 1961 American Civil War Centennial. Over his 50 year career he has supported the US Department of Defense, Fortune 500 Corporations, and notably as an internationally recognized wargame designer. Over the years he has been awarded a host of publishing awards and is in the Industry Wargame Hall of Fame. Most recently his Rebel Fury title won the 2024 Charles S. Roberts awards for Best American Civil Wargame plus the James F. Dunnigan Award for Design Excellence. Across his design career Mark has published ~100 game titles that cover the gamut from the Peloponnesian War, American Revolution/ Civil War, World War II, and contemporary

conflict with his soon to be published *Defiance!* that covers the current war in Ukraine. Herman has led two publishing companies and is a retired Booz Allen Hamilton Senior partner who led 300+ wargames and simulations for the US Department of Defense and other government institutions with a large portfolio of Fortune 500 corporate assignments in aviation, automotive, energy, financial, healthcare, high-tech and transportation sectors. He has authored two books, most recently *Wargames According to Mark*, that is now going into its second printing.

Mary Hezelgrave is an analyst at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). Since joining Dstl she has been involved in a range of projects from historical analysis to climate change wargaming. Mary also runs the Wargaming Accelerated Skills Programme (WASP), Dstl's internal wargaming training programme. Through this work Mary has collaborated with the Defence Academy to help design and develop their wargaming training. Mary is also a member of the core Women in Wargaming team, organising events and opportunities to diversify those who are involved in the analytical technique. Before joining Dstl Mary studied History and Politics at the University of Sheffield.

Dr Aggie Hirst is Reader (Associate Prof.) in International Relations Theory and Methods in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. Her research is situated in international political theory and critical military/war studies. She completed her ESRC-funded PhD at the University of Manchester in 2010. She is author of *Politics of Play: Wargaming with the US Military* (Oxford University Press 2024), and articles with *International Studies Quarterly*, *Security Dialogue*, *International Political Sociology*, and *Review of International Studies* focused upon play, games, and the military wargaming renaissance. She is also co-author of *Global Politics: Myths and Mysteries*, a student-facing book that offers a novel approach to teaching theory.

Perry Jago has been a professional wargamer since 1979 when, as a young Royal Air Force officer, he participated in a series of 'Tactical Floor' games at the Royal Navy School of Maritime Warfare. He served on active duty from 1977 to 1999 in a range of disciplines, including operations, training, command, testing & evaluation, policy, and research & development, much of which included wargaming. Since leaving the service, he has primarily worked in operational research and analysis, initially in a small consultancy company and, since 2009, in his own business. He has been a player, analyst, designer and facilitator in exploratory games since 1997, and continues to work in this area for a variety of customers in the UK and abroad. He is a trained game facilitator, and was the Lead Facilitator for a US DoD-led multi-national wargame series from 2007 until January this year.

Catherine Jones is a lecturer at the University of St Andrews, previously she was a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Warwick and received her PhD from the University of Reading. Her research focuses on three areas of work: (1) agency of East Asian states in international order, (2) the China-North Korea relationship, (3) and the politics and development in Southeast Asia. Across these areas she has incorporated wargames and wargaming into her teaching and as an analytical tool for her research. In this context she has particular interests in engaging with diverse perspectives and incorporating voices from less prominent parts of the world. Her work has been funded by the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, the Korea Foundation and the Global Challenges Fund. She has published a monograph on China's challenge to Global Norms (Palgrave, 2019), an edited volume (with Sarah Teitt) on China-North Korea relations (Elgar, 2020), an edited journal (with Garren Mulloy) on East Asia, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and peacekeeping (*Australian journal of International Affairs*, 2020) as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters.

Dr. Marxen ("Mark") Kyriess started wargaming at age 12 and was immediately hooked. After 24 years as a U.S. Army officer (flying Apaches and serving as an Army Strategist) he culminated his military career in 2004 at United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), where he spent the next 19 years as the civilian Chief of Defense Policy. In 2006 he became involved in a USSTRATCOM multinational missile defense policy experimentation campaign series known as NIMBLE TITAN (NT). As an additional duty, he

became the multinational Wargame Control Group (WCG) director for NT in 2009. Retiring from civil service at USSTRATCOM in 2023, he was hired by USSPACECOM's Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense to continue as the NT WCG director to the present. With the NT community's support, Mark was able to use NT as the basis of the experimentation that resulted in his Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 2018. NT continued to grow and today includes 23 nations and three multinational organizations from around the world. Mark is an avid historical, fantasy, and science fiction miniatures wargamer, and loves researching and painting miniatures, and playing numerous miniature games.

Graham Longley-Brown has wargamed since he could read well enough to realise that there were better ways to adjudicate outcomes than rolling marbles at Airfix Romans. A British Army Officer since 1986 (and still in the Reserves), he has used wargaming for professional purposes throughout his career. He was the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College Directing Staff Subject Matter Expert for wargaming from 2000-2002. Since leaving the Regular Army in 2003, Graham has designed and consulted on all-matters professional wargaming around the world. He is a published author on professional wargaming having written or co-authored: the MOD Wargaming Handbook; the Course of Action Wargaming section for the UK Army's Planning and Execution Handbook; his own Successful Professional Wargames, A Practitioner's Handbook; and the MOD's Influence Wargaming Handbook. He is a co-founder of Connections UK.

Colin Marston is Chief Wargamer at the UK MOD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), and he is Head of the Defence Wargaming Centre (DWC). Colin has developed wargaming capabilities across Dstl, the wider MOD and partner nations over a 20+ year career. He has designed, executed and analysed wargames across all parts of UK Defence and has brought wargaming to new areas, including Space and Influence. He co-authored the UK [MOD Wargaming Handbook](#) and the UK MOD [Influence Wargaming Handbook](#), and he's authored numerous professional wargaming articles, as well as contributing to a couple of wargaming books. Early on in Colin's MOD career, he deployed as an Operational Analyst and [Field Team Leader](#) to Afghanistan and Iraq, and preceding this he served in the Army Reserve (Infantry). He is a Fellow of the OR Society and has a BSc (Hons) in Physics with Astrophysics. Colin is Co-founder of the [Connections UK Professional Wargaming Conference](#).

Keith Martin-Smith is Games Master at HexWar Games Ltd., formed in 2002 it is now part of the Code Wizards Group developing primarily for PME. A lifelong wargamer Keith took part in his first PME game in 1978 and published his first commercial digital wargame in 1981. As well as having design credits on over 40 commercial wargames, and a number of PME games, he has had a varied career, as an IT Manager for a group of hospitals, various roles at Dell Computer Corporation, including head of marketing research and European Business Operations Manager. As a director with a major retailer, and as a director and head of games design at a gambling company. He remains a very keen competitive gamer. Over the years he has won dozens of games tournaments across the UK, Europe and the US. Keith was also a member of the TAVR for 10 years.

Professor Vikki McCall is an expert in co-production, facilitation and networking, leading projects focusing on housing, ageing and future-proofing society. Vikki is Creative Director and co-founder with Professor Alasdair Rutherford of the social enterprise Socialudo, who deliver Serious Games: <http://www.socialudo.org>. Socialudo was established to use serious gaming to facilitate and help diverse groups plan and think about how we future-proof society and make research impact. Vikki is currently Principal Investigator on the Intersectional Stigma of Place-based Ageing (ISPA) project (an ESRC funded project 2022-2027) and is leading the Inclusive Living Alliance looking to combat stigma in relation to place, age and disability.

Iain McNeil has worked in computer wargames since 1991. He has held every position from QA to designer, and CEO. He has built Slitherine and its partner company Matrix Games into the largest

specialist wargame publishers in the world. Through Matrix Pro Sims, Iain is also delivering professional simulations to over 150 defence organisations across 23 countries. He also consults for [dstl] and is the UK industry representative to NATO MSG's 189 and 198 and was a finalist in EY's Entrepreneur of the year in 2022. Iain has also been wargaming since he was 6 and won every title possible from UK, European and World Champion and was ranked #1 in the world for 5 years until he retired.

Anders Melander is an analyst at the Swedish Defence Research Agency. He has worked for Swedish government agencies since 2006 and has since September 2019 been working at the Defence Research Agency with issues concerning, among other things, civil preparedness and army long term force planning. Between August 2022 and December 2024 he was seconded to The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, where he focused on training and exercises. He has used various wargaming methods in most areas that he has worked in. He holds a MSc in Biology and a BA in Classical Archaeology from Uppsala University.

Tom Mouat is a graduate of the Army Staff College and has served in the Army since 1977. He is an expert in both manual and computer-based simulations, and running large scale military training exercises. He served with the ARRC including 12 months in Bosnia and was awarded an MBE. He also ran the Army's principal land-based simulation system for 3 years and served in the UK MOD's procurement organization dealing with simulation systems for 5 years, where he was awarded the Chief of Defence Material Commendation for innovation. He has an MSc in Simulation & Modelling and is co-author of several books on simulation and educational Wargaming. He is currently Officer Commanding the Defence Wargaming, Modelling and Simulations school at the Defence Academy of the UK, where he has been awarded the MOD Chief Scientific Officer's Commendation for his contribution to science and technology.

Wesley R. Odum Jr. is currently the Team Lead of the Joint Warfighting Concepts and Wargaming team at US Central Command (USCENTCOM). He served in the US Army as an Infantry Officer retiring in 2011. He has served at USCENTCOM since 2010, initially as a strategic and operational planner. In 2016, USCENTCOM asked him to create a wargaming capability for the command. Since 2016, his team has designed, created, and facilitated multiple wargames to support Joint, Interagency, and Multinational wargames at the strategic and operational level for the US Department of Defense, USCENTCOM, and service components.

Georgie Rice is still a newbie in the world of wargaming, having only been working on the development and delivery of Cyber Security table-top exercises for around four years. Exercises have ranged from rolling out the pre-packaged NCSC Exercise in a box, all the way to simulating supply chain attacks in Apache helicopters with the Chief of the General Staff. She wants to take work that she has done with senior leaders in the Army and promote the use of executive level Cyber wargames elsewhere in Defence. Georgie has a passion for Psychology and understanding human behaviour, therefore finds learning from gamification fascinating (and fun!).

Dominic Rougier has been an analyst and leading wargames designer at Dstl for three years, with the majority of his work being on tactical, operational and campaign-level wargaming, answering difficult questions like "do we have enough trucks?" and "where did all the trucks go?". He's been involved in wargaming for as far back as he will admit to remembering, and worked on several commercial releases, most notably the fourth edition of High Frontier.

Fred Serval is a French game designer and commentator focused on historically grounded, accessible conflict simulations. His published designs include Red Flag Over Paris and A Gest of Robin Hood (GMT Games), with forthcoming titles such as A Very Civil Whist (PHALANX) and Napoleon 1870 (Shakos Games). He hosts Homo Ludens, a Youtube channel and podcast dedicated to history and board games, and curates community initiatives like the Consim Game Jam, linking scholars, practitioners, and

designers. Before turning to design full-time, Fred served as a director in data analytics and AI ethics, an experience that informs his approach to modeling systems, evidence, and bias in wargames. His current work explores how streamlined mechanisms can still surface political context, logistics, and decision friction—bridging hobby and professional wargaming audiences.

Pete Sizer has been a hobby wargamer for 35 years, much of that designing games and scenarios too. Entering academia in his 30s, doing a Military History MA, with a special interest in counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare. He is now currently doing a PhD looking at the development of Counterinsurgency games, allowing a bringing together of academic and hobby interests to gain a deeper understanding of both. Pete is currently employed in the commercial hobby games industry.

Mike Tickner joined the Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub as the Senior Lessons Manager in January 2024. He is employed by MASS. Mike completed a full career in the Regular Army. He spent many rainy nights on the North German Plain and Salisbury Plain and served in many beautiful countries with rich and vibrant cultures and warm and hospitable people. The Army also sent him to countries where the people were particularly unfriendly. He concluded his career as SO1 Operational Lessons at the Land Warfare Centre. Married with a young family, his interests include keeping fit, good food and wine and military history, particularly the Indian Army. He regularly speaks to military and civilian groups, has led battlefield studies to the Far East and he writes the occasional article.

Dr Neil Verrall is a Chief in behavioural science with the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). He has spent nearly 30 years addressing the human aspects of behaviour and performance for numerous Defence & Security challenges.

Jessica Viccars is a wargame analyst for the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl). Last year, Jess won the Emerging Explorer award at Dstl for her work promoting wargaming through STEM outreach and by taking on the role of head of the Women in Wargaming community. Jess has a background in Biology and Marine Biology after completing both an undergraduate and postgraduate degree at the University of Southampton. Jess is passionate about promoting diversity and inclusion and encouraging education in this space. Blending her skills in wargaming with her own experience Jess has developed a game to help others learn about and explore inclusion further.

Alex Vince has nearly a decade of experience working across the Civil Service, covering areas such as health, education, defence, and Civil Service reform. He is currently the Deputy Head of the Collective Leadership team, which supports the Civil Service Leadership Group - comprising Permanent Secretaries and Directors General across government. In his spare time, Alex is a member of the Government's wargaming community of practice, specialising in engagement and facilitation. He established the Fast Streaming Wargaming Network and, more recently, has collaborated with the College for National Security to develop an internal talent pipeline for Civil Servants interested in wargaming techniques. He began his working life as an electronics technician, during which he worked on various projects, including the construction of the lasers for Transport for London's renowned Santander Cycles (more commonly known as Boris Bikes), as well as engaging in a small amount of acting. He has just joined Newspeak House, the London College for Political Technology, as their Wargaming and Challenge faculty member for the 2025/26 school year.

Steven Wagner is Senior Lecturer in International Security at Brunel University. Dr Wagner is an historian specialising in intelligence, security, and the modern Middle East. At Brunel since 2017, Dr Wagner has taught using matrix games for the past three years. He is now in the process of starting original research on the topic. Before coming to Brunel, Dr Wagner was a SSHRC postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History and Classical Studies at McGill University, Montreal. He received my DPhil from the University of Oxford, and my BA and MA from the University of Calgary – his hometown.

Sally Walker (nee Ward) spent her first career as an intelligence officer at GCHQ. From the Balkans forwards her operational focus was support to military operations, although her crisis management skills were further honed through 9/11 and the London bombings. Having lead the London Games support in 2012 she became the UK's civilian lead for offensive cyber, running the national programme and the national cyber exercise Cyber Warrior in partnership with Gen Sir James Hockenhull, and designing the National Cyber Force. In post government life, Sally is a non executive director, board advisor and mentor. She has run leadership programmes for clients as diverse as Microsoft and Sopra Steria, mentors a number of defence and AI start ups, and supports defence exercising programmes. Her core interests include the impact of technology on society, people and business, cognitive diversity and human potential, and the sustainability (and resilience) of human digital systems.. Although now not working a thousand hours a week, she can also be found renovating a Victorian garden and keeping dogs boys and chickens alive.

Jim Wallman is a professional game designer specialising in manual games for developing insights, strategy and team development and for education, with over twenty five years' experience in the field. These wargame game designs are informed by many years as senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, as well as senior roles in the voluntary sector. He has designed and delivered map wargames at political, strategic and operational level for the UK Defence community; board games, map games and concept development games for the British Army; over 40 sets of wargaming rules; and command and decision games covering issues such as equipment development, political crises, strategic planning, and civil disorder. He has worked extensively with the corporate, public, educational, entertainment and voluntary sectors, in particular designing and implementing games for senior leadership development and analytical wargames for the UK MOD, corporate and the voluntary sector. Also a regular guest lecturer on wargame design and development at Wolverhampton University. His background and training is primarily in the social science, psychology and military history fields, with a particular interest in the practical application of positive psychology to game structures and the development of immersive gameplay. His game designs in the recreational arena have now been played world wide in the USA, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Austria and New Zealand as well across the UK.

Natalia Zwarts holds a master's degree in security studies from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. She has previously served at the NATO Headquarters, where she contributed to the Capability Development Roadmap in Anti-Submarine Warfare and Precision-Guided Munitions. In 2016, she has joined the NATO Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence, where she led the Wargaming, Modelling and Simulation project. She focused on developing civilian players and updated scenarios across NATO. Her work culminated in a book Wargaming Experiences: Soldiers, Scientists and Civilians. In 2020, she accepted an appointment at the Hague University of Applied Sciences as a Lecturer in the Safety and Security Management Studies. Her focus remained within wargaming, coordinating a project linking groups of students with organizations requiring development of new prototypes for training and experimentation. In 2023, a group she mentored won the NATO Wargaming Challenge with an innovative design for the Multi Domain Operations. In 2024, she has joined the Information Security Management Team as a Lecturer and a Researcher at the Cyber Risk Management Group. Her work addressed the most pressing cyber threats with simulations. Since 2025, she has been appointed as a Research Leader in Wargaming at RAND Europe.