

# THE FIRST BATTLE FOR SOLUM.

## Written for Blitzkrieg Commander rules.

A scenario from the Italian invasion of Europe in 1940 by Mal. Wright.

The Italian 10<sup>th</sup> Army under the command of Maresciallo d'Armata Graziani has invaded reluctantly invaded Egypt on the orders of Mussolini. The 10<sup>th</sup> is unprepared for war but under heavy political pressure and considering its far superior manpower has crossed the border as ordered, hopeful for success, but with commanders who are full of dread that disaster awaits them.

Heavily outnumbered the British decided to withdraw in front of the invaders, fighting holding actions at various points to delay their advance. Not long after starting the operation the Italian 10<sup>th</sup> Army is making its way down the Halfaya pass headed for Solum. Most of the army is without transport resulting in slow progress by the infantry.

In this scenario the British need to move some of their dumps from the general area of Solum, however the largest dump is too big to move and will have to be blown up to prevent capture. Historically the Italian force created its own chaotic road conditions by trying to send too many troops down the narrow pass road at once. The British have it under observation from their artillery batteries and were able to follow the progress of the attackers with some ease. The Italian force has no such advantage. The dust of its advance is obscuring the view for its artillery observers, air support has been of no real help and a mass of traffic and marching troops have become jammed up on the road, which has steep verges and is difficult to deploy off.

## BRITISH ORDER OF BATTLE.

### 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars.

1 Squadron of 3 Morris A9 reconnaissance cars.

1 Squadron of 3 Rolls Royce Armoured Cars. (2 modified with a Boyes anti tank gun & LMG, 1 in original WW1 configuration.)

1 Company reconnaissance infantry. (9 figs) in three Universal Carriers. (1 armed with a Boyes anti tank rifle)

**3<sup>rd</sup> RHA.** 1 Battery of 3 x 18pdr field guns. 6 moves of fire initially.

**4<sup>th</sup> RHA.** 1 Battery of 3 x 25pdr field guns. 6 moves of fire initially.

**Attached.** 1 Battery of 40mm AA. (2 guns) 1 Battery 20mm AA.

The artillery batteries are both near small dumps and have a continuous supply of shells available UNTIL they need to blow the dumps. If they do not fire for one move prior to moving away from the dumps they retire with 3 moves of fire for subsequent use. If they cease fire two moves before moving away from the dumps they will have 6 moves of fire for subsequent use.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion.** COLDSTREAM GUARDS. 4 companies, each of 9 infantry figures. Battalion support of 1 MG, 1 mortar, 1 2pdr anti tank gun and a HQ base. The battalion is fully motorized. The trucks must be retained nearby to allow the unit to retire.

### Army Transport, Supply and Depot companies.

12 x 3 ton trucks.

1<sup>st</sup> PARK coy. General supplies. 8 truck loads.

2<sup>nd</sup> PARK coy. Fuel supplies. 12 truck loads.

3<sup>rd</sup> Park Coy. Ammunition. 8 truck loads.

To determine how long it takes for each dump to be prepared for demolition and then blown, roll a d6 and add the score to 6. The resultant number equals the moves before it can be blown up. NOTE truckloads can be removed at the rate of one per move. However none can be removed during the last two moves before a dump is blown. If they are all removed there is no need to blow the dump. Each truck that leaves the tabletop via the line of retreat is considered to have successfully escaped. The truck model is put back on the table at a dump of choosing to represent another vehicle that has become available.

### AIR SUPPORT.

1 Air attack (bombs) with Blenheim aircraft.

2 Air attacks, (strafing) with Gladiator aircraft.

### BRITISH VICTORY CONDITIONS.

The British force will hold while the dumps are either blown as per die roll above, or their contents removed by trucks. The British combat units are required elsewhere so they must retire with no more than 33% material loss. British commander must elect to either withdraw the dumps, or to blow them.

## **ITALIAN FORCES.** **BABINI BRIGADA CORAZZATA.**

### **32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Regiment.**

**Battalion I** Under strength. 3 x M11/39 tanks.

**Battalion II.** Under strength. 2 x M11/39 tanks.

**Battalion III** Under strength. 3 x M13/40 tanks.

**Battalion IV.** 9 x L33 tankettes.

**Battalion V.** Under strength. 6 x M13/40 tanks.

**Bersaglieri Motorcycle battalion.**

**Bersaglieri Motorized battalion.**

**Artillery.** 2 Batteries 75mm field guns. (2 models)

### **Reconnaissance.**

2 AB40 Armoured cars.

### **INFANTRY.**

3 Battalions of Libyan infantry without transport. No mortars or machineguns.

### **ARTILLERY.**

3 Batteries 75mm field guns. (3 models) 4 moves of fire each.

1 Battery 150mm Howitzers. (1 model) 4 moves of fire.

### **AIR SUPPORT.**

3 air attacks each with two CR42 aircraft. (Strafing only)

To represent the restricted entry of the Italian forces coming down through the Halfaya Pass, a single road is used at their entry end. All Italian units must enter via that road in single file. Only the 150mm battery can fire from off table. All other guns must enter and fire on table.

In real life the British bombarded the Italian units as they negotiated the pass. This can be represented by allowing them to bombard the point where the Italian forces enter the tabletop. The British had the area already ranged in so there will be no need to roll deviation die as used in BKC.

Any confusion and movement difficulties caused by this will represent the traffic jams that occurred in the pass during the real battle.

Battalion IV of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Regiment and the Bersaglieri Motorcycle battalion negotiated an old trade pass to attack on the flank as shown on the map.

### **ITALIAN VICTORY CONDITIONS.**

Regardless of what the British do, Rome will declare a victory if you capture SOLUM.

However in wargames terms you will win the game if you capture any of the British dumps intact or inflict more than 33% casualties on the British force.



**High Plateau.**

**Halfaya Pass.  
Winding descent.**

**ITALIAN LINE OF  
ADVANCE.**

**Battalion IV.  
32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Regt.**

**Bitumen road to  
SOLUM**

VERY FLAT PLAIN WITH SAND, STONES, OR  
LOW BUSHES.

**COASTAL  
PLAIN**

**11<sup>TH</sup>  
HUSSAR**

**BIR  
SALEH.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> RHA**

**COLDSTREAM GUARDS**

**1<sup>ST</sup> PARK  
COY.**

**4<sup>th</sup> RHA**

**Ammo dump**

**Dump**

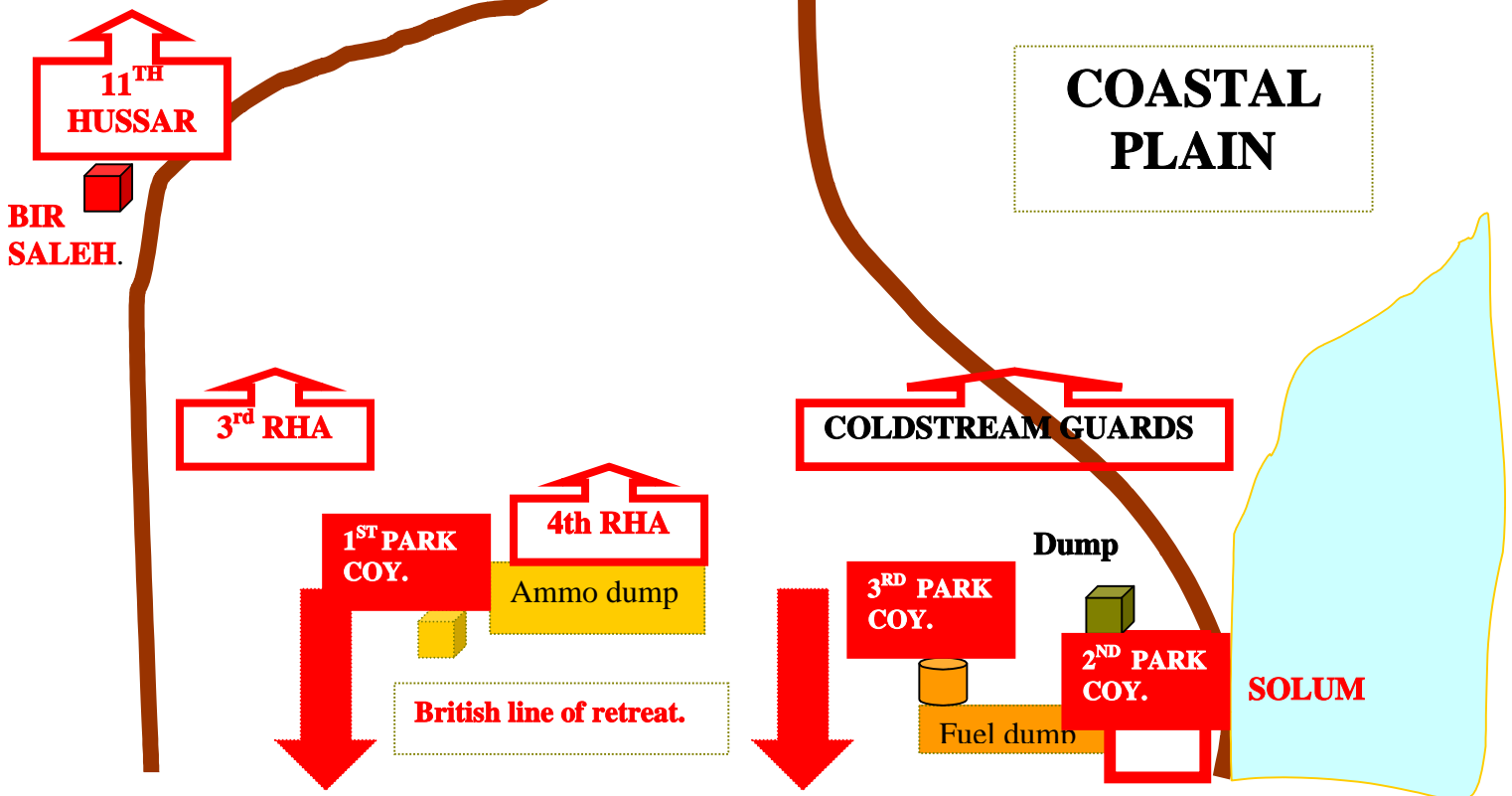
**3<sup>RD</sup> PARK  
COY.**

**2<sup>ND</sup> PARK  
COY.**

**British line of retreat.**

**Fuel dump**

**SOLUM**

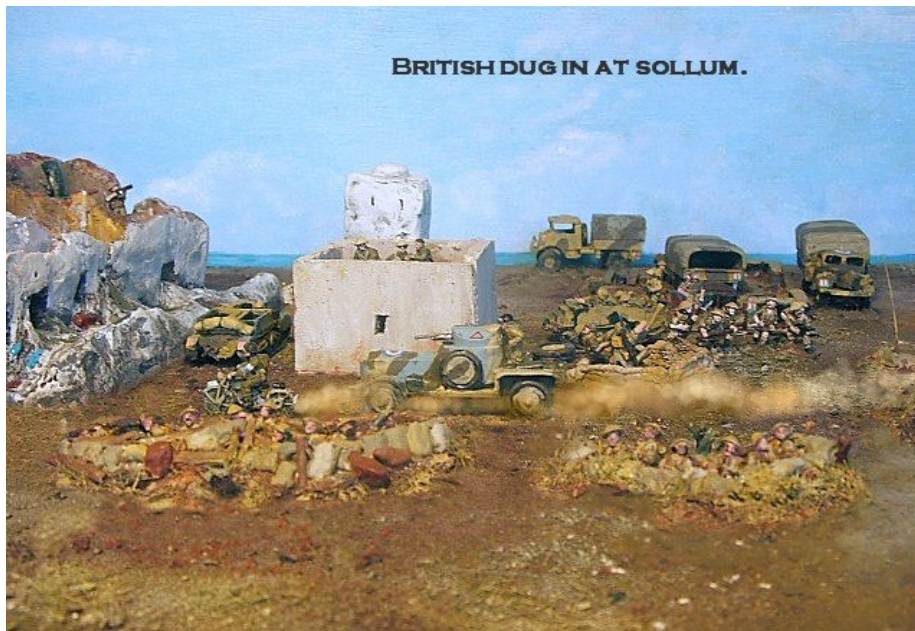


**BRITISH DUMPS ORDERED TO WITHDRAW TO BUQ BUQ  
AS ITALIAN TROOPS CLOSE ON SOLLUM**



**BRITISH DUMP AT SOLLUM IS BLOWN TO PREVENT CAPTURE,  
AS 18PDR GUNS COVER THE WITHDRAWAL.**

**BRITISH DUG IN AT SOLLUM.**



**BRITISH DUMP NEAR THE BEACH  
AT SOLLUM.**

