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This is the transcription of the conversation with John Stallard and Rick Priestley that took place in Nottingham, 5th December 2009.

HH: My thanks to John Stallard of Warlord Games (JS), previously of Games Workshop, who has very kindly allowed his kitchen in his central Nottingham home to be the venue for this interview with Rick Priestley (RP), author of Black Powder, Warmaster, Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 and himself. The supplies of tea and biscuits are impressive in their own right!

Anyway, let's get started right away with a question directed at Rick. Lots of people know who you are, but let's start with a few biographical details such as where you were born and where you grew up.

RP: I'm actually from Lincoln, just down the road from Nottingham. So I regard myself as part of the East Midlands Wargames Mafia.

HH: Yes, I call you lot the Nottingham Mafia.

RP: Lincoln is where I was born and grew up and went to school. I went to school with Richard Halliwell, the other original Warhammer author along with me. A long-time Games Workshop designer, he designed *Space Hulk*. We were part of the same wargames club, we were at school together in the same class and generally grew up together, so that's where I started out.

HH: So what was the first wargame or model soldier influence that you can remember, and when would that have been?

RP: The usual story, the 1960s and Britains' and Airfix obviously, because everybody was doing that. I think the first things I discovered that you could consider to be 'wargamey' rather than toy soldiers was when I was on holiday with my parents down in London for the first time (you all speak funny down there). I have no idea what the shop was, it might have even been the original Tradition shop, where I bought some Les Higgins figures and spent my holiday money on those. So those were the very first metal figures I ever bought. This would have been about 1969 or 1970. I was born in 1959, so I was probably about 10 at the time. Then when I was about 11 years old – it was my first year at senior school – I was given a prize for something. I can't remember what it was – plainly it wasn't for English! Or memory! Anyway, the prize was a book token and I toddled off to the local bookshop, which was Ruddock's in Lincoln, which is still there, and I was just looking for something to spend that Pound on or whatever it was, and I found Charles Grant's *Battle: Practical Wargaming*.

HH: A fantastic little book.

RP: I think that book was, for me, the wellspring from which all my wargaming interests then developed. On top of that, playing with toy soldiers. I mean, the minute I got that book, I went round to my mate's house and we had all the kit– it wasn't starting afresh, it was just the concept of playing a game with dice and measuring that was new to me.

HH: So, the first stuff you were doing was World War II?

RP: Yes, with that particular thing.

HH: And that was because you already had all the Airfix World War II kits and stuff?

RP: Yes, we did, and there was a store in Lincoln in the mini market that sold Roco Minitanks. Well, that Charles Grant book was based on their own collection, which were basically Airfix figures with Roco Minitanks vehicles.

JS: All assembled by Austrian housewives, did you know? And they are all 1/87 Scale.

HH: Yes, they're a slightly smaller scale than the Airfix figures.

RP: That's one reason why I like 15mm World War II, because the Minitanks were slightly smaller, whereas I've found the Airfix 1/72 or 1/76 scale vehicles slightly too big because they don't have that nostalgic reference from me. Obviously we did sometimes use Airfix kits – we mixed and matched a bit – but if you bought that book and read through it, in particular because it was a MAP publication, it had a list in the back of all the manufacturers and the magazines they did, which would included Airfix magazine, and Military Modelling which was just starting up.

HH: And it was in the small format wasn't it? Quarto, or whatever it was called.

RP: It might have been priced in new money [*that's decimal currency for our overseas readers, or those too young to remember Pounds, Shillings and Pence!* Ed.], but only just! So I got that, and I got every Military Modelling from issue two, right up through to the mid-1980s, which is quite a useful reference if you can stand the dust! So, once I'd subscribed to that, the whole world of wargaming opened up. I mean, you only had to open it up, and there were the ads from the Harrow Model Shop, and Tradition was advertising, Minifigs, Hinchliffe, Skytrex and all of those classic 70s companies were in there. So we were World War II wargaming, though I should perhaps point out that *Battle: Practical Wargaming* isn't really a World War II game, it's a fantasy game set in World War II. So immediately, things opened up to me, and I got into ancients, which is kind of obvious coming from Lincoln, surrounded by Roman ruins. The museum has lots of Roman stuff.

HH: So were you using the Airfix Romans and ancient Britons?

RP: I did have some, but actually I immediately got into Garrison 20mm figures that were advertised in Military Modelling. So I sent off for those. And I spent all my money on Christmas I think it was on a Roman and Gallic army.

HH: And of course, Garrison are still available. So, John, give us a bit of background about you then. How did you start in the hobby?

JS: Very similar to Rick. My father always had an interest in history and he used to include questions about military history in those quizzes that you always had on long drives, such as on the way to a holiday, and those long hours in the caravan when it was raining. And he was very generous in buying me Airfix soldiers, because they were two and sixpence in those days.

HH: Half a crown!

JS: Yes, those were the days! I think the crowning glory for me was when Airfix were going to bring out the British Hussars. My dad knew I wanted them for Christmas and he astonished me by buying me five boxes of them and before they were even in the shops – and I still don't know how he did it! It was such a great trick because Airfix didn't even have a mail-order department in those days. But I was eternally grateful. One box would have been useless, but five boxes? Very handy.

HH: That was the thing with Airfix figures wasn't it? Because of the variety of poses, you needed a few boxes to make it all work. I think I had 30 boxes of Confederates at one time, 30 boxes of Union...

JS: Well, I still collect all the old Airfix box sets in my gaming room now, just for nostalgia. So, I started with Airfix really, and the first metal miniatures I bought were from a chap called Trevor,

at Trevor's Model Shop in Worcester, and they were four Minifigs Imperial Guardsmen – Young Guard. That's all I could afford. Worcester, is where I would call home. I went to school there, then I went to college, then came out of college after spectacularly failing at my psychology degree, the only man ever to have done it.

HH: How did you manage that? You must have been having a good time instead of studying!

JS: Yes, unfortunately I was playing with toy soldiers! And I had discovered *Dungeons & Dragons* as well.

HH: [Laughs] And here's me trying to tell parents that wargaming is very good for education...

JS: Well, it was a disaster in my case! And we used to play *Dungeons & Dragons* all night or wargame, so when I left, having wasted an expensive education, I read *White Dwarf* lying in bed, and it said they wanted a Quality Control Supervisor at Citadel Miniatures in Newark. So, I thought, "I can do that," and I wrote in, and the mighty Bryan Ansell gave me an interview the very next day, which got me out of an embarrassing home situation, and so I joined Citadel Miniatures and met up with Rick and the rest of the gang, 28 years ago.

HH: So you were already playing fantasy games of one kind or another – Dungeons & Dragons and the like. What about you Rick? Were you already doing fantasy stuff at the same time? When did you start doing fantasy gaming?

RP: Really early on, because the initial impetus to play fantasy wargames came from *The Lord of the Rings* which was huge in the 1960s. I think I read it when I was about 12 or 13, not least because *The Hobbit* was a set text in my first year. So I read *The Hobbit* and that gave me the impetus to go on and read *The Lord of the Rings*. And like many people at the time, I became obsessed with *The Lord of the Rings*, to the extent that I can still quote from it quite extensively. And remember, I was already gaming with ancients, using the early WRG rules, and me and Hal and a few mates from school started a project, to make *Lord of the Rings* armies from existing model ranges. We did that just before Minifigs did their Middle Earth range, at which point we immediately abandoned our pipe cleaner Ents and started using Minifigs. I loved Minifigs – once I started gaming seriously, Minifigs were my thing.

HH: Minifigs were *the* company, weren't they?

RP: Well, they were in the south of England, but in the North it was often Hinchliffe. And Lincoln, here in the Midlands, was right on the dividing line.

JS: It's true, there was a north-south divide.

RP: The other companies that I remember at the time were Garrison and Lamming.

HH: So you had read *Lord of the Rings* quite early on then?

RP: Yes, in the early 1970s, and that was the impetus that drove us to do fantasy wargaming.

HH: So John, had you read *Lord of the Rings* by that time too?

JS: Yes, I read it because my father had read it, which surprised me, and my uncle was taught by Tolkien's son, Christopher. So it's sort of a family tradition that we all like *Lord of the Rings*.

HH: What was your dad's profession?

JS: He worked for British Petroleum, a rather dull job, buying and selling petrol signs, but was just interested in everything, history in particular.

HH: I think it's something about that generation, because I can remember my dad was also interested in everything, and that's something I feel I benefited from, having a father who was not only creative, but open-minded about stuff. Nowadays, there are lots of people who say "oh no, it's fantasy". Whereas in our fathers' generation, there were quite a number of people who were quite open-minded and receptive to that kind of idea.

JS: Well of course, there was also the other genre: there was *She*, by H Rider Haggard, and there was Edgar Rice Burroughs, and others – there was a lot of good adventure stuff, wasn't there, which is quite high fantasy. But I think that the first proper adult book I read was *The Washing of the Spears*, the big book on the Zulu Wars, which was a great accomplishment for me when I was about 13 and which gave me a lasting interest in the Zulu Wars.

HH: So, John, how did you get into *Dungeons & Dragons* then?

JS: I got into it by going to a wargames club in Worcester, which met in the top of a pub, so we used to sneak in there as 16-year-olds and get our first pints. Then one night we turned up and there was a chap who used to do ancients wargaming was sitting down with four other people playing just the weirdest game that we had ever seen in our lives. My introduction to *Dungeons & Dragons* was just phenomenal. He sat us down and got us involved in this game and we hadn't got the faintest idea of what we were doing, and that it was quite magical. We had two of the most fantastic hours of our lives. I remember Dad came to pick me up at 10 o'clock, and we were chattering about it like magpies – he must have thought we were mad or drugged, but of course it was so difficult to explain to someone who had never tried it.

HH: So, presumably, this was the original *D&D*, without miniatures?

JS: Well, he *had* painted up some miniatures, some of the old Middle Earth range, the Minifigs *Dungeons & Dragons* figures, which were really nice models for the time, and he'd painted them exquisitely. But I remember thinking, "my whole life is going to change now", it was absolutely wonderful.

HH: I remember my first *D&D* game seemed a really bizarre to me because it was without miniatures, just the Dungeon Master sitting in the corner, making it clear that you had to imagine what was going on, it was all inside your head, and I came away feeling like I'd smoked something particularly strong –it was just mind expanding. And it was actually quite a long time before I saw a game using miniatures.

RP: But it was always *associated* with miniatures. People would collect a selection of miniatures and particularly try to find one that looked like they imagined their hero, and they became totemic. So a lot of those early roleplayers were definitely roleplayers in the original sense: they acted the part as if it was a piece of theatre. I remember we had one of the very early editions – it came in a little A5 white or brown box, which was the first one that came into this country.

JS: Of course the brown one was much better for you...

RP: Those were the ones which Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone imported.

JS: The start of Games Workshop.

HH: That leads on to how you got involved with Games Workshop. So John came in on the production side as a Quality Controller in 1983?

RP: Yes, he basically came in to work alongside me. How I got involved is quite a long story. I knew Bryan Ansell. I had worked with him when he was part of Asgard. Bryan had founded Asgard in the late 70s. Asgard was very much the up-and-coming company. In many ways, it's what became Citadel Miniatures. I'd done a bit of sculpting, but mostly, Hal and I had written a set of fantasy wargames rules called *Reaper* in the late 70s, when we were still at school. We got in touch with Bryan because we'd seen the Asgard advert, and we thought he might be a good local chap who

could advise us on how we could publish it. He helped us publish it and we got to know him. Then I went to college for three years, during which time I made the odd figure for Asgard. But then Asgard closed down, and Bryan left.

HH: What did you study at college?

RP: Archaeology. So I'm a qualified archaeologist, but I wouldn't necessarily trust me with a trowel near anything important!

HH: So we're not going to see you on *Time Team* any time soon?

RP: [Laughs] No! What I discovered was I really don't like standing out in the field in a hole in the ground, two feet deep in water, in the middle of winter!

JS: An amazing discovery!

RP: So, I tended to avoid that wherever possible, and once I'd left college, I did do a little bit of digging, just to try and earn some money, but I couldn't make a career of it, because I just didn't know the right people. So, whilst I found it interesting, I just couldn't see a future in it.

HH: Let's go back to *Reaper*. This was before you had got into *Dungeons & Dragons* then?

RP: When *Dungeons & Dragons* came along, we were already doing something very similar, playing fantasy-based skirmish games with personalities inspired by the Skirmish Wargames Group, which was Mike Blake, and his mates, who produced two books that I know of. One was Wild West skirmish, and the other one was Colonial skirmish. They were fantastic books and really inspiring. They had lots of individual combat, so they were an early form of roleplaying, but in the context of the skirmish wargame. So, based on toy soldier wargaming, but still with that element of roleplaying. That was where I came in. *D&D* then came out, and when Richard Halliwell and I first saw it, we thought "They've stolen our ideas!" But of course, Gary Gygax and his crew in America had been doing that for years already. So, they were ahead of the curve, but we had had no knowledge of that – this was, after all, the 1970s, when often what happened beyond the confines of your village was a mystery! We had been fantasy gaming, usually in a science fiction context, often inspired by Philip José Farmer, Michael Moorcock, and those authors who were writing speculative "what if" fiction, so we had a mixture of science fiction and fantasy. And there were quite a lot of books that used that as a basis, and we'd read most or all of them, in the way that you do.

HH: Sure, especially as a teenager you latch onto and devour everything that comes within your reach.

RP: I often get people saying to me, "Warhammer is based on this, isn't it?", and I say, "Yes, I read that"; and then other people say "It's all based on this, isn't it?", and I say "Yes, I read that too". Actually, it's based on everything and anything – it was a new construct, with many, not just one source of inspiration. We were steeped in all that kind of thing.

HH: So from an early age you were already writing and using your own rules?

RP: Oh, sure, from the time we were 11 or 12 years old.

HH: And had Charles Grant's *Battle: Practical Wargaming* sparked the notion of dividing things into bounds, using scales and so on?

RP: Sure, the book explains, okay, you're going to play a wargame, this is how it works, and how we should design the rules for this or that, it takes you through the narrative of designing the game.

HH: That's one of the things I loved about Charles Grant's writing; it was almost proper academic writing, because he tells you how he arrived at his conclusions, which you often don't get in a set of rules these days.

JS: I think you will find that Rick still writes in that way.

HH: Yes, it is one of the things that I like about *Black Powder*.

JS: Even though *Black Powder* isn't aimed at new wargamers, if you *were* new to the hobby and picked it up, it would serve as a nice introduction. It explains what a tabletop is, it explains how to get your armies together and explains what it's all about. I think a lot of people would do well to consider these things when they write a book about the hobby.

HH: Sure. I didn't discover *Charge!* by Peter young until relatively recently. The first books that I found on the shelf were by Charles Grant and Don Featherstone.

RP: Absolutely, because they were in all the libraries! So when you started wargaming, you went to the library, and all the books were there on the shelf. Don Featherstone's books always struck me as slightly old-fashioned, because by the time I discovered them, wargaming had already started to move into a much more serious phase.

HH: Did you ever read Charlie Wesencraft's books?

RP: No, I missed those.

HH: Well, that's a shame, they were really lovely books. His *Practical Wargaming* is what got me into Ancients. He used the Airfix Romans and Ancient Britons and it was the first book I found where you mounted figures on bases. This is contrasted with what Charles Grant had done, which was to say for example, that his ground scale was 1 inch equals 10 yards, and a musketeer regiment during the 18th century had a frontage of approximately 120 yards, therefore our miniature regiment needed to have a frontage of 12 inches, then we see how many model soldiers we can fit into that space on the table. So he didn't have a direct correlation between figure scale and ground scale. By contrast, Charlie Wesencraft said, "This number of men occupy that amount of space" which determined the size of the base. I also remember that he advised using lino tiles to make the bases – I loved them! Anyway, it was that book that prompted me to go out and buy dozens of boxes of Airfix Romans and Ancient Britons.

JS: Yes, and what did you do with all those Roman chariots? Where are they all now? One in every box wasn't there?

HH: I bet someone used them to stage *Ben Hur* chariot races! Either that, or in a landfill somewhere...

RP:[laughs]... alongside French World War I bicycle teams and other Airfix funnies!

HH: Actually, I bet Don Featherstone got hold of them and designed all sorts of conversions for Airfix magazine, changing them into Hittite or Persian chariots and the like.

RP: I can remember Phil Barker doing some of those early conversions, turning an Airfix Robin Hood into a Thracian with a rhomphia. I can remember vividly trying to bend a pin into the shape of the rhomphia, but what Phil barker hadn't said was that he'd used a soft iron pin instead of a dressmaker's steel pin!

HH: Some of those were great, converting American Civil War Confederates into Han Chinese or whatever, using drawing pins for the shields and so forth.

RP: And getting hold of that mythical Banana Oil!

JS: Something I found out only just a couple of months ago, a funny wargaming fact, is that Wilkinson's, the big Woolworth-like store, has a stipulation in their buying department that their pan-scourers have to be made in a mid-green, because "wargamers make hedges out of them, you know!" The fact is that they've got to be made in a colour anyway, so make them in green. Isn't that amazing?

HH: Fantastic! Wargamers have had an influence on the world after all! Anyway, back to Charles Grant and his method of writing. One almost feels that he had a 'Reithian' brief, the desire to educate the reader. Reading it now, it can come across as slightly patronizing, but at the time it was like having your favourite uncle explain exactly how things are done.

RP: Sure, 'avuncular' is how I would describe it and without wishing to copy him, that's sort of what I modelled my style on.

HH: Okay, let's get back to your rule-writing, Rick. Because of the way Charles Grant had written *Battle: Practical Wargaming* in this very explanatory way, and had gone through the process of showing how he had arrived at his conclusions and so forth, had that in effect provided a framework for you to say, "ah, right, that's how you do it?"

RP: I guess so. I've not consciously thought of that, although it's very likely. Because there's a world you're trying to represent and Charles Grant would tend to say, "This is how it happened, this is what it was like, how are we going to represent that?" Having said that, of course, I'd played any number of wargames between first reading that and the late 1970s.

HH: What were the next wargaming books you got into?

RP: Well, after I first discovered wargaming, I enthused about it at school and discovered a couple of other guys were also into the same kind of thing, one of them being Richard Halliwell, who had already discovered pretty much every Don Featherstone book at his local library and was already playing American Civil War wargames using Airfix figures. So I went round his house and played a few games and we just became friends. He came round to my house and we played the Charles Grant rules, and at his house we played Don Featherstone's rules. So the next influence on me would have been all those Don Featherstone books. The seminal one was *War Games* which I bought from another friend who had dabbled with wargaming but then lost interest. What's interesting is that Charles Grant, Don Featherstone and that entire generation of wargamers had experienced war at first hand, whereas for our generation, brought up in the 1960s, war was a medium for adventure.

HH: It's one of the things that fascinates me. Our parents generation had actually fought in the war and our feeling about wargaming, and our feeling about the war, was very much coloured by our parents, whereas now you've got a generation whose parents didn't fight in the war at all, even their grandparents probably didn't fight in the war, and that has changed the way that people feel about warfare and about our hobby. Also, computer gaming has made certain things acceptable that I still don't want to see in wargames.

JS: It's interesting to realize how many of those people who did fight in the war – Charles Grant, Don Featherstone, Peter Young – were wargamers. You'd think it would be the last thing they'd want to do.

HH: On the other hand, for some of them, it may be a way of making sense of their experiences. Particularly if you weren't of high rank, you would have had to just obey the orders you were given, without necessarily understanding why you would given that order, whereas as a wargamer, you're able to command at a much higher level.

RP: Quite a lot of the guys in the Armed Forces now order Games Workshop stuff.

JS: Yes, including Sgt De'Ath – Sgt Death! I will never forget having to make out a label to Sergeant Death!

HH: And there are many serving and ex-servicemen who say, "What's the problem? It's just a game!" And I think there is a lot of us who engage in intellectual hand wringing that isn't really necessary. Anyway, let's go back on track – so Rick, you were reading those early books, and at some point you must have encountered the WRG?

RP: Yes, that would have been quite early on, I think I encountered them when the Third Edition Ancient rules and *The armies of the Macedonian and Punic Wars* came out by Phil Barker. They were both reviewed in the same issue of *Military Modelling*. I remember seeing it and ordering both, right there and then. That was my first exposure to the WRG rules. I think I got a brand-new Third Edition rules, plus the mediaeval amendments because I was into mediaeval stuff a bit at that time; so I got the Second Edition of mediaeval updates with the Third Edition rules all as one package. And I remember the rules being a complete revelation. Not because I read them and thought they were fantastic, because actually, I read them and thought "Wow, this is serious!" There was no way I could actually understand them as written. What I liked about them was the fact that here was someone taking things very, very seriously. Not, "Wow, here's something I could imagine playing", because you just couldn't imagine it. People sometimes talk about Phil Barker's writing as being hard to understand, but actually, in the early editions, his writing was absolutely fine, because he wasn't so driven about trying to get everything absolutely perfect, or preoccupied about people trying to bend the rules. I think he became obsessed with the grammar of it in the end, but I always felt that his original books, particularly the appendices at the back, were very charmingly written.

HH: I would agree with that, because he also wrote that excellent book, *Alexander the Great's Campaigns*. This was the same time at which Bruce Quarrie came out with *Napoleon's Campaigns in Miniature*. And that was a superb book! For someone like me who is interested in campaigns, there was rafts of material in it.

JS: I think *Napoleon's Campaigns in Miniature* by Bruce Quarrie was one of my favourite books for about eight years; you could just give that to anybody and there's all you need to know.

HH: Absolutely. It'd followed on from the Airfix *Guides to Wargaming*, specifically the Napoleonic one, from about 1974 – it was quite early. I remember I was in about the third year at high school when the Airfix guide came out. There was everything in there that you needed, the whole national characteristics thing, and the level of detail was groundbreaking, keeping records of actual men killed as casualties, learning your 33 times table.

RP: Of course WRG Ancients was based on 1:20.

HH: Absolutely. And it just didn't seem strange. It was about that time that I started playing the WRG Ancients rules with the 1:20 scale – probably about Fourth or Fifth Edition I should think – and I think that as a teenager, you were really into that kind of micro detail. Things like, what does happen when the Thracian armed with a rhomphia comes up against hastati?

RP: Your sense of overview is very poor as a teenager, but your sense for detail is fantastically precise. That's something that people sometimes forget, and even today, when I'm writing rules, some of the criticism I get, particularly from older gamers, whilst occasionally I'm accused of dumbing down, it's usually, "Oh, this is far too complicated," and my answer is, "Yes it is too complicated for *you*, but it's not too complicated for kids! Anyone who is 14 can pick this up, and they'll have grasped it like *that*!"

HH: This is moving is on nicely to the kind of subject that comes up frequently, which is where you have a brouhaha that blows up on an online forum, particularly amongst older gamers, when what they're complaining about wasn't aimed at them in the first place. Or, of course, conversely, younger gamers who whinge about 'old school' stuff, but it wasn't aimed at *them* either. And of course, one of the challenges facing any wargames writer is determining precisely who your readers are going to be. You may think that you're writing for a complete newcomer to the hobby, perhaps a youngster, but you also have to be aware that your book will be picked up and looked at by

the older *grognards*. So you've got to be aware that whilst overtly you're writing for one audience, there is this other audience who may be hypercritical. That's quite a challenge! In fact, this is one of the things that I admire about people like you Rick, is that you've managed to pull that trick off, and you must have been very single-minded about what you wanted to do

RP: Yes, bloody-minded in fact!

HH: So, the first rules you wrote were the *Reaper* rules, and these were more or less for yourselves, were they?

RP: Well, we wrote any number of sets of rules for ourselves. As teenagers. I think we even had a few articles published. There was a little fanzine at the time called *Dragon's Lair*. This was for Middle Earth wargamers and it was run by a policeman. It was basically a little Roneoed publication. I think it was quarterly. Both Hal and I contributed the odd article to that. I think Hal's first set of published rules was a set of spaceship rules that appeared in that magazine. I did a modelling article for it. So we already considered ourselves to be quite the thing, we were up there! I think *Reaper* was the first thing we published – it was *Reaper* by Richard Halliwell, but I actually helped develop and wrote quite a lot of it, but it was Hal's project, and then when we did the second edition, we shared the credits on it. You sometimes still see the second edition – TableTop Games published it. It was A5 size – the original one was A4. I did all the production work on it and everything. So it was a real amateur publication in every sense. It was published by the Nottingham Model Soldier Shop. It was the local toy soldier shop at the time. That was our real Mecca for many years, because there was no model shop in Lincoln, so we'd get on the train and come into Nottingham. We'd buy a pie in the shop next door, and go into the Nottingham model shop.

HH: So that was in the late 1970s?

RP: That's right. I don't have a copy of the original any more, and it didn't have a date in it, so I can't remember precisely when the first *Reaper* was published, but it was probably 1977.

JS: Yes, that's about right, because I bought one then. I was 17 or 18 years old.

HH: So, was *Reaper* a skirmish-based game?

RP: No, it was a *Warhammer* type game for armies and units, but in which you could break out the individual figures and skirmish with it. So it was one figure equals one man, but the system was based on rolling percentages, (you have to remember that percentages were quite important in those days). It was calculated on the basis of one man having a 37% chance of a hit, so 10 men would hit three times with a 70% chance of a fourth hit, while the armour value coming back the other way would be, well, each man has got a 73% chance of saving and there are four hits, so that's 73x4 and so on... The problem with this system was that it was very deterministic, because you were always rolling for the marginal numbers, so it became very predictable, and but some people loved that. It became quite a successful little system in its own right.

HH: That's also reminded me of another one of those Airfix guides. The *Guide to American Civil War Wargaming* by Terry Wise. He'd done the calculations for you. So, this number of men at that range are going to cause this number of casualties and so on. I can't remember whether you actually ruled any dice at all, or whether it was completely deterministic. Because that can obviously leads to this interesting decisions by gamers. The tactics that they choose can favour the more chess-type game.

RP: The games we were playing were very roleplay and skirmishes. For example, you and your horde of goblins had arrived at the wizard's tower and you intend to assault it and burn it to the ground, not knowing that meanwhile, a third player was bringing some knights on from round the corner, or from the kitchen or wherever it was! And that the wizard himself was actually summoning some daemons, and that he was the enemy of this third player, and so on and so forth! And it would be run as a roleplaying scenario, presided over by an umpire who knew all the little

secrets and who provided you with the map that showed what was going on, but didn't tell you that it was the wrong map... Well, that was what we did with *Reaper*, and once we'd published that, we went on and did a science-fiction game called *Combat 3000*.

HH: Sticking with *Reaper* for a second, this is interesting, because you've got these two things going on, in the early days: *Battle* with Charles Grant, which is sort of platoon level action, sort of semi-skirmishing...

RP: Yes you're right, sort of small company and platoon level action, 30 figures or so a side.

HH: …and then, on the other hand, you've obviously done your *D&D*, which is entirely individual and skirmishy type action.

RP: We'd also done that way earlier with gladiatorial combat.

HH: But the drive towards creating fantasy battles stuff, was that derived from your *Lord of the Rings* interests?

RP: Yes, of course, we'd read *Lord of the Rings* and wanted to recreate the battles from the *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. I mean, The Battle of Five Armies we fought any number of times: we built towers for the battle and so on.

HH: Of course, that is now available as a *Warmaster* type game isn't it? From GW?

RP: Yes, an odd game that is, in that we released it but make no attempt to sell it!

HH: [Laughs] Yes, I stumbled upon it on the Specialist Games pages of the GW website.

RP: Yes, it is *Warmaster* again. But with a specific scenario. It's quite nice, actually.

HH: So, you moved to Games Workshop in 1982?

RP: Yes, I went to college in 1978; I think I left college in 1981, then I was at Games Workshop in late 1982, but I was at Citadel doing part-time casual work for a while before, because Citadel had moved to Newark, and whilst I was at college, most of what I've tried to do was build on my sculpting, because I'd been doing bits of sculpting before I went there, and when I was a college, I started doing sculpts for Bob Connor at TableTop Games, and I made quite a few of his 15mm figures – not the better ones, I have to say! I make no claims to be a figure sculptor, but in those days the standard was not great, you just had to work quickly. I made some ancients, and I made some of his colonial ranges, including Zulus and others. I found it was actually really hard work trying to make a living as a sculptor. You didn't get paid very much for 15mm figures and you really had to do something like three a day to make a living at it. I was talking to Aly Morrison about it, because he took over from me at TableTop Games after I left, and he said he was doing five a day!

HH: Crikey, five a day!

RP: But that was the thing in those days. The first thing Bryan Ansell ever said to me when I said that I was really interested in figure sculpting, which is when I first met him, he said, "If you want to be a figure sculptor (he was talking about 25mm figures) then you have to be able to make a figure a day in order to make a living at it."

HH: We have to remember that back in those days, 15mm was quite a revelation, it was still comparatively new as a scale.

RP: Peter Laing had been making 15 mm figures since time immemorial, but they were really quite crude.

HH: I call them the 15mm Spencer Smiths.

RP: Yeah, but not that good!

JS: The hobby's first generic models! You could use them for anything!

RP: I had some of their hoplites with spears – I remember the spears were made from pins. Lethal! Anyway, Minifigs got the ball rolling with their figures on strips in the mid-1970s.

JS: I'm sure they were easy to cast, but they were a pig to use! And I'm convinced that they employed a lady to bend the pikes around the bodies and squash them into inappropriately small boxes!

RP: As an aside, in those early days when Richard Halliwell and I were ordering lots of Minifigs, Richard used to live in a Post Office. In those days, during the troubles of the 70s, Post Offices were frequently being raided or receiving bombs in the post, so the security was quite sensitive, and one of our consignments of Minifigs, after triggering the metal detectors, ended up being defused by the bomb squad! They had taken our package and put it in a bucket of water – and because Minifigs used to use sawdust to package their figures in those days you can imagine the state it was in!

HH: [Laughs] Count yourself lucky that they didn't run a controlled explosion on it!

JS: There would have been a lot of shrapnel!

HH: So you arrived at Citadel and you were doing figure sculpting?

RP: Let's just clarify the history a bit. I was doing figure sculpting before, for Bob Connor. If I remember right, Bryan had founded Citadel, left, and then come back again. He was just starting up again with Citadel in Newark. He took over from Duncan MacFarlane who had been the previous manager. Bryan knew me, and one of my other wargaming friends was already working at Citadel. We were all interested in toy soldiers; we were all hippies. Citadel had started at the Folk Museum, but by now it had moved to Victoria Street.

HH: And that's where it was when you joined as well, John?

JS: Yes, it was a rather Dickensian mill, not a huge premises, but it was quite frightening in many ways.

HH: So how many people were there? I am trying to get a picture of it in those early days – how big a company was it?

RP: There would be, say, three casters, about three people in the office, Diane, Bryan, then maybe half a dozen or a few more, another friend of mine from Lincoln was doing mould cutting, Richard Halliwell was doing mould cutting. We were unemployable otherwise, because we were all hippies! I was employed to do mail order; up until then, Bryan or Duncan had been doing it in their spare time, so they needed someone to do mail order.

JS: And when the lead lorry arrived, everyone had to go and help unload. It was blooming heavy!

RP: The lead came in big boxes which weighed about 50 kilos each. We didn't have a forklift truck, and everything had to go through a door that was no bigger than an ordinary domestic door. So, the guy would arrive with the lead lorry with everything on pallets, thinking that it was a proper industrial premises he was going to, and got a nasty surprise, because he had to break open the pallets, and hand the 50 kilo ingots to the waiting employees to get them through the door! Each person at the factory probably had to do four or five each and, so by the time you were finished, you are absolutely exhausted! But Bryan always showed willing – that is probably hard to imagine when you think of the size of Games Workshop today, but back then, everyone had to muck in. Citadel was already quite a big company by wargames standards, but we were still a very small company and most of us were hippies.

HH: I imagine a bizarre rewrite of the Italian job, with you guys hanging off the edge of a cliff, but instead of it being gold in the boxes, its lead!

RP: [Laughs] Anyway, so I came in on the mail order side, and I started doing flyers and sheets, which people may remember – they were big colourful things, using a different colour ink every month, that's how we could tell what was coming in.

JS: The difference was, of course, everything was coming in by post, obviously there were no e-mails and no websites in those days, and the post was crucial, so when there was a strike by the Royal Mail, we had to lay people off, it was as simple as that. There was no work for the packing girls, and of course they were very cross indeed.

HH: So when did the transition from just Citadel to Games Workshop happen?

RP: Citadel was originally founded by Bryan Ansell, and Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. So although it was always separate from Games Workshop, it was co-owned by the same people. Then what happened was that Bryan left, and his share was bought by the others. So in essence, both Citadel and Games Workshop were owned by the same people. Then, later on, Bryan came back and then he subsequently negotiated for the whole business. So in the end, it was Citadel that bought out Games Workshop.

JS: So, Games Workshop came up to Nottingham, though at the time, I think it was presumed to go the other way.

HH: So, Rick, you were working in the mail order department, but how did you get involved John?

JS: When I joined, I found that the post of Quality Control Supervisor was illusory. What Bryan liked to do was hire some good people and just throw them at things, to find out what they could do. I was Rick's lackey in mail order, I was the second mail order troll.

RP: I think that when we employed you, the idea was that I started to employ people to help develop the mail order, and build the business up, because I was looking to move onto something else and I think that Bryan thought I could do more for him. John had already been up over a summer vacation, and John was the Great White Hope, because he had been there, he was obviously middle-class, he could spell and all that sort of thing, and I think that they were hoping that John would come in, and take over from me, and deal with the mail order department. Except that John moved very quickly from mail order to sales. Because by then, you'd had your accident with your foot.

JS: Yes, I lost half my left foot! It was a forklift truck accident – not at Citadel, I hasten to add, because we didn't have one!

RP: That is why all the ladies call him 'foot and a half Stallard'.

JS: [Laughs] Yes, and they're all disappointed! So, I couldn't walk around very much for quite a while, which rather put paid to my involvement in mail order, which involved getting up, going round all the racks, and picking things out. So in the end, I got into terrible trouble because I wasn't doing a very good job, and I wasn't enjoying it as a result, so I actually resigned, partly because I thought I was bound to get fired, and then Bryan called me the following Monday and asked, "What have you resigned for?" I replied, "Well, I can't really do the job". He said, "Well, you've got a poncy BBC accent, you could get on the phones and talk to trade customers, couldn't you? Come on in tomorrow and we'll get you started on that." So I thought that was very kind of him to give me a second chance, so I went into trade sales right away. Because up to that point, we were primarily a mail order company.

RP: We did quite a lot of trade, doing a lot of really big orders for the Games Workshop stores.

JS: There were four or five Games Workshop stores at the time. We had the retail thing, but trade was fairly small, apart from a couple of big distributors in France and America, but then we thought it would be a good idea to get trade accounts, so we put a team of agents on the road, five guys that we got from the toy industry, and we got them selling Citadel spinner racks into toy and hobby shops to get Citadel in people's faces. We were pretty much the first company to achieve that and, as they say, first to market normally wins through.

HH: So it's not like you had a selling or business background – this was all self-taught?

JS: No, as Rick says, we were all hopeless hippies. Other than Rick, the rest of us had not even thought about how model soldiers were made, or the industrial process behind them, with some big sweaty guy with a ladle pouring lead into a mould, or the skill that went into cutting that mould. It was very much Bryan who was the guy who knew how it would all go together.

RP: And Bryan wasn't that old, either, just a couple of years older than me. He was a college dropout, a maths student who saw the opportunity to do something in the toy soldier industry. He was a very driven man, with a very strong vision, a very creative vision. I think he saw the business as, "There's something I love, and I can make money at it".

JS: Also, Bryan's wife Diane worked there as well, she was a superb administrator. But Bryan had the vision, the passion – those were extraordinary days, and Diane did a lot of the organizing. There was a lot to organize! Both of them had an immense customer service ethic: getting it right was pounded into us, and it didn't do us any harm at all. That ethic still runs through Games Workshop and, I'd like to think, Warlord today. You have to think back to that time, where there were some companies with great product but useless marketing, or great marketing but not such great product, but no other companies who could put it all together like Bryan did. Bryan was known for making the most fantastic models, putting it together with what became *Warhammer*, tying it all into a magazine as well (*White Dwarf*), and this was the first time that it had been done, and put together as a package. This then gave us something that could be rolled out as a program, which happened later when Tom Kirby came to buy Games Workshop. It gave the business something sellable which obviously worked. Then he could do that in other countries, all around the world.

HH: So it was during the Thatcher years that most of the impetus for the business was growing? And you realised that you were part of something that was more than just another job?

RP: The very fact that we were getting paid to do what we were doing was quite a thrill in itself. The idea of making money out of designing toy soldiers or writing wargames rules or, in fact, anything to do with wargaming, was inconceivable. For decades afterwards, my parents would ask "When are you getting a proper job?" It was only when I pointed out that I was earning ten times what my father had earned in his heyday that they finally acknowledged that it was, after all, perhaps a 'proper job'!

HH: So, John, you were really involved in getting the sales of GW up to a new level?

JS: Yes, the marketing was always really studio based, so I was getting trade sales sorted, and then it was setting up the retail chain. We had about half a dozen Games Workshop stores, and at the time they were selling all sorts of stuff – water pistols, kites, jigsaw puzzles, ouija boards, *Dungeons & Dragons*, all sorts of weird and wacky stuff. They were really just games shops, but of course they also sold Citadel Miniatures, *RuneQuest*, and all the other American stuff, like *Traveller*, and they were doing okay, but we opened some more stores, and then Bryan and Diane realized that we weren't making any money on the other stuff, because the margins were so thin, especially having to have stuff brought in from America. It was really only on *Warhammer* and Citadel Miniatures that there was any real profit. So we had a critical meeting in about 1987 where we brought in about 24 of our store managers and asked them "What would you think if we only sold Games Workshop products? Do you think you could run your stores just selling Citadel and Games Workshop stuff?" They were told how much more of the GW stuff they would have to sell in order

to do it, but they all said "Yes, we're sure we can do it." So we had a big sale to sell off all the other bits and pieces, and we massively increased all the other Citadel and Games Workshop lines.

RP: Remember, this was just about the time when *40K* was coming out for the first time.

JS: Obviously, getting *40K* as a second string to the bow was one of the things that gave us the confidence to do this. And so from that point on, we decided we were going to be Games Workshop stores proper from now on – really, to become Citadel Miniatures stores. And the effect was amazing – they could just concentrate on what they wanted to do, and we started putting in the gaming tables, an idea we had picked up from an American store when we visited America, because they had so much more space over there. Gaming tables were almost unknown in British stores because they were so tiny, because the rent was so high in comparison.

HH: Let's face it, most UK wargames shops were pretty tiny, staffed in general by some antisocial type in a cardigan who resented selling anything to their customers…

JS: [Laughs] I couldn't possibly comment! Anyway, we made the decision to put gaming tables in the shop and have our staff introduce people to this wacky world of wargaming, because if you'd not played it before, it would seem a bit weird; and then we learned to put a painting table in too. That changed what our stores were – it changed them from being a general toy and game shop into what we'd call an activity centre, and it became a hobby and club type of thing, which again became something that we could roll out to the ever-growing number of Games Workshop stores around the world (about 350 now). It was also something that would work across the different cultures in France, Spain, Germany and elsewhere.

HH: Certainly from a business point of view, I can see that that's the really clever core concept which has built the company: you managed to create something which was reproducible. This is something that so many businesses struggle with – take my own small publishing business as an example – scaling that up is not something that's easy to do. In effect, and I mean this in a nice way, Games Workshop is like the McDonalds of wargaming, because it's a reproducible, franchiseable concept. You can say to someone, "Well, if you want to become a Games Workshop store, here's the package. So long as you reproduce that package exactly like it says in the manual, you'll do fine." And what so many businesses struggle with is coming up with anything that means that the owner of the business can actually be 'hands off', and doesn't have to be there in person in all the different locations.

JS: Well, Bryan very much did lay out the vision of what he wanted and passed that down, and whilst there must have been times when he got very frustrated when things weren't done as he believed they should have been, he did have some good disciples who helped him roll out the program. Workshop has had some sensational guys who do it for the love of the hobby, and I believe it's done the whole of the hobby a lot of good. As we know, it's got its detractors who think of it as 'The Evil Empire', but they're just not realists if they think that Games Workshop has destroyed the wargames hobby.

HH: Actually, one of the things I admire about Games Workshop is that it has managed to achieve this business franchise model with a hobby at the core of it. To have managed to create a worldwide chain of stores with a series of games at its heart is pretty amazing.

JS: Actually, what I find even more amazing is that they have managed to achieve that in the teeth of the computer generation. For 20 years, every year, city analysts have been saying "Ah, it's all going to end now because of the competition from computer games," but it never happens. But you're right, to get young lads to paint models and read those books and chuck stuff on the kitchen table still, it's quite an old-fashioned concept, and a great trick, isn't it?

RP: [Laughs] And get them to measure in feet and inches!

HH: Okay, this brings me back to you, Rick – at what point did you write *Warhammer*?

RP: I think it was one of the first things I started when I joined Games Workshop. I was running mail order, and setting all that up, and we were doing news sheets, and I think that from day one, Bryan wanted a set of wargames rules that would enable people to make use of their collections. He knew me as someone who had already written and published wargames rules with Hal. So he commissioned Richard Halliwell to write *Warhammer*, and me and Richard developed it together, and then because I'd been doing all the production work on the mail order, we originally intended to do the wargames rules as a mail-order giveaway to subscribers. But of course it grew, to the point where you couldn't possibly do that, and the first *Warhammer* came out of that. I then stopped doing mail order, and just spent my time getting first *Warhammer* finished, and it was done very much as an amateur publication, and I look back on the very first *Warhammer* with some embarrassment because it's so amateurishly done.

HH: I don't think I've ever seen a *Warhammer* First Edition.

RP: [Laughs] Well, don't go and look at one! It's absolutely appalling, because it was just me, with a bit of Richard Halliwell, and it wasn't properly laid out, all done on a very primitive word processor, with Letraset for all the headers, and the drawings were done directly onto the paste-up, a very old-fashioned way of doing it. By the time we did the second edition, we were taking ourselves a bit more seriously and employed a proof-reader.

HH: So, first edition was 1983-ish?

RP: Yes, first edition very entertainingly has two dates on it. The box back says '83, I think, and the internal contents says '82. So it was done over that period.

HH: So, what were the first *Warhammer* races? Did you already have the races fully formed at that point?

RP: Yes, because the *Warhammer* game was developed to allow people to make use of the collections they already had. So, we looked at the range, and took copies of every single thing, all the blister pack and bag notes, and those became the races that were then incorporated into the game.

JS: For a long time, people were just mail-ordering Citadel Miniatures because they could, because they loved the models and in their heads, I think they thought of the armies they might like to play with, but they weren't doing anything with them, it was just lead under the bed, or painted up as little warbands, but nobody did anything with them. Until Bryan had said to Rick, "Write us a set of rules", the vast majority of those miniatures were just going to collectors.

RP: And a typical mail order when I joined was just one of this, one of those, three of them… They were being bought by people who were, at best, playing roleplaying games. Then we started to do regiment deals, like "Buy 20 orcs with a leader and a standard bearer and a musician", or "Buy an army deal, get these 20 orcs and those 20 orcs and these other 20 orcs and you've got an army" and so on. So, we started to sell armies… It wasn't that we invented a world or a background for a game and then made models for it, we had a vast range of models already…

JS: …including Ral Partha, from America, which we made under license.

RP: And we also did *RuneQuest* figures under licence, *Traveller* figures under license, *Star Trek* under license, *War of the Worlds*, we made a range of gangsters, spaceships, Marlburians, Romans, Arabs… So, it was a very diverse range. The reason why the *Warhammer* world has got these human races in was because we made historical toy soldiers – mostly medieval, of course.

HH: Sure, I've got some of them! And of course I also remember things like *HeroQuest* and *Advanced HeroQuest* from the mid-1980s.

RP: Yes, from Milton Bradley.

HH: That was a great game, and I loved the miniatures, particularly some of the barbarian figures.

RP: I set up the first design studio after mail order, and that was in Newark, in a separate office, and then when we moved to Eastwood on the outskirts of Nottingham, the studio was in the top floor of an office block, and then soon after that we moved into Nottingham, a place in Low Pavement, and that was when we did the *HeroQuest* under license.

JS: Opinion is divided on how well *HeroQuest* did for Workshop. But I can tell you from the front line, recruiting managers and staff for Workshop, how many of them were recruited as a result of *HeroQuest*, and it ran into the hundreds. It was a terrific game.

HH: I've had games of *HeroQuest* with people who would never, ever consider playing a wargame under any other circumstances. Great game, and I've got a very soft spot for it. And I also remember that curious book that came out, *Heroes for Wargames*?

JS: Yes, Stuart Parkinson wrote that. He used to work for us. He was on the sales side with me. He famously had a steel plate in his head from jumping into a river to save someone who was, it turned out, only larking around, and the water was actually only two feet deep…

HH: [Sharp intake of breath] Anyway, leaving poor Stuart's act of regrettable bravery to one side for a moment, let's concentrate on *Warhammer* again. I'm trying to build a picture of when that was released, because at the time, whilst there were other sets of fantasy and Middle Earth rules around, they were very disparate and didn't have the professional presentation or commercial backing that *Warhammer* did.

RP: [Laughs] Well, that's very kind of you to put it like that, because we felt that we hardly had it either! I think the reason why *Warhammer* took off despite its limitations was because it was full of energy and very gag-tastic. There was an element of fantasy gaming that was quite serious at that time, as the original splurge of roleplaying games of the late 70s had grown up a bit, and there was a very strong element who were into roleplaying games as a serious concept, and rules had started to develop into a very detailed, profound state, valuing mechanisms for their own sake, very furrowed brow. *Chivalry and Sorcery* was like that, and even *RuneQuest* had an element of that.

JS: And it's undeniable there was a certain amount of American versus British feeling there – the Americans struck me as terribly serious at that time, and the gaming, in my opinion, seemed a bit dull, and when Rick wrote *Warhammer*, of course with some guidance from Bryan, it was irreverent, it was very funny. Dwarves were characterized as grim Northerners, Orcs were dodgy south Londoners, elves as not quite manly, effete southerners… It was all just such great fun!

RP: Well, that sort of characterization was driven by a very British sense of humour, very Pythonesque in places, and certainly irreverent, to the point of being a bit 'sixth-form' to be honest. That was definitely something that Hal and I brought to it, because Hal did a lot of the original writing on *Warhammer*.

HH: Looking at the structure of the rules, the IGO-UGO structure, was that something that you had already been doping with *Reaper*?

RP: That was how all wargames rules worked in those days, wasn't it?

HH: Ooh, no! Simultaneous moves – Charles Grant, Bruce Quarrie, WRG Ancients, they all had simultaneous moves, with written orders.

RP: Oh yes, you're right, which we did with WRG, but WRG orders became more and more formalized, because the system became complex. No, we did alternate moves with *Warhammer*, because we knew our audience. You can't write a game based on simultaneous movement unless you're going to have some element of hidden orders or direction. Well, no youngster is going to play that.

HH: This is an interesting point, because John, you were doing written orders, playing with rules like Bruce Quarrie's, keeping note of casualties and so on.

JS: Yes, I must have done.

HH: For me, the culture shock came when I first started playing *Warhammer*, thinking, "This is weird! What's all this?" At a similar time, I came across the WRG *1685-1845* rules, which were 'phased', as well as board games like *Squad Leader* (it's three in the morning and we've only managed two moves!)

RP: Yes, we had all that as well.

JS: But of course, don't forget that because *Warhammer* was a fantasy game, Rick put the emphasis on 'the game'. It's not a historical re-enactment, is it? It's purely a game, using all those great model soldiers that you'd bought.

RP: You know, in my mind, *Warhammer* was always an ancients or medieval wargame with fantasy bits bolted on. I built it that way. The d6 was a prerequisite. Bryan did the brief on the game and he said that you have to do rules for everything we make; and it has to use a d6. So, right from the beginning, you'd got certain limitations. Hal and I thought that the idea of using a d6 was already quite primitive. We took our *Reaper* game and tried to convert it over into d6. What we found was that there weren't enough modifiers in a d6 to be able to do everything we wanted. So we split the system down: instead of being a two-stage hit/defend, it became a three-stage hit/defend/save. Which is also inspired partly by the old Tony Bath and Terry Wise rules, which had saving throws. But we were very conscious that this was old fashioned, and clunky, but we kind of made a virtue of it.

HH: It's hard to remember how many systems were d20 and percentage based back in those days.

RP: D6 systems had become old-fashioned and were seen as being primnitive.

HH: Yes, at the very least many systems also used average dice, such as the WRG, where you differentiated between regulars and irregulars in morale by using ordinary and average dice.

JS: The other clever thing, though, was by bringing in that third die throw, it engages the opponent in the fight, even when it's not their turn, which is really quite clever.

RP: Yes, and that's an important part of wargaming which I think a lot of wargames don't accommodate, and that's the 'jeopardy' or 'heart in mouth'. So, you roll a dice for a positive – I roll to hit – then take a dice roll to kill, and as you're doing that, your opponent has got his eyes firmly focused on what's going on, and then the saving throws, rather than being a third stage from the same guy, are passed over to the other side of the table and become a positive, so now "I'm going to save", not "I'm going to kill again".

HH: It's also a way of overcoming what can be one of the problems with IGO-UGO, which is that each turn, one bloke is having to sit there whilst everything happens to them, without any chance of retaliation.

RP: Well, the original *Warhammer* actually had some more interactive elements in it, because it was built from a skirmish background; so you could use individual figures, and characters had special powers that would allow them to interrupt moves, which we tended to lose as time went on and it became more of a battle game. We never thought of IGO-UGO as a big deal, and we wouldn't have even used that terminology at the time. I have noticed on some forums where people obsess about it as being a matter of principle, but to me, objecting to a game mechanic is a bit like taking a poem and objecting to it being written in iambic pentameter. I think, "No, it's a piece of work, you choose the mechanisms to facilitate the overall objective, the themes you're dealing with and so on". All mechanisms are available to you: there aren't good mechanisms and bad mechanisms, there are just mechanisms, and some are more appropriate to some situations than to others. I

wouldn't use the same systems or mechanisms for a small figure scale game like *Warmaster*, for example, as for a large-scale figure game like *Warhammer*. If I were writing science fiction ship rules, which is my other great passion, although I've never had the opportunity to do it – the original *Rogue Trader* game was a set of ship rules – I'd go back to percentage dice, because science fiction ships are scientific, and so are millimeters, and that seems more appropriate.

HH: I can understand that – when you're creating a recipe, you'll choose from an appropriate set of ingredients.

RP: And I think a more precise or scientific measure gives a scientific aspect to what you're doing. Similarly, if the models are quite small, I think you need a smaller increment of measurement. That's just an emotional attachment to your making to the rules it doesn't matter whether you're playing with a model, or a base, and in a science-fiction game you can play with any sort of counter. So I think that you have to take all that into account when you're rule writing and when people talk to you about the mechanics as pure mechanics, pure games, you have to step back a bit from it. You have to ask, "Why don't you like taking alternate moves?" and "What is it that does your head in about that?"

HH: One of the things I found hardest to get to grips with when I started playing *Warhammer* was the alternate move thing.

RP: That must have just been because you were so used to playing another way.

HH: And also playing in a different genre, having been a historical wargamer rather than a fantasy wargamer. Also, the from the early 1970s through to the mid-1980s, there had been a growing momentum towards seeing wargames almost as a simulation, the growing discussion around "What is it that we're playing? Are we participating in a simulation, or are we playing a game?" and the alternate move makes it more 'gamey'. Also, in my experience, people who enjoy chess also enjoy alternate move games. It seems to suit the way their minds work. Whereas for me, all my reading of military history had led me to think about generals having to cope with all sorts of things happening at once, and the kind of forward planning which that requires. The general must be thinking, "I want to be able to do this and I want these troops to reach that point whilst, at the same time, my opponent will be doing this." So, that sense of all sorts of things happening at the same time seems to suit my personality. But also, as I said, during the 1970s and 1980s there was an increasing sense that we were trying to simulate something, and therefore the general has got to make decisions in advance whilst his opponents is also doing something.

RP: Well, you know what's going on there? Wargaming really took off in the 1970s with people of our generation, so as 11 or 12-year-olds, we were growing up with wargaming, and then we were maturing. As teenagers mature, they go through various psychological stages. One of the things about kids in their mid-teens is their fantastic ability to absorb and to learn, but their utter inability to make generalizations or compromises. It's something you only learn in later life. If you talk to mid-teenagers about rights or wrongs, their attitudes are very black and white. They really have no facility to make judgments. They don't like judgments, especially boys. They simply don't have the ability to develop those soft skills. As wargamers, we were all growing up at the same time. So, that move towards simulationism, as opposed to gaminess, was a sign of a lack of maturity, on the part of a whole group of people, a sense that it all had to be profound, it all had to be serious, we are not playing with toy soldiers, we're doing something real. So a lack of sensitivity, a lack of social skills, on the part of what were overly intelligent, mostly grammar school boys, led to that situation. Perhaps these days, we'd call them geeks, though the term didn't really exist in those days. So, it was all wrapped up with that. I think that most people grow out of it, because they discover women and other things, and they realize that there's more to life than toy soldiers, but for a certain section of teenagers, the fact that you had wargames rules was part of your social life, because you've got no ability to have any other kind of social life. You don't have the soft skills. So when mid teenage boys interact with one another, the fact that they can do it with a set of rules, enables them to have a conversation, and do something together. It gives some common ground. But the rules become really important. For a more mature kind of individual, and, ironically, for a much younger individual, the rules can be quite soft. Because when you're very young, you know how to

play, and when you're much older, you feel faintly embarrassed that you might have taken this or that much too seriously. Well, that's my theory anyway!

HH: But the interesting point is that right from the word go, you were producing a rule sets that had a narrative outcome. And another thing that I think was clever was that you were pitching it at a size of game that could be played in roughly six moves per side, at which point you can arrive at an outcome.

RP: Yes, the premise there was that you have to be able to play a wargame that starts when you get home from work, which can be played in its entirety, and then allow you to get to the pub in time for last orders with time for you to discuss it! Now, because we've changed the licensing laws in this country, this has undermined an entire generation of wargames developers! It's a serious problem! But that was indeed the basis on which we developed our games, because that's how we did it.

HH: That's interesting to hear, because as a historical wargamer, I would happily spend entire weekends, nay, *weeks* playing a wargame. The epitome for me was going up to the Wargame Holiday Centre, in the days when Peter Gilder was still alive, probably in about 1985, for a Salamanca long weekend. This was my dream wargame! Thousands of model soldiers on the table, seven players a side, beautifully sculpted terrain – it was just fantastic! An amazing experience which epitomized from me the kind of wargame I was after. And, of course, simultaneous moves!

JS: I can see that that was exactly what ticked your box, and it's a broad church isn't it? I also think that's what we were after. But now, you probably wouldn't want to do that all the time – perhaps once or twice a year at most.

HH: Yes, most of the time, I'm happy if I can get a wargame at all!

JS: Most of the time, what you want is a two-hour bash, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. And then, down the pub!

HH: I think it's also that as you develop as a gamer, you look for something different from a game. The feeling is, "Okay, I've done that, I've done the enormous epic 'can-you-change-history kind of game," but also asking yourself, "Does a wargame really prove anything?" I don't think it does, other than creating a moving diorama. This makes an interesting contrast, and moving dioramas can look fantastic, I'll admit. With my last visit to you here last February, when we did those trial runs of *Black Powder*, in the space of a couple of hours, we did that Crimean game here, and the following day I had a Napoleonic game at Alan Perry's, and these were big, epic battles, but they were done and dusted in the space of a few hours each, and it had been great fun. And I was struck when *Black Powder* first came out by the fact that, judging by some of the comments made online, there were an awful lot of people who just didn't 'get it'.

RP: Well, there were an awful lot of people who hadn't even seen the book, let alone read it.

HH: You see an awful lot of that online, people commenting on things who haven't seen them in the flesh. But I would say that anyone who has ever read anything by Charles Grant, surely will get it? Because there's so much of that kind of ethos in *Black Powder*. I mean, you're not actually using fictitious nations, but by goodness, I'm already thinking of making use of the rules in that way. And they will suit it perfectly. This brings me back to *Warmaster*, another one of your projects. This interests me because you'd already got *Warhammer*, which suits a certain size of game, of perhaps a dozen to 15 units a side. Because of the amount of dice rolling there is to do and the narrative way that those rules work, it provides a game of a smaller scale. With *Warhammer*, you have created units, of between, say, a dozen and 30 figures per unit, unless you're playing goblins or Skaven, where occasionally you would have a much bigger units, but the idea is that you're playing 1:1. That's a really clever trick that you've pulled off there, because of course, with historical rules, such as WRG, you would look at a unit of 20 figures and say, "Okay that's 20 figures, but each figure represents 20 men, so that's 400 real men". And when I play *Warhammer*, I almost can't help myself thinking that.

RP: Well, did you know, that's precisely how the game dynamics were built? It assumes 1:20. Because I played so much WRG Ancients! So, when we came to do *Warhammer*, the dynamic of what the game is was largely driven by that. So, the size of the units, and the way they move over the tabletop, was driven off that scale. And some of the manoeuvre rules are based on the big scales. In reality, ten men do not wheel – you don't have to. So although in *Warhammer* you always talk about and treat the miniatures as if they were 1:1, for the purposes of developing the game they're often treated as 1:20. It is a strange abstraction. But it is an abstraction that is invisible. When you portray that to someone who is a prospective young gamer, they don't immediately say "Ooh, there's some strange scale anomaly going on here". It's not obvious. They take it as read that this is how you should manoeuvre.

HH: But, at the same time as you have this abstraction, the leader figure, standard bearer and musician are key, genuinely individual sorts of figures, and you have the ability to issue challenges…

RP: Sure, on the one hand it is that, but on the other hand that musician, or that standard bearer, functions just like every other piece in the unit, but it's giving the unit special rules. With a standard bearer present, that's all he's doing, but the champion, yes, he can do individual combat. Yes, I admit, it is an interesting mix isn't it?

HH: It is a clever trick, because someone like me would come to a *Warhammer* game, and look at it, and say, "Okay, that's a unit of 400 archers, but the way it functions can almost seem multi-dimensional".

RP: [Laughs] Ooh, I don't know about that!

HH: Whereas, of course, *40K* is much more obviously individualistic. Almost like you're going back to that Charles Grant *Battle: Practical Wargaming* book.

RP: Well, *40K* has gone through two major rules iterations. The first version of *40K*, which covered the first and second editions, was more closely based on *Warhammer*, so it was that game system again. It included rolls to hit, rolls to kill and so on. Then, from the third edition onwards, there's been a different system.

HH: I've actually only tried out *40K* fairly recently, so tell me, when did it first appear?

RP: The first one was 1987, the second one would have been 1993.

HH: So the first edition was at the same time as the shops were kicking off?

RP: The first edition in 1987 was *Rogue Trader*, the hardback book. The second edition was a big box, with a red Space Marine captain on the front. I only did those two, so I can't remember what happened after that. I designed and wrote – which is to say, I actually sat down and typed – the first two versions of *Warhammer 40K* and the first five versions of *Warhammer*. After that, they have been done by other people, often taking my text, but then developing it with other people. I do still have some input into it, so for example, for the third edition of *40K*, I briefed the game system, but then Andy Chambers wrote it. And as it develops, it often changes. So, the modern *40K*, and the modern *Warhammer* are not by me in the literal sense.

HH: And of course, other people are brought in to write the codices and the Army Books for *Warhammer* and *40K*. So, when were the first Army books written for *Warhammer*?

RP: 1992. When Tom Kirby took over Games Workshop from Bryan Ansell, and started to expand the business, John and I were part of the management buyout. A very minor part of it, I have to say, but we were part of it. So we were then part of the senior executive team. One of the things that we did was to look at the range, and we restructured it. I was in charge of the studio, and I restructured the *Warhammer* and *40K* ranges into the big box format. These included the plastic figures, so

every army had its own range and army book. That was something I had wanted to do for a year or two, but Bryan hadn't let us do it.

HH: So you're saying that the idea of doing the Army books and so forth was creatively driven?

RP: Oh yes, absolutely.

HH: Because what the nay-sayers say, is that it was all commercially driven. All you were interested in was, "How can we sell more stuff?"

RP: Well, at the end of the day, you're doing this to make a living, you've not just got a duty to make your own thing, you've got hundreds of employees.

JS: Absolutely, you really did have hundreds of employees by then.

RP: So yes, what we did was creatively driven, but it would be very dangerous to do something on a creative whim that didn't have some kind of commercial value in it. That's not to say that everything we did was commercially successful. But with something like *Warhammer* and *40K*, you had to be very confident of what you're doing, in order to drive the business forward. Because otherwise, you'll end up as many businesses have – being sold, dismantled, and we'd all be out of a job.

JS: And let's face it, the business has been around now for what, 33 years? 35 years?

HH: When you first joined it had ten or a dozen people, so how quickly did it expand?

RP: It expanded really quickly from the time when Bryan sold the business, which was about 1991, and Tom Kirby bought the business. Up until that point, we had expanded, and we had added more shops, but we'd done it very carefully, because it was Bryan's personal possession. And as long as he could generate a living out of it for himself, he was very happy. There was no reason why he should want to have done anything else. So, as I understand it, he felt it was inappropriate for the business to try and develop in European countries and elsewhere, because you would have to develop foreign-language products, start employing lots of other people, and you would have to invest a great deal.

HH: So, right up through the 80s, the core of the company was still quite small?

RP: Yes, you had the UK, the USA, and we were turning over something in the region of £10-£14 million. That was as big as you could build it in that way. The business was quite controlled. The next stage was a step-change. Bryan saw no advantage in making that step-change, because it meant a great deal more work and risk for himself and he always aimed to sell the business. So he then sold the business to Tom, who then of course acquired a rather large debt. So the only way that Tom could pay that debt and make some money himself was by expanding. So what John and I did as part of the executive team was set about expanding the business under Tom's direction, and the way we did this was by rationalizing the product range to make it more commercial, and commercially stronger, and also, let's not foreget, it was what I wanted to do. It was great having lots of new products – fantastic fun – and John set about building the sales teams and added shops, so we ended up with a massive retailing base.

JS: Yes, we pushed through a huge new improvement program, things like getting the packaging right, and adding the big plastics program, which was something that I wanted.

HH: I know how people perceive Games Workshop from the outside, as a vast company and so on, but each of us has that little voice inside is saying "Gosh, it's only me", so was this quite scary for you?

RP: No, it was fantastic! Because what had happened was that we had been underfunded for so long, because Bryan didn't want to expand the business particularly, he didn't want to invest huge

amounts of money in it, he just wanted to run what was there; so although there had been the possibility of moving ahead and doing new things, particularly plastics, it was only once Bryan sold the company, and we realized that we had to invest to grow, that I very soon saw the potential for us as a plastics company. Even at that time, the future of the metal figure was already under threat – there was some talk in America about banning white metal, and lead, and lead in the environment was becoming an issue, so thinking ahead, turning Games Workshop from a company that made white metal based figures, into a plastics company along the lines of Airfix reborn, the incentive was already there in the 1990s. We didn't necessarily get it right first time, and I think it's only recently that we have got it right.

HH: So that was really inspiring you then? You carried with you a vision something like, "Wouldn't it be great to be like Airfix?" And become mass-market?

RP: Yes, Airfix could have been so great.

JS: It's interesting to think that we could be the equivalent of Airfix, although our turnover was already much bigger than theirs had ever been. We did want every 14-year-old boy in Britain to have three things in his toy cupboard: one was a football of some description; the second was some sort of Nintendo PlayStation; and the third thing was a box of *Warhammer*. Those were the three things that we thought boys should have. And we knew that that was true of Airfix when we were lads, so we thought, "We're damn well going to make sure that it's true for Games Workshop!" Bryan had inspired us, and but Tom gave us the direction, and the financial backing, and I will say for Tom also that he gave us the freedom to go and do it. He said, "Right, cut loose. Go and do it!"

RP: Bryan was a visionary. He wanted it doing as he had envisioned it. That was fine, and he gave some of us creative freedom, including myself, but not an absolute one. So, for example, I joined Games Workshop to do *40K*, that was what was in my mind, but it took six years to get round to doing it! Because there was a strong feeling at the time that science fiction wasn't commercially viable. It was seen as the kiss of death. Fantasy was where the money was, not science fiction.

HH: I can see there was also an interesting personal transition taking place, from this bunch of blokes who were basically *D&D* playing hippies, into business people running a major corporation. An international company.

RP: [Laughs] Yes, I can remember going to a board meeting with our financiers in London in one of those posh office blocks overlooking HMS Belfast, and it had full-length glass walls, and I walked in there in my Burton suit, and there was a sense that they all felt I was deeply eccentric and I couldn't work out why, until I realized it was because I was wearing Doc Martens! But they *were* new ones!

HH: So Rick, you were heavily involved on the creative side, writing rules, and you had been a figure sculpture, and you John, you'd been told that you were no longer mail order, and you're now our sales guy…

JS: My role was cheerleader, to explain to young lads that they can have a real job and a real career in their hobby. Show them how they can go from being a shop assistant to store manager to area manager to head of retail to then perhaps go and run France. That was my role, the 'rah rah' salesman. So I had to roll out the program, and keep banging the drum. Show people how it works, and why it's great.

HH: So did you feel that either by luck or good fortune, you had found yourself in a role and in a place at the right time doing something that effectively was an expression of your personality?

JS: Yes, I think that's fair to say, and I think that what's come out of this interview is that there was no grand plan, nobody had sat down 30 years ago and precisely planned this out, you just see the opportunity and you push and you push. Tom would probably have said that he would know that he would have 300 stores in ten years time, in eight different countries, but we didn't know how far we could push the envelope. So what we did was the Worcester shop experiment, which is my home

town, 80,000 people – a small town – and what we thought was, "Well, let's open a store in Worcester, because I know that town, and if it can work in Worcester (because up to then we had only been in 350,000+ population cities), then it can work anywhere". The goal was to really make the pips squeak, and to my surprise it made money. We thought, "Wow, that's interesting, that means there are at least another 60 locations where we can open stores, so let's get on and do it then, because they're not going to be there forever!" So that gave us the confidence to do it, and we could say, "We know it's going to work, because it worked in Worcester". So we knew Norwich would work, and Bristol would work... And that makes it a sure thing, which gives you the confidence, whereas beforehand, we were led by Bryan, and it was really him who had given us confidence; but then Bryan had gone, and we had worked our way through the fires, but because we had done this, Tom said, "Well, come on lads, you know you can make it work". And then Rick could then make the products to suit.

HH: I would have thought that for an outsider, the thought of stepping into your job, John, would be fairly terrifying. But you'd obviously absorbed confidence from Bryan?

JS: Yes, I had developed his armour.

RP: We both knew what the next step was, and we'd known it for quite a while. Because Bryan had been involved with selling the business off the previous year, and for some of that time he had not even been in the country, we'd been coping without him. He stayed in contact by telephone, and I can remember we had some really long conversations, but that was the extent of the management that we were getting. So we were well prepared for the next step. One of the things that I remember was that the venture capitalists who lent us the money were very keen on seeing a proper management structure in there. They talked to us, and what was obviously the question in their minds at the time was, "How are you going to be able to cope without Bryan?" And our reaction was simply to tell them to relax, that we were well versed in this. We had been showing what was possible with our previous boss, and we were just raring to go the next step. We just knew what to do.

HH: What is coming across very clearly is that you felt unleashed when the transition came.

RP: Bear in mind that the company was only turning over £10-£14 million at the time.

HH: I love the way you say "only"!

RP: Well, relatively small in business terms. We very quickly became five times that big, then ten times that big.

HH: It's a bit like the franchising model isn't it – once you've got that formula right, going from one place to five places to 50 places to 500 places is just a matter of multiplication.

RP: You hit step-changes in the organisation where you need to start to introduce new management stages, and new management processes, and every time we hit one of those, we hiccuped. Quite badly. Because no one had ever made a factory making toy soldiers that was going to serve a £100 million company. It's always been a couple of machines in a garage. So how do you do it when you're dealing with a company that size? At one time, we reached the point where the amounts of lead we were casting was equivalent in weight to a British armoured division! And we worked out how many space Marines there were in the world at one point, and it was millions! People sometimes ask, "How many copies of *Warhammer* have you sold?" Well, you couldn't work it out, it must be millions.

HH: Surely, you're one of the best selling authors on the planet!

RP: Sort of, but you wouldn't measure it like that. Nor are they authored in the way that a novel is authored. As I said, I wrote the first five editions of *Warhammer*, but the current one isn't by me. So you have this slightly strange relationship with it, and you're thinking, "Is it mine, or isn't it?" And

because your name isn't on the product, you sort of fade into the background. The only time I was recognized at the last Games Day was when I stood by an exhibition of really old artwork!

HH: I can see that we need to think about wrapping up soon, but I just wanted to ask some more about *Warmaster*. It's quite different from *Warhammer*, in so many ways, and more abstract, and I have to admit that I have become hooked on it. I even played my first game of *Warmaster Fantasy* recently. And I really loved it!

RP: People tend to associate me with *Warhammer*. But once we had started designing *Warhammer*, we had come up with the basic mechanics, and imagine, there I was, someone whose hobby is designing wargames, because I have done loads of different wargames over the years, and even used to just to design them as a game, board games too and everything; but then we had created *Warhammer*, and we were all hooked into it. Well, that was 25 or more years ago. So, as a games designer, it was a little frustrating! The opportunities to do new things were rather limited. And the opportunities to design new games in Games Workshop are very few and far between. So I sort of got a bit frustrated. So I started to do things in my own time and the *Warmaster* game system was something that I had come up with as a concept and my personal, internal rule, whilst writing it, was that nothing must come from *Warhammer* in terms of the mechanics and I wrote it on that basis. Every mechanism had to be new and original. Then, I found that half the mechanisms weren't playable! I already had a few playtesters, and they all came back and said, "Great, but can you do it like this? Can you do it like that?" So there was much gnashing of teeth and, eventually said, "Okay, that's like in *Warhammer*". So, some of it is more conservative than my original draft.

HH: Ah, so what kind of things did you rein back on?

RP: The basic combat system is much more like *Warhammer*, because you roll a number of dice, and you pick out your hits, and then you roll for saves: that's a slightly crunched-down version of *Warhammer*. But in my original, it was calculated with an attack and defence factor and a chart, and the chart had a sub-number on it which was then used to generate casualties. More like the old WRG rules, although not quite the same, and again a little bit like *Reaper*, but what I found was that all my playtesters said, "We don't like the chart, we just like rolling dice, so can we do it like *Warhammer*?" I also did a system where you can determine whether you could be charged in the front, side or rear, but which had a big loophole in it, which I didn't spot when I first designed the game. So I then had to go back and change it, so I did an update for it, and made it more like *Warhammer*! But it does work, and is practical. But the thing that makes that game is the order system. It's the same with *Warmaster Ancients*, which is basically an updated version of *Warmaster*. I recently did another big update for that.

HH: I find it very elegant.

RP: Well, "elegant" is the word that people often use, but the funny thing is that when I talk to people about *Warmaster*, the one thing they often want to do is add more detail into it. More representative detail. Especially for Ancients. And I have to tell them that I worked so hard to strip all that detail out! I wanted to make it simple. I worked so hard to get it down to an abstract, and the first thing they want to do is start adding all that stuff back in! And the system doesn't suffer that very easily, because it *is* elegant and precise in its own way, in the way it works. If you start to add modifiers in, and vary the troop types, it can begin to fall apart a bit.

HH: Something interesting happened during my first game of *Warmaster Fantasy* that I had recently, playing with Empire against an army of Orcs. The guy I was playing against was trying to be helpful, knowing that it was my first time, and said to me, "When you're charging with your cavalry, put them in columns, so that if they lose, and get pushed back, they won't disrupt the following units." Now, to my mind, as a historical gamer, that seemed an anathema to me, because historically, cavalry always charged in lines, and I couldn't help feeling that it seemed like a bit of a cheat.

RP: [Laughs] That's certainly a strange interpretation! He might be right, but that is one of those things where as a games designer, you can't necessarily get into the dark corners of other people's minds when you first publish.

HH: Absolutely, because someone, somewhere, is always going to come up with some way of wangling it! It's the 'gaminess' of some people that always surprises me. While there are some gamers, particularly historical gamers, who think, "Well, I may lose, but that's the way it was done", on the other hand there are those people who are primarily games players, who think, "I want to win the game". This may apply particularly to tournament players. This can lead to people thinking, "Okay, how can I interpret the rules to give me the best possible chance of winning the game?"

RP: You have to be so careful. If you take tournament players as your driving force behind games design, you end up with a certain kind of game. And I would venture to suggest that it's not the type of game that is terribly accessible to someone in their middle teens or a youngster who is starting out. But even though I don't set out to write those sorts of rules, you have to have play testers who have got that kind of mentality, in order to find your loopholes. Because some of those teenagers who are going to be playing this have got that the literalness that we talked about earlier, whereby if it says this in the rules, then it means I can do it.

HH: One of the things I have been meaning to bring up is the interview you did with Dan from *Wargames Illustrated*, and you made a comment something like, "When you're playtesting, you find out quite a lot about playtesters".

RP: [Laughs] Yes – it's one of my favourite quotes! The more you playtest, the more you find out about playtesters. It's absolutely true.

HH: And what *is* it that you find out about playtesters? That it takes a particular kind of person to want to be a playtester?

RP: Well, as individuals, they're all different. But if you're seeking feedback, what you would like is objective feedback, by people who have taken the game, played it as written, and noted down any problems they encountered, noted down points of contention, or confusion, and have got back to you in an honest and above-board fashion. That is the ideal playtester. But people aren't neutral, because they're playing something they enjoy. So they'll always have things that they'll come back on where they have an agenda. What you have to do is learn what the agenda is in that group. So if you manage not to take it personally, it really helps. I have playtesters who I know and play to enjoy the gaming, and who are a bit soft on the rules. And when they come back to me and say, "Ah, we had a great game and we really enjoyed it," that's useful feedback, but I know that person won't have picked up on any of the precision of the argument, they've probably not played the game as I've written it, and what they've done is a first impression. And that is part of the audience too. So, if you've designed a game that that person can have that response to, that's fine, but you don't expect the same response from someone who's a tournament level DBA player, who will come back and say, "Oh, you do realise that in this situation, I can do this this or this, which will break the game?" and you think to yourself, "Okay, interesting, I'll go back and check that," and then conclude, "No, he's talking rubbish, but I expressed the rules in a way that has allowed him to think that". So, I'm relying on him to wilfully try and bend or misinterpret what I've written. The other type of player is the kind of person who has got a strong historical or pseudo-historical bent, whose view will be, "This is how cavalry operated in an army, or this is how the Greek phalanx worked". Now, I'm actually fairly well-read, and I know that when you scrunch down rules, it can often seem like you're making gross generalisations, but what you're doing is making gross generalisations on the basis of knowledge, *not* gross generalisations on the basis of ignorance. People often don't see that distinction. So you will get someone coming back saying, "I think you'll find..."

HH: Oh good grief yes! And these are probably the same people who sidle up to you at a show when you're staging a demonstration game and use that same opening line. "I think you'll find…"!

RP: So, yes, they'll tell you, "This is how ancient chariots operated, or this is how ancient cavalry operated, and do you realise that there's a sculpture that has got this thing on it which means that this other thing was used in that way?" Well, I'm an archaeologist, so I'm pretty good at examining evidence! And when it comes to written accounts from ancient authors, you can pluck one from one place who says one thing, and pluck one from somewhere else that says something completely different, and many of them were just copying one another anyway, and you can plough through some of this stuff as much as you like but actually, you won't learn very much.

HH: And there's another category of playtester that I can add from my own experiences of beginning to write a book myself, which is the playtester who also writes rules themselves, and he basically says, "Well, I wouldn't do it that way".

RP: Yes, you get a lot of people who say, "Well, we played it this way, and we didn't like it, so we think this is how you should play it". Again, you have to look at that, and think that occasionally that may be useful, and they may have a point, but at other times, that may be predictable, because you've made the decision to go for option A, but you could have gone to option B, and the players play it and say to you, "We've got a much better idea", and it turns out to be what your option B was anyway. So, it's not that you didn't already have the idea, it's just that you chose another one! But the very fact that you chose A, drives them to look at B.

HH: Sure, at every nexus, or decision point, an alternative universe opens up.

RP: But what happens is that they spotted it, and they think that they are being genuinely helpful to you. But in fact, all they are doing is saying to you, "Do you realise that you had a choice here?" And you're thinking, "Yes, but I chose the other one!" All these kinds of players and people can be playtesters. But if you don't know the people personally to speak to, if you don't know the gaming groups that they go to, you don't know what agenda they're always playing with, and what games they've played, and the spirit in which they play, if you don't know any of that, feedback is very difficult to make sense of. A lot of people will just 'armchair' criticise. So, you will send them a manuscript, and they'll send their comments back on the manuscript, but unless you're actually looking for proofreading and editorial, it's not much use when what you're actually looking for is gameplay.

HH: Okay, just a last quick question for both of you. Looking back over your time at Games Workshop, what were you most proud of, what was the achievement that you look back on with the greatest pride? John, let's have yours first.

JS: Probably, by the time I left GW in 2007, establishing a dominant retail chain that could genuinely get out there and recruit for Games Workshop. And the fact that it was done in the right way. Building up a retail chain that was not just selling machine, but which was also a recruiting machine for the hobby. I was made redundant when Workshop were making some cuts, and I was one of them! But they were all good years, and I'm still pretty friendly with Games Workshop, and I always watch how they're doing with great excitement because I know that if they are doing well, Warlord will do well.

HH: And Rick, if you look back over your time so far, what would you say is the thing that you are most proud of?

RP: If it is one thing, it's the first *Rogue Trader/Warhammer 40K*. Because that was very much my thing, that I fought to do, against the general view of the time, which was that science fiction wouldn't sell. And no one buys aliens! By taking the fantasy archetypes, and creating a science-fiction world around them, and though it's easy to see where the inspiration came for *40K* in part, I think it's still an original creation of which I'm quite proud. So, as an individual thing it is that, because that changed the whole fortunes of Games Workshop, and if we hadn't launched *Rogue Trader/40K*, Bryan would never have been in the position to sell the company, because that really built our fortunes. And it added substantially to the IP, it gave us our most valuable IP. If we hadn't done that, Bryan couldn't have sold the company, Tom couldn't have bought it, and then we couldn't have gone on to do what we did. We certainly wouldn't be in the position where we can

now employ 3000 people worldwide. So 3000 people around the world owe something of their jobs to me doing *Rogue Trader*. I'm not claiming to be entirely responsible! But I think that had I not done that, the world would be a slightly different place, and I'm quite proud of that. The other thing, if I can be allowed two, is when I did that new version of *Warhammer* in 1992. It was the big box with plastics and all the stuff that went with it, because that established the basis of what Games Workshop is now in terms of the model ranges.

HH: And that, in fact, is when I first bought *Warhammer*.

RP: So, it's those two Nexus points that I think were quite important. I doubt very much that I'll do anything significant again, ever!

HH: [Laughs] Oh, dear!

JS: And on that bombshell...!

HH: Well, gentlemen, thank you so much for your time.

JS: Thank you, it was fascinating, it really was.

RP: Thank you, always a pleasure.