

Triguard Miniatures Marches onto the Scene

Editor Stuart A. Hessney introduces readers to Triguard Miniatures, which is based in a rural town in New Zealand that many readers might already be familiar with.

Text: Stuart A. Hessney Photos: Triguard Miniatures

On the face of things, historic Greytown, New Zealand, seems like an unlikely place to be a hub of the toy soldier and model figure hobby universe. The rural community of only two thousand souls is in the centre of the scenic Wairarapa region on the lower North Island about 80km north-east of Wellington. I'm familiar with the tourist destination because it is home to both Imperial Productions and Regal Enterprises, makers of first-rate, 54mm (1/32-scale) toy soldiers beautifully painted in traditional gloss. In addition, my collector friend Gary Emery, a prolific magazine contributor whose name should be familiar to *TCS&HF* readers, has lived there and has raved about it to me. In fact, Greytown was awarded the title of New Zealand's Most Beautiful Small Town in 2017.

Now I've learned that my new acquaintance Phil Gates of Triguard Miniatures, who makes 40mm (1/43-scale) historical figures for wargamers, modellers and collectors, runs his business out of his home in none other than Greytown! He explained, "My family first came to live in Wellington when we left the UK in the early 1970s. This area has always been home - my wife is a local - even when we have lived in Wellington or the UK through the years. We have been in Greytown this time since 2012, and the coincidence of it being home to miniature figure producers is just a coincidence."

Hobby Becomes a Business

Phil is sterling example of how a passion can turn into a business for some hobbyists. He recounted,

A US customer has used figures from Triguard to recreate a skirmish during the American Revolution's 1781 Siege of Yorktown, Virginia.



Triguard Miniatures proprietor Phil Gates inspects a knight in the livery of Ezzelino da Romano, a close ally of the Emperor Frederick II in northern Italy. He makes and sells castings, but this one was painted for him by Fernando Enterprises Miniature Painting Service, which has been operated by Sanath Fernando in Sri Lanka since 1994.

"In 2018, I was presented with the opportunity to retire early, and while considering that as an option, American Doug Carroccio of The Miniature

Service Center in California decided to retire fully and put the moulds for the ranges up for sale. As a wargamer of close to fifty years at that point, one of the appealing aspects of retiring early was to get more time to focus on my hobby. And, as an admirer of Doug's Trident Designs and Vanguard



Figures from the maker's French and Indian War range form a British patrol in North America. They were painted by a Triguard customer from Christchurch, New Zealand.

Men-at-Arms ranges, although not a collector, it seemed like a great opportunity to add another aspect to my experience in the hobby."

After acquiring the assets in late 2018, Phil plunged into figuring out what he had to work with, production processes and how to develop new products. His main ranges focus on the Middle Ages, the French and Indian War fought in North America concurrently with the Seven Years War in Europe, and the American Revolution. Foot soldiers, cavalry, artillery and personality figures are among the potential recruits for enthusiasts. Considering their diminutive stature, the figures are remarkably detailed thanks to sculptor Sean Judd, who has also done a lot of work for UK-based Gringo 40's, a maker of both 28mm and 40mm castings as well as a publisher of specialist books for wargamers and military history buffs. Ian and Allan Farley, the brothers behind Regal Enterprises, lend Phil a big hand with his mould making and casting.

'Battle Packs'

To a great extent, Phil is picking up where Doug left off by selling unpainted castings (he does not offer a painting service). They come in 'Battle Packs' usually containing twenty figures randomly mustered based on the group's description. For example, Trident's 'French Firing Line' (ref. SYW/FIW Pack 1) provides figures in a number of firing and loading poses. A typical infantry set of twenty figures and costs \$70 US, while a package of six mounted sells for \$65. "All prices on the website at the moment are in US dollars, again continuing the nature of the business that existing customers are familiar with," Phil noted.

Looking ahead, Phil is always thinking about expanding his ranges, with the American Revolution range being his biggest, by adding new attractions like a personality figure

of Mohawk Indian Chief Joseph Brant on the drawing board. The proprietor also plans to soon start offering 'Unit Pack' sets containing a random mix of a dozen infantry and six mounted aimed at wargamers. In addition, Phil is looking into possibly offering his products via dealers and/or agents in the USA and the UK because he is confident that his figures hold appeal not just for wargamers, but for modellers and collectors too. Though Phil downplays their convergence as merely a coincidence, this writer is still amazed by learning how Imperial Productions, Regal Enterprises and now Triguard Miniatures all hail from Greytown! END



An assortment of 40mm medieval fighting men from Triguard's 'Lion Rampant' retinue.

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