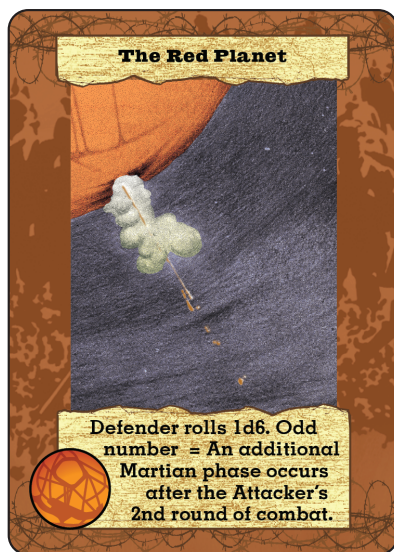


# War of the Worlds expansion for MacGowan and Lombardy's *The Great War* card game

– Craig Robertson

Before this April I had never read H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*. Of course I recognized it as one of the foundations of the science fiction genre. I had heard the story of the premiere of Orson Welles' 1938 radio drama and the panic it caused in New Jersey. I remember watching George Pal's 1953 movie version on Saturday afternoons when I was growing up. I've even read other stories by Wells, including "The Land Ironclads," but somehow I had missed reading his most famous work.



Fortunately, Dana gave me an opportunity to correct my oversight when he asked me to help design a *War of the Worlds* expansion for MacGowan & Lombardy's *The Great War* card game. Although my historical research mostly veers toward American Civil War and late-nineteenth-century colonial warfare, there is enough overlap with the First World War that the project appealed to me. As a fan of the Victorian science fiction

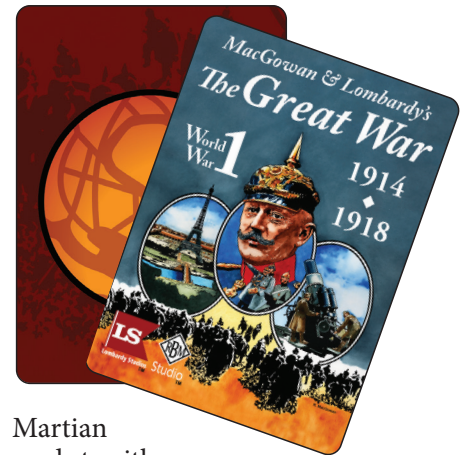
of Wells and his contemporaries such as Jules Verne and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, I loved the idea of pitting WW1 flying aces and trench-bound Tommies against the might of the Red Planet.

The first thing that struck me about the novel was Wells's tightly focused and disciplined point of view. Instead of presenting a dry historical narrative of a past event, Wells makes you an eye-witness right alongside the Narrator. You hear the clatter of the cavalry as it rides over the cobblestone village lanes toward the sand pit where the Martian cylinders have landed. You feel the intense heat of the Martian weapons as it passes just over the Narrator's head. You run alongside the mobs of ordinary English shopkeepers, housewives, and clerks as they flee the invasion.

So how did we convert that visceral experience into a game expansion? The first challenge was to recreate the mystery of the Martian motives for invasion. The Narrator (and the rest of the Earth, for that matter) only learned about the true nature of the Martians long after the invasion was brought to an end by humble terrestrial germs. There were no successful negotiations with this alien foe, whose response to all diplomatic enquiries was a quick death by heat ray.



We considered a number of approaches. The first concept was an additional playable Martian nationality that would enter the game when a Random Event announced the Martian landing. However, that left the third player sitting around waiting for a card that might never come into play. The second concept added



Martian cards to either a separate Martian deck or the Neutral deck. That idea worked well from a gaming perspective, but gave the players too much power over the Martians and diminished the mystery and alien nature of the Martians.

In the final version, the Martian deck acts a little like the Random Event deck. Between the two Battle Phases of each Game Round, the Martians appear on the battlefield, potentially damaging both sides. It's hard to imagine the Martians taking sides in a conflict between two groups of human cattle. The alien invasion forces each player to divert resources toward driving off the Martians while still battling each other, leading to difficult decisions about where to play each card. Martian cards are defeated by discarding cards in an auction of sorts, with each player contributing a card's Battle Point value to overcoming the Martian card's Threat value (solo play works differently).



Of course, there are other ways to defeat the Martians, or even turn them against your opponent by using new Bonus and Neutral cards. "Humble Bacteria" demanded to be included and shouldn't require any explanation for anyone acquainted with the novel. "HMS *Thunder Child*" recreates one of the most gripping moments of the



Prototype cards shown. Final art and text may differ.

story, allowing you to sacrifice a Naval card to cancel all Martian cards in play.

We departed a bit from the text for some cards. For instance, the expansion needed a card to allow players to hurl the Martians against their opponents. Technically, Wells's novel doesn't include "The Traitor," but when we found the image of the Narrator

standing over the body of the Prelate in a 1906 French edition, we had to bend the rules.

Likewise, "Tearful Reunion" veers from Wells's depiction of the Narrator's first sight of his wife after his long and harrowing journey: "My wife – white and tearless." However, "Formal and Cordial Greeting" just doesn't express

the joy a player will feel when bringing back a card from the dead (or at least the Martian discard pile).

If you have ever wondered how Black Jack Pershing and T.E. Lawrence would handle a Martian invasion, here's your chance. Get ready to make some really tough choices as you face an implacable interplanetary foe.



Why did we decide to make our first expansion for MacGowan & Lombardy's *The Great War* card game about a famous creation of science fiction?

H.G. Wells stamped his mark on world literature with *War of the Worlds*, first published in 1898. Numerous reprints and adaptations quickly followed, making his novel a staple of fiction, radio, and the movies. Along with his earlier and equally timeless works such as *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Invisible Man* (1897), *WotW* confirmed Wells's title as "the father of science fiction."

However, he also penned well-known social commentary and can be considered one of the world's first futurists. Wells foretold of the coming world war and the roles that tanks and airplanes would play in *The Land Ironclads* (a 1903 short story) and *The War in the Air* (a 1908 novel). In a 1917 propaganda work called *War and the Future* he described his 1916 visits to the Western Front, avowing he was a pacifist—but went on to strongly support Great Britain's war against Germany.

One of the most infamous and misquoted sayings about World War One predicted that it was "the war that ended wars." This is a misquoting of Wells's idealistic 1914 book *The War That Will End War*, published as the war began. This particular prediction spectacularly failed within a brief twenty years, hence its cynical use today.

Given Wells's strong historical association with the Great War, he quickly came to mind when we were thinking of possible expansions for the card game. The sudden appearance of Martian invaders seemed to be a perfectly fun and funny way to mix history and science fiction in the game.

– Dana Lombardy

