

THE BURNING BLUE

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN, 1940

Guide to the use of the module for The Burning Blue





The Vassal module for TBB is now in its third version, and builds on the splendid work of previous designers. It is a major update because the old palette is gone and replaced with panels where you can locate all the counters you need, except a few counters that are placed through right-click commands. I hope that you will like it, and be inspired to play the game more often.



Setting up the game


TBB requires quite a few random chit draws. So, the “Cup” window (Alt+Ctrl+C) to facilitate this. Right-clicking a stack of chits gives you a “Send to Cup” command that puts the appropriate group of chits in the cup where you can draw from them (the chits are automatically shuffled, so regardless of what you may see on the top when you draw a chit, what you get will be random). The weather chits have their own right-click menu when they have been drawn, with commands that can send them directly to the weather areas.

Once complete with that draw you can return the stack to the original chit pile with the “Return to Chits” command.

There are a number of map cutouts intended to facilitate access to parts of the main map that could draw focus from where the action is. In the scenario setups the markers start here. The map cutouts are


- “Channel Patrol”  which includes the boxes for Luftwaffe Channel Patrols, RAF flights, RAF Wings, and a Combat Box which you can use to hold the units that are involved in a combat.
- “Game Status”  which includes the Game Clock, Air Picture track, Sun Display, Crosswinds, and Victory Points Track (also used for Scramble Limit, HF Radio Range, and RAF Response).
- “Luftwaffe Airfields”  which is a private window for the Luftwaffe Player so that the RAF player cannot see which units are moved to the Raid Display. Here all Luftwaffe Gruppen are to be found at their airfields so it is easier to plan the raids.
- The “British Tote Board”  where all the RAF squadrons are located, is not private because the British dispositions cannot influence German Planning. This is not strictly speaking a map cutout, and it will be described further below.

As mentioned, all Gruppen and squadrons are found on their airfields in respectively the Luftwaffe Airfields, and the British Tote Board. You find the Luftwaffe Staffeln together with the Hostile Raid markers in the panels that appear when you press the  button (Alt+R), and the  button (Alt+F) gives you the RAF flights.


The Germans have the  Form Up markers (including the dummy Form Up markers) together with all the planning markers.

Most markers will be found through the  button (Alt+M).

Game status—tracks, weather, and the clock


The game clock, Sun position, wind box, and the Victory Points track with markers not only VPs, but also for RAF Response, Scramble Limit, and HF Range are all to be found via the  button (Alt+Shift+S). The markers are ready, the players just need to put them in the right places.

Luftwaffe Planning

A number of features have been provided to enable the Luftwaffe player to plan his or her raids on-map if desired. For this purpose, there is a special Luftwaffe Airfield map  (Alt+Shift+L) showing all the Luftwaffe airfields. This is only visible to the Luftwaffe player, and is only used for planning the composition of the raids. Here all the air units are to be found according to the scenario. For scenario 3 to 5, the Luftwaffe player will have to decide where the “3/2” units will have to be placed.



When on the Luftwaffe Airfield map, air units have a special right-click command at the bottom, sending the units to the Hostile Raids display, where they will be put at the top.

A unique feature of this Vassal module is that it is possible to plot the raid paths directly on the main map by placing special planning markers (invisible to the RAF player) on the map board. These markers are found in various colours in the  (Form Up and Planning markers window). Each planning marker has a number of different images called layers that can be cycled through the Increase (Ctrl+F11), and Decrease (Ctrl+F10) commands on their right-click menu. These are “Arrow”, “Form Up”, “Waypoint”, “Target”, “Bomb”, “Strafe”, “Orbit”, “Recovery”, and a layer with just a dot, intended to be a neutral holder of the notes (see below).

When moved on the map, these planning markers leave a coloured movement trail that can mark the map with a route. Each marker will have its own trail, so you can clone a marker, and split a route, or put the marker somewhere else. You can delete the entire trail of one of these markers by using the Erase Line (Ctrl+E) right-click command. All these markers and their trails can be hidden temporarily through the “Show/Hide Planning” button, so that you can look at the map without the clutter of the planning markers, and the “Show Only Planning” button hides all other counters so you can better concentrate on the planning. This last button is slightly dangerous because you might forget that you have pressed it, and wonder why you have no counters on the map!

The planning markers also have Notes (Ctrl+N), which are little labels above the unit. This could be used to mark things that the layers cannot do, or tell which raid they represent, in case the colour is not enough. Furthermore, there are Fixed Notes (Alt+N) printing “Check Fuel”, “Split Raids”, “Balloon Barrage”, “HAA”, “LAA”, “Form Up”, “Recovery”, “Orbit”, “2nd Target”, “Nav Check”, “Bomb”, or “Strafe”. Finally, they have Table Notes (Ctrl+Shift+N), that can be filled in with various information at the player's option, like the composition of the raid.



There are also Plan Notes which are little coloured pieces of text that you can place on the map for any purpose you like. They could, for instance, be used for marking the game turns along the trails of the planning markers. The Plan Notes are likewise invisible to the RAF player.

Again, players are not forced to use planning markers and Plan Notes. You can use the old-fashioned paper and pen method just as before.


Below is an example of what a German plan could look like. Planning markers have been used with various layers to show Form Up, waypoints etc., and the timing have been shown with Plan Notes. First, the planning marker was dragged along the route from the starting point to the end point, and at the end point it was turned into a Recovery layer. Then more markers of the right type were placed at points where something special was happening. Finally, the Plan Notes were added with the timing.



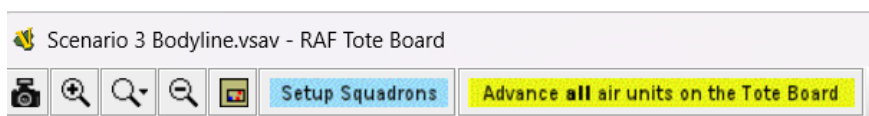
Here is how it would look at 12:55 PM to both sides when planning is hidden:



British Tote Board

The RAF player starts with all of his squadrons on the British Tote Board  (Alt+Shift+T) but it is otherwise used just like in the physical game. The Tote Board is not hidden for the Luftwaffe player.

One pre-game activity for the RAF player that takes a lot of time, is described in rule 6.6.3 *Readiness* where the player sets up the squadrons on the Tote Board according to the scenario instructions. This activity can now be automated by pressing the “Setup Squadrons” button on the Tote



Board. The dice will be rolled, and the squadrons moved to the correct Ready, or Available boxes. This can take a while, but is much faster than doing it manually. The Duxford Wing roll is also made automatically.

A reminder is printed at the end about the various optional setup rules for the scenario. Also note that in scenario 5, the 421 Reconnaissance Flight sets up in the air, and of course you will have to do this manually.

- * **Setting up squadrons**
- * Rolling for squadron readiness (scenario 3) - **Die roll: 2**
- * Rolling for Duxford Wing- **Die roll: 8**
- * 257 (Burma) Sqn at Debden is moved to Available
- * 601 (County of London) Sqn at Debden is moved to Ready
- * 111 Sqn at Debden is moved to Available
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- * 213 Sqn at Exeter is moved to Ready
- * **Remember Special Rules (c) and (d) about forward airfields**
- * **Replace 603 Sqn. with 264 (Defiant) [Vc, HF] if the Defiants Defiant optional rule is used**
- * **Remove 303 Polish Sqn. from play if the Poles in Training optional rule is used**

In order to speed up play during the Admin Phase, the chore of rolling dice, and moving all the squadrons on the Tote Board towards Ready, has been automated through a button called “Advance ALL fighters on the Tote Board” (Ctrl+Shift+A). When this button is pressed, an attempt will be made to move each fighter closer to its Ready box, rolling a die as needed.

- * **Auto Advance of all fighter units**
- * Hornchurch airfield is disrupted
- * Attempting to move 601 (County of London) Sqn. **Die roll: 1 - Failed** but becomes ready because this is 6th attempt
- * 601 (County of London) Sqn at Debden is moved from Available Box B to Ready Box B. **If desired, the unit can be manually moved back to Available.**
- * 54 Sqn at Lympne is moved from Rearm Refuel 2 Box to Rearm Refuel 1 Box
- * Attempting to move 610 (County of Chester) Sqn. **Die roll: 2 - Failed**
- * Attempting to move 501 (County of Gloucester) Sqn. **Die roll: 5 - Failed**

However, according to the rules a player is not forced to progress a fighter on the tote board, and in particular, a player can decide to move the fighters to the Available box instead of the Ready box. If any of this is the case, it is necessary to do the procedure manually, or manually correct any fighters that have been moved further on than desired.

When a fighter has made five attempts to move from the Available box to the Ready box, the automated procedure will make the sixth attempt successful, in accordance with the optional part of rule 18.2.2 *Available*.

Rule 18.2.6 *Rearming and Refuelling* states that squadrons that are not assigned to the airfield where they are located will have to go through the Rearm/Refuel boxes a second time. For forward airfields, or for flights, the automated procedure doesn't know the correct assigned airfield, and in this case, the fighter will have to be moved manually to the Available, or Ready box.



When an airfield is disrupted, no RAF squadron can change its readiness state [16.4.1]. An airfield disruption marker (Bombing Disruption or Strafe Disruption) placed above the airfield on the Tote Board display, will halt such change of state when using the

automated procedure. Alternatively, the disruption marker can also be placed in the airfield hex on the main map.

Note also that when in an airfield hex, a squadron can be sent to the corresponding Landing Box on the Tote Board by the bottom-most right-click command. Likewise, when a squadron is in the Scramble box on the Tote Board, the bottom-most right-click command will send it to the corresponding airfield on the main map.

Air Units

Air units and raid markers have extended right-click commands that facilitate various functions in the game. Some of the most important are the commands to change size (for raid markers), or altitude. It is recommended that initial altitude is set with Change Altitude (Alt+A), and subsequent changes are done with Climb (Alt-Up), or Dive (Alt-Down). Each of these adjust the altitude with 2 Angels. The Climb command has the additional function of putting a Climb marker on the air unit (not on raids) so that it is not forgotten. One word of caution: The Climb command only adds a single Climb marker to the hex. If there is already one, say on another unit, a new one will not be added, but will have to be done manually (with the Place Climb Marker (Ctrl+Shift+C) command.)

The Log Sheet command (Ctrl+L) is an important command, because this is the primary way intended to recording information about the air units (if you are not using pen and paper). Here you can record Home airfield, endurance, ammunition status, hits and other things that would normally to allow recording information which would otherwise have been shown via disruption chits, or recorded on the paper log sheet. This information is not available to the opponent.



Note also the commands to place Order markers (Ctrl+Shift+O), Tally Ho! (Ctrl+Shift+T), Patrol (Ctrl+Shift+P), and Orbit (Ctrl+Shift+R) markers for the unit in question. When Order markers have been placed in this way it is possible to use the “Find” right-click command (Ctrl+Shift+F) from either the air unit, or from an Order or Tally Ho! marker, and a line will be drawn between the air unit and its marker (see the illustration).

You can only have a single marker that can be an Order marker, a Tally Ho!, or an Orbit marker. Delete the old one to create a new, or convert it to the new one.

The Notes command (Ctrl+N) writes a note that is shown above the unit (could be like “Pancake Filton” instead of a command), and there is a Notes Table command where you can record whatever you want about the unit that doesn’t fit within the log or the normal notes.



When giving orders to units, you can use whatever method that suits you best: Notes, or Order markers. My preference is to use order markers to specify where a squadron is going, and Notes to specify desired altitude or add an orbit order to the destination. The Orbit marker can easily be replaced by a Note.

Patrol Line markers are also created through a command: Place a pair of Patrol Lines (Ctrl+Shift+P). Patrol markers placed in this way also have a command called Draw lines between the Patrol markers (Ctrl+Shift+F). Here is an example:



If one patrol line marker is deleted, the other of the pair is also deleted. Patrol lines are not owned by an air unit in the same way that Order, Tally Ho!, or Orbit markers are, so more than one air unit can share a patrol line (but remember rule 10.3.3 that says that an air unit must occupy one end of a patrol line when it is set up).

The Luftwaffe Hostile Raid markers are the only air counters that are normally on the map, and accordingly, they have the same commands, with the addition of a command to change their detected strength (Alt+S).

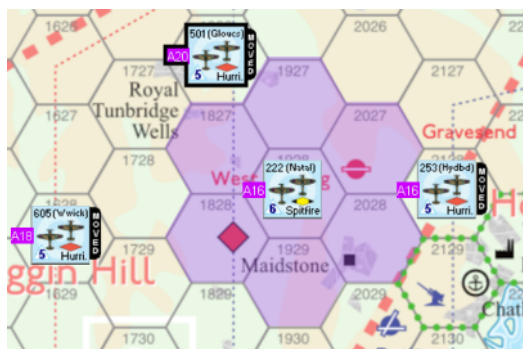
Of course, you can choose to use the strength, altitude, and disruption markers just like you would in the board game. Also, if you prefer to use the paper maps and logs, that is perfectly fine.

If you want to, air units, raid markers, and most other markers can be rotated with Ctrl+Right, and Ctrl+Left.

The Luftwaffe player uses the German Raid Display  (Alt+Shift+R) to hold the air units, and here the Detection cards for the raids are also placed, just like in the physical game. The German Raid Display can never be seen by the RAF player.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find the last raid or squadron that hasn’t moved yet, and for this purpose there is a button called Show Moved. When this button is pressed, all air units that have not

yet been moved will be shown within a purple circle of hexes. Press the button again to remove the highlighting.




There is a similar right-click command that shows the HF range of RAF squadrons (Alt+Shift+H). This range can change during the game, but the right-click command will show the correct distance in a similar way if the HF Range marker is set correctly on the VP track.

Similarly, there is a command to show the Tally Ho! Range (Alt+Shift+T), but this is always set at 5 hexes.

Admin Phase

Three buttons are used for the Admin Phase. “Advance ALL fighters on the Tote Board” (Ctrl+Shift+A) has already been described. “Remove Moved Markings” (Ctrl+Shift+M) is self-explanatory, and prepares the game for the next turn..

The button “Advance Clock and Remove Temporary Markers”  Advance Clock and remove temporary markers advances the clock by five minutes (if both clock hands have been set). Using this button instead of moving the clock hands manually will also print the clock of the new turn in the chat window. The temporary markers Ack-Ack Barrage, Airfield Disruption, Climb, and Dive Bomb are removed at the end. You should note that of the two kinds of airfield disruption markers, the Bombing Disruption marker is only removed the game turn after it was played. (This information is part of the counter, so if you need one, a new Bombing Disruption counter should be picked, rather than cloned from an old one).

Remember to roll to increase the Air Picture (on a 6)!

TIPS

1. Right-click on a map spot to centre the view there. You can walk your way around the map by right-clicking your way there.
2. Every piece in the game has its own menu. You get to it by right-clicking on a piece.
3. If you want to issue a right-click command on a bunch of pieces at once, use your mouse cursor to draw a box around a bunch of pieces. Then right-click a piece and do the command. (If not all the pieces share that command, you might not see it though). You turn it off by clicking anywhere on the map.
4. If you want to pick a single piece in a stack, double-click the stack to expand it first.

5. If you are looking for a marker that you can't find in the Markers panel, it is probably created through a right-click command on the air unit or raid. These markers are:
 - Order
 - Tally Ho!
 - Orbit
 - Patrol Lines
 - Disruption
 - Climb
 - Dive Bomb
6. Use the commands to convert Order, Tally Ho!, and Orbit markers into each other. It is faster than picking a new one, and you only need one of these for an air unit at any one time.
7. When you as Luftwaffe player use dummy Form Up markers, you should notice that when you place it on the map, it will automatically be flipped to its hidden side, so the RAF will not see that it is a dummy. When you place the cursor over it, it will show its front side to you, but the RAF cannot do the same. You can always flip it over with (Ctrl+F) if you want to show the RAF player that it is a dummy.
8. The Invisible (Ctrl+I) command will hide the counter from the opponent. The Luftwaffe player can use it for hidden raids without needing to remove the raid from the map. It can also be used to have counters handy for future use.
9. If you want to be more players on each side, all you need to do is to have all players for one side use the same password (File—Preferences—Personal).