

WITH MACDUFF TO THE FRONTIER

22 Apr 2014

Ross Macfarlane's Simple 18/19th Century Miniature Wargaming Rules

The original version of these rules was published in 1997 in the late, lamented Courier Issue #73.

I describe these rules as simple not to dismiss the history behind them but because they are designed as a flexible, relaxing, hopefully occasionally exciting, game which favours imagination rather than as an exercise or study or teaching aid.

It is now more than forty years since I played my first wargame using a set of rules cobbled together from the suggestions in Don Featherstone's "Battles With Model Soldiers". Along the way I have played something like a thousand games from skirmishes with a few figures to battles with thousands of figures on table, using figures ranging from 6mm to 54mm in almost every "period" on land, air and sea, from ancient to sci-fi / fantasy and sampled every style and degree of seriousness, gaminess, fun, historical accuracy or imagination that I could find. I've also read a few scores of histories, memoirs and the like on the way and walked the occasional battlefield on the side.

Sadly, this had not elevated me to the ranks of the all seeing, all knowing; it has merely increased the width and depth of my tolerance/acceptance for various styles but especially for the less serious side of wargaming. It has also led me to realize that my favorite wargame rules over the years have enabled not confined the players.

If you have questions about the rules or are looking for some suggestions on how to go about things, please browse some of the posts and battle reports on my blog Battle Game of the Month (<http://gameofmonth.blogspot.ca/>) or drop me an email at rmacfa@gmail.com, I'm always happy to chat about things toy soldier and wargaming related.

GOLDEN RULE. It is up to the person designing the game or scenario to balance forces and victory conditions, define terrain and its effect and come up with any special rules that seem to be needed. Situations will sometimes arise that don't seem to be covered or else just don't look like 'right' to you. If there is a game-master (GM), his decision is supreme even over the rules as written. In the absence of a GM, players need to work together to resolve situations in a reasonable way. If possible, use history as a guide but if stuck, go with what makes the best story. If really stuck, both players should state their case and roll a die with the high score's opinion ruling, or in the words of Joe Morschauser: "**Let the dice decide**".

Note for those familiar with previous versions.

The original rules use card activation, a command/activation roll and variable length moves. I found this a bit much and tried dropping the variable moves and I simplified the command roll. I kinda missed the diced for moves though so I am using a simplified command rule and have reinstated variable moves.

1. **DICE.** All dice are old fashioned 6 sided dice.

2. **UNITS.** A unit is a group of soldiers that move and fight together. They can be organized anyway you like, there are no fixed sizes but units of 6-8 cavalry or skirmishers or 12 - 16 infantry or a gun with 4 crew work well. There are various modifiers that appear in the rules such as "superior firepower", "shock troops" or "Elite". It is up to you and any opponents to decide which modifiers and classifications should apply to which troops. The rules were designed for individual figures but figures on multi-figure bases may be used by tracking hits. The actual number of figures may be used or each base may be counted as a set number of figures.

The soldiers in a unit must normally stay together but groups may be detached for example to garrison a house or to act as skirmishers. As long as at least 1 figure is within 12" of their original unit the whole is treated as one unit and any casualties may be drawn from either part as the player prefers. If the gap becomes more than 12" then the detachment becomes a separate unit for all purposes until it rejoins.

Formed Units: Troops that have been drilled may form in close order formations such as column, line or square. Figures arranged neatly in 2 or more ranks with bases touching are called formed. Skirmishers, Irregulars and troops disordered by terrain or after melee are unformed.

3. **COMMANDERS.** A commander is a leader who commands 2 or more units. One commander on each side is **The General** (for game purposes regardless of actual rank) who commands all units. Other Commanders only affect units which have been assigned to them or which they have joined. Commanders who are killed, wounded or captured are not replaced in game terms.

a. **Activation.** When a commander is activated he may order any or all units under his command. If the unit is not within 12" and in sight of the commander it must roll a 4,5, or 6 to receive an order otherwise it may only react that turn.

b. **Moving.** Commanders may move normally when activated but may also join any unit within 12" then move

with it. Once he has joined a unit he must stay with it until the next turn. If the unit is removed from the game, he is removed with it.

- c. **Follow Me!** A commander may add 1d6 inches to the movement of a unit he has joined.
- d. **Steady Men!** If a commander is joined to a unit which suffers hits from shooting or melee he **Must** roll a die the first time each turn that the unit takes a hit from shooting then again after melee if the unit takes hits.
 - 4, 5 or 6 = one of the hits is cancelled,
 - 2 or 3 = no effect
 - 1 = the commander has been wounded and is removed from the game.
- e. **Capture.** If a commander who is not joined to a unit moves to within 1" of an enemy unit or if an enemy unit moves to within 1" of him, there is a risk that he will be captured. Both players roll a die. If the commander's die is equal to or higher than the enemy's die then he escapes and may move up to a full move towards safety, otherwise he is captured.

4. SEQUENCE of PLAY.

- a. **Card Activation.** Make a deck using playing cards and assign red to one side and black to the other, or using your own homemade deck. Take 1 card per Commander, add a joker if using chance cards. Commanders should be pre-assigned to specific cards but if preferred players may be allowed to select which ever one they want to activate or one side can be handicapped by using specified commanders while the other side, which is deemed to have superior command control, is allowed to choose who to activate.
 - When a card is drawn the player may activate a commander. Once all cards have been drawn the Activation Phase is over. When the General's card is pulled he may attempt to order any unit that has not yet been ordered or failed to receive an order.
 - When ordered a unit may shoot and move. A unit may only be activated once per turn. Some enemy units may react.
 - **Observation.** If a General or an Observation Balloon or elevated observation post within 12" of him (*not counting the distance between signal teams who have line of sight to each other*) has line of sight to 2 or more formed enemy units at the start of the turn then add an extra General's card to the deck for that turn.
 - **Loss of a Commander.** If a commander is killed, wounded or captured, all of his units must dice for activation.
 - **Initiative Method.** Instead of cards, dice each turn with the highest scoring side deciding whether to move first or second for that turn. In case of a tie repeat the previous turn's sequence. The first player then activates each of his commanders as above, in any sequence desired then the 2nd player activates his. Once both players are done the activation phase is over.
 - **Observation.** If a General or an Observation Balloon or elevated observation post within 12" of him (*not counting the distance between signal teams who have line of sight to each other*) has line of sight to 2 or more formed enemy units add 1 to that side's Initiative die roll.
 - **Loss of a Commander.** If a Commander is killed, wounded or captured, all of his units must roll for activation.
- b. **Melee Phase.** Resolve melee for all units in contact. Then conduct any pursuits.
- c. **Markers.** It is useful, especially in a larger game, to have markers to indicate units which have been activated, those that have fired and those that need to rally. This may include cotton smoke puffs, casualty figures and the positioning of command figures or whatever works.

5. **MOVEMENT.** The distance that a unit may move each turn is determined by throwing dice as below and reading the total as inches that may be moved. A unit does not have to move the full distance rolled but no figure may move more than this.

- a. **ORDERS.** A player must declare what all of the units being activated by a commander will do before he rolls any movement or shooting dice. If he neglects to do so his opponent may demand a reroll or insist that he keep the original roll. The units must attempt to carry out the ordered moves as far as possible.

UNIT	BASIC MOVE	SPECIAL
Formed Infantry	2d6"	
Unformed Infantry	3d6"	

Formed Cavalry and Mounted Infantry	3d6"	
Unformed Cavalry, Commanders, Messengers	4d6"	
Artillery, Wagons	2d6"	+1 d6 if fast, +2d6 if Horse
Boats	3d6"	-1d6 against or across current +1d6 with current
Off Rail Steam Engines	2d6"	If all dice rolled = 6 then there is an accident. Roll 2d6 to determine how many work pts are required to fix the problem.
Trains	4d6"	If trying to run an obstacle if at least 1 6 is rolled the train is derailed. Roll 2d6 to see how many work points are required to fix it.
Airships	2d6"	+2d6 in the direction of the wind. Balloons only drift with the wind.

- b. **Basic Move.** The amount rolled is the maximum that any figure in a unit may move that turn.
- c. **Maneuvering.** A unit which is ordered to maneuver may not shoot before doing so but may shoot later as a reaction. A maneuver may be to move backwards or sideways or to pass through friends or to change formation and/or facing, or to reform after being defeated in melee. When changing formation no figure may move farther than the amount rolled. Players are encouraged to find out which formations their army used and how it maneuvered historically and to emulate this. Cavalry may mount or dismount but not both in a turn. If mounted while moving use the mounted rate, if dismounted move like infantry. Artillery may limber or unlimber but not both in a turn. Light guns may manhandle as a maneuver. Other artillery may only change direction if unlimbered.
- d. **Marching.** A unit ordered to march may add 1d6 cross country or 2d6 if in a 2 wide column on a road. It may not shoot that turn and may not perform any maneuvers.
- e. **Well Drilled Troops.** (*Optional*) Well drilled infantry may roll average dice marked 2,3,3,4,4,5 for movement.
- f. **Charges.** A unit must stay at least 1" away from any enemy unit unless charging it. A unit may only be ordered to charge an enemy which is at least partly to its front before moving. If the unit is at least partly in the enemy's front it must charge the front. A charging unit which does not fire or maneuver may add 1d6 of movement if infantry or 2d6 if cavalry.
- g. **Charge Reactions.** The enemy may react in **ONE** of the following ways if it is charged and not already in melee contact. A unit which has been contacted by a charge is pinned and may not be activated until at least 1 round of melee is fought.
- **Fire!** A unit which has not yet fired or marched may shoot at a range of their choice. The dice will show whether or not they were steady enough to fire at the optimal time. The unit fired at may choose to halt and return fire or to charge home.
 - **Charge!** Cavalry which has been charged from its front may declare a counter charge and move forward up to 1d6"
 - **Form Square!** Regular infantry which has not yet been activated may form square if charged by cavalry.
 - **Fall Back!** Skirmishers and cavalry which have been charged may evade by retreating a full move. If the charging unit fires before it charges then the reacting unit may return fire as per the shooting rules before evading. Skirmishers will pass through any supports they encounter and may stop once they do so or if they cross terrain the charger cannot cross. The charging unit may halt part way or may continue to advance to the limit of their original move including charging a unit exposed by the evade.
6. **TERRAIN.** The terrain must be defined by the person who lays out the table as to its degree of difficulty, which troops may enter it, whether or not it provides cover and how it affects line of sight. Open ground is assumed to include various minor obstacles so only the most important terrain features should be put out.
- a. **Broken Ground.** Broken ground is any terrain that is passable but which will break up formations or cause

problems for horses and wheeled vehicles including open woods, boggy ground, farmland with low fences or ditches and scattered buildings, and the like as well as streams and other minor linear obstacles.

- Unformed infantry and pack animals may only make a basic move through broken ground.
 - Formed infantry, unformed Cavalry and light artillery may make a basic move through broken ground at 1/2 speed.
 - Other troops and wagons may not move off road through broken terrain and may only cross minor obstacles where a crossing place exists or has been made by pioneers.
- b. **Difficult Ground.** Difficult ground is impractical for horses and for wheeled vehicles. It includes dense woods and thickets, swamps, deep gullies, high walls and bocage style hedges as well as villages and town blocks.
- Unformed Infantry and pack animals may make a basic move across difficult ground at 1/2 speed.
 - Other troops may not move through difficult terrain except by road or through a gap.at 1/2 speed in march column on a road or through a gap.
- c. **Impassable Ground.** Impassable Ground is terrain not practical for bodies of troops or animals or vehicles such as deep rivers or cliffs.
- d. **Road Bonuses.** Roads negate off road terrain and allow troops in a road column to move an extra 2d6 if they are making a march move along the road for the whole turn.
- e. **Visibility** Visibility into/through woods, buildings, fog, at night etc. is 3". Units that are hidden in such terrain may be marked on a map or a system of counters and dummies may be used. They will be seen if they fire or the enemy comes within 3".

7. **SHOOTING.**

- a. **Restrictions.** A unit which is in a continuing melee may not shoot or be shot at. A unit may only shoot once per turn. Artillery must be unlimbered.
- b. **Line of Fire.** In order to fire a figure must have a clear line of fire to a target which is in range and to its front (within 45 degrees of straight ahead). The line of fire may be blocked by terrain and troops except that skirmishers will not block the enemy's line of fire merely obscure it (*supports must keep their distance*). Measure the range from the front rank. Two ranks of formed infantry may shoot, 1 rank of other troops.
- c. **Fire and movement.** A unit may shoot and then move a basic move but may not shoot then maneuver or march. A unit that fires as a reaction may move a basic move or maneuver later.
- d. **Return fire.** A unit which is fired at may react by returning fire if it has not yet fired or marched or used a charge bonus. If the enemy fires then moves then the return fire happens after the enemy fires but before it moves.
- e. **Dice:** When counting figures count remainders of ½ or more.
Close Range: Roll 1 die per 2 infantry or cavalry or 1 die per gunner.
Long Range. Roll ½ the normal number of dice.
- f. **Shaken.** Shaken units roll ½ the normal number of dice.
- g. **Effect:** Each modified score of 5 or 6 causes 1 hit.

WEAPON	RANGE CLOSE/LONG	
Musket, Carbines	6"/12"	
Rifles, Jezzails	12"/24"	
Light gun	12"/36"	
Foot artillery	12"/48"	
Rifled artillery	12"/72"	
Mortar	24"/-	Does not need line of fire. Ignores cover.
Rocket	24"/48"	Does not need line of fire. Ignores cover. A roll of 1 indicates a rogue rocket. At a point ½ way along the line of fire randomly choose a direction for the remaining distance. If it

		lands on a unit of either side a hit is inflicted.

h. **Die Modifiers.**

- **Difficult Targets.** -1 from each die if firing at skirmishers, cavalry, an obscured target or troops in hard cover or if firing when mounted. Skirmishers may not claim this if charging.
- **Superior Firepower.** Troops with superior training or equipment add +1 per die. This modifier may be used to give a first fire bonus to some well trained musket armed infantry when they shoot for the first time in a game.
- **Dense Artillery targets.** Artillery may reroll misses if firing at a square, a column or limbered artillery. If there is a unit of either side behind the target and within 6" of it when extending the line of fire then the artillery will roll misses against that unit.

i. **Overhead Fire.** Artillery on hills may shoot at long range over friendly troops on lower ground if these are closer to the gun then they are to the enemy. (*Measure from the front rank both ways*).

j. **Breaching Fire.** Artillery may attempt to breach a fortified town or similar or a palisade instead of firing at the troops defending fortifications or building. Artillery firing at a 6" range or less may try to create a breach if they have line of sight to the base of the target. Roll 1 die for a light gun, 2 for a field gun or 3 for a siege gun. A 6 is needed to breach a door or weak wall.

k. **Fires:** If artillery fires against a town, a roll of 6 indicates a fire. The garrison may try to fight the fire during their melee phase if not in melee. Roll 1 die per 4 figures, a score of 4,5 or 6 puts it out. If the fire is not extinguished then it will cause 1d6 points of damage and continue burning. If a town is destroyed by fire any garrison must retreat.

8. **MELEE:** Resolve melee if opposing units are in contact.

a. **Dice.** Roll 1 die per 2 figures. Count 2 ranks if formed. 1 rank if unformed or if attacked in flank or rear. Count remainders of ½ or more.

b. **Shaken.** Shaken units roll ½ the normal number of dice.

c. **Effect.** Each modified score of **4, 5 or 6** inflicts 1 hit on the target.

d. **Die modifiers.**

- **Troop Quality** +1 If **Elite or Shock Troops**, -1 if **Militia or not equipped for melee**.
- **Charging.** +1 if charging without having fired this turn or if pursuing
- **Killing Ground:** +1 if defending an obstacle or if uphill
- **Cover.** -1 If the enemy has **hard cover**.
- **Square.** -2 If cavalry fighting infantry in square.

e. **Result.** If a unit fought in melee compare the casualties it suffered to the casualties it inflicted. If it took more hits than it inflicted then it has been defeated. If shaken it will rout and is removed from the game otherwise it will turn and immediately retreat a full move facing away from the enemy and unformed except that infantry in square fighting cavalry will stand. If units remain in contact they will fight again during the next melee phase unless one or both sides fall back before then.

f. **Pursuit.** If a unit charges and all of its melee opponents are defeated or eliminated during that melee round it may immediately charge the same or another unit and resolve a round of melee immediately. There is no reaction to a pursuit charge. Impetuous units must pursue. If cavalry charged a square and defeated it this turn then the square is broken and the cavalry will fight a pursuit melee against the infantry with no square modifier. If the cavalry win this round then the infantry will rout and be destroyed otherwise the square is immediately reformed

9. **MORALE.**

a. **Hits.** Hits represent not just actual dead and wounded but also fatigue, fear, ammunition depletion, officer & nco losses and all the various other things that cause a unit to lose combat effectiveness. In theory the unit's frontage should not change substantially so take casualties from the rear rank if convenient. As a rough guide line for campaign games, an average of 25% of hits may be considered permanent losses: dead, wounded and missing. The rest of figures "lost" during a game will normally be ready for battle again by the next morning. If a defeated army is vigorously pursued by a substantial force of fresh cavalry and does not have an adequate rearguard it will be lucky to recover any casualties at all but assessing that is a case by

case situation which I leave in the hands of the campaign GM.

- b. **Shaken.** When a unit drops below strength it is immediately shaken. Units are shaken when they have lost more than 1/2 of their original strength except that Elite units are not shaken until they have lost more than 2/3 and Poor Morale units are shaken when they have lost more than 1/3. A shaken unit which takes any casualties must take a Rally test, even if it has just won a melee.
- c. **Rally Test.** Roll 1 die.
5,6 = Rally. The unit may reform and face the enemy and may act normally.
2,3,4 = Retreat a full move, leaving the board if the edge is reached. Take a rally test next turn.
1 Rout. Remove the unit.
+1 If Elite, +1 if joined by a Commander, -1 If Poor
- d. **ARMY MORALE.** In the absence of other victory conditions, count the number of units in an army and divide by 2. This is its morale level. Subtract 1 when a unit is routed, destroyed or forced to retreat off table. Subtract 1 for each commander that is killed, wounded or otherwise lost. If the army morale drops to 0 the General must concede defeat. If both armies reach this state on the same turn then the game is a losing draw for both sides.

10. **ENGINEERING.** A unit of Pioneers can do 1d6 of engineering work for each 4 figures during the melee phase if it did not move and is not in melee. Some tasks require an Engineer. Work points can be accumulated until the task is done and then must start again, points can't be carried from 1 task to another. If the unit moves away from where they are working then any accumulated points on incomplete tasks are lost. Only 1 task can be done in a turn even if enough points are rolled to do more.

- a. **Fortifying:** 12 points are required to fortify a town, or construct 6" of earthworks, or to build an obstacle such as an abatis or street barricade if there are supplies within 6" (a wood, buildings, a supply wagon etc).
- b. **Bridging:** Pioneers who are ordered by an engineer may work on a pontoon bridge if a pontoon wagon is attached. Each pontoon section is a task. 6 points are required to build 1 section of pontoon bridge (usually 3 to 6 sections should be required to bridge a river).
- c. **Demolitions and Breaching.** If an engineer is present to order pioneers, they may do demolitions using explosives. Each charge is a separate task and takes 6 points of work. When the charges are blown, roll 1 d6 per charge and add them up. A breach is considered 4 figures wide. Other targets may be damaged as per GM

Breach a fortified house, gate or stone wall	6 points
Destroy a wooden bridge or breach a palisade	12 points
Destroy a stone bridge	18 points
Breach a fort	24 points

- d. **Gapping:** Pioneers need 6 pts of work to make a gap in a wall or hedge or to break down the banks of a gully, stream or shore up marshy banks to make it passable for guns and wagons or to manually break a wooden bridge. If cutting a road through woods, each 1 inch of road needs 2 points.

11. **Hospitals and Bands.** Each army may have 1 band and 1 hospital.

- a. If an army has a field hospital operating, roll 1 die per turn. On a score of 4,5 or 6 one casualty may be returned to a unit of the player's choice. It takes 24 points of work by the staff (see engineering) to set up a field hospital from wagons or to pack one up for moving.
- b. A band moves as infantry. If within 6" of a unit when the unit is activated it may add 1d6 to its movement.
- c. Bands and hospitals may not be targeted by civilized armies but if an enemy moves into contact they are captured and count as a unit lost for army morale although they do not count towards the total number of units. *(That is an army with 12 units and a hospital counts as 12 for army morale and would retreat if 6 units were lost but the hospital could count as one of those lost units.)*

OPTIONAL RULES.

12. **CHANCE CARDS.** Chance cards are an old way to introduce random or unusual events into a game. Chance cards can be drawn up on a computer and printed on business cards, a look up table can be made, keyed to a deck of playing cards or the score on a die. Make a set of cards and shuffle them together with an equal number or more of blank cards. card and applies the effects. If using the card sequencing, include the joker. When the joker is pulled the next player whose card comes up pulls a chance card. If using the alternate initiative sequence the 1st player pulls a card.
13. **SAMPLE CARDS.** I have included a page of 10 suggested cards that can be printed on business cards but players are encouraged to make up their own deck. The more extreme events should be rarer than minor ones. The deck/table should be a mix of positive and negative events. Each card should be discarded once drawn but you may wish to include multiples of some events. Your imagination is the only limit to the number and nature of the events. Print 1 set in black and 1 set in red or mark them with a marker.
14. **WIND.** If it matters, the game master should determine the starting wind direction and strength by any means he likes. It is most convenient if the direction aligns with the table. At the start of each turn, roll 1 die and consult the wind chart. If players wish to include other weather effects, a chance of storms, rain and so forth they should be added to the chance card deck.

1	2	3	4,5,6
Wind dies down.(No wind) or if there is no wind, the wind picks up.	Shift left 45 degrees	Shift right 45 degrees	No change

SOMEONE HAS BLUNDERED

Nominate one enemy infantry or cavalry unit which is not defending cover. The unit must immediately advance a full move and may charge.

AMMO SHORTAGE

Nominate 1 enemy unit. It is low on ammo or mistakes an order and will immediately fall back a full move facing the enemy, limbering if artillery, and may not be activated again this turn.

HUZZAH!

A wave of enthusiasm sweeps through a unit of your choice. It may add 1d6" to any move or +1 to each melee die.

FOR WANT OF A NAIL

A courier has been delayed. Nominate one enemy unit which may not move this turn.

WE MARCHED ALL NIGHT

An unexpected reinforcement arrives. Choose one independent unit selected from spare units on hand. Place the unit at the board edge at the most suitable place.

THEY COULDN'T HIT AN ELEPHANT

Your General has been targeted by a sniper or his command group has been hit by a stray shell or friendly fire. Roll 1 die. On a score of 1 the General, is wounded or dead and out of the game.

RISING TO THE OCCASION

One fallen Commander may be replaced immediately or one unit's officer gains the ability to act like a commander who has joined the unit.

SEIZING THE MOMENT

One unit on the side which is not active may be activated now out of turn.

NEVER SAY DIE

The troops are inspired, stragglers and lightly wounded return to the ranks. Roll 1d6 and recover that many casualties from any combination of your units still on table.

I'LL TRY SIR!

If a unit which charges this turn may add 1 extra die in melee.

SOMEONE HAS BLUNDERED Nominate one enemy unit which is not defending cover and is not artillery at close range. The unit must immediately advance a full move and may charge.	AMMO SHORTAGE Nominate 1 enemy unit. It is low on ammo or mistakes an order and will immediately fall back a full move facing the enemy, limbering if artillery, and may not be activated this turn.
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