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IN MORT VERITAS

In death one finds the truth

INTRODUCTION

These are a set of fairly simple and somewhat light-hearted wargame rules for the “Ancient” period, which I am treating as post-Biblical to circa 1000 AD; beyond this point the rise of the Feudal knight changes both the nature and tempo of warfare, which I feel is better represented as a separate sub-period covering 1000-1500 AD (discuss). These rules largely stem from discussions held between myself (Martin Clark) and Dan Cunliffe, with “constructive input” from Jim Graham and Iain Law (and you thought it was just idle bickering).

OVERVIEW

The salient features of these rules are;

- Element based structure - apart from when figure numbers count.
- Combat skill specialisation - units are not necessarily good at anything.
- Alternate movement - this is going to hurt you more than it hurts me.
- Accelerated movement - more gets done when the general is watching.
- Bloodless combat - results expressed as a drop in morale.
- Troop scale - 1 figure = 100 men seems to work OK, but it doesn't really matter as long as both sides are of historical proportions.
- Ground scale - probably about 1 inch = 12.5 yards, but it doesn't really matter.
- Time scale - not applicable.
- Everything in inches - I'm an unreconstructed Imperialist.

UNITS

Organisation

As this is primarily an element based system then ideally all figures should be on stands of a similar size. An element should contain 2, 3 or 4 figures depending on whether it represents troops in **open**, **loose** or **close** order. The maximum size of a single unit is 16 elements, although ad hoc formations brigaded together by a general may be of 25 elements.

Training

The major distinction is between those troops permanently maintained “under arms” - usually within a recognised “regimental” structure - and those raised on a part-time or seasonal basis for specific campaigns. While I hesitate to use the old WRG “regular” and “irregular” labels, it is the functional consistency imparted by an ethos of military tradition which I am trying to represent. Under this regime, for example, Spartan hoplites, Roman legionaries and Byzantine Tagmatic troops would be classed as “regular”, whilst Athenian hoplites, Gaulic warband and Byzantine Thematic troops would be “irregular”. Note; while some may tend to classify barbarian tribemen as being permanently under arms, I prefer to treat the greater majority as merely militarised civilians (discuss). In terms of these rules “regulars” use average dice (D5) while “irregulars” use normal dice (D6).

Ability

Units are rated for their skill in each of three broad combat styles as shown below;

Fighting in **formation** as a cohesive body either in shield wall or with "stand off" weapons such as pikes or thrusting spears.

Fighting in **melee** with side arms or two-handed weapons.

Use of distance (**missile**) weapons.

Rating	Description
4	Exceptional
3	Superior
2	Average
1	Inferior
0	None

Only troops depicted in close order may attack in Formation, but those in loose order able to close up for defence (typically a shield wall) may have a Formation rating greater than zero.

Only troops depicted in open or loose order may skirmish. All troops in open order are skirmishers.

Weaponry

Formation Weapons	Distance Weapons	Range
Pikes and two-handed spears.	Bolt throwers	24
Long and short thrusting spears.	Staff sling	12
Halberds and similar polearms.	Crossbow	12
Sidearm and large shield.	Bow	10
Mounted lance at contact.	Sling	8
	Mounted bow	6

Melee Weapons	Mounted crossbow	6
Two-handed axes, etc.	Javelin or dart	4
Short thrusting spears.	HTW (pila, etc.)	2
Sidearms	Improvised	2
Mounted lance versus foot		

I do not recognise the WRG "JLS" category (javelin or light spear); its either a single short thrusting spear or a number of lighter thrown "darts".

Armour

The protection offered is a combination of both the degree of cover and weight. The minimum rating for a unit is "Unarmoured".

Degree Of Cover & Rating			Weight Type	
Unarmoured		1	Leather	Including padded and other organic forms.
Partial	Covering just the torso.	2	Mail	Including all flexible metallic forms.
Full	Extending to cover the upper arms and thighs.	4	Plate	Including all rigid metallic forms.
Complete	Head-to-toe "cataphract" style.	8		
Invulnerable	Special.	16		

No distinction is drawn between bronze and iron plate.

Except when using specialised formations (e.g. Testudo, shield wall) a shield raises the **degree** of protection against missiles only if not fired on from the rear or unshielded flank. It does not count against artillery. Both shields and bucklers raise the degree of protection in Formation or Melee combat. To count as a shield it must be large enough to cover at least 40% of the body. Formed, stationary units (and Testudo) sheltering behind shields count as two levels higher.

Mounted troops (cavalry, chariots, camelry and elephants) who lack barding count as one level lower

against missiles and foot in melee.

Heavy chariots and elephant howdas are usually robust enough to class their occupants as shielded, even if not depicted as such.

Temperament

Units are rated for their battlefield behaviour as being either **Erratic**, **Steady** or **Disciplined**, this represents their degree of self-control and responsiveness to tactical influences. Note that this has little to do with their skill ratings or regular/irregular status, although erratic regulars would be fairly uncommon.

Elite Troops

Certain units such as fanatics, personal bodyguards or other "household" troops can be afforded this status where historically justified. It is not necessarily matched by any great ability.

Morale & Control

Units have a range of "good" morale which is plus and minus the rating for the skill they are currently using; e.g. a unit of archers represented as 0-1-2 (formation-melee-missile) would have a good morale band of +2 to -2 when firing or being fired at, but only +1 to -1 if threatened with hand-to-hand combat. If charged by a close order formation unit it would flee.

If unit morale exceeds the upper limit it becomes **Impetuous** and will advance at the double towards the most easily accessible enemy, charging when in range (except artillery and troops with a melee rating of zero). Impetuous units are automatically disordered.

If unit morale would be forced below the lower limit then the excess is absorbed by removing elements; the unit breaks and will rout towards its own table edge in its next movement phase. Thereafter its behaviour is governed by having no orders (see Orders).

GENERALS

Leadership Rating

Based on the difference in two dice (D5 or D6 depending on his regular/irregular status), always counting it as positive. This is the morale bonus a unit will gain due to his presence and can also be used to increase its movement.

Command Rating

Based on the sum of two dice (D5 or D6). Command points are used to change a units orders, influence morale tests (if not leading a unit in person), and increase unit movement. The cost is based on unit size;

Elements	Cost
1	1
2-4	2
5-9	3

10-16	4
17-25	5

The effective command range of a general is his Leadership rating in inches, if on foot (doubled if mounted). This can be extended by expending command points on a 1 inch per point basis (2 inches if mounted).

A general may have a personal bodyguard, or join a unit to lead it in person, or brigade units together in an ad hoc formation under his personal control. He does not have to expend command points to control such a formation, but the maximum size is limited by his Leadership rating, using the table above.

Replacing Generals

If the C-in-C becomes aware that a subordinate has been killed or routed off-table, he may despatch a cup bearer/lackey/staff officer to assume command. The new general must move to and “rally” each unit before it will accept/recognise his authority. Allies and joint commanders may not be replaced.

ORDERS

The range of orders used should be fairly self explanatory; e.g. Advance, Hold, Withdraw, Skirmish, Support (react to enemy actions against the designated unit), and anything else which seems sensible.

A unit continues with its current orders until;

- Changed by a general.
- The unit becomes impetuous or routs.
- It voluntarily halts an advance (no orders)
- It rallies after melee, pursuit or rout (no orders).

A unit with no orders will react in the following circumstances;

- Erratic troops with negative morale will withdraw.
- Steady troops with minimum good morale will withdraw.
- Erratic troops with positive morale will advance.
- Steady troops with maximum good morale will advance.
- Disciplined troops will just stand there.

All units can be considered to start the battle with whatever orders the player desires.

A unit with Support orders may not instigate a charge in its own movement phase.

MOVEMENT

All distances are in inches.

Order	Foot	Mounted
Close	3	5

Loose	4	6
Open	4	8
Rout	8	16

Mounted includes chariots and camelry but not elephants, who move as loose order foot. Wagons move as close order foot and artillery is fixed.

Units add or subtract their current morale in inches from the above distances (doubled if mounted). This does not apply to “regulars” (unless Erratic) and/or Disciplined troops.

When charging, counter-charging, pursuing, doubling or evading add the appropriate skill rating to the above distances (doubled if mounted).

A unit can be ordered to move quicker by allocating it command points over and above those required to control that formation. These are converted to extra unit movement on a one point per inch basis (doubled if mounted).

When led by a general in person his leadership rating **and** any unused command points can be converted to extra unit movement on a one point per inch basis (doubled if mounted). His leadership rating supersedes the current unit morale.

Note; combinations of the above conditions may apply. A close order unit is disordered if it moves further than its normal movement distance.

Note; this “**accelerated movement**” is what catches out new players repeatedly; the formation is not actually moving quicker but more gets done in the time period (of unspecified length) represented by a turn when an officer takes a personal interest.

Although firing is assumed to take place at any point during the active player phase, skirmishers may not move after reaching their “release point” without using accelerated movement; i.e. they may move and fire or fire and move, but not normally move-fire-move.

A doubling unit must take a morale test at the end of its turn, if no other tests apply.

A general on his own is considered to be in open order.

Terrain Effects

For linear obstacles such as walls, streams, line of trees, etc. deduct the difference between two dice (D5 or D6) in inches (doubled for mounted troops).

For woods, marsh, etc. deduct one die (D5 or D6) in inches for each move into, out of or across that area (doubled for mounted troops).

Open order foot ignore all but impassable terrain.

Loose order foot and open order mounted treat open woods, scrub, etc. as linear obstacles.

Other terrain/troop type combinations cause disorder.

There is no “cessation cured disorder”; troops must either halt or be rallied by a general.

Formation Limitations (Optional)

A unit is limited by its temperament to certain formations when charging, counter-charging or doubling. Failure to adopt the formation shown, or one deeper, causes the unit to become disordered.

Temperament	Formation	Definition
Erratic	Column	At least as many elements deep as wide.
Steady	Supported Line	At least two elements deep.
Disciplined	Line	One element deep.

Formed, Disordered, Unformed.

A formed unit has everyone in their proper place, drawn up in nice neat lines. It is a requirement only for close order troops who wish to fight in formation.

A disordered unit has wavy lines, with gaps and some straggling, but at least everyone is heading in the same direction - probably the "natural" state for loose order troops. The unit cannot fight in formation, but is not penalised during melee or when firing. Disordering an already disordered unit has no further effect.

An unformed unit is an armed mob. With attitude. It may fire or fight with only the front rank, it does not count supports, and is classed as a single rank target if fired upon. It is especially vulnerable to breakthrough by a more cohesive enemy as it has an assumed recoil movement of 1 inch (2 if mounted). Rallying an unformed unit raises it to merely disordered.

Changing Formation & Facing

A unit may expand or contract its frontage by a 2, 3, or 4 elements per turn depending whether it is Erratic, Steady or Disciplined - exceeding this rate causes disorder. There is no movement penalty.

Units charging, counter-charging, pursuing or doubling may not change formation without becoming disordered. Being already disordered has no further effect.

Unformed units may not change formation and have "all-round" facing.

Most close order units, and/or regulars, and/or Disciplined will change facing by wheeling and/or an about turn; this deducts the difference in two dice (D5 or D6) from their movement (doubled if mounted). If the deduction exceeds their normal move the change has been cocked up and the unit becomes unformed (it does not have to move backwards). Most "barbarian" units simply become unformed and rally facing in the new direction. There is no hard and fast rule for this distinction and you will have to be guided by historical accounts of their battlefield behaviour (if any).

Charges

Any move into contact constitutes a charge, irrespective of actual distance moved. A charge may be declared at any point during movement, due to bursting through skirmishers, successful evasion or forcing an enemy in combat back through its supports. Multiple charges can be declared during a turn, as successive recoil and follow-up results from victorious combats can allow a unit to "roll up" an enemy formation or crash straight through several lines (and yes Iain, I'm talking about you).

Skirmishers

Open order skirmishers do not impede the interpenetration of either friend nor foe. They automatically evade if charged in the open and may never charge themselves. If contacted they count as unformed should the moving player wish to fight, but he may pass through without penalty.

Loose order skirmishers are assumed to have part of their number acting as supports and may thus close up to fight; they may stand or charge, but not counter-charge. Some loose order troops are also trained and equipped to defend in close order and may do so even when skirmishing.

Evading Units

As these rules use alternate movement, this constitutes their move for the next active phase. If subject to a "double whammy" evade (the attacking player goes second in one turn then first in the next), they are only penalised once.

The attacking unit must exceed the evading dice score by an value greater than or equal to the distance between them, in inches.

Base value is; foot 2 dice (D5 or D6), mounted 4 dice.

+1 die if open order.

+1 die if led by general.

-1 die if charged in flank or rear.

-2 dice if charged from concealment.

If the evading unit has the higher score then calculate the difference and place it that distance ahead of the attacking unit after it is moved normally. This may seem a bit strange in the case of accelerated movement, but it is more the relative rate of closure between the two units which is being represented.

Effect Of Being Cold-Cocked

A unit charged from **concealment** must take an immediate morale test and if unsuccessful may not counter-charge.

A unit charged from its **flank** must take an immediate morale test and if successful may;

1. Attempt to evade (if not Impetuous).
2. Stand and fight, counting one element, becoming unformed unless Disciplined.

If it fails it becomes unformed and must stand and fight, counting one element.

A unit charged from the **rear** must take an immediate morale test and if successful may;

1. Attempt to evade (if not Impetuous).
2. Become unformed to change facing without further penalty.
3. Attempt to about face, if capable.

If unsuccessful it becomes unformed and must stand and fight.

If the unit elects to about face it counts the morale test dice deduction calculation - doubling it if the attacking unit is mounted or elephants (a defending mounted unit may therefore count is as x4). If the deduction exceeds its normal move the unit becomes unformed and may not counter-charge, otherwise it may counter-charge or stand (an Impetuous unit must counter-charge).

The concealment limitation on counter-charges overrides Impetuous behaviour, where applicable.

SPECIAL TROOP TYPES

Elephants

These are used either as fighting platforms or in a sacrificial charge aimed at disrupting the enemy formation.

Fighting elephants may be barded and their howdas are usually robust enough to class the occupants as shielded, even when not depicted as such. Count twice the number of crew fighting in melee if charging, counter-charging or following up. Each elephant model counts as 2 elements when being fired upon.

Sacrificial elephants charge with a formation rating of 1D6, plus any other relevant factors. If successful the enemy unit becomes unformed. In any event the elephant is removed at the end of that turn. They automatically interpenetrate loose or open order troops, but inflict no damage.

Any elephant with negative morale is considered wounded and goes berserk. Thereafter it moves at charge speed, during the Initiative determination phase, in a random direction; decide this by dice throw with a bias towards the rear. If it encounters a close order unit it counts as a sacrificial charge. Once berserk it may not be rallied or receive any orders and its crew are ignored.

Other mounted troops do not count any movement tactical factors if fighting against elephants and are considered unformed whilst in contact with them.

Camelry

Camelry is assumed to behave as its cavalry equivalent. Other mounted troops who are unused to camels do not count any charging tactical factors if fighting against them and are considered unformed whilst in contact (I have no idea how elephants react to camels or vice versa).

Chariots

These are either light (skirmishers), heavy (fighting platforms) or scythed (sacrificial).

Each chariot counts as 2 elements when being fired upon.

Heavy chariots count the number of horses as additional fighting crew if they charge, counter-charge or follow up that turn.

Scythed chariots are treated as per the rules for sacrificial elephants, and also for reaction if "wounded".

Sacrificial Targets

Close order Disciplined troops who are facing such an attack and who are able to fight in formation may attempt to open ranks. This is simulated by deducting the unit formation rating from the elephant or chariot attack die (see above). If this die score is reduced to less than 1 the attacker passes through the intended target and continues moving normally for that turn.

FIRING

There is usually no restriction on moving and firing, except that where a unit ends in contact its missile rating is treated as a combat modifier rather than being calculated here. Whereas this allows troops to overperform against well protected targets, I am assuming it is largely the volume of fire which affects the enemy, rather than actual casualties.

Weaponry

Distance Weapons	Range
Bolt throwers	24
Staff sling	12
Crossbow	12
Bow	10
Sling	8
Mounted bow	6
Mounted crossbow	6
Javelin or dart	4
HTW (pila, etc.)	2
Improvised	2

Certain weapons are classed as "heavy" depending upon circumstances and ammunition.

- Artillery.
- Staff slings.
- Heavy throwing weapons - can be used once per element and expends that weapon.

Improvised missiles used by loose/close order mounted troops (represents thrown lance, heavy sidearm, etc.) - can be used once per element and expends that weapon.

Light weapons are penalised when facing plate armour.

Procedure

Number of **figures** firing times their missile rating, divided by the number of **elements** in the target unit.

Divide by the armour protection rating, rounding down.

Deduct 1 if "light" weapon against plate armour.

Deduct 1 if using crossbow or staff sling in less than two ranks.

If the result is greater than zero the target unit is required to take an immediate morale test.

If the result is greater than the target unit formation rating it becomes disordered.

Limitations & Exceptions

Troops using artillery, heavy throwing weapon, crossbows, slings, staff slings or improvised missiles, and Skirmishers (with any weapon), count only one rank of figures when firing, but count only one rank of enemy elements (or equivalent) in the target unit.

Troops in open order may only skirmish.

Troops in loose order may skirmish, counting as 2 figures per element.

Troops not covered above may fire in a number or ranks equal to their missile rating.

CLOSE COMBAT

A combat is either formed or melee. A combat is formed unless;

Neither side can fight in formation.

Both sides wish to fight in melee.

The victor of the previous round of combat wishes to fight in melee.

A unit which cannot fight in formation (not in close order, disordered, etc.) and facing one which is formed is thus in a bit of a bind and must try to overwhelm the enemy at contact or they will simply be driven back.

A unit is disordered at contact, and thus forced to fight in melee, if;

- It is overlapped by a number of elements greater than its formation rating.
- The missile factor of the attacking unit is greater than its formation rating.
- It is charging or counter-charging an Impetuous enemy.
- Foot charging or counter-charging mounted, unless the mounted unit is already in contact, become unformed.

Formed Combat

In second and subsequent rounds of combat, a unit which cannot fight in formation and which did not win the previous round automatically loses. In this case take the "difference in scores" as the formation rating of the enemy unit and refer to Results.

The base value for a unit is its formation rating (zero if attempting overwhelming attack).

+1 die (D5 or D6).

+1 if higher morale than enemy and greater than zero.

+1 if Impetuous (overwhelming attack at contact only)

+1 if charging, counter-charging or following-up.

+1 if stationary pike or long thrusting spear against mounted charge.

+1 for a supporting rank; long spear may count 2, pike 3.

+1 for each overlapping element, maximum equal to formation rating.

+1 for each rank (overwhelming attack at contact only)

+? firing factor.

+1 heavy throwing weapon at contact.

-1 if lower morale than enemy and less than zero.

-1 if "closed up" loose order with no supporting rank.

-1 if "light" weapon against plate.

-1 if in less comprehensive armour.

Calculate for each side and refer to Results.

Melee Combat

To calculate the base melee rating of a unit, divide the number of figures eligible to fight (see below) by the enemy melee rating, rounding down.

- +1 die (D5 or D6).
- +1 if Impetuous.
- +1 if higher morale than enemy and greater than zero.
- +1 if charging, counter-charging or following-up.
- +1 if charging mounted versus disordered foot.
- +1 if charging or counter-charging with lance.
- +1 if following-up with lance versus mounted.
- +1 if foot using two-handed weapon versus mounted.
- +2 if charging mounted versus unformed foot.
- +? firing factor.
- 1 if lower morale than enemy and less than zero.
- 1 if "light" weapon against plate.
- 1 if in less comprehensive armour.

Calculate for each side and refer to Results.

Results

Troops in heavier armour win ties. Mounted troops (cavalry, chariots, camelry and elephants) who lack barding count as one armour level lower against foot.

The lower scoring unit recoils a distance in inches equal to the difference in scores, x2 if the higher scoring unit is mounted. If this distance **exceeds** its normal movement the recoiling unit becomes disordered and automatically loses 1 morale point (per multiple move). If there is any "unabsorbed" recoil then the retreating unit must also take a morale test applying this distance as a negative modifier; e.g. a close order unit with a normal move of 3 is forced back 7 inches. It would automatically lose 2 morale points and take a morale test at -1.

A unit following up may do so on an element-by-element basis, effectively splitting into two. It need not follow up beyond its normal movement distance unless Impetuous.

In the event of a tie then both sides lose 1 morale point.

The risk to a general in combat or under fire is the net enemy result on 1D20.

MORALE TESTS

Units have a range of "good" morale which is plus and minus the rating for the skill they are currently using; e.g. a unit of archers represented as 0-1-2 (formation-melee-missile) would have a good morale band of +2 to -2 when firing or being fired at, but only +1 to -1 if threatened with hand-to-hand combat. If charged by a close order formation unit it would flee.

If unit morale exceeds the upper limit it becomes **Impetuous** and will advance at the double towards the most easily accessible enemy, charging when in range (except artillery and troops with a melee rating of zero). Impetuous units are automatically disordered.

If unit morale would be forced below the lower limit then the excess is absorbed by removing elements; the unit breaks and will rout towards its own table edge in its next movement phase. Thereafter its

behaviour is governed by having no orders (see Orders).

When Tests Are Required

- Erratic troops under fire.
- Erratic troops first time in own charge reach of enemy.
- Erratic troops with enemy flank or rear within charge reach.
- Mounted troops under fire who are not advancing or are outside charge reach of any enemy.
- Moving at the double.
- Own general seen lost.
- Interpenetrated by routing fiends.
- Charged by previously concealed enemy.
- Charged in flank or rear.
- Loose order skirmishers who wish to close up and fight.
- Open order skirmishers interpenetrated by enemy.

Procedure

Roll two dice (D5 or D6).

Add or subtract current morale (does not apply to combat results test).

Add the leadership rating of general if leading in person, or in range and command points expended (does not apply to combat results test).

Subtract the effect of missile fire and/or combat.

Subtract the leadership rating of general if leading in person and killed this turn or abandoned unit in combat.

Consult the table shown below.

Temperament	-1	n/c	+1
Erratic	4-6	7	8-10
Steady	4-5	6-8	9-10
Disciplined	4	4-9	10

When a general is trying to “bolster morale” (see Turn Sequence), then any fail result is counted as no change.

A unit which cannot pass automatically drops one morale point and tests on the remainder; e.g. an Erratic unit with a net modifier of -5 would drop one point and test at -1.

A unit which cannot fail automatically gains one morale point and tests on the remainder.

A unit whose enemy in close combat breaks, for whatever reason, gains one morale point.

Only units with "Elite" status can take voluntary morale tests without the influence of a general.

TURN SEQUENCE

Determine which side has initiative

This is the total Leadership values of your remaining generals (not dead, in rout or off-table) plus 1 die* (D5 or D6). The side with the higher result may choose to move first or second, and in addition your C-in-C receives a command point bonus equal to the difference in scores (if not dead, in rout or off-table). Dead or missing subordinates can be replaced after one full turn has elapsed.

**A side which began the battle with fewer generals rolls two dice.*

Generals join or leave units

Generals on both sides may move. Does not apply to those individuals with personal bodyguards.

Generals bolster morale

Generals on both sides may move into range if unaccompanied. This is an ordered morale test (command points expended) by which a general attempts to “psyche up” units before they enter combat, defined as being within their own charge reach of the enemy. This represents a range of actions from mumbling his way through a carefully prepared speech decrying the vile moral depravity of the enemy (a Greek favourite) to riding around helmetless while shouting “Men, do you know me!”. It may not impress the troops (“Who is that boring bastard in the toga?”, “Too pissed to remember his name. Again”) but it is essential to try if you have a high leadership general and Erratic troops. Disciplined armies should usually try and attack before the barbarian hordes get to DefCon 1.

First phase generals issue orders

Expend the appropriate command points. Units can be rallied at this point.

First phase units move, shoot and fight

Although not necessarily as required, or even as desired. Second phase Supporting units may counter-charge.

Second phase generals issue orders

Second phase units move, shoot and fight

First phase Supporting units may counter-charge.

End of turn

Bemoan crap dice throws. Have tea and biscuits.

DESIGN NOTES - Warning! This is somewhat of a general rant

Well then. Those of you who have lived through the genesis of DBM will find that these rules have a distinctly “retro” feel; I’ve been playing “proper” wargames (with dice and rules and everything) for some thirty years now, which in the field of Ancients takes me back to WRG 4th edition (1000 BC to 1000 AD), and I feel that certain basic truths have been diluted, obscured or just plain abandoned in the pursuit of a more “accessible” game. When I first started buying figures it was 25 mm or nothing, and the available range was limited to such “classical” armies as the Romans, Greeks, Macedonians, early Byzantines, Persians, Indians, etc. Accordingly armies were small, 1000-1250 points in the old reckoning, and certain troop types overperformed under the rules as a compensation for the expense (and physical effort) of getting them to the wargames table; Indian “irregular B” heavy chariots and elephants were a case in point. Moreover, with so few troops on the table, no-one wanted their painstakingly crafted units to stand idle due to “command and control” limitations, and thus the writing and creative interpretation of (written) orders became somewhat of an art form in itself. Wargaming was still a relatively “young” pastime back in the 1970s, and those of us who survived the teenage onslaught of girls and peer pressure generally did so in a somewhat defensive fashion, claiming a genuine historical interest in Ancients, Renaissance, Napoleonics or ACW to explain our continued “playing with toy soldiers”.

The fundamental flaw with early WRG rules was their “weapocentricity” at the expense of troop quality. Indeed, in the commentary to “Armies And Enemies Of Imperial Rome”, Phil Barker makes the explicit point that he believes the superiority of Roman legionaries over the later Macedonian phalanx was due to their pila, pure and simple. However, this led him into a “pila/pike/long spear/spear/sword” hierarchy, and thus the Romans versus (say) German warband or the Persians was pretty much a forgone conclusion, but it is one interpretation of their success and anyway, he really likes the Romans. As WRG expanded to cover upto 1500 AD, new and esoteric classifications appeared to explain why a heavy cavalryman was not the same as a heavy knight, and the concept of certain troop types with inherent (and sometimes seemingly arbitrary) strengths and weaknesses versus certain others began to gain ground. With the switch to DBA/DBM this form of inherent ability and vulnerability became explicitly encapsulated within the broad classifications now used to identify troops. Henceforward both Roman legionaries and dismounted 100 Years War men-at-arms were both “Blades”, but the former were now always “Ordinary” and the later always “Superior”; at which point I said “bollocks” and switched to using Newbury rules instead. To be fair, this simplification was an attempt to win back the increasing numbers of young wargamers “lost” to science fiction/fantasy periods - it being far harder to avoid embarrassment “at a certain age” when your army consists of orcs, or you have an encyclopedic knowledge of mechanoid livery from the 3rd Rimfire War.

Ho hum. If only we could carpet bomb Games Workshop, the world would be a safer place.

The basic concept behind In Mort Veritas can be summed up as “rules you can remember”; I have an inherent dislike of copious tables and endless lists of combat/morale modifiers which no-one can fully recall and which require frequent referrals to the main rules for clarification. I have tried to keep these rules simple, with modifiers which are both “obvious” and few in number so as not to overwhelm the base factors. I also wanted a set of rules in which generals “can get things done” - historical accounts frequently speak of big sweeping cavalry moves, or suddenly striking the enemy “like a thunderbolt”, or how a reserve raced to bolster the line at a critical moment. Unfortunately, I have found no commercial set of rules which would allow the recreation of any such events, due to their somewhat rigid time/movement/ground scale interrelationships, so I decided on a somewhat different approach. All my rules try to be internally consistent rather than “complete”, as this tends to necessitate arbitrary conditions which are (at best) simulating historical circumstances which the game mechanism cannot recreate. Moreover, exchanges along the lines of “Look the British get +1 when firing, they just bloody do, OK?” do not make for affable gaming...

Look carefully at the accelerated movement and try to maintain battlefield cohesion, otherwise a good enemy general will suddenly be in your face with his picked troops and the whole battle will come down to a very simple concept.

Right here, right now.

Martin Clark

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