



THE 9TH SCROLL

ISSUE #014- March 2019

VALHALLA RISING: AN ÅSKLAND
ARMY SHOWCASE

THE BATTLE OF KORONTAV MOOR

COMPANY SHOWCASE: RAGING HEROES

EDITOR'S NOTE

Something I have been asked recently is the “officialness” of 9th Scroll background material. Is all the background and narrative that appears in the Scroll official, or is some only “fan fiction”? There is not an easy answer. Usually where the Background Team has done an “official” article we state “Background and Arts Section” or there is a disclaimer in the text stating that this is an official piece. I would like to explicitly say that both the Background Compendium and the “Ask the Sage” articles are always created by the Background Team and are always considered official background.

On the other hand, narrative text in battle reports, stories such as those written about Sir Breslin are not necessarily “approved by the background team”. However, as a member of the Background Team myself, I am always working to ensure that the narratives in the 9th Scroll are consistent with the background of the 9th Age setting. While not “canon” you can consider the narratives in the articles in the Scroll to take place in the 9th Age world and the themes associated with them to be true. For example, the story about the summoning of a Scourge of Wrath in Issue 8, while not “official background” really outlined some of the themes that have been fully fleshed out in the Daemon Legions Army Book; This article was in fact “approved” by the Background Team prior to release. Moving forward, I will endeavour to have all narrative content approved by the Background Team so our readers can be sure that what they are reading is in fact official 9th Age background.

In other 9th Age news, I recently found out that the famous (or infamous?) SkaveninAZ and Dan knew each other and would be facing each other at a tournament in the USA over the winter. I therefore jumped on the opportunity to give 9th Scroll readers another great battle report with awesomely painted

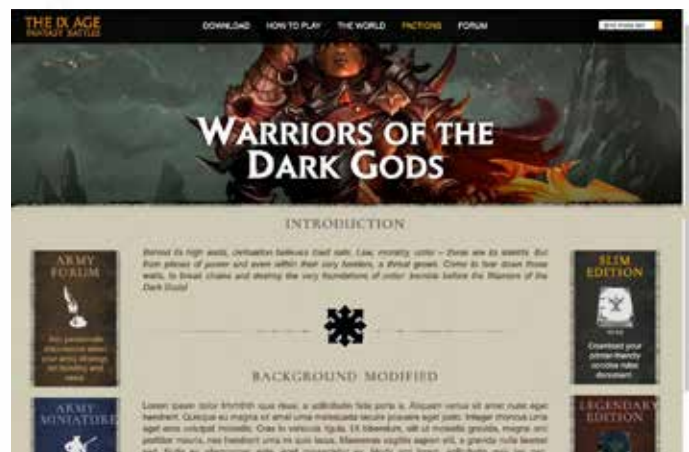
armies! This one contains a little narrative that could give some insights into the Dwarven Hold background that is currently being worked on.

We also have a landmark to celebrate here at the 9th Scroll; I would like to personally thank Little Joe for doing a years’ worth of terrain articles! We are going to be compiling his tutorials into a compendium in the near future. If anyone has used the terrain tutorials from the scroll, we would really like to hear about it and see some pictures of your work!

The 9th Age team would also like to apologise for the delay in the Makhar Khans Auxilliary Army Book. We are very close to the release now, and as a final teaser, we have included a background article for you all in this scroll to keep you going until the book is released.

Lastly, we are considering getting the scroll printed. Is this something our readers would pay for on a bi-monthly basis? It might mean reducing the number of pages substantially, so less content. Please let us know your thoughts on the Issue 14 feedback thread!

With that, I leave you with this sneak peak of things to come (▼)



-HPM

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VALHALLA RISING: AN ÅSKLAND ARMY SHOWCASE

Article by Jirga

I started my Åskland army at the end of 2016. I had just finished building a sizeable Beast Herds army and wanted a change. Warriors of the Dark Gods has been my main army for years so returning to the ranks of Warriors was refreshing.

My initial goal was just to update my existing army a bit. I had decades old metal models for barbarians, and I had grown to dislike the look. I wanted barbarians which looked like they could actually live in cold environments. So, my search for suitable models began.

Characters are usually the obvious starting point for me. I found these five from eBay. The lady in the first picture is a Wildling Spearwife with Bow from Dark Sword Miniatures and the rest are from the board game Bloodrage. I like how characterful these models are especially sorcerers. Both models embody the characteristics that I imagine sorcerers devoted to Shamanism and Witchcraft possess.



I had little experience of Viking or Åsklandic miniatures and the pictures I found from different historical games manufacturers looked like they were too small for 25mm wide bases. Finally, I saw pictures of Frostgrave models and was convinced that they would serve my purpose. To add to the Åskland image I found some Viking heads and round shields from eBay, grabbed few packages of spears from Fireforge Games which concluded my search for suitable model parts for my infantry.

Around that same time, I found second hand markets for miniatures from Heroclix and Pathfinder Battles. I bought a couple of Frost Giants from the U.S. with such a low price that my order didn't get the usual VAT bonus from the customs! I wholeheartedly recommend everyone to check out trollandtoad.com for what models they have in stock.

At this point I had this idea starting to develop about Åsklanders connection to giants. I imagined that giants are their medium to the Gods and because of that giants take central part in their beliefs. Later when some of the Åskland background was revealed I started to contemplate this a bit further. Dark Gods aren't the original Gods of the Åsklanders. There have been other gods that the Åsklanders have been worshipping in earlier years before they dedicated themselves to the Dark Gods. To me this looked a lot how Christianity eventually pushed away the worshipping of old Scandinavian gods in the early middle ages. From this I was inspired to create an army from Åskland who follow the old ways and worship the Old Gods.

The giants and the unit were my first units finished for the Åskland army. Pictures was taken before the Åskland book was written so I had built the tall giant to be used as Feldrak Ancestor. Later on Jötunn were conveniently introduced with the Åskland book. Now I have an actual big giant in the book that I can use my model for.

The model for the tall Jötunn was another great find I from a non-traditional miniature source. It's a White Walker action figure from Game of Thrones which has been given horns and beard with greenstuff. I added few skulls and a skeleton to implicate it's size and to tie it's scale to the rest of the army.



When I had finished these models, I had this idea that I should try to build this army without a single miniature from Games Workshop. I don't have a grudge against said company, but I wanted to challenge myself and see if I could do this without models from the industry's giant. To be honest an army which has its source of inspiration in historical events is rather easy to build as there are lots of different manufacturers offering miniatures for different time periods. The bigger challenge was the more fantasy-oriented unit entries in the book.

I still had this giant theme lurking in the back of my head which caused a moment of sudden inspiration while roaming the net for suitable models. I had found Russian model manufacturer called Tehnolog sometime ago but never combed through their catalog properly. They manufacture cheap 54mm scale toy soldiers and to my surprise they had vikings on their catalog too. I had found my trolls.

The cartoony look that these models have doesn't bother me as they are supposed to be human-giant half breeds in my background narrative. The slight goofy-ness in their proportions is only to be expected.

My opponents shouldn't have difficulties in recognizing which type of trolls they are facing when looking at the models. Models in chainmail are cave trolls and models with blueish skin ice trolls. Total cost for these models was around twenty Euro's. They did need slight converting as some of the models had bows and the plastic used in these models is rather soft, so their



weapons were usually too bendy. Luckily, I had lots of spare WDG weapons in my bits box so the re-arming these fellows wasn't too difficult (I reasoned that I can use conversion bits from Games Workshop without breaking the army building philosophy).

How to get models for wargs did cause some head scratching for me. GW has some nice wolf models in their catalog especially those Thunderwolves from 40K. I had to admit that at this point it felt a bit silly to hold on to some premise I had made when starting this army. But I can be a stubborn mule at times and so I held on to that premise and tried to find other options.

Again Troll&Toad.com came to rescue. I had already bought Winter Wolf from Reaper Miniatures but didn't want to use the model more than once. Googling winter wolf yielded pictures of models from Pathfinder Battles and so I was able to get few nice wargs to my collection. The rest are from Gamezone Miniatures.

I think the horse sized wolves that are the norm for such units in fantasy games are not very immersive. Using the larger sized models as wargs suit my tastes. I have purchased lots of more 'realistically' sized warhounds which I'll be using, as their name suggests, as warhounds so the size difference between these two types of canines will be noticeable on the field. I'll be basing several hounds a on single base which will further underline the difference.



The only unit entry that is missing a model in my collections is the Kraken. There are few nice squid models on the market and Reaper Miniatures has some models from the Cthulhu mythos which would fit the role of the Kraken but those don't inspire me.

When the gold version for the 9th age was released there were also unexpected but genius addition to army books which had giants in them. Namely the Big Brother upgrade. As soon as I saw that I knew I had to have one and I wanted it to be one with the Monstrous Familiar upgrade too.

After some searching, I found the model below. It's a frost giant from Marvel Heroclix range and it's suitably large enough when compared to my regular giants. The staff in its right hand is from my bits box and the paint scheme is pretty close to the original. I love that model, if only I could get it work on the table too.





Åskland infantry and especially Huskarls are the foundation upon which this army is built. Both Huskarls and Åskland Warriors can use the Round Shield special rule which emulates the shield wall tactic used widely during the Dark Ages. I wanted my Huskarl unit to look like it is in shield wall formation. Basing models traditionally on separate bases won't help when trying to create this look. Especially when base size for Åskland infantry is 25x25mm.



I decided to base my models on 50x50mm bases. This way I could place models close enough each other in the front rank so that their shields are overlapping in required fashion. Using this sort of element basing I was able to use fewer models on the back ranks which creates quite dynamic looking unit. I keep track of wounds to each base with dice.

Models for the Huskarl unit are built mainly from Gribbing Beast Viking Hirdmen models with few additional models from Warlord Games Saxons and Forge Games Medieval Russians.

Long before I decided to use element bases for my Huskarls I had become obsessed over characters mounted on War Dais. Don't let the name of this mount, or even the fact that in-game terms War Dais is a mount, distract you. War Dais presents a perfect opportunity for players to build thematic centerpiece characters for their armies. None of my characters on War Dais are actually carried by their subjects. I represent the properties that War Dais offers to the character with either additional models which acts as his bodyguard or with some physical features.



In the pictures above I have two such characters on War Dais. Character on the left is Jarl with the Eyratöki spear enhancement from the armybook. On the right I decided to represent the Harp of Bragi artefact with a bard model which is styled after Väinämöinen from the Finnish national epic Kalevala. Both characters are encircled with their trusted bodyguard. The models are from V&V Miniatures, Gripping Beast, Mierce Miniatures and Fireforge Games.



I used the same Idea with my Berserkers. I got so carried away with these characters that I built way too many for regular games, but at least I won't have shortage of characters when playing bigger games. The first unit has two War Dais 'mounted' characters attached to it and the second unit has one. Berserker models are a mix from Warlord Games and V&V Miniatures. The Bear is from Reaper Miniatures.



Åsklanders on the Battlefield.

The Åsklanders is an Auxilliary army book and in my experience is not as strong as the regular army books. I have a problem when it comes to building lists for regular sized games as I usually want to include all the giants and as many big units as possible. This is a little hard to do at 4500 points.

The army itself doesn't have high resilience troops in that are also scoring. This means that any combat where they are committed is bound to get bloody. Without character support Åskland Warrior units aren't much of a threat to dedicated close combat units. Huskarls do have the Bodyguard special rule and better stats so they'll probably hold few turns when facing tougher opponents.

Similarly, the characters are humbled when compared to other armies' fighters but their "Deeds not Words" special rule does make them interesting enough to include as well as adding character to the entry.

Berserkers look intimidating on the paper but need skilled general to utilise their full potential. They have

a good selection of special rules attached to their berserking state of mind but they run literally naked on the field. They are also light troops which is a blessing and a curse for a unit which wants to smash face as much as possible. Light troops enables easy maneuvering on the field but once they are committed to a fight they need to wipe their opponent to a man because returning attacks cause a lot of casualties and they can't be steadfast because they are light troops. This is a characteristic that I like a lot as it forces me to think how to use them.

Horsemen are medium chaff, not a full-frontal assault unit (as I unsuccessfully tried to use them). But are useful in the chaff battle as they can take on the enemies lighter chaff.

The army is far from finished for me. I'll be expanding it next with warhounds that I mentioned previously. Victrix Miniatures is also releasing plastic Vikings and Saxons early in 2019 and their Gallic chariots are already on their website which means that I have future purchases pretty much planned for the most part of this year. I definitely need more practise with this army. I have a feeling that when played well it can pull some nice feats on the field.

For closing words I'll do some shameless self promoting and invite anyone interested to follow how my army progresses on my hobby blog "All Things War-gaming" on the 9th age forums.





ART CONTEST II - RESULTS

Contest by Karak Norn Clansmen

The votes have been counted and the results of the second 9th Age Art Contest have been collected! The theme of the contest was "Beyond the Battlefield: Daily life in the 9th Age," and I'm sure you will agree, there were some great entries!

However, there can only be one (well three in this case) winner(s)! Thanks to all who entered and voted. All prizes were donated by Admiralty miniatures. The gold and silver prizes are sculpted by Fuggit Khan. Bronze prize sculpted by Tobias Torstensson. The runner up entries can be seen below and on the following page.

Xanatan ▼



Chevalier Rouergue ▼



Carburner ►

(editor's personal favourite:
no army biases aside)





Karak Norn Clansmen ▲



◀ Arktek09

Alf ▼



In third place we have HKYUGOK's phenomenal piece depicting a couple of Sylvan Elves enjoying an afternoon glass of wine and some music among the eaves of Wyscan. The detail in this piece is quite remarkable! ▼

The prize for this entry is some ID hats!



Congrats to A20t43c who has won second prize with the following entry. This one really tells a story with the one image. The human (let's call her a countess) countess who has lost her property has been bought out by a vampire. The vampire is of course using his animated minions as the removal crew. He has acquired her estate down to the last ring on her finger and the candlestick on her table! You have to ask the motives for the acquisition? Is she after immortality in return for the estate? Is the vampire hiding in plain sight and able to acquire the estate through legal means? Or has he taken it nefariously? The look on her face suggests some reluctance at least. ►

The prize for this entry is some more ID hats!



Some ID hats for the third (▲) and second (▼) prize winners





▲ Lastly the 1st prize goes to Yalo and the piece below; detailing an undead Pharaoh or priest being worshipped by his equally skeletal congregation. The lighting effects here look almost manufactured, yet it is clear that the piece has been painted. Those clouds could be from a Windows screen saver! Very impressive! The story leaves little to the imagination. The priest is clearly there to be worshipped, implying that the artist considers the skeletons to be somewhat autonomous in their thoughts. An interesting concept – that or the priest is massively egotistic, making his raised minions appear as if they worship him for his own gratification (wouldn't put it past an Undying priest).

The prize for this entry was a couple of ID weapon team sculpts from Admiralty Miniatures. ▼



THE DIARY OF MARZELL VON STIRLINGEN

Article by
the Background Team

Excerpts from the Diary of Marzell von Stirlingen, ambassador to the Emperor Matthias. Sent to parlay with the Makhar whose horde is reported at camp by our Reiter patrol. Three days march east of Volksagrad, on the steppe east of the beacons.

3rd Acrober -Early Evening

It would appear that the reports of our Reiters have not been incorrect, as so many have claimed.

The Makhar scouts that intercepted us with such speed and surprise have conveyed us into their seemingly endless camp of tents and fires. Numberless are their warriors; women and men alike. From each wind-beaten face emanates a look of hatred and distaste. Their smell is appalling but I make no comment. Despite my understanding of the guttural tongue, it seems wise to hold my thoughts. I suspect they are quick to anger and the parchment bearing the Emperor's Seal suddenly seems so very fragile.

In the very centre of the camp there is a huge leather pavilion. The size of an Alfhaven warehouse. I estimate a full battalion could be housed easily inside. Upon closer inspection, the leather is evidently horsehide. I had heard that these Makhar lived closely with their mounts, but to dwell within their tanned skins epitomises their primitive ways. Guards move towards us as we approach. I hold up my hand and our small party stops. I sincerely hope that the message of peaceful talks that I think I have conveyed to our guide will be received and accepted, it's hard to say. These Steppe folk are not very forthcoming. I suspect that they are waiting to see how their leader will respond.

The leather flap which serves as a doorway to the Pavillion is pulled back. A squat, black-haired warrior steps through it. By the deference shown by the Makhar that surround us this must be their leader, the Gyula. He fixes me with his one remaining eye and, despite the fact he is dressed in clothes that would shame a dockside beggar, it is plain that there is real intelligence in his steely gaze, and more than a little confidence. I stare back, but the contest is short lived, I know when I am beaten. He snorts with triumph, or maybe disgust, and begins to speak in a voice thick with the accent of the grasslands and in the language I have studied so hard to comprehend.

'The Makhar Steppe breeds tough inhabitants. Only through total commitment to our people can we Makhar survive the inhospitable, endless plains and the ravaging creatures therein. Loyalty is expected and demanded of all, weakness cannot be tolerated. Our allies are the beasts of the Steppes; horse, dog, mighty turul and mammoth amongst others. Our code is one of war in the face of relentless struggle. From the depths of the mighty Steppe our war hordes strike with elemental force. Our speed and ferocity are legendary. Not for us the soft and easy life of the settled people to our West. We are the children of the grass, the sky and the wind and we bring with us death.

My trusted kinsman, Munkács, will show you the might of our army. Heed his words and mind yours; you are not among friends here. While I will honour the terms of the negotiations and refrain from spilling your blood, my people may not show you such courtesies. Feast your eyes on our might and report back to your masters. Tell them their demise is at hand should they not agree to our demands.'

The Gyula disappears back within his Pavilion. A warrior steps forward. He stops uncomfortably close, a deep affront to my nostrils but I hold my reaction of disgust in check. The sword at his belt looks well used. Evidently this is Munkács. Now we will learn if the hours spent pouring over the transcripts of the Makhar tongue have been wasted.

'Our Gyulas lead by example, as they must to earn the respect of such a proud people. They must be gifted leaders, as skilled in war as they are in holding together the fractious elements of our people. This is no easy task and many fail. For their weakness they die to the usurper's blade or the enemy's spear. We do not mourn their passing. Those that master this enigmatic art are elevated almost to the status of gods and when their time on the Steppe is at an end we raise massive earth mounds to house their treasures in this realm and the next. The weak are left in the grass for the wolves. Portents read by the Enaree in the wind and entrails tell of the coming of a Great Gyula who will lead us in domination over the settled peoples. We await their arrival.' With this he steps away, evidently expecting us to follow, not that he looks back to check.

A little way from the main camp a single yurt stands in the shadows of the leaping campfires. Munkács approaches slowly and begins to whisper, while a new aroma of blood, fire and incense fills the air around him. 'There are some amongst us who see that which is beyond most Makhar. They perceive the living, beating heart of the Steppe, feel the pulsing rhythms of the winds and commune with the spirit of our land. Their way is no easy path, these Enaree; they are as much part of our war horde as the horses or bows. We expect them to fight alongside us, to live and die as we do, in the cauldron of battle. Their skills which bring the power of the Steppe crashing into our enemies has turned many battles in our favour.' Munkács creeps away, but I note that he does not turn his back on this shaman's yurt as he leaves. We follow at a less sedentary pace.

Our party leaves the confines of the tented camp and moves towards the shadows of moving beasts in the half darkness. Munkács has become a little more talkative and wants to show us his prized horses - in fact he is insisting. A small Makhar child steps forward from the grass gripping a stout staff. His eyes blaze defiance even if he demurs to our guide. From the shadows emerges a truly fearful creature to stand alongside the boy. Not unlike our hunting hounds, this dog, if it can be called such, is shoulder high to the child. Matted and thick is its fur and its eyes speak of myriad of struggles fought in the dark.

'The Steppe harbours many fearful beasts. As children we learn of these terrors, stories told around the fire create a healthy fear. The young are entrusted to guard the herds of horses, goats and sheep. Their death means our death, so this is no childish game. To aid them we keep dogs; territorial and brave, they match the terrors of the Steppe with teeth and claw. These are no fireside lapdogs familiar to the settled people but bred over centuries as the

fiercest and fastest of their kind. Accustomed to fighting wolves and worse in the depths of winter, they know, as we do, that our herds mean life and in their battles with the wild beasts of the grasslands, either they or their foe must die.' The wolfhound slips back into the dark and the child follows. Munkács is already striding away, I scamper after him, the further the better from that beast.

A curious sight now presents itself. A man clad in what looks as though it were once the trappings of an Equitan Knight is slowly shovelling horsedung into a wooden bucket. He is evidently not enjoying his work. I approach and greet him in his language - I speak it as a native to his lands. This is not lost on him, and he is keen to tell me his tale.



'We were ready for their horsemen, knew they would be coming. Spent all day digging shallow pits and covering them with mown grass to break their horses' legs. Well, the peasants did, obviously I only supervised. But the horses never came, just hordes of wild Tamyir Vassals on foot. It quite spooked the men and I had to be firm with them. Quite severely so as I recall. Of course, it didn't do any good, we were overrun in a heartbeat.'

Incredibly, this man we have happened upon claims to be Baron Luis de Châtray, once a Questing Knight, now a dung shoveller; a miserable sight and worse smell. I once watched his father tilt at the lists in Guenac. His son truly has fallen far to be a prisoner in such a place. As I drift away to follow Munkács he enquires miserably if I have wine in my luggage, I suspect he tolerates his incarceration only through a liberal use of strong drink. I promise him a bottle. Perhaps I should poison it and put him from his misery.

Our guide now leads us to a section of the camp where the warriors are notably different. Larger and more muscular with heavy lances stacked in pyramids, they sit about their fires with a nonchalant diffidence. Even Munkács seems intimidated by them. Nearby, the horse lines are populated by taller and bulkier steeds than most we have seen - I recognize Dacian warmbloods bred in the southeast of the Steppe, each worth a Prince's ransom in civilised realms. Perhaps I can ask for a pair as a parting gift? They are kept close to the camp; it would appear that they valued here as well and their owners will not risk them to the roaming herds guarded by boys and wolfhounds.

Munkács is talking again. I make a pretence of having been listening for some time and not coveting their blood stock. "Not all our warriors prefer the bow..." he finished, smirking at my expression. Stopping by a small group of horses, Munkács casually clips a small boy around the head, causing the lad to scamper off to a safe distance. This seems to be an act of parental kindness. Munkács points to the nearest horse, and a smile of truly paternal pleasure spreads over his face. If this man knows real love then this, surely, is it.

'Our warrior code is a way of life and it extends to our horses, the closest and oldest of our allies. As hard as the cruel winters we endure, these brave mounts provide us with all we need: speed, milk, bow strings, armour, wealth and, if needed, food. Their loyalty is complete and ancient, our families and their bloodlines intertwine far beyond the telling. We are as one. We live, or die, together. All Makhar can ride and are masters of the bow, our survival demands it and no man can match us. We ride before we walk and shoot before we talk. By adulthood, the Makhar and our horses are as much a part of us as we are of them. We are soul-crossed and fight that way; man, horse and bow as one entity. With our bows a Makhar Horse Archer is to be feared, appearing without warning and fading away as fast. The last sound many have heard is the flight of our arrows.'

Strange noises from this part of the camp, out of the darkness. I am happy I cannot see their source and, it would appear, so is Munkács. "Among the Makhar some follow a darker path. That of the flayer. Where the herdsman is content with his horses and sheep, the flayer seeks more exotic and sometimes dangerous pastoral beasts. Chimera, Turul, Karkadan, even Fel-draks; the more dangerous the herd, the more prestigious in the eyes of a Flayer. To control these perilous and unpredictable herds, flayers mount the most spirited Shadow Chasers.

The flayers need to be fast to corral such beasts; darting in and out of wicked claws and lethal jaws, subduing their herds using whips to tear hide and flesh.' I am only too happy to move on.

Returning back through the camp I am surprised to hear a thick Aschau emanating from a small group of Makhar women. The fellow is clearly enjoying himself and is obviously drunk. Munkács explains that he is a guide in the pay of the Makhar - evidently he holds this man in low regard. He claims to be Sgt JG Holtz of the 7th Ullsberg Reiters. He is forthcoming with his tale; I could have happily lived without it.

'You want to know what haunts my nightmares? Thirty years I was a Reiter. Seen, fought and killed most anything that walks, flies or crawls. I've fought plenty of cavalry and infantry, easy kills for the repeaters, but that chariot was the worst I faced... I'll never forget it. Four warriors to deal with, two of them riding the horses... caused us a lot of problems. Either too many bows, or too many of those damned heavy lances. Lost good men that day, Ullor bless them. Now, hand me that bottle.'

Upon returning to the Gyula's pavilion we are subjected to what passes for entertainment amongst these people. Dancing women and a truly fearsome drink made from fermented milk. I hope that it is horse milk, but I have my doubts. We drink sparingly and smile at appropriate moments; our hosts soon tire of us and we are left to amuse ourselves. We lounge in a quieter alcove of the pavilion. My eyes wander to a small chest and some ancient parchments within. One in particular catches my eye, crusted in what is obviously dried blood. I edge it from the case and ponder the script.

'I am struggling to get the Turul eggs you requested, Master. These creatures are smarter than eagles. When the mother goes off to hunt and I see her wings disappear over the horizon, I begin my descent. Every time I am within metres of her nest my spotter shouts down to me and I must abort the climb. It's as though the damned Turul can see me from miles away! These beasts are fearsome, truly. With the hindquarters of a mountain lion and the claws, head and wings of a giant hawk I dare not get close to the nest when she is within sight. I would be ripped to shreds. Another method must be found.' The signature is illegible; I suspect whoever wrote it is long departed this world. I am beginning to envy them.

A second parchment now occupies my attention. It appears to be an excerpt from the diary and travels of Columbo Vinaroni. Embassy of Zilas to the Great Khan. 'Our guide continues to find our ignorance amusing. Many months after we left Volskagrad, we camped the night in a rocky river basin next to a watering hole fed by a small stream. Upon awakening with the morning sun, I went to stretch my legs and loose my bladder. Much to my surprise, I was confronted across the watering hole by a furry beast with a gigantic nose-horn slurping greedily. In my excitement at being the first man of Zilas to experience the majesty of a unicorn, I awoke the camp with my screams of delight. Once roused, our guide promptly dismissed my discovery and informed me of the beast's true nature. As if in agreement, the Karkadan turned and released its bowls in my direction, kicking its back legs to spread its steaming faeces. With a grunt it promptly rumbled off into the tundra to join its herd.'

I read on as the Makhar continue to gorge themselves.

'Entering the valley from over a high pass, the green sea of grass spread out before us like verdant silk slung carelessly across a floor. The deep blue of the morning sky met the boundless green of the steppe. The only thing disturbing the idyllic folds of the grasslands appeared to be large boulders clumped together haphazardly. On closer inspection these boulders seemed to possess a heavy fur coat. When I remarked this to our guide, he almost fell off his horse with laughter. He informed us that these boulders were in fact humongous beasts and quite approachable when grazing. However, if roused to anger, these "Mamuts", he divulged, are unstoppable behemoths of rage. They are herded and ridden in the same way as horses and their milk is fermented as a highly prized delicacy along the Makhar tribes - kumis, powerful liquor.'

Munkács is back. He drops down beside me and offers me yet more of this 'kumis'; I sip to be polite. A rumbling sound from without the Pavillion penetrates the revelling throng, I look with alarm to my guide, who sneers at my response. 'Some Steppe people foster relations with the wandering giants of the grasslands. Although their lumbering gait is dissimilar to our highly mobile warriors, they can be brutal in battle and in simple imitation of our archers some sport mighty bows that launch gigantic arrows of death to smash apart our foes. A fine sight indeed.' I suggest that it might be a fine sight, but it's one I'd prefer to witness from behind thick walls.

We sit and wait. Perhaps we will be allowed to report on this mass of humanity moving westward. If not, I shall attempt to smuggle these notes out by any means I can find. The Emperor must know what is coming.

These notes were delivered to the court of Emperor Matthias on the 23rd Acrober having been discovered in the possession of two men, both near death and utterly lost on the Steppe. The patrols who found them claim that both were raving mad and blaming each other for their predicament. The two have provided reasonable evidence that they are Sgt JG Hóltz, Reiter, and Baron Luis de Châtray, Questing Knight of Equitaine. I have to say I am surprised that the Court has accepted these bold assertions; the two most certainly do not appear as they claim.

The notes, soaked in dried blood, were smuggled out of the camp in a waxed packet cleverly hidden inside a bottle of wine. This wine was apparently poisoned and the bearers claim that they used it to dispatch the camp guards, being that the Makhar are fond of liquor. Not the only ones, judging by the smell of the two unlikely comrades.

Both men have been offered the chance to join the diplomatic mission that the Emperor has ordered me to undertake to ascertain the claims made in these notes and to locate the party led by Von Stirlingen. To say that they have politely declined would be to understate their position most significantly.

*Gravius Stiegler - Imperial Ambassador
Departure Notes - 25th Acrober*



THE BATTLE OF KORONTAV MOOR

Article by Dan and SkaveninAZ / Narrative by the Background Team

We found vermin in those hills and not the kind that you might keep as a pet. These were big bastards, walking on two legs! They gave us a right hiding that day... Yeah, ill tell you the tale. But it'll cost you another ale and a few more by the time I'm finished.

Dans Dwarven Hold (4500pts):

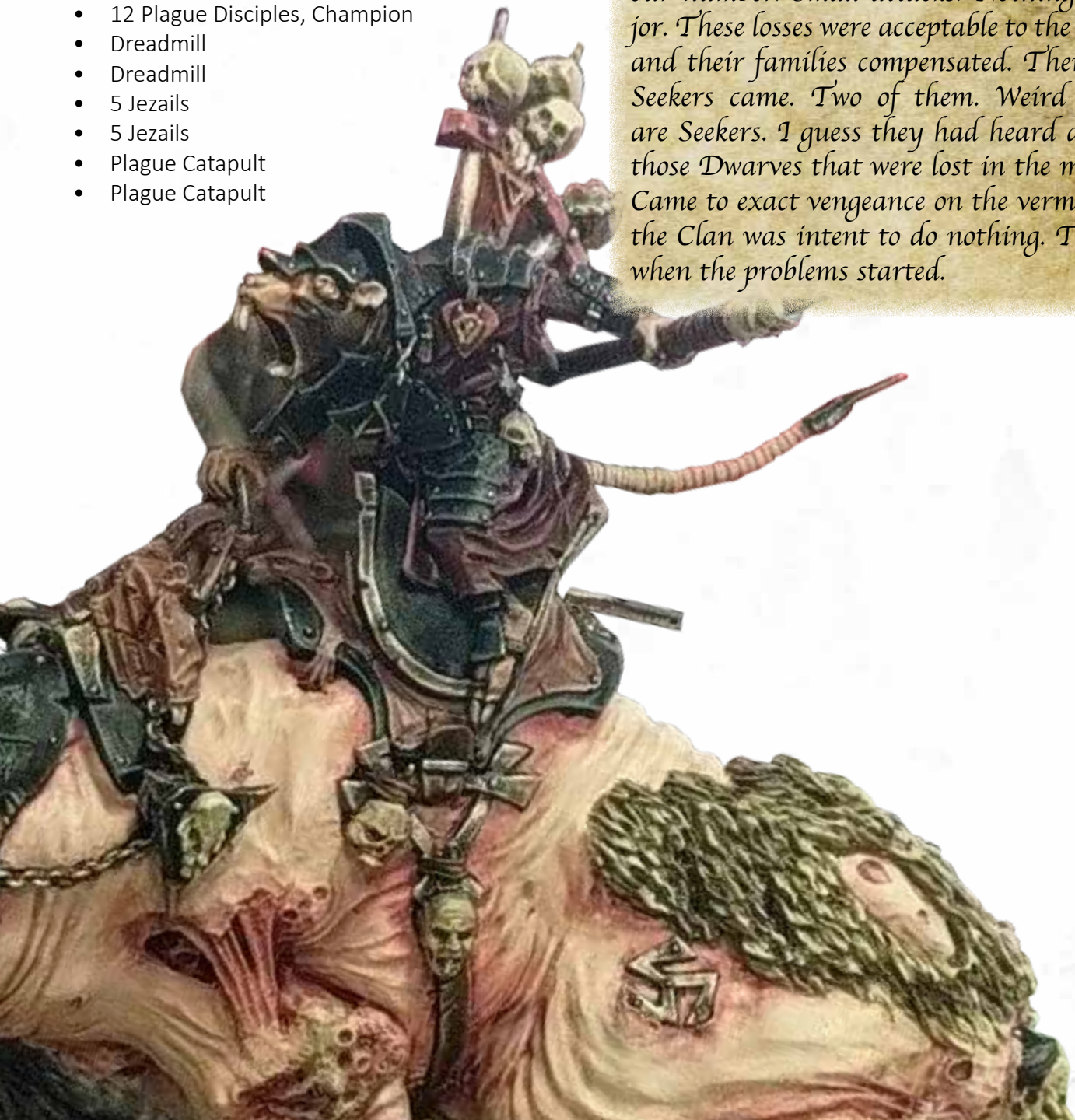
- King, General, Ancestral Grudge, Shield, 2 x Rune of Iron, Rune of Fury, Rune of Smashing, Rune of Destruction
- Thane, Battle Standard Bearer, Shieldbearers, Rune of Resonance, Shield, 3 x Rune of Lightning, Banner of Swiftness
- Engineer, Shield, Forge Repeater
- Anvil of Power
- 25 Greybeards, Full Command, Shields
- 10 Greybeards, Musician, Shields, Thrown Weapons, Vanguard
- 10 Marksmen, Musician, Guild Crafted Handguns, Shields
- 22 Deep Watch, Full Command, Standard of Wisdom
- 10 Miners, Musician, Shields, Pistols
- 8 Rangers, Skirmish, Shields, Crossbows
- Vengeance Seeker
- Vengeance Seeker
- Organ Gun, Rune Crafted
- Catapult, Rune Crafted
- Ballista, Flaming



SkaveninAZ's Vermin Swarm (4498pts):

- Magister, General, Wizard Master (Thaumaturgy), 3 Dark Shards, Talisman of the Void
- Chief, Battle Standard Bearer
- Plague Patriarch, Putrid Scholar (Occultism), Paired Weapons, Swarm Master, Putrid Protection, Plague Pendulum
- Tyrant, Paired Weapons, Tail Weapon, Heavy Armour Shield, Heros Heart, Ghostly Guard, Dragon Staff, Monstrous Rat
- 10 Footpads
- 20 Plague Brotherhood, Full Command
- 25 Rat-at-Arms, Full Command, Banner of the Relentless Company
- 40 Slaves, musician
- 40 Slaves, musician
- 12 Plague Disciples, Champion
- Dreadmill
- Dreadmill
- 5 Jezails
- 5 Jezails
- Plague Catapult
- Plague Catapult

We had been mining the tin in the hills. Sending it up the river to Vanez. The vermin problem had been there from the start y'see. But the Clan had invested too much to back out of the operation. To begin with we suppressed them. But they got bolder. Eventually we faced a whole army of the things. Where they came from, I don't know. I was a ranger. Scouted them hills every day and didn't see head nor tail of them! My guess is that they live in burrows in the hills. Sometimes they would collapse our mines and make off with a few of our number. Small attacks. Nothing major. These losses were acceptable to the Clan and their families compensated. Then the Seekers came. Two of them. Weird folks are Seekers. I guess they had heard about those Dwarves that were lost in the mines. Came to exact vengeance on the vermin as the Clan was intent to do nothing. That's when the problems started.



Battlefield and Setup

We rolled a standard Battleline Deployment with Secure Target as the secondary objective. The battlefield was set up to resemble a small, forested village, with several buildings clustered together on one side of the board opposite several groups of trees. Walls and fencing were scattered, as well as a water feature on the forested side of the board. Both players agreed that neither should have the benefit of a hill, and so it was added to the middle, far side of the board primarily for aesthetic purposes. As part of the secondary objective, a marker was placed in the middle of the village and the other near the forests.

Dan: Pregame

Well, this was a long time coming! SkaveninAZ and I have known each other for quite a while (going back to our Warseer days), and I've been an avid follower of his YouTube channel for even longer. While I don't feel that watching so many of his games necessarily gives me an advantage in playing against him, it has left me with both a great familiarity and healthy respect for his most recent list.

As an aside, we Dwarf players have tools to deal with just about all but two things: high Armour Penetration, and attacks that ignore our Shieldwall save. SkaveninAZ's list has a lot of both: the Dreadmills, Monstrous Rat, and Pendulum can all get around Shieldwall, while the Jezails, Plague Disciples, and Plague Catapults will all make short work of my otherwise high armour saves. I wanted to avoid his focus-firing everything into any of my combat blocks, and so, given my superior leadership and lack of reliance on the "bubble", my plan was to split my force in half: a single combat block and on either side of the table, with all of my war machines holding the centre.

The Seekers had been stirring up trouble. "Protecting the honor of the Clan and ensuring the Oath of Protection was upheld," they said. Yes, one more ale. Where was I? The Seekers. They follow the old ways. The "Gods" they say. Wear amulets and not much else. Spend their time praying and pursuing oathbreakers. Ah yes, they were here to hunt the Vermin. Make sure the Clan's honour was maintained. But they stuck their beards in and stirred up something vile under that moor. Korontav the locals called it, aye.

I'd hoped that this deployment, combined with the objective naturally encouraging a battle on two fronts, would split his army and resources and prevent him from overwhelming any single unit.

Beyond that, special attention needed to be given to his Monstrous Rat and Pendulum, because I had only two tools in my arsenal that could reliably deal with them: my King and my War Machines. The placement of the King would dictate where the centrally-placed guns would shoot, and with him joining the Greybeards on the far right it would be up to them to keep the Pendulum at bay.

SkaveninAZ: Pregame

Dan and I have known each other for quite a while through the internet and it was great to get a game in against him. I follow his painting blogs regularly, and love seeing his progress. We agreed to play a game, and Dan sent me a copy of his list. I saw two things that I was very concerned about - the King and the shooting. The King could easily kill off either of my main combat threats and force me to avoid a large chunk of his army, unless I could whittle the unit down with shooting/magic. That's where the shooting enters the equation. If Dan counter batteries my catapults, then I'm not likely able to kill the unit with the King. I'll have to depend on some tricky deployment tactics, and a well placed Wrath of God or two to get me through this game. If that works, I could do well. If not, then I'm in for a rough time.



Deployment

To the surprise of both players, neither dropped first and units were alternated for a majority of the deployment phase. The Dwarf line was split in two: the Deep Watch, BSB, and small unit of Greybeards were placed on the village side of the board, while the Marksmen and large unit of Greybeards were placed on the forested side. The Dwarven war machines were all placed in the woods central to the board with their Engineer, and a Vengeance Seeker was placed near each of the main combat blocks.

It was a dark night they came. Cloudy but no rain. I was about to head out with my band of Rangers when the alarm went up. We were out the gate and drawn up for battle in no time. We weren't ready for them. We assumed it was just a rag-tag raiding party. Nothing organized. When we looked across the moor that night, I admit that I felt fear in my heart. They had come in force...

On the Vermin side of the board the Slave blocks went near each other in the center with the Dreadmills in front of them, while the Plague Brotherhood, Disciples, and Pendulum faced off against the Deep Watch near the village. A unit of Jezails was placed on either flank, while the Plague Catapults were deployed next to each other behind the Slaves. The small bunker of Rat-at-Arms was placed along the back of the board near the catapults along with their Magister. Dan placed his King in the large unit of Greybeards once SkaveninAZ's Monstrous Rat was placed on the same side of the board.

The Rangers were scouted opposite the Plague Disciples on the Village side of the board, and with that both the Deep Watch and small unit of Greybeards both used their Vanguard move to go forward. The Vermin Swarm seized the first turn and we were away!

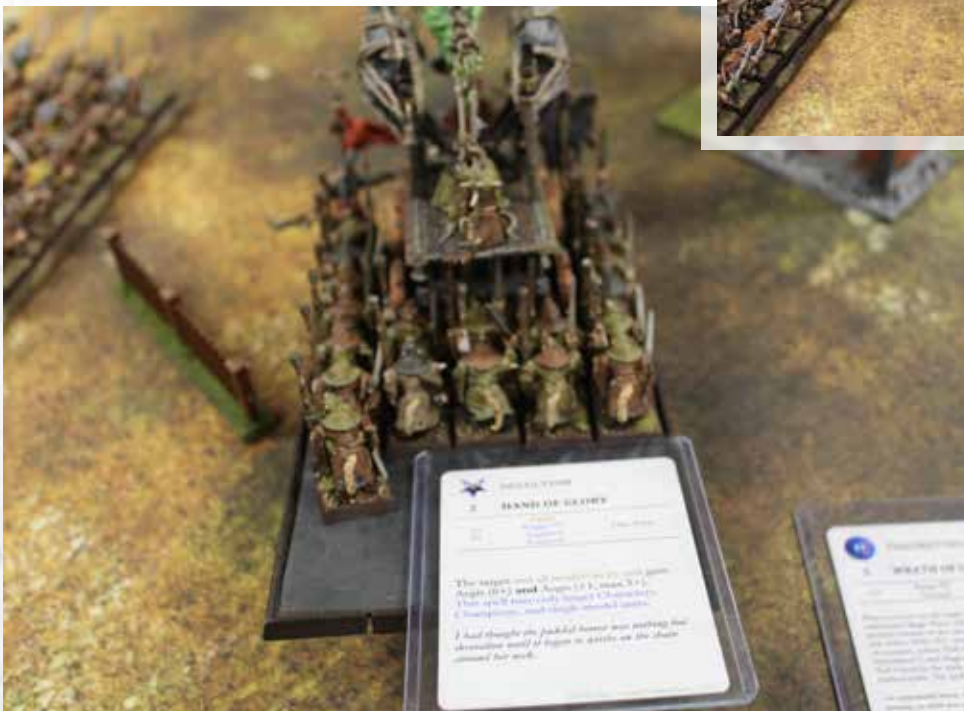


Vermin Swarm Turn 1



SkaveninAZ: In true swarm fashion, everything but the Jezails and Catapults surged forward. The Footpads crept up behind the hill, plotting a late-game seizure of the objective marker close to the forest, while the rest of the army listed toward the village side of the board.

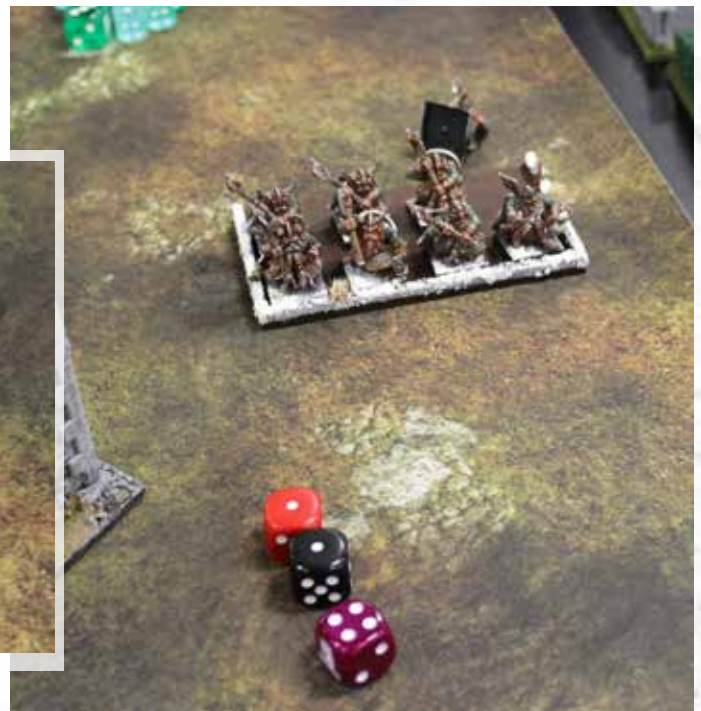
The Dreadmills both rushed toward the Dwarven artillery emplacement in the center, knowing their multiple wound weapons would be of most use there. The Monstrous Rat, uninterested in squaring off with the decked-out King, scurried as far as it could to the right.



In the magic phase the Magister was unimpressed by the Dwarven Hewn from Mountains rule, and pushed through both Hand of Glory on the Plague Brotherhood and Smite the Unbeliever on the Deep Watch (reducing their Resilience) before dropping a perfectly placed Wrath of God in the midst of the Dwarven War Machines.



The Jezzail volley killed a Ranger and took a wound off of the Ballista saving the heavy lifting for the Catapults and their toxic attacks I was able to fell six models from the Resilience-reduced Deep Watch. With shooting finished and no combat, it was over to the Dwarves.



Dwarven Holds Turn 1



Dan: The Vermin movement phase had left the right flank of the Dwarf line in a bad place, and so both the large block of Greybeards and Marksmen marched forward. Elsewhere the Vengeance Seekers ran toward the centre of the board to threaten the Dreadmills, while the Rangers marched forward around the side of the village and the battered Deep Watch reformed.



Magic was uneventful, with Rune of Resonance being cast on the Deep Watch and the impending Wrath of God gaining a token.

The Rangers' crossbows managed to return a wound on the Jezails, while the Organ Gun spat out 20 shots and put 3 wounds on the closer of the Dreadmills.

Still finding their range, both the Ballista and Catapult missed their targets.



Vermin Swarm Turn 2



SkaveninAZ: The only charge on the Vermin side was the Plague Disciples, who weaved through the streets of the village to charge the small unit of Greybeards. Despite reaching them, the Dwarves' S4 throwing axes killed four of the disciples in the stand-and-shoot! Otherwise the movement phase was predominantly made up of adjusting units. One of the units of Slaves turned to face the King's unit across the pond and the other was marched forward to block the Deep Watch.

The Magister cast the Wrath of God again, this time placing the marker on the other side of the forest near the catapult and then forced through a Hand of Glory

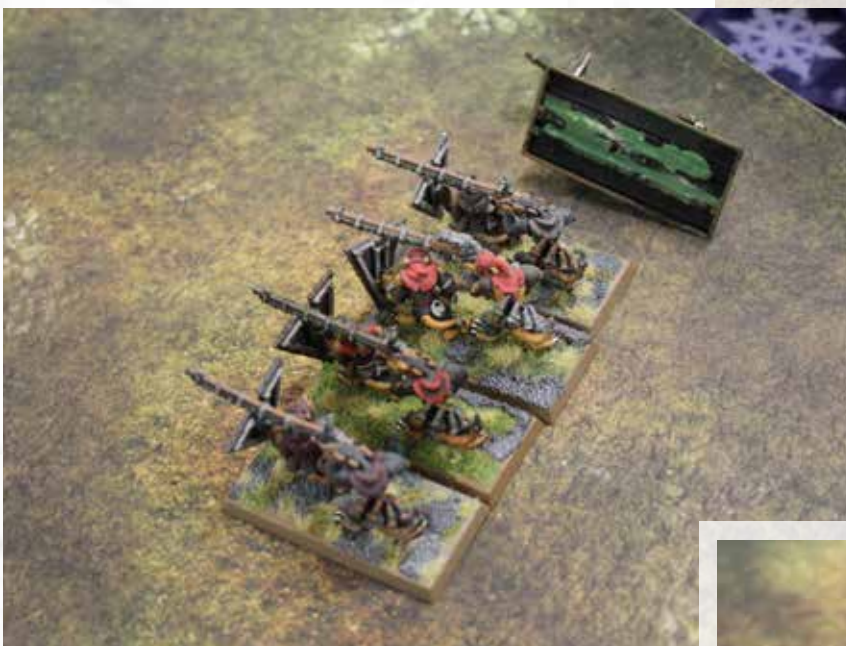
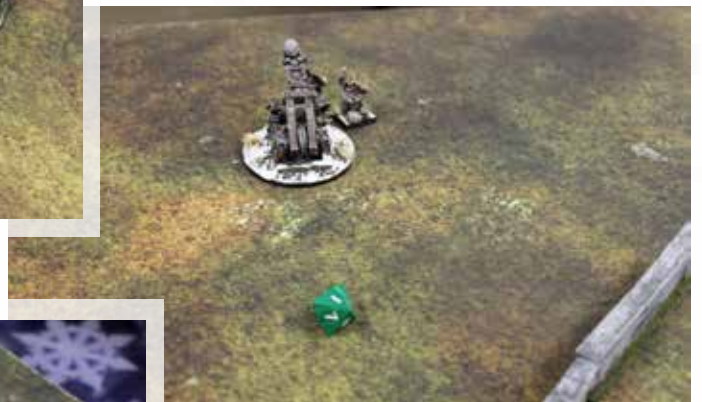
on the Plague Brotherhood. At the end of the phase the first Wrath of God token went off, unleashing a devastating explosion that took out 6 Marksmen, the Ballista, a Vengeance Seeker, the Engineer, and the Organ Gun. Squeek!

Yes, I know it's my fourth. Do you want to hear this story or not? ...Those Seekers speak of Gods but there was no Gods helping us that night, I tell you. I've never seen anything like it. From out of the sky came a fiery piece of mountain! How unnatural. Rock, falling from the sky. This was clearly the work of the vermin. It hit us square in our midst. One of the Seekers. Bravest Dwarf I ever met. He saw it coming. Stood right there. Sang a prayer to these "Old Gods" and took it. Right in the face. The rock was huge. Completely pulverised him along with all our artillery! Made a crater the size of this ale house! The other Seeker, you might know him as Duthar? Aye the same Duthar. Well he was smart enough to get out of the way. Maybe his faith in the "true Gods" was not as unwavering as the songs sing, eh? We were under fire from falling mountains and a deadly hail of gunshot and the battle had hardly been joined by the rest of the lads. I knew here that it would be a long night.



THE BATTLE OF KORONTAV MOOR

In the shooting phase another Ranger was felled by the Jezails at the explosive cost of one of their own, while the Deep Watch were hit again by the catapults and lost four more models. This time, however, one of the war machines misfired and was unable to fire for the rest of the game.

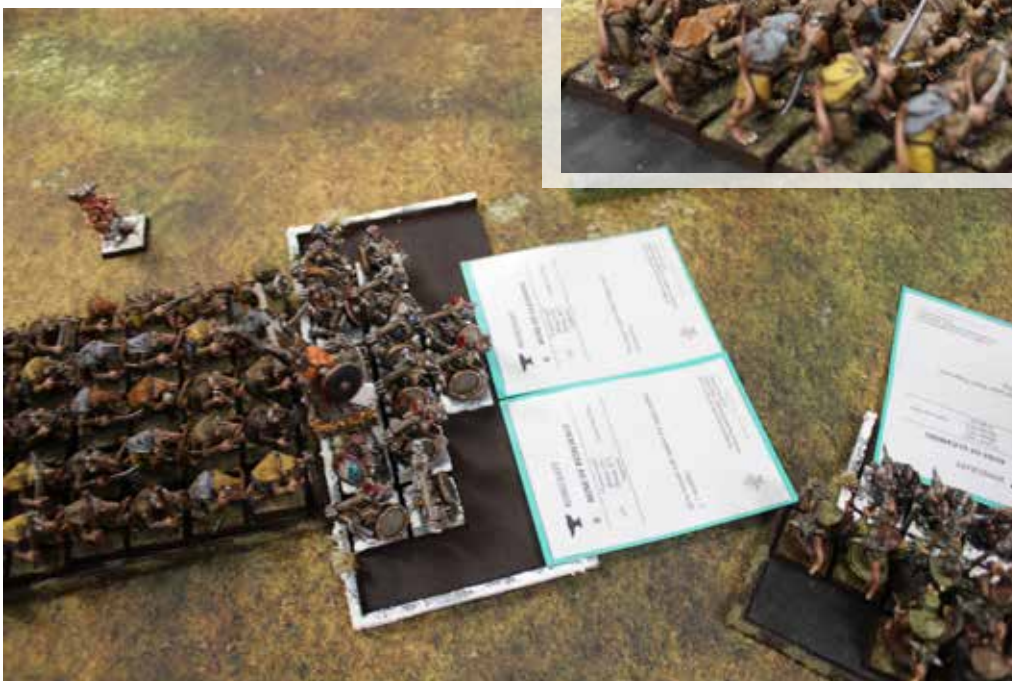


In combat the plague-laced smoke of the Disciples killed 5 Greybeards before they could strike, and not a single rat died in return. Due to the Disciples being light troops, however, the Greybeards remained steadfast and held.



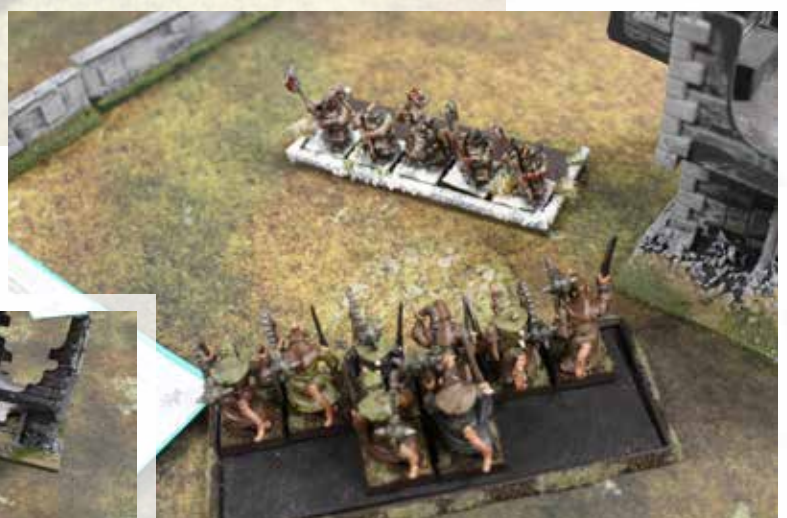


Dan: With few options and losing models at an alarming rate, the Deep Watch charged the block of Slaves in front of them. The Miners appeared at the back of the board between the Catapults, while the Greybeards continued their march around the water feature. The remaining Vengeance Seeker moved up to support the Deep Watch.



In the magic phase Rune of Resonance came in handy, and both the Deep Watch and Greybeards were granted Distracting. Furthermore, with the Magister apparently also distracted, -1 to wound was cast on the Deep Watch.

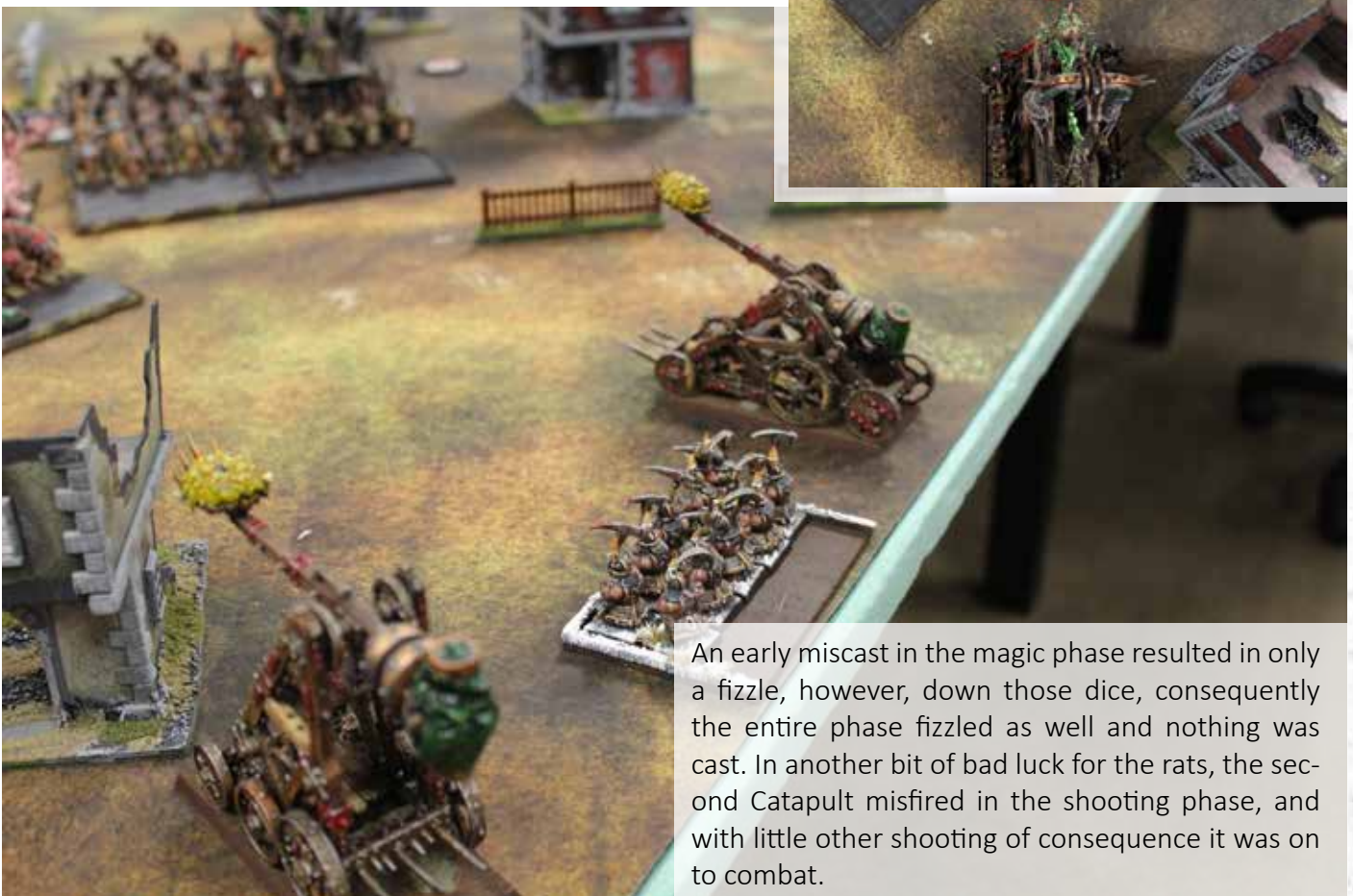
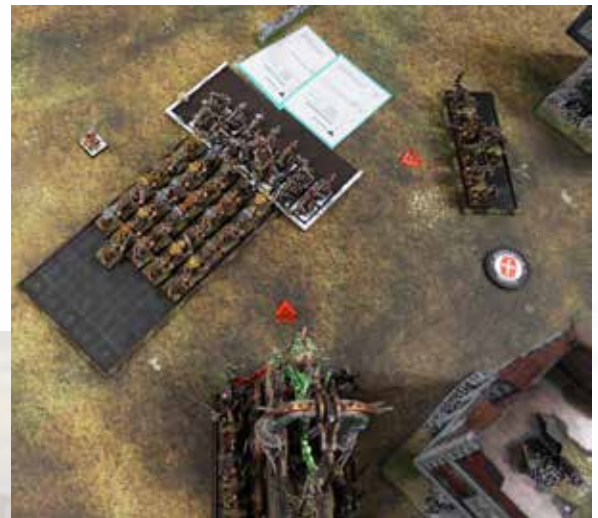
No, I haven't had enough... stop interrupting me. I need a drink in my hand when I praise the dead! We gave 'em hell back, let me tell you! Back in my day I was a crack shot. After a few volleys those gunners fled with their tails between their legs. We were too much for them. Shame about the rest of the clan. Those boys were dropping and there wasn't much we could do about it.



In the combat phase the Disciples finished off the Greybeards before taking any damage, while the Deep Watch and BSB were able to carve through 9 of the ever-steadfast Slaves.

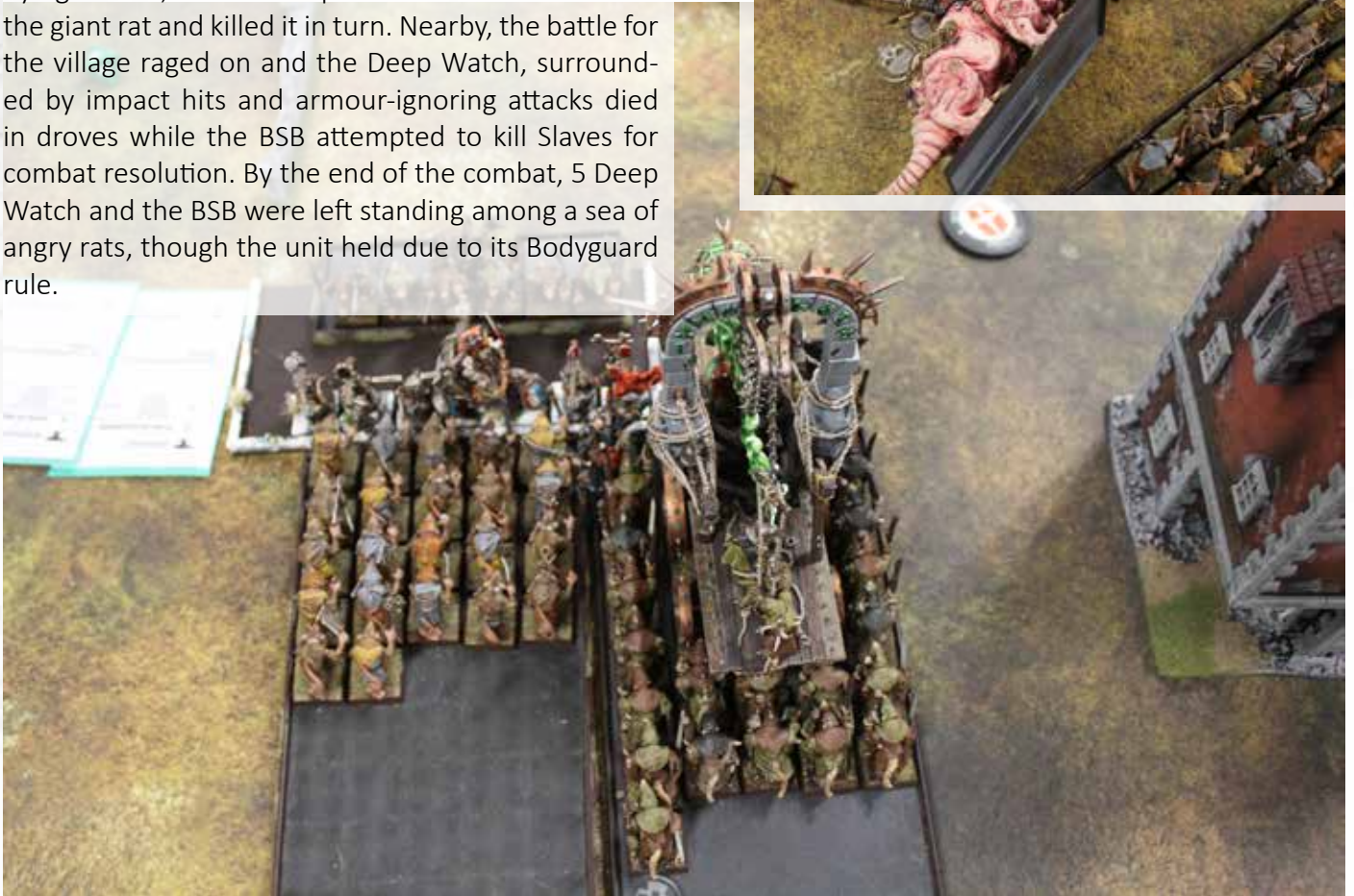


SkaveninAZ: Three charges were declared. The Pendulum charged the front corner of the Deep Watch fighting the Slaves, the Plague Disciples charged their rear, and the Monstrous Rat charged the remaining Vengeance Seeker. With no charge reactions available, all of the charging units made it to combat. This was going to be fun!



An early miscast in the magic phase resulted in only a fizzle, however, down those dice, consequently the entire phase fizzled as well and nothing was cast. In another bit of bad luck for the rats, the second Catapult misfired in the shooting phase, and with little other shooting of consequence it was on to combat.

The Agility 10 Vengeance Seeker managed to sneak three wounds on the Monstrous Rat, which easily smashed aside the Dwarf in return. However, with its dying breath, the Seeker placed one final wound on the giant rat and killed it in turn. Nearby, the battle for the village raged on and the Deep Watch, surrounded by impact hits and armour-ignoring attacks died in droves while the BSB attempted to kill Slaves for combat resolution. By the end of the combat, 5 Deep Watch and the BSB were left standing among a sea of angry rats, though the unit held due to its Bodyguard rule.



Aye lad, I saw him. Saw it when Duthar died. It was glorious. These Seekers, they eschew armour you see. Think it dishonours the old ways or something. It's all superstition. Yes, I know the ballad. I was there. Well if he wore armour, he might have survived, ay? Anyway. Duthar gave the beast a mortal blow, right in the side of the neck. His axe was buried deep in the monstrosity. How big you say? As big as this table. I've never seen a rat so big. And one of their leaders was riding it like a horse. Madness. Anyway, his axe got stuck, and well, the monstrous rat took chomped right down on his shoulder, its teeth sinking into his stomach and lower back. An equally mortal blow. Right away the colour washed from his face. He knew he was done. With a roar, Duthar ripped out his axe. All this blood and pus followed. Acid it was. Burned all his arm and face. That's why they call him the Bloody-Handed. With his death blow, Duthar smote the beast a final strike right back into the wound he had made. Almost took the things head clean off, it did. As I said, those Seekers are a brave bunch. The beast came down on top of him, rider and all. Was a sad day. We lost a lot good Dwarves that day. Here's to them! Duthar!

Dwarven Holds Turn 3



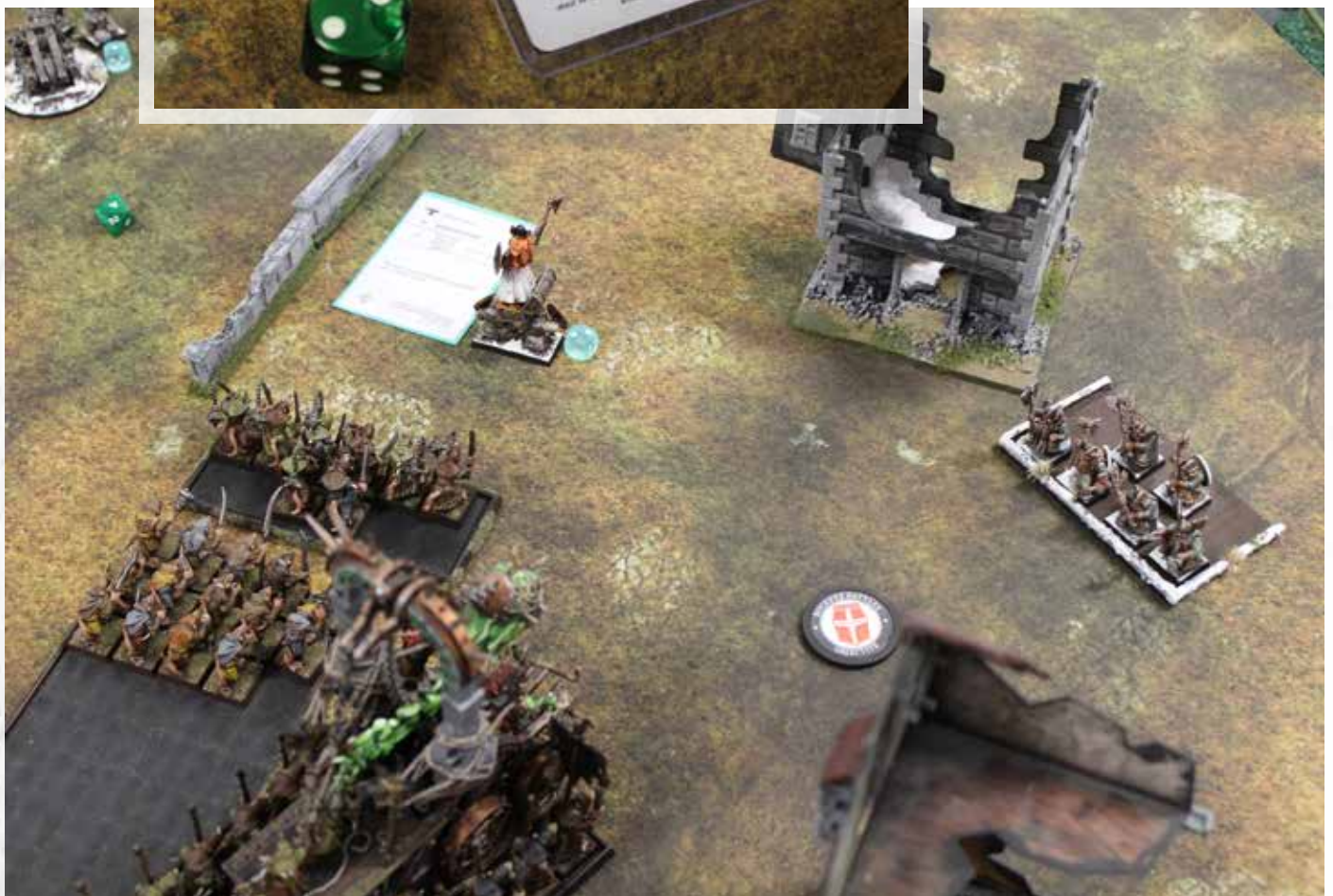
Dan: Like the Deep Watch a turn earlier, the Greybeards found themselves out of place and low on options, and so declared a desperate charge into the unit of Slaves closer to them. The Slaves, in turn, fled, leaving the King's unit even further out of position to help the vulnerable Deep Watch. Elsewhere, the only other movement for the Dwarves was to turn the Marksmen to face the Footpads on the hill and shuffle the Miners and Rangers forward.



THE BATTLE OF KORONTAV MOOR

In the magic phase the Vermin Swarm shut down all of the Dwarves' defensive runes that could have been used to help keep the Deep Watch alive, and only Rune of Oaths (Reroll to wound in combat) was snuck through. The second comet failed to arrive yet again, and another token was placed on the marker!

The Dwarven Catapult wounded itself in the shooting phase. The misfortune for the dwarves continued with the loss of the remaining Deep Watch in the combat phase. Without Bodeguard to protect her, the BSB fled but managed to outrun both the Slaves and Disciples.

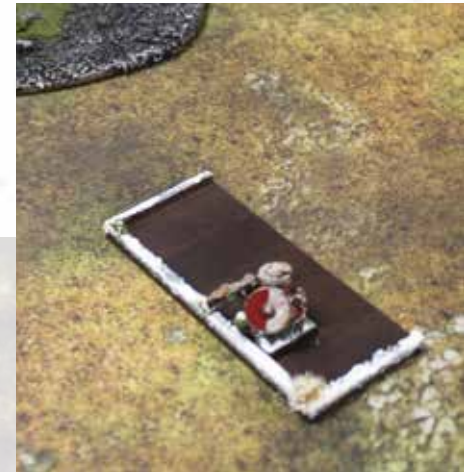


Vermin Swarm Turn 4

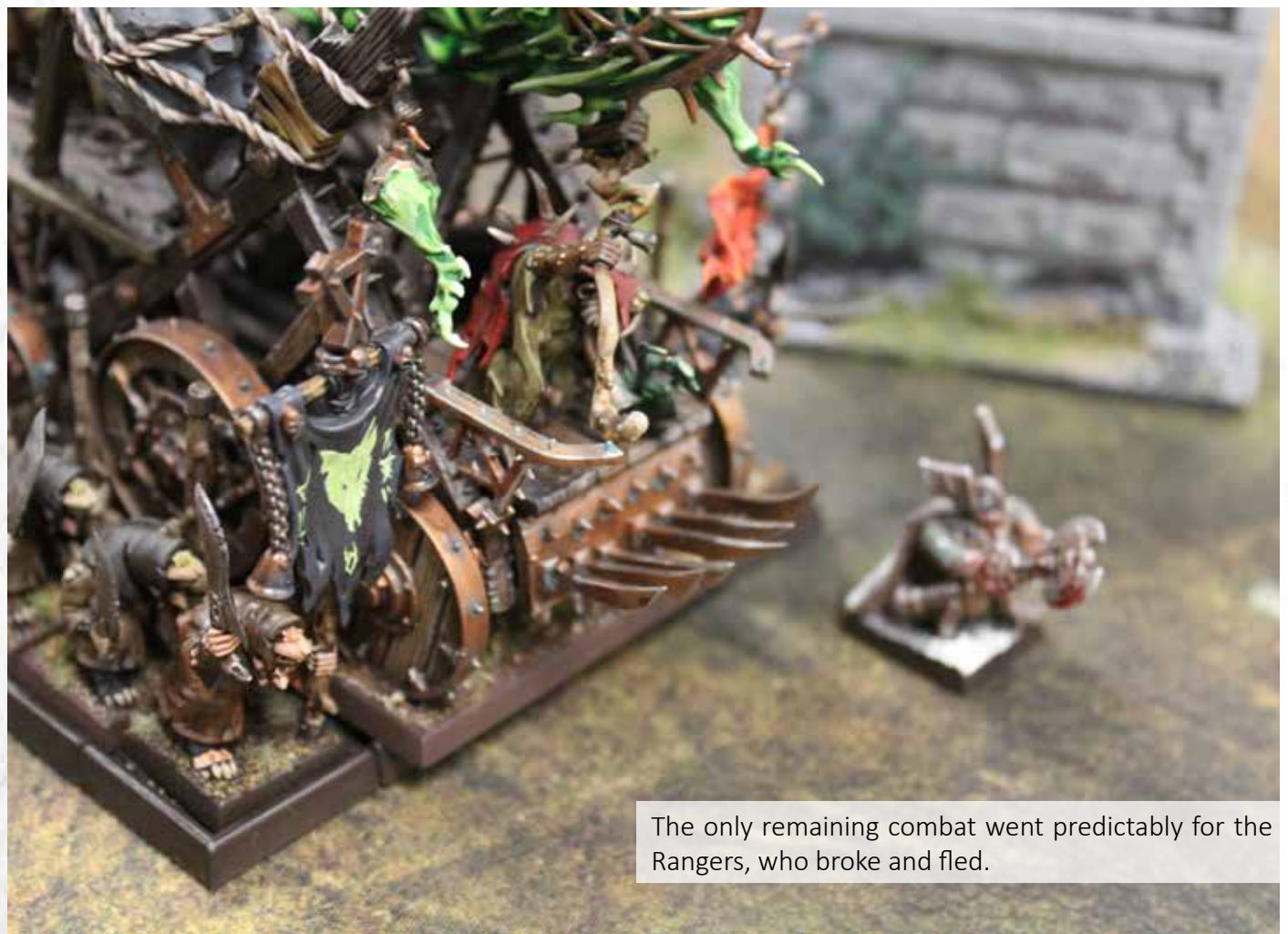
SkaveninAZ: Pressing their advantage, the Disciples charged the fleeing BSB and ran her down. Likewise, the Pendulum charged the Rangers, who were so close to the board edge that they had little choice but to hold. The Slaves and Jezails rallied from the previous turn, while the bulk of the remaining rats surged toward the remaining Dwarf War Machines.



In the magic phase, Hand of Heaven was cast and blew up the Catapult, which was immediately followed by the second comet finally arriving and damaging my own units that had moved forward toward the Dwarf deployment zone - the remaining Dreadmill took three wounds, the Slaves took five, and the Disciples lost two of their number.



Combined shooting from the Footpads and Jezails killed three of the remaining Marksmen, though once again the Jezails injured themselves in the process. Across the board the injured Dreadmill zapped the Anvil, removing three wounds.



The only remaining combat went predictably for the Rangers, who broke and fled.

Dwarven Holds Turn 4

Dan: With little left on the board, the Greybeard unit marched forward toward the center of the field and the Miners charged the rallied Slaves. Magic was subsequently shut down, and the only shooting left on the board was a single Marksman, which missed the group of Footpads he had aimed at.



In combat the Miners killed 7 Slaves and lost a single model in return, though the effort wasn't nearly enough to overcome their Steadfast and the unit held.

I didn't see the last stand of the Greybeards. Those old codgers. Stubborn to the last I bet. Here's to them! I was well away by then. I'd lost most of my unit and the Hold Banner was in the dirt. And another! For my fallen comrades and the lost banner! Those damned Vermin. The Vengeance Seekers will be back to Korontav Moor. The ballad? Aye, the ballad. Get me another ale and you'll hear it.





SkaveninAZ: There was little left for the rats to do but clean up. The Pendulum and Disciples turned to face the centre of the board but kept back in the village, while the wizard and his bunker, depleted Slaves, and Dreadmill moved into the Dwarf deployment zone.

In the shooting phase the last Dwarf Marksman was killed and the Anvil was ruptured by the continuing barrage from the Dreadmill, leaving only the Greybeards and Miners on the board. The only hope for the Dwarves was an unlikely, long, cascading charge into the rear of the Slaves and toward the Pendulum. Unfortunately for them, the Slaves killed a whopping three Miners, and the heart went from the Dwarven resistance. The Miners broke from combat, and the slaves ran the unit down!



With only the Greybeard unit remaining, stranded in the center of the board, the final turns of the game were played out as a formality. The Footpads and Pendulum moved to secure the objectives, resulting in an overwhelming and well-earned victory for the Vermin Swarm!

SkaveninAZ:

I think the big tipping point in this game came in deployment. We went about 4-5 deep in deployments, each of us deploying 1 unit at a time. But it got to a point where I thought I understood his plan and dropped everything left to go first. This gave me an advantage because I saw the possibility that he might deploy his King to counter my Monstrous Rat - and let his shooting deal with the Pendulum. When he did this, I was able to run away, and leave his King stranded on the far side of the board. That put me in a great spot, being able to put more of my army against less of his. That strategy allowed the attempted multi-charge on the Deep Watch, which ultimately led to me breaking that unit.

Dan: Ouch.

If I didn't have a healthy enough respect for Wrath of God before this game, that smouldering crater where the centre of my battle line used to be has cemented it. Beyond that bit of bad luck, I made some glaring missteps. The decision to split my army cost me the game. My placement of the King on the far right to take on the Monstrous Rat relied on him not using his superior movement to simply run away from me, and using my (admittedly limited) rounds of shooting to take on the Dreadmills instead of the Pendulum left the Deep Watch to do far too much heavy lifting on their own. I also underestimated the Plague Disciples, despite the irony that I also play VS and fully understand how devastating they are in combat. I should have dedicated more than a small unit of Greybeards to deal with them.

Everything aside, SkaveninAZ is a gentleman and a fantastic opponent, and the game was delight right up until we put down our dice and shook hands. Most importantly, witnessing the improbable moment that a Vengeance Seeker killed the Monstrous Rat with its Yer Comin' with Me death blow makes even the most decisive of defeats totally worthwhile!

*Embattled miners of Korontav Moor;
Died in vain, heroes all.
Duthar and Telvan did stride among them;
Two Seekers striving to meet their Gods.*

*Their foe was the Rat-Men, five-thousand strong;
Dark magics, fell machines and monstrosities
thronged!
With heavy hearts did the Clan sally fourth;
Led by Seekers, upon the Moor.*

*Late was the hour that the two forces clashed;
The wrath of the Rat-God sending fire and flash.
Woe to the Clan. A meteor was called;
Blazing from the sky.*

*Brave and foolhardy, Telvan stood tall;
Facing his doom, the comet did fall.
It struck him from this earth with a mighty blow;
The fate of the hero in sight of his Gods. Telvan!*

*The melee swirled upon Korontav hill;
The vermin's plagues spreading ill.*

*Upon his hellish steed, the tyrant did shriek;
Onwards to victory!*

*The battle was lost, yet honour demanded;
The last stand of Duthar the bloody-handed.
He smote the beast a terrible wound.
Deep in the neck of the gigantic rat.*

*A mortal blow. Yet the Rat struck in return.
The Seeker was felled at the battles turn.
In sight of his Gods, Duthar did not flinch.
Once more his axe hewed.*

*Deep into the neck of the best it went;
With his deathblow Duthar's life was spent.
Monstrosity and chieftain fell.
Slain to the earth. Duthar!*

*After brave last stand the battle was done.
Upon Korontav Moor, noble Dwarves were none.
Tragedy of the clan. Failure of the hold.
Death of the Seekers.*

Now lad. Leave me to my cup.

ORCS AND GOBLINS



Like the great primates of the jungles of Taphria, orcs are strong and robust beings. In battle they seem able to resist the most terrible wounds and still continue fighting. Distinctive features include large fangs and the earthy hues of their hide - from ochre to green to darkest brown - all combining to give them a terrifying and wild aspect.

The goblins, while sharing certain traits with their larger kin, are very different. Smaller in size and less physically powerful, they demonstrate exceptional cunning, treachery and malice. Their large noses and ears make them excellent trackers and explorers.

Throughout history, the "warborn" seem to appear from nowhere, emerging in huge swarms from deep forests, caves, and any wild region. Orcs in particular are extremely aggressive, showing a passionate love of fighting seemingly for its own sake. Their movements have proven virtually impossible to track, while goblins can be more sedentary, with some claiming they dwell in great hidden cities, accounts of which are difficult to verify.



Though I believe we Daeb have little more to learn of taming the creatures of this world, I have found some profit in an interrogation of members of the Warborn races. It seems their relationship with beasts is closer to that of unruly siblings than master and servant.

Orcs appear to make connections with creatures as brutal and stubborn as themselves. Giants, boars, wyverns are treated as comrades in arms, earning glory and feasting on the spoils, tusk to tusk in the mud and gore.

Meanwhile, goblin lairs are all but impossible to scout, protected as they are by the myriad beasts of cave, forest, plains and more. Guardians and crude avatars, the wretches all but worship the things with the largest teeth and claws - anything to preserve their own feeble forms. Still, the arrangement is effective. I must find a way to harness it.

This is a stone
It does not know the truth
Let these words teach it our way
Our way is war
We are born only to this
A stone is born for staying
But we will set it rolling
And in the speed of life, it will learn
It will know the way
Of war, of speed, of sweat
We love to struggle and to win
We want this stone to love it too
We will give this stone a brood
And set it searching
And it will know the way of war

Translation of a carving found on an unfinished stone idol

Increasingly convinced orc society organised by birthgroups (broods) - comprising all individuals emerging at same site. Each group competes for dominance of the tribe. Brood alphas vie to be warchief.

Individual observations (working names):

Gustav - member of youngest brood. Extremely unruly behaviour; he and siblings are feverishly eager to fight.

Heidi - used to be much wilder. As brood has grown, she has developed basic weaponcraft & some modicum of discipline in battle.

Henning - from oldest brood. Produces the heaviest, most advanced iron weapons and armours of the tribe. Calmer but unflinching in battle.

Wilhelm - outlived rest of brood. Fights alone, never socialises with other broods. Increasingly speaks only to shamans.

Saw Wilhelm leaving into the wilderness, purpose unclear. Has not returned after several weeks.

Field notes of researcher Johan Möhring

No Brothers, No Sisters
The Only King
No Past, No Future
The Only King
No Fear, No Weakness
The Only King
Born of Soil and Born Alone
The Only King
Breaker and Builder
The Only King
One fist in Iron, the other in Stone
The Only King
Bringer of Battle, Bringer of Fate
The Only King
Heart of a Child, Heart of a King
The Only King

It is said among the tribes of this land that in the most ancient times, the oldest prophet-leaders of the goblins, called Darmmu, created a vast labyrinth under the Great Mountains. At its center stood what they called the Earthly Garden of Delights. This was their most secret abode and refuge between Augea and Vetia, protected by the monstrous creatures of the deep - the qogyag.

No man, elf or dwarf was allowed to enter such a secret and holy place, the goblin city. It was imagined as a mortal representation of the Divine Garden that all faithful goblins hope to enter - either after their death, or through transcendental use of the unknown substances they employ in their rites. It is said that denizens of this city would undergo the cruelest challenges if ordered by their darmmu, exhibiting a fanatical faith in some form of Truth which they associate metonymically with these same substances, and with the Twin Deity who supposedly discovered them.

From 'Book of the Terrors of the World',
by Niccolò Solo, famed Arcalean
merchant traveler



Mantra reportedly recited by orc prisoner
under torture by Tsuandanese authorities

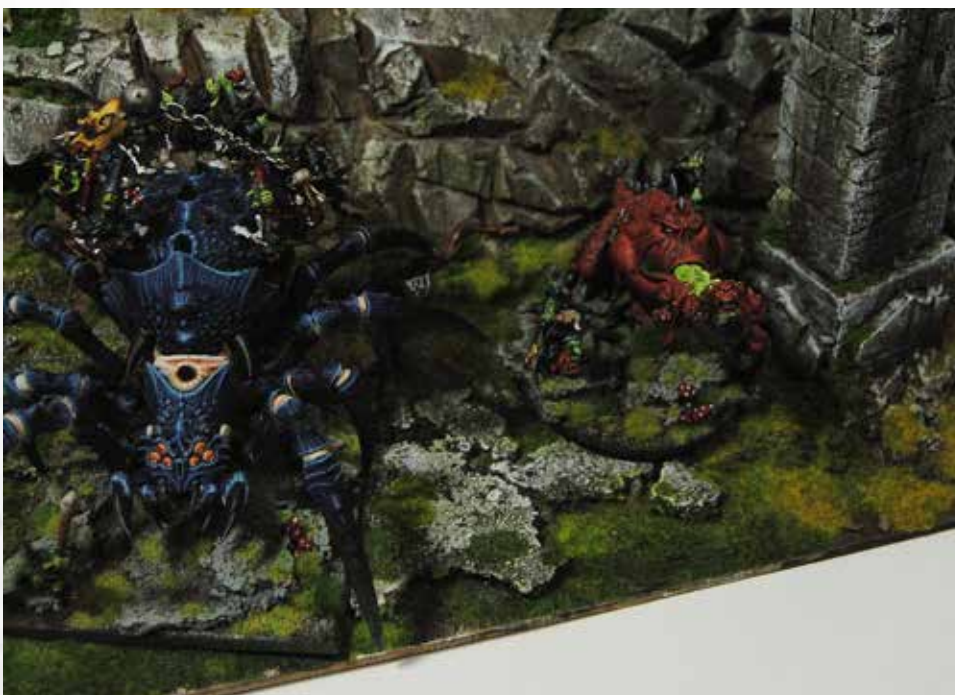
ARMY SHOWCASE: KING RED SUN'S ORCS AND GOBLINS

Article by Manacerace

*The green horde grows out of proportion.
Every day hordes of goblins and orcs join the bulging ranks!
The shamans speak of a great boss, a king of Orckind.
The greatest Warboss since the Great Orc!
His Axe never dry of enemy blood.
King Red Sun!!!*

The War Cry of King Red Sun.

Since I started this hobby my army of Orcs has grown along with a constantly developing narrative. I started long ago with a starter set of Goblins and Dwarves. I realised that the Cave Goblins were much more fun to paint, and the final effect made me crazy. From that moment on I began to accumulate what would end up as more than 50,000 points of Orcs and Goblins. The army shown here is only a part of my horde, more specifically the goblins.



These pictures are of my 4500 point list that I took to a tournament in Italy. The main theme of the army display is that a tribe of Cave Goblins have taken over an a dwarven stronghold (belonging perhaps to the starter set dwarves whom I failed to paint). They have then repurposed the fortress as their new home. To stick with this theme, all of the Goblins are Cave Goblins. For example, I have replaced the Garagantula crew with Cave Goblins to make sure that my theme remains true and consistent throughout the army.



In fact, in my back story, the spiders are mushroom-eating spiders who live in the caves vacated by the Goblins. As a result, the colouring of the spiders are bright like poisonous mushrooms.

The hordes of cave goblins belong to various clans and for this they also have different coloured banners, shields and caps. These colours are related to the types of mushrooms each clan eats!



The two banners represent the duality in characteristic of the army. The Orcs of King Red Sun and the Cave Goblins who thrive at night and worship the moon.



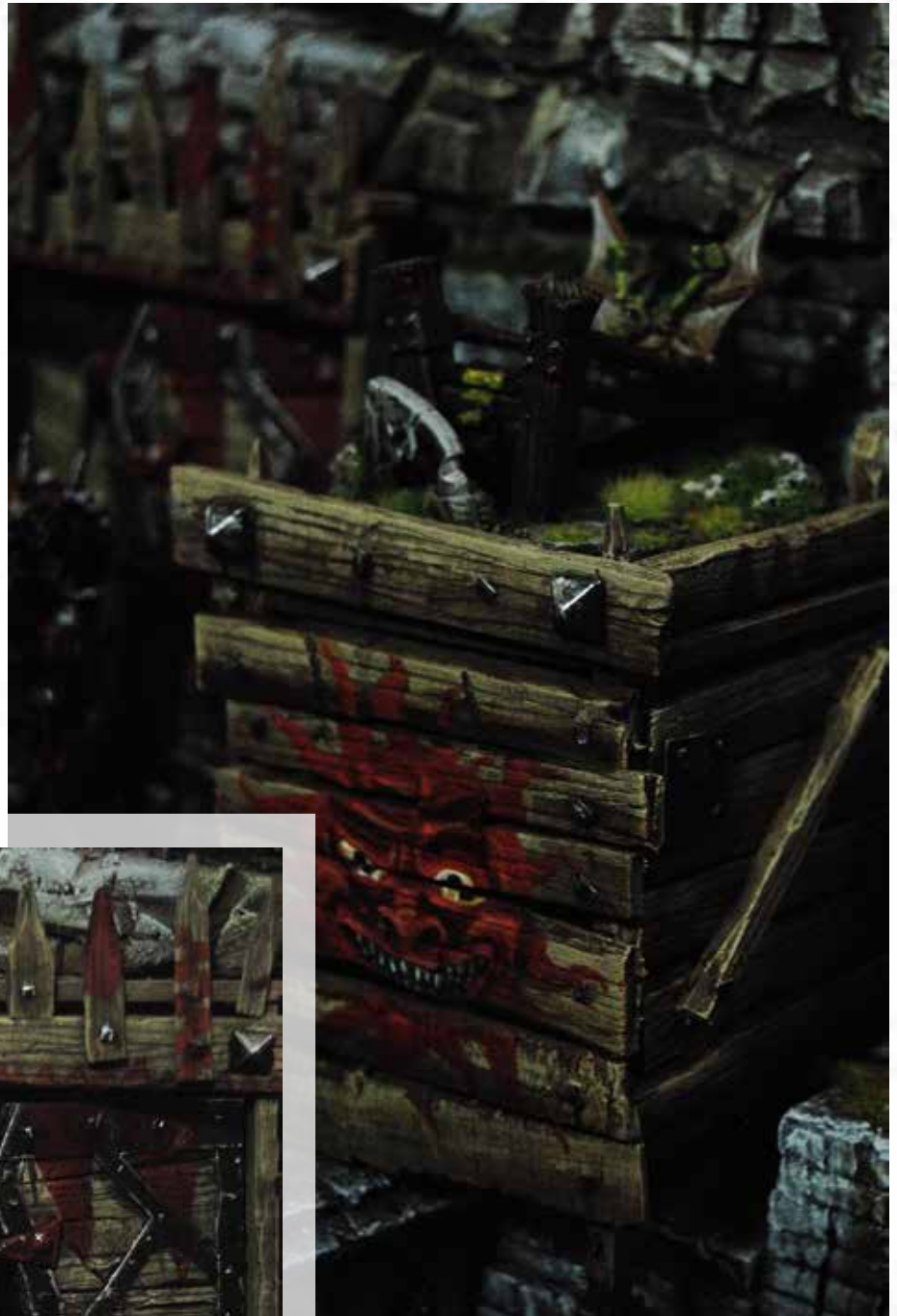
To show the connection to the poisonous and magical presence of mushrooms, I decided to include many unit fillers with giant and gaudy mushrooms that make the units more lively and interesting as well as reinforcing my theme.

The general in this list is an Orc Shaman who lives with cave goblins, eats their mushrooms and became the Red Sun Prophet.

The display in which the army is shown is completely self-built. Interestingly the cost to build the display was very low, but the time taken to build it was significant! I used the polystyrene to build the structure, based on a sketch I made. From there I started from the bottom up by carving out the various pieces.



I wanted to give an impression of a fortress that had been conquered by a threat that came from inside the mountain (a bit like Moria in the Lord of the Rings). To show this, I made cave entrances in the side of the mountain. From these caves, many Gnasher and Cave Goblins come out. I also wanted to build a collapsed mine to give an added character of a dwarven stronghold being partly destroyed during the Cave Goblin attack.



To make the fortress more orcish I added some wooden structures that are clearly made by Orc or Goblin hands. The gate is not masterly crafted and there are equally rough wall paintings which perfectly reflects the indifferent nature of the Orcs and Goblins.

My next project will be the Warboss King Red Sun himself. He will be made from a very big ogre that I am making and will be leading my huge horde of Orcs and Goblins.

This project required a lot of work but the end result is very satisfying. I believe that the greatest satisfaction of this hobby is reached when all the parts that compose it are explored in their fullest, i.e. narrative and background, modelling and gaming.

The 9th Age project has allowed me all these things together and it is the task of the player to also explore this world, to create it in the most epic way possible.





- ♦ *What happens if a Magister/Patriarch eats too many Dark Shards?*

Good gracious! Do you think they eat that stuff? I've never observed it myself, but I have it from almost reliable sources that Dark Shards, those oddly empowered scraps of rock, are the source of much of the Swarm's wilder technologies and practices. Somehow able to store energy, Darkstone is a fascinating invention. Consuming such a substance raw might be considered akin to swallowing a burning coal, or perhaps just an inert piece of rock. Their physiology could be adapted to such things, but I think more likely they have other means of harnessing Darkstone. The rewards must be substantial to risk working with such a volatile substance though, I've heard tales of rotting flesh and destroyed organs resulting from misuse or malfunction.

- ♦ *Who is Prince Estaban and what is his relation to Empress Sophia?*

Not often I hear him granted his title! Estaban may be a Prince technically, yet in Destria he is one of many. Each city state is led by noble families, vying over title and position. The family tree of one city could be called complicated. The whole nation is akin to a thicket of brambles - and just as thorny! Estaban is no doubt a cousin of the Empress, perhaps an uncle too.

- ♦ *How many regions does Sonnstahl have? How many princes?*

A question more complicated than it might appear. Sonnstahl is made up of eight regions, Scharland, Göthen, Breidmark, Vosenland, Köln, Ullsberg, Narrenwald and Aschen. Within each is a tapestry of lands - some ruled by counts, some by prelates, some named princes. Those with the power to warrant it are named Elector and become part of the fabric of the Empire. Those who lose favour, wealth or military strength fall into obscurity. The count of Electors is not fixed - I would suggest consulting the records in Aschau to be certain.

- ♦ *Are Beast Herds, Saurian Ancients and Vermin Swarm connected? All of them are bipedal animalistic humanoids?*

No doubt each would be horrified at the thought they should be defined by humanity's standards! The Saurians have long been believed to be among the oldest of beings, unchanged from the times they claimed dominion over the world.

Beasts have also existed for as long as written, carved or painted documentation can prove, yet theirs is a story of changing appearance. For reasons held closely among themselves, their forms have shifted and adapted over the Ages, never static, always advancing. It is speculated that this ensures the growth and survival of the Herds, which I could well believe.

By contrast to the others, Vermin were never documented before the fall of Avras. In those terrible events, the Swarm arose to dominance in Vetia, an empire forged with a speed that defied all expectation.

I know of no scholar who has managed to prove any clear connection or shared root between these three very different species, but I look forward to reading such a thesis.

- ♦ You say that you do not like to debate the divine, Herr Selig, but perhaps you will permit me one question: the daemons who serve the Dark Gods are well known. Do other gods, such as Sunna or the elven gods, have lesser supernal servants of their own? If so, why are there so few stories of them sending servants of their own to aid their worshippers in battle, like daemons are often reported to do? Do the other gods not send their servants?

Very well, if I must walk those dangerous paths once more, I do so in the name of knowledge. It is known that many gods have supernals who act in their service. Some can be seen at times in the stranger beings of this world. From the medusa and phoenixes of the elves, or the fire spirits of the Infernal Dwarves, there are many beings considered to be agents of the gods.

Stories of their presence in our world are limited in comparison to the daemons of the Dark Gods though, and I have gathered the prevailing theories on why this may be the case.

The Dark Gods and other deities are known to wage their own wars and have their own dealings in the Immortal Realms. If the gods focus on matters of the Immortal, this leaves limited scope to pay attention to affairs in the Mortal Realm.

Meanwhile, the Dark Gods tear at the Veil, while their daemoniac agents cross to further schemes on the other side of the barrier. Whatever their nefarious reasons for crossing into our world, they have persisted for as long as human memory.

Finally, I have heard that the Abyss houses legions of supernals, following the currents of power in that place. Yet with so many rivals arrayed against one another, it is only natural that conflicts spill over into new fields of battle, and our own realm may form part of those eternal power struggles.

Still, legend tells of divine agents crossing the Veil in the service of other gods – devout mortals do not stand alone. Tales of golden angels raining destruction upon heathen foes, or ancestors made manifest to stand against waves of invaders, these bring hope to the faithful in the darkest moments.

Now, enough of subjects that leave me without appetite!

- ♦ *Why do dragons accept to be mounted by so puny riders? Why can't dragons fight on their own, like so many monsters?*

Two questions, yet the answer to one is the answer to the other, a fortuitous event. Twice in my life I have communed with a dragon. Experiences I will never forget. Their eyes burn like braziers, their voices are like thunder vibrating your very bones, and as their mouth opens, all the fires of Hell seem to glow from within.

No common beasts, to be certain. They are as intelligent and dangerous as any prince of elves, king of men or dwarves, or follower of the Dark Gods. Why then should they choose to fight in the wars of other beings? Their reasons are unknown to me, yet I do know they do nothing without cause, albeit the reasons may not become known for many years, if at all.

What I can say though - they do not risk their lives idly. Those who can call upon the services of a drake must observe the same dangers, only by remaining with the dragon is the bargain secured. It has often been speculated who the master is in such an arrangement, and who the servant. Myself, I have no such doubts...

- ♦ *Who is Olaron? Is s/he part of the universal elven pantheon or unique to the Dread Elves?*

As always, divine matters are no simple matter to untangle. I once debated theology with an elf, but unfortunately, I dozed off before she'd explained half of their web of deities and interrelations. Still, from what I recall, Olaron is known by all elves, but only considered to be a true god by the Dread Elves. Should he ever cross the Veil though, I believe we'd all live to regret it, fuelled as he is by a drive to crush the armies of the world.

In case there are barbarians who do not worship the dark gods, whom do they worship? Are there other races or nations that worship them, openly or secretly?

Barbarians covers a very broad range of peoples, some who follow the Dark Gods, or other deities, or a mixed pantheon of both. Of course, the real barbarians are those idiots at the Academy who keep trying to make me lecture to students. Students! The very idea...

Moving on. The Dark Gods do not lend themselves well to a structured nation, so those on the fringes of civilisation make for more fitting worshippers. As for races? Well, the truth is almost any being can choose to pledge their soul. Not in equal proportions - some races resist temptation better than others, and some find less value in the rewards offered. Among the ranks of the Dark followers, elves, men, dwarves, ogres, saurians and many other races have been observed.

- ♦ How and why did King Henry the Young became king?

I suppose it would be too trite to respond: "His father died!". A serious answer then. To understand the full story, you'd have to learn the lives of the last three generations of Equitan nobility. Charles the Strong, Henry's grandfather, was accounted a great king. Under his rule, Equitaine gained much land and wealth over years of crusading. The crowning achievement being the capture of Avras.

One might expect a golden age for a nation after such glories, yet the reversal was swift. Charles' son, Luis, was named "the Meek" for his temperament and fortunes. Within a decade, much of the previous gains had been relinquished. Even Avras pulled away, with General Fontaine renouncing his Equitan loyalties. Meanwhile Sonnstahl forged a union with Destria, intent upon reasserting dominance in Vetia.

After the Battle of Moitiers, Luis fell ill and died shortly after, long before his time. This thrust his son, Henry, into the fore. The Young King has begun well, re-establishing links with Volskaya and proclaiming bold ambitions for his reign. Time will tell the truth of such notions.

- ♦ Who are scraplings in Ogre society? Slaves? Henchmens? Friends? Pets? Why do they live together? Scraplings are goblins or other type of creatures?

If only I charged by the question, I'd be a wealthy man. Or at least less poor! So, the mystery of the scrapling. If I'm honest, I think it might be a mystery only because no one truly cares to ask the question!

Ogres seem to neglect these little fellows, like those birds who pick meat from between the teeth of a crocodile. So long as they don't get in the way, or get ideas above their station, they are tolerated. I'm certain they are even useful occasionally, though I can't imagine why. Still, they are an ever present feature of ogre society.

Nevertheless, I think the answer comes with their name. Most commonly claimed to be because they live on scraps, they seem to work as cleaners and pest control for the most part. Others have even claimed it's because they are composed of the scraps of other peoples. In truth, I have heard many terms for the type of creatures making up the scraplings. Some say goblin, others halfling, kobold, brownies and so on. Should I ever be inclined to look more closely, I shall attempt a more comprehensive summary.

COMPANY SHOWCASE: RAGING HEROES

Article by Henrypmiller



Who are Raging Heroes, where are you from and what do you do?

Raging Heroes is a group of intergalactic pirates coming from another dimension. We usually spend our time raiding space cargos passing through the Tannhauser Gate, but when we have some down time, we like to settle in our Raging Lair in the south of France and design badass heroines and troops based on characters we met on our past adventures!

Why are you inspired to make models for the 9th age and other games?

For many years, I felt like I could not really find many of the miniatures I was looking for. Me and My wife (and CEO of Raging Heroes) Mireille and I come from a movie-making background and we wanted to bring the richness of movie character design and character development to the wargaming world. We especially felt that there was not a lot on the market if you were looking for nice female characters. And that's how everything snowballed. Of course, we design our characters have their own stories. We have a very rich universe you can discover in our upcoming games. Nevertheless, it was very clear from the start that one of Raging Heroes mission was to provide something that would serve the whole wargaming community and not only people who would end up playing our own games.

What drew you to the 9th age as a game system that would be relevant for your miniatures?

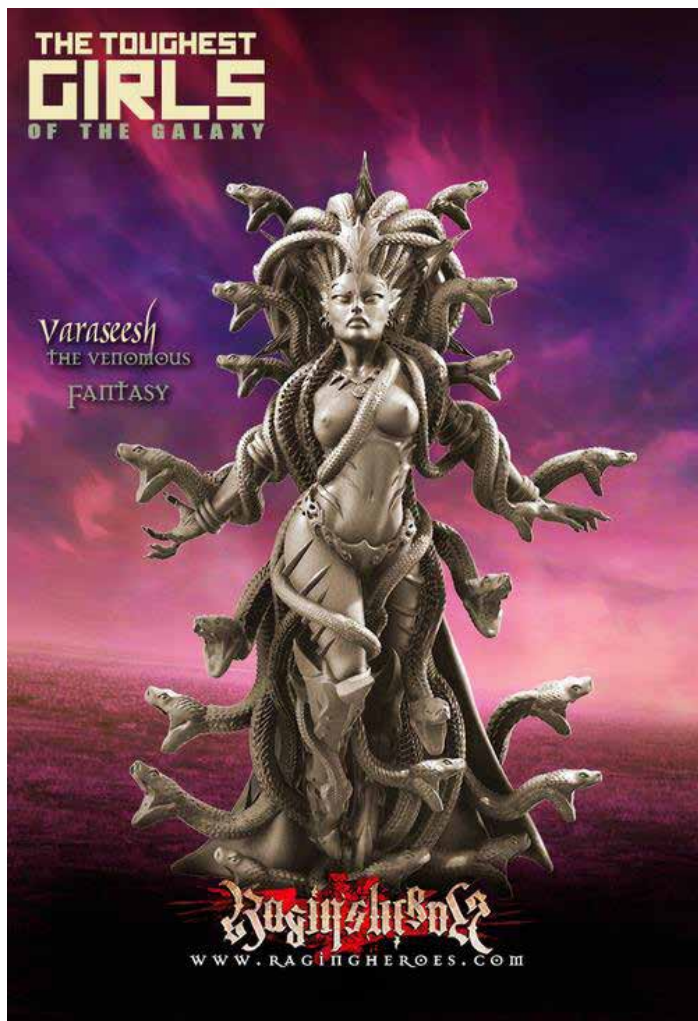
One of the very first concepts I had in mind for Raging Heroes 10 years ago was to change the look of rank and file units for fantasy mass combat game. I really dislike the very uniform and somewhat lifeless arrangement of many units you commonly see; I wanted units to look like they were in full action mode, charging into combat or taunting their opponent with an attitude. I wanted each unit to look like a mini-diorama.



I know this is something that has become a much more accepted practice now, but at that time it was very new. However, I think that to this day, we are the only company who design their units with that idea in mind. The 9th age is a perfect system to take advantage of that idea.

What miniatures do you currently have in your product range(s)?

We have a range that spans across Fantasy and Scifi. We have about 500 individual minis in total. For the 9th age we have a very wide selection of models perfect for Dread Elves. We stock models for most of the troops and units you might need plus some gorgeous heroines for your characters.





We also have a very unique army of pleasure demons which blend exquisite sophistication and utter creepiness. These would be perfect for a lust themed Daemon legions army! We keep on reading comments that say we are the only brand who make that type of army as it is supposed to be.



We also have a wonderful knights / sisters army, proud, elegant and powerful, they kick butts with tons of class! Lastly, we also have a few miniatures for Wood Elves, Imperial, Vampire or Chaos players.

What makes your models different to other miniature companies?

Our clients are always very excited by the level of detail they get on our minis. We get many emails saying how they look even more lively and detailed when you get them in your hands.

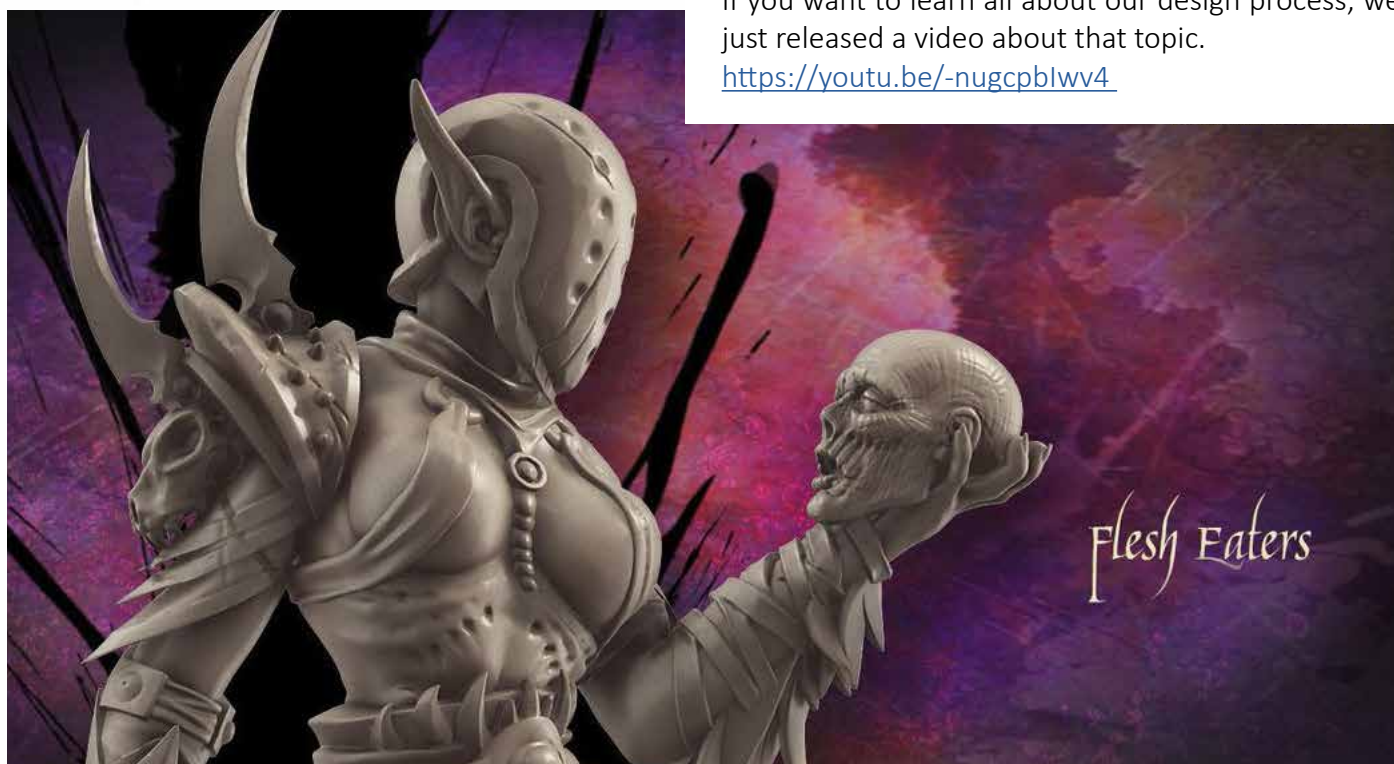
Also we work a lot on giving them character and creating very expressive posing, whether it's for charging super agile troops like our Mantis or Blood Vestals or stern and dominant looking ones like the Flesh Eaters.

We like to think that a "simple" Raging Heroes trooper could easily pass for a minor Heroine in another miniature company's range because of the intricacy and level of details and ornaments on each model.

That's what happened with our Angels or Death Dancers. We kept having people asking us to buy them individually, so we finally gave in and are now offering them as troops as well as individual characters.

If you want to learn all about our design process, we just released a video about that topic.

<https://youtu.be/-nugcpblwv4>



Does Raging Heroes have any future release plans you can share with us with regards to models that could be used for the 9th Age?

We have a new unit of fantasy sisters coming out in about a month. They will make a perfect unit of Knights on Foot but we know people will even want to use some of them as heroines as they look so cool.

They are your typical Knights on foot but with a Raging Heroes touch. 9th Age players will surely love them but we are also sure that female role players will finally get the paladin figure they've always wanted!

We also have a full range of units in the works that will soon come slithering through the battlefield. They will be perfect for your Dark Elf or Lust God army. And then are freaking epic! But I can't say more at this time.

Will you be working closer with the 9th Age to make more specific models for the game?

Yes! We are definitely working in that direction. We'll soon be producing some heroines that would perfectly fit the 9th Age universe. We just need to investigate a bit more about how we would do that, but it's coming!

Furthermore some of the Dark Gods within the Raging Heroes universe are based on the Seven Sins in the same way as the Dark Gods in the 9th Age. You can already find our Gluttony hero and Daemon models and more will come in the future.

What is your favourite miniature that you have made so far and what inspired you to create this?

Mmmm, tough question. There are several we love for very different reasons. The Altar of the Succubi is the kind of crazy, gigantic project that you just know you have to build, even if it's insane on all level. Being able to produce such a complex piece was a seriously rewarding accomplishment.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there is Tim, Tam & Tom, the 3 little kids who act as a standard bearer for the Daughters of the Orphanage. It is such a different miniature, I don't think you find something similar in other ranges. This miniature was intended to create one of the mini dioramas I mentioned before. I wanted to change the usual representation of a standard or a musician so I could give a completely different vibe to the unit.

We also are very proud of our daughters of the crucible, our Flesh Eaters, our Draahk Riders, it's really hard to tell really. I think our favorites change every week!

Where is the best place to find and purchase Raging Heroes Models?

You can find our whole range at www.ragingheroes.com and we ship worldwide! If you subscribe to our newsletter, you are sure to get some pretty awesome deals, discounts and info before everybody else:

<http://bit.ly/RagingHeroesNews>



We are very excited to present the Raging Heroes' range to the 9th age community. We have a great customer service ready to help you so don't hesitate to be in contact and we'll be happy to answer your questions.

May our miniatures bring you luck on the battlefield!

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SISTERS OF THE ORPHANAGE

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SISTER *Marotte DesBels*

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KICKSTARTER



A MINIATURE REVIEW: ZEALOT MINIATURES

Article by
Guardbro Miniature Reviews

As you grow as a modeler and a gamer, your taste in models changes rapidly. This can make us fussy with what we buy and who we buy from. Personally, I have a constant curiosity to sample companies from all over the world to see what they have to offer.

Zealot Miniatures is a little-known miniature company. They were the company from whom I bought my tiny goblets, books, and other such knick-knacks that I wanted in order to decorate my other models. In this respect, Zealot Miniatures is a pioneering company. They take advantage of technology to expedite the process of model creation. Their small accessories and other such accoutrements are usually more highly detailed than others on the market, right down to the fruit baskets. When I saw that they were going to make some actual hero type models, I was excited to get my hands on them first!



Months passed and having forgotten I had placed an order, a tiny box arrived but I had no idea what was inside of it. After opening it up I was flabbergasted that I saw it was from Zealot Miniatures! My first thought was that I had ordered some more jack-o-lanterns or similar accessories, but instead I pulled out these crispy and finely detailed models.



After recording a video I set to putting them together, which was a painless task and required very little flash/mould line trimming. What was most refreshing was that these models were all female and actually looked like they were female (instead of looking like a man in a dress). I'm sure you will all agree that some older female sculpts from many companies look like Johnny was trying to smuggle grapefruit on the battlefield under his chain mail or power armour. I could tell at a distance that Zealot Miniatures had succeeded in creating models with fine feminine faces.

Not only did I receive some Conan-esque sword slugger, but also a dwarf! A female dwarf model that doesn't look overly masculine is hard to come by and this models' fighter armour has a refreshing feminine fit. There were two elves as well, a Highborn Elf wizard and a Sylvan Elf archer. The Highborn's face was a decent sculpt, but the Sylvan she-elf stole the show! When it comes down to minute details, right down to the pointy tips of her ears, this fae-lady is a masterpiece. There is also a discussion to be had over how cut her abs were and how inferior it made me feel, but that's for another time.



Zealot Miniature's website lists them for 6.50 euro a piece! I was shocked that they were selling such fine models for such a low price, and it got me even more curious about what else they could come out with in the future. Zealot Miniatures has a strong chance of grinding their way into the mini market and easily shouldering Games workshop out of the way just on price point alone, let alone quality.

If you are looking for a hero type model on the cheap and cast out of fine resin, you would be remiss if you didn't grab one from Zealot Miniatures when they go on sale. While the Highborn Elf is not anything particularly special in its sculpt, the human, Sylvan Elf, and Dwarf are must buys if you are collecting those factions.

Keep a strong dice hand and happy war gaming!
Guardbro Miniature Reviews. Find us on Youtube!

<https://youtu.be/dCPeIwFvbXA>

LITTLE JOE'S TERRAIN WORKSHOP

Article by Little Joe

Welcome to the final article for this series on terrain for the 9th Age. By now, there has been an article on all the different terrain type except water. So, let's get started on that!

The Rules

Regarding the core rules for water terrain, there is not much we need to consider for terrain building. Water terrain is wet and nasty to be in, especially for infantry. There are some rules to observe. Water terrain does not block line of sight or provide cover. If we also consider the rules in the "Lands of the 9th Age," supplement, there are mostly variations on whom the terrain is dangerous for and how it affects being flammable. Therefore, when keeping the rules in mind, we can essentially stick to the basic water terrain rules.

Challenges

Basically, water terrain is a flat template for dangerous terrain tests, potentially influencing steadfast troops and affecting the flammable rule. This makes it ideal for 2D terrain and by far the simplest way to construct water terrain is to print it on paper. There are very good mouse mat water terrain solutions available as well. The quality of printed terrain shines with water terrain features and this means that the standard of homemade water terrain can be quite high.

Really flat terrain is hard to make when building terrain, especially for T9A where terrain has a large footprint. Water is often transparent, which requires depth, yet you are trying to make this as flat as possible. To create this effect, a thin layer of translucent material over printed or painted water and shore can add the little extra we are aiming for. There is also a lot that can be done by embellishing the water terrain just above the surface.

Inspiration

This is where the new terrain from the "Lands of the 9th Age" expands the creative horizon by providing rules to change gameplay when building your vision of a battlefield. Usually water terrain is modelled as a body of standing water. Depending on geography and chemicals in the environment, you get ponds and lakes in all colors of the rainbow. Have a look at Kawah Ijen, Salcantay, Peyto Lake, Pink Lake, Hells of Bepu, Laguna Colorada, Grand Prismatic Spring or the Morning Glory Pool. As well as colourful lakes, tar pits or oil slicks contain black or dark liquids. Swamps can also give you lots of greens and browns to play around with.



A lake consisting of water will have debris and rotting plant material at the bottom, possibly fed by a bubbling spring. On the other hand, a man-made (or elf-made) basin might be kept clean and could have a fancy fountain and multiple spouts to add to the aesthetics. Moreover, interesting items in, or at the borders of the water feature give you great options to make characterful water terrain. Springs, fallen trees, dead or living fish, whirlpools and most likely rocks will add a lot to how your terrain looks. Water terrain does not always need to be organically shaped. Trajan's lake is hexagonal, an elven swimming pool could be heart shaped and an Ancient Saurian spawning pool could be any shape at all!



Further obvious inspiration comes from the climate and the season. Water in a normal environment can have all three basic aggregate states (solid ice, liquid water and steam). This adds even more interesting possibilities for your water terrain. Iceland has hot springs and geysers in a mostly snowy environment, and mixing aggregate states gives you interesting textures to use. Lake Malawi has huge smooth rock features you can see in the water. In a fantasy setting you can show anything you want just under the surface. Think about adding sunken ruins, hidden treasure, sirens or ghostly figures. There are also many other interesting natural water features like Lake Kaindy where organic things are half submerged. A frosty lake may contain the remains of those that attempted to cross it and froze. A lava tongue will have cooled down rock on top.

Then there is flowing water terrain; rivers and canals. A river flows freely and has a ragged shoreline whereas a canal is straight and structured. Here the task to keep it flat is even more challenging. With rivers, it is possible to use multiple pieces to combine and influence how to strategically use the battlefield. Adding impassible rapids, shallow crossings, bridges etc. can force interesting decisions during a game. Rivers also carry lava, mud streams and many other strange things. Some examples could be molten metal from a Dwarven forge, blood canals from a Dread Elf sacrificial chamber, human waste from a sewer and much more. Maybe rivers of Dwarven ale are the best?

Creating Water Terrain

What we see on a lot of tables is poured resin or water effects to represent water. I am a bit apprehensive of liquid resin, having tried many water effects, and I am yet to see one that works without insane amounts of work due to pouring thin layers. I would like to showcase an interesting and very simple alternative with Plexiglas. At the same time, I will use this tutorial to test fancy lighting in flat terrain on a couple of extra "test lakes".

Basic materials needed:

- 5mm Plexiglas
- 6mm MDF (ask for cheap off cuts)
- Thin cardboard, such as in cereal boxes
- Clay
- Sand
- PVA (wood or white glue)

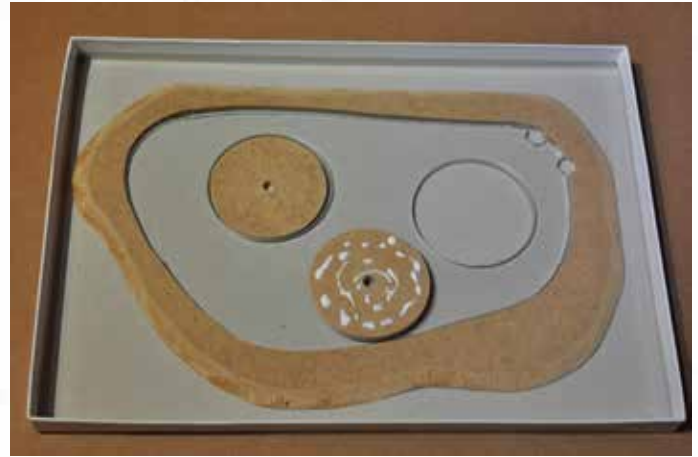
Tools used: drill, jigsaw, standard sculpting tool and hobby brushes



For the "test lakes" I also used green stuff gel (medium), snow powder (ground wax), white glitter and a blue LED with a battery holder.

To cut the basic shapes, start by clamping the Plexiglas and MDF together. I did not want to cut into the edge, so I needed to drill holes to get started. I then cut out the basic lake-shape in both the plexiglass and MDF simultaneously with a jigsaw. I also made some circular inlays to act as islands in the lake. Having the materials clamped together ensures the inlays made will fit without issues. After cutting out all the shapes, cleaning the edges of the Plexiglas and beveling the edges of the MDF you are ready to go. When building terrain with children, I would recommend preparing the MDF and Plexiglas in advance.

Glue the MDF onto the cardboard using dots of PVA. This will dry very fast and bond well, so there is no need to use a lot of glue. By using Plexiglas (5mm) and MDF (6mm) of slightly different thickness, there will be a small height difference between water and land. 6mm MDF is already rather thick. I prefer terrain with a bit of weight and with little flexibility for storage. You can go down to 4 and 3mm if you want to.



On the test pieces for the fancy lighting, I did a light test and checked that the LED worked. I bought the LEDs and battery holder directly from China. You can get whole batches for the price of buying locally. To really fixate the wires, I used Green stuff (A CR2032 battery lasts a few gaming nights). Fill the gaps between MDF and Plexiglas with clay on one side to hold the pieces in place. At this point we still need to be able to remove the Plexiglas. Gaps up to 1mm are not a problem, those are easy to hide later on.



The secret to nice water terrain is in the (painted or printed) image under the waterline. This stage will determine most what your terrain will look like. Luckily there is no need to be tidy at any stage so have at it and splash the colors of choice onto your terrain. As you can see, I was not being neat at all and used overbrushing to quickly get many greens, browns and blues mixed into the water. You can see that the result is rather patchy and does not look like water at all right now. The edges have a dark brown color because wet sand is dark.



Next, I glued sand on top and sealed it with a 1:3 mix of PVA and water. The edges look messy but all that matters is that the Plexiglas is attached without using glue underneath. Pressure from the clay applied earlier and a messy overhang with sand should lock it into place.



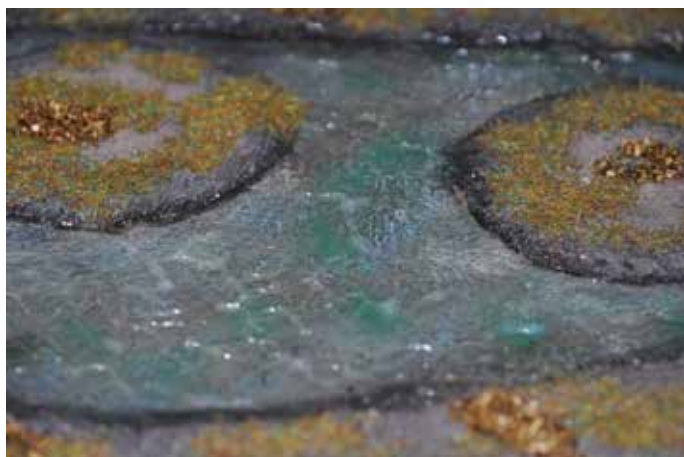
I then painted the terrain the same way as described in the previous tutorials. I did not paint the Plexiglas, but having a few dabs and splashes of color on top adds depth. If you get too much paint on it from dry-brushing the shore, wait a bit and then rub it off with a paper towel. This ensures that some of it stays on. At the water's edge I then applied a small amount of black ink and rubbed in some of the base color. This blacklining will hide 90% of the untidy edges. A brown ink or wash will be better for most uses; black gives a bit more contrast for images.

The surface of water is not as smooth as Plexiglas; the easy way to fix this is a messy layer of PVA on top. I used art gel (medium) to get a more uneven surface on the pond. On the "test lakes", after applying snow powder I used a wet brush to clear some of the Plexiglas in a pattern of stripes and push more snow to the edge. The snow powder I use needs three layers but you get a nice transition from frost to snow. As a final highlight I added white glitter, it makes the snow much more dynamic.

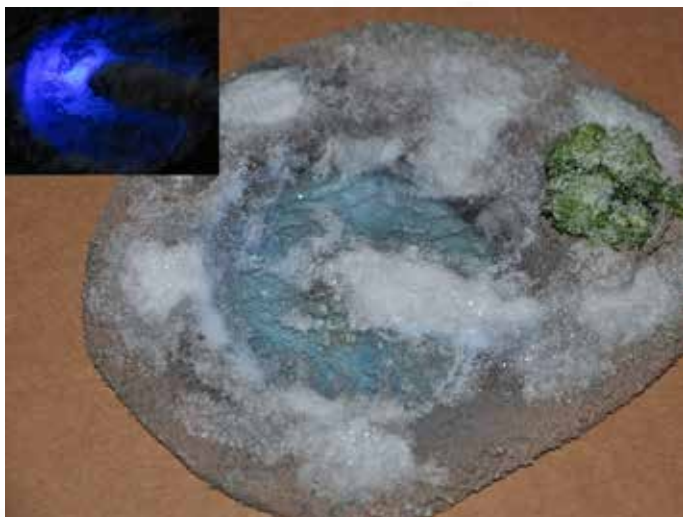


The lake was flocked in the same way as the other terrain of the series and the same additional textures and layers were added.

The combination of 2 layers of paint under and on the Plexiglas, the clear thickness of the Plexiglas and the light breaking effect of the sealing layer with medium gel creates an overall effect that looks like water.



The water of the lake came out very well. The combination of many effects makes it look realistic from a gaming position (where it matters most). This is a vast improvement on my old ponds which were color prints on MDF. I think that I will need to try a combination of these techniques in the future. You could even have a high-resolution custom art print behind Plexiglas and get those laser cut to size, which would be expensive but very realistic.



The tests of the lighting effect worked relatively well. It is subtle, yet provides enough light to not be a distraction. It mostly shows when you sit at the table. With a red LED this would work very well for lava effects. Fixing a hole in the middle is no problem at all and does not show even on the test piece where I just covered a small area with snow. Adding lights is a great way to help identify scenarios or play in the gloom.



This concludes the basic series on terrain for the 9th Age. Below you can see my complete terrain set from this tutorial. This is enough to play a game and a good start to build a collection.

More Complex Terrain

Where to go from here? HPM: I already have a task in mind for you! The 9th Age has different terrain needs for other facets of the game. The quick starter rules could be interesting to make specific terrain for. The “Lands of the 9th Age” expansion also has hundreds of options to inspire. Furthermore, terrain for tournaments is quite often very flat, and that is an interesting topic to delve into. Lastly there are advanced techniques that I would like to explore. If there is something of particular interest our readers would like to read about, feel free to get in touch on the forum.

Happy terrain building!

BONDY VS THE ETC: PART II

Article by Chris Bond

In the last few months, preparation for the ETC has begun and is starting to ramp up. The team has been discussing what armies we want to take into the event and the general roles we want each player to fulfil in the team. This generally includes an average tournament points per game that the team would expect each player to be achieving during the event. As my army and target has been clear from the beginning, I have already chosen what I believe to be solid backbone for my list. My task now is to develop the list from this backbone and involves experimenting with the 800 or so points that I have left over to spend.



Without going into the details of my list, I have attended two events with different iterations. These tournament games have provided me with a much clearer view of what I need from the last 800 points of the list. This isn't really something you can do when just theory-hammering. As a bonus, I won one of the events! Unfortunately, the larger of those two events proved to be the less successful one.

list iteration and events with a much better idea of what the final 800 points needs to bring to the list which I think lends itself well to success in the future!

Art of War, an 80-man event in Bristol, provided me with plenty of opportunity to test the list against a good range of armies and against some ETC-standard players. In particular I found that with the changes made to my list after my win at the Masters Open event, I was not able to push as effectively or deal with ranked units as well. I've judged this to be an insufficient trade off for the speed and threat range brought by including a unit of Kestrel Knights. This realisation was the result of a huge loss game 2, where an early game advantage quickly turned into a disaster once I tried to consolidate and push for a bigger win. Naturally, my tactics in an actual ETC game would have been much more conservative; but understanding the limitations of certain choices and being punished for tactical mistakes is imperative in building a strong list and in my development as a player. Overall, despite mixed success, I'm starting my next





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