

## Reinventing An Old Friend - Rekindling The Passion For Old School Rules

Way back in the early 1980s when double-sided photocopying was at the cutting edge of wargame rule production, I happened on a set of ancient wargame rules.

Two likely lads by the names of Adams and Clarke from the Sheffield University Wargames Club persuaded me to buy a dozen or so copies of *Hoplite Warfare* for the wargame shop I helped run in Oxford Street in London.

I liked some of the mechanics, but I particularly liked the idea of the rules covering a fairly narrow time frame (650-330BC). The oddest thing about the rules was the randomly generated table top armies that were created using the army lists at the back of the fifty page ruleset. You threw ten sets of dice to randomly create ten units from each of the army lists. This system would create some weird anomalies like a Spartan army consisting of 120 mercenary archers or a matching Athenian one with 50 cavalry. In theory, the army lists meant that in order to play you could need 10 units of everything on the army list, just in case. In the days when we lugged our armies around in pressed steel tool boxes you'd need some native bearers in tow if you were attending a club night.

I never got to use *Hoplite Warfare* in anger. Neither did I get the chance to try out the supplement *Hellenistic Warfare* which took the rules on to 146BC. No, they lay dormant in an old filing cabinet until an abortive search for some articles I had torn out of *Military Modelling* magazines thirty years ago revealed them once again. This time, my 1982 vintage rules were feasible. I had vast Greek armies, more than enough to cope with the vagaries of any bizarre army list die rolling.

Then reality set in. At a fairly sparing 33 pages, the actual rules were over-fussy. There were 37 factors alone to consider when you needed a unit to take a morale test. In fact, this figure, if you took into account the six different morale classes, rose to a staggering 222! Worst of all was the prospect of returning to the chore of keeping track of casualties. The rules had been written in the heyday of one figure equalling twenty men. So, you never removed a figure until 20 casualties had been racked up. Since I had originally based the Greek armies to match a version of *Hail Caesar* I had put together, I would not contemplate rebasing. Rebasing is something you should *NEVER* consider for a moment. If the rules can't be adapted to suit your existing basing either they are not the rules for you or you need to amend them!

I was beginning to wonder whether anything could actually be salvaged from the old set of rules. If I changed them too much they wouldn't have any of characteristics that attracted me to them in the first place. Besides, the unconscious decision to hang on to them all these years (and believe me I have divested myself of countless rule sets and literally thousands of figures) spoke volumes. I had copied and pasted the key tables and created my own bespoke "quick reference" sheets, these ran to seven pages! I had my work cut out if I was ever going to use them.

I hope what follows serves as an impetus to others who love a set of old-fashioned rules and yearn to update them. So many sets of perfectly good rules seem too retro these days. I played hundreds of games with the renaissance set *Tercio*, many more with *WRG Ancients*, *Laserburn* science fiction and of course, the legendary (with skull bursting mathematics) *Reaper* fantasy rules.

## The conversion process

### General principles

A number of conventions have been applied to bring the rules up to date:

1. Most close order infantry units consist of five bases of around 4-6 figures
2. Normal and open order infantry are individually based. Movement trays are used to combine open order infantry into normal order units.
3. Cavalry are individually based (movement trays might be desirable for larger units)
4. Close order casualties are expressed as bases, normal and open as multiples of five figures
5. Generals are based on circular bases with other command figures
6. Units such as chariots and artillery are not considered (although they would be easy to fit in)

### Movement

Not much you can get wrong with movement is there? Well yes actually, the original rules had two types of infantry base densities. They recommended basing peltasts and others like them on single bases. They could be deployed base to base and move as close order infantry or spread out and move as open order infantry. For simplicity's sake I created a normal order category. The idea being that when they were ranked up they didn't operate in tight formations like close order troops or far apart like open order ones. The rules were developed for 25mm figures, so 28mm is no issue either. No reason to worry about metric movement when good old inches work fine!

Troop Type	Normal Movement	Charge Bonus	Notes
Close order infantry	6	2	Mainly hoplites, pikes and other closely packed troops
Normal order infantry	7	2	Peltasts, Thracians and other loose order troops
Open order infantry	8	2	Archers, slingers and javelin throwers
Close order cavalry	12	6	Macedonian cavalry, heavier Persian horse and other cavalry fighting in tight order
Open order cavalry	16	8	Skirmishing and scouting horse, Persian and Scythian mounted archers and others
Generals	6 or 7 /12 or 16	2, 6 or 8	A general should move at the same speed as the majority of the army or the bodyguard.

The one thing you may have noticed is that rough ground, olive groves and other terrain isn't really cover here. As a rule of thumb, reduce movement by half to get the right kind of effect.

## Drill manoeuvres

One of the things that attracted me to the rules was the simple and elegant way of categorising units, but more of that later. Drill manoeuvres cover things such as expanding the frontage of the unit, wheeling, turning and doubling files. The original rules were overly obsessed with geometry and needed simplification, so I opted for the following:

Unit Training Class	Time taken to perform manoeuvre
A	Quarter Turn
B	Half Turn
C	Three Quarters of Turn
D	Full Turn

I think the key to this is the fact that any kind of direction or formation change counts as a manoeuvre.

## Classification of Troops

This was one of my favourite rule features. In a combination of three or four letters and numbers, everything you needed to know (apart from armour, shield and weapon, so I suppose not everything in the literal sense) was summarised. There was no real need to change any of this, so to summarise the key points:

Morale Class	Explanation
A	Very steady, extremely good quality troops
B	Sound, good quality troops
C	Somewhat unreliable troops
D	Poor troops, very unreliable
X	Over-enthusiastic troops, those with an overly high opinion of their own qualities
Y	Blood thirsty and unpredictable barbarians

Training Class	Explanation
A	Well drilled – guard troops and those with lots of experience
B	Good drill – troops that have been trained on a regular basis
C	Average drill – troops that have had some sort of annual service
D	Poor drill – virtually untrained with little experience

For infantry, there are nine classes of fighting or close combat ability (1-9) and for cavalry four (1-4). For those units armed with firing weapons, there are three classes (1-3) of shooting ability.

As a general rule of thumb and to get you started if you fancy converting your forces over to this set of rules, skirmishers tend to have fighting abilities of between 1 and 3. Peltasts (and not so good close order troops) tend to be either 4 or 5. The factors 6-9 are usually reserved for close order troops with the really good ones at the top end.

Typically, a top quality Spartan hoplite would be A9A (A class morale, 9 class fighting ability and A class for drill). A helot hoplite in the same army might be classed as D6C. Thracian peltasts are

typically Y5D2 (blood thirsty with average fighting ability, poor drill and reasonable shooting ability). Dodgy levy archers in a Persian force might boast D1D2!

### Armour and shields

Nice and simple, troops are either armoured or not. Typically this means having some sort of torso armour or not. There are armoured horses too which cover barded steeds. Most troops (with the exception of some archers, slingers or javelin men) have shields. Open order troops count as being shielded all around, regardless of the direction being attacked or fired upon; close or normal order units count as shielded to their front and their left. They are unshielded to their rear or right.

### Turns and Generals

Typically for the period this was UGIG. I incorporated aspects of the optional rules on the personality of the general and created a different system. It was still UGIG, but had variations:

Die Roll	Type of General	Characteristics	Turn Order Modifier
1	Heroic and Inspiring	Must be attached to a front line unit, allows one unit to ignore morale test each turn. Will not rout if attached unit is lost, will reattach to nearest friendly unit.	+1
2	Heroic	Must be attached to a front line unit, will stand ground and fight if attached unit is lost *	+1
3	Maniacal	Must order the army to close to hand-to-hand at earliest opportunity. Cannot order a friendly unit to withdraw	+2
4	Normal	No additional impact	None
5	Normal	No additional impact	None
6	Normal	No additional impact	None
7	Inspiring	In encounter battles will always choose table edge to set up the army.	+1
8	Cowardly	May not engage in hand-to-hand combat. Will withdraw if unit attached to is charged	-1
9,10	Figurehead	As above, but choose table edge to set up the army.	

\* When in solitary combat, the general will roll a D6. 1-3 no effect, 4-6 kills one base of enemy. Attacker then rolls, 1-2 no effect, 3-4 General withdraws, 5-6 General killed.

When creating generals, roll one D6, and then add +4 for a Persian, +1 for a barbarian (non-Greek).

To determine which army goes first, roll a D6 and then add any Turn Order Modifiers. In the event of a draw, Greek armies will always go first, otherwise if there is a draw, roll again.

Dead generals are not a good thing. If this should happen, the army will gradually react. The original rules were pretty vague about this "when a unit realises" was the phrase. If the general is killed start with the nearest unit and in each successive turn test the next closest and so on. If a unit in the

previous turn routed, then deduct one from the dice roll. If a unit in the previous turn got a revenge result then add one to the dice roll. In all instances use a D6:

Dice Roll	A Morale	Y Morale	B Morale	C Morale	D Morale	X Morale
1	Rout	Rout	Rout	Rout	Rout	Rout
2	Obey Orders	Rout	Rout	Rout	Rout	Rout
3	Obey Orders	Rout	Obey Orders	Rout	Rout	Rout
4	Obey Orders	Revenge	Obey Orders	Obey Orders	Rout	Rout
5	Revenge	Revenge	Revenge	Obey Orders	Obey Orders	Revenge
6	Revenge	Revenge	Revenge	Revenge	Revenge	Revenge

Rout means just that. If the unit is in hand-to-hand combat it will break off and the enemy will have to test to see if it pursues. Otherwise the unit will turn and move back one move (including the charge bonus). It can then test its morale next turn.

Revenge for a unit in combat increases its fighting ability by one for the rest of the battle (up to a maximum of 9). Units ignore morale tests for two turns.

A typical turn means moving and firing and then working out the results of combat. Normally morale tests are taken at the end of the turn.

### Morale Tests

Given the complexity of the original set, there were elements worth saving, but the enormous number of factors (which differed according to the morale class of the unit) needed streamlining.

The occasions when morale tests were necessary have also been streamlined:

1. First time in charge distance of the enemy (i.e. they can charge you, not the other way around)
2. The unit wants to charge or is being charged or is being fired at for the first time
3. A unit has lost a round of hand-to-hand combat
4. A unit sees a friendly unit rout within 15 inches
5. A unit has already routed and wants to rally.
6. A target has lost a base from shooting or combat

The procedure is to use three dice. For A and B class morale units count 1s as 3s and 6s as 4s (i.e. 6, 5, 5 counts as 4, 5, 5 totalling 14). If you have any, you can use average dice. C, D, X and Y units use three ordinary D6s.

Let's have a look at the simplified morale factors:

Morale modifier for each	Factors
+1	Unit advancing Each enemy unit retiring within 12"
+2	Each enemy unit routing within 12"
+3	Attempting to charge into contact General is with unit (or within 6")
-1	Infantry pushed back once in combat Each enemy unit charging the unit Unit is halted due to morale test
-2	Infantry pushed back twice in combat Cavalry pushed back once in combat Unit trying to recover from rout Unit is disorganised Enemy charging to flank or rear and unit engaged frontally
-3	Infantry pushed back three or more times in combat Cavalry pushed back more than once in combat

Only fifteen factors; this is still quite a lot but a big difference from the original 222!

Here is the modified Morale Results table. Remember to add or subtract the modifiers from your die rolls to get the right result:

Modified Die Roll	Result	Effects on different units
16+	Unit must advance to contact. Unit rallies from rout.	C/D class trained units will become disorganised in second or subsequent advance to contact
6-15	Unit obeys orders. Unit rallies from rout.	
4-5	Unit halts Unit rallies from rout.	Open order units may evade if they are charged.
3	Unit retires. Unit breaks and routs if it has been pushed back in hand-to-hand combat	Routers reduce fighting ability by 1 for the rest of the battle (to a minimum of 1).
1-2	Unit retires. Unit breaks and routs if it has been pushed back in hand-to-hand combat	Routers reduce fighting ability by 2 for the rest of the battle (to a minimum of 1).
0	Unit retires. Unit breaks and routs if it has been pushed back in hand-to-hand combat	Routers reduce fighting ability by 3 for the rest of the battle (to a minimum of 1).
-1 or less	Unit retires disorganised. Unit breaks and routs if it has been pushed back in hand-to-hand combat	Routers reduce fighting ability by 4 for the rest of the battle (to a minimum of 1).

Retire means falling back half a normal move until the unit is either within 6" of a friendly close order unit not retiring or is in base to base contact with a general.

Halt means stopping until a morale test is taken next turn. A halt can be ignored if a general moves to base to base contact with the unit.

Disorganised means that the unit must spend a full turn attempting to get back into some sort of order, otherwise disorganisation has an impact on fighting and firing.

Pushed back simply means having lost a round of combat or the unit has been beaten back by fire.

Rout means moving back a full charge move. The unit will continue to rout (and off the table) unless a general can get into base to base contact with it or it comes to within 6" of two friendly units that are not routing.

### Personal combat and shooting at generals

Sometimes generals sought one another out and on other occasions they exposed themselves to unnecessary risk. I have adapted the original rules for a bit more fun:

For hand-to-hand combat between generals throw a D6 and add one for each of the following: a maniacal general, a heroic general, a mounted general, the first round of combat. Each general rolls and adds any modifiers. If one general scores 2 or greater than a hit has been scored. If no hits are scored, then both generals must agree to a second round, but if one general withdraws he will no longer trigger a revenge result in the event of his death (the category below revenge then applies).

Similarly, a unit can opt to fire at a general. The general must be 3" from a friendly unit and in range. Use the following table to determine hits:

Shooting Ability	1-2	3-4	5	6
1	Missed	Missed	Missed	1 hit
2	Missed	Missed	General forced to retire	1 hit
3	Missed	General forced to retire	1 hit	2 hits

For each hit scored roll 1D6:

D6 score	Result
1-2	General wounded; if mounted is unhorsed, if on foot may only move at half speed
3-4	General wounded and is captured.
5-6	General killed

### Weapon Ranges and Shooting

The only real problem with the weapon ranges was the rather mean 4" range for javelins, but this had consequences for the other ranges. There seemed too great a disparity between the sling range

(18") and the javelin range, so both needed to be changed. This also meant that the bow ranges needed some reduction too:

Weapon	Maximum Range
Javelin	6"
Sling	12"
Horse bow	12"
Foot bow	18"

With the major change away from fractions of 20 being used to calculate casualties, there were some major changes necessary to the casualty table, but the main shooting factors could be largely retained (with some slight changes). The modifiers affecting shooting also needed to be seriously pruned:

Shooting Ability	Shooting Against			
	Armoured Infantry	Unarmoured Infantry	Armoured Cavalry	Unarmoured Cavalry
3	2	3	3	4
2	1	2	2	3
1	0	1	1	2

Shooting modifier for each	Factors
+1	Armoured infantry that cannot use shield
+2	Unarmoured infantry that cannot use shield Target is more than 1 base deep
-1	Target has moved over 6" Target in open order Cavalry with horse armour
-2	Target in cover (woods, wall, building etc.)

One of the features of the original rules was the random factor applied to shooting and to combat, it looked a little old-fashioned; it also used morale as a firing factor which seemed odd. Instead, the firing should be affected by training:

Training	1 Thrown	2 Thrown	3 Thrown	4 Thrown	5 Thrown	6 Thrown
A	-1	0	0	+1	+1	+2
B	-1	-1	0	0	+1	+1
C	-2	-1	-1	0	0	+1
D	-2	-2	-1	0	0	+1

To summarise, cross reference the shooting ability with the target for the basic factor, then apply the modifiers. Then throw 1D6 to find the random factor. For example; a unit of C2C2 archers are firing into the front of some advancing armoured, shielded infantry at a distance of 13". Cross referencing the shooting ability with the target gives a basic factor of 1. The target has advanced more than 6", so -1 applies. This brings the running total down to 0. The archers have C training and



throw a 6. This gives them +1 on the casualty table. Add up the number of bases firing and cross reference that and the final factor.

### Casualty Table

This was the most “retro” aspect of the rules. Frankly, who wants book-keeping as an integral part of their wargaming experience? The original 40 x 15 casualty table grid had to be completely overhauled. At the same time, the original system meant cross referencing the factor with the number of eligible figures in the unit that could fire (or fight). Since we were moving over to bases for the most part, it made sense to radically change the approach. It has always seemed to me that firepower in rules for the classical world has always been too effective. Firepower should aim to disrupt, dissuade, disorganise and in some extreme cases kill. Most units capable of firing comprise of ten figures. We can then count each five as a “base”. Up to four skirmish bases can combine for truly devastating firepower attacks on a target (providing they have the same final factor).

The simplified casualty table for firing looks like this:

Number of Bases	Final Factor								
	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	No effect	No effect	No effect	Target halts	Target disorganised	Target fighting ability reduced by 1	Target Retires	Target Retires	Target Routs
2	No effect	No effect	Target Halts	Target disorganised	Target fighting ability reduced by 1	Target Retires	Target Retires	Target Routs	Target loses base
3	No effect	Target Halts	Target disorganised	Target fighting ability reduced by 1	Target Retires	Target Retires	Target Routs	Target loses base	Target loses base
4	Target Halts	Target disorganised	Target fighting ability reduced by 1	Target Retires	Target Retires	Target Routs	Target loses base	Target loses base	Target loses 2 bases

### Combat

With figure counting rather than bases being the major factor in shooting and combat, there was always a preoccupation about just how many figures could fire or fight. These days, although a degree of reason and sense should prevail about this, bases are far more forgiving (and frankly there are less differences of opinion too!) In combat, if a base is in contact with an enemy base then it should fight. Silly overlaps of fractions of an inch should never really count; this is a trick often employed by the competition gamer and there was no place for it in 1982 and none in 2017 either.

Just as the original set, we need to split the infantry factor table from the cavalry one (again I have amended and overhauled the tables and modifiers to make a bit more sense):

Infantry Fighting Ability	Fighting Against			
	Armoured Infantry	Unarmoured Infantry	Armoured Cavalry	Unarmoured Cavalry
9	9	10	6	7
8	8	9	6	7
7	7	8	6	6
6	6	7	5	6
5	5	6	5	5
4	4	5	4	4
3	3	4	3	3
2	2	3	2	2
1	1	2	1	1

Cavalry Fighting Ability	Fighting Against			
	Armoured Infantry	Unarmoured Infantry	Armoured Cavalry	Unarmoured Cavalry
4	6	7	8	9
3	5	6	7	8
2	4	5	6	7
1	3	4	5	6

Combat modifier for each	Factors
+1	Fighting armoured infantry unable to use shields
+2	Fighting unarmoured infantry unable to use shields Close order cavalry fighting open order cavalry Fighting enemy that has been pushed back
+3	Fighting against troops unable to fight back Close order cavalry fighting open order infantry
-1	Fighting cavalry that has horse armour
-2	Fighting whilst disorganised Fighting up a slope

Again, the random factor table needs to be used just in the same way as shooting:

Training	1 Thrown	2 Thrown	3 Thrown	4 Thrown	5 Thrown	6 Thrown
A	-1	0	0	+1	+1	+2
B	-1	-1	0	0	+1	+1
C	-2	-1	-1	0	0	+1
D	-2	-2	-1	0	0	+1

My wargame buddy Nigel contends “ancient wargaming is just blokes with sharp sticks and silly headwear trying to push one another over”. There’s a bit more to it than that and I wanted the

results table to suggest that. Instead of working out the results of the attacker and defender separately it made sense to combine them into one simple set of results. In doing this any anomalies would be eliminated.

To work out the total for each side involved in the fighting simply multiply the number of bases by the final factor. For example if 5 bases mustered a final factor of 15, then the total scored would be 75. If their opponents mustered 5 bases at a final factor of 9 then they would score 45. Deduct the lower score from the higher one and then refer to the table:

<b>Difference in scores</b>	<b>Higher scorer</b>	<b>Lower scorer</b>
<b>60+</b>	Advance full charge move	Loses two bases and remainder routs
<b>50-59</b>	Advance full move	Loses one base and remainder routs
<b>40-49</b>	Advance 3"	Loses one base and falls back 6"
<b>30-39</b>	Halt	Loses 1 fighting ability
<b>20-29</b>	Advance 3" disorganised	Pushed back 3" disorganised
<b>10-19</b>	Disorganised	Disorganised
<b>1-9</b>	Falls back 3"	Falls back 3"
<b>0</b>	No effect	No effect

This table should allow you to combine the fight between one or more units on each side. Apply the results to all participants. Bases loses should apply to the largest unit in combat.

**Next month we'll look at how to randomise your terrain for an encounter battle, what typical amended army lists look like and we'll round off with a scenario or two showing all of the updated mechanics in action. Meanwhile, the search begins for Adams and Clarke!**