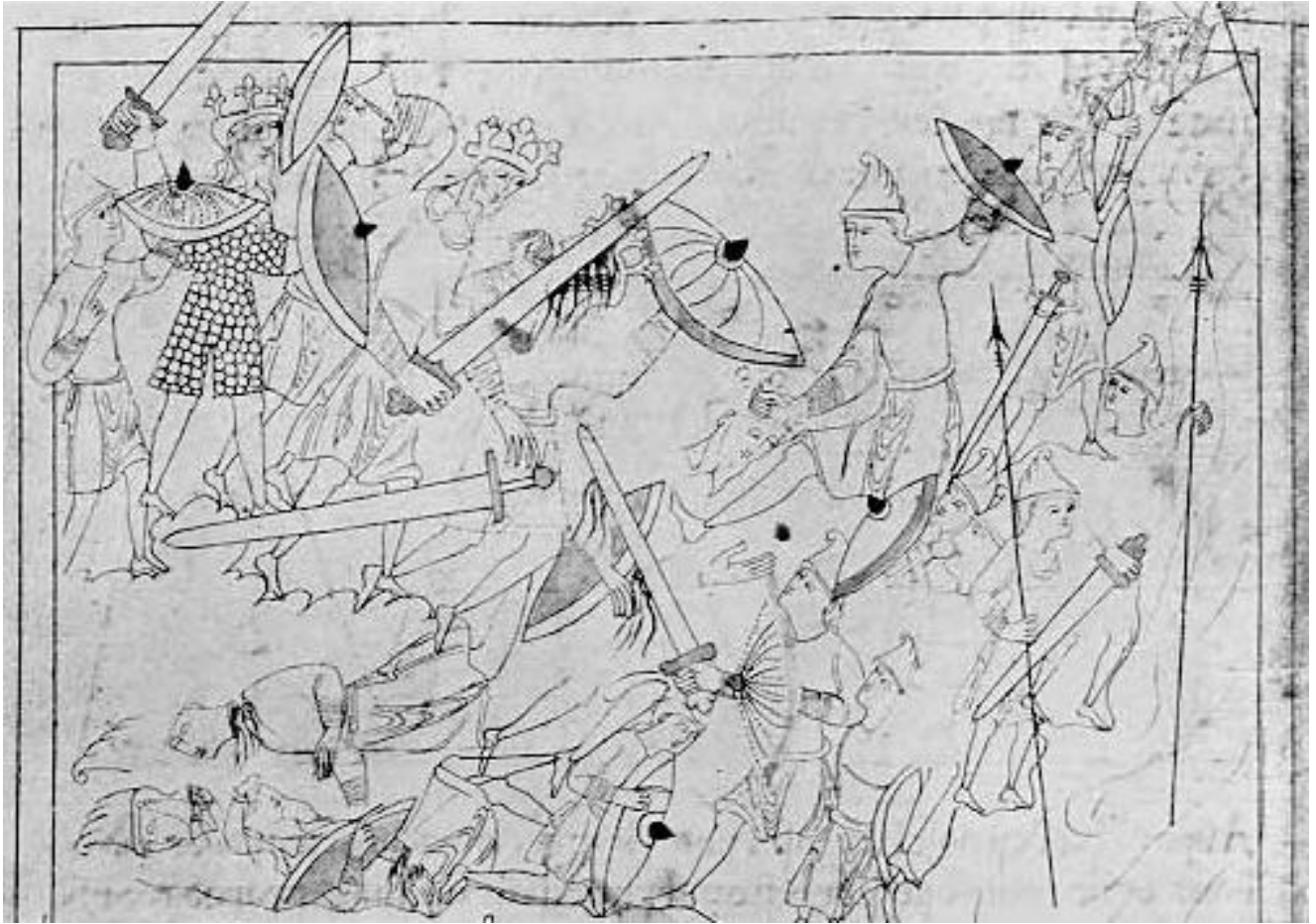


Scyldburgh



WARGAME RULES FOR ANGLO-SAXON SHIELDWALL WARFARE

By Mike Garrett (1987)

Scans of hand-written pages

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

Before the game can begin, the following will be required...

- Two opposing miniature armies
- A wargame table with model terrain
- One expandable steel ruler (marked in inches) per player
- Two ten-sided dice per player
- One four-sided dice per player

The ten-sided dice (d10) are each marked 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. If they are thrown together in order to achieve a percentage score, one dice will count as 'tens' and the other as 'units'. If thrown individually, a ten-sided dice will score ten points if the 'zero' score occurs.

A four-sided dice (d4) is marked 1, 2, 3, 4. It is usually used to determine the number of casualties occurring due to 'war steel' and 'the clash of shieldwalls'.

SCALES

- 1 inch on the tabletop = 10 yards in real-life.
- 1 game round = 15 minutes in real-life
- 1 model figure = 20 warriors in real-life

'THE FIELD OF SLAUGHTER'

The physical geographic appearance of a Dark Age battlefield is something which is seldom recorded. In many battle accounts, there is no mention at all of what influence terrain had on the outcome, whilst in others, there is only mention of one side having advantage of higher ground, or the possible inference that one side was defending a river crossing.

For wargame purposes therefore, when no mention of influencing terrain occurs, it is recommended that the battle should be fought on a flat tabletop (possibly embellished slightly by a few areas of muddy bog land and gorse bushes for purely scenic purposes). In King Harold's Saga, there is mention of rivers, dykes and swamps on the flanks of the opposing armies. It would therefore seem permissible to allow players to put impassable rivers, dykes, swamps and woods on the flanks of their armies (again for scenic purposes) if they so desire. When there is the possibility of a defended river crossing, a model river should be placed across the middle of 'the field of slaughter'. When one side has the advantage of higher ground, the table should be raised at one end to produce the sloping effect required. An example of this would be the battle of Ashdown (AD. 871) shown below.



WARRIORS OF THE WARHOST

For the purposes of the game, the following classes of warriors are allowed...

a) Household

These were the most experienced warriors in Dark Age armies. Many would owe allegiance to a lord because of feudal obligation, whilst others would be hired mercenaries seeking fame and fortune in return for their services. Most would form a trusted bodyguard for a great nobleman or a famous warrior leader. Examples of these would be Viking Huscarls, Saxon Thegns and Norman Knights. Their weapons would include swords, axes, spears, knives, shields and possibly chain-mail.

When the warhost is drawn up for battle in a shieldwall, the Household warriors should be in the front rank, grouped around the lords (and their attendant standard bearers and warhorn blowers) to whom they owe allegiance. A king or senior earl should command the allegiance of more household warriors than any other lesser earl, due to their social rank.

b) Retainers

Though a general term, it is used here to describe the lower class freemen, who performed military service in exchange for land given to them by their lord. Examples of these would be Viking Bondi and Saxon Georls. Their weapons would include spears, axes, knives and shields.

When the warhost is drawn up for battle in a shieldwall, the Retainers should form up in the ranks immediately behind the household warriors.

c) Serfs

These would be impoverished peasant farmers and slaves, who would only be called up in an extreme emergency. Their weapons would be limited to spears, knives, clubs and farming implements.

Information on what proportion of a Dark Age warhost was provide by each warrior class is non-existent. The general guide which follows is thus purely conjectural, but is designed to produce miniature warhosts on the tabletop which will not look too unreasonable. The rules will work best if this guide is followed, but there is nothing stopping players using other agreed to army lists, if they so desire. The guide below gives the minimum and maximum percentages of the total number of figures in the warhost (respectively) that each warrior class may be allowed to provide.

Household Warriors	(Chain-mail and shield, plus sword, spear or axe)	5% - 25%
Retainers	(Knife and shield, plus spear or axe)	45% - 95%
Serfs	(Spear, knife, club or farming implement)	0% - 50%

In reality, no two opposing Dark Age warhosts should ever be equal in numbers or fighting ability, but instead be produced by the circumstances of a particular campaign. Players should simulate this by fighting the battle with the miniature forces they turn up with (which may, as in real-life, not necessarily produce a balanced encounter).

However, for those players who do feel a balanced game is required, the following 'point values' (per individual figure) is suggested. Opposing warhosts will thus be of equal point value (and fighting ability) though not necessarily of equal numerical strength.

Household Warriors (Armed with knife and shield, plus sword, spear or axe)	6 points each
Retainers (Armed with knife and shield, plus spear or axe)	4
Serfs (Armed with knife, club, spear or farming implement)	2
Extra to give any Household warrior chain-mail	+1

A lord, his standard bearer and warhorn blower, are each 'paid for' as normal Household warriors. Viking invasion forces (such as Guthrum's 'Great Army') may be entirely composed of Huscarls, mercenaries and adventurers, and if so, will thus have every individual figure 'paid for' as a 'Household' warrior.

Depiction of Warriors on the tabletop

One model figure on the tabletop represents twenty real-life warriors (drawn up in four ranks of five). A lord, standard bearer or warhorn blower figure, represents the person concerned plus nineteen other 'Household' warriors. Though spears and shield appears to have been the most favoured Dark Age weapons, individual warriors still seem to have turned up with other preferred weapons (chosen from sword, axe, bow, club, knife, throwing-axe or farming implements). The model figure on the tabletop thus represents twenty warriors of the same social class, though not necessarily twenty identically armed warriors.

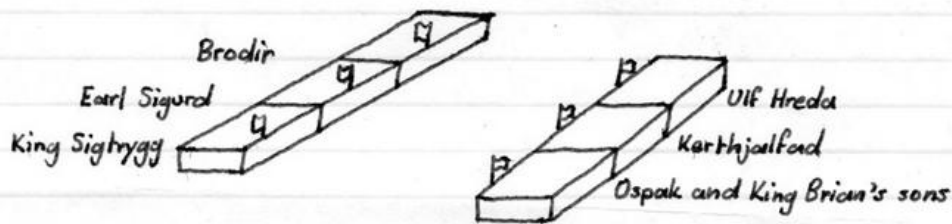
For rule purposes, it is assumed that all figures are mounted on equal sized bases (15mm frontage, 20mm depth). However, some players may already have part of their miniature collection on larger bases (20mm frontage, 30mm depth) due to their previous use of other commercial rules. If the latter are used on the tabletop against the figures on the smaller bases, they will thus have less figures on the same frontage, with resultant excess figures to make their shieldwall deeper (and thus gain an unrealistic advantage). This should be countered by giving the figures on the smaller bases an extra +1 on their dice role in 'the clash of shieldwalls' for facing what is affectively 'enemy warriors in looser order.' Ultimately, rebasing the figures on the larger bases is the only real solution, but because of the inconvenience it would cause, it is hoped that the above compromise might prove successful.

SHIELDWALL WARFARE

The term 'wall of shields' or 'shieldwall' appears in almost every detailed account of a major battle in this period. The term itself seems to suggest that each warhost formed itself into a very tightly packed dense mass, with the result that the shields of the warriors in the front rank appeared to form a continuous wall. The advantages of such a formation would be that the 'shieldwall' would provide protection, whilst the compactness of the warriors would provide great weight and impetus when attempting to smash through the enemy ranks, for it was the head on collision between opposing shieldwalls which decided battles, with warriors hacking and stabbing at each other, until one shieldwall had taken enough casualties and been broken through by the other.

Forming the Shieldwall

The shieldwall appears to have been formed by several 'retinues' deployed side by side in one continuous battle-line. At the battle of Clontarf (AD. 1014) '... Brodir was on one flank and King Sigtrygg on the other, with Earl Sigurd in the centre ... Ulf Hreda was on the flank facing Brodir, and on the other flank facing King Sigtrygg were Ospak and King Brian's sons. In the centre was Kerthjalfad, with the banners aloft before him.' The diagram below is a possible reconstruction of this.



On the wargames table, this principle should be followed, with both sides drawn up in a shieldwall composed of several 'retinues' and (since there is no evidence for one shieldwall having a greater frontage than another) deployed parallel to each other, on an equal (mutually agreed) frontage, with the larger warhost using its excess figures to make its shieldwall depth greater.

The Shieldwall Advancing.

Once battle commenced, both shieldwalls seem to have mutually advanced on each other (using bows and hand-hurled weapons as the range closed) in order to get into hand-to-hand combat as quickly as possible. On the wargames table, both shieldwalls should thus act as above, advancing at their maximum allowed tabletop pace (12" per round), until they make contact with each other.

The only exception to this, may have been Celtic armies, which occasionally defended river crossings. In such cases, these should form up their shieldwall along the river bank, so as to take advantage of their opponents' disordered state as they clamber out of the river to attack them.

The Clash of Shieldwalls

When opposing shieldwalls met in battle, there appears to have been a prolonged hand to hand combat, with various parts of the line bending or pushing to and fro in the confusion, until one side achieved a breakthrough. Once this occurred, the warriors on either side of the gap could be attacked in the flank or rear by the enemy warriors bursting through. The ensuing panic would thus lead to the rapid break up of the defeated shieldwall, as warriors fled from the field to avoid the disaster. Thus shieldwall combat should be fought on the tabletop until the first breakthrough is achieved, when the defeated shieldwall should then turn and flee from 'the field of slaughter'.

To accurately simulate the buckling and shoving effect of shieldwall combat, it is necessary to break down the shieldwall clash into combats between various segments of the opposing shieldwalls, so that the varying results of each clash will produce the buckling and shoving effect required. It is suggested that before play begins, both sides should mutually pair off (all equal sized) segments of their opposing shieldwalls (denoting the boundaries of each, by a very small gap in the shieldwall) referred to as 'retinues'. The number of retinues should vary according to the number deemed appropriate by the players for each particular game. However, unless the historical battle being refought dictates otherwise, it is suggested that each shieldwall should be divided into three retinues (left flank, centre and right flank).

If the King is with the warhost, he will lead the retinue he is with. If the King is not present, one Earl will be designated as the senior Earl, and lead the retinue he is with. All other retinues will each be led by a lesser Earl. A retinue will consist of a lord's personal household warriors (including his standard bearer and warhorn blower), together with his lower class retainers and serfs. In practice, the division of the shieldwall into so few retinues (for simplicity sake), may result in their being several real-life retinues (ie. those of several Earls or lesser chieftains) in one grouping. In such cases, one of the Earls present (if not the King) will be designated as the lord of the whole (combined) 'retinue', with the other lords and standard bearers being classed as household warriors for combat purposes (though it is acknowledged that in reality they would be assisting the leading Earl, by controlling their part of the shieldwall).

One round of shieldwall combat is fought between each opposing pair of retinues per one normal game round. Each retinue rolls one d4 and adds any modifiers (below) which are applicable to it.

Led in battle by the King or the senior Earl	+ 1
Front rank consists mainly (50%) of 'Household' warriors	+ 1
Front rank consists of mainly (50%) chain-mail clad warriors	+ 1
Attacking downhill	+ 1
Each figure rank (at least 50% as strong as front rank) deeper than opponents	+ 1
Celtic warriors defending a river crossing (if not yet 'pushed back' away from the bank)*	+ 1
Any shieldwall 'not drawn up properly' at the start of the battle*	+ 2/1

Both opposing retinues compare their total scores. Whichever retinue has the highest score is deemed to be the 'winner' of that round of combat. Refer to the table below.

<u>Point Difference</u>	<u>Result</u>
0-1	Little Effect. Both retinues roll one d4 to determine their casualties recieved
2-3	Losing side pushed back 1" on the tabletop and rolls two d4 to determine its casualties recieved. Winning retinue rolls one d4 to determine its casualties.
4 or above.	Losing retinue pushed back 2" on the "field of slaughter" and rolls three d4 to determine its casualties. Winning retinue rolls one d4 to determine its casualties.

When dicing to determine casualties, every fourth figure is deemed to have been 'slain' whilst fighting in the front rank and is correspondingly removed from the majority class of warriors in the front rank. If a retinue loses less than four casualties in any one round of shieldwall combat, it must still always lose one 'slain' casualty. All other casualties are deemed to be 'cravenous wretches' (taken from the lowest social class of warriors present in the rear rank) who begin to flee from the 'field of slaughter' on the following round.

At the end of each round of shieldwall combat, warriors in the rear ranks should be automatically filed forward to fill gaps in the front rank. This will thus lead to a gradual reduction of a shieldwall's combat status from mainly Household warriors in its front to mainly Retainers in its front rank.

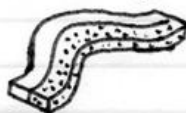
Depicting the Shieldwall Clash on the tabletop

During the course of a shieldwall clash, the end result of a particular round of combat may result in the opposing shieldwalls looking like diagram (a) below. This is caused by the game mechanism of the paired off retinues. To give the true visual appearance of the shieldwall clash, the model figures should be slightly repositioned at the end of each round of combat, as in diagram (b) below.

a) Before repositioning model figures



b) After repositioning model figures



The visual appearance could be further enhanced by placing a model corpse on the tabletop for each figure 'slain' fighting in the front rank of the shieldwall, and abandoned weapons and equipment cast down by 'cravenous wretches' fleeing from the 'field of slaughter.'

Many players may feel that repositioning their figures at the end of each round of combat causes too much 'wear and tear' on their figures, or that making model corpses takes up too much of their time. Therefore, all of these suggestions, though recommended, should be treated as optional.

The Shattering of the Shieldwall

A shieldwall will be deemed to be broken through (or outflanked) when due to casualties, any one of its retinues can no longer match the frontage of an opposing retinue. At the start of the following round, the figures in the broken shieldwall will begin to flee from the 'field of slaughter' (moving as if they were 'cravenous wretches' at 16" per round).

Evidence would also seem to indicate that when one shieldwall fled, it exposed itself to being mercilessly cut down from behind, by the victorious pursuing warriors. The pursuit at the end of a battle would undoubtedly cause the majority of the casualties attributed to it. Thus most of the alleged 'many thousands' killed at Ashdown (AD. 871) would have met their end after their shieldwall broke into flight.

To simulate this, one d4 is thrown for each retinue in the victorious shieldwall, to determine the number of rounds spent pursuing the broken enemy. For each round that is spent in contact with the fleeing fugitives, one fleeing figure is slain per 8 figures (rounded up) in the front rank of the pursuing retinue.

The Hurling of War Sleet

Although contemporary sources mention bows and hand-hurled weapons, it would seem that these played a secondary role in the battle, being used to soften up the opposing shieldwall just before hand to hand combat began.

According to the initial distance deployed apart, troops armed with bows and hand hurled weapons, will be able to use their weapons for either one or two rounds (including the round in which the shieldwalls advance into contact) before hand to hand combat begins..

On the tabletop, there should be a few figures armed with bows, javelins or throwing-axes in the shieldwall. However, these are for purely scenic affect, as the number of casualties inflicted (per round) by 'war sleet' is determined by rolling one d4 (1, 2 = one figure slain, 3, 4 = two figures slain) per retinue hurling 'war sleet' at its opposite number.

When removing 'war sleet' casualties, these should be taken from the majority warrior class in the front rank.

The Slaying of a Lord

The tales of kings and leaders in battle, is an almost continuous theme in contemporary sources, for in an age of violent warfare, power needed to be in the hands of mighty warlords. Before a battle commenced, lords 'rode about and advised', exhorted their men to 'stand firm, not yielding an inch' and urged everyone 'not to be afraid'. Though a lord could command the allegiance of a large warhost, if he was slain, many of the warriors would run away in panic, leaving perhaps a handful of the lord's faithful household retainers to be rapidly overwhelmed by the enemy.

Thus, every time a retinue loses casualties due to men 'being slain' by 'war sleet' or in the 'clash of shieldwalls', there is a chance that one of the figures removed will be the retinue's lord. Two d10 (percentage dice) are rolled each time a test has to be made. In 'the clash of shieldwalls', a score of 2% or 1% will indicate that the retinue's lord has been killed. When assailed by 'war sleet', a score of 1% only, will indicate the death of a lord. If a lord is not slain, an ordinary figure will be removed instead.

If their King or senior Earl is slain, the shieldwall will commence to flee from the 'field of slaughter' during the next round. If any other Earl is slain, the remainder of the shieldwall will continue to fight on, but his own retinue will commence to gradually flee from the 'field of slaughter'. This is simulated by rolling two d4 per round, to indicate the number of figures involved. These are rolled in addition to any other dice rolled to determine casualties in the 'clash of shieldwalls'.