

Renaissance Commander

By Tony Barr

Introduction

This variant of Warmaster Ancients (WMA) is designed to be used for the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, including the Great Italian Wars (1494-1559) during which France and Spain (including the Holy Roman Empire after the crowns of Spain and the Empire were merged under Charles V) fought for control of Italy, the French Wars of Religion (1559-1598), the various Turkish Wars, the rise of Russia, the Dutch Revolt (1572-1648), the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the English Civil Wars (1639-1651), the wars of Louis XIV, the Scanian War (1675-1679), the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697) the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) and the Great Northern War (1700-1721) among others. Other armies which fought with or against the main protagonists in these wars will be included in the army lists.

This was a time of major changes in both strategy and battlefield tactics, as commanders strove to understand how best to use hand firearms, mobile artillery and light troops and to grasp the essentials of coordinating these different arms. The 16th century saw a transition from medieval warfare, in which European armies were organised in deep formations known as "battles", to early modern warfare, in which more linear formations predominated.

There is no immediate intent to include non-European armies in this variant, as the military revolution affected the rest of the world rather later and therefore the standard Warmaster Ancients rules should suffice to cover non-European wars. Players will need to devise their own army lists for those though!

Warmaster Ancients rules, including those modified or added in the recently published Warmaster Ancient Armies (WAA) book apply in their entirety except as modified below. Some mechanisms have been borrowed from the original Warmaster (WM) rules.

Basing

The size of the bases used for each stand of troops is not important as long as the figures on both sides are based to the same conventions. While it is usual in Warmaster and Warmaster Ancients to base figures on 40x20mm bases and on 20x40mm for shock troops, it is recommended that all figures are based facing the long base edge in this variant, using the WMA rules for alternative basing for shock troops and pike-armed infantry, adding the extra +1 bonus when charging or pursuing in the open. Base depth is less critical.

If shock cavalry and pikemen are based facing the short edge then a work-around will need to be found.

Units and Brigades

Infantry units consist of 2 or more stands of figures, some or all of which will be melee troops (Core Stands) and some of which may be missile troops

(Peripheral Stands) as part of a mixed unit. All stands in infantry units consisting entirely of non-skirmishing firearms are also core stands.

Cavalry units have 3 to 6 stands of figures, all of the same type.

Both infantry and cavalry may have attached stands of different types. See below for details.

Light artillery units have 2 stands and heavy artillery units 1 stand.

Because of the variable size of units, the points cost of the unit in the army lists is given as a cost per stand.

Command penalties for lost stands in units larger than 3 stands are:

- Per full third of stands lost –1
- Per full two thirds of stands lost –2

Thus a 6 stand unit will suffer a –1 command penalty when it has lost 2 stands and a –2 penalty when it has lost 4 stands.

Even larger bodies of troops may be created on an ad hoc basis using the brigade rules.

Infantry and cavalry may not be brigaded together. Dragoons may only be brigaded with cavalry or other dragoons. Light artillery may be brigaded with artillery or infantry. Heavy artillery may only be brigaded with other artillery.

For the purpose of transferring actual forces to the table top assumptions have been made as to roughly how many troops a stand represents.

- Heavy infantry 200-400 men, 3-8 ranks deep
- Light infantry 100-150 men
- Heavy cavalry 100-150 men
- Light cavalry 50-75 men
- Heavy artillery 4-8 heavy guns and crews
- Light artillery 4-8 light guns and crews

This will be useful for adapting historical orders of battle for the tabletop but should not be viewed as definitive.

Formations

Due to the variety of unit sizes it is necessary to specify permissible regular formations.

Any unit not in a regular formation usually moves at half pace, as per WMA rules. Any unit which has more than 1 stand of pikemen, or which consists solely of bayonet-armed musketeers more than 1 rank deep (unless in a 1 stand wide column), moves at half pace in the Initiative or Command Phases unless it moves straight ahead or charges.

Core stands are in a regular formation as long as they are all facing in the same direction and the stands touch edge to edge and corner to corner. All ranks of stands must have the same number of stands except that the rearmost of 2 ranks may have one less, the

rearmost of 3 may have 2 less and so on. In cavalry units all stands are treated as core.

Core stands do not have to maximise frontage when charging but may do so if the player wishes.

Peripheral stands are in a regular formation as long as all are facing in the same direction and the stands touch at least one other stand of the unit corner to corner.

Pikes

Pike stands should be mounted facing the long edge of the base, like other troops.

Pikes are treated as shock troops so a stand of pikes in close combat receives the extra +1 bonus when charging or pursuing in the open.

If a unit which includes pikes (whether as part of a mixed unit or not) is charged frontally in the open by cavalry, then all stands in the unit (core, peripheral and attached) count as defended as long as the unit is not also engaged to its side or rear. They also count as defended if in the open, not confused and they are charged in the flank by cavalry as long as the unit is not also engaged to its other flank, its front or its rear.

A pike stand can be supported by any infantry stand from the side in the same way as any other infantry stand. A pike stand cannot be supported from behind at all – instead a pike stand that would otherwise support from behind adds its basic attack value to the stand in front. The rearward stand must be from the same unit. Note that the modifier is the stand's basic attacks value and no further attack modifiers are applied to this bonus.

Further pike stands from the same unit to the rear of the 'supporting' stand are also useful. Their basic attacks (without any modifiers) can nullify attacks of opposing pike stands. Half the attacks of ranks 3 to 6 cancel out attacks from opposing pike stands. The attacks are not rolled for.

A pike stand can support other infantry stands placed alongside it, but can neither support such stands from behind nor add attacks to non-phalanx infantry stands when placed behind them.

Units which include pike stands treat all dense terrain as impenetrable – woods, broken/marshy ground, steep hills/slopes, woods/tall scrub, and villages/built up areas.

Firearms

Firearms include handguns, arquebuses, pistols and muskets. Ranges are given in the army lists.

Enemy armour values are treated as one worse than normal when shot at by any firearms. So an armour value of 4+ counts as 5+, and 5+ as 6+, whilst an armour value of 6+ can't save against firearms. If non-skirmishing firearms shoot at non-skirmishing targets more than one stand deep, the target's armour value is two worse than normal so 3+ counts as 5+ and so on.

Mixed Infantry Units

While many troops are in homogenous units (all troops of the same type), other units can consist of a variety of types. Such mixed infantry units combine melee troops

(Core Stands) with missile troops (Peripheral Stands) and are usually of pike and shot armed troops, but can also include billmen or halberdiers, swordsmen, archers and crossbowmen.

Mixed units were developed from the second quarter of the 16th century to give firepower to the melee troops and to help the missile troops to be able to fight in the open without being ridden down by cavalry or crushed by heavy infantry. The proportions of melee to missile troops varied throughout the period, though the constant trend was towards increasing the latter at the expense of the former.

Under Unit Size in the army lists the proportion of melee troops to missile troops will be given in terms of Pikes : Shot. e.g. P2S1 = 2 stands of pike and 1 of shot. A note will be made if troops are otherwise armed.

Only stands with missile weapons may shoot. While all stands in a unit have the same armour value and number of hits, the different troop types within the unit may all have their own attack value. When stands are to be removed as casualties it is the player's choice as to which of his stands he removes.

Bayonet-Armed Infantry

By the 1680s most musketeers were equipped with a plug bayonet (first used in 1647), effectively giving each infantryman his own pike. This speeded the demise of the pikeman as a separate type, disappearing around 1720. The disadvantage of the plug bayonet (PB) was that it was hard to remove in combat once fitted, precluding further shooting. The socket bayonet (SB) was introduced in 1687 and was rapidly adopted as the musket could be fired with the bayonet in place.

Stands in units of bayonet-armed troops are all treated as core stands. Unit size is 3 or 4 stands.

A non-confused unit with bayonets is deemed to be defended when charged frontally in the open unless also engaged to its side or rear. Units with socket bayonets may shoot as normal when charged. Units with plug bayonets may only shoot if they opt *not* to be treated as defended or unless at least one stand of pikemen is present.

A second rank of musket and bayonet armed infantry adds half its shooting attacks (rounded down) to the front rank as long as the unit is not confused.

Attached Stands

Some units, usually infantry, may have attached stands of missile troops, assault troops or grenadiers, in the same way that WM Empire infantry may have attached 'skirmishers', which are not to be confused with WMA skirmishers. Units which may have attached stands and how many of which sort are given in the army lists.

Attached stands never fight as independent units. Attached stands have the same armour value as the rest of their unit. They fight as part of their unit and can be removed as a unit casualty if the player wishes. Such casualties never count as casualties for purposes of issuing orders. Attached stands are ignored for the brigade rules and they do not count as part of a unit's formation, so no movement penalty is incurred if they are arranged out of the unit's regular formation.

Attached stands do not have to maximise frontage when charging but may do so if the player wishes. When a unit with attached stands charges or is charged, any attached stands may make a special evade move to the flank or rear of the unit immediately after shooting. The stand may still end up in contact with enemy if the player wishes.

Attached missile troops may be armed with firearms, bows or crossbows and may be mounted or on foot, as described in the army lists. They should be based as for skirmishers and not in close order. They were intended to disrupt (confuse in game terms) enemy formations with their shooting and provide support in combat. The attached stand (not the whole unit) may shoot as normal, with all the usual rules applying. If infantry, they may also provide support, using the usual rules.

Attached assault troops can only be infantry and are armed with sword and buckler, halberds or two-handed swords. They were used to disrupt opposing pikemen and break any stalemate between opposing pike blocks.

This is achieved by their number of attacks and the flexibility of their placement. They fight and can provide support as normal.

A unit with attached grenadiers that is in close combat treats an enemy behind fieldworks or a natural defensive barrier as being one level less protected; defended units count as in the open and fortified units count as defended.

Steadfast Units

Some troops in the period were especially resolute and were less likely to give ground than others. These troops are deemed to be Steadfast. They roll one less dice for shooting drive backs and retreat one less cm from a lost close combat. This may mean that they do not get driven back or retreat at all. This bonus is cumulative with any bonus for being in a defended or fortified position.

Dragoons (Mounted Infantry)

Dragoons first appear towards the mid-16th century and should not be confused with the later cavalry of that name. They are arquebus- or musket-armed infantry who have been given horses to improve their mobility. Pike-armed dragoons did exist but were rare and so are ignored for game purposes. Dragoons are hopeless fighting from horseback and are not good in hand to hand combat on foot. Their main purpose was to provide additional firepower, often from cover, to aid their own horse or to secure advanced positions. They did not use their firearms when mounted.

Dragoon units are represented as cavalry (facing the wide base edge) when mounted and as infantry when dismounted. Six stands will be needed to represent one unit of dragoons – three stands of mounted dragoons, two stands of dragoons on foot and a stand of “empty” horses and horseholders. When they are dismounted the horseholder stand merely acts as a status marker and is positioned anywhere as long as it touches the other two stands. It neither causes the formation to be irregular nor does it fight or shoot. [Alt basing]

When mounted dragoons move as cavalry. When dismounted they move as infantry. Dragoons may mount on initiative if they are in the open and enemy horse are within 30cm, after which they may evade. Otherwise it takes one command to mount or dismount.

Cavalry

Cavalry should ideally be based facing the long edge of the stand, even if they are shock troops. The stands in a cavalry unit are all core stands. Cavalry are divided into several sub-types, each of which has various type-specific rules which apply unless otherwise noted in the army lists.

Lancers

Lancers are the standard lance-armed heavy cavalry used throughout the 16th century, gradually being replaced by lighter types armed with swords and pistols. They include heavily armoured gendarmes as well as more lightly armoured chevaux-legers who late in the 16th century might also have a pistol. They fought in shallow formations and relied on charging at the trot or gallop to break opposing troops. They were vulnerable to infantry with firearms and were not too effective against pikemen.

Lancers are shock troops and gain the usual benefits from that. Lancers only have pistols if mentioned in the army lists. Such lancers never shoot at a distance but may shoot when charged.

Unit size is between 2 and 4, or rarely, 6 stands.

Reiter

Reiter are the classic pistol-armed cavalry using caracole tactics to disrupt pikemen with firepower. They used relatively large and deep formations and the riders were well armoured though the horses were unarmoured. Only when opposing pikemen were confused by the shooting would the Reiter charge home. They were vulnerable to opposing shot and also to lancers.

Reiter are not shock troops. They may shoot at a distance and also shoot when charged, representing local counter-charges. They may only charge infantry units which have stands of pikes if the infantry is confused. Reiter units are unique in that stands in the second rank add their shooting attacks to those of the stands in front, simulating the caracole tactics in deep formations. Reiter also count stands to the rear (but not stands on the flanks) as supports when in close combat with infantry, in the same way that infantry does.

Unit size is between 3 and 6 stands.

Trotters

Trotters are a late 16th and early 17th century development of the Reiter. They would be similarly armed but often more lightly armoured, and tended towards shallower formations. They charged at the trot, rather than the gallop and used their pistols just before contact.

Reiter are not shock troops. Trotters may shoot on contacting a unit they are charging normally, possibly causing confusion (on a dice roll of 6, rolling 1 dice per hit) but do not cause drive-backs. If they are charged

they may shoot as normal. If Trotters cause confusion in their target unit with their distance shooting, they may immediately make a charge move to contact that unit. Trotters may shoot when charged, representing local counter-charges. Trotters in $\frac{3}{4}$ armour were often termed Cuirassiers. They are treated as Trotters in every respect, but have better armour.

Unit size is usually 3 stands.

Gallopers

Gallopers were a 17th century development of the Trotters. They tended to yet lighter armour and charged at the gallop, only using their pistols once in melee. They relied on their swords and the speed of their charge for their effect.

Gallopers are shock troops and gain the usual benefits from that. As they only used their pistols once in melee, they have no distance shooting capability. They may not shoot on contacting a unit they are charging. Gallopers may shoot when charged, representing local counter-charges.

Unit size is usually 3 stands.

Sipahis

Sipahis are Asiatic or Eastern European cavalry, usually mail-armoured, who fought with a wide variety of weapons both for close combat and for shooting. They were equally at home charging fiercely as skirmishing at a distance. Though less cohesive than most western cavalry, they were non the less effective. They were vulnerable to lancers and to firearms but could sweep away other foot and were effective against other cavalry. They often fought in deep formations against other cavalry to better absorb their charge.

Sipahis are treated as shock troops when in close combat against infantry but as non-shock in close combat against cavalry. Instead, in close combat with cavalry they count stands to the rear and flank as supports in the same way that infantry does. Sipahis can shoot when charged and at a distance they shoot at different ranges depending on the weapons used (see the army lists). Sipahis may evade from shooting or charges as skirmishers do.

Unit size is 3 or more stands.

Mounted Skirmishers

Mounted skirmishers include all those lightly armed and armoured mounted troops who avoided contact by evading, prefer to cause confusion with their shooting. They are treated as normal WMA skirmishers.

Unit size is 2 or more stands.

Artillery

In the early 16th century most heavy artillery was used for siege work and therefore has little place on the battlefield. The advances made by the French in artillery technology, and soon copied by other armies, were mostly aimed at improving strategic mobility. On the battlefield such artillery as was present was frequently masked by other troops and was therefore of limited effectiveness except in defence. Light artillery (small calibre pieces, organ guns and later light pieces) had some battlefield mobility but was more often also

used in defensive positions. In the light of this, artillery described in the army lists as heavy actually represent the lighter of the heavy guns. See WMA rules for the basics of heavy and light artillery. The following rules and restrictions on artillery also apply.

Artillery may deploy up to one cavalry move in front of the rest of the army at the start of the game (i.e. forward of the normal deployment zone).

Heavy artillery may not move except to pivot up to 45° on a successful command roll, after which it may not receive any further commands.

Heavy artillery also uses the third point of the WMA light artillery rules, potentially hitting 3 successive stands with 3 attacks each. In the case of shots against an enemy flank, then 3 adjacent stands may be hit.

Heavy artillery can shoot over obstacles or friendly troops that occupy lower ground than the shooter or target as long as there is at least 8cm clearance between the artillery and the obstacle or friendly troops and also between the obstacle or friendly troops and the target.

Light artillery may either move or shoot, but not both in any one turn.

Any unit shot at by artillery is treated as having no armour and receives no armour save.

All artillery is always considered to be unreliable, suffering the usual -1 command penalty. Heavy artillery is usually slow as well.

[limbers?] [later artillery?] [medium artillery] [galloper guns?] [battalion guns?]

Characters

There are three types of characters in RC. The General, Great Captains or Colonels (equivalent to WMA Leaders) and Captains (equivalent to Subordinates).

Fieldworks

In many armies it was common practice to set up defences or even dig entrenchments prior to a battle, which would then be conducted defensively. Two levels of Fieldworks are possible, Field Defences (which could be temporary and are usually of an ad hoc nature) and Field Fortifications (which would involve more extensive entrenchment and preparation). Field Defences give defended status to infantry or artillery behind them who are charged or shot at and Field Fortifications give fortified status in the same situation. The stands of a "unit" of Fieldworks have the same frontage as other troops and may be as deep as needed. Fieldworks may be deployed up to one cavalry move in front of the rest of the army at the start of the game (i.e. forward of the normal deployment zone) and as many infantry or artillery units as will fit wholly behind any Fieldworks may be deployed behind them.

Turn Sequence

Initiative Phase

In addition to the usual possibilities any unit capable of shooting may shoot at the closest enemy within 20cm.

Command Phase

All shooting is done as a result of successful orders. This means that units (except artillery – see above)

may possibly shoot more than once, move more than once or combine moving with shooting as desired by the player.

The -1 to command penalty when within 20cm of an enemy unit does not apply when commanding a unit to shoot. The player should specify whether a command is for moving or shooting before rolling the dice.

Confused units suffer a -1 to hit penalty when shooting.

Shooting ranges are given in the army lists.

If a blunder is rolled when issuing orders to artillery the blunder table roll does not apply to the artillery unit (only to any brigaded infantry). Instead the artillery unit takes 1d6 attacks (someone got careless with the powder!) and may not receive further orders that turn.

Shooting Phase

There is no separate shooting phase.

The End of the Battle

Units marked with a ¶ in the army lists are termed key units. Only key units count towards the total number of units an army must lose before having to withdraw.

End Note

This Warmaster Ancients variant has been extensively tested at the North Hull Wargames Club. Special thanks to Wayne Olivant for ideas and playtesting. Feedback is most welcome! Contact Tony Barr: ermtony@gmail.com

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WMA/WAA: <http://www.warhammer-historical.com/>

WM: <http://www.specialist-games.com/>

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This list only includes books actually read by the rules writer. Some are undoubtedly more useful than others but all have played a part in helping to formulate the writer's views on the subject.

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