Saxon, Norman, Celtic & Viking Re-Enactment

Hersir Handbook IV

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Hersir` Handbook is so called, because it collects together details of command and manoeuvre, which are used by the Hersir, to control action on the battlefield. The title Hersir, is given to leaders of proven ability over the full range of command tasks and is therefore an acknowledgement of considerable achievement.

Unit leaders and their command groups in the society are volunteers, whose skills make a major contribution to the enjoyment of participants and spectators alike. As a guide to commands and the expected resulting action, this book is equally important for all Combat Training Officers and complements the Combat Training Manual.

2. THE BATTLEFIELD

Battlefields may be of many sizes and shapes, many of the factors governing the size and shape of a battlefield are out of our hands but there are some basic requirements of all battlefields.

2.1. Barriers

There must be two barriers separating the public from the warriors. The barriers must be at least ten feet apart or however much greater as deemed by the Health and Safety Officer. Between the barriers there must be signs warning the public of the danger of getting to close to the action. It is the duty of the marshals to erect the battlefield barriers after consulting with the Battle Captain and the Health and Safety Officer.

2.2. Position Markers

Position Markers will be set up close to the inner barrier and between both. The start lines will be marked by red or blue boards and the centre line of the battlefield will be marked by white boards. Unit leaders must be aware of them especially when directing scripted action.

2.3. Access points

There must be at least one point of access to the battlefield for the armies, preferably two. There must be a clear approach route for the armies at the time required for commencement of the battle. These access points must also be suitable for emergency vehicles, if not an additional access point must be made. Access points must be staffed by marshals at least fifteen minutes before the commencement of the battle and throughout the performance.

2.4. Public address system

The PA must be situated between the barriers in a position from which the commentator can see all the action, this is normally at the centre of one side.

2.5. First aid point

The first aid point must be in an easily identifiable position, normally next to the PA. A qualified first aider, designated by the Health and Safety Officer and with a full up to date first aid kit , must be present during any combat display.

2.6. Approach route

The approach route to the battlefield must be as clear of obstacles as possible and normally wide enough to allow three warriors to walk abreast. These two points will not always be achievable, if not extra time must be allowed for the warriors to get to their forming up point. The Battle Captain will walk the approach route and note the time it takes. For each defile passed through one minute must be added for every ten warriors. If an obstacle has to be climbed then two minutes must be added for every ten warriors. Unit Leaders must ensure that their units are reformed before moving off again.

2.7. Fostrar

Fostrar wishing to participate in combat training and support roles on the battlefield, must report to the Battle Captain and supervising adult, on arrival. Fostrar on the battlefield must be supervised by a dedicated adult and must be made known to all warriors.

2.8. Archery

When archery is to be used the size of the battlefield becomes critical. If the battlefield is longer than the range of the bows then archery may be used by both sides. The Battle Captain will consult the designated Missiles officer . In the case of a shorter field, the end(s)must be clear of audience to allow the archers to shoot in that direction.

2.9. Cavalry

If cavalry are to be used, the battlefield must be long enough to allow the horses to manoeuvre safely away from the infantry. There must be a clear area behind the enemy warriors to allow the horses to run off and be brought under control if necessary. There must be an escape route from the battle field towards the horses stabling area, clear of all obstacles and audience, to allow loose horses an avenue of escape.

2.10. Street fighting

When fighting in streets a double barrier is still required. This is to be provided by two sets of marshals who will be clearly distinguishable from one another and clearly identified to both warriors and audience. One set of marshals will control the audience as the outer barrier, the other will control the warriors as the inner barrier.

The warriors on the flanks of the opposing forces will act as an additional safety barrier when there is an audience on their flank. The flank warriors will not fight properly, they should just clash weapons above their

heads and pressure their own warriors away from the audience. The inner warriors should fight as best they may.

The chief marshal must carry a whistle and if in their opinion the combat is unsafe they should blow the whistle and keep blowing it until combat has ceased. The warriors should break contact, the performance may continue but no fighting should take place until the chief marshal has given the all clear to the Unit Leaders.

3. DURATION OF COMMAND

All officers appointed to lead units and armies exercise their authority from the Battle Captain`s script meeting until all battle standards are returned to the Battle Captain.

4. COMMAND STRUCTURE

All armies throughout history have had some sort of command structure, at the minimum it was a leader and followers.

The following is a full recommended command structure which assumes no restriction on the size of the battle. Adjustments will have to be made when numbers so dictate.

4.1. Army

The army must have a commander, who will need two or more sub-commanders to convey orders to the units and take control of part of the army when necessary. The number of sub-commanders will increase in proportion to the number of units in the army and/or the total strength of the army. For every two units there should be one sub-commander, for every 100 warriors, or part thereof, over the first 100 there should be an additional sub-commander. Eg. An army with six units has one commander and three sub-commanders. If the total strength of the army is 201 there should be an additional two sub-commanders making a total of five. This will ensure that orders can be transmitted quickly when both army and battlefield are large.

4.2. Unit

A unit must have a leader, who will need one or more sub-leaders to ensure that orders are carried out properly and promptly. The number of sub-leaders will depend on the size of the unit, for every ten warriors, or part thereof over the first ten, there should be one sub-leader. Eg. A unit of nine warriors will have one leader and eight ordinary warriors. A unit of ten warriors will have one leader, one sub-leader and eight ordinary warriors. A unit of eleven warriors will have one leader, two sub-leaders and eight ordinary warriors. Each unit should have a standard bearer. The standard bearer should be an experienced warrior of the same quality as the sub-leaders.

5. DUTIES

Each officer in the command structure has various duties that must be performed to ensure the smooth running of the battle. A small amount of effort on the part of every officer in the command structure will result in a successful battle that is enjoyable to participants and spectators alike.

5.1. Battle staff

The Battle Captain and Assistant Battle Captains constitute the battle staff. Their duties during the course of a scripted battle are the same:

Ensure that the armies and units have properly appointed officers.
Collect warrior attendance figures from Herred/Lethang representatives.
Allocate warriors to units.
Ensure that all officers understand their duties, the script and their part in the script.
Ensure officers carry out the safety checks.
During the course of the battle give cues to the officers as necessary.
Attempt to keep the battle script on course and to time.
Make or authorise changes to the script when necessary.
When possible, liaise with opposite numbers in the other army.
Liaise with counterparts in other societies.
Ensure that any problems from the battle are dealt with by the proper Society officer or agency.

5.2. Army commander

Must ensure that the army is ready to begin the battle, mustering at the right place at the right time.
Must understand the battle plan.
Must ensure that all the unit leaders understand the battle plan.
Must ensure that the unit leaders carry out their pre-battle safety checks.
Must make modification to the battle plan when required.
Must attend officers script briefing and de-briefing.
Must be in possession of a watch

5.3. Sub-commander

Must assist the commander mustering the army ready to start the battle.
Must understand the battle plan.
Must transmit the orders of the commander.
Must take command of a part of the army if ordered to do so.

5.4. Unit leader

Must attend the Unit Leader briefings.
Must be familiar with the script.
Must be in possession of a watch.
Must make self and other members of the unit command group known to the unit.
Must ensure that the unit is ready to begin the battle.
Must carry out the pre-battle safety checks.
Must advise warriors of the presence of Fostrar and their role.
Must be in possession of, or have immediate access to a file, to remove burrs from metal weapons.
If leading a unit of archers must be in possession of a bow scales.
Must lead the unit through the script and issue clear commands.
Must liaise with other unit commanders of their army, with regard to unscripted actions.
Must attend the de-brief after scripted battles.
Ensure that any problems concerning the unit and warriors of the unit arising from the bat

5.5. Sub-leader

Must assist the unit leader mustering the unit ready to start the battle.
Must be familiar with the script.
Must assist the Unit Leader with the safety   checks.
Must repeat the orders of the unit leader and ensure they are carried out.
Must ensure the coherence of the unit as a fighting force.
Must transmit reports from the unit leader to the army commander when necessary and relay advice from the Battle Captain to the Unit Leader.
Must lead sub-units detached by the unit leader if ordered to do so.

5.6. Standard bearer

Must collect the unit standard from the Battle Captain.
Must raise it at the muster point.
Must march and stand immediately behind the Unit Leader to identify the location of the Unit Leader.
Must repeat all orders of the Unit Leader when in combat with the enemy.
Must defend the unit standard.
Must return the unit standard to the Battle Captain.

5.7. Hersir

Carry out any of the above duties when appointed.
Provide guidance to Unit Leaders, Sub-Leaders and Standard Bearers.
Recommend unit leaders to the Battle Captain for promotion to Hersir.
Be prepared to take a command group role at short notice.

Advise the Battle Captain on matters concerning the management of musters and battles.

6. SAFETY CHECKS

Safety is of paramount importance to all members of the Society and particularly for the warriors. It is in every warrior`s interest that weapons and equipment on the field are of a high standard and not a danger to themselves or others. To ensure that these standards are maintained the officers of the Society must make periodic checks of equipment.

At the pre-battle muster the unit leaders must check:

That all warriors have the safety equipment prescribed in the hand to hand combat and archery rules.
That all metal weapons conform to the Society's weapons specifications and are free from burrs.
That all shields are in a safe condition.
That all sharp tools or weapons have been left off field.
That all arrows have undamaged blunts, the shafts are un-damaged and there is at least 18" of fletching with four or more flights.
That all wooden parts of weapons have no cracks or splinters.
That all bows have a draw weight of not more than 35lb at 28"
.

7.   ARMY STRUCTURE

In the Viking Age warriors went to battle with the best equipment they could afford, this meant that there was a good deal of variety between them. Most units of an army represent a leader and followers, these followers could have a variety of weapons and equipment. It is not unusual to have lightly armed and equipped warriors in the same unit as heavily armed and equipped warriors. Archers and slingers may also be in the unit, the Vikings particularly were known for their use of the bow. The more wealthy the leader the more heavy infantry in his unit. A kings hearth troop would only have well-equipped warriors.

Some nationalities were known for producing certain types of warrior. Because they were generally poor, the Welsh had more light warriors. As time went on there was a tendency towards concentrating troop types together to make a bigger impact but this was rarely the case in the tenth century.

Most good commanders would keep a reserve so as to exploit the enemy's weakness or to back up a unit in difficulty. Heavy infantry were best for leading the main fight and light skirmishers would be sent out from their parent units to harass the enemy.

7.1. The hearth troop's mission

To keep the army commander alive.
If the commander dies they fight on around the body until the enemy is defeated or they are all killed.

7.2.The skirmisher's mission

To spearhead major attacks by the army.
To harass the enemy while the army deploys.
To harass the enemy while the units of the army redeploy.
To prevent the enemy following up units, which are breaking contact with the enemy.
To engage and drive off the enemy skirmishers.

7.3. The missile warrior's mission

To harass the enemy while the army deploys.
To harass the enemy while the units of the army redeploy.
To harass the enemy as they advance.
To prevent the enemy following up units, which are breaking contact with the enemy.
To engage and drive off the enemy skirmishers.
To engage and drive off the enemy missile warriors.

To engage and kill enemy leaders and commanders.

7.4.The line unit's mission

To fight and defeat the enemy line units.

7.5. The army reserve`s mission

To strengthen any unit of the army, which is in danger of being broken.
To counter any attempt by the enemy to take the army in flank.
To make flank attacks upon the enemy when the commander so orders.
To replace routed, broken, or tired units.
To skirmish with the enemy and delay their advance while the army rallies and or reforms after being broken.

This mission is vital to the survivability of the army, it is not a mission that should be entrusted to an inexperienced unit.

The reserve unit should be experienced and steady in combat, it must respond to orders quickly and without question, it's warriors must be fit and able to move quickly.

The reserve is the unit which is going to save the army from disaster, it is the unit which will turn victory into triumph.

8. UNIT STRUCTURE

Unit sizes will vary depending on the number of warriors available, it will not always be possible to have sub-leaders, if there are only five warriors in the unit they will all be needed in the front rank.

Wherever possible a unit reserve should be appointed. In a unit of eleven warriors the two sub-leaders will have to fulfil this role alone, if the unit is large enough a quarter to a third of the warriors should be appointed to the reserve. A unit of fourteen warriors should have one leader, two sub-leaders, eight main body warriors and three reserve warriors.

The reserve will be commanded by one of the two sub-leaders when needed.

The unit reserve's mission is:

To strengthen any part of the main body which is in danger of being broken.
To counter any attempt by the enemy to take the unit in flank.
To make flank attacks upon the enemy when the leader so orders.
To replace casualties or tired warriors.
To skirmish with the enemy and delay their advance while the main body rallies and or reforms.

This mission is vital to the survivability of the unit, it is not a mission that should be entrusted to inexperienced warriors. The warriors of the reserve should be experienced and steady in combat, they must respond to orders quickly and without question, they must be fit and able to move quickly.

The reserve are the warriors who are going to save the unit from disaster, they are the warriors who will turn victory into triumph.

9. TACTICS

The following may be used in a scripted or un-scripted battle, they are not intended as the only tactics that may be employed but as a guide to what may be done. The use of agreed commands and movements make communication on the battlefield, more effective.

9.1. Attack in echelon left/right

> # Command: Echelon right/left – Attack!

The ordered flank unit advances towards the enemy. When it has advanced fifteen paces the next unit in the line advances towards the enemy. When the second unit has advanced fifteen paces the next unit in the line advances towards the enemy. This continues until the whole line is advancing towards the enemy. The commander may vary the number of paces. Units may be ordered to adopt the boars snout formation for this attack.
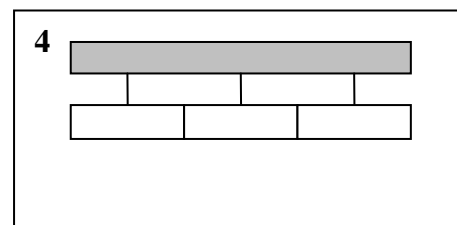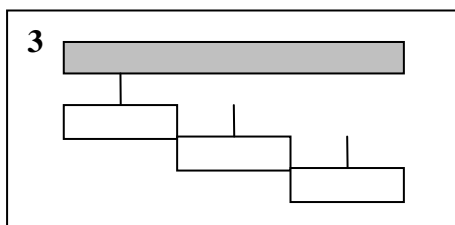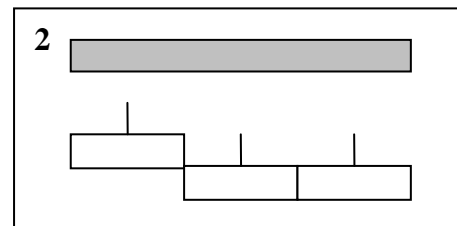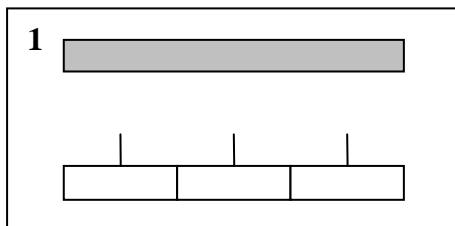
9.2. Attack in line

> # Command: In line – Attack!

All units of the army advance in a single line towards the enemy. All units must ensure that no gaps are allowed to develop between or within the units.
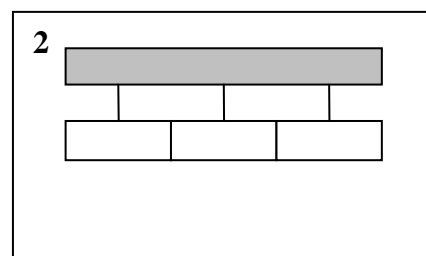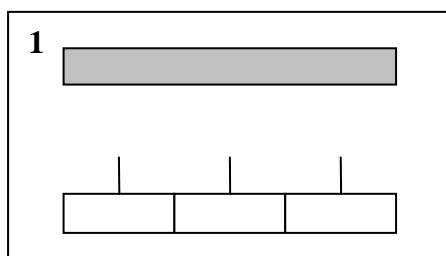
9.3. Break contact

> # Command: Break Contact!

The army breaks contact with the enemy by moving back ten paces and reforming shieldwall facing the enemy. If the unit is to retire further, the unit standards should be sent back to the position where the army is to reform before the command is given. (See 13.5).
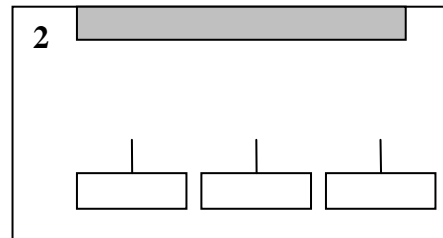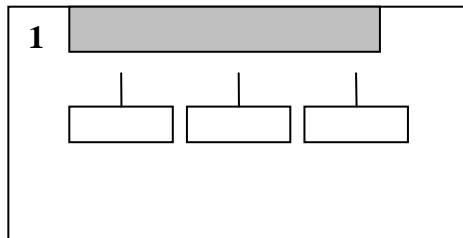
9.4. Bulls horn attack

> # Command: Bull`s Horn – Attack!

The flank units advance towards the enemy. When they have advanced fifteen paces the units on their inner flanks advance towards the enemy. When these units have advanced fifteen paces the next inner flanking units advance towards the enemy. This continues until the whole line is advancing towards the enemy. If the commander wants a greater or lesser gap between the units the number of paces should be stated in the order. Units may be ordered to adopt the boars snout formation for this attack.
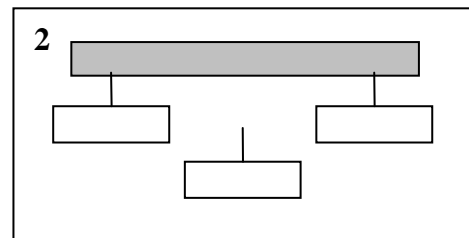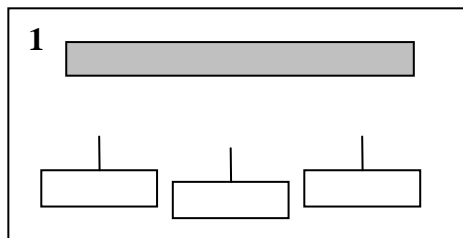
9.5. Defence against cavalry

Command: Form Circle!

If the flanks of the army are threatened by cavalry they should bend back until they are behind the centre thus forming a circle. The warriors should be in shieldwall and all supernumeraries within the circle.
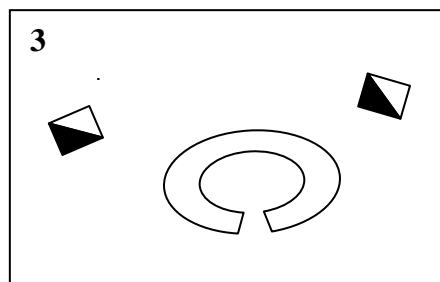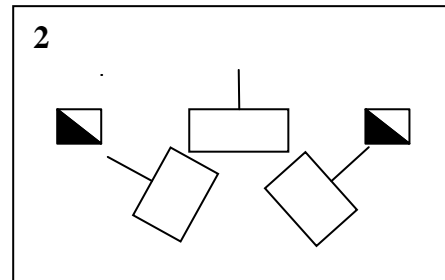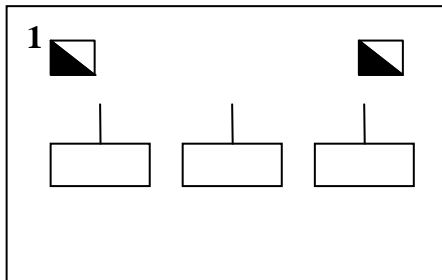
9.6. Left/right flank attack

Command: Rear Flank– Attack Left/Right!

The enemy's front is attacked while a designated unit moves around the enemy flank.
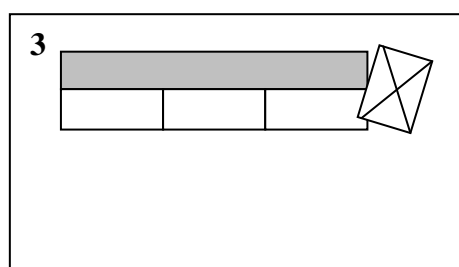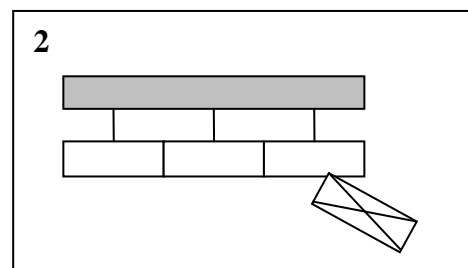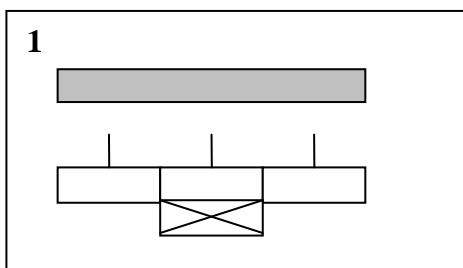
9.7. Oblique attack left/right

Command: Oblique Left/Right – Attack!

For oblique attack left the reserve moves behind the right flank unit. The front line units of the army make a half turn to the left and advance on the enemy. The space made on the right flank of the attacking army is then filled by the reserve which advances directly to it's front. The aim is for the left flank unit to overlap the enemy line and attack it in flank. The space made on the right flank of the attacking army is then filled by the reserve which advances directly to it's front.

For oblique attack right the reserve moves behind the left flank unit. The front line units of the army make a half turn to the right and advance on the enemy. The space made on the left flank of the attacking army is then filled by the reserve which advances directly to it's front. The aim is for the right flank unit to overlap the enemy line and attack it in flank. The space made on the left flank of the attacking army is then filled by the reserve which advances directly to it's front.

The direction given in the command, is the direction for the main units to attack.

E.g.   Oblique attack left.

9.8. Rams horn attack

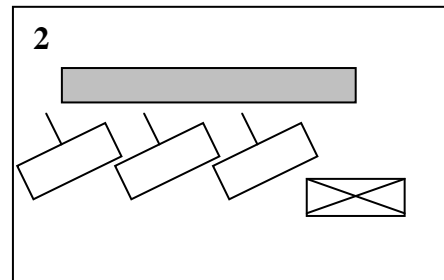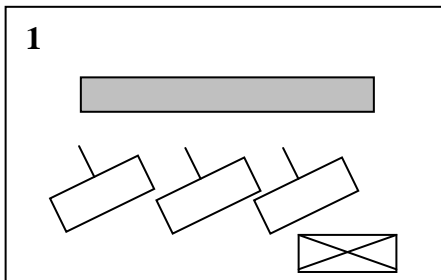The centre unit advances towards the enemy. When it has advanced fifteen paces the units on it's flanks advance towards the enemy. When these units have advanced fifteen paces the next flanking units advance towards the enemy. This continues until the whole line is advancing towards the enemy. If the commander wants a greater or lesser gap between the units the number of paces should be stated in the order. Units may be ordered to adopt the boars snout formation for this attack.
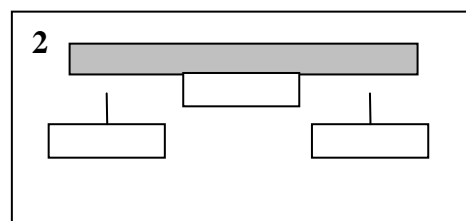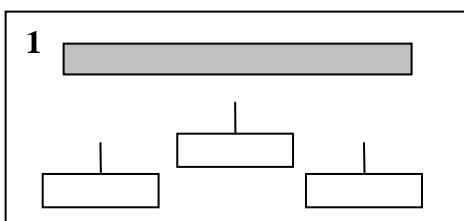
9.9. Retire in line

Command: In Line- Retire!

All units of the army retire in a single line towards their start line. All units must ensure that no gaps are allowed to develop between or within the units. This is done in after having broken contact with the enemy.
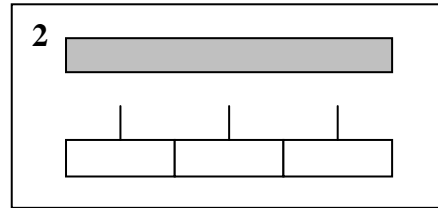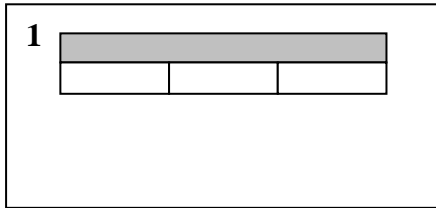
Command: Form Line!

9.10.   Army close order

Command: Form Line!

All units of the army close up on the centre and close any gaps that there may be.

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10. SIGNALS

Many of the orders issued by the commander require units to act in co-operation with each other, attacks have to be coordinated or they become disjointed and lead to disaster for the army.

As part of an order, the commander may issue a signal instruction. A signal instruction informs the unit leader of the signal which will initiate a tactical order.

Due to the lack of sophistication of Viking age technology these signals are restricted to visual and audible signals.

Audible signals are usually made with a musical instrument or a loud verbal cry. Horns are most likely to be heard. A verbal cry must be repeated by those in a command role if it is to be heard throughout the army

Visual signals are usually made with flags or banners, the waving in a particular way of the army banner could be a signal to attack. Some tactical orders lend themselves to a visual signal by a whole unit, "rams horn attack" for instance can easily be seen if all leaders look towards the centre unit and watch for it's advance.

11. STANDARD SCRIPT ACTION

During the Viking age people did many things differently than we do today, this was true both on and off the battlefield. The Maldon poem gives good examples of what was considered responsible behaviour on an English battlefield and the Viking sagas are full of heroes and cowards alike. The Anglo-Saxon chronicle expresses the disgust of the authors at the actions of some Saxon ealdormen there by indicating that their conduct was not what was expected of them. The following are actions that should be carried out by warriors to give the battle more of a Viking age aspect as opposed to a modern one. The principle of what follows is that a warrior who is an officer, or possesses chainmail, is of a higher social rank, where the expectation is to preserve name and dignity rather that follow the dictates of common sense. With this higher status they are expected to do things to preserve their name and dignity rather than what common sense dictates.

These actions should be considered as the "default settings" of the warriors, if the script calls for a warrior to behave "out of character" then individuals will be appointed to play those roles.

11.1. Entry on to the battlefield

All units, other than a hearth troop of semi-professional warriors, should enter the battlefield in a very loose and ragged marching order. On reaching their position on the start line unit leaders must call them into line and bring order from the chaos. Where possible there should be no clear distinction between the units as they march on, only when they are formed up should this be clear.

11.2. Leaders performance

Unit leaders must appear calm and heroic in the face of all adversity and set a good example to the warriors. Stand firm in the centre of the shield wall and give orders in a loud clear voice. The unit leader must also be the calming influence in the unit, loved by their followers. (Except where the script calls for a specific characterisation.)

11.3. Sub-leaders performance

Must appear energetic and more frightening to the warriors in their unit than the enemy. Suffer fools lightly and keep the warriors in the line and on task. Their mother may love them but no one else does!

11.4.   Death of a warrior

During scripted combat, all kills should be reacted to as wounds unless otherwise specified. Wounded warriors should drop back out of the fighting line acting in accordance with the wound received. Once safely behind the lines, the wounded warrior should wait to be attended to by the Fostrar or should bind the wound from a personal bandage stock, before being returned to the combat.

11.5.   Death of unit leader

On the death of their leader, sub-leaders and any warriors wearing chainmail, rally around their fallen leader's body and fight to death or victory, all other warriors rout off the field.

11.6.   Death of army commander

On the death of their commander the hearth troop, leaders, sub-leaders, and any warriors wearing chainmail, rally around the body of their fallen commander and fight to death or victory, all other warriors and units rout off the field.

11.7.   Death of mailed warrior

Any warrior not an officer or wearing chainmail who kills an enemy who is wearing chainmail should attempt to stop and loot the body if it lies behind the killer`s fighting line. The looter should be seen to attempt to take all the victims arms and armour, in the interest of safety the victims helmet and shield should be left unless the fighting is over. Unmailed warriors should always attempt to loot the dead, especially when mailed, at the end of the battle.

11.8.   Death of all one's followers

When a leader or commander is the sole survivor of a unit, an attempt to make a long speech should be made, in the hope that the enemy might get bored and wander off. If the enemy does not fatally interrupt or wander off, the leader/commander should follow this by a desperate attempt to cut a way to freedom, or challenge for single combats and die heroically.

11.9.   Loss of unit standard

When a unit's standard is captured by the enemy the leader, sub-leaders and any warriors wearing chainmail must attempt to recover it or die in the attempt. Other warriors in the unit may or may not help to recover the standard as they please, or are ordered.

11.10. Leader runs away

If a unit's leader runs away, the unit will break and every warrior in the unit will follow unless rallied by the army commander or a sub-commander.

12. OFFICERS LIVES

By now it will be clear that the officers have considerable responsibility for the running of a good battle, whilst being busy leading their warriors they are also at risk from the enemy and their death can have adverse effects on the fate of their followers. During the scripted battle officers should take all hits as wounds until their task is complete, they will then die or survive according to the requirements of the script.

During the unscripted element of on open ended battle or during a refight officers take hits in the same way as other warriors.

13. Formation manoeuvres for melee units

Many of the following formation manoeuvres are initiated by the centre warrior. Before a unit goes into battle the unit leader must designate the centre warrior and make sure this warrior is known to all the other warriors. Wherever practicable the unit leader should, in true Viking style, be the centre warrior., and so the unit standard bearer should stand immediately behind the centre warrior.

Key:

▷	Unit Leader	A/B	Sub-Leader
◣	Standard Bearer	①②③	Warriors in ranks
↟	Archer	✚	Medic
F	Fostri		

13.1.   Standard formation

The warriors stand in two ranks (numbers permitting). The unit leader stands in the centre of the front rank and the standard bearer stands immediately behind in the centre of the second rank. The sub-leaders space themselves evenly behind the second rank. Fostrar stand together approximately ten paces behind the standard bearer

①②③④   ▷⑤⑥⑦⑧
①②③④   ◣⑤⑥⑦⑧
↟   A   ↟   ↟   B   ↟
F✚
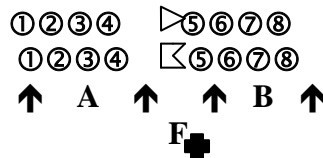
13.2.   About turn

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

Command: About Turn!

</div>

The warriors stand in a line or shield wall. On the command "about turn" the warriors turn to the right 180$^{\text{o}}$. When in shield wall, each warrior brings the shield over head with the shield arm straight. The shield is then returned to the original position but with the warrior facing the opposite direction. When the unit is in the at ease position, the shield remains at the warriors side, as the turn is executed.

13.3.   At ease

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

Command: At Ease!

</div>

The warriors stand in line facing the enemy with their weapons and shields held at their sides in a relaxed manner.

13.4.   Boars snout

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

Command: Boar`s Snout!

</div>

The warriors stand in shield wall facing the enemy. On the command "boars snout" the centre warrior starts to advance upon the enemy. The warriors to the left and right allow the centre warrior to take a step and then tuck themselves in behind the centre warrior's shield. The remaining warriors in the shield wall follow suit, they allow the warrior nearest to the centre warrior to take a step before they do so, thus creating a V shaped formation.
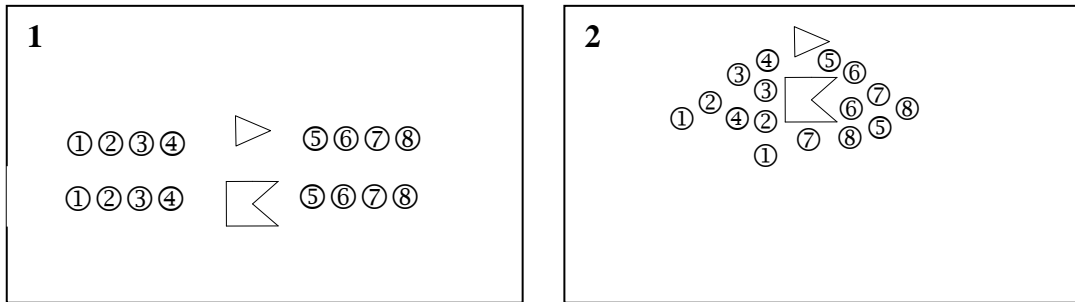
As the front rank warriors step forward those to the left of the centre warrior reverse the overlap of their shields. This is to prevent the enemy from breaking through gaps between the shields
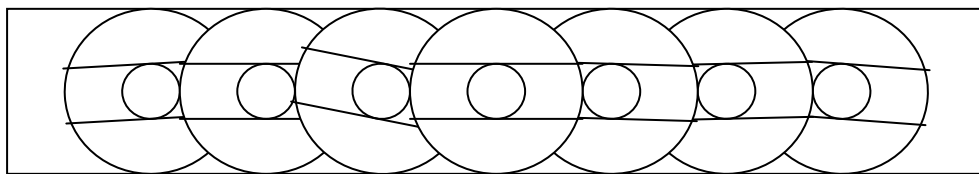
Any warriors in the second rank fill in the gap between the two limbs of the V giving the formation the strength to break through the opposing shield wall. Supernumeraries may follow on behind if combat trained or scripted so to do.

This is a command to advance upon the enemy. The intention is to break through the enemy`s defences and is therefore most effective when performed at a steady advance with the centre warrior leaning back. If required , several units may be combined to form a large Boar Snout.

13.5.   Break contact

Command: Break Contact!

The standard bearer and the rear rank, under the command of a sub-leader, retire ten paces and reform in a loose shieldwall. One sub-leader stands behind the front rank and watches to see when the rear rank has reformed.
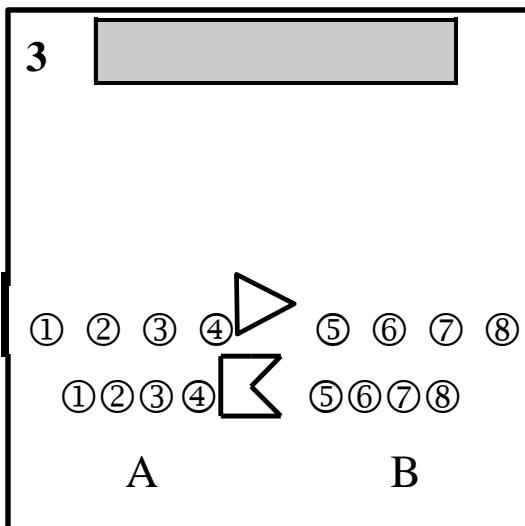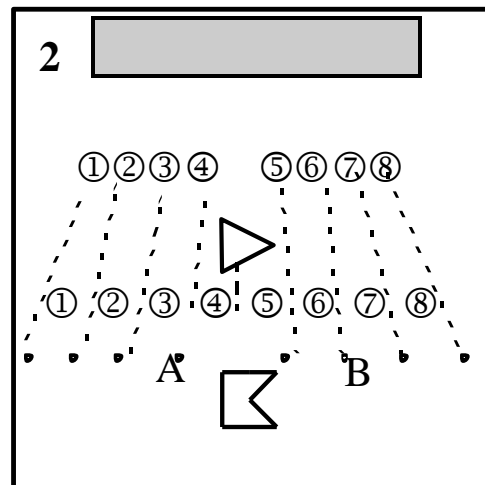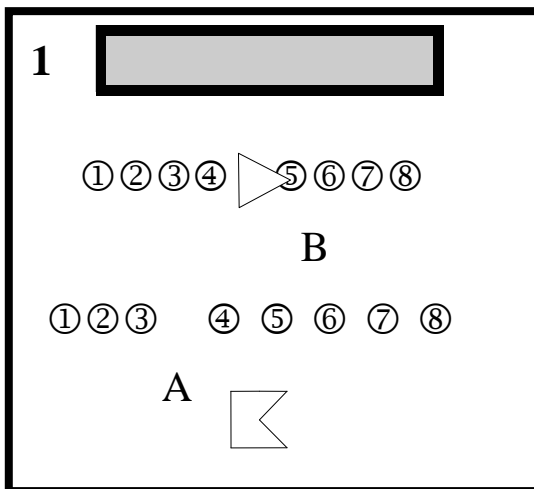
Once the rear rank is formed up the sub-leader informs the unit leader who then gives the command "break".

All those still fighting run back between the rear rank warriors and form up behind them. The new front rank now closes up and prepares to meet

an enemy attack or retire further. The unit leader takes up position at the centre of the new first rank.

13.6.   Close order

<div style="border:1px solid">

Command: Close Order!

</div>

      The warriors are in open or extended order. On the command "close order" the warriors move in towards the centre warrior until they are shoulder to shoulder.
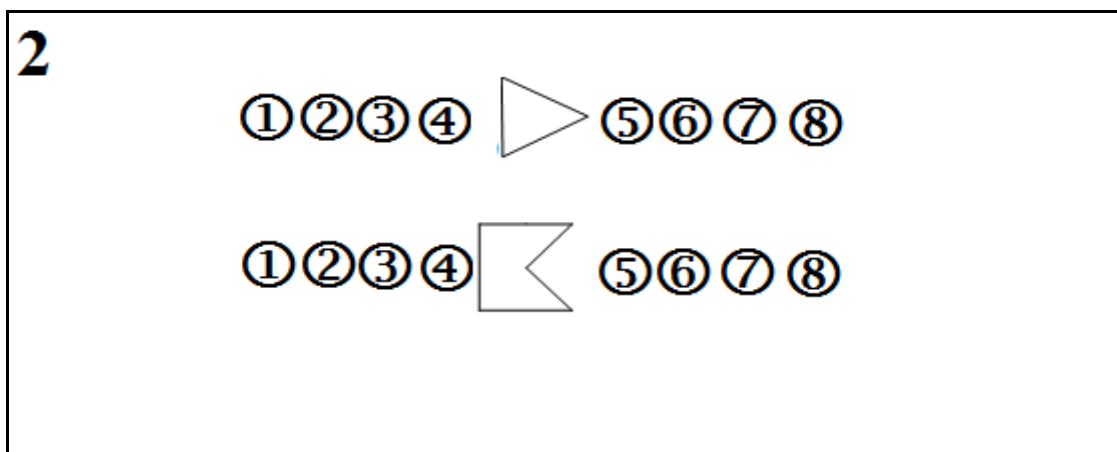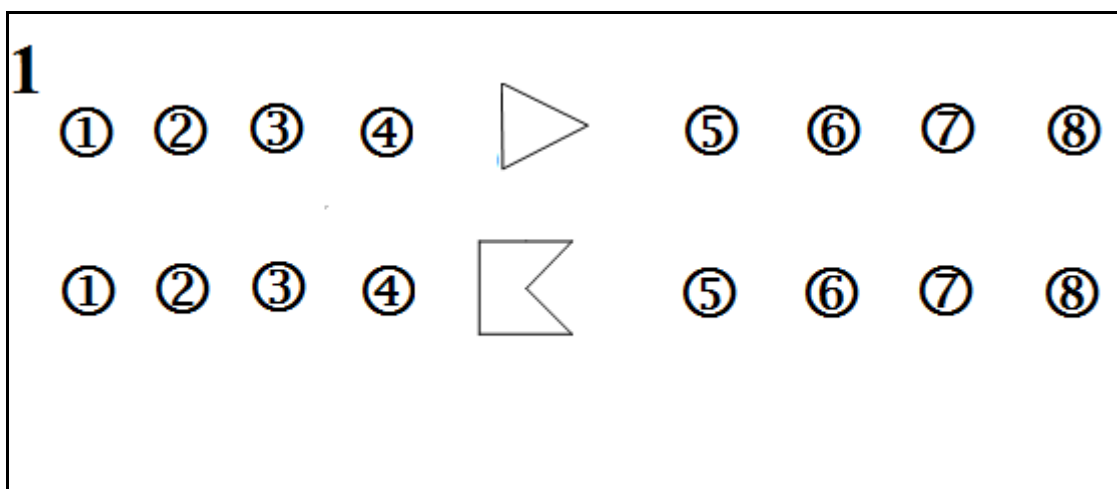
13.7.   Counter charge

<div style="border:1px solid">

Command: Charge!

</div>

      When an attacking enemy is within six paces and the order "counter charge" is given, the unit moves rapidly towards the enemy without breaking its formation. The aim is to disrupt the enemies attack.

13.8. Crescent

Command: Form Crescent!

On the command "Form Crescent" the Sub-Leaders will place the warriors of the unit into position to receive the attack.

The centre of the unit will stand firm around the Unit Leader while the flanks will be advanced to form a crescent with the intention of enveloping the enemy attack.

When receiving an attack in Boars Snout by the entire enemy army the Crescent may be formed by some or all of the units in the defending army.
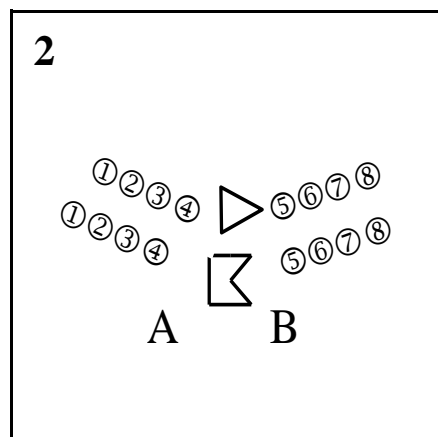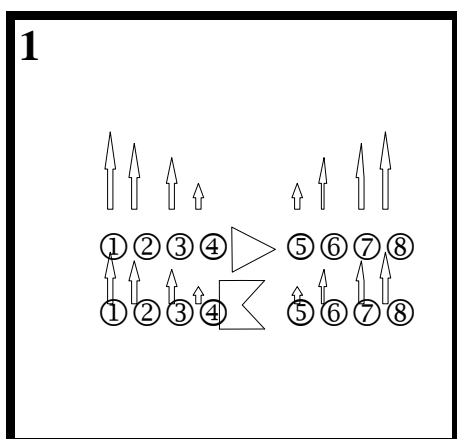
Crescent formation in units:

45
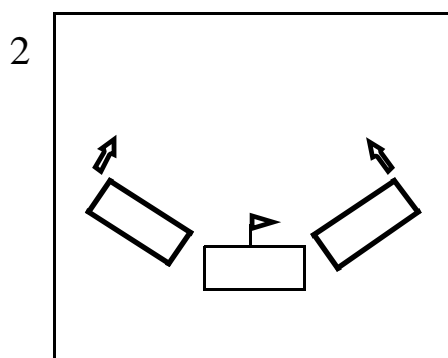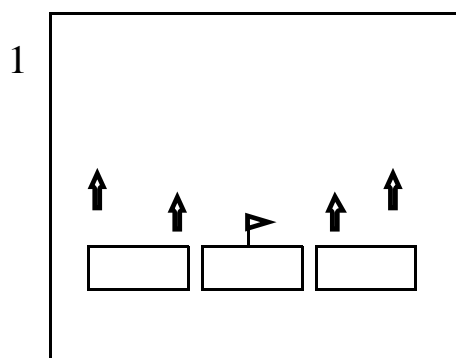
13.9.   Defence against cavalry

Command: Form Circle !
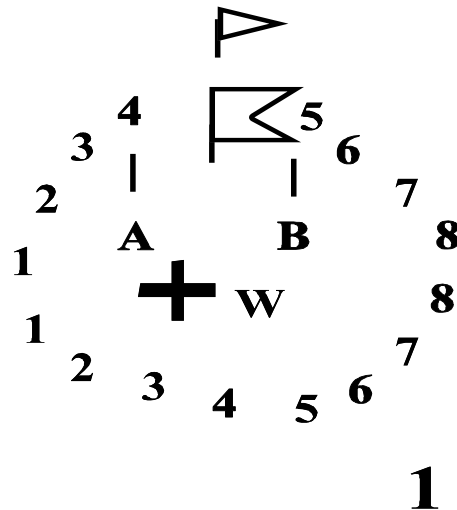
When a unit is approached by cavalry they should halt and form shieldwall. If the units flanks are threatened by the cavalry they should bend back until the unit forms a circle. The warriors should be in the shieldwall and all supernumeraries within the circle. Special arrangements depending on the script, should be made, if Fostrar are present.

13.10.   Extend the line

Command: Extend the line!

The warriors having been called to form two ranks, facing the enemy at ease or in shield wall. On the command "extend the line" , the warriors **in the second rank,** to the left and right of the centre warrior , take up position at the ends of the first ranks, maintaining the looser spacing.

13. 11.   Form one rank

The warriors stand in two ranks facing the enemy at ease or in shieldwall.
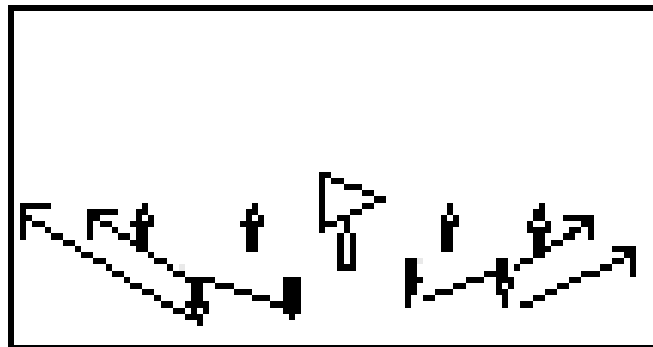
On the command "form one rank" the warriors in the front rank maintain their position, those in the rear divide and move to the flanks, the warriors take up position at the first space they come to. There they form up in line shoulder to shoulder with the front they adopt the "at ease" or shield wall stance as appropriate.
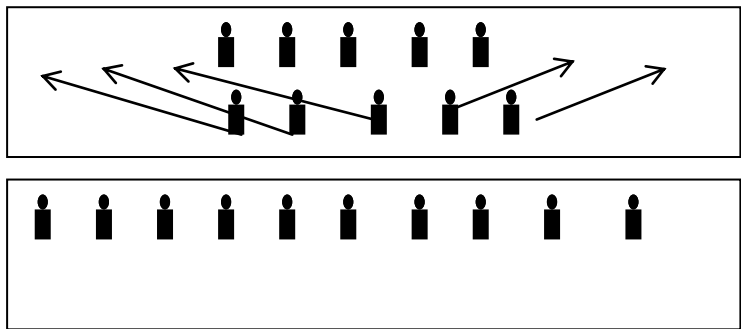
13.12.   Form two ranks

The warriors stand in a line facing the enemy at ease or in shieldwall.

On the command "form two ranks" the centre warrior takes one step forward, all other warriors look into the centre of the unit. The warriors to the left and right of the centre warrior on seeing which way the centre warrior has gone take a step in the opposite direction, that is to the rear.

Each warrior then follows suit taking a step in the opposite direction to the warrior nearest to the centre of the unit.
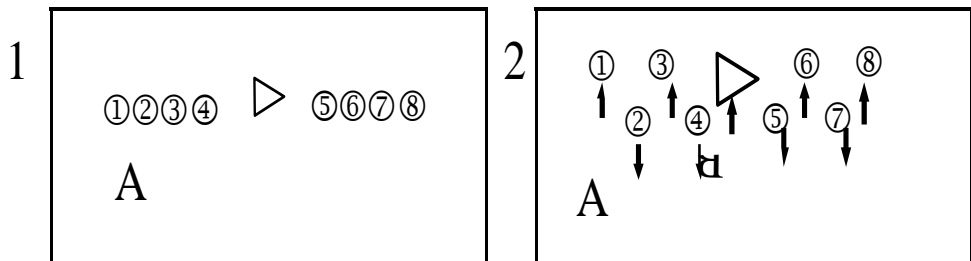
On the command "close order" the warriors move sideways towards the centre warrior until they are shoulder to shoulder.
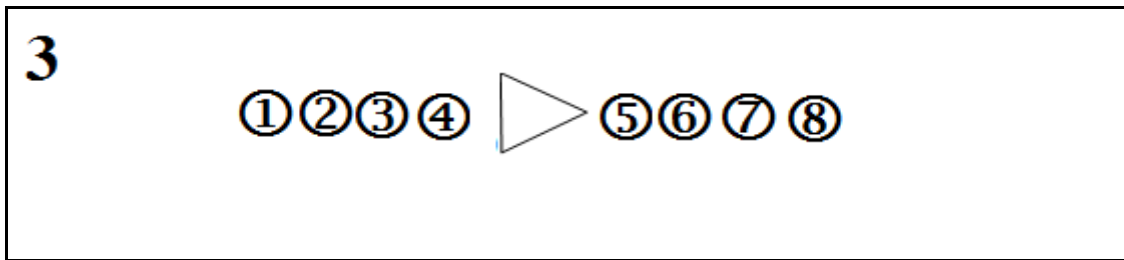
13.13 Retiring whilst engaged

Command: Give Ground !

The Warriors are engaged . On the command " Give ground" they start slowly to move backwards, whilst continuing to fight.

13.14 Hunting group

Command: Hunt !

Hunting groups usually comprise three warriors working as a team to single out and kill an enemy. If the script requires a hunting group, the unit leader should designate the warriors and their leader in advance. The hunting group can devise any tactic it wishes. Normally one warrior will be in charge and will decide what tactics to use. To enable warriors who have never worked together before to achieve their goal there are a number of common methods:

a).   **One two bulls horn**

One warrior, usually the leader, stands in front of two others. The leader attacks the enemy's front while the other two warriors move around both flanks to attack the enemy in the rear or flank.
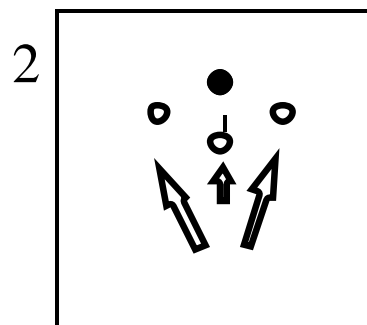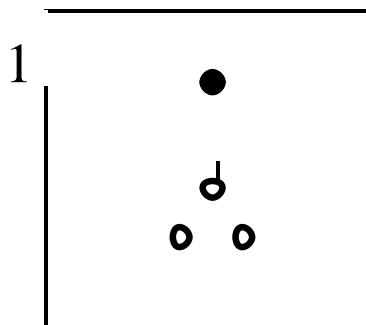
b).   Two one bulls horn

One warrior, usually the leader, stands behind two others. The front two warriors move around both flanks to attack the enemy in the rear or flank while the leader attacks the enemy's front.
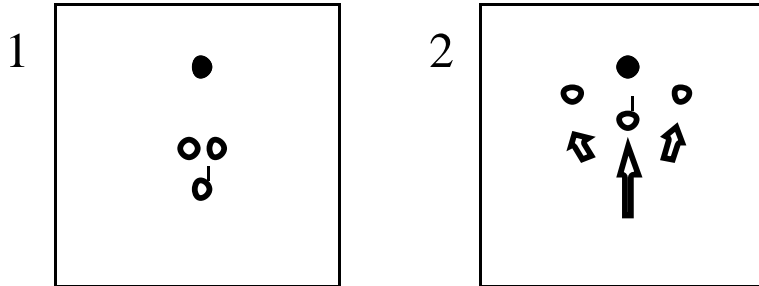
c).   One two left/right hook

One warrior, usually the leader, stands in front of two others. The leader moves around one of the flanks to attack the enemy in rear or flank while the other two warriors attack the enemy's front.
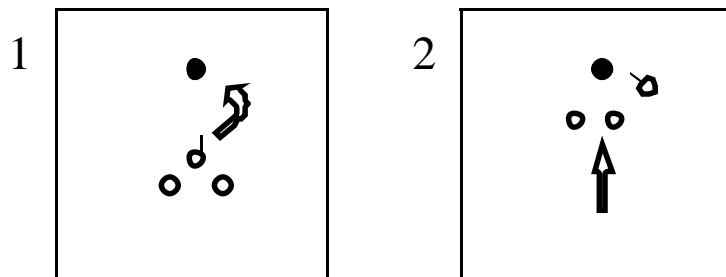
d).   Two one left/right hook

One warrior, usually the leader, stands behind two others. The leader moves around one of the flanks to attack the enemy in the rear or flank while the other two warriors attack the enemy's front.
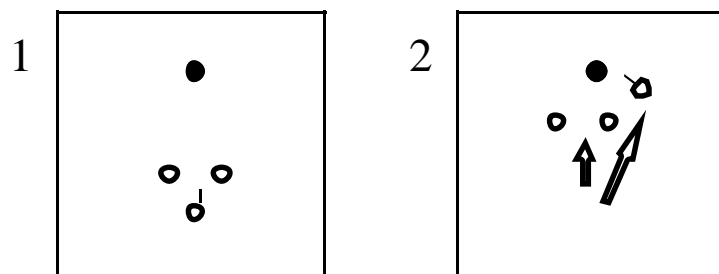
e). One two hammer anvil

One warrior, usually the leader, stands in front of two others. The leader (the hammer) moves around to attack the enemy in one flank while the other two warriors (the anvil) move around to attack the enemy in the opposite flank. The leader must remember to tell the anvil which direction to go.
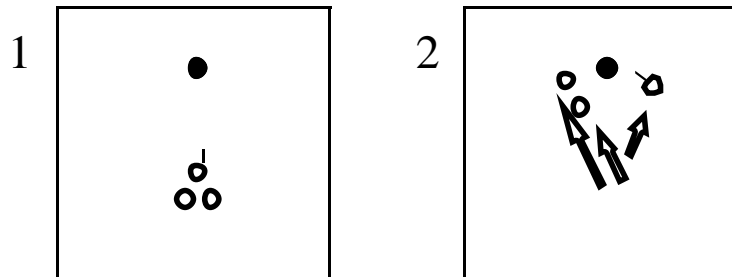
f). Two one hammer anvil

One warrior, usually the leader, stands behind two others. The leader moves around to attack the enemy in one flank while the other two warriors move around to attack the enemy in the opposite flank.
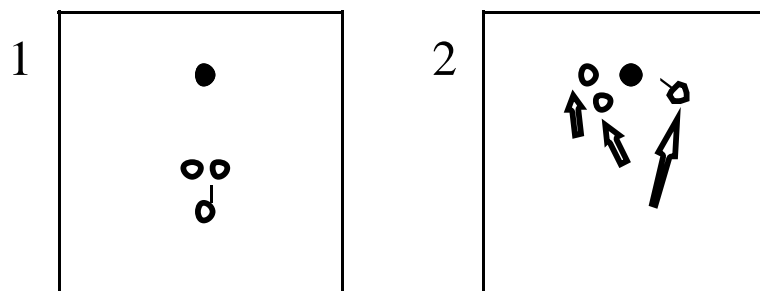
13.15.   Interpenetration (i)

Command: Penetrate !

Two opposing units are first both formed into two or more open order ranks. One unit advances on the other or they both advance towards each other. As the units meet each warrior in the front rank passes the enemy warrior in front by stepping to the right. As they pass each other the opposing front rank warriors crash their shields together. Once the front ranks have passed they engage a warrior from the enemy's second rank.

1
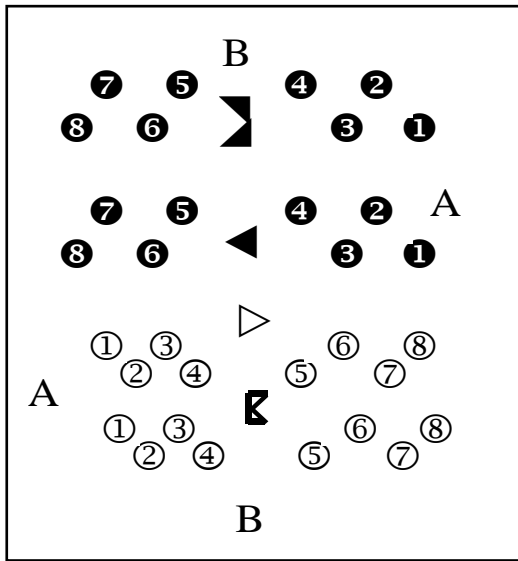
2
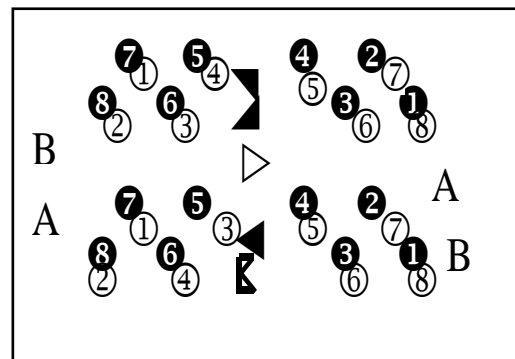
Interpenetration (ii)

Two opposing units are first both formed into two or more open order ranks. They advance and engage. On the order "penetrate", the designated unit will "push" through into an interpenetrated formation, individuals passing to the right of the opposing warrior.

1

2
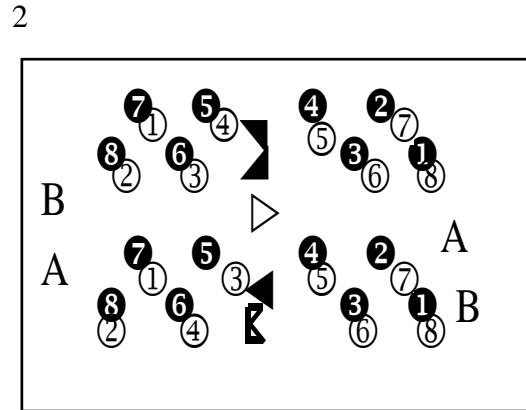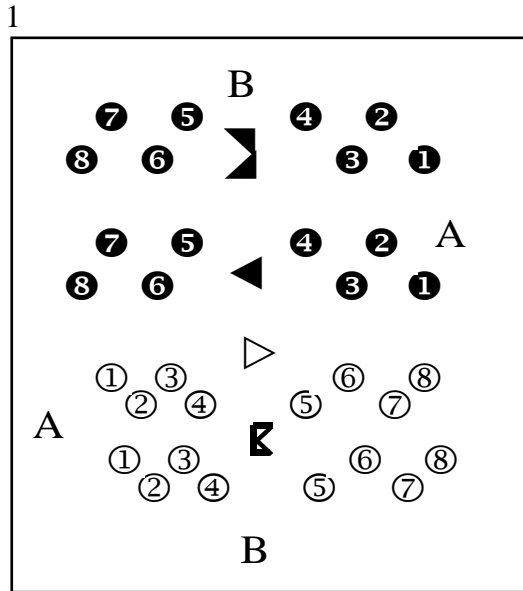
13.16   Left/right wheel

Command: From the left/right, wheel!

The warriors stand in a line at ease or in shieldwall.

On the command "From the left/right Wheel" the warrior at the end of the line in the direction of the wheel stands still but turns slowly on the spot. The next warrior slowly moves around the pivotal warrior in the direction of the ordered wheel. Each warrior in turn moves slightly faster around the pivotal warrior with the aim of keeping the line straight as it moves in the direction indicated.

The   warriors continue the movement until they have wheeled through 90° at which point they move straight ahead. At any point during the wheel the unit commander may give the command "march on", on hearing this order the warriors cease wheeling and move forward in the direction they are facing.
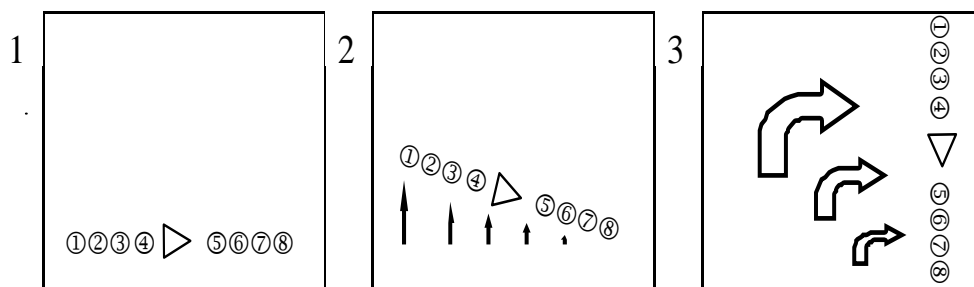
13.17 March on

Command: March On !

The warriors are standing in shield wall facing the enemy.

On the command "march on" they all step off together towards the enemy.

13.18 Ordered Advance

Command: Step on my command… Step!

The warriors are in shieldwall. All warriors in the front rank take one step forward together. At the same time, they may aim a blow at the enemy. On the blow, a shout may be given. This manoeuvre is designed to restore confidence in an attack, whilst being intimidating to the enemy.

13.19 Rally

On the command "rally", the warriors break contact and run to the specified place.

E.G. "Rally on the standard"

All warriors gather where the standard has been placed.

13.20 Reform

Frequently given after the command "rally" the command "reform" instructs the warriors to adopt the previously held formation.

The Rally and Reform commands may be combined. E.G. " Rally and reform on the standard!"

13.21.   Rout from cavalry

Some warriors, led by a member of the command group and including those not wishing to fight the cavalry, rally around the standard. Those warriors wishing to interact with the cavalry flee to the rear. The cavalry move around those warriors standing firm and pursue those that are fleeing. The cavalry then fight or cut down the fleeing infantry. If the rout is total, the standing warriors rout away from the cavalry action. This manoeuvre is only used by cavalry and fleeing infantry who have practised together.
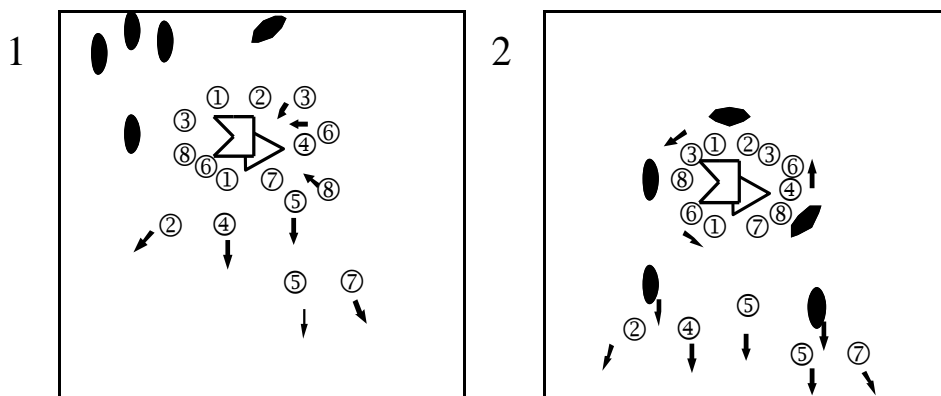
13.22 Rout from infantry

Command: Rout !

When the script calls for a unit to rout the unit leader orders "rout" and leads the rush to the rear. If the unit is to be rallied the warriors must keep hold of their weapons and shields. If the unit is to rout from the field they should discard their shields, spears and long axes, the discarding of other weapons is optional.

Wait for meeee! !
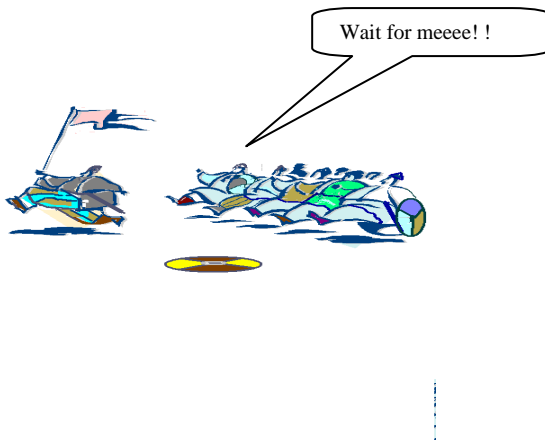
13.23 Shieldburh

Command:Shield…burh !

This formation is designed to give maximum protection against missiles.

The unit must be formed into not less than three ranks, four or more is preferred. The ranks must be as tightly closed up as possible.

On the command "shieldburh" the front rank warriors kneel and tuck their heads down below the upper rim of their shields. The second rank warriors lean forward and place their shields over the upper rim of the front ranks shields. The next rank cover the heads of the second rank, and their own, with the lower edge of their shields under the top of the second rank shields, the action of which will cause the shields to lap back over the heads of those behind. The deeper the unit the greater the efficiency of the overhead cover.
The flanks of the unit should bend back to provide some protection there. Supernumeraries should tuck themselves into the back of the shieldburh and crouch down so as to take best advantage of the cover. There must be no gaps

in between the shields which arrows and javelins could pass through. Warriors with small shields must be in the rear ranks.
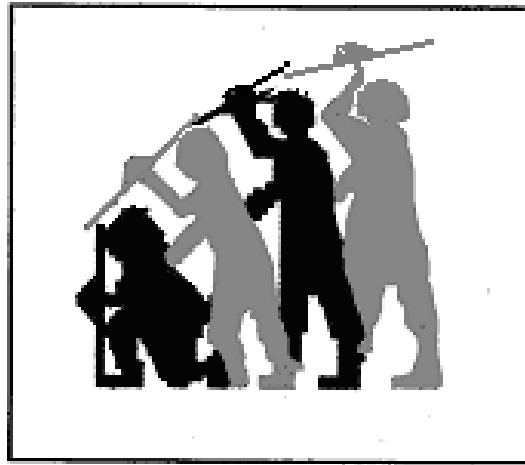
Sub-leaders, once they have ensured the shieldburh is complete, must place themselves so as to provide additional protection to the auxiliaries. They are responsible for checking that missile shots have ceased before calling the order to stand.

On the command "stand" all warriors disengage their shields and stand, the front rank warriors keep their shields in the shieldwall position. No other action is taken until the unit leaders give their new orders.

This formation, being static and blind can disadvantage the defender. It is a response to massive missile attack, or a cover for movement of warriors in the rear ranks, where the front ranks are not expected to survive.

13.24   Shieldwall

Command: Shield…wall !

The warriors stand in line with their shields and weapons held at ease by their sides, facing the enemy with their feet apart.

On the command "shield wall" they move their weapon side foot to the rear and bring their shield smartly up to the ready position. As they do so they over lap it with the shield of the warrior to their right. They do this in such a manner that a crashing sound is made as all the shields come together.

Once in position the shield side arm is pressed against the shield forcing it out while at the same time pulling in with the hand. This provides the firmness required of the shield wall.

On the command "weapons" the weapon (not spear or long axe) is brought up in an arc from the rear and brought down upon the shield with a

loud crash. It is then held ready with the hand behind the shield. The ranks must have sufficient space between them to allow for this movement to be carried out safely.

If armed with a spear the warrior holds it vertically with the point downwards.

On the command "shield wall" the warrior thrusts the weapon hand forward keeping the spear in a vertical position as the shield is brought to position.

On the command "weapons" the spear is brought up to a near horizontal position with the point slightly down and forward.

13.25 Skirmishing

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

Command: Skirmishers Go!

</div>

Skirmishing is the harassing of the enemy units between attacks by the main force, and while the latter deploys or attempting to slow their advance; this is done by short rushes followed by brief attacks. Skirmishers should not stand toe to toe exchanging blows with their enemy.

Skirmishers should work as a team; some warriors engage the enemy while the others hang back and only rush in when their comrades withdraw. No more than half, and not less than a third, of the unit should be engaged at any one time.

If one of the enemy warriors steps out of the shieldwall in an attempt to attack the skirmishers, all nearby skirmishers should attack this foolish warrior.
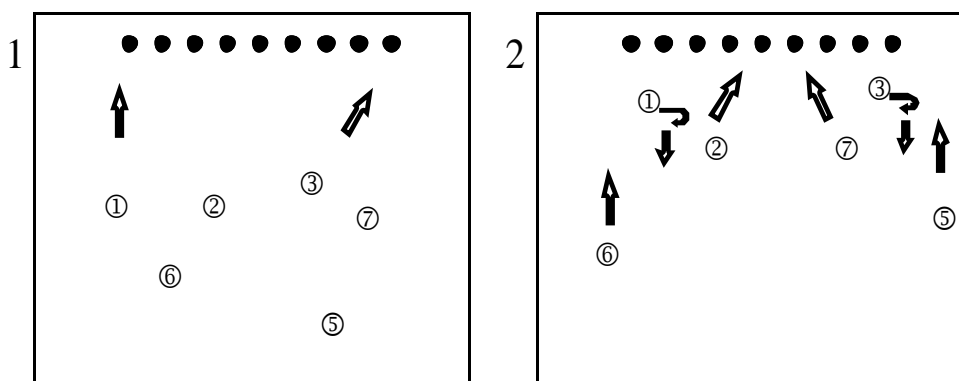
13.26 Skirmishers versus cavalry

Command: Cavalry Skirmishers Go!

The skirmishers stand before the cavalry in two extended order lines which are off set. The cavalry form a single open order line with each horse in front of one of the gaps in the skirmishers front rank.

1

① ② ③ ④

① ② ③ ④
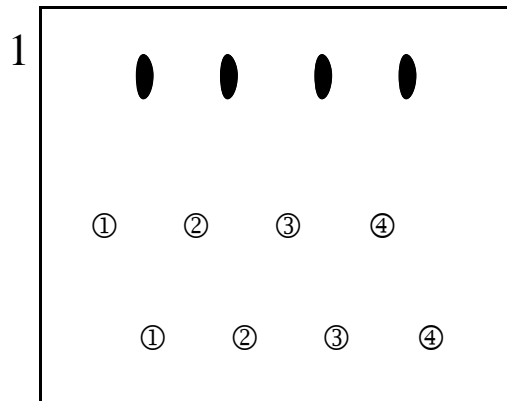
The cavalry charge the skirmishers and direct the horses to the gaps, the riders hold their lances out to their right as far as they can and aim to strike the skirmishers shields. The front rank skirmishers stand their ground and move their shields across their bodies to the right (**Note.** Left handed warriors must carry out this drill as right handed warriors.) The second rank of skirmishers turn and flee holding their shields over their backs.

2

① ② ③ ④

① ② ③ ④
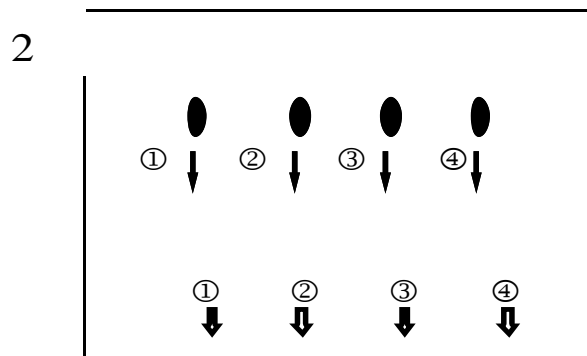
The fleeing warriors must judge the time that they turn and run and the pace they run at carefully, the aim is to allow the cavalry to catch them.

As the riders strike the skirmishers shields they allow their hand to slide down the lance until it reaches the head, at that point they let go of the lances letting them drop to the ground before the skirmishers. As soon as the riders pass them the front rank skirmishers fall to the ground and play dead or wounded.
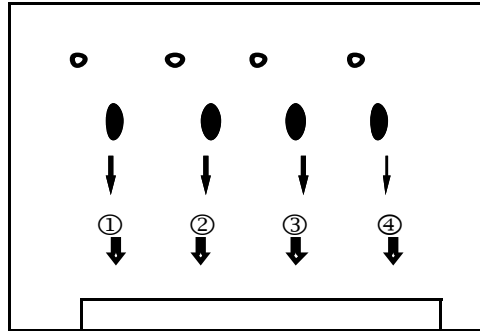
Wounded warriors and any that were missed by the cavalry should make their way back to their own side avoiding the riders. They should try to behave in a confused manner as befits those just ridden down by cavalry.As soon as they have let go of their lances the cavalry draw their swords and pursue the second rank of skirmishers. With the point of the sword pointing to the ground and held out to the right side they ride past the fleeing skirmishers and allow the blade to slide over the skirmishers shields. Once hit and the horses having past them the fleeing skirmishers fall to the ground and play dead or wounded.

Again wounded warriors and any that were missed by the cavalry should make their way back to their own side avoiding the riders. They should try to behave in a confused manner as befits those just ridden down by cavalry. Any skirmishers that out run the cavalry must get into or through the shield wall before the cavalry close on them.
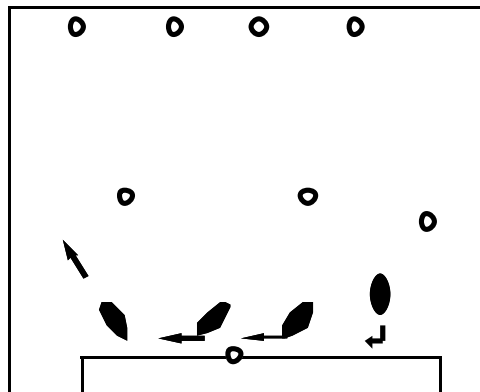
The cavalry then continue on towards the enemy shield wall where they pull up. They can then ride down the line of warriors striking at them or warriors can step out of the shield wall to engage in hand to hand combat with the cavalry.

As the cavalry move away from the shield wall they must avoid the area where bodies are lying.

This is a specialized action which may only be performed by warriors and cavalry who attend a practice at the show and before the battle takes place. No other warrior should attempt to skirmish with cavalry.

14. Considerations for missile units

Most of the manoeuvres on the battlefield are the same for all warriors, some however have weapon specific variations. There are also some missiles specific commands and manoeuvres which are included here.

Before a unit goes into battle the unit leader must designate and make known the centre warrior. The unit leader should take position on the left of the line (if right handed). This allows the leader to watch at the same time as shooting.

Javelineers and slingers not engaging in hand to hand combat, may be part of the missiles unit. Commands directed to all members of the unit start with the word "Missiles…". If the order is aimed at particular weapon groups, the command will start with the name of the group "Slingers…", "Javelins…" etc. Where there are significant numbers in separate weapons groups, each should have a sub-leader.

Basic Commands for launching missiles:

Archers:
Knock - fit an arrow to the string
Draw - Aim and draw the string back ready to shoot
Loose - Loose the string and launch the arrow

Slingers:
Load - Load ammunition into te pouch of the sling
Make ready - extend the sling arm to the rear in preparation to launch the missile.
Loose - Launch the missile**.**

Javelineers (when in a missiles unit)
Aim – Javelins are raised to a horizontal position ready to launch.
Loose – Javelins are launched.

14.1.   About turn

Command: Missiles, about turn!

The warriors stand in a line.

On the command "about turn" they turn to the right 180°. Archers bring their bow upright so as not to strike another warrior with it.

14.3   Free Melee

<div>
<center>Command: Loose at will !</center>
</div>

At certain times in a scripted battle, missile warriors are not required to operate as a unit. The Command " Loose at will" informs missiles warriors that they may move on the field choose targets and loose individually

14.4.   Open order

The missiles warriors always form up in open order. They stand in a line facing the enemy an arms distance from the warrior either side of them.

14.5.   Rolling volleys left/right

<div>
<center>Command: Rolling Volley left/right…!
Knock…Draw…Loose</center>
</div>

This manoeuvre is performed by archers.

The warriors stand in a single rank one arm length apart, at ease.On the command "rolling volleys (left or right)" they do nothing.

On the command "nock" they all fit an arrow to their bows.

On the command "draw" the archer at the end of the rank designated by "right" or "left" draws.

On the command "loose" the first archer looses at the target then the next archer draws and also looses. Each archer continues in turn loosing at the target.

When the archer at the end of the rank has loosed, that archer shouts "gone" and the drills above are repeated until the command "stop" is given.

On the command "stop" the archers stop what they are doing and await further orders.

Any archer unable to loose in turn, shouts "miss" and the next archer looses instead.

14.6 Volleying, ranks advancing

Command: Volley Ranks advancing!
Knock…Draw…Loose

This manoeuvre is performed by archers.

The archers are formed in two ranks two arm lengths apart at ease.

On the command "volleying, ranks advancing" they do nothing.

On the command "nock" both ranks fit arrows to their strings.

On the command "draw" the front rank draws.

On the command "loose" the front rank archers loose together and then fit another arrow to their bows. The rear rank steps forward as the front rank looses and takes up a position two paces in front of the front rank becoming themselves the front rank.

The command "nock" is no longer given and on the commands "draw" and "loose" the above drills are repeated.

On the command "stop" the archers stop what they are doing and await further orders.
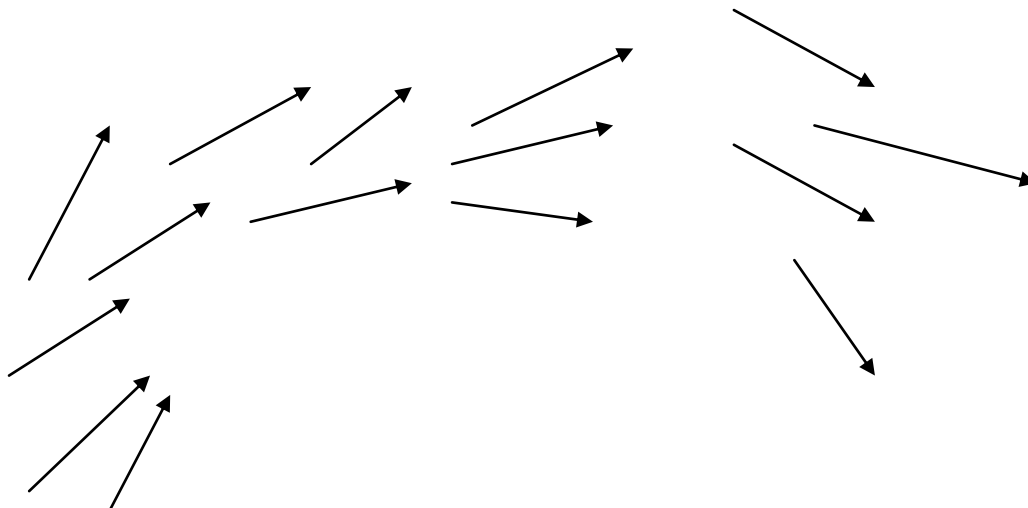
14.7 Volleying, ranks retiring

> ### Command: Volley Ranks retiring !
> ### Knock…Draw…Loose

This manoeuvre is performed by archers.

The archers are formed in two ranks two arm lengths apart at ease.

On the command "volleying, ranks retiring" they do nothing.

On the command "nock" both ranks fit arrows to their strings.

On the command "draw" the front rank draws.

On the command "loose" the front rank looses together and then steps back behind the rear rank forming up two paces to their rear. As the rank retires they ensure that bows are held upright so as not to hamper the archers in the rear rank. They fit another arrow to their bows as they retire.

The command "nock" is no longer given and on the commands "draw" and "loose" the above drills are repeated.

On the command "stop" the archers stop what they are doing and await further orders.

Appendix A. Terminology

When the Battle Captain briefs the unit leaders on the script or when a commander is giving battle orders, it is important that everyone understands what is being said quickly. Every speciality has its "jargon", a technical language designed to allow the initiated to understand rapidly each other without the need for lengthy explanations. Some professions seem to encourage jargon as a method of keeping outsiders at a distance, this must be resisted. Any additions to our jargon must be designed to create greater clarity for all concerned.

Most of the technical terms listed here are common to any English speaking army with the addition of a few terms dealing with tenth century battle re-enactment.

Any unit leader aspiring to the title of Hersir must have a good understanding of the technical language of leadership.

(i)   General

Most of the terms in this section are designed to enable the Battle Captain to brief the unit leaders about the warriors arrival at the battlefield and the subsequent script.

Access point - point at which armies or emergency vehicles enter the battlefield.

Approach route - the route from the muster point to the battlefield.

Army - a group of units fighting under a unified command structure with the purpose of defeating an enemy.

Attack - to come willingly into contact with the enemy.

Audible signals - indications to carry out a given action that can be heard.

Auxiliary - non-combatant support personnel such as water carriers and medics.

Barrier - that which separates the warriors from the audience.

Battle - combat between two groups of warriors.

Battlefield - the place where a battle takes place.

Battle plan - what the army commander intends to do.

Break contact - the separating of two opposing units currently in combat with each other.

Broken - used to describe a unit which has been disordered and has retreated in haste from the enemy but may be rallied. Or a unit which has been divided by enemy action.

Close - to "close on" the enemy is to move up to them so that they are within reach of the weapons carried by the attacker.

Commander - the warrior in charge of the army.

Command Group - the officers leading a unit or an army.

Command structure - the organisation of command and control of the army.

Commentator - the person who informs the public as to what is happening on the battlefield.

Contact - when two opposing units are fighting.

Counter charge - a response to a charge by the enemy.

Defend - to resist an enemy attack.

Disengage - to separate two opposing units currently in missile or skirmish combat with each other.

Engage - to fight an enemy with missiles or skirmishers.

First aid officer - the person responsible for first aid on the battlefield.

First aid point - the place where the first aider and first aid kit may be found.

Forming up point - place where units form up just prior to entering the battlefield after the muster.

Giving Ground – the act of retiring whilst still engaged in combat.

Health and safety officer - the person responsible for ensuring that all health and safety matters are attended to.

Hersir - an experienced and qualified unit leader.

Loot - that which is taken from the fallen or prisoners.

Looter - any one who takes loot from the fallen or prisoners.

Main body of - the bulk of a unit which starts the fight as opposed to a detachment of skirmishers. The bulk of an army which starts the battle as opposed to a detached unit.

Marshall - person responsible for crowd control, guiding of the armies to the battlefield and giving cues to the armies to enter the battlefield.

Mission - a task given to an individual unit or sub-unit.

Muster - the gathering together of an army or both armies at a specific place and time.

Muster point - the place where the warriors are gathered together into their units.

Officer - a warrior that has a place on the command structure.

Order of march - the order in which the units will approach and enter the battlefield.

Orders - instructions to the sub-commanders, unit leaders and sub-leaders to carry out the battle plan.

Parley - meeting between officers of opposing armies.

Position - the place that a unit has in the order of march or along the start line.

Public address system (PA) - used by the commentator to inform the public of what is happening on the battlefield.

Recycle - the raising of the "dead" for further performance during a scripted battle.

Reserve - that part of a unit or army set aside for unforseen circumstances.

Rout - the action of a warrior who panics and flees from the enemy.

Safety checks - actions carried out by unit leaders to ensure that the weapons and equipment used by the warriors in the unit comply with Society safety regulations.

Script - the combination of battle plans with the intention of putting on a public performance.

Signal instruction - an order explaining the meaning of a visual or audible signal.

Start line - the place on the battlefield at which the army or unit must be at a given time to begin the battle.

Street fighting - any fighting that takes place on the streets of a town.

Sub-commander - a warrior who assists the army commander and may lead a part of the army.

Sub-leader - a warrior who assists the unit leader to control the unit.

Sub-unit - part of a unit detached for a specific mission.

Supernumeraries - all those that stand behind the lines such as auxiliaries, sub-leaders, sub-commanders and additional standard bearers not qualified for combat.

Tactical order - an order issued by the commander to one or more units with the intention of gaining an advantage over the enemy.

Unit - a group of warriors under a single unit leader.

Unit leader - the warrior in charge of a unit, who must be a Hersir or a warrior advised by a Hersir.

Visual signals - indications to carry out a given action that can be seen.

Warrior - any armed person prepared to fight.

(ii)   Formations

Advance - the movement of warriors forward.

At ease - the status of a line of warriors not prepared for combat

Boars snout - a wedge or "v" shaped formation adopted by a group of warriors in a shield wall who intend to break through an opposing shield wall.

Centre warrior - the warrior designated as such by the unit leader and initiator of many of the formation manoeuvres. Ideally this should be the unit leader.

Close order - the formation of a unit of warriors standing shoulder to shoulder.

Crescent - a "C" shaped formation adopted by a group of warriors to counter a Boars Snout.

Disorder - the status of a group of warriors who were previously in formation but have been broken up by the nature of the ground or enemy action.

Double rank - two ranks of archers, each rank two paces from the other and each archer two paces from those beside them.

Extended order - the formation adopted by a group of warriors when in a line and one arm and one side arm's length apart.

Flank - the side of a unit at right angles to the direction it is facing.

Front - the side of a unit in the direction it is facing.

Hearth troop - the army commanders body guard.

Hold – the order to stand one`s ground and resist the enemy`s advance.

Hunting group - a small body of warriors, usually three, who are fighting as a team with a specific objective.

Line unit - main fighting unit of the army.

Loose shieldwall - the formation adopted by a group of warriors when in line with their shields only just touching at the rims.

Missile unit - unit armed with missile weapons.

Open order - the formation adopted by a group of warriors when in a line and one arms length apart.

Ordered advance- the forward movement of a unit; each step being called by an officer.

Rank of archers - a single line of archers where each archer is two paces from the next.

Rank of slingers - a single line of slingers where each slinger is four paces from the next.

Rank of warriors - a line of warriors standing side by side facing the enemy. There may be as many ranks as is desired by the unit leader.

Rally - the bringing together of a group of warriors at a given point after they have become dispersed, usually where their unit leader, standard or central warrior is located.

Rear - the side of a unit in the opposite direction to that which it is facing.

Reform - the adoption of the previous formation after disorder.

Right/left wheel - the moving of a line of warriors through an arc of 90□ to the left or right to finish at right angles to the previous line.

Rout - the action of a unit which panics and flees from the enemy, may be rallied.

Shieldburh - the formation adopted by a group of warriors to defend against missiles.

Shield wall - the formation adopted by a group of warriors when in line with their shields overlapping.

Skirmishing - the harassing of the enemy units between attacks by the main force while they deploy, or attempting to slow their advance; this is done by short rushes followed by brief attacks by a group of warriors in a loose formation and may include ranged combat.

Skirmish units - may contain any mix of weapons except long axe. Ideally they should contain missile as well as hand held weapons. No more than half, and not less than a third, of the unit should be engaged at any one time.

Stand - a controlled response to a charge by the enemy where the warriors remain under the control of their unit leader.

Unformed - the status of a group of warriors who are not in any ordered formation but which is otherwise under the control of a unit leader.

(iii) Tactical orders

Echelon Left-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the left flank unit moving first and there being a fifteen pace interval between units.

Echelon Right-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the right flank unit moving first and there being a fifteen pace interval between units.

Echelon Left ?? paces-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the left flank unit moving first and there being an ordered number of paces interval between units.

Echelon Right ?? paces-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the right flank unit moving first and there being an ordered number of paces interval between units.

In Line-Attack - the order to make such an attack with no gaps between the units and all units striking the enemy at the same time.

Break contact - the order for the army to disengage from the enemy.

Bulls horn-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the flank units moving first and there being a fifteen pace interval between units.

Bulls horn ?? paces-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the flank units moving first and there being an ordered number of paces interval between units.

Counter charge - the order to charge an advancing enemy, when it arrives within six paces.

Extend the line – the order to second rank warriors to form up at either end of the first rank, making one line in open or extended order.

Follow me - the order given by the commander when ideas have run out and the outcome of the battle is to be left to the gods.

Form circle - the order to form the shield wall into a circle as a defence against cavalry.

Form crescent - the order to adopt crescent formation as a defence against a boar`s snout attack.

Give Ground- the order to retire whilst still engaged in combat.

In Line-**Attack** - the order to make such an attack with no gaps between the units and all units striking the enemy at the same time.

In line- Retire - the order for the army to retire to its start line with no gaps between the units.

March On- the order for a unit to advance.
Oblique Left-**Attack** - the order to make such an attack with the army moving to the left.

Oblique Right-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the army moving to the right.

Ordered Advance- the order to advance whilst engaged, where each step is called.

Rams horn-Attack - the order to make such an attack with the centre unit moving first and there being a fifteen pace interval between units.

Rams horn??paces-**Attack** - the order to make such an attack with the centre unit moving first and there being an ordered number of paces interval between units.

Retire - the order for the army to move back towards its start line, may be carried out after contact with the enemy has been broken.

?unit? Left/right flank-Attack - the order for the named unit to make the ordered flank attack.

Appendix B. General Commands Reference

About Turn!
At Ease!

Boar`s Snout!
Break Contact!
Bull`s Horn – Attack!

Cavalry Skirmishers Go!
Charge!
Close Order!
Echelon right/left – Attack!
Extend the line!

Form Circle!
Form Crescent!
Form Line!
Form one rank!
Form two ranks!
From the left/right, wheel!

Give Ground !

Hunt !

In line – Attack!
In Line- Retire!
March On !

Oblique Left/Right – Attack!

Penetrate !

Rally on …!
Ram`s Horn – Attack!
Rear Flank– Attack Left/Right!
Reform!
Rout !

Shield…burh !
Shield…wall !
Skirmishers Go!
Step on my command… Step!

Missiles only

Aim
Draw
Knock
Load
Loose
Loose at will !
Make ready
Missiles, about turn!
Rolling Volley left/right…!
Volley Ranks advancing!
Volley Ranks retiring !