



FORAY-

Longbow era skirmish rules

(based on Men At Arms One-Brain Cell Medieval Skirmish Rules by Jim Wallman)

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Introduction

Jim Wallman's Men-at-Arms skirmish rules combine Old School mechanisms with a straightforward (and lighthearted) style. Clearly designed for a fun night's skirmishing, they are a bit short on detail. However, the basic game is one of leading small groups of assorted followers. I particularly liked the "action" model of leadership, involving the leaders shouting commands and encouragement to their men (in Jim's original, there was a degree of role play to this, which you may keep if you wish).

Foray keeps the basic mechanisms, expanding some and clarifying others. The main changes are in the shooting section, which is now less lethal (the original seems to be designed for fights with few archers, not lots of longbowmen), and in the morale section, where casualties are not quite as devastating.

In keeping with the Old School ethos of the original, there is still a lot left for interpretation. Areas like wagons, boats, animals, scaling ladders and arson are left to players to create rules if a scenario requires it. Also in the Old School style, a lot depends on the players agreeing exactly what happens. An umpire will help here but, in the words of the old saying, "If you can't agree, dice for it". If you can't game in this collaborative style, these rules aren't for you.

Setting up the game

Figures

This works best with 25-40mm. single-based figures, but could be used with other sizes. You can use individually based armies on move trays using the extra rules for formed groups in the appendix. Size and composition of the armies depends on what you have available.

Players

The game is structured round companies and contingents (see below). Opposing forces have one or more companies and you will need at least one player per company up to one player per contingent. An umpire who controls the scenario (see below) and neutral things like animals and acts as arbiter of interpretations can be useful.

The scenario

The game works best with a backstory or scenario, which provides the players with their rationale and objectives and can describe the ground over which the battle is fought in more detail (is the river fordable, for example), when reinforcements will appear and so on. It can also contain special circumstances and modified rules for the fight.

One fun part of a multi-player skirmish scenario is to set not just objectives for the forces but personal success criteria for the player characters.

The Men

In these rules, men are not divided so much by how they are equipped but by who they are. Of course, this is a bit of a false division – how you were equipped and trained

reflected your status, experience and battlefield role. However, exactly how a figure is equipped doesn't matter that much (though there are exceptions – see below). Men are divided into the following categories

Knights – Socially at the top of the tree, well armed and trained. Brought up to lead. You can, in the later Middle Ages, include men who had not yet been knighted but belonged to the same military elite, such as esquires, in this category.

Men-at-Arms – Men of slightly lesser status but nevertheless well trained and equipped. Professional soldiers, leaders of common soldiers, sergeants of the earlier Middle Ages.

Soldiers – Paid men or militia, decent equipment, some experience or training. Often carried a spear or polearm

Reivers – Armed and dangerous but not really battlefield fighters – more at home looting, pillaging and killing civilians. Ribalds, caterans, outlaws etc.

Peasants – ill-equipped rabble, with tools and cheap weapons. Can have bows or slings. Also use this category for civilians caught up in the fighting, angry mobs etc..

Archers – A varied group. The ordinary archer is quite skilled with his weapon but is lightly equipped and lacking skills for hand-to-hand fights. Professional archers (particularly English or Welsh ones) were somewhat better equipped with light armour, swords and bucklers and the like, and better able to mix it.

Crossbowmen – Usually better armoured than archers but not enough to make a difference in the rules. No better hand-to-hand than ordinary archers.

Pavises - The pavise was essentially a very large shield, offering protection particularly against arrows. They were often carried by specialist pavise bearers in front of crossbowmen, but could be fixed in place. They were also occasionally carried by front rank men at arms to protect the men behind them.

To be effective, pavise bearers need to form the front rank of a formation, where they will be a priority target, ahead of the ranks behind.

The Company

Each player has a **company** of fighters that are their followers in the battle. Each company consists of one or more **contingents** or **groups**, each led by a **leader**.

Groups of followers should be up to 20 figures strong depending on type – small units of badly armoured men don't last long – and what you have available. Groups must all be on foot or all mounted but, other than that, may be a mixture of types.

Group Cohesion

This is a skirmish game and so groups are not formal units. However, it is not individual combat either. Therefore a couple of rules about group cohesion are needed.

1. Men may be no further than 10cm. from the group leader
2. A man may not be further than 5cm. from his nearest group comrade
3. Infantry can be “formed” in close ranks (see Appendix)

In effect this gives great flexibility to the player – scattered clumps and shoulder to shoulder ranks are possible. When thinking of formations, three other things need to be borne in mind – archers’ line of sight (see below), the fact that the minimum gap a figure can fit through is the width of its base and that no man in a unit may move further than his maximum move distance

Any figure finding itself in breach of these cohesion rules must as soon possible move to bring itself back within distance in the “stragglers” phase. As this is effectively extra movement, this should be the smallest move possible to meet the cohesion rules.

Leaders

Leaders may represent a variety of characters – a household knight, a professional captain, a local hero, the village priest leading his flock. However, leaders are always classed as a man-at-arms or a knight for combat purposes, whichever figure they may be represented by. A knight can command any group but a man-at-arms only those that do not contain knights.

The overall commander of the company can command his own group. He may have a spare leader with his group, who can takeover if he leaves the group. Alternatively, the spare leader may be sent to command another group in the company that finds itself leaderless.

With the exception of the commander, leaders cannot leave their group unless that group runs away, when a leader of knightly rank may choose to join another group, or, in certain circumstances, to yield.

Knightly leaders may challenge their opposite number to meet one-to-one if their groups are in hand-to-hand combat. A challenge from a leader of equal rank cannot be refused but a commander need not face a mere common knight.

The Standard

Every company has a standard, the battle-flag of its commander. The flag is carried at the commander’s side. Provided his followers can see the standard flying, they know their commander is still in action.

Like a leader, the standard bearer is a character, either a man-at-arms or a knight. He has the same fight bonuses and double life. He remains next to his commander at all times. Even if the rest of the group run away, he stays with the leader.

If the standard bearer should fall, the commander may nominate another knight or man-at-arms in the group to carry the standard (swap the figures). Replacement standard bearers are not characters, however.

Markers

The game can be played without markers but the following would be useful :

- Horse holders – swapped for a figure when a unit dismounts
- No Advance and Withdraw morale result markers

These can be figures, tiddlywinks, gaming pieces, chits – up to you, as long as they are clearly identifiable.

Game Sequence

The sequence of working things out each turn is as follows:

1. Players roll a die. Winner has the initiative this move.
2. Player's commander figures carry out any **special actions** (e.g. may leave or join groups), starting with the player with the initiative
3. Players declare what **actions** they and their leaders are doing (see below), starting with the player with the initiative.
4. Players move groups in accordance with the **action** they said they were going to do. Do this simultaneously, making common sense interpretations of what the interactions of groups would be.
5. If movement brings contingents into weapon range, work out who killed who. Work out archery and long range effects first, then work out melee.
6. At the end of the turn, all contingents to whom the criteria apply have to take a test to see how they react (the **Morale Test**).
7. Carry out any flight or pursuit moves.
8. Stray figures are brought within cohesion distance of their contingent

Actions

In each game turn every leader gets to perform **Actions**. All actions are assumed to happen simultaneously.

These are the actions any leader can do:

- **Shout "Fight me, you coward!"** A knightly leader whose men are in hand-to-hand combat may call on a character of equal rank in the enemy group to fight one-to-one. Your followers can't move if you choose this but they can keep fighting. You can't choose this if you have a "Withdraw" morale result from last turn.

- Shout “Charge!” All group members attack a designated enemy by the most direct route possible. You can’t choose this if you have a bad morale result from last turn.
- Shout "Follow Me, Men!" All members of the group will follow the leader to the limit of their movement distance (See **Movement** below). This is the general action for moving about, withdrawing etc. but actions can be limited by morale test results.
- Shout “Take Heart, Men!” If your followers morale is low or they face a stiff test, you can inspire them by shouting your war-cry and giving a stirring speech (see below for **Morale Test**). You can’t normally move men if you chose this (though they can keep fighting or shooting) but you can use this if your men are retreating because of a morale test result last turn
- Shout “Keep at them!” Once in hand-to-hand combat, your followers will let the enemy pull back if they want to, unless you chose this action. If this action is chosen, your men will follow after the enemy if they try to pull back and, if successful, start another round of fighting. Particularly useful as it allows you to react to actions declared after yours. You can’t choose this if you have a bad morale result from last turn.
- Shout “To me, to me!” The leader stands still and his followers move towards him. Useful if your group has become dispersed. Also used to create “formed” groups.
- Shout “Shoot at them!” Left to their own devices, archers and crossbowmen will shoot randomly at nearby targets. A leader can instruct them all to shoot at the same target.
- Shout “Hold your fire!” Useful for preserving the first shot advantage of crossbowmen or in ambushes.

These are the **special actions** only commanders can do, which take place in the special action phase

- Leave or join a group A commander can leave a group and ride off or ride up to a group and join it, but can’t do both in the same move. He can take command of any group he joins, provided that it is from his company, and immediately give it an action.
- Send a character from one group to another. A commander can send a spare character from his group to another group in the company to take charge if the group is leaderless. This character moves in the normal actions phase and follows the same rules of leaving and joining. Once there, the character is the new group leader and may not leave again.
- Send or receive a message. If your player character is not within 15cm of a person then you can't talk to them, you must send a messenger. This is an **action**. The message is then transported using a messenger from your followers to the person it’s meant for. Messengers move in the normal actions phase and

follow the usual leaving and joining rules.

Leaderless Groups

None of the actions above are available to a leaderless group (there is no-one to shout the orders). What a leaderless group can do is dependent on the result of its morale test at the end of the previous turn (see **Morale Rules**). A good result allows the player to halt or move the group as desired, including making an attack, but not control them through any other actions (e.g. direct shooting). A bad result further restricts their options. However, only a “Flee” result prevents them from shooting or fighting if attacked.

Movement

Individual figures move as directed by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

Type	Distance (cm)
Peasants, Reivers, Soldiers, Archers, Crossbowmen.	15
Knights on foot, Men at Arms	12
Light horseman	40
Mounted Knights and Men-at-Arms	25
Carts, herds, etc.	8

Obstacles

Obstacles can't be easily crossed. If crossing a low wall or hedge, take one move delay. Wading through a ford or shallow stream costs half the movement distance. Players should use these as a guide to degree of difficulty for other crossings e.g. marshes, rocky outcrops. It follows that men attacking a palisade, hedge, etc. will not be able to cross immediately, even if unopposed. However, unopposed men could follow into gaps between defenders on a subsequent move if they are ordered to “Keep at them”.

Buildings

Moving - These aren't siege rules and so there are no details of fighting through buildings. Occasionally, a house will feature. They can be entered on foot through doors without penalty. Low windows take a move to climb through. Movement indoors is as normal – use a floor template if buildings don't have removable roofs.

Shooting - Only crossbows can shoot out of house windows (not enough space inside to draw a longbow). No shooting inside houses (bigger structures are up to you – there was once a longbow shoot out in Dublin Cathedral).

Fighting- You have to be on foot to attack or defend a house. Fighting at windows or doors is one-to-one (a push back or kill allows you to follow through a door but a window takes an unopposed move). Fighting indoors is as in the open (unless you create internal walls etc.)

Other- Morale and Group Cohesion rules apply to attackers and defenders.

Mounting and Dismounting

Takes a whole turn and the group needs a “Follow Me” action. Archers and crossbows can’t shoot during the process. The group count on foot if shot at or attacked.

A group that intends to mount or dismount during the fight must either start the fight mounted or have a horseholder stationed nearby. You can assume the commander and standard bearer have an otherwise invisible page to hold their horses when moving between contingents.

Dismounters face the choice of turning their horses loose for the duration of the fight or appointing one of their number as a horse holder. Knights won’t turn their horses loose, nor will they hold others’ horses, so a unit with knights in had better contain someone of lower status if it intends to dismount.

The horse holder stays behind the group and moves with them. He is an individual for shooting purposes. If attacked, he will release the horses and defend himself.

Lines of sight

Take a common sense approach to this. Specific cases are as follows

- Buildings, woods and hills block the line of sight.
- Men on the edge of a wood, behind a hedge or wall etc. can be seen if they are not in an undiscovered ambush.
- In open ground, groups can “see” things on all sides
- An archer or crossbowman can see 90 degrees right or left of straight ahead when preparing to shoot.

Shooting :

Eligible to shoot

An archer or crossbowman is eligible to shoot if he can see a target and his line of sight doesn’t pass within 1cm of a friendly figure. This automatically excludes any target in hand-to-hand combat (but not unengaged figures in an enemy group). It also means that for men to shoot from a second rank, the front rank need to be at least 2cm. apart.

Target priorities

1. Any enemy moving into contact with the group

2. Any target nominated by the leader in the Action phase
3. Nearest enemy (on an individual basis)

Individuals cannot be nominated as a target. However, if that individual is eligible by other priorities (e.g. is the nearest enemy), he is fair game

Readiness

An archer is always ready to shoot. However, crossbows are much slower to load. To represent this without resorting to paperwork or markers, a crossbowman is only loaded for certain if he is part of a group which has not yet shot at or fought with the enemy. In other cases, throw for each crossbowman before he shoots – **4,5,6** he is loaded, **1,2,3** he isn't. The easiest way of doing this is to throw two different coloured dice together – a "loaded" dice and a "hit" dice – when the crossbowman shoots.

To shoot : . Roll 1d6 per figure shooting

Vs target	Archer			Crossbow		
	25cm	50cm	75cm	25cm	50cm	100cm
Peasants, Reivers, Soldiers, Archers, Crossbows	5,6	5,6	6	5,6	5,6	6
Knight/Man at Arms	5,6	6	-	5,6	5,6	-
Light Horseman	4,5,6	5,6	6	4,5,6	5,6	6
Mounted Knight/MAA	5,6	6	-	4,5,6	5,6	-

Shooting at infantry in cover **or** carrying a pavise is at **half** effect i.e. 5,6 to hit becomes 6; 6 to hit throw a second d6, score 4,5,6 is a hit.

The score in the table is the chance of a hit. One hit kills most people. It takes 2 hits to kill a character figure.

Shooting and Hand-to-Hand combat

Archers and crossbowmen may shoot at close range and then fight in hand-to-hand combat in the same turn, provided their action doesn't involve movement e.g. "Follow Me" or "To me, To me".

Other weapons

You may wish to develop scenarios involving less common missile weapons. Here are some suggestions:

Slings - Slingers behave like archers. Slings are less effective against armoured targets, though.

Javelins and darts - Given the limited number of javelins carried, treat javelin throwers like crossbowmen to keep the rate of fire down.

Handguns & Arquebuses - Again, treat these like crossbows. Early firearms were difficult to reload and fire quickly – load too quick and you got more misfires – so you need a **5 or 6** on the load dice to be ready. Their effectiveness at close range is excellent but there is a marked fall off of power and accuracy with distance.

Vs target	Sling		Javelin	Handgun	
	25cm	50cm	15cm	25cm	50cm
Peasants, Reivers, Soldiers, Archers, Crossbows	5,6	6	5,6	5,6	6
Knight/Man at Arms	-	-	6	5,6	6
Light Horseman	6	-	5,6	4,5,6	6
Mounted Knight/MAA	-	-	6	4,5,6	6

Melee (or HAND TO HAND COMBAT)

First, break the combat up into 'fights'. This will require common sense and fair play. A fight is one figure vs. one or more enemies. To count as fighting, the figures' bases must be touching (unless fighting across an obstacle e.g. a fence or if a supporting figure has a pike). Move individual figures to contact, remembering the limits on distance an individual can move and the group cohesion rules. Moves should be as direct as possible – most men are not going to wander about looking for dance partners (heroic leaders being the exception). Groups can become intermingled at this stage. No figure can be in two fights at once.

For each fight roll 1d6 per side (if a side has two or more figures, use the factors for the best fighter), add the factors below and compare the scores

Factors in Melee :

-2	Peasant/Peasant archer
-1	Ordinary Archer/Crossbowman
0	Reiver/Professional archer
+1	Soldier
+2	Man At Arms
+3	Knight
+4	Commander
+1	On horseback
-2	Outnumbered 2-1
-3	Outnumbered 3-1
-4	Outnumbered 4-1 or more

The highest score wins

If they win by 1 or more means the loser is pushed back 5cm

If fighting against Peasants/Reivers/Soldiers/Archers a win by 2 or more is a kill

If fighting against Men at Arms a win by 3 or more is a kill

If fighting against Knights a win by 4 or more is a kill

If fighting a Leader a win by 4 or more is a HIT (it takes 2 hits to kill a leader)

If an outnumbered figure wins, it can pushback/kill/hit only one of its enemies that turn. The winner chooses which one.

Yield!

A player character who has lost one "life" may yield (surrender) in combat rather than suffer a second fatal hit. He may do this honourably only if the group he is fighting contains knights or men-at-arms. The prisoner is immediately removed from play.

Morale test

Events and circumstances can make your followers less keen to fight. The entire contingent is affected by the morale rules, whatever their type.

Roll 1d6 when any of these apply during the turn:

- The contingent takes a casualty.
- The contingent is surprised.
- If the player in command wants the group to take a test
- The contingent is leaderless
- The company's standard is seen to fall

- The contingent has an bad result from the previous turn

Add or subtract the following factors:

- 1 suffered 1 or more casualties this turn
- 1 outnumbered (more enemy groups in good morale in sight than friendly ones).
- 1 if the group is leaderless
- 1 The majority of the group are peasants
- 1 Infantry fighting cavalry this turn
- 2 surprised this turn
- 2 for each 20% casualties in game
- +1 Group contains knight(s) other than leader
- +1 if the Company standard is in sight
- +2 being inspired by its leader this turn.

Check the result in this table:

Result

Score	Outcome
3 or more	Morale is good-carry on as desired.
0 to 2	Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.
-1 to -3	Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away.
-4 or less	Contingent flees headlong from the field. Immediately move all figures a full move away from the enemy. Any group they were fighting moves an immediate full move (or to contact) in pursuit. At the beginning of next turn remove the fleeing figures. The pursuers undertake actions as per normal. A figure representing a player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight on or run away as desired.

Any **score 2 or less** is a **bad morale result** in game terms

Appendix : Additional rules for formed contingents

Definition : An infantry contingent may be described as formed if all its members are in base-to-base contact along at least one edge (i.e. not by corners) and its formation consists of at least two ranks and two files i.e. a single line cannot be formed. Cavalry cannot be formed.

Forming & Reforming : A contingent can become formed by its leader making a “To Me, To Me” action. It remains formed until its formation is broken, either by enemy action, terrain or its own action. Any kind of combat is likely to leave the contingent ragged but, provided it continues to meet the criteria above, it can close-up its ranks in the straggler phase. If it does become unformed, it can be reformed by its leader, if it still has one.

Effects of Terrain : A group cannot be formed while crossing, moving through or fighting in difficult terrain or inside buildings. It is possible to form a unit in a gap between difficult terrain or buildings e.g. to block a road.

Turns : A formed contingent cannot wheel and is only allowed one “about face” of 90 or 180 degrees per move. The “about face” is done by ranks or files, not by the contingent as a whole e.g. a contingent of six files and two ranks turns 90 degrees to become a body of two files and six ranks.

Melee : A formed contingent can fight across an obstacle. It does not break its ranks to seek opponents, but individuals may be turned to face attackers. Individuals in the contingent ignore the push-back result in melee.

Pikes –For the purposes of the rules, a pike is a long spear 10 or more feet in length, wielded in two hands. To get the most out of such a weapon, men equipped with them tended to fight in deeper formations, confronting the enemy with rows of spear points. To represent this, a pikeman in a formed contingent can count as fighting an enemy in melee even if he is not in base contact, provided he is behind another who is in contact.

Morale : A formed group counts +1 for morale