

# Size is everything!

## (Planning and running a large multi player wargame)

Size is everything! Well in wargaming terms it can be mightily impressive. Huge tables with thousands of figures are definitely what `makes it' for some of us. Great examples whether it be Colin Rumford's **D-Day**, John Tuckey's **Gettysburg** or that huge **Blenheim** game featured in Wargames Illustrated some time ago, have been a constant source of fascination and enjoyment for me and many others over the years.

Inspired by such magnificence, we decided to organise something along the same lines for our Grand Alliance-Marlburian armies. This article aims to offer other gamers a guide to setting up and running such an event if they have never done it before. If you have no interest in megalomania the scenario itself offers an interesting and to my knowledge little covered, `what if '.

The first and very significant hurdle was a lack of figures. Our collections are not insubstantial but we quickly realised we had nowhere near enough. Even if we painted 24-7 for a year we'd still be well short of the required muster. Undeterred, we set about organising and began dealing with the challenges of making it happen.

### The Scenario

Leafing through our scenario notes we were tempted to go for one of the big four – Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde or Malplaquet. All had been done before as big demo games or at the Holiday Centre and all would have made excellent multi player affairs. In the end however we opted for a `What If?' scenario devised by our good friend David Shuttleworth and based on an incident from 1705 near Overjise in what is now Belgium. During this `near miss', the armies of France and the Grand Alliance did not become fully engaged but toyed with the idea!

We had played this game before with two players per side on a ten by six table and 20-25 battalions in each army. That was considered extremely enjoyable and so the decision was made to `go large' with up to 90 battalions per side and as much cavalry as we could possibly lay our hands on. More detail on the historical background plus detail briefings for both sides appear later in the article.

### Planning

Where could we get the troops? Our solution was to contact as many friends as possible with collections featuring this period. The choice of who to call was based not only on what they could bring but also on the more important question of how they'd all get on together in a hotel for two days. We wanted harmony (at least off table) and so called people who we more or less guessed would all hit it off. The total haul (of figures, not gamers) amounted to some 190 battalions (each of between 12-20 figures), 90 squadrons (of 6 figures) and 20 batteries of guns. These were drawn from the collections of ten gamers from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Teesside, Lanarkshire and Fife. Once the word got around it was clear that other were interested and so we planned for six players per side and three umpires.

For convenience we picked the fine border town of Dumfries as a central location with regard to travelling. Next objective; Where in Dumfries? Again, local wargaming contacts arranged to hire a function room in a small town centre hotel. This landlord with whom our friends were matey (strange, the association between wargaming and alcohol) would benefit not only from the function booking but also from the block room requirement. No doubt mein host was salivating at the potentially huge bar bills. Wargaming is of course an extremely drouthy business.

What about the table? This scenario was only going to work if there was opportunity for defence in depth. Not much depth in six feet of table when you've got around 4,000 25mm figures on it, no matter how long it is! We wanted at least twelve feet but the more the better. We also wanted to use a single playing surface and not the 'tables in parallel' principle often used to provide depth. For those of you unfamiliar with this method it involves a series of variable length by six feet wide, tables, which troops move across (forward or backward, contingent on whether you are having a good or bad day with the dice).

Twelve feet is of course too wide even for the few Wargamers of Michael Jordan physique so, what to do? We came up with an acceptable solution that offered us a table twenty feet long by fourteen feet deep. It involved two 'walk in' sections (see diagram 1) representing impenetrable woodland within the French deployment zone. Troops choosing to march through these areas disappeared from the table for an indeterminate period to reappear somewhere else (and almost never where they planned). This process was to be managed by the umpire team. The 'walk in' channels gave the table the shape of a huge E with two French players able to stand in each channel at any time. It also provided the French with ten feet of depth in which to deploy their considerable forces.

Construction of this beast was another matter. The Logistics Corps delegated to arrange the playing field were guilty of gross dereliction of duty resulting in a 'jury rig' which took us till almost 10.00pm on the Friday evening to complete. Nevertheless, scraped knuckles, hernias and slipped discs excepted, the field of battle was ready in time.

### **Set Up**

We arrived on Friday evening to set up. The plan was then to play all day Saturday and on into Sunday aiming for a late afternoon finish. Even after some pre planning the set up was no mean feat. To make it as stress free as possible we had distributed a 'muster roll' to all contributors a few weeks before the event and requested that they list their contingents by arm of service, number of figures per unit and nationality. These were compiled and an OOB was prepared, assigning commands and positions in the line of battle. By return, all players were given a full OOB for their command, which was in most cases a mix of various people's collections.

On the night, a small team 'checked-in' the arriving combatants and directed them to the appropriate table zone for deployment. It was fascinating (amidst the general chaos) to watch brigades and then whole wings of each army assemble on the table as the players arrived at varying times with their laden box files. Whilst the Route-Meisters sweated over the lead, the Generals undertook a quick inspection of the troops and repaired to the bar to discuss the forthcoming test of arms. By about quarter past midnight it was set up with the exception of a contingent from the city-state of Cologne, which had lost its way but sent a courier to assure us that it would arrive on the field by 0845 prompt!

### **Umpire Preparation**

As it was an 'Augsburg gig', Phil and I decided not to play but instead, with the help of Alasdair Jamison (Umpire Grand Master) would attempt to manage the logistics of the big event. Our planning had so far worked well but the next day when the action commenced, the real test would begin. All of us were very familiar with the rules. Based on a heavily modified version of the Wargames Holiday Centre Marlburian set, all three Umpires had used and adapted them during as many as 100 games. This would make the process quick and communication on points of arbitration easier. We divide the table into three zones each of us being responsible for what happened in one of them (see diagram 1). We also set up 'casualty clearing stations' at key points around the main table. These consisted of smaller tables around which, were placed box files belonging to the various contributors. As casualties were inflicted, the toys were positioned in or near the respective box. We had an eye on the quick getaway Sunday afternoon!

Recognising that the first few turns of such a huge game would inevitably lead to lengthy periods of inactivity for players without proximity to the action, we devised a cunning plan. A series of some forty battle-related events were created with a description of their consequences. On each turn a random selection was made and then on a 50% die roll allocated to one side or the other. These mostly posed problems for the players which kept many busy for much of the game and in some cases became more pressing issues than actually carrying out their given orders! Heavy gun batteries had to be re-sited as they were sinking into sodden ground, certain mercenary units (and in one case a brigade) refused to fight until negotiations were completed with the Commander in Chief regarding pay increases. The wrong size shot was delivered to unlucky batteries or regiments thus rendering them useless in any situation other than close combat. In another case the powder supplied to a unit had been mixed with sand and was thus useless at ranges greater than thirty yards. Strangely these allocated nightmares often fell to garrison units in strategic positions! One Colonel (reputedly roaring drunk) led his battalion out of the line and doubling across the field to grapple with the enemy! Watching the Commander in Chief's face at that point was worth the whole trip, as he had no idea what was going on. We have often used this events mechanism for games and found it tremendous fun to create and even better to implement. Maybe the players felt a little differently. On a wider note, it is useful in any period and on any size of game from a skirmish to the Hollywood epic we were trying to enact.

One final and very important umpiring duty in our games is the management of despatches and couriers. Once a game has begun we allow no discussion between the players about the game itself. Anything but the game can be discussed! All communication such as changes in orders, requests for reinforcement and intelligence is dealt with by written message. We do not use courier figures on the table but request that players wishing to send despatches give them to the umpire at a set point in each game turn. It is then put into Phil's courier management system and delivered (or not) at some later stage in the game. I've known Phil for around ten years and played many games during which this system has been the source of unbelievable angst to the players. I must confess I don't have a clue how that wee box works! Maybe he'll write an article on it.

### **The Player teams**

On big games such as this we break each army down into sizeable commands which will keep a player involved (unless he is incredibly bad or unlucky) for the full game. Often we will restrict the make up of such a command to one arm of service. This helps focus the true nature of what each player is dealing with. The scale of this game allowed us to create five battlefield commands for each army plus a Commander in Chief for each. The C in C controls no troops and following an initial briefing to his team is allowed no subsequent communication with his generals unless his character figure is in base to base contact or he sends a despatch (which often arrives too late to be remotely meaningful to the situation). Poor old C in Cs, it's a nightmare brief. Hapless generals squander precious resources, march off in the wrong direction, abandon positions too early or press fruitless attacks too long and all they can do is chew chunks from the carpet and drink more ale! The command structure for this scenario is detailed in the OOB.

We sometimes give particular historical 'briefs' to individual whom we know possess certain of the idiosyncrasies of their General-Character. Plodding infantry commanders, fiery tempered and impatient cavalry generals, it all oils the wheels of the game. Petulance also raises its head at certain points when a heart-rending plea for reinforcement is flatly denied or an order to take an impossible objective received. These C in Cs have got to be thick skinned. The final word on team choice is about balance. They've got to have a mix of personalities and get on with each other. This produces the best atmosphere if perhaps the least realistic but hey, were supposed to be enjoying it!

## Terrain

For a game of this size we used very simple terrain. Most of the table was open and flat. We used 'place on' items such as villages, bridges and river sections, where applicable. For the impenetrable forest within the French deployment zone we simply lined the edges of these areas with trees to give the impression of what the gaps actually represented. Functionality was the key to our idea. Roads were made of cardboard strips painted appropriately.

## The Armies

We did not worry too much about Orders of Battle for this scenario. We used what we had from people's collections and attempted to keep as close to the horse: foot ratio characteristic of the period as possible (1:2). In actual fact we were still significantly deficient on cavalry despite having over 500 figures on the table. For a more accurate period feel it would have been necessary to find at least around the same number again. We got round this hurdle by massing the cavalry so that it would have sufficient impact and also concentrating the large numbers under commanders who had little or no infantry. This tended to focus their minds somewhat and led to them thinking more like cavalry generals.

We also massed units of a particular nationality together. This is representative of the period and gave the Grand Alliance Army in particular, a character of its own. On the right stood over twenty 'British' battalions composed of English, Scots, Protestant-Irish and Welsh. In the centre a massive block of battalions from the Dutch Republic including, the Scots Brigade, Swiss, Swedes and Germans, Huguenot French as well as the Dutch themselves. On the left were the professional and highly considered, Danes. The Cavalry was dominated by European contingents with a good sprinkling of Britishers.

On the French side the majority of the troops were native French, but significantly represented were also Italians, Swiss, Walloons, Spanish, Germans and of course the Irish. We had two distinct Irish contingents. One was the 'Wild Geese', at this time native born Irishmen in French service forming perhaps *the* most romanticised mercenary body in history. The other was the Army of James VII (II) which, was the rump of his Jacobite Army. These men had fought William III at the Boyne and Aughrim during the War of the Grand Alliance, aka League of Augsburg, aka Nine Years War (1688-1697). Held well to the rear of the French army were seven guard battalions and five squadrons of the Maison du Roi who, as the story unfolds, were to be pivotal to the outcome of the battle

We did not consult contemporary sources to determine which regiments were actually present, as this would have added much work for little reward.

## Unit organisation

Our battalions are organised in three stands of 6 figures (dimensions 45mm front by 50mm deep) with standards in the centre. Composite grenadier battalions and some dismounted dragoons are organised in two stands of six figures. If you choose to use pikes in your units we normally place the pikes on a fourth stand directly behind the central musket stand. It doesn't count as an extra 6 figures but aesthetically is very pleasing. Very necessary during the War of the League of Augsburg, less relevant for the Marlburian period when pikes were falling into disuse. If you can't be bothered with the extra stand but want a few pikemen place them in the central stand of three and take the appropriate minus (-1) on your shooting die.

Cavalry squadrons are organised on two stands of 60mm front and 50mm deep. Five or six figures are distributed over the two stands. Using our figure to man ratio of one to thirty, this makes a squadron about 180 men, which in actual fact is double the number of troopers normally passing muster. If you look at accounts of battles in this period often noted are two to three hundred squadrons per army. Looking at our OOB it's safe to multiply the number of

wargame 'squadrons' by two to get an approximate historical equivalent. Although we were still far from the required number it does put the figures slightly more in perspective.

Batteries represent three or four guns and are usually on bases to suit. If you would like to obtain an even closer feel for the period either reduce the number of battalions thus maximising the ratio or increase the numbers of cavalry. A perfect balance would be one cavalry figure for every two infantry.

### **Briefing process for the teams**

On the morning of the Day One each team was briefed separately at the table by the Umpires for ten minutes and then allowed 15 minutes on their own to discuss plans. These briefings were of critical importance. After the game started, the commanders would not be allowed to talk directly with any of their generals unless character figures were in base to base contact.

### **Optional special rules**

These have been written by us and are added as supplementary to the basic gaming rules. We think they're fun.

#### **1. Limited movement**

We have never been comfortable with commander omnipotence and omniscience. Years ago we introduced a simple system to limit the percentage of any command that could move in a given turn. The system involves the commander being rated -1 (cautious, uninspiring or plodding), 0 (proficient) or +1 (Inspiring) if no historical background is available then the rating is decided on a D3 die. If historical information is available then the above system is applied. For example Marlborough and Eugene of Savoy are +1 as would be Duc de Luxembourg. The mechanism becomes the first action of any new turn. 'Dice for movement' sees each player roll a D10. On a 1-2 he can move none of his units, 3-4 he can move 25% of his total units, 5-6 is 50%, 7-8 is 75% and 9-0 is 100%. The modifier is applied to the category not the die score so for example if Marlborough rolled 7 which allows 75% movement he would modify this up to the 9-0 category and receive 100% movement.

#### **2. Initial bombardment**

This rule is to simulate the pre manoeuvre exchange of fire, which often took place between armies in the field. To run this activity as game turns would be rather dull and eat into precious playing time. If effective, it also lends itself to creating situations which can be exploited and go toward a limited 'time' game being more decisive. Each artillery commander rolls a D10. The resultant score is the number of 'rounds' he can fire for each gun under his direct command before the game begins. Any targets can be nominated. A number of targets can be chosen if the dice score permits although switching targets means a 10 to hit regardless of the range (see next special rule). All casualties are attributed and morale checked before the first game turn.

#### **3. New target – new orders**

This is to limit the God like powers of wargamers by ensuring that batteries continue to fire at what they have been initially ordered to. The rule if used, means that the gun model cannot change its direction of facing after the game begins unless specifically receiving a courier message from the general commanding that contingent (not the C in C) or a personal visit. It may however, engage any target as it sees fit in its current arc of fire. A less severe version of this rule is to allow new targets to be chosen but to alter the artillery rule so that '0' on a D10 is required to hit the new target regardless of range and target type. I strongly recommend invocation of this mechanism. These quasi-military gunners are manhandling huge and heavy pieces not 25pdrs!

#### 4. Limited ammunition

Each battery commander rolls 2 x D6 and this simulated the number of rounds of fire available to that particular gun battery for the duration of the game. This does not in any way interfere or nullify the Initial bombardment rule above if chosen.

#### 5. Rapid fire (only useable in conjunction with Limited Ammunition option)

This option is available to represent critical moments in an action where, to either press an advantage or stabilise a crisis, a battery can fire more than once in a turn. A battery invoking this option can fire up to three times in one turn. The casualties are cumulative on one target only. The option is available only once per battery during the game and only when limited supplies of ammunition have been agreed. The option could be considered as a game 'winner' or game 'saver'.

6. Use of Pikes. Any unit with pikes takes a minus 1 on its musketry capability but is allowed 4 'pike prods' if in good order when charged by any non-pike armed troops. This involves the pike armed unit owner rolling a D6 four times. Each time he rolls, the attacker has to match or beat his score on his own D6. For any 'rolls' where the pike armed unit beats the attacker's score, the attacker suffers a casualty, which is used in the overall combat result. For example Defender is successful with two 'pike prods' against attacking cavalry. The attackers have to score 3 casualties on the defender to win the melee.

7. Firing artillery at defences and built up areas. Each town, building or section of field works has a numerical value equivalent to a number of figure casualties. These are set by the Umpire at the beginning of the game. If artillery fire hits such defences or a unit behind such defences the 'firing player' may elect to inflict damage on either men or structure. Damaged defences drop a cover band when they reach half of their value and then again when they reach one quarter. When they have no points left they are deemed destroyed or breached. For example, a village section is considered hard cover and has a value of 4. It is hit twice and drops to soft cover. When all four points are lost it offers no cover. If the weather is dry there is a 20% chance of fire breaking out with each hit. More than one fire can be started with multiple hits. One figure detailed to 'fire brigade duties' has a 10% chance every turn of putting out the fire. Two figures 20% up to nine figures 90%. The chances cannot increase past 90% no matter if more than nine figures are detailed. If you also choose to set wind strength during a game then double the number of figures required to achieve the percentages. For example, two figures to get a 10% chance of extinguishing. The roll is made after the turn is completed but before the next turn. Fire fighters are not allowed to do anything else that turn.

8. Construction of field defences. One group of four engineer/labourer figures can construct one inch of hard cover gabions (or similar field works per turn). At the end of each turn new gabions are placed on the table. If the engineer group is at half strength it takes double the time and at quarter strength, quadruple the time. A player can also assign combat troops to this function but it takes twice as many to achieve the same result. For example, eight infantrymen to construct one inch of gabions per turn. Whilst doing so they cannot do any other task.

9. Casualty removal. We do not remove any figures from a unit until it is under 50% strength. Until then, a suitable number marker is placed on or near the unit. You can of course use the traditional curtain rings or if you don't want to spoil the aesthetics, keep a paper record. Our reason for this is that in battle, units would attempt to maintain their optimum frontage until unable to do so. Casualties were normally replaced via rear ranks moving up. A very significant positive trend resulting from this mechanism is the inability of enemy commanders to keep track of 'weak' units in all the mayhem. This prevents 'gamey' play and makes all units appear threatening. We find this gives an excellent edge.

If you intend to use this scenario everything after this paragraph should be distributed selectively by the Umpire. Each side of course should be given a copy of the relevant briefing to be read in conjunction with the appropriate map and order of battle. Each team combines these documents with their table briefing on procedures by the Umpires and their own copy of any 'special rules' which you choose to use from the selection provided. The Umpire briefing should include an explanation of the courier system, pointing out of difficult terrain features and the general structure of the proceedings. It should also include any relevant information on the use of mining, fording, bridging etc. The final piece of preparation is their team 'table talk' on strategy.

### **Umpire special rules - French**

#### **Forest Path**

There are tracks running east-west across the forest (see French map). If the French wish to use these to move troops then they enter at any of the allocated points. They will emerge on the opposite side of the forest after 2 x DAV turns (known only to the Umpires – must be recorded somewhere). The emergence point is also diced for on a D3. Dependent on the score, they will exit on the path with that number regardless of where they entered.

#### **Grimaldi's Arrival**

Dice for on 2 x D6 by the Umpire before the game begins and tell no one, not even the Grimaldi player. Grimaldi must specify an order of march to the Umpire before the beginning of the game. This is the order in which his troops appear on the table in column by Point B. Only what occupies the road may appear on any one turn. Traffic jams are inevitable!

#### **Maison du Roi**

Under the command of the Dauphin (Umpires). They will do nothing unless Villeroi requests specifically in writing by courier. He must also be specific about what he wants them to do. We recommend you 'play around' with Villeroi for a few turns, request clarification, hesitate, make a few despatches go back and forth, in other words make him crawl and have fun writing!

#### **Mining bridges**

The French can choose to mine one of the three crossing points. Charges can be detonated at the beginning of any turn. Roll one D average. 2 is a Dud, 3 makes the bridge a half speed movement obstacle but still passable, 4, a quarter speed movement obstacle but still passable, 5 totally destroys it. If any unit is on the bridge during a successful detonation then it takes casualties as a round from a heavy cannon using grape shot.

#### **Dragoons**

The French may choose to deploy some, all or none of their dragoon brigade in and around the ruined abbey on the south bank of the Yssche. If you choose to do so these are placed on the table as the very last act before the game proper begins turn 1.

## **Umpire special rules – Allies**

### Lord Cutt's Flank March

You have managed to produce a stunning outflanking manoeuvre to the west where Lord Cutts has been operating. His Force has been instructed to appear behind the enemy right flank at a predetermined point (A on Map). During the command brief before the battle, dice 2 x D6 to determine turn of arrival. Cutts must specify his order of march before the game begins

### Pre game redeployment

Once command briefings and table discussions have been completed for both teams, the Allies may redeploy up to 10 units (battalions or squadrons or a combination). This happens immediately prior to turn 1.

### Crossing the Yssche

The stream is not well known and appears to be boggy and in some places treacherously deep. In order to cross, a unit moves to the edge, dices 1x DAv and consults the table below. During those turns the units may neither fire nor fight and count as disordered. A record must be kept (preferably on paper), as otherwise the enemy will see the markers. Fascine bridges can be laid in one-inch `squares' by a stand of infantrymen who visit appropriate woodland and march back to the river. A pioneer group must be present in both the woods and at the river. The infantry act as `labourers' No limit is placed on the number of troops who can be allocated to this task.

Die Score (DAverage)	Turns to Cross stream
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4

## **Umpire Rules Miscellaneous**

Units starting and ending a move in march-column and more than 36 inches from any enemy unit throughout the turn may move at double speed.

### **Special Briefings for specific players (their eyes only)**

#### Lord Orkney

You are contemptuous of the politically motivated Dutch and want to be first across the Yssche and at the enemy. Ensure that no man can doubt the superiority of English fighting men. Take the village to your front and glorify your homeland and Corporal John!

#### Marshal Slangenberg

The English are political children fighting religiously motivated crusades. The Dutch Republic understands Real politick and grand strategy. Sacrifice none of the Republic's resources in a wanton fashion. Support your Allies but do not lead the attack. Wait for your artillery if possible and if need be, hold back until the island fire-breathers have absorbed the shock of the enemy's fury. Today's victory will be a Dutch one no matter who leads the army.

Slangenberg should take an automatic drop of two levels when dicing for movement each turn.

Dutch Artillery will arrive on turn 3 x DAverage and behind your central position.



## **French Briefing**

(For eyes of all French players)

### **Background**

It is 1705. The campaigning season is well underway and not going according to plan for his Majesty's armies. So far, French forces have avoided a defeat on the scale of last year's debacle at Blindheim. However, the initiative has clearly been with the enemy who under Marlborough, have consistently outmanoeuvred the King's Marshals. At present you are unsure of the enemy's intentions but know him to be on the march. Your own army is all that lies between him and Bruxelles. It is time to make a stand and you have found the ideal position. It lies south of the Foret de Soignes between the villages of Overjise and Neerjise. Your defensive line is drawn behind a brook known as the Yssche, which should prove very difficult to cross anywhere other than at the three bridging points. You must now defend not only this position, but also your own reputation at Court. You need a decisive victory. Both the roads through the forest lead to Bruxelles so the enemy must not pass. A complication for your Commander in Chief Marshal Villeroy is the presence with the army of the Dauphin. His experience of military matters is somewhat limited but he has chosen to command the household troops of the Maison du Roi who are held in reserve well behind your frontline. Participation of these glorious and experienced guards will depend largely on the whim of his Royal Highness.

### **Objective**

Prevent the enemy gaining control of either of the roads leading into the Foret de Soignes.

### **Intelligence**

Marlborough is an old adversary whom you know well. He is confident after a successful series of victories, manoeuvres and offensives. Reports suggest that the enemy force is superior to your own in both numbers of foot and horse. Their speed of march has also surprised you somewhat. This means that their imminent arrival has left you still not fully prepared. Defensive works need to be completed around the two villages and engineers are even now working on these. The whereabouts of Count Grimaldi's detached force is also unknown to you. Couriers have been sent to locate him and demand his presence with the main body of the army.

## **Alliance Briefing**

(For eyes of all Allied players)

### **Background**

It is 1705. The campaigning season is well underway and going according to plan. So far, the French Army is being elusive and you are desperate to bring them to battle and finish what you started at Blindheim last year. By aggressive strategic manoeuvring and despite constant 'differences' of opinion between Marlborough and Slangenburg, only Villeroi's army now lies between you and Brussels. You have however, become rather strung out on the march and all of your heavy artillery is many miles from your rapidly deploying battle line. Nevertheless, the enemy is where you want him and you must press your attack with all speed.

### **Objective**

Capture both the towns of Overjise and Neerjise (which you believe hold the supplies for Villeroi's army). Win control of both northerly approach roads to the Forest of Soignes thus opening the road to Brussels. By the end of the day you must be in undisputed possession of both the towns and the roads beyond the towns heading north.

### **Intelligence**

Villeroi is an old adversary whom you know to be fairly cautious. He is however under pressure not only from you in the field but also from his enemies at Court who would see him fail. He is likely to be more aggressive than usual today. The enemy is drawn up in a strong defensive line behind the Yssche. You are uncertain as to his strength but reckon it less than your own. The whereabouts of his heavy artillery is not known. Spies have informed you that supplies were being evacuated north out of the two villages for some days now and you fear he may slip the net once again.

## The game

By luck or design the allied army behaved much as it did historically (although not at this hypothetical action!). The British contingent advanced en masse against the French left wing, crossed the Yssche under heavy fire and attached the village of Neerjise, where after a long struggle, they took the position. Accompanied by much xenophobic bluster, Lord Orkney harangued his slothful Dutch allies, christened Prince Louis of Baden (the cavalry supremo) "*Princess Louise*" and hurled abuse across the lines at the French. In the centre the mass of Dutch infantry (thirty battalions) stood for the whole morning without moving. The Dutch were under (secret) orders to avoid wanton slaughter and pointless casualties. Their movement percentage die was modified by a minus 2 (off the normal scale!). The poor Dutch commander sat with folded arms and sullen countenance as both wings of the army pressed on whilst cat calling the cowardly Dutch! The Danes cautiously approached the village of Overjise on the extreme right of the French lines. They used engineers to check whether existing cross points were mined and built fascine bridges just in case. Their attack was measured but sound. Meanwhile "*Princess Louise*" threw about 5,000 cavalry across the Yssche on the allied right carrying almost all before them. They did land themselves in hot water on the far bank through disorder, over extension and counter attack but claimed to be the first allied troops in the cobbled streets of Neerjise.

And what of the French? Their deployment was bedevilled by problems. The heavy batteries covering their centre began to sink into the mud just at the point when the vulnerable allied advance was presenting the best targets. The Wild Geese, garrisoning Overjise on the extreme right, ran out of powder and were delivered the wrong calibre shot. Cries of 'foul', 'set up', 'treason' and worse were heard from Lord Dorrington, commander of the bold Celts. This came on top of the shock appearance of an allied flanking march just behind their position. Grimaldi did not arrive soon enough and when he did, his considerable force was strung out in a huge column tailing back miles behind the French left. The final straw was the (unfortunate) presence with the army of the Dauphin who, in the absence of the King decided to play power games with Villeroi. Despite increasingly desperate and progressively toadying missives from his 'subordinates, the little prat wouldn't release the Maison du Roi. I incidentally played a cameo as the Dauphin! Finally with the army in danger of collapse the Guard was committed but alas, too late. Despite their considerable firepower and quality they were not where they needed to be, when they needed to be there. Positioned deep behind the French right their late arrival cut up the Danes badly but made no impact on the overall result. By early Sunday afternoon the French army was broken, their positions riven and strategic objectives such as Overjise and Neerjise captured.

## Historical background and notes

Although the wars mentioned often assume a religious undertone particularly in the UK, their true focus lies not in a clash of beliefs but rather in territorial conquest and commerce. France was dominant in Europe and wanted control of the Low Countries, then thriving under good Dutch management. Louis XIV was greedy for power, land and of course the commercially generated cash to finance his adventures which were rapidly bankrupting his country. The other European super power was Habsburg- Austria, which like France, was devoutly Catholic. The Austrian Empire however was a close ally of the Protestant Dutch Republic and the equally anti papist English. They wanted to keep the French in check and commonly hired mercenaries from Denmark, Holland and many German states. Therefore Protestant and Catholic troops were marching and fighting side by side in both armies but by far the largest mix would have been in the army of the Grand Alliance.

The battles and wars between these power blocs centred mostly in Flanders but were also enacted in Spain, Northern Italy, Germany, at sea, in the American colonies and of course in Ireland and Scotland through the convenient vehicle of the Jacobite cause.

This is not a history lesson, merely an entrée into the wealth of wargaming opportunity offered if, like us, you're bitten by the bug. Far from being dull, linear and slow moving firefights, the

games are invariably close fought and exciting with opportunity to use the bayonet and pike as much as the musket and cannon.

The regiments also have a quite unique appeal, with Colonel's names as title rather than a number. I have still to find a unit with a more flavoursome identity than Zachariah Tiffin's Regiment of Foote!

I hope the scenario provides ideas and mechanisms for those interested in this period or for that matter any other.

### **Orders of Battle**

I offer two levels of orbat. The first for the grand scale scenario as described in detail. The second for a scaled down, one or two player per side version. These are not particularly proportional to each other and are merely designed for an enjoyable game. My strong recommendation to you is that if figures are available, increase the ratio of foot to horse to 2:1. For us, finding 1,000 decently painted 25mm cavalry was a challenge to far.

### **Army of King Louis XIV**

Commander in Chief: **Marshal Villeroi**

The right Wing under **General Dorrington**

14 Battalions (mainly Irish). These should be distributed with 8 in and around Overjise and 6 held well back on the Bruxelles road (see map)

6 squadrons (Irish if possible). 1 company of 4 engineering figures. 1 battery of 1 heavy gun, 2 battalion guns

Foot of the Centre under **Marshal Caraman**

20 Battalions and 2 batteries each of 2 heavy guns

Horse under **General D'Alegre**

19 Squadrons

The left wing under **Marshal Comte de Tourville**

9 Battalions and 12 squadrons. 1 company of 4 engineer figures, 1 battery of 2 heavy guns and one battalion gun

**General Grimaldi's Corps**

15 Battalions and 6 squadrons

Dragoon Brigade (free allocation)

6 squadrons equating to 3 dismounted battalions of 12 figures

The Maison du Roi (under umpire control)

7 Battalions and 5 squadrons

Maison du Roi units are all treated as Guard class

15% of all other units may be graded as Elite or veteran dependant on rules used

15% should also be graded as Raw

5-10% of units should be dragoons

For smaller scale option divide the above number by three and round up or down the odd fractions dependant on figures available.

## **Army of the Grand Alliance**

Commander in Chief: **His Grace the Duke of Marlborough**

Horse of the right under **Louis of Baden**

30 Squadrons (up to a third can be cuirassiers)

Foot of the right under **Lord Orkney**

21 British battalions, 2 battalion guns, 1 company of 4 pioneers

Foot of the Centre under **Marshal Slangenberg**

30 Battalions and 2 battalion guns

5 batteries each of 1 heavy gun will arrive as described in umpire special Rules. 1 Company of 4 pioneers

Foot of the left under the **Prince of Holsten Beck**

21 Battalions (should contain a high proportion of Danes and Germans), 2 battalion guns, 1 company of 4 pioneers

Horse of the left under **Marshal Ouwerkerke**

25 squadrons

Detached forces of **Lord Cutts**

13 Battalions and 6 squadrons

Each Infantry command (except Cutt's) may have 2 Guard quality battalions

15% of all other units may be graded as Elite or veteran dependant on rules used

15% should also be graded as Raw

5-10% of units should be dragoons

Cavalry commanders may each have 2 Guard squadron with the other 15% rules applying

For smaller scale option divide the above number by three and round up or down the odd fractions dependant on figures available.



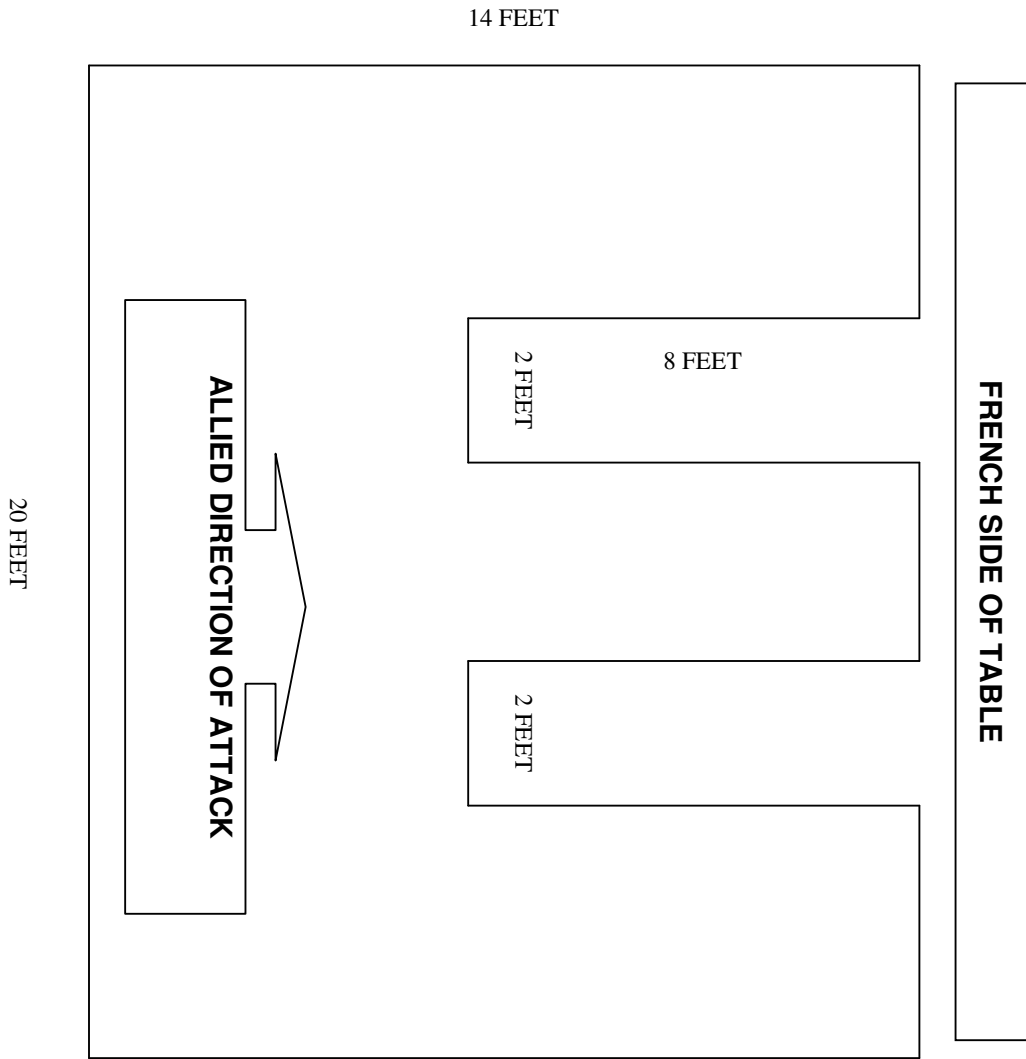


Diagram 1  
 Showing the construction of the table with 'walk in' channels in the French deployment zone. These represent impenetrable woodland as describe in the article text