

“A VERY FIERCE AND HOT DISPUTE”



THE BATTLE OF MAIDSTONE, 1648 - PART TWO

In last month's magazine, the man behind Bloody Miniatures, Richard Lloyd, presented the history of a little known English Civil War battle. He now provides the wargaming angle on this battle that was “a fierce and hot dispute”.

PLANNING THE WARGAME

The Battle of Maidstone is not one battle, but a running series of engagements, culminating in the final assault on the town itself. There are six identifiable phases:

- The fight for the bridge at East Farleigh.
- The cavalry battle on the road between East Farleigh and Tovil.
- Fairfax's Dragoons clearing the bridge at Tovil.
- Running skirmishes through the enclosed land and outlying buildings south of the river Len.
- The crossing of the Len bridges and the assault on the defensive earthworks.
- The storming of the town itself, and the ensuing street fighting.

In order to refight the entire series of engagements using 28mm figures, you'd need a table about 30 feet long, which I don't have.

Also, the first three actions are rather limited in scope. The fights for the bridges at East Farleigh and Tovil were short, sharp, and wholly unequal affairs, with overwhelming force brought to bear on small parties of defenders.

If you missed last month's article - fear not. Head over to the Bloody Miniatures website (bloodyminiatures.co.uk) where you can view or download part one.



Mayney's gallant cavalry charge and the New Model's counter-attack is of more interest, but again feels limited in scope for a tabletop action. With a (probable) numerical advantage in cavalry of something like 4:1, it feels like another foregone conclusion for the Parliamentarians.

The real interest lies in wargaming the battle for the town itself and, providing we're willing to accept some inevitable



simplification in representing the basic layout, this can reasonably be accommodated on a relatively modest-sized table. In the end, I settled on 8' x 6'.

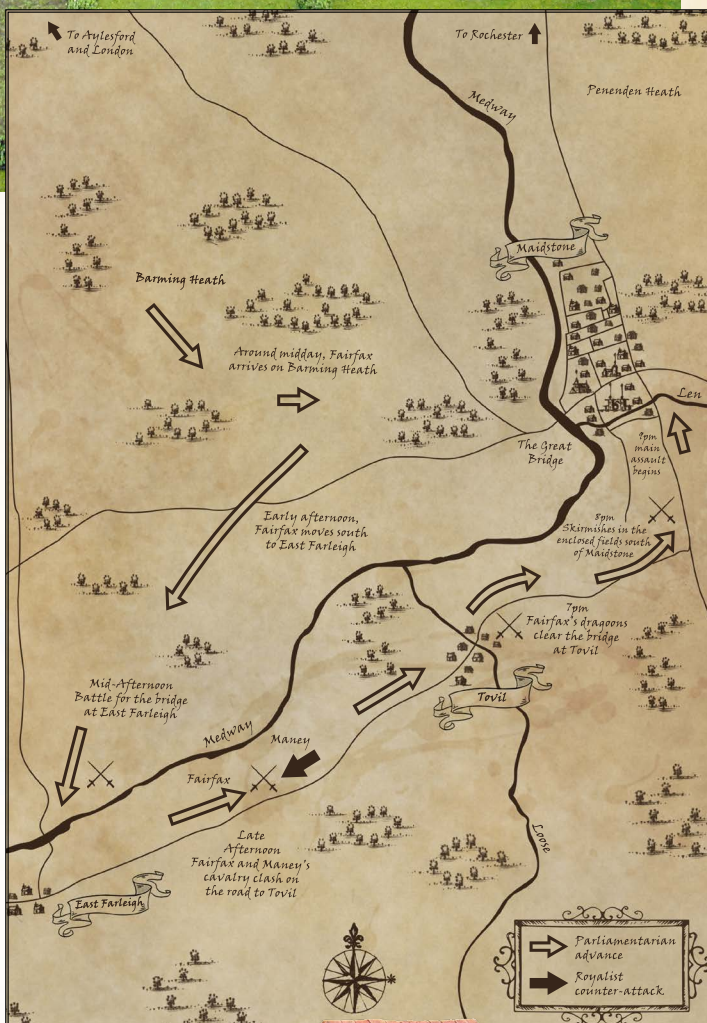
I've built up quite a collection of timber-framed buildings of various denominations, enabling me to assemble a plausible looking townscape of around 45 buildings.

I used 10mm styrofoam sheets to gradually build up the gradient of the town (in a series of terraces for playability and to facilitate the level positioning of buildings), with all the principal streets sculpted into the surface and textured.

The end result is representational and condensed - it's not an accurate scale model of a town which, in 1648, was probably half a mile across from north to south, and comprised several hundred buildings. It gives an impression.

I had to make some bespoke river sections to represent the Len joining the Medway, add a few bridges, and make a watermill, which I converted from a Conflux barn with a Grand Manner water wheel.

I scratch-built some simple sections of earthworks from coffee stirrers and matchsticks on a strip of Styrofoam, textured with sand, PVA, and paint. I put together a number of formidable 'barracades' from assorted parts in the bits box - barrels, crates, doors, wagon wheels, AFV stowage, and lengths of chain. These were completed with broken beams from balsa wood and sacks made from Green Stuff.



Above: Scratch built barricades at different stages of progress.



Above: Simple scratch built earthwork.

Right: Turted up Conflux barn into watermill.



RULES AND FORCES

My go-to rules for ECW have long been *The Pikeman's Lament (TPL)*. Pike and shot purists are snuffy about the simplistic nature of these rules but they are certainly appropriate here. I guess if I were attempting to recreate a large-scale field battle, I might look at rules which make a more sophisticated stab at representing the battlefield organisation and tactics of the day, but the the Battle of Maidstone is really a succession of large skirmishes. *TPL* is a fast and enjoyable set of rules for playing precisely those sorts of actions.

The way units are organised also lets you field multiple small parties of soldiers and differentiate between them perfectly for an action like Maidstone. The defending Royalists, for instance, will tend to have a preponderance of raw units, and parties of 'commanded shot' - useful for skirmishing musketry and moving quickly amongst cover, but fragile in contact. The attacking Parliamentarians, conversely, will have mainly veteran units, and many more 'Forlorn Hope' parties - assault troops, tough, and durable in hand-to-hand fighting.

In terms of manpower, the Parliamentarians will not only have higher quality troops, but also an advantage of around two to one in numbers - particularly once the Parliamentarian troops waiting on Barming Heath enter the fray (as I believe they must have done).

Against this, once across the river Len, the Parliamentarians must attack uphill and against troops behind successive lines of barricades - both factors give the defenders significant advantages against musketry and assault. The Royalists also have their formidable gun battery covering the streets up which the Parliamentarians must attack; so, the game should by no means be a foregone conclusion.

ORDERS OF BATTLE

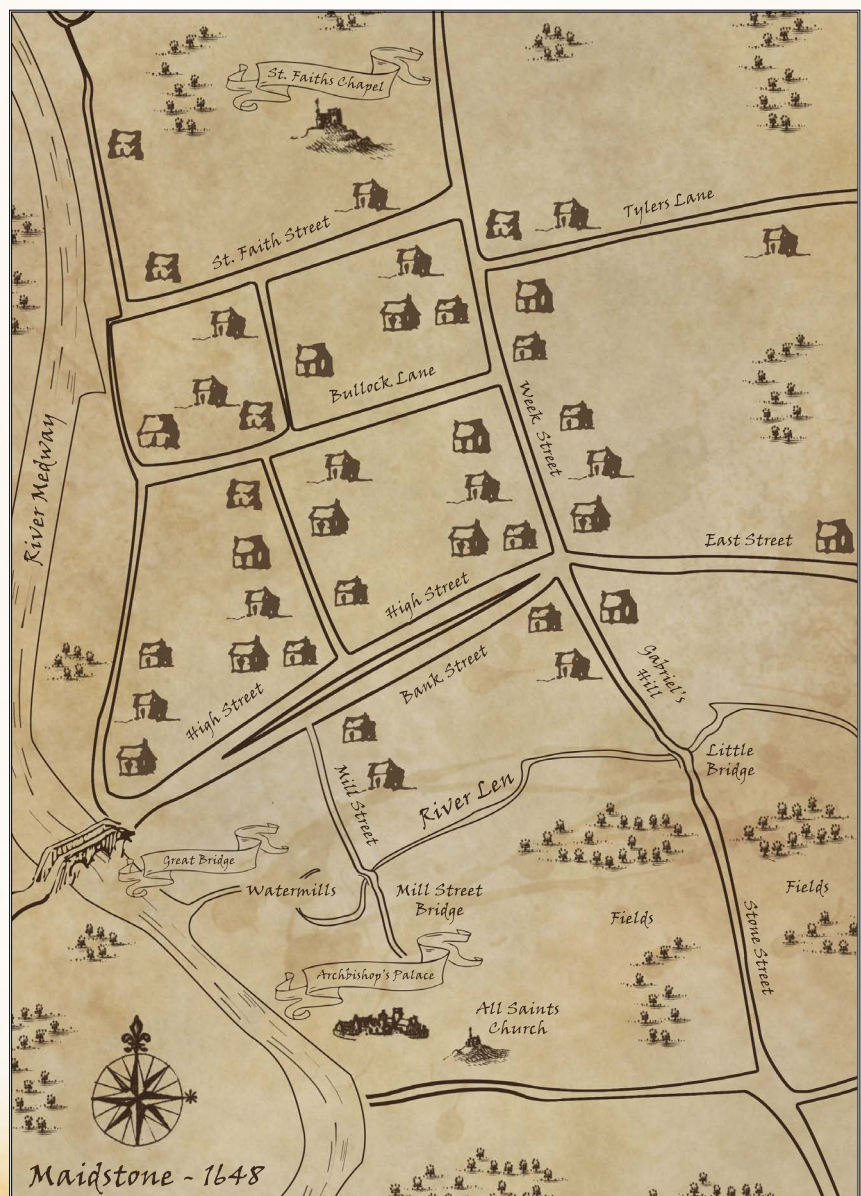
As explained above, the Royalist order of battle for Maidstone is, more or less, unknown. There were probably several troops of experienced horse under Sir John Mayney, no doubt bolstered by other 'cavaliers', and possibly some companies of experienced foot under Sir William Brockman, but the bulk of the Royalist army at Maidstone appears to have been made-up of assorted volunteers. A proportion of these would have had little or no previous military experience, training, or discipline.

We can be much clearer when it comes to Fairfax's army. Although no order of battle exists for Maidstone, the record



Above: Parliamentarian storming party assaulting a Royalist barricade at the end of Bullock Lane.

of Parliamentary proceedings for 1 June clearly states that Fairfax had four regiments of horse and three of foot, plus some detached companies. We can work out most of the units which took part, from where particular colonels and their regiments were despatched to for mopping-up operations following the battle. We can also rule out those New Model regiments which the record shows were with Cromwell in Wales and the north, in the West Country, or defending London.



From all this, we can be reasonably sure that Fairfax's four regiments of horse were his own 'General's Regiment', plus Henry Ireton's, Nathaniel Rich's, and Edward Whalley's.

A New Model horse regiment had an establishment of 600 men, divided into six troops. At full strength (unlikely but not impossible given the relative peace of the preceding two years), four regiments of horse would amount to some 2,400 Parliamentarian cavalry.

As far as the infantry go, we know that Hewson's regiment was at the forefront of the action at Maidstone, and Fortescue's regiment was also present. The identity of the third regiment of foot is a bit of a mystery - the other regiments on the New Model establishment (including Fairfax's own regiment of foot) are all documented as being elsewhere as far as I can see, although I could be missing something. Plus there were five detached companies of Richard Ingoldsby's regiment of foot.

A New Model regiment of foot consisted of 12 companies of 100 men - 1,200 in total. Three regiments of foot plus several detached companies would be perhaps a further 4,000 or more men. Fairfax also had Dragoons - possibly a number of companies detached from John Okey's regiment of Dragoons (although Okey himself was with Cromwell at Preston). Taken altogether, the total Parliamentarian strength of 8,000 looks plausible, with the balance made up of artillerymen, waggons, cooks, clerks, orderlies, and other assorted supernumeraries.

Coincidentally, in February 1648, Parliament had agreed to restructure the army into smaller regiments of 480 horse and 800 foot, but it's likely this reorganisation hadn't been completed by June. Many regiments simply refused to be reorganised. In any event, we can reasonably surmise that Fairfax's army was around 35% horse, 50% foot, and 15% Dragoons, gunners, and others.

The Royalists, on the other hand, probably had 20% horse at best, with the great bulk of the army being assorted foot troops, plus that sizeable artillery contingent.

WARGAME FORCES - ROYALIST

For the purposes of the game, the Royalists are primarily made up of 'commanded shot' units, reflecting the ill-trained and thrown together nature of many of the defenders.

They're stiffened by a smaller number of regular (but raw) shot units, and by Mayney's experienced horse.



Above: Royalist defences along the River Len at Little Bridge.

The aggressive forlorn hope represents the diehard Kentish Royalist gentry, many of whom had military experience from the First Civil War and the Thirty Years' War.

The 'clubmen' represent low-end volunteers from amongst the townsfolk, watermen, etc.

Sir John Mayney's command:

- 3 units of veteran gallopers (18 mounted figures)
- 2 units of aggressive forlorn hope (12 figures)
- 3 regimental guns (18 crew figures)

Sir William Brockman's command:

- 6 units of commanded shot* (36 figures)
- 2 units of raw shot (24 figures)
- 1 unit of clubmen (12 figures)



Above: Royalist picquets in the fields south of the River Len.

** Although the bulk of the Royalist troops are raw in terms of experience and training, they are motivated and have high morale - as evinced by their stalwart defence of the town.*

Improve both the morale and stamina of the Royalist commanded shot units by 1 point whilst keeping their shooting and fighting ability at the low end. Their stamina goes up from 1 to 2, and the score required to pass a morale test drops from 5 to 4.

Royalist deployment

The Royalist defenders have eight large 'barracades', which - before the game starts - they can deploy wherever they like to block streets or bridges. Barracades count as defended obstacles and provide cover. Once placed, the barracades cannot be relocated. Once overrun by attacking Parliamentarians, a barricade is assumed to be broken down and dismantled.

- The Royalist gun battery must deploy at the crossroads at the top of Gabriel's Hill, at the junction with High Street.
- Two units of Royalist commanded shot must deploy in the fields south of the river Len.
- Four units of Royalist commanded shot must deploy to the earthworks (and any barracades), on the north bank of the river Len.
- The Royalist 'raw shot' companies and clubmen must deploy in High Street, Bank Street, and East Street.
- The Kentish gentry (two aggressive forlorn hope units) must deploy in Bullock Lane.
- Mayney's Horse (three elite galloper units) must deploy in St Faith's Street and / or Tyler's Lane.

WARGAME FORCES - PARLIAMENTARIAN

The New Model Army maintained a ratio of one pikeman to two musketeers, but using 16 foot long pikes in house-to-house fighting and down narrow alleyways is clearly impractical. Fairfax's pikemen were perhaps given bills, or thrown into the fight as sword-armed assault troops.

For the purposes of the game, the Parliamentary units are all veteran, composed of musketeers, pistol-armed 'trotter' horse, and forlorn hope parties representing Fairfax's leading assault troops and dismounted Dragoons.

Colonel John Hewson's command:

- 6 units of veteran shot (72 figures)
- 3 units of aggressive forlorn hope (storming parties - 18 figures)
- 2 units of veteran forlorn hope (dismounted Dragoons - 12 figures)

Colonel Nathaniel Rich's command:

- 6 units of veteran trotters (36 mounted figures)
- 2 units of veteran forlorn hope (dismounted Dragoons - 12 figures)

Parliamentarian deployment

Two units of shot and two units of trotters start west of the Great Bridge over the Medway. These units may only come into play once the main Parliamentary force has carried both bridges over the river Len.

All other Parliamentary units start at the southern baseline, entering on table and moving forward as space and congestion allows (it will take two or three turns for all Parliamentary units to enter the table).

COMMAND AND CONTROL

Our game was played with three players on each side. Two of the players on each side commanded approximately half of their side's forces, representing Hewson and Rich for Parliament, and Mayney and Brockman for the Royalists. The other two players took the parts of Dudley and Fairfax, the rival C-in-Cs. They controlled no troops themselves but directed the battle by issuing orders to their respective subordinates - an attempt to represent the difficulties, tensions, and blunders of battlefield command!

As per the *TPL* rules, Parliamentary colonels Hewson and Rich are attached to one foot company and one-horse troop within their respective commands.

Royalist colonels Mayney and Brockman are attached to one horse troop and one foot company within their respective commands.

With such sizeable forces distributed across a large table, it's almost impossible for these commanders to exercise their personal command influence (+1 to all activation and morale rolls within 12") over all their units.

In a deviation from the usual rules, the army commanders (Dudley and Fairfax) aren't integrated within units, but represented by separate command stands which move independently (once per turn, at horse move distance). They may not be targeted directly by shooting, and may not initiate contact - but they may be contacted in hand-to-hand, in which case they fight as a full cavalry troop. They activate at will (requiring no activation test) once per turn.

In addition to the bonuses provided by leaders to all units in their own command within 12" of their own unit (+1 to all activation and morale rolls), Fairfax and Dudley provide an



Above: Royalist defenders' last stand at St Faith's Chapel.

additional +1 to all activation and morale rolls, to all friendly units within 12" of their position.

The Dudley and Fairfax players are permitted to pull rank on their subordinates, and may insist on personally rolling the dice for any action or morale test involving a unit of their army within their 12" command radius.

It's perfectly possible to play the scenario with just four players and omit Fairfax and Dudley as characters in the game. Another alternative would be to have a third Parliamentarian player in command of the force waiting to the west of the Great Bridge.

RULES AND SCENARIO MODIFICATIONS

In each turn, the Parliamentarians move first, then the Royalists, reflecting that the initiative lies with the attackers.

Given the congested street-fighting, the usual 'zone of control' rules (no closer than 3" to an enemy unit - unless attacking it - and no closer than 1" to a friendly unit) are ignored.

There is no 'interpenetration' of units. If a unit is blocking a street, friendly troops cannot just move through them.

If a unit fails its activation roll, it cannot take its action this turn but that failure does not stymie the entire command for that turn.

The double six bonus/double one jeopardy rule on activation rolls is ignored.



Above: Colonel Hewson exhorts his troops by the River Len watermills.

Each Royalist gun has an effective range of 8" - 36" and must take a turn to reload if successfully fired.

The guns can be pivoted but cannot move. If pivoted, a gun cannot fire in the same turn.

For reasons of space on the tabletop, gun crews (six figures) are represented by three figures in 'reduced model units'.

The Royalist guns can fire over the heads of friendly units positioned sufficiently downhill of them, and who are at least 8" away from the targeted Parliamentarian unit.

Figures can only move up marked streets and lanes, or across obvious open spaces. Single trees are ignored. Hedges, fences, and low walls count as linear obstacles and provide cover.

Figures can't squeeze through gaps between houses. In the actual battle, it's likely that much of the fighting would have taken place along such narrow passages and alleys. But for the purposes of the game, trying to squeeze figures between houses just gets too difficult and fiddly.



Above: Royalist gun battery at the junction of Gabriel's Hill and High Street.

Similarly, for the sake of simplicity, buildings are impassable. The real battle would have included hand-to-hand fighting within (and shooting from) houses. But not all model buildings have playable interiors, and it would add a great deal of time and complication in having to break down doors, have figures climbing through windows, and so on. The wargame takes place only in the streets and gardens surrounding the buildings - not in the buildings themselves.

I considered reducing distances for shooting and visibility to reflect the rain and darkness in which the battle was fought, but since this would affect both sides equally, there didn't seem much point. In any event, the rain appears not to have greatly dampened the gunfire on either side. As George Thompson's eyewitness account has it, the New Model were "...every minute of the time firing upon them, and they upon us, it being extreme wet weather during all that time".

HOW THE GAME UNFOLDED - “A VERY FIERCE AND HOT DISPUTE”

The game proved a gritty and hard-fought affair. The Royalists threw pretty much their entire force along the defensive line of the river Len, and held it successfully for much of the game.

Note: I've adjusted the Royalist starting deployment in the scenario, to try to make sure their forces are spread throughout the town, rather than all concentrated along the Len from the off!

The Parliamentarians threw their veteran shot units forward first, but against the Royalist commanded shot parties behind their earthworks and barricades, this proved a fairly even shooting match, with the attackers taking more casualties than they inflicted. The Parliamentarian storming parties, being much tougher to

kill, probably should have taken the lead instead, but these troops were being held in reserve for the assault up through the streets.

Eventually sheer weight of Parliamentarian numbers began to tell, and both bridges over the Len were carried - in the teeth of fierce resistance - by turn 7. That said, the Royalist guns on Gabriel's Hill, with Dudley stationed nearby (adding his command influence to their shoot activations) inflicted serious damage on the Parliamentarian horse crossing Little Bridge, destroying at least two units.

In an ahistorical episode, Sir William Brockman, attached to a company of raw shot, found his unit heavily reduced by musketry from the New Model infantry crossing Mill Street Bridge. Brockman's men then failed a morale test - thanks to a catastrophic dice roll combined with

multiple casualties - causing the remnants of the unit (and Brockman with it) to immediately break and flee! Over half the Royalist army lost their commander and his influence on their future activation and morale rolls in this moment!

As the Parliamentarians gradually pushed forwards through the lower part of the town, they met stiff resistance from the Kentish gentry manning the barricades who were almost impossible to shift and very difficult to kill, thanks to their high stamina and defensive position. In the end, they were worn down and overcome by remorseless shooting, followed up with assaults of the Parliamentarian storming parties (aggressive forlorn hope on aggressive forlorn hope action which proved inexorably attritional on both sides).

Mayney's Horse held back out of healthy respect for the overwhelming weight of Parliamentarian musketry, but once battle spilled into the lower town, the Royalist horse units repeatedly charged at Parliamentarian horse and foot units, inflicting a good deal of damage, driving them back in places. Eventually musketry from the highly effective Parliamentarian dragoons whittled away these bold cavaliers and drove off the remnants. Mayney's own troop was destroyed, but (like his historical counterpart) Mayney himself, the sole survivor, immune to lucky blows, escaped to fight another day.

Meanwhile, over at the Great Bridge across the Medway, the second party of Kentish gentry manning a barricade blocking the bridge (supported by one of the Royalist guns on Gabriel's Hill, firing down the High Street at the Parliamentarian horse units attempting to cross the bridge), stymied the Parliamentarian attack across the Medway from the west for several turns. Two companies of veteran New Model shot on the far bank of the river eventually poured enough fire into the defenders to drive them off and open the bridge.

Elsewhere, in a desperate last ditch effort, the Royalist 'clubmen' rabble launched a gallant, but foolhardy, counter-attack on one of the Parliamentarian storming parties and were almost totally wiped out for their trouble. The few survivors routed as just about the final act of the game.

The Royalist guns were still intact and firing intermittently, but apart from one unit of Mayney's Horse, and a few scattered remnants of Royalist foot here and there, the rest of the Royalist defenders were destroyed or had fled. The Parliamentarian attackers had been held



Above: Parliamentarian Shot fire over the River Len as their troops attack across Mill Street Bridge.



Above: Parliamentarian Dragoons advancing up Gabriel's Hill on the Royalist guns.

off for a long while, and taken a severe mauling, but the way was now more or less open for them to seize Dudley's heavy guns and snuff out the last vestiges of Royalist resistance in the town.

The result, and much of how it unfolded, was more or less historically accurate - although, thanks to the Royalists' steadfast defence of the Len bridges, most of the action took place along the river Len and in the lower part of the town. This is in contrast to the historical battle, where the bloodiest fighting seems to have taken place along Week Street and the surrounding lanes in the upper part of the town.

With such an advantage in both numbers and troop quality, it feels like it would be difficult, although not impossible, for the Parliamentarians to actually lose this battle - although as in any wargame, much comes down to the luck of the dice, as well as good tactical decisions. It's perfectly possible for the Royalists to give a very good account of themselves and make a proper battle of it, as they did here. In the game, they inflicted a bloodier nose and a far higher proportion of casualties on the attacking Parliamentarians than their gallant historical counterparts.

A note on the pictures: The photos of the game principally feature Bloody Miniatures, with additional figures by Bicone Miniatures, Renegade Miniatures, and a few figures from The Assault Group. All Bloody Miniatures painted by Richard Lloyd. Other figures painted by Richard Lloyd, Michael Siwak, and Shaun Watson.

Maps created by Ross Lloyd.



Above: Royalist Kentish gentry defend a barricade in the High Street.



Above: Sir Gamaliel Dudley and the Royalist gun battery with Parliamentarians attacking over the Great bridge and up the High Street.



Above: Parliamentarian Foot attack up the High Street towards the Royalist gun battery.