

Siren Figures

Review by Rob Morgan

Ancient galley warfare, in most decent wargames scales, from 1/600th to 1/3000th, can of course be enlivened tremendously by the use of mythology, particularly Greek mythology which contains such delights as the Sirens, ancient history's *femmes fatales*. Remarkably, Mick Yarrow's range of 15mm classical ancients now includes a set of three Minoan/Mycenaen "ladies" or "priestesses," which led me to think of the Sirens. They are standard pack rate, and in two poses, one with a tall hat and hands outstretched (to lure mariners) the others with hands to their sides. The figures are neatly crafted, and wear long skirts to the ground, which makes adapting them easy. Take a look at the Mick Yarrow web-site www.spanglefish/mickyarrowminiatures for details of current price and postage, increases in the UK and Europe of late have been a problem for many manufacturers.



What of the Sirens? How can they be used in wargames? Well, they crop up frequently in Greek and Roman mythology. Ovid and Homer mention them, they appear in the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" as dangerous, if lovely, demons -- creatures which existed only to lure sailors with enchanting music and voices to shipwreck and doom. They appear,

always, on rocky shores and islands with cliffs and swift currents, and in many places in the ancient seas. They were daughters of the river god, and usually described as being between 2 and 5 in number, so the Mick Yarrow pack's ideal! You'll remember the story of Odysseus. He closes his sailors' ears with wax, and has them lash him to the mast so that they can pass safely by without harm.

In a wargame, the use would be straightforward. You can cement the 15mm tall figures to a rocky base, of course, as a group or individuals, but I liked the idea of

them “rising from the sea” near the shore, so I cut a section or two from the hooped skirts the models wear, and made each a slightly different height, the Priestess with arms outstretched should be the tallest, I think. Cemented firmly to a sea base, painted rather gaudily, plenty of gold and white and purple -- and that’s it.

Of course, these are 15mm, but the Sirens of antiquity were not described in size, so they will fit in with 1/600th scale warships, say Triton or Xyston, and look well there, and also with scales such as Rod Langton’s 1/1200th, and in the 1/2400th scale, with Tumbling Dice classical warships and galleys (my particular favourite), they look very dominating and powerful.



Ulysses and the Sirens. Flaxman's "Odyssey."

If a warship, or supply ship, or an expedition of any sort, afloat, comes to within a specified range, fairly close depending on the scale, these ladies become active. They are fairly skilled divas but not assisted by any device, I think, so maybe 10cm or 4-5", thereabouts, would be suitable. Escape? Well, a ship falling into the trap, more than one ship perhaps, would need a high dice throw to escape, but also might expect some serious casualties or be unable to fight for a number of turns. The Sirens could be operated by a random card, or be known to one side as existing at a specific island. There could be an Odysseus “trick” with a crew made deaf by wax leading an enemy inshore to its doom. If the wargame is played off a group of islands, then the Sirens might appear anywhere, more than once. They can’t be killed, the only way to deal with them, as the gods found, was to challenge them to a singing contest with the Muses, the Muses won, and the Sirens were robbed of their power.

Think about it -- add mythology to your ancient galley armoury, every bit as powerful as a ram or Greek fire!