

Henry VIII's Army
Osprey Men-at-Arms series No. 191 (1987)
Text by Paul Cornish; illustrated by Angus McBride

Review by Rob Morgan

Well written in a wargamer-friendly way, the text begins with an account of the campaigns and battles of the reign of Henry VIII, Tudor King of England from 1509 to 1547. The fateful early expedition to Spain in some ways set the tone for the wars of the reign; but in 1513, the rather easy victory of the Battle of the Spurs, at which the King was present, was significantly overshadowed by the victory over the Scots at Flodden Field, where King James IV fell, and Scots military power was broken for years to come.

A decade of peace was followed by war against France again, and war against the Scots. These were persistent enemies of Henry, but he also suffered serious dissent and uprising at home. His last war, against France again, is best remembered for the loss of the *Mary Rose*, and like so much of the warlike activity of Henry VIII was indecisive and little more, as Paul Cornish says than a senseless quest for glory.

Henry's army was raised, apart from his Yeomen of the Guard, when needed for war. A threat meant the Militia was mustered, but frequently the King relied on auxiliaries, adventurers or just plain mercenaries. In 1544 for France, he employed hundreds of Irish troops, and *always* hired Landsknechts for service on the continent (France). German heavy horse, Spaniards from his father-in-law's lands, Italians, and other troops borrowed for the purpose of a campaign were paid from the King's purse. At one point, light cavalry from the Balkans were used, sadly there's no illustration of them. Organisation at all levels was seriously lacking in the armies raised by and for King Henry VIII, and led to frequent heavy losses from disease, such as those of Dorset in Spain in 1511.

The equipment of the forces, infantry, cavalry and the close-to-Henry's-heart matter of ordnance is well covered for a short volume, and though uniform or livery was not clearly developed, it was obvious that there had been a start on uniformity at least! The increasingly important matter of flags, banners and emblems is nicely dealt with, and these make for a very attractive army on the table top.

This is a superb Osprey title, and the illustrations are interesting, even if the subjects are sometimes less well known and understood, like the *shrympe* war engines of 1544. Henry's reign was a complex one, an enigma perhaps, and the book avoids most of the pitfalls. As always is the case, McBride's plates make the book complete and delightful; though in this case there are several military types presented which can and do appear elsewhere; the Landsknechts, Border Horse and Irish are typical of this. Still what the wargaming reader is presented with is a fascinating collection of troops, many of which make unlikely companions in war, and perhaps better enemies!

As far as the table top's concerned, my own interest goes back to *Airfix Magazine* in November 1973, in which George Gush wrote an account of Henry VIII's Army in his 'Renaissance Warfare' series, with some splendid suggestions and drawings. I re-read it earlier, and the thought of creating an English and mercenary force from a cross section of Airfix 1/72nd scale soldiers fills me with dread now! Then George talked of selecting 25mm

figures from Miniature Figurines and the old Hinton Hunt ranges, but nowadays, using the economical 15mm products of a few good companies, the ranks can be filled with little difficulty.

East Riding Miniatures 16th century Western Europe series are an excellent place to start; most indigenous troops can be found there, including Militia, while Irregular Miniatures' Irish and galloglass are delightfully attractive add-ons. You can dip into the Peter Pig Range 23 as well. Pack 4 with a long fighting axe, and their Generals and light guns and the handgunners will serve for the earlier years of warfare. For later troops, the heads will have to be changed. Pack 71 in Pig's range with morions and even the Scots bonnet (pack 55) will serve. A lot easier these days to assemble an English army for France than it was in 1973! Mind you, my preference is for Henry's exceptional fleet, a far better bet than wandering about France.

