

Medieval Scandinavian Armies (1) 1100-1300

Osprey Men-at-Arms series No. 396 (2003)

Text by David Lindholm & David Nicolle; illustrated by Angus McBride

Review by Rob Morgan

Apart from the Vikings, northern European warfare during the medieval era is woefully neglected by historians and unfortunately by wargamers too, though it impinges on the history of many other European lands and provides an interesting alternative for the period. This, the first of two Osprey volumes on Medieval Scandinavia, opens with a brief general introduction and a chronology of warfare in what was, it seems, far from being a quiet backwater of Europe!

There follows a very decent eight-page description of the range of weapons in use. Denmark tended to be in advance of her neighbours in terms of military fashion, due to her geographical position, not surprisingly. Strategy and tactics are discussed, and discussed in enough detail to enable the interested wargamer to translate the writers' account to the table top -- for newcomers to snow, hard Winters and big forests, the brief comment on climate and topography is extremely valuable.

The authors continue with an introduction to the rather different fortifications of the north, and conclude with the conduct of siege warfare. Siege engines arrived rather late on the scene, it seems, and a Scandinavian siege might be an unusual and interesting campaign game. There's a short reading list provided, most of which will be unfamiliar to the reader; it certainly was to me!

The book is, as usual, well illustrated, and of course the plates are by the late Angus McBride, and are, as always was the case with Angus, of superb quality. The first plates have a distinctly Viking, and even Saxon look about them, and they continue with a slightly old-fashioned feel; plate D could be straight out of *Game of Thrones*! Most of the figures portrayed are easy enough to find in a number of 6mm, 15mm and 25mm ranges, but the heavier clothing, the use of cloaks and furs, Figures D1 and G1 for example, accurately portraying the feel of war in Winter, may be much harder to find.

The Saami tribal warrior on skis suggests a form of warfare rarely encountered on the wargames table, but which has interest and value. I couldn't find a figure to represent him anywhere in any scale; the best possible option might be one of Mick Yarrow's 15mm Innuits.

The idea of Scandinavian warfare, conducted in the forests around the Baltic or in Iceland and Greenland, or on the Western Isles of Scotland has a great deal to offer: smaller armies, different styles of gear and weaponry not least of all. Worth a try, at least I think so!

An excellent and readable Osprey. Full of potential.

Men-at-Arms

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

Medieval Scandinavian Armies (1)

1100-1300



D Lindholm & D Nicolle • Illustrated by Angus McBride