

A Wargamer's Guide to the Early Roman Empire

A Wargamer's Guide to the Anglo-Zulu War

A Wargamer's Guide to the Desert War 1940-1943

A Wargamer's Guide to 1066 and the Norman Conquest

**All by Daniel Mersey; Published by Pen and Sword
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Review by Paul Le Long

All of these books follow quite a tight format so I thought it would be useful to review them all together.

We start with a background chapter and then proceed through Armies, Organisation and Tactics, The Key Battles, Wargaming the period, an overview of rules for the period, broken down into rules that cover big battles and those that cover skirmishes, an overview of figures and finally some scenarios.



Let's take the Early Roman Empire volume as an example of what's in the book. First we have the background chapter, which is a brisk trot through the period (27BC-284AD) in just 12 pages. Not in-depth but a good primer for anyone not familiar with the subject. Armies, Organisation and Tactics is 35 pages on how the Roman army functioned, a description of how various types of units fought and a brief overview of the main enemies they might face and broadly how they fought as well. Then in Key Battles we have 10 battles briefly described, with advice on wargaming each of them.

The chapter on Wargaming provides general advice & in this volume we have interesting discussions on the role of auxiliary infantry, legion versus warband, Roman command structures and so on. Then we move to the chapter on rules, which are mini-reviews really and very useful; there are 10 big battles described and eight skirmish games. The

chapter -Choosing Your Modelsø is also pretty comprehensive, covering all scales and providing some mini-reviews.

Finally we have scenarios, of which there are five, each of several pages sub-divided into a description, forces involved, setting up the table, victory conditions and rules considerations. The final scenario is a mini-campaign.

So there you have it; all of the volumes follow a very similar structure and all are written with Daniel Mersey's clear, unfussy prose, which is always straightforward and practical. But should you buy them? Surely they are aimed at the beginner and not the seasoned *grogard* reading this blog? Well, yes, that's sort of true, but only to a point; I enjoyed each volume regardless of how well I knew the topic. I probably enjoyed the book on the Zulu War the most, despite the fact that I have absolutely no interest in that war and probably will never wargame the conflict. That, I think, is a testament to the writing ó they are simply an entertaining read.

The novice will certainly get a lot out of any of these volumes ó they give you a handy jumping-off point to see whether the period is for you and if it is, how to go about getting started. For the *grogard* there's generally something there too ó mainly because the author's voice is so spritely and encouraging. I got a lot of enjoyment out of the 1066 book even though I know the period well.

I can't recommend these volumes (all of them) highly enough.