

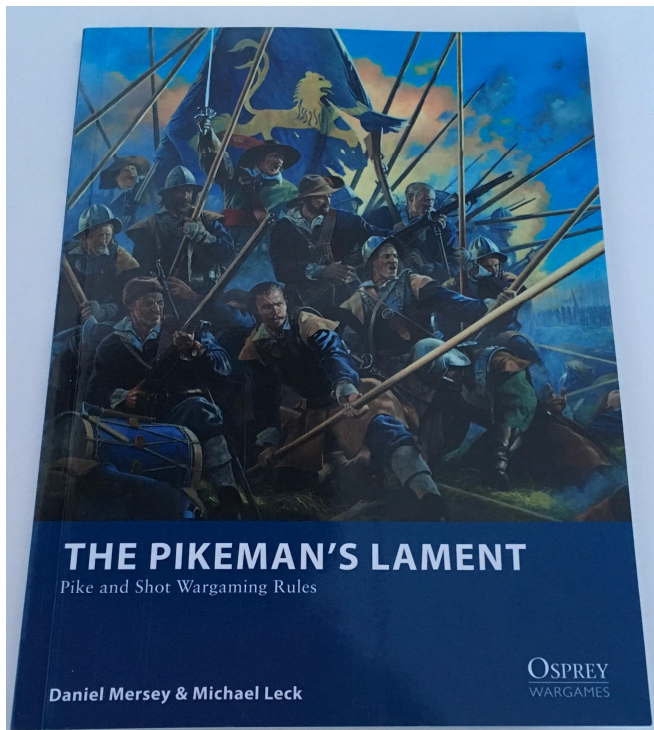
The Pikeman's Lament

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By Daniel Mersey and Michael Leck; illustrated by Mark Stacey

Review by Paul Le Long

If you have read my review of Lion and Dragon Rampant then you will know what to expect here ó in fact, this book might have been called Pike & Shot Rampant because the rules are very similar indeed, just transposed to the Pike and Shot era. There are sample forces at the back of the book and these cover the Thirty Years War, English Civil War, Scanian War (1675-9), Polish wars (1655-60), King William's War (North American frontier 1688-97) and the Great Northern War (1700-21) so that gives you a good idea of what is covered in the rules.



As with the Rampant titles, the focus of the rules is small battle/large skirmish. For example a typical force ó called a Company here ó is 24 points. A standard unit of pike or shot (12 figures each) would cost 4 points. So you are fielding a company of about half a dozen units on average.

Types of unit: Gallopers, Trotters, Dragoons, Pike, Shot, Commanded Shot (skirmishers really), Forlorn Hope (commandos really!), Clansmen (fierce foot who can also represent woodland Indians as well as highlanders), Regimental Gun, Clubmen.

Turn sequence is IGO-UGO but player A has to roll for each of his units as he activates them ó if he fails, that unit stays put and his turn is over and player B gets to go. So you have to prioritise which units you want to move as some are harder to activate than others. Units have to roll over a certain target number to hit and damage is dealt depending on the quality/armour of the defender. Let's take an example:

Player A wants a unit of Gallopers (6 figures) to attack Player B's shot. Gallopers can attack if you can roll 5 or more on 2D6 (they are keen on charging). Player A rolls 7 so off they go. They hit the musketeers and now they can attack ó the cavalry roll 12d6 (all troops roll 12 dice, unless they have been reduced to half strength, in which case they roll

6 dice) and will hit on any roll of 4 or more. Let's say they get 8 hits. Shot have a Stamina value of 2 - which means it takes 2 hits to kill every musketeer so in this case 4 of them go down.

But the shot do get to fight back so when defending (as they are in this instance) they hit on any roll of 5 or more on their 12 dice. Let's say they get lucky and score 6 hits. Looking good so but wait so the cavalry have a stamina value of 3 which means that 3 of the 6 hits take down 1 trooper each for just 2 casualties. By the time the next turn comes around we have 4 troopers facing off against 8 musketeers.

There are other rules which add chrome but that's the basic mechanism. The feature of most use to the soloist though, and one which goes beyond the other Rampant games, is a focus on officers. Each player has an officer so not necessarily the overall commander, indeed a starting officer is a lowly Ensign. He will have a background, traits, can earn (or lose) honour during a game and is really intended for campaign play so you follow him through several battles, hopefully winning honour and promotion and avoiding death and dishonour. This is a nice little side game that can give the soloist something to latch on to and identify with.

As with Rampant, everything is handled with a light touch so the emphasis is on rough and ready, enjoyable, scenario-based gaming. We are not refighting Marston Moor here so we are representing the war of outposts so raids, ambushes, patrols, storming a redoubt, burning a village and so on. Ten scenarios are provided.

You will not like the book if:

- You want big battles
- You don't like Pike and Shot
- You want a very serious, rules-heavy, tournament style approach

You will like the book if:

- You like small games with about 50-60 miniatures on each side
- You like scenario-driven encounters
- You want to represent the everyday small war of outposts rather than large formal battles with proper formations
- You want a simple (but elegant) game that flows quickly without getting bogged down in detail

Highly recommended.