

Medieval artillery set from Ultima Ratio

By Rob Morgan

I must admit my medieval ordnance park hasn't increased for quite a while, and I'm not familiar with the Ultima Ratio range, made in Ukraine, but this pack called Medieval Gunpowder Castle Artillery caught my eye and



suggested one or two potential conversions. There are four sprues of decently hard plastic in each pack. All four are identical. There are four guns on each sprue. First a trestle mounted gun, which could transpose from castle to siege lines, or ship easily enough, but the

trestle legs do need slight adjustment. This long-armed weapon, in scale terms about eight feet or more, has the gunner firmly attached and in the act of firing. The second of the large guns is pillar-mounted with an elevating arm. A lovely gun, accurately portrayed, and with very wide potential from 1350-1450, possibly a little later than that date. Slender, rather than chunky.



There is, I should say, no real gun crew in the pack, but that's not a serious problem either. There are plenty of options in scale to add a crew. I tend to use peasants from the Airfix Robin Hood set as labourers and assistants. That's the cheapest option, though several other 20mm plastic sets have some good

figures. Try Caesar's HO88 foot soldiers, or Strelets MOO6 Levy. You'll get almost a dozen crewmen from each.

Having considered the heavier ordnance, there are two handgun variants. One is an unusual four-barrelled, long shaft-mounted hand gun, firmly gripped in the hands of its gunner, but this would be from c.1350 onwards, always having a crew of two, with the second man giving fire. This gunner's holding a flaming brand, which can be cut away, and for the earlier period, a second gunner can be added say from the advancing swordsman in the Airfix Sheriff of Nottingham set, with

his sword altered to an igniting device, hot wire, etc. This rather heavier hand-gun would be better placed behind a castle wall, or used in a defensive position, I suspect! The sprue has a substantial pavise (25mm high) which is cut for a gun, and the 4-barreled weapon with only a little adjustment will fit behind this.

The second hand gun and gunner is one of the loveliest plastic versions I've seen; it's supported by a shield and with a decently harnessed gunner, posed in advancing/firing position. Like this, he's good for sieges or for earlier field actions, but again, he could do with a second man for firing. Both shields in the set are embossed with designs, but are easily enough trimmed flat and repainted.

There are three other figures, and very useful ones. You'll find examples of two of them in the Osprey Men-at-Arms No. 144 *Armies of Medieval Burgundy* -- look at plate B; figures B2 and B3 show a mason and a gunner working on trimming gun-stones using a wooden template; that's exactly what's in the set. A standing figure with the template -- holding an axe, but that can be trimmed to a hammer, and wearing an apron, then a kneeling figure with gun-stone and small hammer. Both in civilian dress. Perfect for any gun scenario, and for any late medieval army that you field. A highly recommended pair of workers!

The last figure on the sprue reminded me of something I'd seen in an Osprey. He's a well-harnessed, vizored, tall gun captain (or so I assume) sword in hand and with a burning brand in his left, he lacks a scabbard by the way. He looks a little later than the others, and I found him, and surely this is a copy, from plate G1 in Osprey's *Medieval Scandinavian Armies 2* (Men-at-Arms No. 399). He's the Danish man at arms shown at the Battle of Brunkenberg 1471. With the torch left in place, he could command a night watch, a mine operation, or generally commit havoc on a raid! A great figure, he could find himself in most European armies, and indeed would fit into a WoTR army easily. Cut the flame away from the shaft, and it becomes a baton. A mercenary leader perhaps? A very useful figure indeed.

An interesting, and valuable group of figures and weapons, though *four* identical sprues, well, probably too much for any individual wargamer. A pack of two sprues would be enough. Worth a look.