

Simple Campaigning: Ancient and Medieval Wargame Campaigns

by John Graham-Leigh.

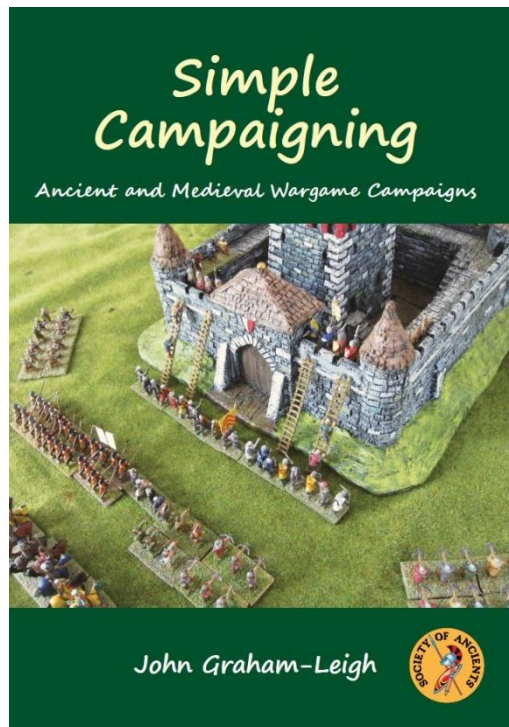
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Review by Martin Smith

As this publication is not as widely known as those produced by the larger commercial publishing houses (produced as it is independently by a wargaming association), I thought I might offer a review to bring it to wider attention. This 48-page A5 softback staple bound booklet is a collation of a series of articles originally published in *Slingshot*, the journal of the Society of Ancients, between 1997 and 2013, some having been refined and updated specifically for this publication. Following the Introduction, the subsequent chapter titles are:



Solo Campaigning,
More Solo Campaigning: Angevin Empire,
Solo Campaigning Across the Steppes,
The Millennium Campaign - Europe 1000-1100AD,
Crisis of Rome Campaign,
The Wolf on the Fold,
The Calamitous Fourteenth Century 1330-1450.

As you might expect from a Society of Ancients publication the focus of the chapters/articles is on the ancient and medieval period, though many of the systems employed could easily transfer to other eras in history. Most of the articles describe relatively simple systems the author has employed to generate battles for a group of friends at his local club. He states in the Introduction that "...typically a framework is provided to decide by dice throws which nation attacks another, and then the resultant war is decided by a single tabletop battle", WRG's DBM rules being his weapon of choice. He mentions that the 'Solo Campaigning'

chapter heading was something of a misnomer, as the actual battles were fought between club members. He then continues "...but the campaign would work just as well solo", and I'm very much inclined to agree.

The first piece is a brief description of a mini-campaign set in the 2nd century BC, stretching geographically from Greece to India, with Rome hovering menacingly in the wings, and with a simple method of determining who fights whom in each five year period. A schematic map is included.

The second article, however, goes into considerably greater detail regarding the mechanisms used for a campaign based around the Angevin Empire, under the 'English' monarchs Henry II, Richard Lionheart, and King John. This covers England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, plus much of modern-day France and the northern Spanish borders, all shown in a well-presented schematic map. The player is required to make some key decisions, but the game system determines how events subsequently unfold: a clever set of tables for event generation then produces clashes in different parts of the cash-strapped English monarchs' territories as they attempt to maintain control of their extensive domains. Battles can be wargamed, or there is a further method described to assess the success or otherwise of an army. This looks like a pretty much complete set of campaign rules, cleverly constructed, and seems to be based primarily on real history, with none of the 'what if' situations being implausible.

Solo Campaigning Across the Steppes is a simpler battle generation set up, for warfare in the mid-13th Century. It produces three battles per decade, with options for war in Europe, the Crusades and Mongol aggression, and geographically covers all the way from Ireland in the west to China, Burma, and Cambodia in the east, with yet another well produced schematic map included.

The Millennium Campaign covers similar ground, but a couple of centuries earlier and no further east than the Arab empires, effectively a simple battle generator for European wars from 1000 to 1100 AD, with Normans, Byzantines, and Arabs among the key players. It looks like it would run well as a solo campaign, as would the 'Steppes' campaign previously described.

The Crisis in Rome chapter is set in the 3rd Century AD, when political chaos and rapidly changing leadership posed as much of a threat to Rome's existence as external forces and begins with a list of the twenty-nine Emperors proclaimed between 193 and 283 AD, very few of whom died in their beds. It is designed for five Roman players, acting as Emperor, Prefects and Heads of the Senate, their aims being to keep the barbarians at bay whilst jostling for power and political advantage. This system seemed to be very much multi-player orientated and would need significant changes if a gamer wished to convert it to solo use, though the charts and other information included would make a great starting point.

The Wolf on the Fold takes us back to the days of the Assyrian Empire, around 900-600 BC, and is once again a multi-player set up, the players taking turns at being the Assyrians. Changes in the Assyrian army can be instigated by the current incumbent, as can attacks on neighbouring peoples, with each defeated enemy revealing further options for targets beyond the newly subjugated nations' borders. A table also allows for revolts by troublesome subjects, such as the Babylonians and Egyptians.

Finally, The Calamitous Fourteenth Century campaign begins in 1330 and is another simple but effective battle generation system, producing three battles per decade. It covers the 100 Years War and associated conflicts, turmoil in Germany, Ottoman incursion into Eastern Europe and attacks by the Golden Horde, all historically based yet with a host of possibilities.

Each article/chapter includes brief rundowns of how the campaigns played out, and mention is made that the campaigns took a couple of years each to run, using DBM, but might be completed

considerably quicker if using a fast-play rule set (such as DBA). In-game photos, seventeen of them, appear throughout the booklet showing campaign battles in progress, and while being of 'old school' figures and not to 'glossy wargames magazine standard' they are none the worse for it and nicely done.

Overall, I'd say production quality was more than decent and the book's contents thought provoking and of great potential interest to any solo gamer looking for campaign ideas, especially in the pre-gunpowder era. Despite being essentially a collection of magazine articles with an ancient and medieval wargaming theme, this booklet has a great deal to offer any reader with an urge to go campaigning.