

THE SIEGE OF BRAKEN KEEP

A battle report between Martin Turner and Philip Sobel, report by Erwin Jackson, photography by Conrad Gonsalves and rules wizardry by David Simpson.

This is a battle report of the final assault scenario from issue 9 that was played out at the Tanelorn Wargames club in north-East London (www.tanelornwgc.org).

Philip Sobel took the role of the attacker, with his Dwarfs, and Martin Turner the defender with the Empire. You will notice rules comments scattered throughout the report by Dave to help explain some of the new mechanics.

And finally, a big thank you to all the guys involved and the Tanelorn Wargames club as a whole with helping to make this possible. The report just wouldn't have been finished without the enthusiastic support, necessary equipment, facilities and talent provided by all the Tanelorn Warmaster players, even Chris helped out with the odd: "I wouldn't do that if I were you Phil".

EMPIRE ARMY SELECTION

First of all my Knights had been sent off in scenario 2 to raise a relief force, so we agreed none would be available for the final siege game. So to start with I selected all my compulsory units Graf Barndorf (General): two units of Crossbowmen and two Halberdier units. I chose all of the artillery units available – one unit of cannon and a Helblaster Volley Gun. The cannon would come in handy for attacking enemy siege

towers at range whilst the Helblaster would be placed near the gate in case the enemy got too close. Next, I chose a unit of Flagellants – the Dwarfs will need 6's to hit them so their lack of armour is not such a problem plus the five attacks per stand would make them very handy up on the walls or defending a breach.



Next I needed some troops to make up a sally force. I decided Ernst Methina, Graf Barndorf's personal wizard, would personally lead this force. To accompany and protect him on his forays from the castle I choose a lone unit of Pistoliers.

I now needed to bulk up my defensive units and added a further four units of Halberdiers and a unit of Handgunners. Handgunners are 10 points more than Crossbowmen but the -1 save modifier might prove essential against Dwarf armour. I also decided to give three of my Halberdier units Skirmisher stands, these would greatly enhance my combat potential when the Dwarfs got to the walls. That left me with just 10 points to spend so I gave Graf Barndorf a *Sword of Might* as it was quite likely at some point I would have to risk him in battle.

Empire Defenders of Braken Keep

• Graf Barndorf – General	125 pts
• Ernst Methina – Wizard with <i>Ring of Magic</i>	55 pts
• 6 Units of Halberdiers – three units have Skirmishers	345 pts
• 2 Units of Crossbowmen	110 pts
• 1 Unit of Handgunners	65 pts
• 1 Unit of Flagellants	70 pts
• 1 Unit of Pistoliers	95 pts
• 1 Cannon Battery	85 pts
• 1 Helblaster Volley Gun	50 pts
	1,000 pts

The Siege of Braken Keep

EMPIRE DEPLOYMENT

My initial deployment can be seen opposite. My basic strategy was to slow the Dwarfs advance using the Pistoliers to lure away the inevitable protective screen of Troll Slayers from Phil's siege towers and then to destroy the towers as they advanced. I deliberately left the gate and the sidewalls accessible to try to funnel the Dwarf attack into these areas. My earthworks would force the Dwarfs into a narrow attacking column in front of the gate where my massed fire power could wreak terrible losses on the Dwarfs, hopefully driving them back in confusion. Siege equipment can only move once per turn, forcing your opponent to advance as far as possible is good tactic. The longer the scenario goes on the greater the chance of an Empire victory so the option to attack the undefended side walls with the siege towers was not really viable especially as I had won scenario 2 and would start rolling to end the game from turn five. My strategy would be enhanced by Methina casting the *Weird Enchantment* spell on the advancing Dwarfs, reducing their movement by half – again a tactic designed to buy the Empire's relief force time.

DWARF ARMY SELECTION

With a couple of siege battles under my belt I approached this one with a little more experience. In the past I'd made some classic mistakes when selecting and setting up my army which I was determined not to repeat. Things like putting my siege artillery in a place that would see their line of sight cut off in the second turn and others too silly to mention have been the death of my army. With all of this in mind I selected a force that would see an unusually large brigade of Slayers as my missile screen/breach openers and a staggering

amount of Warriors, more specifically eight units, with a brigade of four pushing siege towers and the other four with siege ladders. I also took a couple of units of Rangers with mantlets to protect my cannon from the inevitable charge of cavalry, you know what I mean?



My plan of attack was as follows: I would send my Slayers forward, ahead of the rest of my force to act as a missile screen and to destroy any earthworks in the way, thereby allowing my siege towers through. The Slayers would also try to open a breach through which my forces could pour, most notably the Dwarf Warriors with ladders, as well as giving the Slayers a chance to die honourably, denying their Victory points to my esteemed opponent.

"Well, if that was your plan why aren't the Warriors next to the Slayers?" you say. A good question. The short answer is that I wanted them to be in a position to attack an opening on the right flank (the Empire defenders were spread rather thinly on the walls and there were none on the sidewalls at all). Should the opportunity arise, troops could always cross in front of the slower moving Dwarf Warriors with siege towers and attack the fortress's side walls. The Slayer attack was to be on the left side of the gatehouse and the other side would enjoy the company of my siege towers. The bombardiers were positioned to support the Slayers in case they failed to open a breach, a little insurance in uncertain times. Well, this was the plan...

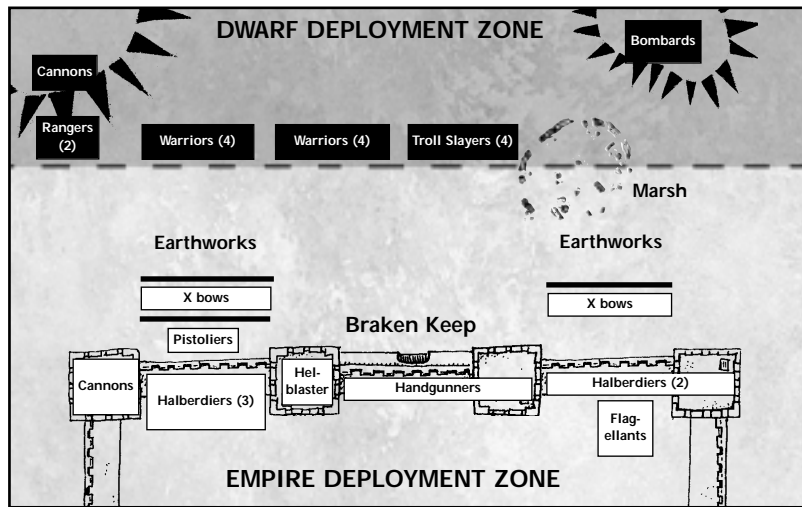
Dwarf Besiegers

• <i>Kurgan Ironhelm</i> – General with <i>Orb of Majesty</i>	185 pts
• <i>Kadrin Grimwrath</i> – Runesmith with <i>Anvil of Doom</i>	100 pts
• <i>Urli Stonefist</i> – Hero	80 pts
• 4 Units of Dwarf Warriors – with Siege Towers	480 pts
• 4 Units of Dwarf Warriors – with Ladders	460 pts
• 4 Units of Troll Slayers – with Log Rams	340 pts
• 2 Units of Rangers – with Mantlets	240 pts
• 1 Cannon	180 pts
• 2 Bombards	180 pts
	2,245 pts

The Siege of Braken Keep

TURN 1 - Dwarfs
 On the left flank Gadrin, the Dwarf Runesmith, ordered the brigade of Trollslayers forward and around the marsh. While on the right flank Urli, the Dwarf Hero, failed to bring the Rangers and Cannon batteries forward to support the centre. The Dwarf General, Kurgan Ironhelm, undeterred by the failure of his sub-commander,

DEPLOYMENT

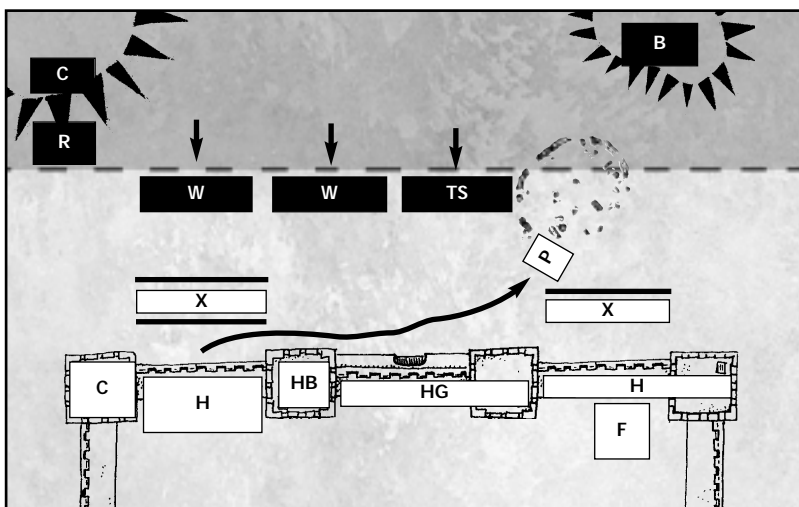


The Empire earthworks

ordered the two brigades and associated siege towers forward.

With a roar, the Dwarf bombards opened fire on the castle walls on the left. One machine found its mark and a wall section weakened under the Halberdiers.

TURN 1 - Empire
 From his lookout on the castle's gate tower, Graf Barndorf ordered the young Pistoliers to sweep forward from behind the earthworks towards the Dwarf left flank. The noblemen positioned themselves with their flanks to difficult terrain as protection.



TURN 1

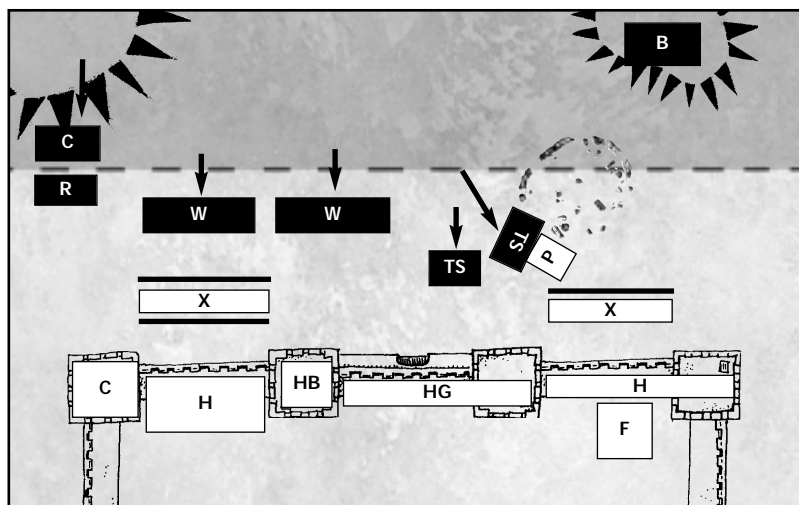
Ernst Methina, the Empire Wizard, rode out to near the Pistoliers and breaking through the anti-magical defences of the Runesmith and cast Weirid Enchantment on the closest unit of

The Siege of Braken Keep

Dwarf warriors pushing a siege tower.

TURN 2

This was a good little trick that Martin played, as it slowed down the advancing siege towers. However, it did cause concern, as the spell forces units to move at half pace, yet siege engine equipped units can only move up to 15cm per turn. The question was whether the half-pace move was half the movement allowance of the unit, or half the allowance of the siege engine. In the end we decided that half pace for units with siege equipment is half the unit's movement allowance. - Dave



Meanwhile the Runesmith ordered the remaining Troll Slayers forward again, while the Hero sent his Rangers and cannon forward. The Dwarf General continued to drive his two Dwarf Warrior brigades towards the castle.

Once again, the bombardrs opened fire on the castle walls but to no effect.

TURN 2 - Empire

Seeking revenge for the loss of their comrades the Pistoliers charged the closest unit of Troll Slayers on Initiative, only to be driven off by the frenzied Dwarfs. The other unit of Troll Slayers came under fire from the cannon batteries on the fortress walls, the Helblaster and two units of Crossbowmen dug in behind the earthworks at the foot of the castle walls. After the bombardment, the Troll Slayers on the right flank were reduced to a single stand whilst the other unit on the left flank lost a stand of Crossbowmen.

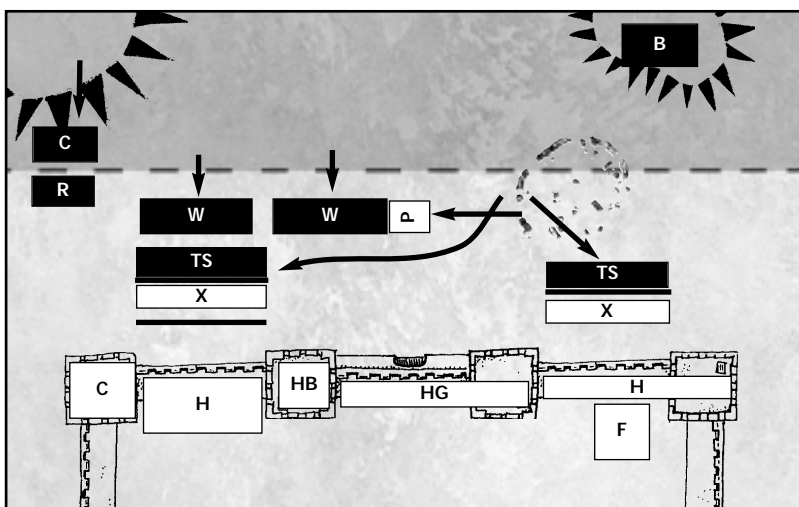
TURN 2 - Dwarfs

With manic glee a unit of Troll Slayers charged the Empire Pistoliers on their Initiative. Ernst, the Empire Wizard, fled from the axes of the enraged Dwarfs and fell back to the protection of a unit of Crossbowmen. The hot lead of the young cavalymen tore through the charging Dwarf Slayers as the Pistoliers stood their ground and fired at them, but the axes of the Troll Slayers proved more lethal. In the ensuing combat the Troll Slayers lost a stand and the Pistoliers two before they could retreat and outrun the crazed Slayers.

*Empire cannon*

The Siege of Braken Keep

TURN 3



engines are ignored in combat, but nowhere does it actually say what this meant. I came to what I think is a very workable solution on the spot, see the earlier 'missing siege bits' article to see what this was. - Dave

Graf Barndorf, seeking to plug the gap in his defences caused by the Dwarf artillery, ordered the unit of Flagellants into the rubble of the breached wall.

TURN 3 - Dwarfs

With the Empire Crossbowmen within Initiative charge range, two units of fanatical Slayers surged forward and threw themselves at the earthworks on either side of the gatehouse. The remaining unit of Troll Slayers was ordered forward by the Runesmith to offer support to the Slayers on the right. The Troll Slayers were cut down by bolts and swords and failed to budge the well-defended Crossbowmen. On the right, the Troll Slayers in the fore lost two stands but managed to take a stand of Crossbowmen with them. On the left, the Troll Slayers were pushed back after losing a stand.

The Hero ordered the Rangers forward again but the cannon, obviously bogged down in the marshy ground, failed to move once more. In the Dwarf centre, under the watchful eye of Kurgan, the Dwarf General, the brigades of Dwarf Warriors and their siege towers continued to roll forward.

Under the unrelenting fire of the Dwarf bombards, two wall sections were reduced to rubble.

TURN 3 - Empire

In an act of unmatched courage, what remained of the Pistoliers charged the closest unit of Dwarf Warriors pushing a siege tower. After forcing the Dwarf Warriors to retreat, the Pistoliers threw grappling hooks onto the siege tower and pulled it to the ground destroying it. Flushed with victory the horsemen re-deployed themselves in front of the remaining siege towers.

It was this action that caused me to think up a solution for the fact that siege

Ernst the Wizard, moved to the flank of the Dwarf Warrior brigade on the right flank and bringing forth his *Wand of Power* attempted to incinerate the stunties with a *Fireball*. With a fizzle the spell was dispelled by the Dwarf Runesmith.

On the right flank the Empire cannon, Crossbows and Helblaster fired upon the remaining Slayers to their front. The remaining single stand of Troll Slayers was destroyed and the other unit lost a stand.

TURN 4 - Dwarfs

Once more into the breach the remaining Slayers charged into the Crossbowmen to the left and right. On the right flank the Slayers were pushed back again while on the left, in a bloody assault, the Dwarf fanatics were destroyed.

Having freed themselves from the mud, the Dwarf cannon finally surged forward and brought themselves into range of the enemy. This particularly surprised the Pistoliers in front of the Dwarf battleline who, after



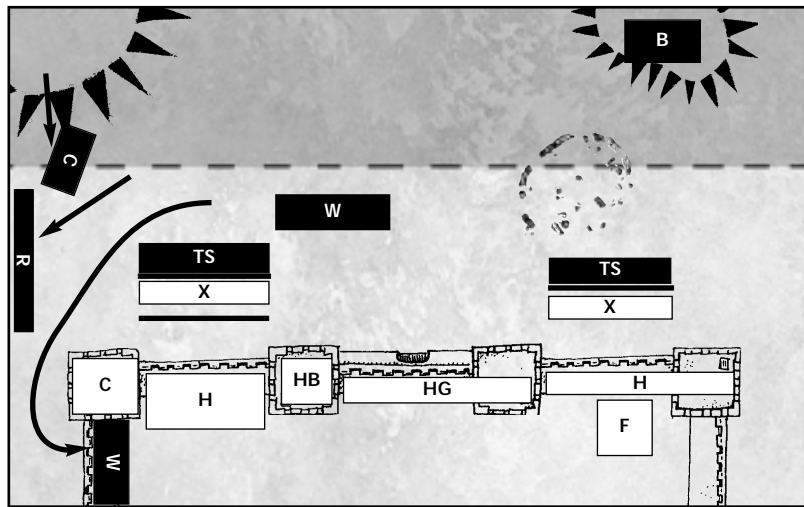
Troll Slayers charge...

The Siege of Braken Keep

TURN 4

round after round, of cannon fire scattered to the winds. In support of the cannon, the Dwarf Rangers moved into position on a hill overlooking the castle walls to the right.

Encouraged by the success of Urli, the Dwarf General ordered the Dwarf Warrior brigade around to the right side of the castle and one unit managed to gain the castle wall. Kurgan then, however, failed to retarget the bombard.



From the wall and from behind their earthworks, Handgunners and Crossbowmen poured fire into the remaining Slayers, destroying them to last Dwarf.

TURN 4 – Empire

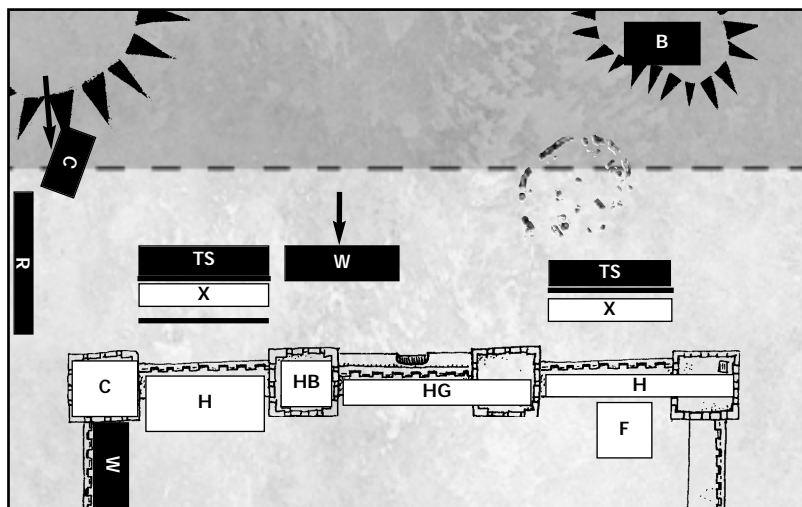
Graf Barndorf gazed nervously at the approaching Dwarf siege towers and tried to order a unit of Crossbowmen to retreat to the second line of earthworks. The Crossbowmen, flushed with success at holding their position against the repeated assaults of the Troll Slayers, decided to hold their ground.

The Empire Wizard moved to the corner of the left tower where the Empire cannon were stationed and sent a ball of fire through the massed Dwarf Warrior formations along the right wall of the castle. As Dwarfs were cooked inside their armour the Empire cannons fired upon the Dwarfs which had captured the wall previously, driving them into the castle courtyard.

TURN 5 – Dwarfs

Despite taking heavy loses from the Empire cannon and Wizard, the Dwarf Warriors on the right flank, with Kurgan urging them forward, set their ladders against the castle wall and climbed to take the undefended wall section. Slowly but surely the siege towers crawled yet closer to the castle. The Dwarf Hero Urli ordered the bombard to be re-targeted but they failed to find their mark. The Dwarf cannons opened fire on the Crossbowmen to the right, destroying a stand and driving them from the protection of the earthworks.

This situation didn't require a new rule, but merely the application of an existing one. The Dwarf Warriors were on the fortress wall, however the firing units were in the tower – which is obviously higher ground. Therefore when the cannons and Wizard fired (or in the case of the Wizard zapped!) at the Dwarfs they counted as being in the open. – Dave



TURN 5

The Siege of Braken Keep



Dwarfs assault the walls

This is the main function of earthworks, as siege engine 'speed bumps'. Think of them as the Warmaster equivalent to razorwire and mines, they slow an attack down but don't necessarily stop it. - Dave

The General ordered the Dwarf Warriors and Rangers forward and they began to make a path through the defences. They ignored the battered Crossbowmen unit nearby and their axes and picks made short work of the earthwork defences.

I haven't completely decided on the mechanism for removing earthworks yet. As they stand at the moment they can be very hard to remove. Since I intend to add moats at a later date it might be an idea to have earthworks removed on a 5+ with all the unit's base attacks, and moats on a 6+ with all the unit's base attacks. I basically need as much feedback as possible on this one as it's one of the most critical areas that needs balance testing. - Dave

The Dwarf artillery continued their bombardment and shattered the Empire cannon battery in the tower and the bombards managed to damage a wall section.

TURN 5 - Empire

With the invading Dwarfs on the captured wall now well within missile range the Empire General signalled his troops to hold and rain down hell upon the Dwarf army.

A mighty ball of flame erupted from the Wizard's hands and smashed through the Dwarf Warriors that were scrambling up the undefended wall. Cannons and Handgunners lent support to the magical assault and as the smoke cleared all that could be seen of the Dwarfs on the wall were charred remains.

TURN 6 - Dwarfs

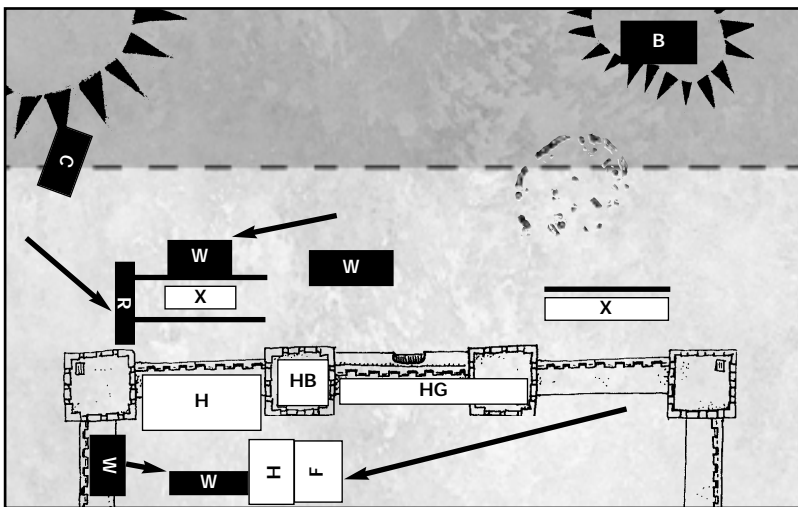
Regaining their courage, the Dwarf Warriors previously driven from the castle walls into the courtyard advanced further into the castle. The other Dwarfs on the right, stalwart to the last, again mounted the unmanned walls and halted amongst the remains of their comrades. The siege towers continued their advance but were forced to halt before the earthworks.

TURN 6 - Empire

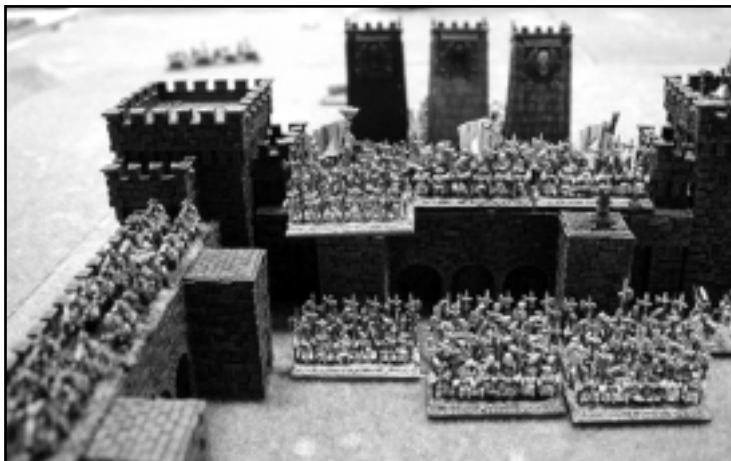
Seeing the danger posed by the Dwarfs in the courtyard the units of Halberdiers and Flagellants from the left wall assaulted them. The Halberdiers smashed into the flank of the Dwarf unit, with the Flagellants in support and after heavy fighting drove them off of the table. The Halberdiers then fell back to face the Dwarfs on the wall.

When attacking units on a fortification from the inside count the defenders as Defended rather than Fortified, as there are lots of stairs to climb and no crenellations. - Dave

The remaining Halberdiers redeployed to face the oncoming Dwarfs and the Handgunners turned to fire on the Dwarfs attacking the earthworks in order to drive them back.



TURN 6

The Siege of Braken Keep*The final assault*

As Graf Barndorf lifted his handgun and took aim at a retreating Dwarf Ranger out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of the sun reflecting off metal to the east. Afraid of further Dwarf reinforcements he grabbed his ornate spyglass and lifted it to his eye. Line upon line of Knights of the Blazing Sun rode towards the besieged castle. Behind them marched thousands of Halberdiers, Crossbowmen and other infantry. The relief force had arrived, the battle was over.

EMPIRE – AFTERMATH (or 'A Comedy of Errors')

Well, so much for my plan, how so many things went wrong in so short a time I'll never know! All was going according to plan until the second turn when Martin in his wisdom (who knew?) moved a single piffling unit of Pistoliers on to my left flank and guess what... My crazed Slayers went charging in on Initiative (for 'Initiative' read lunacy). Well, to cut a painfully long combat short I reckon that those Pistoliers were wearing Dwarf made armour, they survived much longer than was natural against the ferocity of my Slayers. This little action messed up my left flank beyond all recognition and left the pointy end of my 'Spear' seriously blunted. Then to my horror the remaining stand of Super Pistoliers (whom I miraculously failed to destroy yet again) flank charged my Warriors with siege towers and fluffed up that prong of my attack as well! In short, they were becoming a thorn, no, a log ram in my side. Thankfully, my repositioned

cannon (who by the way weren't charged by cavalry at all, what a waste of two units of Rangers) blasted them out of my way at last, though they succeeded in delaying me for a crucial turn. My next mistake (or at least the next one that I noticed) was my failure to destroy his cannons in the tower. I had, as planned, moved round with four units of Warriors to climb the undefended walls of his left flank, only to be blasted straight off them and even when I attempted to correct my earlier error of

judgement by firing my cannons at his, I couldn't seem to hurt them! Only in turn seven did I finally manage to destroy his cannons and succeed in getting a unit of Warriors into an excellent attacking position. By then, of course, it was too late to be of any use and the game ended. Defeat! Oh the humiliation.

The Rules

Overall I thought that the new rules worked well and provided for a balanced game. There were a few grey areas that needed clearing up such as: Can a unit with ladders be ordered more than once? Unfortunately, I can't blame my ignominious defeat on any holes in the rules. The new siege equipment lists were balanced and prevent somewhat less than scrupulous players from lining up four or five bombardiers and just blasting away and the addition of points costs for siege ladders is great because it allows you to spend more of your siege equipment points allowance.

*The Generals – Phil (left) and Martin (right)*