NEWCASTLE QUITE DECENT ANCIENT SKIRMISH RULES

The full rules for this game go on for twenty four pages, and include details of many weapons, types of armour, characteristics of fighters, and include rules for sneaking, cowering, dodging, morale, fire, chariots, cavalry, fumbles, critical hits, initiative, and much more. This document contains just the basic core rules, and enough to have a pleasant enough bash with a one or two dozen figures per side. Follow the instructions below and you should fairly quickly get the hang of it.

Find yourself some figures to represent fighters. These should be based individually. One force will have six spearmen, and the other will have three axemen and three archers. Here are their statistics:

Spearmen

	W	D	T	S	M	R	Notes
Sword	X12	4	13	+3	5		-1W versus non-X
Spear	10	4			5	1	-2W per neighbour, +2 closed. Long.

Archers

	W	D	T	S	M	R	Notes
Dagger	12	3	12	-	6		Short weapon.
Bow	12	4			6/18/30		Two of: move, load, shoot.

Axemen

	W	D	T	S	M	R	Notes
Axe	9	5	15		5		

You see that the archers are also armed with daggers and the spearmen carry swords. Before we pit these two forces against each other, we will fight one axeman against another. Place two axeman figures a foot apart. We shall call them Eric and Sven. Eric will have his turn first. He can move the number of inches listed under "M" for Move, which is 5. Move him five inches straight towards his foe. Since he is not in contact with his enemy, he cannot fight a melee with him, and he has no missile weapon, so this is all he can do with his turn. Now it is Sven's turn. Again, he moves five inches towards his foe, and now the two are two inches apart. In Eric's turn, contact is made, and so melee can be fought. Roll 1d20 for both fighters to see how well they do in the fight. Each has a "W" for Weapon Skill of 9. There is one factor to take into account, however, which is that each carries a shield. We know this because under "S" for Shield we see the statistic "+2". This is the number to be added to the W of an opponent. So, each must try to roll higher than 9+2=11. A skilful fighter has a low W score. There are four possibilities of what will happen;

1. Neither roll is 11 or higher, in which case neither has harmed the other.
2. One roll is 11 or greater (a "hit"), while the other is 10 or lower (a "miss"). The man who rolled a hit causes damage to his enemy.
3. Both rolls are 11 or greater, but the rolls are different numbers. In this case, the *lower* roll is a hit, and the other is a miss.
4. Both rolls are 11 or greater and both are the same number. Both fighters have hit the other.

In other words, each fighter must try to roll equal to or above his modified W, but lower than the roll of his foe. This system is very efficient. With one die roll it determines both the attack and the defence of a fighter, and it takes into account the skill not only of one fighter, but also the relative skill of his opponent.

Each turn a man is in contact with an enemy fighter, he can roll to determine the outcome of melee. Keep taking turns for Eric and Sven until one hits the other. Then roll 5d20 to determine the damage caused by the successful hit. You know to do this because under "D" for Damage, you see the number 5, which is the number of twenty-sided dice you roll to determine damage. Look at the results and see how many dice show equal to or greater than the "T" for Toughness of the opponent. In our example case, this is 15. Here are the possibilities:

1. No dice equal or exceed the T of the opponent. The man is unharmed.
2. One die only equals or exceeds the needed score. The man is driven back half a move (half his M). The victor may choose to follow up.
3. Two dice are up to the mark. The opponent is wounded and marked as wounded in some way. From now on he moves two inches more slowly, uses one die less when rolling for damage, and all his skills such as W are at +4.
4. Three dice are hits. The opponent suffers an incapacitating injury. Perhaps he is knocked unconscious. Perhaps he falls over and can do little more than try to staunch the flow of blood from a gash in his thigh. He is out of the fight.
5. Four or more dice are hits. The opponent is killed instantly.

This is the basis of the combat system. Simple enough, I hope you'll agree. Now let us fight the two forces against each other. Set the up the spearmen in a line, and opposite them, two feet away, set up the axemen and archers in a ragged mob. Between them, put down something to represent a bit of hedge, and something to represent a patch of difficult ground. The spearmen will be in formation: a formed up group that fights as a unit. When formed up like this, they all move one inch slower than usual.

Let the mob have the first turn. We shall assume that the archers all start the game with their bows loaded. They may move and then shoot, or shoot and then move. They may not move a bit, then shoot, and then finish their movement allowance. They may not see targets through the hedge, and so in order to get a shot at the spearmen, must get into a position where they can see them. Keep playing turns as you did before until an archer can get a shot off. Keep the spearmen together in a line. If anyone moves over the difficult ground, subtract two inches from their movement rate. Make the men walk around the hedge.

Measure the range for the shots. Under "R" for Range (and Reach) you will see 6/18/30. These are short, medium and long ranges. Most likely, the archers will get a first shot when they are between 18 and 30 inches away. This is long range, and so you add +5 to their W. The spearmen are shielded too, which adds +3. Another factor is that the spearmen are in a group. For a group between three and seven strong, the factor is –2. The archers' skill is W12, so the archers need to roll 12+5+3-2=18. If they hit, determine randomly which spearman is hit, and determine damage to him just as with axe blows.

After shooting, the archers have to think about when to load. If they moved and then shot, then during their opponent's turn they are not loaded, and will start their next turn unloaded. They might like to stay where they are and load and shoot each turn, or perhaps move forwards and load, closing the range. Each turn they may do two out of these

three things: move, load, shoot. For them, 6-18" is medium range, in which they shoot at +2, and in the range bracket 0-6" they are at short range, and suffer no penalty for range.

Try to get your axemen to attack in melee. Remember, you are not trying to play this game well in order to win - you are just trying out the rules. Note that the spears have a reach (listed under "R") of one inch. Because they have a reach, it is possible for a spearman to attack an axeman from a range of up to an inch away, while the axeman cannot strike back. In the notes, they are described as "long". When a fighter is up against a foe who has a weapon that out-reaches him, such as an axeman against a spearman, to get a blow in, the axeman will have to "close" with his spear-using opponent. The same goes for users of "short" weapons (such as daggers) against longer weapons such as axes. For the sake of example, we will assume that two axemen (X and Y) charge the centre of the spear formation (ABCDEF).

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A B C D E F

X Y

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X fights C, but also will have to defend himself against C's neighbour B. Y fights D and will have to defend also against E. D will not attack X, because he is busy fighting Y.

X attacks, and tries as usual to roll above his weapon skill (W9) modified by the shields of his foes (S+3=12). C fights too, but he has the advantage of fighting in a coordinated group. For each neighbour in the line (he has two neighbours, A and F have one each) he would normally get –1W, but because he is using spears, particularly suited to this sort of combat, he gets minus 2W per neighbour =-4W. The axemen are shielded, though, so the final sum is W10 –4 for supporting neighbours in group +S2 for shields = 8. If the spearman hits the axeman, the axeman takes damage. If the axeman wins the fight, the spearman takes no damage, because the axeman has not closed. Furthermore, B also fights X. In this contest, the axeman gets a "defence roll". A fighter only gets one "attack roll" (chance to hurt an opponent in a turn) per turn. If two fighters attack one fighter, the out-numbered fighter makes a "defence roll" against the second foe. If he wins, he has defended himself, but inflicts no damage.

Let us imagine that with luck and fury, X beats both C and B. He has then closed with C. A good way to mark this would be to stand the figures with overlapping bases. Though C has suffered no damage so far, he is now in trouble. His notes say that he is +2W versus foes who have closed with him. We shall assume that D is still busy fighting off Y. This turn, X rolls as usual to hit, but C now loses the special –2W per neighbour, and is down to the usual –1W per neighbour in a formation. He is also +2W because he is trying to use a long weapon against a man who is right next to him. X is still shielded, so the roll to hit is now W10 –1 –1 (two neighbours) +2 (foe closed) +2 (enemy's shield) = 12.

One thing this example shows, is that groups are difficult to beat, but if the spearmen had suffered a few hits from archery, and if the axemen all charged one spearman on the end of the line, things would be rather different. A spearman on the end of the line charged by three axemen would have to win all three contests in order to keep all three at a distance, and would only be supported by one neighbour. One option a spearman has is to drop his spear and change to using a sword. When doing this, he gets no attack roll that turn, and only

defence rolls with his new weapon. Swords are extra-wieldy weapons, and get the X-factor. The spearmen's sword skill is "X12". This means that they get –1W (which is good) when fighting against foes whose weapons do not also have the X-factor.

Also, shields do not apply to all opponents. A shield covers 180 degrees around a man. Therefore, if three men attack one man, then one man might be able to get round the back in his turn, and would not count the shield of the single man in the fight. Also, if two archers shot at one man from two directions, the defender could turn to face one archer, but not both, and one archer would get an easier shot.

If a man in a formed up group gets a "move back half a move" result from damage (one hit), then he only goes back one inch. A second similar result will drive him away from the group. If casualties open up a two-man wide gap in a formed group, then it is now two smaller groups. It takes a minimum of three men in a line to form a group, so melee can break a group up.

So, you have now tried moving, shooting, and fighting, both individually and in groups. There are just two more rules I'll tell you about and you can try a small simple game out using the rules so far. Get three spearmen in a line, and place one archer five inches in front of these. It is the turn of the spearmen, and they are going to charge the archer to see him off. The spearmen move at M5 -1 for being a formed group = 4" per turn. The archer is therefore just in range of them, because you must remember that they have a reach of 1" with their long spears. Move the spearmen forwards to attack the archer. The archer has a few options.

1. He could drop his bow and draw his dagger. If he chooses this, he will fight the melee as usual, but against three spearmen he would have little chance.

2. He could shoot at the spearmen as they charged. This is called "opportunity shooting" because it occurs in the turn when the spearmen move. The archer would need to have a loaded bow for this. If he shoots, he does so at +2W because this is a panicky snap-shot. He cannot see off all three spearmen with one shot. If he shoots, then when he is contacted in melee he will have to change to his dagger while in melee, and will lose an attack roll (not that he'd get an attack roll anyway, because a dagger is short, and so he would have to close with the spearmen), plus he hampers his ability to evade (see 3, below).

3. He could try to run away. This is probably his wisest choice. This is called "evading". If he tried to opportunity shoot this turn, he halves his movement rate. The spearmen are moving as one, and so make just one roll for all three men, and move one inch slower because they are in a group. Compare the M of the archer with the spearmen (6 vs. 4) and add the difference to the faster side's roll and subtract it from the slower sides. In this example, the archer (assuming he didn't shoot) rolls 1d20+2 and the spearmen roll 1d20-2. Higher roll wins. In the case of a draw, evader gets away. Move the spearmen to where the archer was. If the archer got away, he is moved one full move away. If not, he is in melee and in a lot of trouble.

You now know enough to play a game. Fight with the above forces again, but this time choosing sensible tactics. There are many refinements to the above in the full rules, such as the risk of hitting friendly forces with missiles (for the moment, just rule that you can't shoot at a man involved in melee, nor through anyone), but this is enough to get you started. Fight it out until one side has twice as many men who are fine (not wounded) than the other, at which point the loser flees.

Here is a summary of everything you have learned so far:

W = Weapon skill. Roll equal or above this to succeed.

D = number of Damage dice rolled versus **T** of opponent (Toughness). One hit = driven back half a move (1" if in group); two hits = wounded (+4W, -1D, -2M); three hits = incapacitated; four or more = dead.

S = effect of Shield on opponent's W. Shield covers 180 degrees.

M = number of inches Movement per turn. –2" over bad terrain, -1" moving as a group.

R = Reach of melee weapons and Range of missile short/medium(+2W)/long (+5W).

Turn sequence:

1. Movement and shooting. May move then shoot or shoot them move. Archers may do two of: move load and shoot per turn. Group target 3-7men –2W.
2. Opportunity shooting (–2W, lose attack roll that turn, half move rate if evade).
3. Evading (1d20 +/- difference in modified M, draw = evader wins, evaders evade full move).
4. Melee. One attack roll per fighter. Must close versus users of longer weapons. Only defence rolls while closing. In melee, roll equal or above modified W to hit. Win fight if roll above needed score, and if opponent does this too, below opponent's roll. Both roll above and the same number = both hit. -1W per neighbour of formed up group (minimum three to form group), -2W when out-reaching spears. X-factor = -1W versus non-X weapon.