



COMITATUS

Warfare in the Dark Ages AD 250 - 1100

Scenario 6
Clontarf
AD 1014

Historical Background

By 1014 the redoubtable warlord Brian Boru claimed the position of 'High King of all Ireland'. He seems to have been planning to bring his realm into line with a more centralised European model. Unfortunately for him he'd only just got started on this when the Leinstermen revolted against his rule in league with the Hiberno-Norse of Dublin. The latter drew in opportunistic 'allies' in the form of Sigurd of Orkney and Brodir of Man, who turned up 'uninvited' with large retinues of Vikings and a high kingship agenda of their own.

Brian for his part called up his Irish followers, mostly from the west and south-west, but also a large force of Hiberno-Norse from the cities of Limerick and Waterford. He had coerced support from the King of Meath, a subjugated rival for the high kingship. The latter held his force in position during the battle until its outcome was decided, and only joined in the final slaughter.

The actual battle was fought on the flat plain north of the Liffey, probably near what is now Dublin airport. The rebels and their allies sallied out of Dublin, partly in their ships, and took up position with their backs to the sea while Brian arrayed his forces opposite them. Both sides were near equal in number. With the two lines taunting each other, several champions emerged to fight individual battles.

Although it's apparent that the battle was fought largely between two shieldwalls in an open field there were also some wooded areas that played an important part.

Brodir apparently fled 'into a wood' after he and his guard had been defeated early in the battle, and then - whilst trying to make his escape, he apparently stumbled upon Brian. The sagas tell us that Brian was 'praying in his tent' (Brian was quite old by this point, near 70), his guards were surprised and overwhelmed, then Brodir cut down the High King in his moment of victory.

The battle was a long bloody slogging match which raged on 'most of the day'. Eventually, the High King's army began to get the upper hand.



The rebels were joined by a large number of opportunistic Viking warriors, like this man, looking to take advantage of the conflict.

Finally the rebels and Orkney Vikings broke - the loss of the sacred raven standard may have had a bearing on this. With nowhere to run and their ships moored off shore, the Vikings were cut down almost to a man.

The King of Meath joined in at this point, preventing the rebel fugitives from escaping over the Liffey into Dublin city. He was also one of the only royal participants to survive the fray. Brian and all his relatives were dead, as was the king of Leinster and Sigurd of Orkney. Brodir survived for a few days more on the run, but was soon captured and executed in a particularly nasty way.

The rebels and their allies were crushed but the possibility of Ireland's unification under one feudal monarch suffered a blow from which it was never to recover.

High King's Order of Battle

1 General: **High King Brian Boru** 3 CPs

3 Subordinates:

Murchad (Brian's oldest son) 4 CPs

Turlough (Murchad's son) 3 CPs

Ulf the Quarrelsome 3 CPs

1 Ally Contingent Commander:

Mael Shechnal of Meath, 3 CPs

High King's Comitatus: 1 Shieldwall Infantry, Armoured, Exceptional Morale

Sons of Death 1 Javelinmen, Exceptional Morale (Murchad's Comitatus)

Royal Hostages 1 Javelinmen, Exceptional Morale (Ulf's Comitatus)

Turlough's Comitatus 1 Shieldwall Infantry, High Morale

Mael Shechnal's Comitatus 1 Javelinmen, High Morale

Munstermen: 3 Javelinmen, Average Morale

Connachtmen: 3 Javelinmen, Average Morale

Mercenary Vikings: 2 Shock Infantry, Armoured, High Morale

Hiberno-Norse: 2 Shieldwall Infantry, Average Morale

Dal Caissans: 3 Javelinmen, Average Morale

Meathmen: 2 Javelinmen, Average Morale

Notes

Brian directly commands his own comitatus but no other troops

Mael Shechnal commands his own comitatus and the Meathmen.

The other non-comitatus troops may be divided between Murchad, Turlough and Ulf as they wish.

Murchad has higher command points as he was the defacto general since Brian took no active part.

All units (in both armies) are B Grade

Rebel Order of Battle

1 General: **Mael Morda of Leinster**, 3 CPs

3 Allied Contingent Commanders

Sigurd of Orkney, 4 CPs

Brodir of Man, 3 CPs

Olaf Sigtryggson of Dublin, 3 CPs

Mael Morda's Comitatus: 2 Shieldwall Infantry, High Morale

Sigurd's Comitatus: 2 Shock Infantry, Armoured, Exceptional Morale

Brodir's Comitatus: 2 Shock Infantry, Armoured, Exceptional Morale

Olaf's Comitatus: 2 Shieldwall Infantry, Armoured, Average Morale

Leinstermen: 6 Javelinmen, Average Morale

Ulstermen: 2 Javelinmen, Average Morale



The Irish were mostly unarmoured with weapons and equipment adapted for fighting in bogs and forests.

Notes

Sigurd, Brodir and Olaf command only their own Comitatus.

The Leinstermen and Ulstermen are under Mael Morda's command.

Sigurd is given higher command points to represent the raven banner he had with him.

Olaf's troops have relatively low morale as most of the Dubliners remained in the town and did not take part

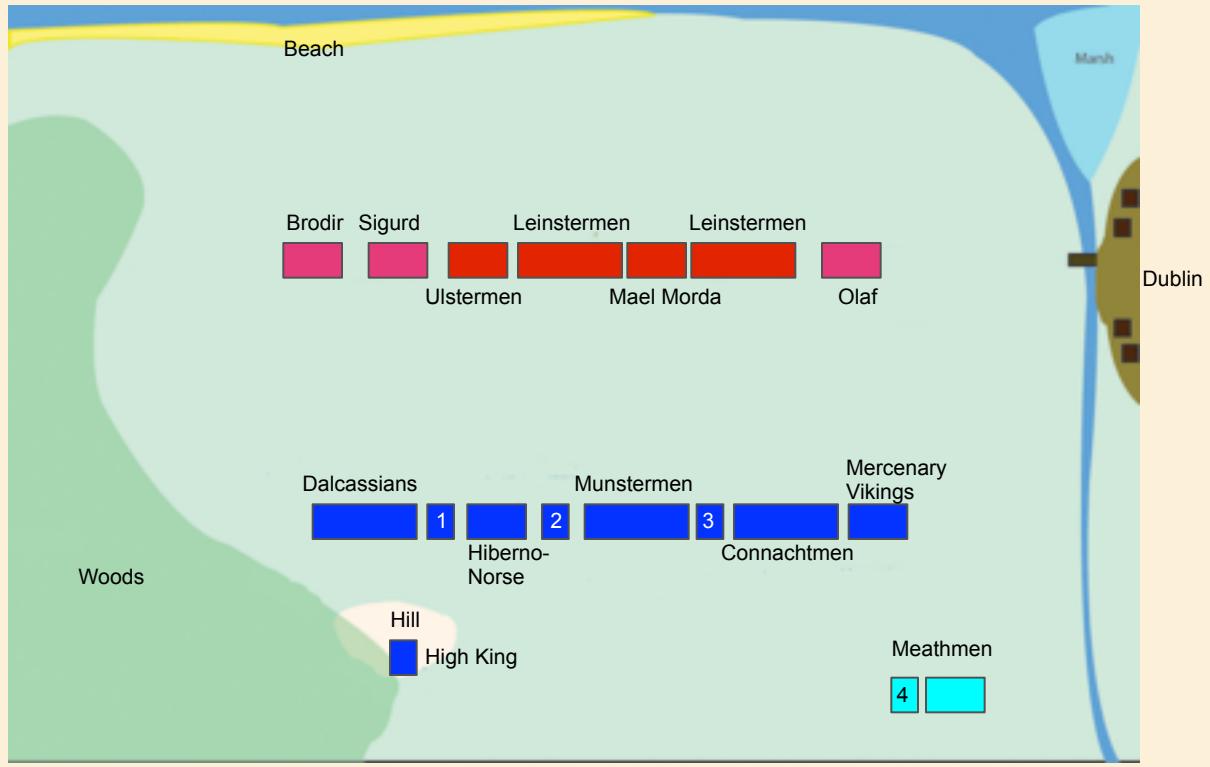
Alternative Scale

The above order of battle is based on a rough scale of 1 stand = 500 men

This gives a relatively small battle. If players wish to increase the scale to 1 stand = 250-300 men then keep the Comitatus units the same size, increasing the other units proportionally. Brian gets no other troops, Sigurd and Brodir get another unit of the same troop type as their Comitatus but one morale grade lower. Olaf doubles the size of his Comitatus

Terrain

The battlefield should be set up as per the map below. The terrain features that matter are the woods and the small hill where Brian Boru is positioned. The sea and river could be represented by the table edges.



1. Royal Hostages 2. Sons of death 3. Turlough's Comitatus 4. Mael Shechnal's Comitatus

Deployment & Special Rules

Units are deployed as per the map. Dice for initiative from the first turn.

Brian and his Comitatus may not move from their original position and may not declare any charges. If charged they will stand to receive. This represents Brian spending the battle in prayer.

The Meath contingent may not move nor declare any charges until an enemy unit retires or routs without any of the High King's units doing the same. This represents their hanging back until they saw who was winning.