Historical Background

Crécy was a catastrophic defeat for the French `at the hands of a much smaller English army in the early years of the Hundred Years War.

Never having experienced the power of massed longbowmen, the mounted French knights, who vastly outnumbered the English knights facing them, charged frontally. They were mown down by archery so that by the time any of them reached the dismounted English knights, they had no chance of success.

Furthermore, the English archers had dug pits in front of their positions, and the French attacks were piecemeal, uncoordinated and uphill.

Wargaming Crécy

Wargaming Crécy offers some interesting challenges.

Eager for glory and confident in their prowess, the French nobles insisted on attacking immediately from their line of march. Riding through the Genoese crossbowmen deployed in front, the French knights charged the English again and again, each time to be decimated by archery before they closed with the enemy knights. The result was a complete disaster for the French

How can we replicate this on the wargames table? Any sane player with 21st century hindsight would not do what the French did that fateful afternoon in 1346.

Instead of a conventional game between the French on one side and the English on the other, this scenario involves two or more French players competing with each other to see who is the bravest and most chivalrous. The English in their static positions can be umpire controlled while the players take on the roles of the great French, German and Bohemian nobles fighting for the French king and vying with each other for prestige. To win the game players need to accumulate more prestige points than their rivals, regardless of the overall outcome of the battle.

Prestige can only come from chivalrous combat with worthy opponents (ie: men of equal or higher rank). Therefore, the English archers are irrelevant even though they probably pose the greatest threat. There is no honour to be gained by defeating mere archers, blows need to be struck against knights, earls and princes — even better if you can get one of them to yield, providing you with a lucrative ransom when his family pays up to secure his release.

The game scenario that follows was initially designed for Tree of Battles, then adapted for Never Mind the Billhooks — the latter being described in Wargames Illustrated #395.

The Game

You need at least three players — two French plus one umpire.

The two French players represent Charles Comte d'Alençon, and Johan von Luxembourg, King of Bohemia. Each should ideally have around 24 mounted knights. The French king and the infantry militia don't come into play but the French will have as many Genoese crossbowmen as there are knights. The Genoese, however, will be umpire controlled

The English will also be umpire controlled. They should have as many archers, ¼ as many spearmen and ¼ as many men at arms as the French knights facing them. So if there are 48 French knights the English should have 48 archers, 12 men at arms and 12 spearmen. The English also had a number of cannon deployed in the centre between Northampton's and the Prince's battles. These could be represented by one artillery model.
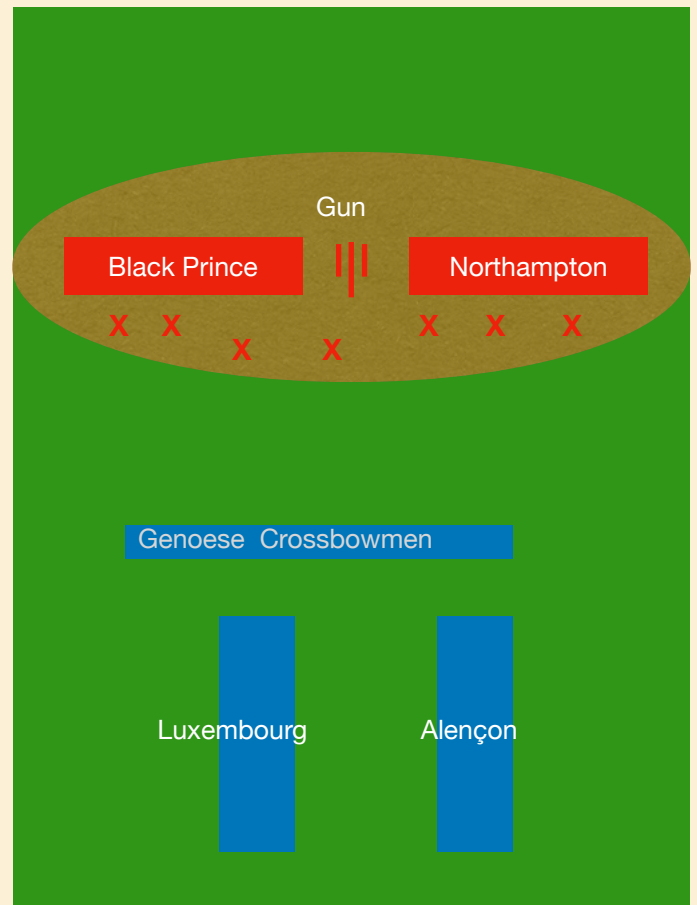
The English should be divided more or less equally into two battles under the Black Prince and the Earl of Northampton. All the English should be dismounted. King Edward III's battle, which was in reserve, can be left out.

Deployment

The game is fought lengthwise on the table.

The English are deployed on along a ridge with the Black Prince on the right and Northampton on the left, the artillery in-between the two battles. Hidden pits have been dug in front of the English position. These can be indicated by scattered lichen which will look decorative to the players. They do not realise that they are pits until they ride over them.

A skirmish line of Genoese crossbowmen are deployed in front of the French knights. Behind them, in column of march are the knights of Alençon on the right and Luxembourg on the left.

Umpire Notes

The umpire-controlled English may not move except:

To face an attack or block one.

To move archers into range of a target.

To move back into original position

Gun may never move except to pivot (counts 1 action)

The umpire-controlled Genoese will move into range then halt to shoot at the English.

Victory Conditions

The French Player who scores the most Victory points wins the game even if the French are defeated.

Each charge led against men at arms	+3
Bonus if personally leading it	+2
Each round of combat fought against men at arms.	+1
Bonus if personally in combat	+1
Enemy men at arms forced to retire	+5
Enemy men at arms routed	+10
Enemy Prince captured for ransom	+10
Enemy Duke/Earl captured for ransom	+5
Yourself captured for ransom	-3
Killed unless in combat with men at arms	-5
Each of your units routed	-7