

MORTEM ET GLORIAM

Welcome to *Mortem et Gloriam*. The game is growing apace, with several hundred players worldwide, and is a regular presence at 'Cons here and overseas.

PLAYING AT BEING A GENERAL

Mortem et Gloriam ("Death and Glory", *MeG* for short) is a wargame where you take charge of an army from the ancient world - loosely defined as the period before gunpowder and firearms (c. 2000 BC – 1500 AD). You command an army of 50-100 bases of painted figures, moving them on a table with model terrain that represents a battlefield.

You are the *Army Commander* and, with your key *Sub-Generals* or *Allies*, control your army and attempt to defeat the enemy. So you could be Alexander with his leading subordinates Parmenio and Ptolemy, or Hannibal with Hasdrubal and Hanno, or Vercingetorix the Gaul with the leaders of the main Gallic tribes, or Ghengis and Kublai... the choice is yours.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

The figures represent the different types of troops that make up your chosen army - be they Macedonian Pikemen, Gallic Warriors or Teutonic Knights. The armies of the ancient era varied enormously from Roman armies of solid legions and their auxiliaries, to steppe armies of nomadic horsemen. For players, one of the most attractive aspects of **Mortem et Gloriam** is that each army has a distinctive feel and character. Through its flexible system of troop attributes, different historical troop types can be properly represented, rather than shoe-horned into a few arbitrary types or grades.

This variety is one of the great things about ancient wargaming. *MeG* now has 550 different lists published, from the dawn of history to the dawn of the Renaissance, and covering Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. **And the army lists are all available as free downloads.**

Mortem et Gloriam has the mechanisms to make Huns feel like Huns, and Romans feel like Romans. So when you play as Attila, the tactics that worked historically for him will work on your table-top battlefield.



AN ARMY IN MORTEM ET GLORIAM

An army is made up of sets of bases representing units or groups of units operating together. These are called **Unit Groups (UGs for short)**. Historical armies were commanded this way - rarely did units operate alone, they tended to be grouped together with others to make controlling them easier. So several cohorts would work together, or two tribes of war-band would be merged and so on. A **Mortem et Gloriam** army typically has 10-20 of these **Unit Groups**.

There are actually two types of **Unit Group**:

- 1) **Tactical Groups (TuGs)** of main battle troops,) and
- 2) **Skirmish Groups (SuGs)** of light troops.

A typical infantry **TuG** is 8 bases and a cavalry **TuG** is 6 bases - although again there is a variety of sizes to cover all types of unit and army organisation. For instance an Elephant **TuG** might be 2, 3 or 4 models.

You can use any basing convention as long as both sides consistently use the same base widths. The rules standard for 15mm figures is for 40mm base widths, so your armies based for WRG, DBx, AdIG, FoG, etc. are totally compatible with MeG.

ROUTING THE ENEMY

We measure the attrition, damage and reduced fighting ability of each **Tactical Group (TuG)** by reducing its number of bases. The basics of the rules are very simple. Inflict losses of more than half the bases in a **TuG** and it breaks and runs away; kill one-third of a **Skirmish Group (SuG)** and it disperses and runs away. So a typical foot **TuG** of 8 bases will break and run away when it loses more than four bases. Its fighting capability will have been dropping with each previous base loss. **SuGs** are typically 6 or 9 bases strong and so break after their second or third loss.

Destroying an army is equally simple. Break half an army's **Tactical Groups (TuGs)** and the army will run away. You cannot win a battle in **Mortem et Gloriam** by just killing enemy **Skirmish Groups (SuGs)**. You have to destroy the opposition's battle troops.

CAUSING DAMAGE

Damage is caused by rolling the special **Mortem et Gloriam Death Dice**. These are a set of dice in five colours: BLACK, WHITE, GREEN, YELLOW and RED. There are **three symbols** on the dice: a Skull, a crossed Sword & Arrow, and a fancy **S** (short for "special"). When you roll the **Death Dice**, a Skull symbol kills an enemy base - simple! The crossed Sword & Arrow symbol causes a wound - and two wounds kill a base. And the fancy **S** generates special effects - for example hoplites may *shove*, charging lancers may *shatter*, a hail of missiles may *slow*. The dice are a handy way of simplifying combat resolution, removing the need to consult multiple charts or remember die roll modifiers.

So in the game you will roll these dice for each column or file of bases shooting or fighting in order to damage opposing troops. The greater the advantage your troops have over your opponents, the better the dice you roll. **RED** dice are brutal and have 2 Skulls, 3 crosses and an **S**. **BLACK** dice are much more timid in comparison, and have only one cross, one **S** and four blank faces that do nothing. So, put simply, your job as Army Commander is to get your troops into a position where they have the greatest advantage over their enemy - represented as rolling the largest number of the best dice. How well they exploit that advantage is up to them - represented by how well they roll!

LEADING YOUR TROOPS

You have a wide range of tactical options and choices to make as an Army Commander. These are all managed using **Mortem et Gloriam Command Cards**. The cards mirror the colours of the Death Dice with BLACK, WHITE, GREEN, YELLOW and RED cards. There are 8 BLACK, 12 WHITE, 16 GREEN, 12 YELLOW and 6 RED in each pack. The basic concept is the same as the Death Dice - **RED** cards are the best and BLACK the worst. **RED** cards will allow

sophisticated moves, BLACK cards generally allow nothing at all (the general is distracted/busy/slow to react).

Better generals get more cards, representing their greater ability to read the battle, anticipate the enemy's moves, and get clear orders to their subordinates. So if you choose to be Alexander (who is a **Legendary General**) you will get 5 cards each turn with which to command his troops. If you are playing Darius, a **Mediocre General**, you will only get 2 cards each turn.

The final twist in the movement part of the game is that there are three types of troops: **Drilled**, **Formed** and **Tribal**. Drilled troops find things easy to do - so rarely need better than a GREEN card to do things. Tribal troops find all but the basics more difficult, and will often need YELLOW and RED cards to do sophisticated things, if they can do them at all. There is a rich variety of different moves to choose from in the game - the cards are used to pay for all of these. For example some troops are prone to charge the enemy without orders, but a general can hold them back – at least for a while – by using a card. So having more cards, of better colours, will always be a good thing.

INTER-WOVEN MOVEMENT

The Command Cards are played alternately in **Mortem et Gloriam** - you play a card to prompt an action, then your opponent, and so on. This creates a system of movement that is **inter-woven** rather than the I-move-everything / you-move-everything of recent decades. Instead you will find there is an ebb and flow of actions and counters occurring continuously. Better generals with drilled troops can react more easily to an opponent's actions than poorer generals with tribal troops. You will also find yourself playing your cards in different **phases** of the game to perform tasks during fighting as well as movement. There is simply no such thing as "my go" - both players are involved all the time.

FAST AND FURIOUS

Mortem et Gloriam is designed to be played at a fast pace. The preamble phase of the battle has all the grand tactical options you need, but they are resolved quickly - so you will usually be in action within 20 minutes of moving the first troops.

Full games can be played in 2½ hours - at a recent comp in the UK, there were 29 results from 32 games. The game is designed to be a fast moving and bloody affair, and like most battles, even as the victor you will usually have suffered - hence, "nobody gets out unscathed!"

SUBTLE AND RICH IN SKILL

The command mechanisms allow a great deal of finesse within the game. It's easy to learn the basics, but you will keep coming back as you explore the subtleties of the system. As you play you will increasingly see the wide range of choices you have as an Army Commander, the trade-offs between them, and how vital some decisions are. Your plan of battle, and the role you give to your Sub-Generals at the beginning of the game is as critical as it was in reality. In the heat of battle, there is the constant tension of trying to exert control on the growing chaos, of not being able to do everything you want, and having to prioritise what your generals give their attention to.

You also have considerable flexibility in how you design your army using the **Mortem et Gloriam Army Builder**, and you will need to design it with your tactics and style in mind.

Skirmishers played a key role in the ancient period and you will find they have their own feel and effect in **Mortem et Gloriam** - but they rarely dominate the battle field. As mentioned, you simply cannot break an army by destroying skirmishers alone - you have to break half your opponents **TuGs**.

Armies vary hugely in their **TuG/ SuG** mix: a Roman army might have no **SuGs** at all, a Parthian might have only 4 **TuGs** of fully armoured cataphracts but a dozen **SuGs**. Used well, **Skirmish Groups** can harass and slow an opponent, but they will rarely win a battle on their own - and in **Mortem et Gloriam** they do this through the effect of their shooting rather than just their presence. You have to fight with the main battle troops to win - so using a Parthian army well is a challenge as you have to soften the opponent up well and use your cataphracts very carefully as you cannot afford to lose them!

BEFORE THE BATTLE BEGINS

In history one of the key skills of the best generals was to engineer when and where their armies fought. This was as important as their battlefield skill. In **Mortem et Gloriam**, better generals give you a greater chance of forcing a battle on the terrain you prefer.

Mortem et Gloriam deals with the run-up to the battle with a simple game-within-a-game, called the Pre-Battle System. This represents the five days prior to the battle and determines where the battle is fought. If you are the invaded player you choose a "map" for the type of territory where you would like to fight the battle, and you decide where you want to try to engage the enemy. But the opposing general will try to work you out of this position and into terrain better suited to them. The result of this Pre-Battle System represents a combination of armies making mistakes, having to move to forage, or failing to understand where the enemy is and so on.

ABOVE ALL ELSE HAVE FUN

First and foremost this is a game and should be fun. The design objective throughout has been to achieve this while making sure the rules portray what **we do know** about ancient history. There are areas of ancient history that are fairly well understood; but many others where different interpretations are possible. The author has tried to err on the side of interesting and enjoyable wherever there is doubt.

The author has also taken a **21st century approach to rules publishing**. The traditional approach is to sell you a set book and supplements, which sooner or later is made obsolete with amendments and new editions, leaving you to buy them all again if you want to keep playing. In contrast, the **Mortem et Gloriam** starter set includes the rules in loose leaf ring binder, a set of reference sheets, a set of cards and a set of dice – everything you need to play. Everything else – the army lists (army composition), the army builder spreadsheet (troop points values), and the Quick Reference Sheet (combat, movement and command factors) - is available online as a free download. This means that corrections, improvements and balancing tweaks can be made online, globally, and at no cost to you, the player.

So shuffle the **Command Pack**, start rolling those **Death Dice** and enjoy!