

BUILDING A PORTABLE SCENARIO

BY PERMISSION OF LMW WORKS - WRITTEN BY PHILIP J. VIVERITO

INTRODUCTION

While planning my upcoming convention schedule I came to a very important decision. Somehow I had to think big, build big... but pack small. With the Siege of Tyre I had made the buildings so that they could be packed one within another. Even then I still had two large boxes. Historicon 2007 has helped me to hone my objective with the Nerve of the Nervii scenario game and it ended up being only one big box for the building and four small figure boxes. Objective secured.

Cold Wars, Historicon and Fall In! are equally important. However they are no more important than local shows like Hurricon, Southern Front or Siege of Augusta to mention just three local conventions. When I do a scenario like The Nerve of the Nervii, I have to envision in my planning the logistical transportation of the scenario. Being myself small I think small. Like most of us appearances are deceiving - we are all much bigger on the inside than on the outside. So I try and turn things inside out. Like getting my big ideas into a deceptively small container.

To achieve the objective I looked and looked for something that would be relatively quick to build and structurally large when placed on the gaming table. Reading Caesar I came up with what I felt was an ideal concept: the relief of Cicero's winter camp. Caesar tells us that Roman winter

camps were larger than the typical daily marching camp. I had already created a full Roman permanent camp with the Hadrian's Wall scenario - see Historical Miniature Gamer Magazine or <http://www.classicalhack.com>. A marching camp would fulfil my handling of Roman camps to a point. All that is left is a Saxon Shore fort.

First and foremost is the table top on which you will grow your scenario. I have found that using a tan or green coloured cloth I have a base which is malleable, light weight and portable. Beneath this cloth I place cut pieces of styrene to create hills and ditches. To make realistic ground, place styrene under the cloth while scattering flocking, cedar chips and spanish moss over the cloth. This terrain is realistic and very portable.

When designing the walls I used John Hutt's Precision Products sheeting and Perfic Panels. The walls of the camp being a simple bevelled rampart of turf with a narrow walk way and a gentle rear slope. The face of the rampart is partially flocked so the turf blocks (sheeting) could be seen.

Below is the main gate which shows the basic Roman gate defences. Unlike modern gates there are no actual gates. The guard unit would stand in the opening which is really a gateway and not an actual gate. Cicero actually





blocked these openings up with a sod wall-the basic build material used to create the rampart. The Romans would cut neat sod blocks and lay them like blocks.

The main gate of the camp which shows how the camp walls looked. The island in front of the main opening (gateway) into the camp is called a tulumus. It is designed to slow or blunt an assault by the enemy. To the rear of the tulumus are towers where ballistae are mounted to rain fire down attackers.

The rampart as mentioned is made of turf blocks. The Romans would stake out where the general lines of the rampart or walls would be erected. Directly in front of where the planned rampart would be built sod blocks were cut from the ground. As the sod blocks were cut and laid creating the rampart a man made ditch was left. This is not quite visible in the photo. So as the rampart was built up the defensive ditch was dug. Very functional in design and construction; the hallmark of Roman engineering. To create the ditches I simply lay cut and bevelled pieces of styrene which are placed beneath the ground cloth.





The thirteen towers are dowels cut to the desired height making the uprights. Platforms made of Precision Products planking deck the tower upper storeys. The wicker works are made from safety barricade tape which I bought at a safety supply store. The barricade tape is about three inches in width and is woven plastic that when painted looks like wicker. I used the same material to create the rampart upper wall sections. Then plaster Elmer's wood putty on the wicker to make a mud facing. Never use speckling as it will not hold up.

The gateways are a key to making the camp big or small. The bigger the opening the bigger the camp. This is important for controlling the size of the display. Caesar mentioned the winter camps were bigger than the marching camps. I just made the gateways wide to cover more table space.

Inside the camp I needed lodgings for the units. This camp depicts a single legion camp. Caesar said because it was a winter camp the men either placed thatching over their tents or made huts covered in thatching. Huts were out because I wanted my camp to be more flexible in use and reflective of Roman marching camps. So I went with tents. I could always make huts later if I wanted. To make the tents I used simple pre-printed paper. The paper was pre-printed with a leather pattern found at Michaels. Lynne (my wife) came up with the idea of printing the stitching onto the paper. So she designed the basic tent shape and made a PDF pattern.

By printing these at different percentages I could control the size. For the officers' tents I used a different pattern. The surplus from the pattern supplied the awnings. The

tents I made by the dozen without trouble. Just print and cut. If you fold them correctly you don't even have to use glue.

Let's review. I needed something big and something transportable. The ground is two pieces of cloth (dollar a yard Wal-Mart); measuring sixty inches by sixteen feet. The styrene is scrap saved from other projects. These make hills and the bank for the ditches. The rampart is cut from Perfic Panels. These are hollow and faced with sheeting facades and Elmer's wood fill on the reverse slope.

The final camp measures about four feet square. By making the gateways wide or narrow I can easily reduce the camp's size. Everything fits into a large mail able box measuring nineteen by nineteen by twenty-three inches. The figures weigh more than the model.

Above you can see the end project. The scenario - The Nerve of the Nervii - which I put on at Historicon 2007 is lightweight, mail-able and meets all my needs to travel to conventions with a BIG game that is, at the same time, small!

For anyone interested, the Nervii (Gauls) were defeated in both games we played, but not without inflicting great damage on the relieving Romans.