
1 PREAMBLE

The Field of Mars game and the Lace Wars series of games are the property of Red Sash Games. This module has been created with the kind permission of Ian Weir, Red Sash Games, and is for personal use only.

Please be aware I am not associated with Red Sash Games. Any issues with the vassal module, should be directed to myself, Tony Kerstan, at snorriht@gmail.com

Specific Field of Mars rules enquiries should be directed to: administrator@redsashgames.com

2 INTRODUCTION

These notes provide tips on how to use the Field of Mars Vassal module, and provide quality of life suggestions for streamlined and fun play.

3 WHAT IS FIELD OF MARS?

Field of Mars is a grand-tactical game simulating historical, what-if or imagi-nation battles from the age of the smoothbore musket. It can also extend into the age of the rifled musket with a minor rule change.

Field of Mars was originally a battlefield expansion kit for Red Sash Games' operational-level land warfare games, known as the Lace Wars™ series, found here: <https://redsashgames.com/>

However, Field of Mars can also be used standalone and played without prior knowledge of the Lace Wars™ series.

4 WHO AM I?

I am a wargamer who has always been interested in the horse & musket / rifle period. My interest stretches from the Spanish war of Succession through to the Franco-Prussian War, so roughly 1701 to 1871. I've been looking for board game to play battles as part of an internet-based map campaign, and Field of Mars is a good compromise between detail and playability. I also appreciate it emphasises force quality, planning and leadership.

5 FIELD OF MARS RULES

This vassal module does not enforce the game rules, so players will need to purchase and read the Field of Mars print and play version, which includes the digital rules. This can be found at:

<https://redsashgames.com/non-series-items/field-of-mars.html>

Your kind contribution will also support Red Sash Games to continue to make great games.

6 RAISON D'ÊTRE

This vassal module was designed to:

- (1) remain faithful to the Field of Mars rules,
- (2) play battles generated from a Red Sash campaign,
- (3) resolve battles as part of a player-made historical, what-if or imagi-nation campaign,
- (4) allow battles to be resolved with or without an umpire.

The original Black and White in Field of Mars have now been expanded with the inclusion of Blue and Red.

Blue/White and Red/Black have been represented as opposition sides on the game map to simulate allied contingents in Red Sash battles. They can also represent discrete nations in player made historical, what-if or imagi-nation campaigns.

Note that a Field of Mars battle is still limited to one Generalissimo per side, and the number of engaged Wings remains at six. Other unit limits as described in the Field of Mars rules must continue to be observed.

7 MULTIPLAYER SETUP

The vassal module was designed so that battles can be played over the internet. Up to four players (one for each colour), an umpire and any number of observers can join a vassal game. Battles not completed in a single sitting should be saved.

Vassal also allows battles to be played by e-mail (PBEM). To speed up play, it is recommended for PBEM that Order and Leader masking is not used. It is recommended for multiplayer to disable the option for the map to centre on an opponent's move.

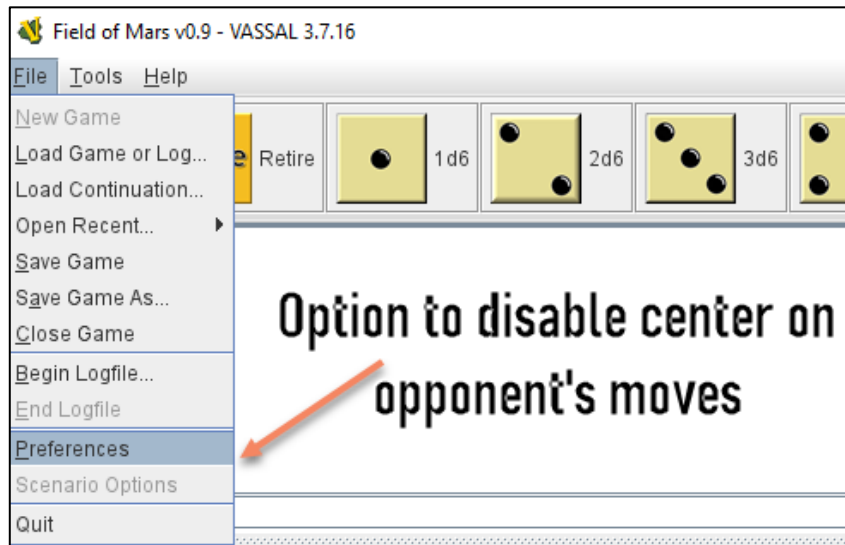


Figure 1: Finding the preferences menu

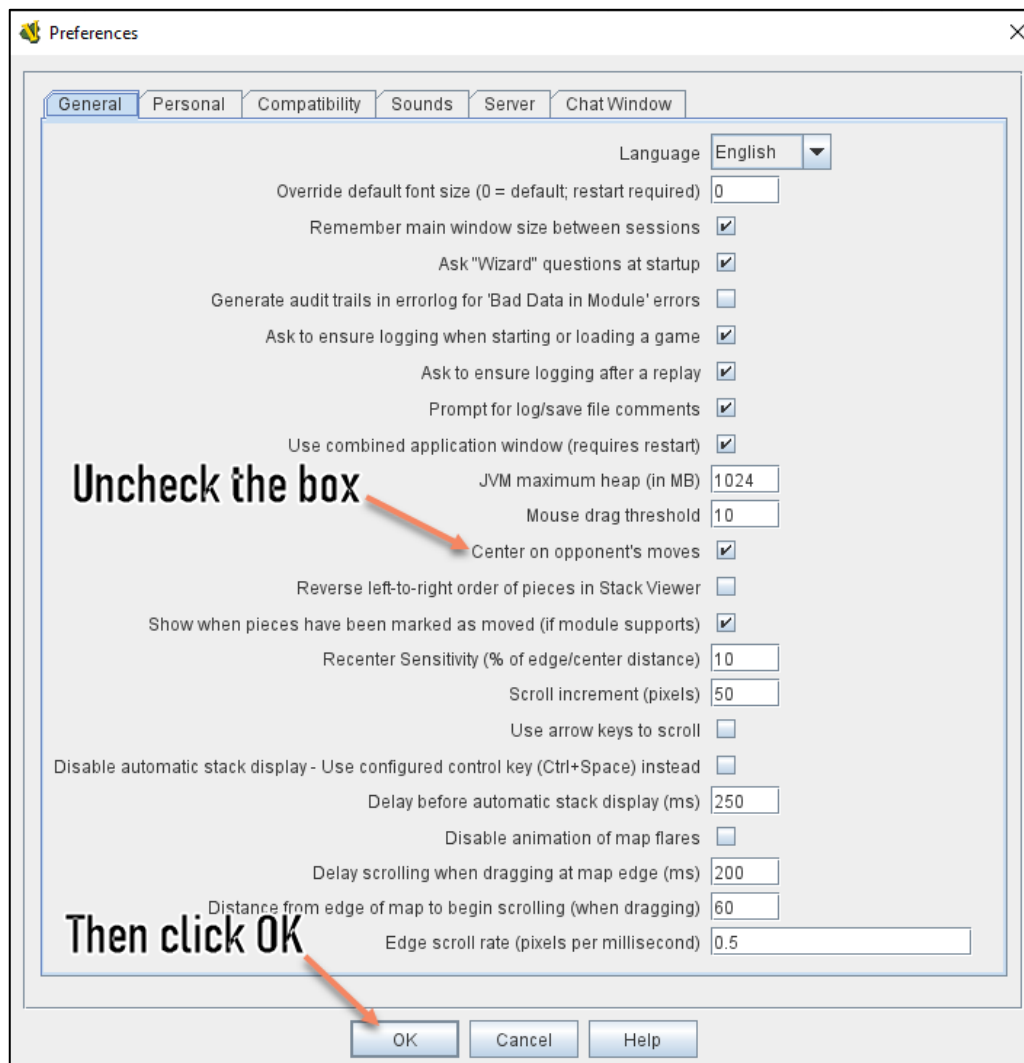


Figure 2: Unchecking center on opponent's moves box

8 BATTLE CHARTS

Charts to determine fire, melee combat, terrain effects and more are found under the Battle Charts icon under tabbed menus.

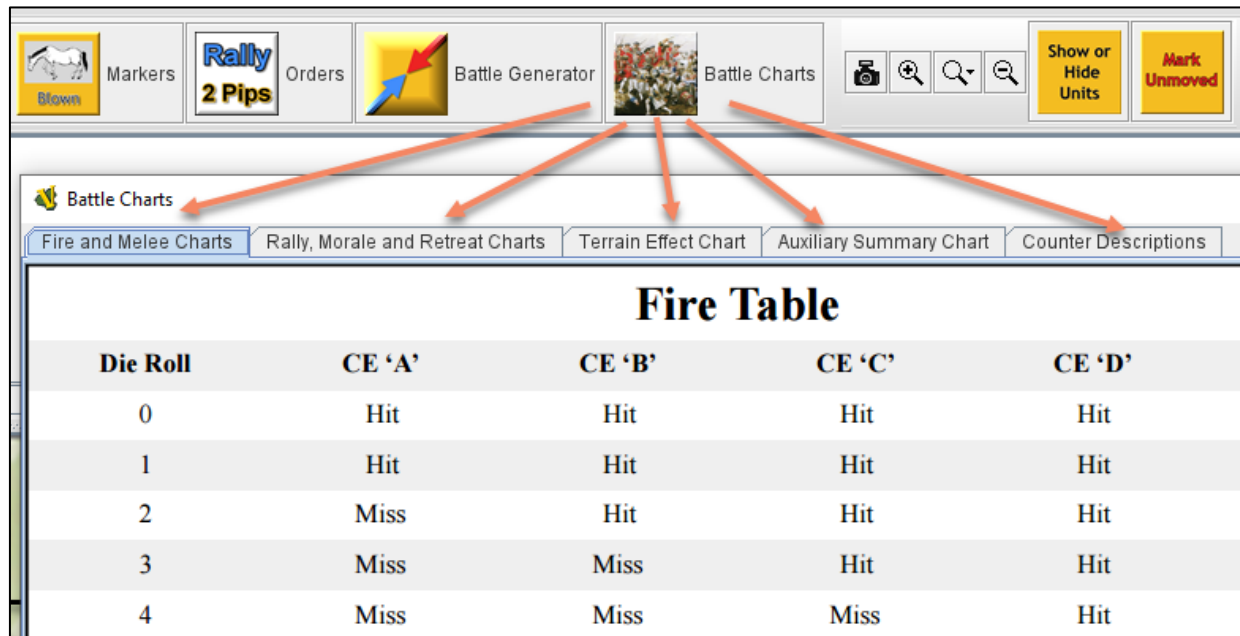


Figure 3: Battle Charts

9 ACCESSING UNITS AND MARKERS

Units are access by clicking on the "Unit" menu item, which then displayed a tabbed menu. This needs to be manually expanded by pulling on dividers by the mouse button to access a scrollable list.

Markers, terrain and orders etc are accessed by clicking on the menu item, which opens a scrollable list.

If you are not familiar with Vassal, this link is to a video which shows how to do this:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/2hgb6wla4ywm7djugs7nu/Accessing-units-and-markers.mp4?rlkey=j9aky4ptiz3kz0v3bnzs11nt2&st=ia95wyug&dl=0>

10 MOUSE RIGHT-CLICK ON COUNTER

The above video also shows the various functions available by right-clicking on a counter and choosing a menu option. Note that menu options vary according to the type of Unit.

11 USE CTRL+ AND CTRL- KEY COMBOS

The remove counter clutter, this module makes extensive use layers for hits, wing orders and leader personalities. These can be cycled through by using the Control + Minus (CTRL -) or Control + Plus (CTRL +) keyboard shortcuts.

12 MASKED ORDER COUNTERS (Optional)

As an option order counters can be masked, hiding them from the opposition.

Orders are chosen by right-clicking on a Wing Orders and cycling through the "More Pips" or "Less Pips" commands.

Once an order is chosen, use the "Flip" command to make the order hidden from other players until revealed. This is done by clicking on the Flip command again.

The owning side (Red in figure 1) can also mouseover the Wing order counter to see their chosen order at any time.

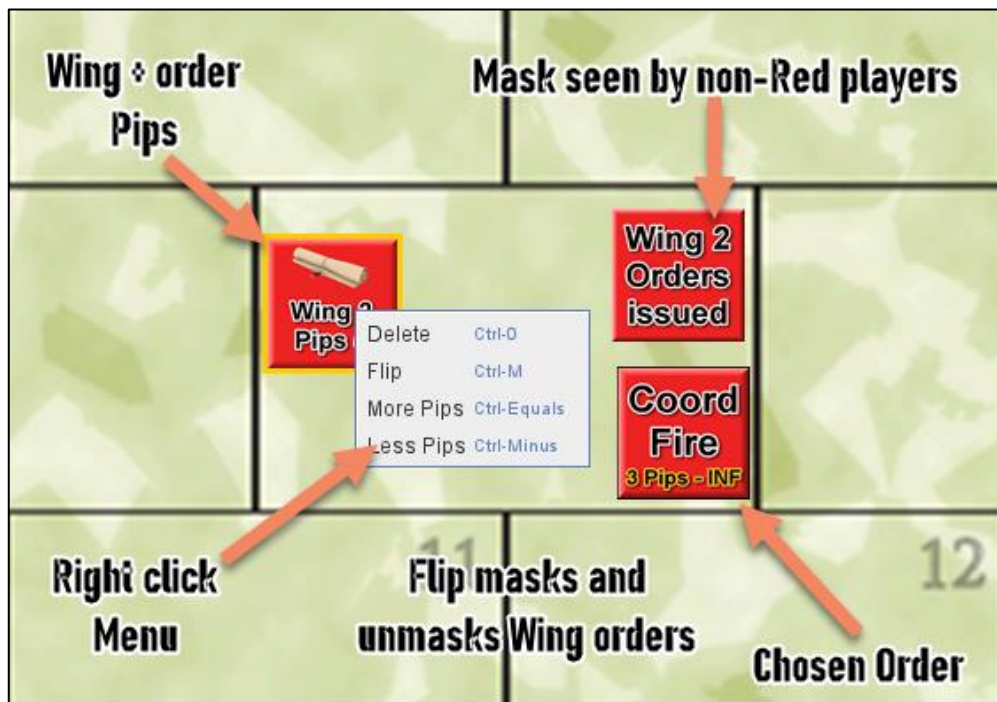


Figure 4: Wing orders, right-click options, flip menu to mask and unmask counters

Note that the number of order pips is enforced. Therefore, a wing with only three pips cannot choose the Advance Order, which requires four pips.

The module does not record the choice of order for a round, so an unscrupulous type could cheat by changing their orders while the other player is not looking. This module assumes the players will act as honourable Officers and Gentlemen.

In the example above, the other side will not even see the flip command on the Red Wing order counter, and visa-versa. The flip command on all sides and all information is visible to the Umpire, if masked or not masked.

13 RESERVE WING AND OTHER MARKERS

Reserve Wing counters are found under the Markers menu. These are used to differentiate between Engaged Wings, which are limited to six (6). Other miscellaneous markers can also be found under the Marker menu.



Figure 5: Reserve wing and other counters

14 DICE-BASED ORDERS

The module also includes dice counters if players want to play Field of Mars rules as written, by assigning dice to each engaged or reserve wing as per the 3.1 rules. The dice counters are found under the Marker menu.



Figure 6: Dice roll counters

15 LEADERS AND PERSONALITIES

Non-specialist leaders, such as a Lieutenant (LT) and the Generalissimo (GO), have personalities which can influence the battle. These are accessed by choosing the correct leader and personality from the unit mix.

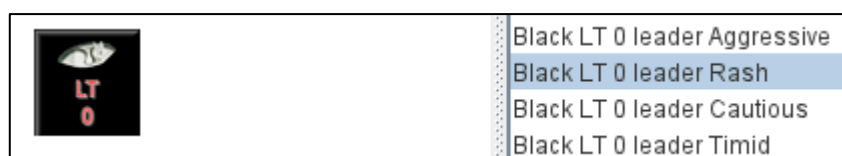


Figure 7: Leader personalities

Each non-specialist leader has a menu which allows switching between the leadership value and personality, as well as the Flip command.



Figure 8: Leader masking and unmasking the flip command

Players can also play leaders rules as written (see 1.49). Firstly, define a non-specialist leader according to rule 2.32 and deploy the appropriate counter (i.e. LT 1). Then deploy another leader counter with the same rating (i.e. LT 1) and use the menu to change it to the personality side (i.e. Cautious). Then place the personality under the leader counter.



Figure 9: Stacking personality under a leader counter

16 "STICKY" TERRAIN TILES AND SELECTED MARKERS

The following tiles and markers are "sticky" once deployed to the map board:

- Terrain tiles
- Battlefield Edge tiles,
- Round markers,
- Coup d'Oeil markers,
- Hors de Combat markers,
- Retreat Threshold markers.

The "stickiness" is to avoid the above being accidentally moved or deleted once deployed. Click on the centre cross of a tile, or the centre of a marker, to select it.

The Terrain tile or marker will display a yellow square to show it has been selected. Left Click and holding the mouse button on the centre will allow the tile or marker to be dragged to another location.



Figure 10: moving terrain tiles, battlefield edges and "sticky" markers

Right clicking on the tile or marker centre when it is selected will bring up a menu, including a delete option.

This video link shows the process of clicking on and moving a terrain tile, or sticky marker:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/6hihuitzts5749pp5mvqi/Moving-sticky-terrain-and-markers.mp4?rlkey=ctdihno5ly9wxcbu6fqb42rru&st=n9ny54pq&dl=0>

17 VISION AND MAGNIFICATION

This module includes magnification; plus, minus or at a specific zoom level. Mouse over zoom (x1.5) has also been enabled for units.

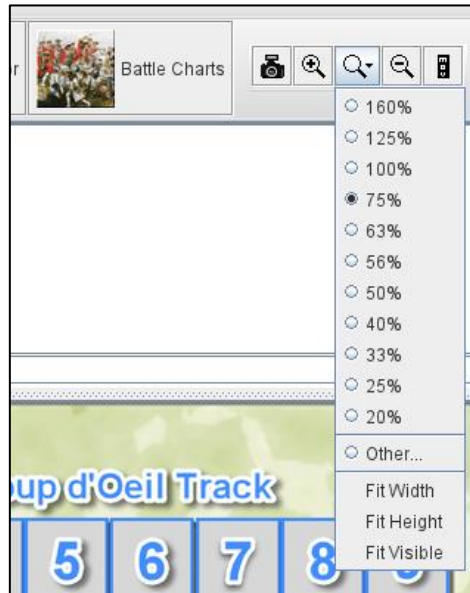


Figure 11: Vision and magnification

Note that counters at high magnification or mouseover may appear fuzzy. This is a trade-off to keep the module size low.

18 LEAD UNIT INDICATOR

Field of mars requires a wing to designate a lead unit. This is done by right-clicking on the brigade and choosing the lead unit menu item. This is a toggle which will turn the icon on or off.

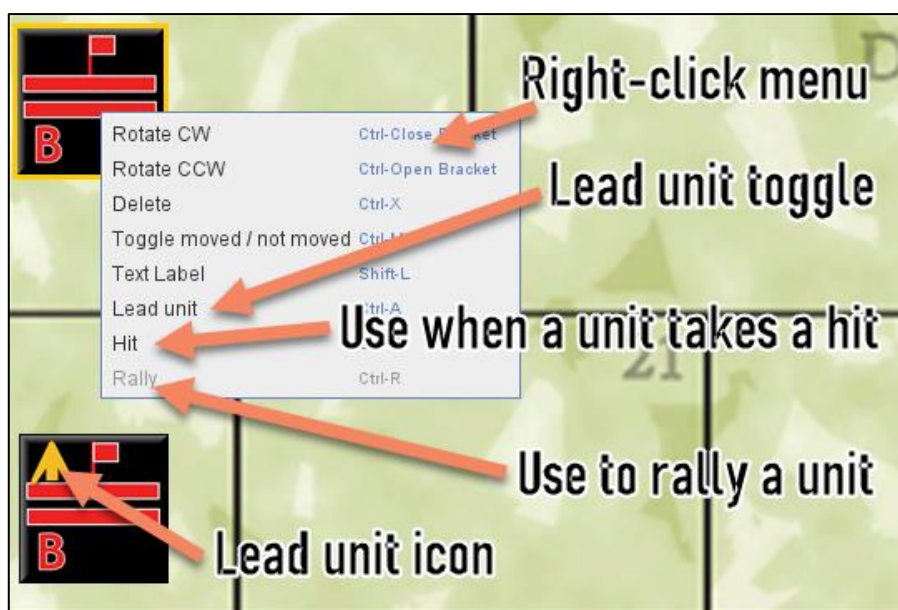


Figure 12: Lead unit toggle switch and other menu items

Figure 7 shows an example layout of a wing. Please are encouraged to arrange their wings this way to speed up play. However, it is your game to use whatever layout that works for you.



- (1) partial separation by double-clicking on a stack of units (i.e. the rifle and irregulars units) and,
- (2) the mouseover function (i.e. stack of artillery and leaders).

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/c5qxxsn0m9wlvxunqxaz8/moving-stacks-and-changing-counter-order-in-a-stack.mp4?rlkey=6r5j75jtljbe6yx4fqzniszhl&st=kocie29l&dl=0>

This video shows how to select, move and rotate multiple stacks, like an entire Wing:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/n05u8pk1wepgo2wxi36wy/moving-multiple-stacks.mp4?rlkey=7q0f2bgpma6nkjxy8mb0q8rbv&st=ol0sthmq&dl=0>

20 UNIT TEXT LABELS

Players can add text labels to units for historical, roleplay, or campaign purposes.

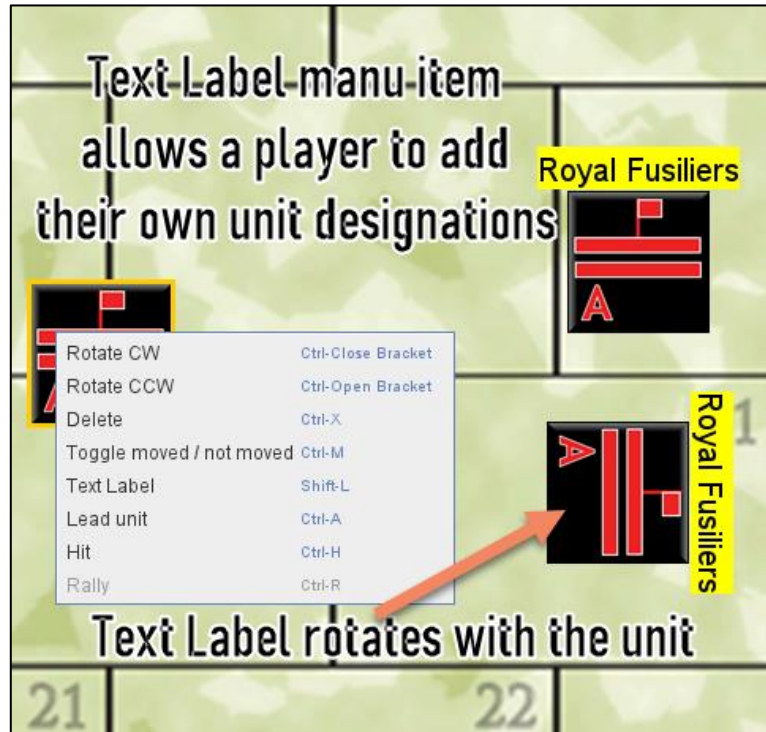


Figure 14: Text labels for units

21 RETREAT THRESHOLD AND HORS DE COMBAT MARKERS

The Retreat Threshold and Hors de Combat markers are used to record on the Hors de Combat Track:

1. the Retreat Threshold of each army, as determined by Retreat Threshold Chart (see 3.91 and 5.2 rules).
2. record when a friendly Wing becomes Hors de Combat (see 1.55 and 3.91 rules).



Figure 15: Hors de Combat Markers

During battle setup, the Retreat Threshold of each side is calculated. Place the Retreat Threshold marker on that numbered space (between 1 to 7) on the Hors de Combat Track.

The first time a friendly Wing becomes Hors de Combat, take an Hors de Combat marker and place it in the 1 space on the Hors de Combat Track.

If another friendly Wing becomes Hors de Combat, move the Hors de Combat marker one space along the track. For example, the friendly side has two wings Hors de Combat, so the Hors de Combat marker should be in the two (2) space on that track.

When the Hors de Combat marker reaches the Retreat threshold marker of same side on the Hors de Combat Track, the battle ends immediately.

22 THE RISE OF THE RIFLED MUSKET

Field of Mars is designed for the linear warfare during time of smoothbore muskets. To simulate battles with infantry primarily armed with rifled muskets, use 3.522 for Infantry formations.

Artillery ranges remain the same, as per 3.51 in the rules.

The Rifled auxiliary units remain the same, and represent sharpshooters, or an army doctrine that encourages marksmanship.

23 FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Add Gray side, which would be suitable for Confederates, Seven Years War Saxons, or the various Napoleonic French Allies.
- Add a Green side, which is a common colour used to represent the Russian Empire or the Ottomans in many hex and counter wargames.
- Adding river, stream or swamp tiles purely for the visuals. Mechanically a river is an obstacle, stream a disadvantage and swamp a defile.

24 OTHER PROJECTS

My next vassal module is building a system to run a horse & musket campaign. This will allow players (or an umpire) to build a map for historical, what-if or imagi-nation campaigns.

The game will come with its own set of campaign rules covering orders, movement, weather, supply, scouting, sieges and events. Alternatively, players can use their own rules.

When two armies meet, the battle can be transferred to the Field of Mars module for resolution. The campaign rules will also include an optional quick battle system for an umpired double-blind map campaign.

In a double blind campaign, only the umpire has access to the vassal module. The umpire will receive orders from the players, and based on that, move forces on their behalf. The umpire will also be responsible for determining random events, delivering scouting reports and resolving battles, the results of which will be sent to the participating players.