



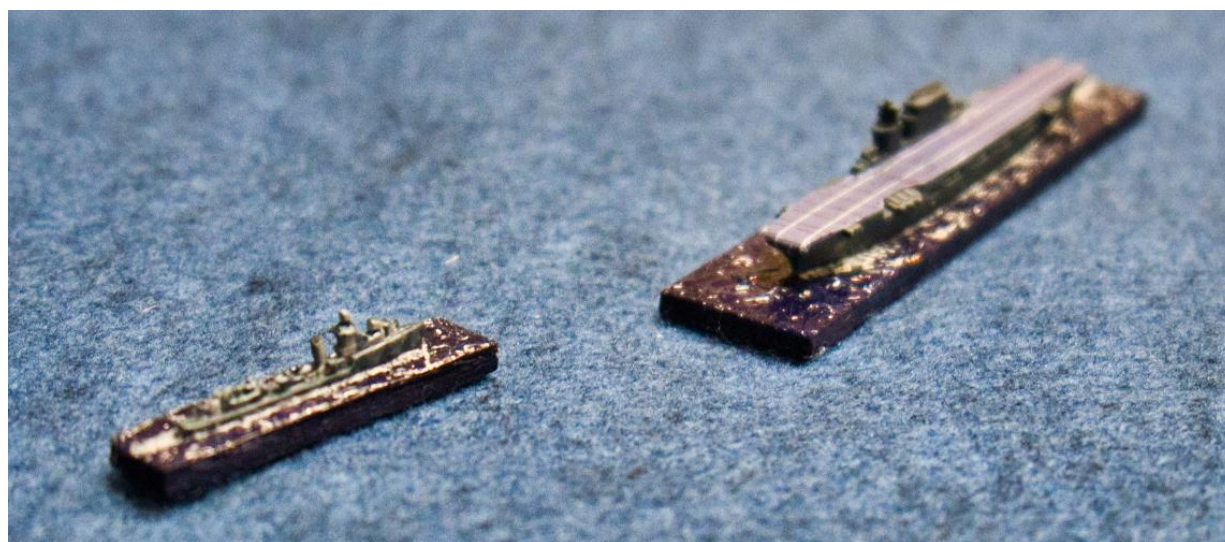
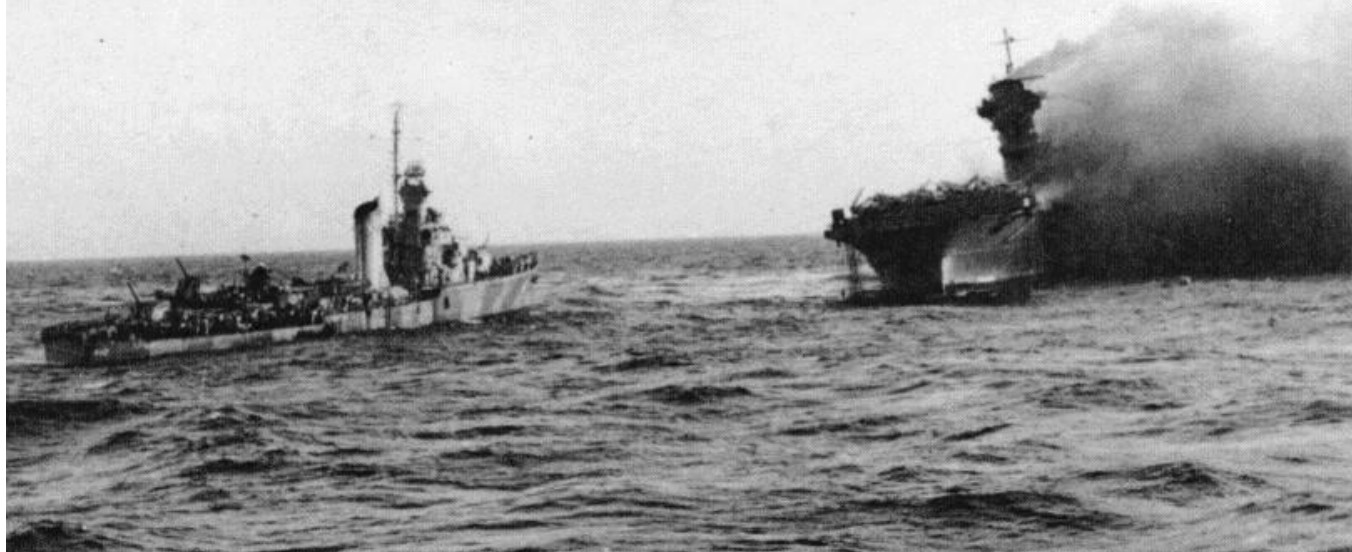
Colorado Military Historians

Newsletter

LI, No. 12

Dec 2025

DD-412 USS Hammann pulls alongside to rescue survivors from CV-2 USS Lexington at Battle of Coral Sea
8 May 1942



News and Views

*Message from CMH Secretary
Eric Elder*

This month we have articles from John Carter, Don Cygan and John Brown. Thank you for your continued support.

The Board is asking members to pay for their 2026 club dues. The dues continue to be \$60 for the year. Please pay cash or check to Dave or Greg at an upcoming meeting.

At the December meeting, it looks like we have Scott Holder confirming he will be bringing his 10mm Hippodrome Circus Maximus game.



Veterans Wars 2025 was a great success. Thanks to Greg Skelly for coordinating the convention. We had 26 people attend on both days. Lots of good games. Also, it was good to see some new faces. We lucked out with good driving weather. Our next convention will be in May (West Wars) and I hope to see a similar turnout with a great mix of games.

Pictures from Veterans Wars 2025



November

Unit of the Month

Sponsored by Tom Dye



Each month, at the monthly meeting, CMH members bring their latest painted figures and models to the meeting to display their latest efforts.

CMH Member	Scale	Manufacturer	Era	Unit
Dave Manley	28mm	Foundry	AWI	Continental & Militia
Dave Manley	28mm	Miniature Building Authority	All	Deadly Native Animals
DAVE MANLEY	15mm	Laser printed	Any	Jungle Huts

Winner in **RED**



Destroyer Squadron 2, DesRon 2 in WWII

Article by CMH Member

John Carter

During WWII the Sims class of twelve destroyers (DD's) suffered five losses, the highest percentage of any USN class of DD's. But there are other ironies.

The Sims class was built after the Gold Platers, a series of three classes all of which had 16 torpedo tubes (TT) in their armament, the heaviest load out of any WWII DD. The Sims' were less radical, being given 12 torpedo tubes and 5 – 5" guns. This proved to be too much topweight and they were soon reduced to 4 – 5" and 8 TT. With that armament, they were sent to the Atlantic for the Neutrality Patrol. With the US entry into the war, nine were sent back to the Pacific as DesRon2. Three remained in the Atlantic and performed yeoman service, one being sunk in the Mediterranean.

In the Pacific they were assigned to escort carriers in three of the four carrier battles that year.

At the Coral Sea, Sim herself was sunk while escorting the tanker Neosho, which was also sunk. Desron 2 was assigned to the Lexington, which was sunk in that battle.

At Midway, Desron 2 was covering the Yorktown when she sustained fatal damage. The Hammann was alongside providing assistance when one of the torpedoes fired by an IJN sub which split her in two; the rest hitting Yorktown, which sank.

In the deadliest torpedo attack of the war. The IJN sub, I-15 torpedoed the Wasp, which sank. But the rest of the torpedoes went on to strike the next group, miles away, damaging North Carolina and the Sims class O'Brien. O'Brien was fixed up to go back to the States for complete repairs, but she never made it.

At Santa Cruz, Desron 2 was covering Hornet, which was sunk.

So, the Sims class DD's of Desron 2 escorted all three carriers sunk by IJN carrier aviation in 1942. I believe this was just luck of the draw plus the learning curve in 1942 about how to defend carriers. Still, makes you wonder.

November

Game of the Month

Sponsored by Tom Dye



Each month CMH members host games at the monthly meeting. This award is for the effort put out by the host.

CMH Member	Scale	Rules	Description
Dave Manley	15mm	Flames of War	Burma Campaign battle
JOHN BROWN	15mm	ADLG	Roman Civil War
Dave Newport	15mm	Zulu!	Rorke's Drift

Winner in **RED**

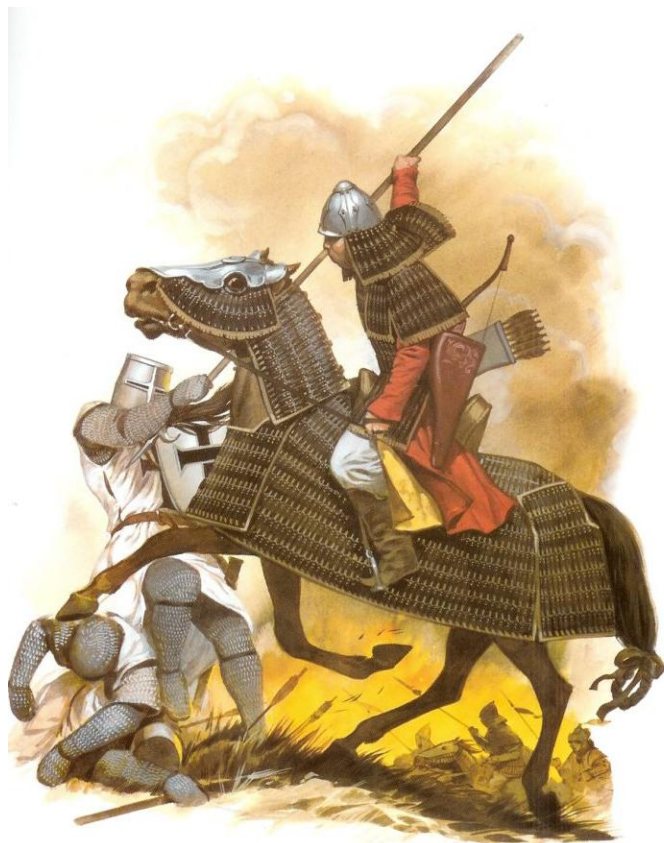


Why did the Mongols stop?

Reflections on the Mongol invasion of Europe

Article by CMH Member

Don Cygan



In A.D. 1240 a terrible wave threatened to overwhelm Europe. It came like a tsunami from the east, bulldozing over many stalwart civilizations who had tried in vain to stop it. As news spread of its imminent arrival, Europeans feared not just for the loss of their lives, farms, and cities, but for the existence of their very culture. In the hyper-religious circles of the day, many people saw this threat as the wrath of God; the end of days and perhaps, the end of the world. Indeed, many clerics preached this wave that terrorized peasants to princes was composed of demons unleashed on earth by the armies of Satan himself.

But this was no natural disaster. The Mongol invasion of Europe was a very human scourge which caused one of Europe's most perilous moments in history.

However, in a strange turn of events, the Mongols - the Oriental descendants of Genghis Khan who had carved out the largest empire in human history -- just stopped and gave up their conquest of

Europe. Perched on the very edge of the cities of the German states, Austria, and France, the nomadic hordes mysteriously halted their bloody rampage and simply went home.

That's a bit of an oversimplification, but the fact remains that Mongol forces caught Europe at a particularly vulnerable moment in history and due to reasons still not completely understood today, halted their advance westwards. If they had not, many historians believe most, if not all, of Europe could have come under their rule.

The Mongols were known for their violent conquests, and above all – absolute ruthlessness. They understood the strategic value of terror. Massively successful (they had reduced the medieval Russian principalities to subservience through a campaign verging on genocide), the Mongols had a particularly brutal attitude towards those who did not submit to their will. This was fact -- not some sort of exaggeration recorded by xenophobic European scribes. After all, no less diverse groups such as the Chinese Xia, Jin, and Song, the Uyghurs, Alans, Kipchak Cumans, Khwarazmianis, Chechens, Circassians, Persians, Vietnamese, all vouched for Mongol savagery.

By 1240, after conquering much of Eurasia under Genghis' grandson Batu Khan, the Mongols decided to invade Europe. Over 12 *tumens* (a Mongol military unit equaling 10,000 mounted soldiers – in this case an army of over 120,000 men), left their winter grazing lands in what is now Ukraine and traveled west. The Mongols made up a tremendous conquering agency. Each Mongol warrior learned to ride a horse

before he could walk and was used to spending all day in the saddle. Each Mongol warrior was expected to be self-sufficient. Each Mongol warrior brought extra horses for remounts, and only what he could carry on horseback. Each Mongol warrior was expected to be a superb and accurate archer at the gallop. Each Mongol warrior adhered to a strict system of obeying orders from above, one that punished disobedience with death.

Such was the invasion force that confronted Christian Europe in 1240. Penetrating the Kievan Rus frontier, the brilliant Mongol general Subedei devised a three-pronged assault given the pretext of chasing retreating Kipchak Cumans (who had fled the Mongols for protection in Hungary). In reality, the Mongols knew from informants that lackadaisical European rulers were distracted by in-fighting and the constant calls for crusading in the Middle East. Taking advantage of this division, a force of two *tumens* under the command of Kadan, another grandson of Genghis Khan. This force would range northwest, into what is today Poland and Germany. Historians have argued that this force was a diversionary army, but there is no conclusive evidence that this is true. It seems more probable it was more of a screening force but given the freedom to act somewhat independently when and where opportunities arose. The main force would be under the direct control of the brilliant Mongol general Subedei and would aim straight for the Hungarian plain. The final third of this force -- under still another descendant of Genghis named Guyuk -- would penetrate Transylvania and the southern Carpathians.

On December 6, 1240, the Mongols sacked Kiev, killing most of its inhabitants. The hardy horsemen marched 270 miles in three days, unhindered by the winter snows. They moved on to Krakow, Poland, and did the same in March of 1241. A small army of Polish knights attempted to defend their lands but were easily defeated. By now, the princes and kings of Europe, including Pope Gregory IX, were listening more seriously to reports of Mongol advances instead of disregarding them as mere peasant rumors. With each new city that fell in the east and each new massacre, the rulers of Christian Europe began to worry.

An army of over 6,000 was raised under Henry II the Pious, Duke of Silesia and Poland. The force of knights represented some of the greatest chivalric orders of the day, full of nobles and lords. (Stories that this force included the famous crusader orders such as the Knights Templar, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights are heavily disputed today). Regardless, the Europeans seemed to believe this force was more than up to the task.

But they were wrong. Through ingenious deception, feigned retreat, a noxious smoke screen (possibly one of the first examples in European history of gas warfare), and the mobility of fast mounted archers, the knights were almost completely wiped out by Kadan's forces at the Battle of Legnica, Poland (April 9, 1241). According to legend, the right ear was cut off of each dead European warrior. Nine sacks of human ears were sent to Batu Khan as proof of victory. Henry II's corpse was beheaded and his head decorated the *Tuk* (standard) of the Mongols for weeks -- a little touch of horror to intimidate any other Europeans who thought they could stop the Asian hordes.

The southern force under Subedei defeated another Christian force of Hungarian knights under King Bela IV at the Battle of Mohi, Hungary, two days later. Lest he suffer the same fate as Henry II, King Bela IV ran all the way to the Croatian coast pursued by the Mongols. He had to take refuge on a small island in the Adriatic Sea.

The ground of Eastern Europe was covered in the bodies and blood of her hapless people. Cities, towns, and villages along the way were burned and their inhabitants slaughtered or enslaved.

Now the Pope, the Holy Roman Emperor, and other Western rulers were desperately trying to cob together another force to stop the onslaught, but with little luck. It seemed as if the gates were open wide

and all of Western Europe -- including the treasured cities of Vienna, Paris, Rome, and Madrid -- were ripe for the taking.

But suddenly, (or so it must have seemed to the European leaders) the Mongol invasion withdrew. Back east through the Hungarian plains the vast horde retreated, leisurely sacking and murdering on their withdrawal. At the time, few Europeans questioned the reason, simply breathing a collective sigh of relief. There was no great political move to figure out why the Mongols did what they did – no diplomacy (until many decades later) to determine whether they would be back, or if a peaceful placation of the Khans might guarantee they never come west again. The European leaders went back to their selfish squabbles over succession and territory between each other, and the crusades in the Middle East continued with Christian relish. (What happened to the Mongols in the Middle East is a fascinating story in itself).

Since then, historians have pondered the question of why the Mongols stopped. One of the biggest problems is that Mongol culture in this period did not lead to what Westerners would call a bulk of written history. The traditional belief is that Batu Khan learned of the death of the Great Khan Ogedei back in Mongolia. His death led to a crisis of succession, and the sons, grandsons, advisors, and other Mongol hierarchy had to return east to elect a new Great Khan.

But this story is much too simplistic of an answer. In fact, more recent information focuses on climate issues and what was really of importance to the Mongol Empire: Grasslands.

Keep in mind the Mongol people were mostly nomadic -- dependent on horses, camels, and movement as their way of life. They had no need (until much later) for “civilization” and cities. As nomads, they also had little use for agriculture. Keep in mind the population of Europe was centered around farming at this time. This is why the Mongols would slaughter city-dwellers and peasant farmers alike. They saw no use for these people in their worldview of conquest. Sometimes slaves were taken, but the Mongols often saw slaves as a burden – people who would be unable to keep up with their migrations and would just be additional mouths to feed. If a group of people were found worthy, gave total loyalty, and could adopt the Mongol lifestyle, they might be assimilated. If they ever betrayed the Khan and his lords, the retaliation was brutal (just ask the Cumans or the Tanguts). As for religion, from what we can tell, the Mongols were not intensely religious, when compared to Christians or Muslims. So, they could care less if they desecrated or destroyed a cathedral. (Their religious weakness would be their one great Achilles heel, as for over a century Mongol leaders would come under conversion from Islamic and Christian influences, causing some in-fighting among the geographic groups known as “hordes” which spanned the empire).

The Mongols did appreciate art, science, and technology. They were known to spare the lives of people with particular skills or talents in these fields and loot any items of value or purpose that might add to their growing wealth and power.

Great castles, cities, and fortresses held very little interest for the Mongols. They did take over a few (Kiev, in particular, sort of became their western headquarters and the center of the famed “Golden Horde” of Russian history). However, as a people constantly on the move, the Mongol *yurt* (tent) was more practical. Also, the Mongols did not believe in garrisoning towns and cities. This loss of manpower was seen as detrimental to their momentum. It was easier to just torch the cities and settlements. At this time, Mongol armies were not designed for territorial rule. (Eventually, the Mongols under Kublai Khan would settle down in China, collect taxes, build cities, and become “civilized”).

So, in 1241 what stopped the Mongols from taking over Europe?

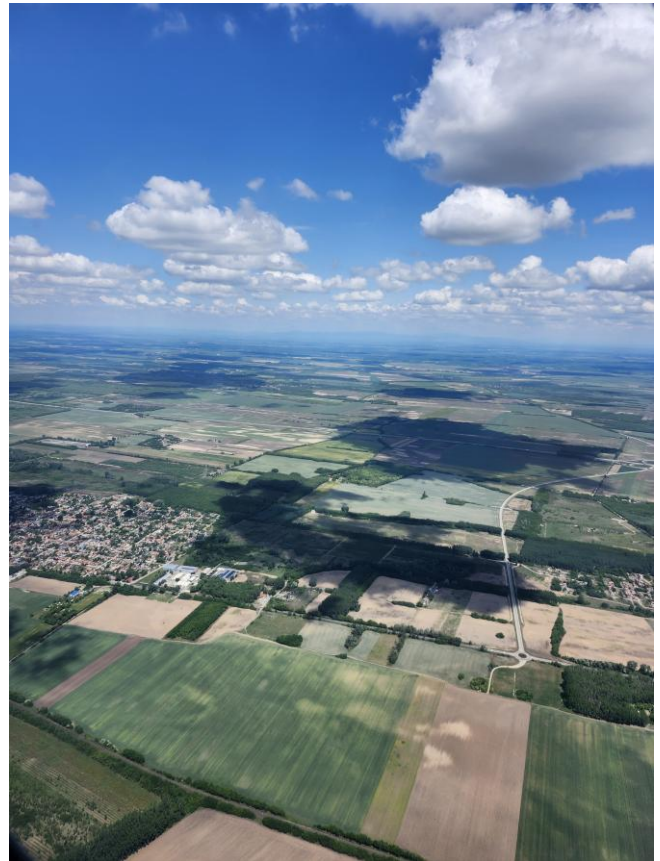
The conclusion many modern historians have arrived at is taken from the clues above. The most valuable thing to the Mongol people was land. Land that could be conquered for pastures for their great herds of horses. Land that could provide a temporary haven for the *tumens* to pitch their yurts, revel in their wealth, and feed their horses, goats, and camels in abundance. This land was called *nutug* by the Mongols and was the center of their very existence. This couldn't be mountainous lands, or heavily-forested lands, or seacoasts, or massive river barriers, and it especially, couldn't be cities, towns, and farms. Those, after all, were worthless to the Mongols. Where would their horse herds graze during the winter in the wheat fields and city streets? In churches and castles? All the wealth of those lands—whether it be material, human, or mineral, was NOT the wealth a Mongol Khan was interested in.(1)

The vast Hungarian plain -- beautifully protected by the Carpathian mountains to the north, was what dangled like a gemstone in front of the Mongol army of 1240-1241. A vast, flat, area of steppe where Batu Khan's herds and people could flourish. This was what the Mongols wanted. I am sure they kept up the pretense of invading further west, just to keep the Christian leaders on their toes, but in the end, I think the Mongols thought about it, decided they liked where they were, and just stopped. They had little interest in the rivers, forests, farms, and cities further west. Historically, we know they spent 1241-1242 in the Hungarian Plain, east of the Danube River.

The broad plains of Hungary were all the Mongols needed. This area, known as the *Puszta*, produced abundant amounts of traditional wild horse fodder of *Festuca rupicola* and *Brachypodium* grasses. Mares and Camels would grow fat and drop their healthy offspring in multitudes, and the Mongols would find the encircling mountains to their advantage, forming a natural barrier to this claimed land.

Okay, but if the Mongols had long desired and made the Hungarian plains their goal, then why did they leave? Certainly, the succession crisis played a small role, but I think it had more to do with climate and overextension. Some climate historians have noted a change in the weather of the mid-13th century that may have played a role. There is some evidence that the growing season for steppe grasses may have been affected by the early start of the "Little Ice Age," which caused colder temperatures throughout Europe for almost five centuries.

In other words, this supposed "Garden of Eden" may have turned out to be not quite as fruitful as the leaders of the khanate were expecting. Disillusioned, knowing there were greater grasslands in the direction they had come, the horde gradually shrunk back east, to reconsolidate and consider an eventual invasion into the grassy and rich lands to the southeast, including Anatolia, Turkestan, and Persia.



Hungarian plain today (Don Cygan)

In addition, the Mongols of Batu Khan's *tumens* may have felt overextended in Hungary. They may have feared the longer they stayed, the more time they were giving the European leaders to get their act together, build a massive army, and drive them out of their newly acquired home.

In the end, the full reason is still unknown. It would seem that the Mongols themselves, as they became more "civilized," adopted foreign religious beliefs, and found themselves trying to control a far-flung empire, weakened their own hegemony. By mid-14th century the empire was only a shadow of itself and finally fell to the Chinese Yuan Dynasty. Separate khanates in Russia existed a bit longer, but had become somewhat bureaucratic, assimilated, and settled. By the 1500s, the Mongols were nothing more than splintered groups that in only some small circumstances managed to retain the dreams and culture of the great Genghis Khan.

Yet their impact on Eastern European history, national psyche, culture, and race in the region today – especially in Russia – is huge. It is a mark with such lasting scars and influence for Eastern Europeans that the majority of Western Europeans, saved by fate and circumstance, still struggle to fully understand.

(1) "For large forces of nomadic warriors to remain together required that they have access to enormous amounts of pasture. The ecology and the mathematics of this problem are complex and still unclear, but a relatively moderate estimate suggests that each soldier could subsist from a string of five horses and one sheep for a year, and those animals -- an unsustainable minimum that does not provide for the stock to reproduce -- would need 208 acres of steppe pasture." (From Gyucha, Lee, and Rozsa, see sources below).

SOURCES:

--Gyucha, Attila, Lee, Wayne E., and Rozsa, Zoltan, "The Mongol Campaign in Hungary, 1241-1242: The Archeaology and History of Nomadic Conquest and Massacre," in *The Journal of Military History*, October 2019.

--Holland, Cecelia, "The Death that Saved Europe: The Mongols Turn Back, 1242" in *What If? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, (NY, Barclay Books, 1999).

--Tsouras, Peter, "The Mongol Conquest of Rus" in *Strategy & Tactics Magazine*, Vol. 351, March-Apr. 2025.

--Turnbull, Stephen, *Eastern Europe 1237-42, Combat: Mongol Warrior versus European Knight*, (Oxford, UK, Osprey Publishing, 2023).



Historic Location of the Month

Legnica, Poland

A European army consisting of Polish, Moravian and Knights Templar attempted to stop the Mongol advancing west into Europe. Mongol forces intercepted the army near Legnica on April 9, 1241 and completely destroyed the army of about 8,000.



Battlefield southeast of Legnica

Rome Unravels in ADLG Tournament

Harvey, Irons, and Rold take an Early Lead

Article by CMH Member
John Brown

Veterans Wars featured the first round of our customary *L'Art de la Guerre* (ADLG) tournament. The theme was “Rome Unravels (395-476 A.D.)”. Eligible army lists were those of the Romans of the period and those who meddled in or took advantage of their civil strife. This was in keeping with the larger Colorado Military Historians Fall theme of “Civil Wars”. In the spirit of civil warfare, five Late Imperial Roman (List 87) and one Patrician Roman (List 88) armies showed up. These were joined by a Visigoth (List 93) and a Sassanid Persian (List 109) army. Since the Visigoths in play were led by Alaric, long a Roman *Magister Militum*, they were arguably civil warriors too.

Speaking of Alaric, Larry Irons, visiting from North Dakota, played the Visigoths with one command that was a mass of impetuous heavy swordsmen, one consisting largely of impetuous heavy cavalry, and one that was a combined arms team of Roman troop types. Phil Gates' Late Imperial Roman Army faced him with a robust cavalry command including cataphracts, a command of legionaries, and a balanced command of heavy, medium, and light foot *auxilia*. Visigoth heavy swordsmen tied up the Roman legionaries in the center in a brutal see-saw battle that inched in the favor of the Visigoths. Meanwhile the heavy cavalry of the Visigoth right flank maneuvered into a charge that caught the Roman medium *auxilia* in the open, annihilating them. On the other flank the Roman cavalry and Visigoth Roman-like command collided in a battle that ultimately favored the Visigoths. With their left flank rolled up and their center and right taking heavy losses, the Romans routed.



Romans and Visigoths Collide: Viewed from Behind Roman Right Flank

Pat Harvey and Richard Kasten both fielded a Late Imperial Roman Army – in a true civil war. Pat's army featured a command of legionaries reinforced by integrated artillery, a heavy cavalry command including cataphracts, and a balanced command including heavy and light cavalry and medium *auxilia*. Richard's featured a similar legionnaire command, a somewhat smaller cavalry command, and a medium *auxilia* command benefiting from field fortifications. The symmetry of the two armies led to a prolonged and artful duel, with heavy cavalry, legionnaire, and *auxilia* commands colliding with their counterparts in appropriate terrain: legionnaires in the center, cavalry on the more open flank, and *auxilia* on the flank with rougher terrain. Pat's cavalry had the best of it on one flank, taking out two cataphracts, while Richard's *auxilia* came out of fortifications to gain an edge on the other flank. Both armies took heavy losses and came close to breaking, but Richard's broke first.



Cavalry on the Open Flank



Auxilia Melee on the Rougher Flank

Jim Rairdon's Late Imperial Roman (LIR) Army faced Greg Rold's Patrician Romans. The LIR Army featured a heavy cavalry command including Cataphracts, a command of legionaries supported by integrated artillery, and a command of medium swordsmen. The Patricians fielded two commands of predominately heavy impact swordsmen with a few mounted or foot *foederati* mixed in. The Patrician's third command consisted of light cavalry that launched a flank march. This flank march landed successfully at the first opportunity, turned the LIR left flank, and overran the LIR camp. Meanwhile the Patrician heavy infantry ground down the LIR legionaries and medium swordsmen while their cavalry distracted their more robust LIR counterparts. The loss of their camp and losses accumulated during the infantry scrum broke the morale of the Late Imperial Romans after heavy fighting.



Late Imperial Romans (left) face the Patricians

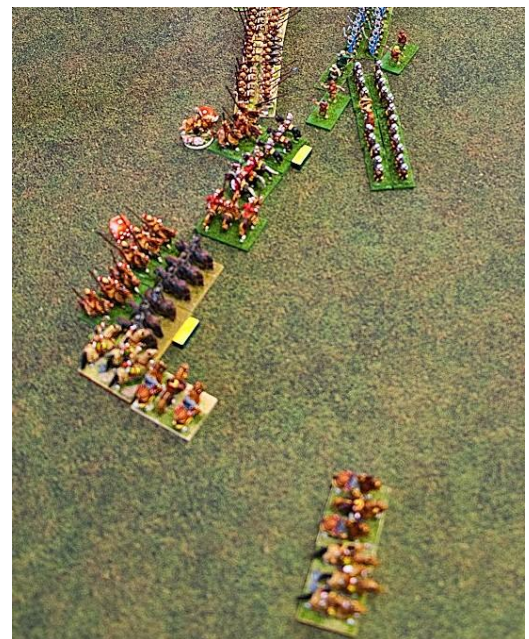


The Heavy Infantry Scrum Begins

John Brown's Sassanids rode into battle against Les Stuart's Late Imperial Romans. The Sassanids deployed a command with five cataphracts (a considerable mass of horseflesh and armor) supported by horse archers, a command of armored horse archers, and a command of heavy spearmen supported by bowmen. The Romans fielded one command consisting primarily of heavy cavalry but including two cataphracts, another of legionaries with some light infantry, and a third of Gothic impetuous heavy swordsmen and *auxilia* medium swordsmen. As the battle opened, the Sassanid armored horse archers erupted from ambush to turn the flank of the Roman heavy cavalry while the Sassanid cataphracts attacked them head on. Meanwhile the Sassanid spearmen and bowmen delayed making contact, assisted by terrain that made it difficult for the heavy Gothic infantry on the Roman left to shake out and deploy. This bought the Sassanid mounted commands two turns of melee before their infantry command came under duress. The Roman cavalry command was overwhelmed before the rest of the Roman army could close. When time ran out the Sassanids were ahead, but the Romans had not yet broken.



Late Imperial Romans and Sassanids Face Off



Sassanid Cavalry Turning the Flank

When the dust settled, Pat Harvey, Larry Irons, and Greg Rold had each fully achieved victory conditions, and thus were tied for first place with 5 points each. Points per game are awarded at 5 for breaking an opponent, 4 for having an advantage of 20% or more when time runs out, 3 for a tie wherein both players are within 20% of each other when time runs out, 2 for being at a disadvantage of 20% or more when time runs out, and 1 for being broken. The tournament will go for another round at the December 14 meeting, with all players still in striking distance of final victory. Who will triumph?

If you missed the November meeting but would like to play in the next round of ADLG, please join us on December 14th. You will be most welcome, and we will be happy to work you in. Contact John Brown if you have questions.



Late Imperial Romans and Sassanids Face Off

Colorado Military Historians, Inc.

Colorado Military Historians (CMH) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote historical wargaming and the study of military history. Founded in 1965, CMH meets monthly on the second Sunday of the month, except in May when the meeting is deferred to the third Sunday. The meeting starts at noon at the Baker Recreation Center, 6751 Irving Street (just a few blocks west of Federal Blvd), Denver, Colorado. The club also hosts gaming at least one Friday night a month, called "Friday Night Fights" (FNF) at 7:00 p.m. Friday meetings will be held at a future determined location. See groups.io site for latest information.



CMH maintains ties with numerous local, regional, and national groups to help promote the hobby. CMH is governed by member-elected officers serving on the Board of Directors (executive board). Terms of office are one year, with elections held at the May meeting. New members are accepted after attending three CMH functions and a vote of the membership. Dues are \$60.00 per year, payable in January. Members wishing to receive a snail-mailed newsletter subscription must pay an additional fee of \$15.00 per year. Authors retain ownership of articles and graphics published. CMH reserves the right to edit or reject submissions to the newsletter.

One year Adult Membership: \$60.00

Half year Adult Membership: \$30.00

(For NEW members who join after June 30)

Family Membership: \$60.00 (one Adult and any number of offspring)

Student Membership: \$30.00 (16 to 22 years old)

Children: free (younger than 16 accompanied by member)

Club Links:

Groups.io Group: <https://groups.io/g/cmhweb>

- Our Groups.io page is the best way to see what our club is up to.

Web Site: <https://cmhweb.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cmhgamers/>

Discord: <https://discord.gg/DAP2Gn>

CMH Newsletter

The CMH Newsletter is a monthly newsletter published by the Colorado Military Historians. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of all CMH members.

Eric Elder
Phone: 303-933-4723
Email: eehist@hotmail.com

Editor/Layout: Eric Elder

Next Issue: Jan 2026

2025/2026 CMH Board Members

President:
Greg Skelly
giskelly1815@outlook.com

Vice-President
Jim Rairdon
rairdon8071@comcast.net

Secretary
Eric Elder
eehist@hotmail.com

Treasurer
Dave Manley
davidmanley2@comcast.net

Historian
Nate Forte
natforteg1@gmail.com