

Field Engineering

by Phil Hendry

The Romans used various types of 'field fortification' as, very occasionally, did some of their enemies. The Romans were usually very aggressive on the battlefield, but occasionally, often when heavily outnumbered, they would employ devices such as ramparts, lilia, or caltrops to supplement their troops. Obviously, a Roman general sowing the ground in front of his position with caltrops, or digging lilia, would know that, in the event of his troops having to advance, he would have to contend with almost as big a problem as his enemy - his only advantage being that he, and his troops, would know the areas such traps had been placed.

General Classifications

We will classify obstacles in four ways: Prepared and Spontaneous; Linear and Area.

Prepared Obstacles are such things as ramparts and lilia. They're fairly permanent, at least in the context of a battle, and can't easily be cleared during the course of a battle. Spontaneous Obstacles are things which are easily laid (like caltrops) and which can, if one is aware of their position, be cleared, albeit slowly, during a battle.

Area Obstacles are, by default, 2" 'deep', and the same width as the fighting frontage of the unit which laid them. If they affect a unit's movement speed (e.g. if they count as Difficult Ground), rules governing that can be found in Section 3.2 on Page 19 of the rulebook. Linear Obstacles are just that - something laid in a line, which has to be clambered over or through. Rules for negotiating linear obstacles can also be found in Section 3.1.1 on Page 19 of the rulebook.

Obstacles

Caltrops (or tribuli).

Caltrops are Spontaneous Area Obstacles, and can be laid during a battle. A unit may lay caltrops to its front (covering the entire frontage of the unit by 2" deep), by spending a complete round stationary. It may not do this if there are any enemy units within charge range. An enemy within sight of a unit laying caltrops will be aware of them being laid, and can proceed with proper caution. Caltrops which are laid during deployment, on the other hand (or those laid by units not in line of sight), are not known to the enemy, who may march into them.

Units marching, unawares, into a field of caltrops, will take an attack of two Combat Dice, with a Combat Attack value of 2, treating the attack as if they were wearing Light Armour - shields don't count, of course, as they don't protect feet! If the unit takes casualties, it must take an immediate Reaction Test. On proceeding through the obstacle, the unit will arrive at the other side Disordered. Movement speed is reduced to half whilst moving through a field of caltrops (as if it was Difficult Ground - but the speed reduction affects all troops, including skirmishers), and units attacking across caltrops do not receive a bonus for charging.

Caltrops can be lifted. A unit wishing to lift a field of caltrops must halt for two rounds before proceeding through the field, or take the consequences outlined in the previous paragraph. They may only do this if they are safe from attack (i.e. not threatened by a charge). They will clear a path equal in width to their own frontage. They may only do this if they are safe from attack (i.e. not threatened by a charge).

Stakes

In this type, we include obstacles made from tree branches, plus 'ready made' obstacles constructed from the sudes (palisade stakes) carried by Roman soldiers for the construction of marching camps, and other 'spiky' obstacles. Stakes are Spontaneous Linear Obstacles.



When fighting against a unit which is defending Stakes, a unit's attacks take a -1 penalty (i.e. move one place left on the Combat Table) - Section 5.1. Defenders fight at no penalty.

A unit can clear an obstacle constructed from stakes by halting next to it for one round. They may only do this if they are safe from attack (i.e. not threatened by a charge).

Ditches

Ditches are Prepared Linear Obstacles, which are crossed in the same way as other linear obstacles. Ditches can be filled in, but only by infantry who have brought fascines with them, and it takes one full round by a unit stationary in contact with the ditch to fill it in. They may only do this if they are safe from attack (i.e. not threatened by a charge). Infantry carrying fascines move with a -1" per round penalty. Units attacking across ditches fight with a combat penalty of -1, whilst defenders fight at no penalty.

Lilia (or lilia)

Lilia are so called because, when unconcealed, they superficially resemble the flower of the same name - being a pit with a sharpened stake within it. Lilia are Prepared Area Obstacles, and are always concealed from the enemy - the first they know of them is when the first troops fall into them. Troops marching unawares into lilia will take a combat attack of two Combat Dice, with a Combat Attack value of 2, treating the attack as if they were wearing Light Armour - shields don't count, of course, as this isn't an actual combat attack. If the unit takes casualties, it must take an immediate Reaction Test. On proceeding through the obstacle, the unit will arrive at the other side Disordered.

All units proceeding through a field of lilia do so as if it were Very Difficult Ground, and will arrive at the far side Disordered (whichever side the lilia nominally belong to!). Lilia can be filled in, with fascines, like a ditch, but Infantry doing so must have brought fascines to the battle, and will move with a penalty of -1" whilst carrying them. It takes two rounds for a unit to fill in a field of lilia. They may only do this if they are safe from attack (i.e. not threatened by a charge).

Camp Ramparts

Camp ramparts are Prepared Linear Obstacles. They consist, usually, of a ditch (which can be filled in, as described above for ditches), and a bank surmounted by stakes (see the rules for stakes above). Units attacking across camp ramparts do so with a -2 combat penalty (-1 for the bank, and -1 for the stakes). Units defending camp ramparts fight at no penalty. Units moving through camp ramparts do so as if they were two linear obstacles (ditch and bank).

Representing Obstacles on the Wargames Table

Stakes, ditches, and ramparts are easy to represent on the table - you simply need models of each to place on the table.

Lilia and caltrops, on the other hand, need a little more preparation. if they are concealed, the player must write down, before the battle begins, where they are positioned (it's easiest to assume they are in front of a unit, and the same size as the unit they're in front of). Once they're discovered, it's probably best to place a 'model' representing them on the table-top. This could be as simple as a rectangle of card, representing the area covered by the obstacle or, if you're a lunatic like me, you could make a terrain piece representing them.

