

# WARHAMMER

## CITY OF THE DAMNED

A Warhammer Skirmish Campaign



Tuomas Pirinen

By Tuomas Pirinen. New art by John Wigley.

**W**elcome to the City of the Damned! In this new series of articles I will be detailing a new project we are working on, along with experimental rules and game ideas. This should prove entertaining and give you an insight into how we develop our games. Hopefully in the future we can do this with several new projects as we work on them. Of course this all depends on what YOU think about the idea. So if you like this sort of article, write in and tell us!

Let's get down to business then. At the moment my stalwart comrades-in-arms here in the Studio are busy with a new game idea. Whether it ever becomes a finished game in its own right and hits the stores in the future is of course unknown. However this series of articles will show how Games Workshop games are born and developed. So how did it all get started...?



A Chaos Cultist warband slugs it out with a mercenary Ogre.

### ☠ MORDHEIM ☠

There was a time when it seemed like the Empire itself was dying. Torn by a terrible civil war, the realm of Sigmar had fallen into anarchy and chaos. Come now to those dark and terrible days when the struggle for the throne of the Emperor divided brother from brother.

Fires burn in the tomb-cold night, as bounty-hunters and ruthless mercenaries search for Wyrdstones amidst the ruins of the eastern city of Mordheim. All that is left of a once-proud city is blackened ruins, devastated by a comet from the sky. And when the vigilance of the authorities lapses, the traitors and Chaos worshippers gather. Corpses stir as practitioners of the forbidden art of Necromancy emerge from their hiding places.

The people of Mordheim pray for Lord Sigmar to deliver them from this horror, but these are dark times when Chaos is ascendant and walks abroad across the heaths and hills, corrupting those who fall easily into temptation. There is dark under the sun.



Witch Hunter



## IN THE BEGINNING...

As those who read my Soapbox in White Dwarf 221 know, I've been experimenting a lot with small-scale Warhammer battles lately. First we played a few battles using the rules for skirmishing from the Warhammer rulebook, but after a few games our warriors had developed their own characters and personalities. We had grown fond of them and wanted some continuity in our battles so I decided that I would write rules for a skirmish-style Warhammer game.

With these outlandish thoughts in my head, I sat down with Rick Priestley, the author of Warhammer, and proposed my plan. We both agreed that doing such a skirmish game would be brilliant fun! But first we needed a setting for the battles, an exciting, fascinating place where skirmishes could take place. We came up with a dark, ruined city in a remote corner of the Empire, devastated in a catastrophic disaster. Thus was born Mordheim, the City of the Damned – the setting for our game.

The background is often the first thing developed for a new army book, game or supplement, and for me personally, it is the most important part of our games. The rich and detailed world where the Warhammer games are set has been developed for over fifteen years, and now it is one of the most evolved of all fantasy worlds. It supplies a writer with a virtually inexhaustible source of ideas, and continues to inspire our artists and miniature designers. It is my love of the Old World and its strange and fascinating inhabitants which led me to play Warhammer in the first place. So flipping through my army books I found a suitable place and time for our city. I knew that once the background sounded right, everything else would follow. Throughout this article you can read the catastrophic history of Mordheim.



Nick Davis' Marienburg warband prepares for battle.

## EMPIRE IN FLAMES

It is the year 2000 of our lord Sigmar, and the Empire is in flames. The once-proud realm of the Emperors has fallen into anarchy and intermittent civil war. Centuries of disunity and rivalry has weakened the Empire and demoralised its people.

The Elector Counts have fought for control of the Imperial throne for centuries, and inevitably their ceaseless wars have disrupted the administration of the provinces. Rebellions and famine are the norm in the stricken lands of the Empire.

Now four ambitious and ruthless nobles have declared themselves as the rightful Emperor. The counts of Marienburg, Middenheim, Talabecland and Reikland all have a claim to the throne and none of them are willing to back down. So armies march on the roads as men struggle for worldly power. For many the world collapses as ruthless soldiers burn harvests and murder men whose only crime is to live in the wrong province.

For the common folk of the Empire it seems that the end of the world is nigh. A thousand redemptionist cults have sprung up throughout the land. Doom-laden flagellants travel from place to place preaching the coming twilight of the gods and spreading a message of universal destruction. Led by the maniac called Johan Cabal, these fanatics have grown powerful indeed.

As the power of the Electors has waned, the rich merchants of the Empire have grown to fill the power vacuum. The Merchants Guild now almost rivals the nobles in power. Larger towns have become prosperous under the leadership of the Burgomeisters, elected from the mercantile classes and other wealthy citizens. The Merchants Guild has even gone so far as to recruit its own troops.

When the times are desperate, men turn to the last hope: the Cult of Sigmar has grown powerful as men flock to the temples and shrines in hopes of salvation. But even the faithful of Sigmar are not safe. Despite the ancient laws which outlaw the use of sorcery and witchcraft, more and more wizards are reported to the Cult of Sigmar each day. Though the Order of Witch Hunters prosecute all manner of wizards and magicians tirelessly, and many a man has lost his life in the purifying flames, the use of magic persists.

But as people flock to the shrines of Sigmar, the Dark Gods grow in power, too. More and more men turn to the worship of the ancient gods of Chaos, the eldritch deities who thirst for the end of the world. Young innocents are stolen from the streets and sacrificed in horrible ways to satisfy the bloodthirsty gods of Chaos. Truly it is a dark time.

## **RULES, RULES, AND MORE RULES...**

After writing a rough storyline for the City of the Damned, I started experimenting with new game mechanics which would be better suited for dealing with battles between small groups of warriors. Soon I came up with rough rules for fighting skirmishes in the Warhammer world. Though the game system is firmly based on Warhammer, there is much more detail, as one might expect from a game which concentrates on individual warriors instead of whole regiments and armies! The combat system has become more evolved, with critical hits and special rules for equipment such as duelling pistols, bucklers, helmets and so on. In this way each warrior becomes an individual, with his own history and personality, as opposed to being just another miniature.

The biggest difference compared to the standard Warhammer game is of course that all of the warriors fight and act more or less as individuals – though staying close to your leader always helps! You have to make every move carefully and decide whether it is better to run or shoot your bow, take cover from enemy arrows or charge forward.

As warriors fight battles and adventure in the dark alleys and ruinous palaces of Mordheim, they gain experience and become more powerful and skilled. They accumulate new equipment, treasures and gold, and fortify their encampment against raids.

A good game needs interesting heroes and villains, so I developed rules and background for several warbands. In the vastness of the ruined city of Mordheim, Dwarf fortune-seekers, Witch Hunters and Mercenaries fight with possessed Chaos Cultists, the revolting Undead, vile Skaven and, of course, each other. Each of the warbands has its own unique agenda, a motivation as to why they have come to fight in this desolate place. All I needed now was a few playtesters to start fighting it out in the City of the Damned.



*Tuomas explains a new rule to Anthony Bath.*

*Tuomas has devised an entire campaign set in the city of Mordheim, for us to try out the new rules. Being as mad as a fish he has even built a scale model of the city for us to explore as we try to uncover the dark secrets that it hides.*



# CITY OF THE DAMNED

Outside the stormy politics and wars of the Empire lies the eastern province of Ostermark. For the most part Ostermark has remained apart from the squabbles and internal wars of the nobles. From time immemorial, the Counts of the von Raukov line have held their court in Mordheim, the capital of Ostermark. It is a fair city built on the banks of the River Stir. The people of Mordheim have become famous for their role as negotiators of peace between the rival nobles of the Empire, and the folk of Mordheim pray ceaselessly for Sigmar to deliver the Empire in its hour of need.

And indeed, exactly two millennia after the birth of Sigmar, a sign appeared in the night sky above Mordheim. A twin-tailed comet, the ancient symbol of the patron god of the Empire was seen amongst the multitude of stars. Surely this was the sign from Sigmar that the faithful had been praying for? Ignoring the dire warnings of seers and the oracles of the Shrine of Sigmar, the men of Mordheim gathered in the streets to rejoice the second coming of Sigmar, and the end of all strife in the Empire.

As the meteor plummeted ever downwards, the ecstasy of the crowds grew. Then, after a week of joy and heady rejoicing, the meteor struck the city, sending up a huge column of flames several miles high. The comet exploded with a titanic cracking noise. The sky burned red as blood, and a huge crater, one hundred yards across, appeared where a prosperous district of Mordheim had once been, forever blighting the capital of Ostermark. Shards of glowing, red-hot stone rained upon the city. Those who died immediately were lucky. Many others were permanently crippled and forced to live the rest of their days in miserable half-existence.

It was as if the Dark Gods had played a cruel joke on the poor folk of Mordheim, for all their hopes had been shattered and the promise of the salvation of Sigmar had proved to be an empty one. In one terrible night of fire and destruction, three quarters of Mordheim's population perished. The city was ruined, its buildings and palaces shattered, its warehouses and stores consumed by fire. The Count of Ostermark perished in the cataclysm, along with his family and most of his high-ranking officers. But the worst was yet to come.

A perpetual darkness settled over the city. Few rays of light penetrated the thick black cloud swept up by the plummeting meteor and the burning houses. In the chaos that followed murders and madness became more and more common. The Sigmarite priests warned that many men and women were being possessed by the Daemons of the dark, and whispered that an evil entity had come to the city with the comet and now hungered for the blood of men. Indeed it seemed that their predictions were true. More and more young disappeared each night. Mutations of the newly-born became commonplace.

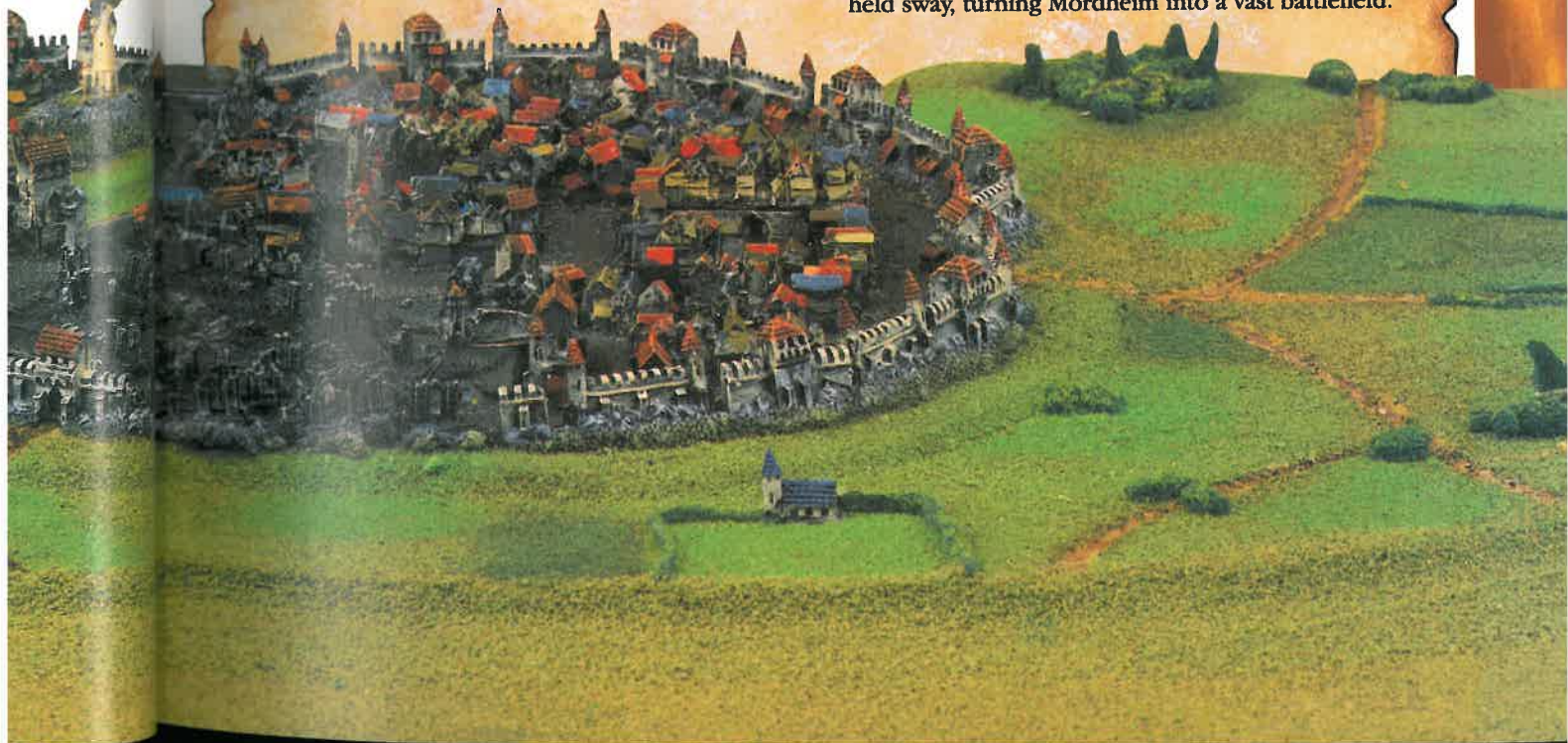
The militia of Ostermark broke into small groups which became mercenaries, brigands or worse. As central authority collapsed, the rule of the strong became the norm. Soon walking in the streets of Mordheim meant swift and cruel death. The men of Mordheim had no-one to turn to for help. The few remaining citizens left the devastated city, and founded several villages around their ancient capital, waiting for better times when they could reclaim their homes. Soon the whole of Mordheim became a ruined city, populated only by the most desperate of the common folk. The mad-eyed Chaos cultists, mutants, Orcs and Beastmen which had come from the surrounding forests to claim these ruins of civilisation held sway, turning Mordheim into a vast battlefield.

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# STONES OF POWER

But as the refugees from Mordheim flooded to Ostermark and other provinces of the Empire, some of them brought pieces of the meteor which had ruined their homes. Magical occurrences were connected with these shards. It was said that the meteorite that had struck Mordheim was no ordinary rock, but a shard from the dark circle of Morrslieb, the black moon which circles the Warhammer World.

Pieces of the meteor which glowed in the dark were bought by alchemists and curious nobles and were taken to all corners of the Empire. Soon rumours started to circulate in Ostermark. It was said that these Stones had power to heal the sick, turn base metals into gold and allow men to work miracles. First the men of the Empire laughed at such tall tales, claiming them to be the stories of lunatics and charlatans. But when Boris von Hafmann, the personal alchemist of Grand Prince Dietmar of Reikland, succeeded turning lead into gold by using a piece of the meteorite, the legend was born.

While the learned professors of the University of Nuln disclaimed all such rumours, the word spread like plague across the Empire. Eventually it reached the ears of the would-be Emperors. Such power promised an easy way to win the civil war and ascend to the throne of the Empire. Any one of these nobles would have willingly sent his armies to conquer Ostermark, except that any such attempts were swiftly blocked by the others. But the claimants of the throne would not

give up so easily. Fetching a price of one thousand gold crowns for each ounce of the 'Wyrdstone', the shards of the meteor suddenly became the most valuable gemstones in the Old World.

Soon a virtual flood of mercenary warbands were headed for Mordheim. The first of the fortune-seekers were careless and consequently very few returned. Sorties into the city were suicidally dangerous, and faced bitter resistance from the cultists, mutants and monsters which attacked the fortune seekers with unspeakable ferocity. The men also fought each other, attempting to gain the priceless meteoric stones for themselves. Even former friends turned on each other with the savagery of wild animals. It seemed that the polluted air of Mordheim turned even the most stoic and iron-willed men into bloodthirsty savages.

The survivors told what had become of the beautiful city of Mordheim. The ruins were scenes of savage battles and gruesome sacrifices to dark gods. The bestial Chaos Cultists gave a foretaste of what the world would be like under the dominion of Chaos. The sun was but a blood-red disc in the sky, for Mordheim rested under the eternal dark of the black meteor-dust cloud. It was even said that Skaven, the evil ratmen, had been seen scuttling in the darkness.

In a very short time Mordheim acquired a grim reputation throughout the Empire. It was said that to enter the gargoyle-guarded gates of Mordheim was to enter the very gates of death. But the prize offered for the Wyrdstone by the rival Imperial claimants was huge. A small piece of this stone was worth many times its own weight in gold, and desperate men could start their lives all over again with just few shards. And during this age of poverty and strife, desperate men were abundant. Countless men, Dwarfs, Ogres, Halflings and even a few Elves took up arms, donned armour and headed to Ostermark.

Now Mordheim is a city where death lurks behind every corner, danger fills all the shadowy alleys and ruined, labyrinthine streets. Death comes quickly here, in guises and forms too horrible to contemplate. Yet the promise of riches lures the avaricious as a candle lures moths, and thus more and more warriors come to the City of the Damned. Fortune seekers, zealots, madmen and mercenaries, the twisting streets and catacombs of Mordheim engulf them all, and the shadows claim them for their own.



*A Vampire with his foul minions.*

## SPREAD THE WORD!

When I announced my plans for the game, all the staff at the Studio were gripped with excitement! All over the place you can now see people converting their own warbands and preparing for the battles to come.

Everyone is looking forward to the forthcoming campaign where they can test their mettle and try to solve the mystery of Mordheim (or so they say – I reckon they just want to bludgeon their opponents and get rich!).

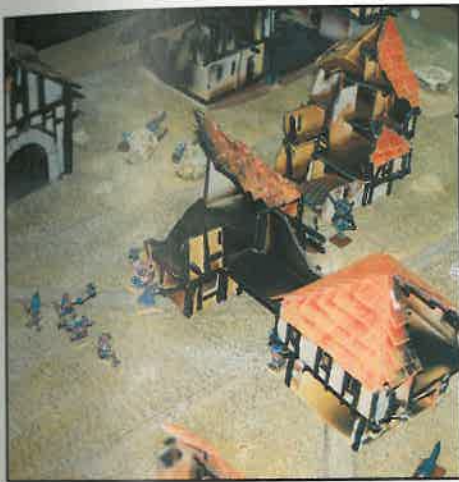
In the coming months I will describe how the project is going, and I will also let you in on some of the rules I am developing. Examples of warbands, rules for developing your warriors, some scenarios, etc. will allow you to play skirmish scale games with your Warhammer miniatures...

See you next month.

*Tuomas*



*You only need line of sight to the enemy, Jim – you don't have to be able to smell them too!*



*There are lots of different encounters that can take place in Mordheim, as well as more unusual adventures cooked up specially by Tuomas. For instance, Elissa, the beautiful daughter of Burgomeister Gotthard von Helsturm was recently kidnapped by Paul Sawyer's Possessed Chaos Cultists. She was to be sacrificed to Tzeentch on Geheimnisnacht, to gain favour with the Chaos god. Jim Butler's Marienburger mercenaries attacked the Possessed Cultists and, after much hard fighting, rescued the maiden before her soul was lost to Tzeentch. The Possessed have now placed a handsome bounty on the Marienburger leader's head...*