

Shield Wall 201

An Intermediate Understanding of the Calontir Shield Wall

By Troy Hafallen, Jan 2006

Fyrdman of Calontir

This paper is written as an outline for a “hands on” class with practical exercises, and as such will be accompanied by verbal input from myself and others to give the students a complete understanding of the inner workings of the Calontir Shield Wall.

Some materials which should be present include: scutum’s, spears, pole arms, and all other forms of weapons found in the shield wall. Fighters attending should bring their armor so they can fight to demonstrate what they have learned. All weapons and armor should be inspected prior to fighting.

Be it known to all, that I do not proclaim myself an expert on the Calontir Shield Wall. I would say that I am well versed in what it takes to make the wall successful and, I recognized a need for a class which covers this material for the newer fighters in Calontir. It is beneficial that when this class is taught, that several veteran fighters be present to help explain the material that will be covered and questioned.

In this class I will explain: formations, tactics, commands, special units, marching and battle scenarios associated with the Calontir Shield Wall.

This class is an attempt to pass on knowledge I have acquired through listening to veteran fighters, commanders, and by many, sometimes painful deaths in the wall.

I will assume that you my student are a SCA fighter in the Kingdom of Calontir with little to no war experience. That you have attended my Shield Wall 101 class or read the material, or that you have watched or participated in some capacity in the Calontir Shield Wall. It is helpful that you have some first hand experience with this subject prior to attending this class.

Within the Kingdom of Calontir we have the fighting ranks of Fyrdman, Huscarl and Knight. For descriptions in this paper, I will refer to these men as “veterans”. These fighters are a tremendous resource. If there is something in this paper or on the field that you don’t understand, ask one of them, I am sure they will help you out.

The reference to “solider” or “man” in this paper is meant as a common descriptive term of all combatant members of the Calontir Army, regardless of sex, rank or weapon style used.

Command Structure:

It is critical for each member of the army to know who each member of the chain of command is and where they will be on the field. The basic chain of command for the army looks something like the following:

- King. The absolute commander of the army, his word is final. He will give the general plans and orders for battles. He makes the treaties with our allies.

- General. Top commander of the army, answers only to the king. Will develop battle plans with input from his Captains, to achieve the goals of the king and our allies. Is in charge of the army, may designate jobs to subordinates for day to day running of the army.

- Captain Commander of one company or special unit. This units' size will vary depending on their mission. They answer to the General.

- Sergant Commander of part of a company or part of a special unit. These units will range in size from a couple of fighters to a dozen, depending on their mission. They answer to the Captain.

There are also the Fyrdman, Huscarls and Knights. These veterans have a lot to offer in leadership. These individuals will be exercising some control over the army as they are directed by the commander, and they will be using their own initiative and experience to direct calontiry during the fight.

Formations:

All formations will start with the standard wall. Depending on numerous battlefield conditions (which I will discuss later), variations to the formation will be made by the General. It is important for each member of the army to know the basic formation, and how the wall works. So when modifications are made, he knows how to adjust to be effective.

Missions:

An easy way to describe this is to ask: What are we trying to accomplish? But the answer will include the how's', where's' and when's.

1. Your mission in the wall is to make your enemy die for his king.
2. A short time goal to achieve within the scenario to win war points.

Special Units:

There are many types of specialty units. Each of the specialty units will be composed of members who can use their skills to maximize the effectiveness of the unit to assure the success of their mission.

Skirmishers primarily are used to harass the enemy prior to the main forces engaging each other. Some of the things they are used to do are: try to redirect the enemy force by having them chase you or attack a flank and force them to shift their line. The task performed by the skirmishing unit will vary from battle to battle and will be determined by the generals overall plan for the battle.

Cavalry units are usually comprised of fighters in light armor and are good at running long distances. These are two traits that are necessary for them to do their job well, as they will be running all over the field.

Other specialty units can be made by the commander to fill his needs.

Treaties:

Treaties are agreements made by our king with our allies as to what will be expected of our army and what can be expected from our allies. These treaties cover items such as battle plans, land allocations, and many other items.

Commands:

Commands are words and series of words, which the army is trained to understand and react to in a timely manner. Commands can be broken down in to two basic groups: commands given at the “halt”, and commands given “on the march”.

When giving commands, it is helpful to say “Calontir!” first; this will help to get everyone’s attention. The captains and sergeants should echo the commands, so as to make sure that EVERYONE has heard it and understands what is about to happen.

The commands are patterned after the United States Military Drill and Ceremony commands. This was done simply because it works.

There is not a list of standard commands at this time, however what is listed here are commands which are developing into the generally accepted list.

Commands at the Halt-

Form up, Fall in, Reform – all used to turn a group of Calontir fighters into an army. Scutum's form in the front rank, artillery next and spears next. With secondary shields and reserves to the rear. This standard formation can be modified by the general as he sees fit.

STAY “Stay the line” or “Stand your ground” mean pretty much the same thing. Given when the commander wants to stop the advance of the wall.

DRESS During the battle, the line will become sporadic as men die, or as the line moves forward. “Dress the line”, means for you to look to your left and right, and reform a straight line, shoulder to shoulder. Can be given at the halt or while moving.

KNELL There may come a time when the commander will want the wall to keep a piece of land from the enemy. The command is “Front rank knell”. This means just what is said. The front rank with scutum's will go to their knees, overlap shields and defend. The 2nd and 3rd ranks will fill in close, usually with their knees in the backs of the scutum drivers. You may also hear “Scutum’s knell or Ground Scutum’s.

STAND Given sometime after the “Knell” command. To get the front rank up and ready to move. “Front rank stand” or “Scutum's Rise”.

CHARGE Self explanatory. You can not run ramming speed until contact with the enemy. You must walk the last three steps. This is to prevent people from getting run over like a football player. After shield contact is made continue the push.

Fall Back To disengage the army from combat, and leave the area. Do not turn your back to the enemy.

Commands on the March –

Marching is the organized movement of a group from one point to another. Hopefully, they are facing the enemy or objective and are ready to fight.

There are several commands which are used to direct the army, so as to go around obstacles or arrive at the destination oriented in a desired direction.

Advance at the Step – One step at a time, all members stepping on the same foot at the same time, starting with the left. Step!, Step!, Step! The line should at all times move as a unit. You will hear the commander tell the line to step forward so many steps or to step to contact. An acceptable step is a normal stride, keeping your neighbor at your side. Step – step – step – step.

Advance to contact – Step together, stay together and keep going until our scutum's are touching theirs.

Advance through contact – Advance to contact then keep going. The front ranks should advance at least 3 ranks deep into the enemy; the commander will be barking orders during this activity, listen for directions and keep advancing.

Dress Left/Right or Dress the Ranks – This is used to direct the ranks to look to their left and right, and straighten the lines so as to remove the staggered look that happens when advancing.

Wheel – Used to move the formation in a fashion where all ranks will stay in the basic formation. This movement can be hard to understand, but once you can do it, Calontir can deliver mass death to our opponents no matter where they may be.

Wheel Left - The far left scutum will stop moving forward, but moving his feet to stay in step with the army. The far right scutum will move at a quick step so as to move the front rank 45' to 90' from its previous position.

At Pavel's Top Speed – This is a reference to Master Pavel. Basically it means that the formation will move at the speed of its slowest member, and will not leave anyone behind.

Adjust Right or Left – A command given to move the formation left or right of an obstacle on the field. Sometimes given as Slide Left or Right.

Driving the Bus – This is a term used to describe the job of the person directing the formation on the field to it's objective. Once in a while when things go wrong in the fight it is said that they "Crashed the Bus".

At this time, if the location and time permit, the student should practicing marching in the standard formation. This can be done without helmets to aid them in hearing the commands.

Charges:

Column – A column of fighters going into the breach one after another, this charge is usually made of shields and artillery to maximize the punch. They should attempt to break through the enemies defenses and engage a target designated by the commander.

Sweep – A group of fighters which run down the front of an enemy formation (left to right or right to left) disrupting spearmen. The focus of this charge is to disrupt and kill the enemy spearmen. This charge can originate from and return to our shield wall. Sometimes the skirmishers will be used for this attack; other times will find the commander asking for volunteers to do it.

Pulse – A group of fighters which will charge into the enemy and attempt to kill as many as possible and then back off, rejoining the shield wall. This is done to disrupt the enemy and take away their momentum. It can be used to disrupt them as they regroup and prepare to attack.

At this time if the location permits, the students should practice these types of charges. Defending and Attacking.

Tactics:

Tactics are the plans of your commander based on his war experience, the enemy situation, battlefield layout, our army's capabilities, and battle objectives. It is also the answer to; what are we going to do now? How do we maximize our assets to be most effective against our enemy?

There will be hours before a battle spent debating the best course of action, and many more spent later analyzing the battle, enjoying the strengths of a plan and eliminating the weakness, to insure that all future battles will be counted among our victories.

It is your job as a member of the army to be familiar with the plan so you can do your job in the wall or special unit. It can be helpful to point out weaknesses in the enemy formation, but it is destructive to the army as a whole to point out what you believe to be flaws with the plan. If you think you can do a better job as a leader, then I would encourage you to volunteer for a leadership position at your next opportunity. Don't tear down the morale of the army.

Try to remember our wars are for fun, and it is always "A clever plan".

Archers:

Not all scenarios will allow archers, so it is important that they understand the commanders intention on the field for the scenarios they are allowed. There are a few targets that should always be high on the hit list for our archers; the enemy commander and king, other archers, enemy spearmen, enemy special units and any fighter making himself a nuisance.

Siege Weapons:

Not all scenarios will allow siege weapons, so it is important that they understand the commanders intent on the field for the scenarios they are allowed. The targets that they engage will be determined by the general. There may be a special unit designated to defend the siege weapon if the situation dictates.

Battle Scenarios and Conditions:

Here I will discuss some of the general scenarios that you will find yourself in as a member of the Calontir Army.

Objectives are the goals that you want to achieve with the battle. Remember that fun and safety are two that should always be on the list. Each member of the army should be made aware of what they are trying to accomplish with the battle. Not only will they fight harder knowing what is going on, but when something goes wrong, they will be able to make corrections on the field to get back on track and continue with the plan.

Time . A lot of battles will use a time limit as part of the scenario. This is to limit the battle so other scenarios can be done as well. If you find yourself in a command position, it will help you a lot if you can have someone keep track of the time left in the battle. This will prove helpful as you will be able to make full advantage of your available resources.

Fort – Every war has a fort scenario, whether there is a real fort or just an area marked off to represent one. This is one scenario where you can count on archery and siege weapons. The main features of the fort that will be important here are the doors and windows, as they will be your way in, or the enemies' way in.

Bridge – The bridge is a funnel point; this feature should be understood and used to your benefit if possible. Spear duels often occur on bridges, some of the things you can do to break them are pulse charges and archery. Sweep charges don't work well on bridges due to the limited area.

Open Field – Each battle will have some type of scenario, time limit, resurrection, or count the flag. Most of these battles will allow siege weapons and archery. Our basic formation dominates these battles, this is what it was made for.

Woods- These battles can be hazardous due to the severely broken terrain. Caution should be exercised while formulating the plan for the battle. If possible the commanders should walk the planned battle area for hazards and have them removed or roped off to prevent injuries. A good way to make your way through woods are in small groups of 4 to 9. Each group should have a couple of shields, a couple of artillery and a spear or two. These groups can use the trees and brush as the broken terrain it is, and make there way through the enemy.

Water Obstacles - Rivers and Fords can be treated like broken terrain for planning purposes. You do want to ask if you can walk through the water, or does it sweep you away to your death.

Town / Village. More broken terrain for planning purposes, with the added benefit of using the buildings to fight in and around. Do get with the marshals so as to clarify the rules of engagement. Fighting through doors and windows, use of siege weapons and archery, all are points that should be addressed in the plan. Small groups work well here as well, fighting thier way from building to building.

At this time students should spend some time fighting as a shield wall. Defending and attacking and marching.

References:

- *Master Pavel Iosefovich. Credited as the Father of the Calontir Shield Wall. His wisdom has contributed to many Calontir victories.
- * Small Unit Fighting, Fighter 201 by Duke Kensor
- * Basic Melee Skills, Fighter 202 by Duke Kensor
- * Fundamentals of Large Unit Command in Society Warfare, by Duke Kensor
- * Army Organization for Estrella by HL Nazir al-Tawil
- *Shield Wall 101 by Troy Hafallen, A basic course in the function of the Calontir Shield Wall.
- *Sargenting 101 by HL Clef of Cividale. Very good instruction on giving orders on the field and a good list of movement commands.

There are many veterans, mentors and peers, which have added to my knowledge of the shield wall and the Calontir Army as a whole. Without their instruction I would not have been able to achieve the things I have. I won't post a list of names of the Calontiry that I have found to be helpful for fear of overlooking someone; the list would be so long anyway it would be better to say that if you are in the Calontir Army, I have learned something from you.
Thank you.

To those who stood as an opponent and provided me with hours of fun, winning and losing.
Thank you.

For without you, I never would have known the agony of defeat,
or the thrill of victory.

