

Bemis Heights

By early October 1777 things were getting desperate for John Burgoyne's army. With the news that Howe and Clinton would not be sending troops north from New York, the plan to isolate New England from the other colonies could not be completed. The army had over extended its supply lines and a cut in rations was ordered on the 3rd. Burgoyne's subordinates urged a withdrawal to re-establish communications and supply, but the commander would not contemplate such a thing, preferring to roll the dice one more time.

On the morning of the 7th a strong force of British and Hessian troops was dispatched on a reconnaissance in force and foraging raid around the left flank of the rebel army entrenched on the Bemis Heights. If this was successful then it would be followed on the 8th by a full assault. In the event, the reconnaissance was not successful. The terrain slowed the advance to a crawl and after advancing only a short distance the troops found themselves engaged by the rebel brigades of Poor and Morgan.

The British and Hessian commanders began to fall back on their defensive lines, but were hard pressed by the rebels, who were now joined by Learned's Brigade. A fierce battle ensued, working its way around the right flank of Burgoyne's camp. This was anchored between two redoubts. As the line of troops collapsed, the rebels succeeded in

capturing Breyman's redoubt, rendering the entire British defence untenable and prompting Burgoyne to bring his entire army back to the main part of his camp near the Hudson River.

Following the Battle of Bemis Heights it was clear even to Burgoyne that his position was untenable. It was however far too late to extricate his army and he was forced to surrender to General Horatio Gates soon after.

OVERVIEW

This scenario begins after the British and Hessian forces have begun to fall back from their reconnaissance mission. They must now seek to defend the redoubts without taking excessive casualties.

THE ARMIES

By the time of Bemis Heights Burgoyne's army was in a sorry state. While the troops retained their professionalism they were suffering from the effects of hard campaigning and a lack of provisions. Compared to many other scenarios, the British and Hessians here have access to very few special rules. The British infantry have been rated as "Crack", but only in the context of a lowered Stamina rating to emphasise their brittleness by this stage in the campaign. The Hessians have not been penalised in



THE LAST STAND OF BURGOYNE'S ARMY

Northern Colonies, 7th October 1777

the same way, but feel free to play around with these ideas if you want to. I have perhaps been slightly kind in allowing British and Hessian Grenadiers a high hand-to-hand value and the British elites a high morale, but these were generally fine troops who continued to fight with valour in the face of extreme adversity.

If the British and Hessians were at a low-ebb, then the rebel army was on the rise. Their confidence was increasing, as was their tactical proficiency. The Continental troops at Bemis Heights were the equal of their fatigued opponents and the militia also gave a very good account of themselves, perhaps aided by the dense terrain and the parlous state of the enemy. The army had also been strengthened by the arrival of Daniel Morgan with his own regiment of experienced riflemen and a supporting battalion of veteran light infantry detachments commanded by Major Henry Dearborn. I have considered Morgan's Brigade as the best units on either side at the battle.

Against a background of generally average command ability two officers stand out. Simon Fraser was a talented and consistently reliable officer who is well worth a staff rating of 9. Likewise on the rebel side, Arnold was a dynamic commander on the 7th October and should also be rated a 9. Arnold could also be considered aggressive, as described in the *Black Powder* rulebook. All other commanders should be given a staff rating of 8.

"The British troops were hard pressed, but retreated in good order; they were obliged to leave six pieces of cannon behind, all the horses having been killed, and all the artillery men, who had, as usual, behaved with the utmost bravery, being either killed or wounded."

Sergeant Roger Lamb



ORDERS OF BATTLE

CROWN FORCES

Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne (C-in-C)

Brigadier Simon Fraser

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • British Light Infantry | 1 British Elite Infantry |
| • 24th Foot | 1 British Infantry |
| • Scouts | 1 Scouts |

Major-General Riedesel

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • Hessian battalion | 1 Hessian Infantry |
| • Hessian battalion | 1 Hessian Infantry |
| • Hessian Jägers | 1 Jägers |
| • Hessian 6-pounders | 1 Artillery |
| • Hessian 12-pounders | 1 Heavy Artillery |

In Breyman's Redoubt

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| • Hessian Grenadiers | 1 Hessian Grenadiers |
| • Hessian 6-pounders | 1 Artillery |

Major-General Phillips

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • British Grenadiers | 1 British Elite Infantry |
|----------------------|--------------------------|

In Balcarres' Redoubt

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| • British battalion | 1 British Infantry |
| • Royal Artillery 6-pounders | 1 Artillery |
| • Royal Artillery howitzers | 1 Howitzers |

REBEL FORCES

Major-General Benedict Arnold (C-in-C)

Brigadier-General Daniel Morgan

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| • Morgan's Rifles | 2 Rifles |
| • Dearborn's Light Infantry | 1 Light Infantry |

Brigadier-General Enoch Poor

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 1st New Hampshire Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 2nd New Hampshire Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 3rd New Hampshire Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 2nd New York Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 4th New York Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • Connecticut Militia | 2 Connecticut Militia |
| • State artillery 6-pounder section | 1 Artillery |

Brigadier-General Ebenezer Learned

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| • 2nd Massachusetts Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 8th Massachusetts Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 9th Massachusetts Continentals | 1 Continentals |
| • 1st Canadian Regiment | 1 Continentals |
| • State artillery 6-pounder artillery | 1 Artillery |

Brigadier-General Abraham Ten-Broeck

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| • Albany County Militia | 3 New York Militia |
|-------------------------|--------------------|

THE TABLE

The scenario is designed to fit on an 8 foot x 6 foot table using a standard unit frontage of around six inches.

The terrain is largely a mix of woods and open fields. The woods are dense and reduce line of sight to six inches and movement to half of normal speed. Units in woods get +1 to their morale save rolls.

Hills block line of sight, but do not otherwise affect the battle.

The battle features two redoubts. These are treated as buildings, following the rules in the *Black Powder* rulebook with the following amendment; units occupying redoubts gain +2 to morale save rolls unless fighting in hand-to-hand combat against a unit attacking the rear of the redoubt, in which case they add only +1.

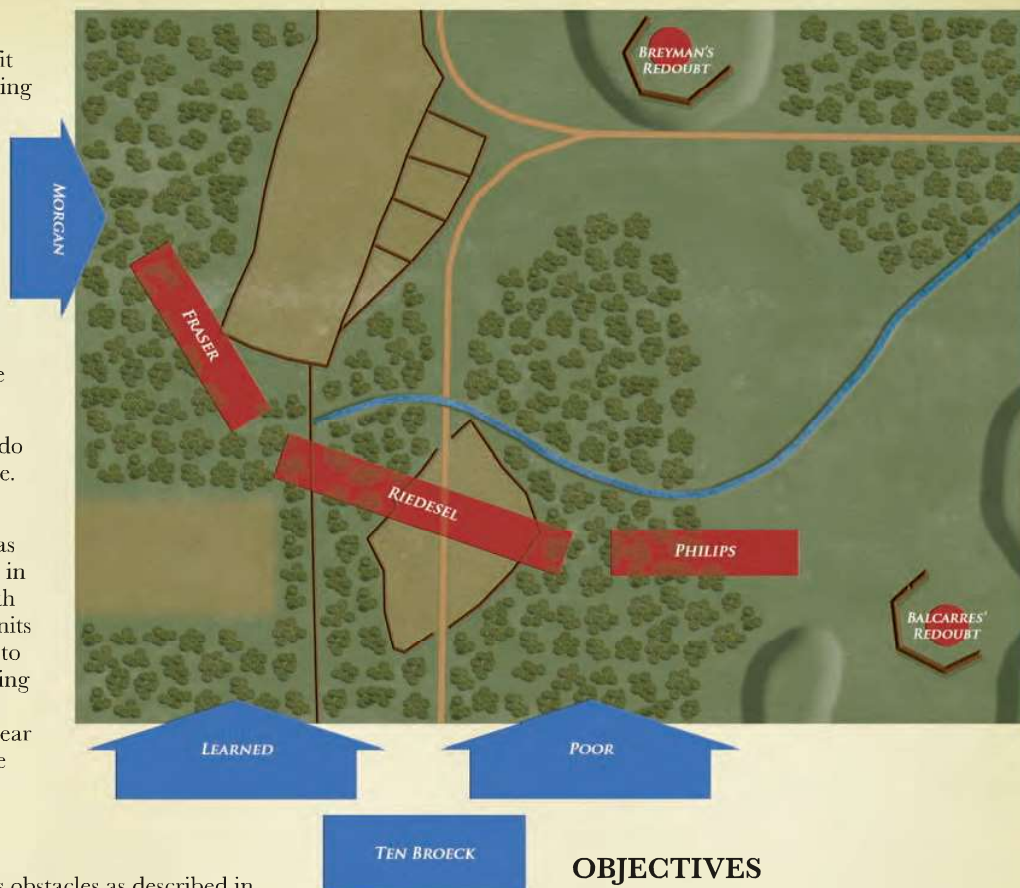
The fields are mostly surrounded by fences. These and the stream are treated as obstacles as described in the *Black Powder* rulebook.

DISPOSITIONS

Burgoyne's army deploys as shown on the map. The garrisons assigned to each of the two redoubts must deploy in those redoubts and the artillery may not leave once emplaced.

The rebel troops enter in the areas shown from the first turn of the battle. Ten Broeck's Brigade may not attempt to enter until two or more Crown units have been destroyed.

The rebels act first each turn.



OBJECTIVES

The game is decided by breaking the enemy army or American capture of both redoubts. Redoubts are controlled if only one side has units in the redoubt. Redoubts remain controlled if troops leave them, until the enemy enters them with troops of their own. Both redoubts start under British control.

If the Americans simultaneously control both redoubts or break the British army, then they claim an immediate victory. The British must break the American army to win.

Brigades will break, as described in *Black Powder*, when more than half of the brigade begins a turn routed or shaken. Each army will break once two of its brigades are broken.



RIEDELSEL'S HESSIANS

Crown Forces: Stats and Special Rules

Unit	Type	Armament	Hand-to-Hand	Shooting	Morale	Stamina	Special
Scouts	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	3	2	5+	2	Marauders, Skirmish Small Unit
British Elite Infantry	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	7	3	3+	2	Crack
British Infantry	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	6	3	4+	2	Crack
Hessian Infantry	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	6	3	4+	3	-
Hessian Grenadiers	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	7	3	4+	4	-
Jägers	Infantry	Rifled Musket	3	2	4+	2	Sharpshooter, Skirmish, Small Unit
Artillery	Artillery	Smoothbore Artillery	1	3-2-1	4+	2	Range: 48"
Heavy Artillery	Artillery	Heavy Smoothbore Artillery	1	3-2-1	4+	2	Range: 60"
Howitzers	Artillery	Smoothbore Howitzer	1	2	4+	2	Range: 48"

Special Rules

Crack: The British infantry are brittle after the strains of the previous months. They may re-roll one failed morale roll whenever they test morale, provided they have taken no hits so far in the battle.

Marauders: The scouts are expected to operate on the extreme flanks of the army and may ignore distance penalties when receiving orders.

Skirmish: The scouts and jägers are expected to fight in dispersed formations to take maximum advantage of cover. They must use skirmish formation throughout the battle. Other units are assumed to use open order in woods so may not specifically use skirmish formation.

Sharpshooter: The jägers are expert in the use of their rifles and may re-roll one miss every time they shoot during the battle.

Rules for howitzers can be found in the Advanced Rules section of the *Black Powder* rulebook.

Rebel Forces: Stats and Special Rules

Unit	Type	Armament	Hand-to-Hand	Shooting	Morale	Stamina	Special
Rifles	Infantry	Rifled Musket	2	1	3+	2	Crack, Sharpshooter Skirmish, Small Unit
Light Infantry	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	6	3	3+	3	Crack, Skirmish
Continental	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	6	3	4+	3	-
Connecticut Militia	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	4	3	5+	3	Unreliable
New York Militia	Infantry	Smoothbore Musket	6	4	5+	4	Unreliable
Artillery	Artillery	Smoothbore Artillery	1	3-2-1	4+	2	Range: 48"

Special Rules

Crack: The riflemen and light infantry are veteran units with high confidence. They have a high morale value and may also re-roll one failed morale roll if they have not taken any hits so far in the battle.

Sharpshooter: The riflemen are experts in the use of their rifled muskets. They may re-roll one miss every time they shoot in the battle, although they do have a lower shooting value to reflect the long time necessary to re-load their rifles.

Skirmish: The riflemen and light infantry are experienced skirmishers and may use skirmish formation whenever they wish during the battle. Other infantry may only use skirmish formation in woods.

Unreliable: The militia performed well, but lack the training of the other troops so may not move on a command roll that equals the staff rating of the commander.