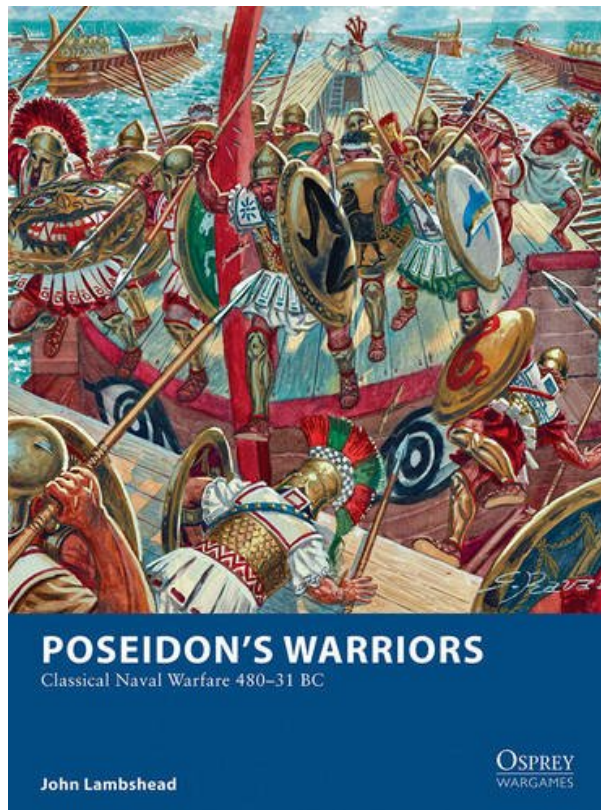
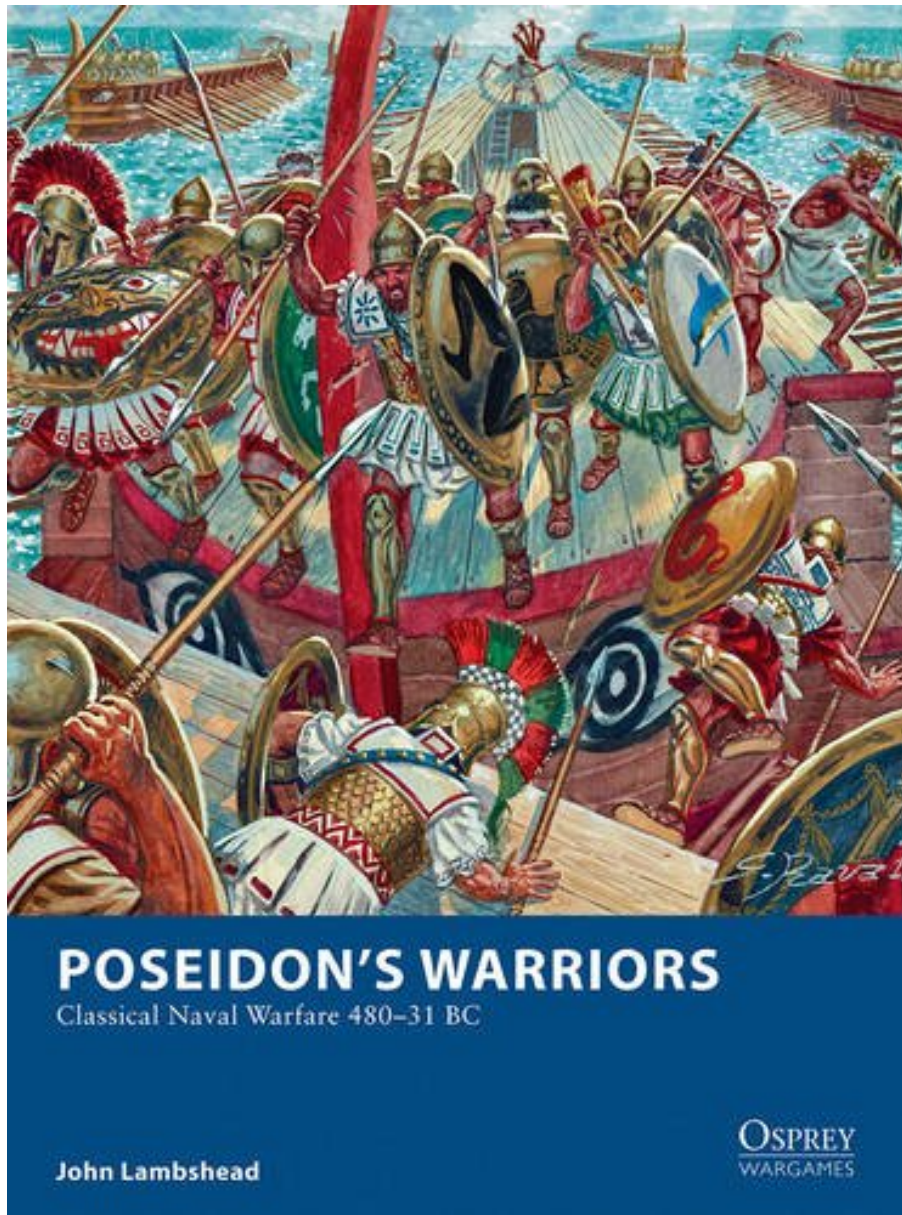


POSEIDON'S WARRIORS: CLASSICAL NAVAL WARFARE 480-31 BC (OSPREY WARGAMES) BY JOHN LAMBSHEAD



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Classical Naval Warfare 480-31 BC

John Lamshead

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Review

"I liked these rules so much that I played a couple games with some hand drawn cardboard counters (thank you Peter Dennis for the inspiration!) and then I placed an order for some 1/1200 galleys. I can whole heartily recommend you do the same!" - Cigar Box Battle

About the Author

John Lamshead is a retired senior scientific civil servant who has worked for the British Museum of Natural History, Southampton University, the University of California, and the Royal Society, with more than a hundred scientific articles to his name. He is also an experienced author and game designer, having written for Baen Books, Games Workshop, and Warlord Games, among others.

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Poseidon's Warriors is a set of wargaming rules for large-scale naval actions between fleets of Classical galleys, from the Greek and Persian clash at the Battle of Salamis, to the Battle of Actium that decided the fate of Rome. With so many of these battles taking place around islands or in narrow channels and shallow waters, sneaky tactics and cunning maneuvers are a hallmark of the era's warfare. The rules use an integrated turn system to allow a commander to position ships to go in and ram without being rammed in return, or to employ feints and traps to tempt the enemy out of position and leave his ships vulnerable to a follow-up strike.

With data for ships throughout the period, rules for famous admirals, historical scenarios, a campaign system, and a brief historical summary for those who wish to refresh their memory of the era, Poseidon's Warriors offers everything players need to equip themselves for the battles and campaigns of the first great age of naval warfare.

- Sales Rank: #335899 in Books
- Brand: Osprey Wargames Osprey
- Published on: 2016-06-21
- Released on: 2016-06-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.68" h x .26" w x 5.63" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 64 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Classical naval warfare, for wargamers

By JPS

This is essentially a book for wargamers, from a collection (Osprey Wargames), which has exactly this purpose.

Others, however, might also find it useful as a rather good introduction and overview. This is because it makes most of the main points about naval warfare under oars in the Mediterranean in Ancient times, up to the battle of Actium included, including all the logistical limitations inherent to gallery warfare.

Another advantage, of course, is that it pulls together and summarises materials found in numerous more specialised titles, some of which are listed in the rather short bibliography. It also explains the main features of such warfare in short, concise terms and spares the reader the technical jargon and explanations, while still making the main points that need to be made.

A number of the battle and campaign scenarios, whether historical or supposedly “freestyle” (although these also have similarities with a number of historical events) are rather interesting, particularly those about assaulting or defending harbours, which may be among the less well known.

Note that the scenarios are rather simple ones that are both easy to set up and which can be played in about half a dozen rounds or so. I got the impression that the booklet was somewhat targeted towards beginners or at least towards readers which may be trying out their first naval war game. To be fair, there is however nothing stopping you from making the games more complex and include bigger fleets, once you have the basic materials and scenarios.

I did nevertheless have a few surprises, and perhaps a few reservations.

I was for instance a bit disappointed to find out that ALL of the colour plates are essentially lifted from a range of other Osprey titles on classical naval warfare.

I was also surprised by the author’s statement believing that “Carthage failed to produce any exceptional admirals” and that this “was one of the great mysteries”, without any further attempt to explain this. I am not at all sure that this is correct, by the way, and there are at least a couple of names that come to mind and who were responsible for utterly defeating a Roman fleet at Drepana thanks to their much superior seamanship.

I was also a bit surprised about the author’s choices of exceptional admirals (all Greeks by the way). Instead of Themistocle, Alcibiades and Demetrios, neither of which were essentially admirals nor exceptional in this respect although they did win at least one naval battle each, one could have expected the Athenians Cimon and Conon, in particular.

One last point, regarding the scenario for the battle of Myonessus in 190 BC, has to do with the set-up of the scenario. This battle opposed a Seleucid fleet to an allied Romano-Rhodian one. The Seleucid fleet only includes 3 squadrons of triremes and two polyremes (a six and a seven) while the Rhodians has a squadron of fours and the Romans have five squadrons of fives. There seems to be a glitch in the scenario or a typo perhaps since, historically, the Seleucid had about ninety ships, half were larger than triremes and only five were sixes or sevens.

Four stars

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Good Set of Convention-Friendly Rules

By T. Henkle

've always been intrigued by ancient naval warfare ever since I first saw the 1959 film "Ben-Hur." The naval battle is still my favorite part of the movie, despite the historical inaccuracies. I'm such a fan of this version, I'm not sure what to think about the upcoming remake.

If I do see the new "Ben-Hur," I'll write up a movie review. In the meantime, I'll get back on course with this rulebook review...

About 30 years ago, I picked up a used copy of "Trireme" at a game store in North Carolina and managed to play it a few times. Fast forward about 15 years, when my friend Joe gave me a copy of "War Galley" for Christmas. I played this a couple of times too, and in fact, like the rules better than "Trireme." Not to mention the counters are a lot nicer and more detailed.

I still have both boardgames, but I've always wanted to play an ancient naval game using miniatures. As fate would have it, my friend Dean told me during a visit that he has the rules "Poseidon's Warriors" along with some miniature ships, and wondered if I'd be interested in playing. I told him, "of course," and ordered the rules within a week.

"Poseidon's Warriors" is a 64-page wargame rule booklet covering naval warfare from 480 to 30 B.C. After a 5-page intro, the rules themselves only take up 14 pages (10-24). The rest of the booklet consists of historical scenarios, scenario and campaign set-ups.

The good points about "Poseidon's Warriors" are:

1. The rules are short and easy, even easier than "Trireme" and "War Galley." This makes the game great for beginners, and gamemasters running a session at a game convention.
2. The book is nicely illustrated with artwork depicting the actual battles and pictures of ship miniatures.
3. It's a bargain, ranging in price from just under \$14 to about \$20.

But on the other tip of the trident:

1. Some may consider the rules too basic. For instance, merchant ships, which relied solely on wind power can move in any direction the owning player wishes. The author did not want to include complex sailing rules, especially for ships he viewed as mere targets.
2. While there is a front & back page Quick Reference Sheet there are other charts scattered throughout the book that may take some time to find.
3. And speaking of the charts themselves, the font size is about half that of the regular text, which I find almost impossible to read without my higher-powered, bifocal reading glasses.

One note about all three games: More often than not, ancient naval battles involved hundreds of ships. So each game often scales its battles from a 3:1 to 15:1 ratio.

In general, Osprey Publishing seems to be hitting the right note by cranking out easy, inexpensive rules that are enjoyed by gamers and gamemasters alike. During this year's Enfilade! convention, several games of "Dragon Rampant," "Lion Rampant," "Frostgrave" and "In Her Majesty's Name" were played.

I'm sure "Poseidon's Warriors" will soon be fought-out at one of our region's future conventions, or game days.

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