

This action-packed battle report for The Two Towers is the first of two covering the initial stages of the Uruk-hai assault on Helm's Deep.

ASSAULT ON THE DEEPING WALL

A battle report for The Two Towers

The siege of Helm's Deep is one of the most evocative sequences in the film of The Two Towers.

Saruman has launched his attack on the lands of the Rohirrim and the Riders of Rohan have retreated to their ancient fastness of Helm's Deep in order to prepare themselves for the coming attack. There they are joined by Haldir accompanied by a force of Elves. The beleaguered band hold out against the horde of Uruk-hai (helped by an angry Dwarf and his heroic friends!).

As this latest version of The Lord of The Rings game includes rules for fighting siege games this seemed to be

the ideal opportunity for us to demonstrate the new rules in their right and proper environment.

There are a number of siege scenarios in The Two Towers rules manual and we chose to fight two of them, The Deeping Wall and The Gateway. These are ideal, as they can be linked to provide a two part mini-campaign with the results of the first game affecting who participates in the second. The second part of this battle can be found on pages 54-65.

We already had the fantastic Helm's Deep board constructed by Dave Andrews and Mark Jones available to provide a stunning setting for the two

games and everybody was eager to see a game played upon it.

We asked Rowland Cox to take command of the Evil besieging forces. Rowland last played as the Fellowship in the Balin's Tomb battle report that we published in White Dwarf 265, so commanding the Uruk-hai should make a nice change for him.

Matthew Ward is the new member of Alessio's The Lord of The Rings development team and was eager to take on the role of commanding the defenders of the Deeping Wall.

Read on to see what happens...



The beleaguered defenders of Helm's Deep prepare for yet another assault.



The Fighting Uruk-hai prepare to attack.

SCENARIO 5 – THE DEEPING WALL



MIGHT OF THE WHITE HAND

Rowland Cox: This scenario pitches the forces of Saruman, in this case his Uruk-hai, against a pitiful few Rohirrim and Elves. All that stands in

Saruman's way is the old fort Helm's Deep and a small band of Heroes. A primitive black powder charge with an Uruk-hai fuse will take care of the walls, but when it comes to the Heroes, well let's just hope there are enough Uruk-hai. If that wasn't enough, any surviving heroes will participate in the next scenario, The Gateway, as we are playing them one after another.

The Evil forces consist of a well equipped siege force. My personal favourite troop choice is the ferocious Uruk-hai Berserker. The Berserkers form an essential part of the siege assault force, incredibly tough, unbreakable courage, well armed and with 2 Attacks, if anyone can get over the Deeping Wall it's going to be these guys.

In order to get my forces over the wall I had to split up the Good Heroes. If I concentrated my forces, then rest assured I would be facing Aragorn, Gimli, Legolas and Haldir together, and those powerful Heroes would soon halt the Uruk-hai advance. So my plan was a simple one: attack at the furthest points from where the Heroes would start. I would split my force so that the strongest part would attack at the very end of the Deeping Wall, the furthest point from the Heroes. This force would contain all my Uruk-hai Captains; their store of Might was my best chance of getting over the walls quickly. I

would back the Captains up with Berserkers which together should be able to capitalise on any early gains made on the walls.

The other part would attack at the furthest part of the main wall. Although not supported by Captains, this force contained an equal share of Berserkers. Matt would have to assign some of his Heroes to stop these deadly warriors, as even Elven troops will be overpowered by their fearsome charge. Six crossbowmen were deployed centrally, so they could support both parts of my assault. The other four would advance on the main wall, filling out the numbers. The siege engine was placed next to the crossbowmen, again to support both assaults. This ingenious contraption could launch a siege ladder against a wall with an Uruk-hai attached. I was looking forward to seeing Matthew's face when a tide of Berserkers rode up against his fortress walls! Last but not least, the demolition teams. I consigned one team per force, again keeping the Good side on its toes. To ensure a successful detonation, an Uruk-hai Berserker is essential; they automatically pass the Courage test to detonate due to their Courage value of 8. It's a great life being a Berserker – running, fighting, and blowing yourself up!

As this game was being played back to back with Scenario 6, The Gateway, I had to be mindful of how many of the Good Heroes I could kill or wear down. I might win the battle by avoiding the Heroes, but the war would be lost unless I could diminish their store of Might and slim their numbers. So in summary, I had to try and win this game whilst not sabotaging my chances in the next one!



DEFENDING THE DEEPING

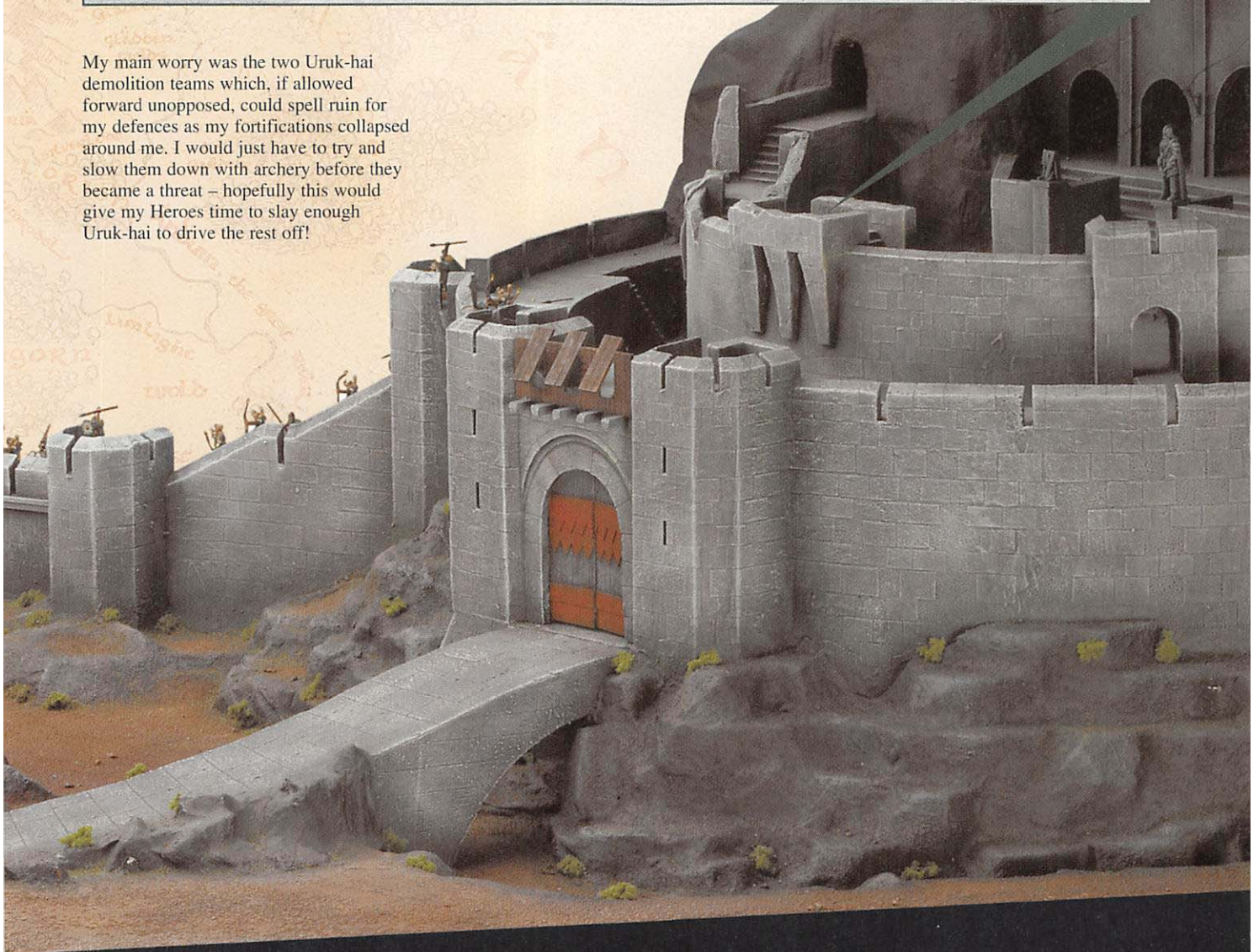
Matthew: Someone (I forget who) once said that to defeat a well-sited defensive force requires an attacking force of at least three times the size of that of the defenders. Well, with arguably the toughest fortress in Middle-earth, and some of the toughest Heroes in Middle-earth to defend it, I certainly had all the best tools for the job. That said, even counting my Heroes my defensive forces still only numbered twenty. Against these gallant souls would be matched – you guessed it – exactly sixty Uruk-hai armed to the teeth with all manner of siege equipment.

As far as strategy was concerned I was dependant on reacting to Rowland's plans, but key to this was ensuring I would have enough troops to hold any one area long enough for reinforcements to arrive. With this in mind I spread my forces evenly across the walls, although I anticipated having to redeploy most, or even all of them, over the first few turns depending upon how many attacks Rowland put in, and where. The most important thing was to deny the ramparts to Rowland for as long as possible – Uruk-hai are so strong and vicious that if I were to let them onto the walls proper I'd have a real fight on my hands! Once my Heroes arrived from the Hornburg I could then commit them to wherever I thought they were needed most, at which point it should become much harder for those foul Uruk-hai to win through.





My main worry was the two Uruk-hai demolition teams which, if allowed forward unopposed, could spell ruin for my defences as my fortifications collapsed around me. I would just have to try and slow them down with archery before they became a threat – hopefully this would give my Heroes time to slay enough Uruk-hai to drive the rest off!



THE FIGHTING URUK-HAI



THE ELVES



THE MEN AND A DWARF



TURN 1

As in most scenarios, the Good side began with priority. With the bulk of the Uruk-hai apparently deployed in preparation for an assault on the outermost point on the Deeping Wall, Matthew redeployed his forces accordingly, leaving only two Wood Elves and two Rohirrim to guard the main wall.

With a bestial howl the Uruk-hai horde advanced in two groups; three Uruk-hai Captains led an advance on the Deeping Wall, while a second group began the longer journey to the now lightly defended main fortress wall.

A demolition team laden with sorcerous explosives accompanied each group and it was at these that the Elves directed their fire. Unfortunately, most of the missiles flew wide and only a single Uruk-hai from the team headed towards the main wall was slain.

TURN 2

Winning priority, Rowland's Uruk-hai continued on towards their respective targets with an Uruk-hai warrior joining the demolition team that had suffered a casualty last turn.

Whilst the defenders continued to muster on the Deeping Wall, a cheer went up as Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and Haldir arrived from the Hornburg. Aragorn and Gimli ran towards the Deeping Wall whilst Legolas and Haldir headed towards the battlements to add their firepower to that of their kinsmen there.

The Uruk-hai crossbowmen targeted the Rohirrim and Wood Elf in the Deeping Wall turret in an attempt to thin the defenders, but a combination of poor dice rolls and the shelter of the turret kept them safe.

Perhaps heartened by the presence of the Heroes, the Elves' return fire proved

slightly more effective, killing a member of the demolition team headed for the Deeping Wall.

TURN 3

Stealing back priority, Matthew hurried his heroes towards the endangered walls. Legolas and Haldir reached the battlements, but Aragorn and Gimli still had a long way to go to their destination on the Deeping Wall.

The Uruk-hai advanced once more, with the Deeping Wall assault force almost at their destination. Deadly Elven bowfire took its toll again this turn, felling two more Uruk-hai. The Uruk-hai return fire was less effective, plucking a single Wood Elf from the Deeping Wall turret.

With one of his ladders within 6" of the Deeping Wall, Rowland attempted to grapple it up to the wall with his siege engine, but the shot went wide.



The Uruk-hai launch their assault on the walls of Helm's Deep.



The Heroes race to the battlements.





The defenders topple the Uruk-hai's ladder onto those waiting below.

TURN 4

Priority passed back to the Evil side and the assault began in earnest. With a cry of triumph the Uruk-hai threw three ladders up against the Deeping Wall, although the second force were foiled by the rough ground and ended their move in the shadow of the main wall.

As Aragorn and Gimli hurried down the stairway to the Deeping Wall, the defenders were able to cast two ladders

back down into the mass of Uruk-hai that swarmed at the base of the wall. The sight of Aragorn proved to be too tempting for Rowland and the Uruk-hai crossbowmen targeted him with a volley. Unfortunately, the sturdy parapets cheated the Uruk-hai of their target and Aragorn emerged unscathed.

Rowland again attempted to use the siege engine to grapple a ladder up to the wall, aiming this time for the main wall, he

scored a successful hit and a ladder was whisked up the wall and propelled a gore-covered Uruk-hai Berserker into combat with a single Wood Elf defender.

The Elven fire proved largely ineffective as, even supported by the deadly skill of Haldir and Legolas, only a single Uruk-hai from the Deeping Wall demolition team was slain. Despairing at the Elves' lack of success, Matthew's Rohirrim hurled their throwing spears into the seething throng of Uruk-hai at the base of the walls. The determined Rohirrim proved to be more successful than their Elvish allies, as three Uruk-hai by the Deeping Wall fell to the hail of spears, and another of the foul creatures was killed at the base of the main wall!

In the Combat phase Elven skill proved to be superior. The Wood Elf calmly defended the ramparts from the maddened Berserker but unfortunately failed to wound the Uruk-hai who just managed to keep his grip on the ladder.

TURN 5

Priority once more shifted back to the Good side, allowing Matthew to redeploy defenders to counter the imminent threat of the Uruk-hai assault ladders, while Aragorn and Gimli redoubled their efforts and continued their determined advance towards the Deeping Wall. In addition, the solitary Elf on the main wall was able to heave away the ladder, causing the roaring



"Forward my Fighting Uruk-hai!"

Berserker to fall, unhurt, to the ground far below.

However, the triumph of the defenders was short-lived as the ladder was raised once more. Even worse, four more ladders were raised to the Deeping Wall whilst an Uruk-hai Captain scaled the established ladder and with a savage cry, carried his blade to challenge the defenders.

In an attempt to thin the attackers, the Elves directed all their fire into the Uruk-hai at the base of the Deeping Wall, with Haldir and two Archers each killing one Uruk-hai. The siege engine again missed its target but Rowland was cheered as his crossbowmen again loosed a volley at Aragorn: one deadly missile piercing his armour and causing a wound!

The only combat this turn proved to be decisive as the Uruk-hai Captain used his two points of Might to kill the Rohirrim that opposed him and, howling his triumph, took the unfortunate man's place on the battlements.

Finally, with the demolition teams now in position, Rowland elected to set off the demolition charges. The charge at the main wall exploded in clouds of smoke and flame and, though shaken, the sturdy

construction endured the force of the blast. The sorcerous skill of Saruman proved to be more effective on the Deeping Wall, where the second charge blew a sizeable hole, creating a clear passage through which the Uruk-hai could now swarm.

TURN 6

The Good side won priority once more and Matthew began by determining whether or not the breach in the Deeping Wall would cause more of the wall to collapse. This was critically important because on a roll of a 6, a 6" section of wall would collapse, allowing the Uruk-hai an easy route into the Fortress.

Fortunately for the defenders, the roll came up a 4 and the wall held firm. In the Move phase, the defenders successfully pushed a single ladder away from both the Deeping Wall and the main wall, whilst the defenders of the Deeping Wall charged to engage the two Uruk-hai Captains that had pierced the defences. Aragorn and Gimli once more dashed towards the fight on the Deeping Wall, Gimli along the battlements and Aragorn dashing to an access ladder. With insufficient move to fully descend the ladder, Aragorn released his grip on the ladder and dropped the remaining distance

to the ground without injury, ending his move within sight of the breach.

In an attempt to seal the gap, a heroic Rohirrim leapt off the back of the battlement, but the fall proved to be too great and the unfortunate man fell to his death. An Uruk-hai Captain and several Berserkers began to advance through the breach whilst other Uruk-hai swarmed up the ladders to take advantage of the space the Captains had cleared last turn.

A roar of triumph came from the Uruk-hai at the base of the main wall as three ladders were now thrown against the ramparts in preparation for an assault next turn. Redoubling their efforts, the Elves took careful aim and slew six Uruk-hai, two slain by the lethal skill of Legolas! This only seemed to enrage the attackers further, for as the Uruk-hai returned fire three black-feathered bolts pierced Haldir's armour and each one caused a deadly wound – with only two wounds and a single fate point he was slain instantly. The Uruk-hai siege engine crew could not match this skill and once more failed to find a target but, as the turn ended, the two Uruk-hai Captains on the Deeping Wall swept their opponents before them.



The Uruk-hai manage to batter their way onto the battlements.

TURN 7

With the situation getting tense, priority returned to the Evil side, the weakened Deeping Wall once more holding firm. Matthew declared that Aragorn would make a Heroic Action before Rowland could capitalise on his fortune. Realising that this would allow Aragorn to single-handedly block the breach in the Deeping Wall, Rowland declared a Heroic Action with the Uruk-hai Captain behind the wall. A dice roll was now required to determine which Hero could act first, and unfortunately for the Good side Rowland won the roll and, screaming their war cries, the Uruk-hai Captain and a Berserker were able to engage Aragorn before he could react.

Now pinned, Aragorn was unable to move as part of his Heroic Action although, bellowing his own war cry, Gimli jumped off the battlements, the sturdy Dwarf easily shaking off the impact of the fall and engaging two crazed Berserkers that had followed the Captain through the breach!

With the Heroic Actions resolved, the two Uruk-hai Captains on the Deeping Wall charged into combat with the beleaguered defenders, whilst yet more Uruk-hai swarmed up the ladders behind them.

Meanwhile the assault on the main wall began in earnest as Uruk-hai began to swarm up the ladders. Seeing the danger, Legolas drew his blade and ran to aid the remaining defenders. Rowland again fired the siege engine with the hope of getting a ladder up to an undefended battlement, but

it missed yet again. The crossbowmen were able to kill another Wood Elf on the Deeping Wall and with all the remaining defenders engaged in combat there was no return fire.

On the main wall a determined defence by Legolas and his fellow Elves slew two Uruk-hai, but the blood-fuelled frenzy of a Berserker proved too much for a third Elf whose broken body was hurled from the battlements as the Uruk-hai took his place! On the Deeping Wall the strength of men appeared to be wavering as one Rohirrim was killed by an Uruk-hai Captain, and while a second Rohirrim won his desperate struggle, his blade could not find a weak spot in the Captain's armour.

At the base of the wall the Heroes fared better, Gimli and Aragorn each slaying a Berserker. With the aid of a Might point, Aragorn wounded the Uruk-hai Captain, but Fate was on the side of the foul creature and the wound was saved.

TURN 8

At the start of Turn 8, things were starting to look desperate for the Good side. With eight Uruk-hai on the battlements and more yet to come, it looked certain that Rowland would get ten Uruk-hai onto the battlements by the start of the next turn. Matthew's only chance was to kill half of the Uruk-hai force. The force had started the game with sixty models, so Matthew needed to kill off another six Uruk-hai to win the game. With that in mind, priority became incredibly important, but with a roll of 6 Mat managed to wrest priority away from Rowland, and more

importantly the Deeping Wall held firm once more.

With a supreme effort the remaining two Rohirrim on the main wall managed to heave away one of the ladders, and two Uruk-hai fell to their deaths as they lost their grip on the ladder!

Legolas and the remaining Elf moved to cover the final two ladders but were unable to push them away. On the Deeping Wall the remaining defenders drew upon their remaining reserves of courage and once more charged the Uruk-hai Captains.

Behind the wall, Aragorn charged the Uruk-hai Captain and a Berserker, and Gimli hurled himself at another Berserker. Rowland's luck with the Uruk-hai siege engine finally reversed, with a shot striking home and propelling a Berserker into combat with Legolas.

In the Combat phase both Aragorn and Gimli called upon their inner reserves and declared Heroic Actions, although even using both remaining points of Might, Aragorn was only able to kill the Captain and so could not move to engage another Uruk-hai.

Dwarfish skill proved more equal to the task at hand, as Gimli managed to cut down his first opponent with the aid of a Might point and then charged headlong into two more Berserkers. With a supreme effort Gimli hacked at his opponents with all his strength and beat down both, reducing the Uruk-hai force to half strength and winning the game!



Aragorn and Gimli's heroic fight behind the Deeping Wall.



AND MY AXE!

Matthew: That was close! If it hadn't been for the last ditch efforts of Aragorn and Gimli, the Uruk-hai would have spilled into the Deeping and it would

have all been over. As it was, that was an incredibly closely fought and enjoyable battle. The new siege rules really capture the feel of a few determined troops fending off a far larger force and made for some very tense moments.

As ever, with hindsight I can see I made several careless mistakes, chief amongst them (and much to my chagrin) was not concentrating my fire. For example, if I had managed to kill both members of one demolition team at any point it would have delayed those explosives for a turn as new Uruk-hai picked up the device. Instead I never killed more than one and so the demolition charge was never dropped. As a long-time wargamer I really should know better. That said, I think that my overall strategy worked pretty well although it did come right down to the wire at the end, with the defence really capturing the spirit of the book and the film.

Without doubt though, the real star of this battle was Gimli. Without his heroic leap from the battlements and stalwart defence of the breach, the game would have taken a very different course. It just goes to show that there is no defence that cannot be made better by the simple measure of adding a Dwarf!



FOILED BY THE SILENT MENACE OF ROCK AND WALL

Rowland Cox: This was a tough scenario to accomplish for the

Evil side; the walls of Helm's Deep are resilient and determined, just like Matthew's defence. However, I am very pleased that the game was so incredibly close. On reflection it looks like the Free Peoples have found the perfect defence to Saruman's blasting fire: Gimli. In fact, we affectionately referred to him as the Gimli bomb. To light the fuse just add Uruk-hai. Toss him over a wall, retire to a safe distance and watch him go!

The decision to split my forces worked very well and I almost managed to overwhelm the defenders of Helm's Deep. Troops from both forces managed to scale the walls, and the Good Heroes were divided between the Deeping Wall and the main wall. However, it was the

demolition teams that really made the difference. Whereas siege ladders can be thrown back to the ground, once you blast a great big hole in the wall, it's there to stay! Much to my delight, Haldir was cut down by a hail of crossbow bolts, and the Uruk-hai Captains and Berserkers were cutting down the brave sons of Rohan with merry abandon. So where did it go wrong?

Two points spring to mind. Firstly, committing all the Captains against the Deeping Wall was a mistake. One Captain should have gone against the main wall, enabling earlier gains to be better capitalised on. The Berserkers alone, although effective, cannot take and hold a wall against the likes of Legolas. Secondly, I should have concentrated the efforts of the siege engine onto one wall. Again, I would have concentrated on the main wall, as it was the least well defended. In a close game, it is your mistakes that cost you victory.

Aragorn and Gimli are perfect for this scenario. Aragorn, with his fountain of Might, can fight against frightening odds and still prevail. Gimli, with his finely crafted armour, can withstand almost any punishment and dish out plenty of hurt. Together they were a real problem for me. To my credit I wounded Aragorn, and drained him and Gimli of their store of Might. Whilst this didn't win me this game, I knew that in the next scenario it

would pay dividend, when the Heroes would be relied on again to clear the walls of Helm's Deep.

This scenario really caught the spirit of the film; a desperate battle over an ancient fortress, scores of Uruk-hai pouring over the walls, and plenty of heroic fights. A special word of appreciation must go out to Dave Andrews and Mark Jones who built the truly splendid Helm's Deep terrain board. It really makes a huge difference playing on terrain like this, and I would encourage anyone to have a go at building a fort for their games. Better still get your hands on the Helm's Deep Fortress box set. Matthew and I really got into this scenario, and found that the siege rules worked masterfully. I look forward to finishing off the defenders in the next scenario, The Gateway. But before I get too cocky I must remember there are no demolition teams next time, and plenty more Aragorn and Gimli to come...

On pages 54-65 we have the concluding part of this two-part battle report. Our players are going to take on the challenges of the next scenario in The Two Towers rules manual. Gimli and Aragorn are low on Might and Haldir has fallen to the Uruk-hai crossbows. It should make for an interesting encounter!



The Ring-bearer takes time out to oversee the action.