



# Poltava 1709

A wargame presented by Schild en Vriend



## Historical Overview

On the morning of June 28 1709 (according to one calendar, July 18 according to another), the Swedish main army with King Karl XII of Sweden met the Russian army under Tsar Peter I (later called the Great) in battle near the small Ukrainian city of Poltava.

The Swedish army had been besieging Poltava on the western bank of the Vorskla river, with the Russian army camped across the river. However, when Swedish high command was in turmoil following a

reforming north of it and attacking the Russian camp, hopefully with surprise still intact.

However, upon passing through the redoubt line, general Roos with about five battalions got entangled with the Russian troops defending them and split off from the rest of the Swedish army. Over the next few hours, Roos and his dwindling command would be chased out of the redoubts by Russian reinforcements, flee into the woods to the south and finally surrender in a cloister near Poltava itself. This took away a third of the Swedish infantry for the battle.

The main part of the army, well past the redoubts, spent a confused hour or so regrouping and waiting for the missing infantry, before moving again and forming line of battle in front of the Russian army, which had by now exited from the camp and formed up in front of it.



wound to the foot sustained by King Karl that incapacitated him for a few days, the Russians saw their chance and crossed the river unopposed.

By the times the Swedish command had recovered and had decided to attack, the Russians had built a fully fortified camp and a line of redoubts (some of which were still under construction) blocking the most obvious access route the Swedes would need to take.

The Swedish plan called for a stealthy night march through the redoubt line,

The following battle was a quick affair. The Swedish infantry line, having barely formed up (in fact, the left flank was still in the process of forming up) advanced upon the vastly more numerous Russian infantry. They managed to push in the first line of the Russian infantry but were then rolled up from the left flank by a powerful attack of the Russian right, consisting of the best infantry regiments in the Russian army and overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

Those Swedes that managed to escape the ensuing annihilation fled the battlefield and surrendered some days later near Perovolochna on the banks of the Dnieper. The Swedish main army had ceased to exist.

## Our game

In our recreation of that fateful day, we have opted to modify history somewhat. The main battle is represented as it was fought in front of the Russian camp, but we have modified the fate of Roos' command. Instead of fleeing ever further away from the battlefield, in our hypothetical version Roos manages to give his pursuers the slip in the woods and returns to the main battle, only to find his way blocked by the reoccupied redoubts. This is the point where the game starts. Can you change history?

## Figures, terrain and rules

The Swedish infantry used in the game are Musketeer Miniatures, with the occasional Foundry or Perry figure standing in as officer. The Swedish life guard grenadiers are the well known Foundry figures. The Swedish cavalry consists Front Rank and Reiver Miniatures. The Russian infantry is mostly Reiver, with strong representations of Foundry figures (Preobrazhenski Guard grenadiers) and Front Rank. The Russian cavalry consists of Reiver and Front Rank figures.



The base of the terrain is a Terrainmat.co.uk mat. The fort is by Grand Manner and most of the buildings are by Hovels. The trees are built using Woodlands Scenics armatures and foliage.

The rules have been specifically written for this game, emphasizing speed and simplicity. In a non convention setting, we recommend using Beneath the Lily Banners or Gå På for refighting Poltava.

## About Schild en Vriend

Schild and Vriend are a small but dedicated group of wargamers active in the area of Vlaams Brabant, north of Brussels. We muster about one game every 2 weeks, usually held at the private premises of one of our members. Regular themes include WW2, Napoleonic, 18th century and Dark Ages, with the occasional Fantasy and Science-Fiction game thrown in.