

The Scenario

In a very Pratchettesque style, I set up the following scenario which gave me the opportunity to use some of the terrain pieces I had created but not used and to give my latest army some battlefield experience. It was also an opportunity to test out the assault rules that I had developed for a Greek campaign but then never had the opportunity to use.

Cyrus, the Persian Satrap of Somewherefarawai had cornered the Commagene army in a small walled town. Antichos IV, the Commagene commander, had summoned help from his neighbour Herod who was marching to his rescue. Knowing that Herod was on his way, Cyrus had also sought help from Xavier, the Satrap of Longawayoff, who was also marching towards the scene.

Not trusting Xavier to arrive in time, Cyrus decided he had to launch an assault before Herod arrived as he felt that once the two alliance forces had joined they would be too much for his army.

The Pitch



The walled town was in the middle and the Persians had a camp on the near side. There were a selection of low hills, scattered open woods, heath and scrub to test out the terrain rule modifications. Some troops would be deployed in the town and the camp whilst the reinforcements would arrive (at random times) from the roads on the side edges.

The Teams

The defending alliance totalled just under 15,000 men, was led by Antiochos IV of Commagene, and consisted of three Armies.

The Commagene Army was 5,500 men strong and organised in four Divisions. Antiochos directly commanded a mix of 1,100 cavalry. The rest were infantry in two 1,600 men pike phalanxes (both armoured but of low quality) and 900 levy archers supported by 300 peltasts.

Herod commanded an Army of just over 6,000 men. He directly led about 1,100 horse guards. His infantry consisted of 1,600 foot guards (spearmen and Thracians) plus 1,400 Royal infantry (legionnaires). All were trained and armoured. These were supported by 800 light Iturean archers. Zamaris, commanding an allied Corps, added nearly another 1,000 cavalry.

The townsfolk (the third army) provided a small number of peltasts and slingers and artillery, plus approximately 2,000 civilians.

The Persian side was formed of two satrapal Armies: Cyrus of Somewherefaraway was the lead and was supported by Xavier of Longwayoff who was classed as a reluctant ally. Their combined Armies totalled nearly 19,000 men.

Cyrus' army consisted of five Corps.

He directly led 2,200 good quality armoured cavalry, whilst his brother Smerdis, commanded a smaller and less reliable force of 1,000 cavalry. The infantry of the Satrapy formed the third Corps of just under 5,000 men consisting mostly of lightly armoured low quality peltasts and archers.

There were two allied Corps: about 6,000 forced ally Bactrian infantry armed with bows and spear; and 1,700 more willing Saka horse archers.

Xavier's Army consisted of 1,200 mixed cavalry, 1,200 good quality bow and spear armed peltasts plus some camel mounted archers.

For more details on the compositions of both forces visit the armies page on this site.

The Deployments



Commagene

Townsfolk

Herod

Longa wayoff

Somewherefarawai

The Tactics

Antiochos IV organised the defence of the town from within. His phalangites and archers manned the walls along with the town's slingers and light artillery. The peltasts and heavier artillery were positioned in the gate tower. He planned to hang on in the town until Herod's army had been sighted and then, whilst the Persians tried to react to Herod's arrival, sally out and try hit them in two directions.

Antiochos IV had sent orders to Herod to advance towards the Persian camp which he hoped would disrupt their plans sufficiently to cause confusion.

Herod would do this and then decide on more precise tactics once he reached the battlefield. He did instruct Zamaris to harass any enemy the best he could if Zamaris arrived before Herod.

Cyrus ordered Smerdis to go down the road to watch out for Herod and sent the Saka round the back of the town to distract the defenders and then link up with Smerdis.

The Bactrians would deploy to the far side of the town wall where they could annoy the defenders with their bow fire and be ready to face the Jews when they arrived.

The main assault would be by his infantry who, equipped with scaling ladders, would attack along the near wall whilst some of his cavalry would use the recently constructed ram to attack the gate.

Xavier was ordered to get to Cyrus' camp where new orders would be issued.

The Order of Battle

In my rules, each Corps takes its turn in being active and doing something. The order in which they become active is determined by a dice roll at the start of the battle. This sequence is set out below and may help to explain the battle report slides, each of which shows the actions for an individual Corps during a period. Each Division normally occupies a single hex on the battlefield.

- C1 – Bactrians (Persian allies) (5 Divisions)
- C2 – Satrap of Longawayoff's Troops (3 Divisions: one cavalry, one infantry, the other camels)
- C3 – Commagene Army (4 Divisions: one cavalry, two pike phalanxes, one foot archers)
- C4 – Herod's Guards (4 Divisions: one cavalry, two infantry, one foot archers)
- C5 – Persian foot from Somewherefarawai (4 Divisions: all infantry)
- C6 – Zamaris' Horse (1 Division)
- C7 – Cyrus' Persian cavalry (2 Divisions)
- C8 – Townsfolk (2 Divisions: first artillery and infantry, second citizens)
- C9 – Scout cavalry from Somewherefarawai (1 Division)
- C10 – Saka (Persian allies) (2 Divisions: both horse archers)

Each Corps commander is in the first Division in their Corps. All photographs are taken from the Persian edge.

P1/C1



The Bactrians were first to awake in the Persian camp and Diodotos, their chieftain, led his leading Divisions out of the camp towards the town.



P1/C3



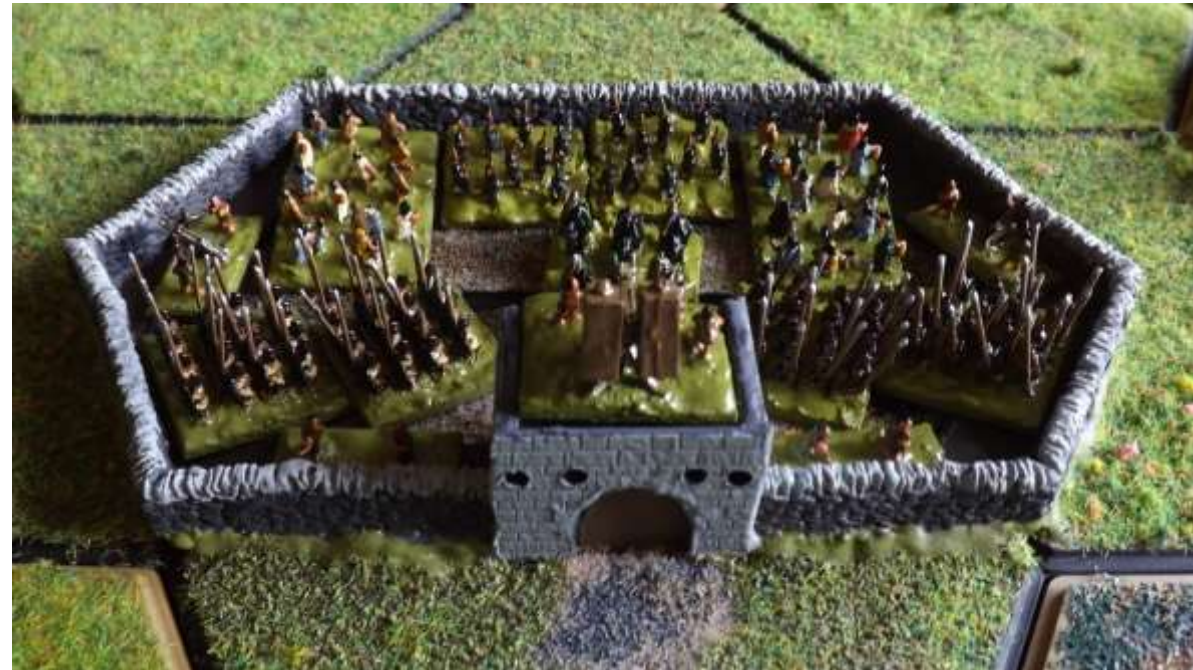
Inside the crowded town, the Commagene troops organised themselves along the walls.



P1/C8



Also inside the crowded town, the townsfolk jostled around to provide support. On the tower and on the walls, the artillerists prepared their engines.



P2/C1



The final Division of Bactrians left the camp.



P2/C3



Inside the town walls the Commagene Army continued waiting.



P2/C5



Inside the Persian camp, the leading Division of Persian infantry hoisted their scaling ladders and prepared to advance.



P2/C8



From the gateway tower, the artillery opened fire on the advancing Bactrians. The volunteer slingers on the adjacent walls also tried a few long range shots.



P3/C1



Diodotos continued to lead his Bactrians around the town. A few Units tried some retaliatory fire but they were unsuccessful in causing many casualties.



P3/C3



With their archers manning the rear wall, the Commagene Army had no opportunity to take any action.



P3/C5



The satrapal infantry marched from the camp carrying their assault ladders.



P3/C6



Zamaris and his cavalry force arrived on the battlefield.



P3/C8



As well as the artillery on the gate tower and the slingers on the front wall, the light artillery on the side wall were now able to fire on the Bactrians.



P4/C1



Diodotos moved on to the hill so he could get a better view of the situation and became aware of approaching troops along the road. Meanwhile some of his men shot rather ineffectively at enemy on the town walls.



P4/C2



Meanwhile, at the other end of the road, Xavier and his cavalry arrived at the ford.



P4/C3



Back inside the town, the Commagene Army continued to wait.



P4/C5



The satrapal infantry continued to march out of the Persian camp.



P4/C6



Sending his horse archers out in front, Zamaris started to scout out the situation.



P4/C8



In the town, the artillery and the slingers continued to fire upon the Bactrians. The Persian infantry were now coming within range of the other light artillery battery and this opened fire as well.



P5/C1



Becoming more aware of the advancing enemy and with his shooting at the town walls being largely ineffective, Diodotos started to deploy his troops to face both threats. He also despatched a messenger to warn Cyrus.



P5/C2



Xavier's cavalry safely crossed the ford and continued along the road towards the Persian camp. Behind him the rest of his force marched on to the battlefield.



P5/C3



In the town Antiochos' hopes rose as he saw the Bactrians falling back and could see the dust from Herod's advancing army in the distance. He ordered his archers to move from the back wall to the wall nearest the Bactrians so they could fire on them.



P5/C4



Herod appeared on the battlefield at the head of his horse guards.



P5/C5



The last Division of the satrapal foot left the Persian camp as the lead Division approached the town walls.



P5/C6



Zamaris continued to advance with his cavalry, sending the horse archers forward to skirmish with the Bactrians.



P5/C7



Cyrus gave orders for his own cavalry squadron to mount up and for his second squadron to load the covered ram on to a wagon for transport nearer to the town gate.



P5/C8



Those slingers and artillery that had any Bactrians within their range continued to fire on them. The light artillery battery on the other wall was now firing on the closing Persian infantry.



P6/C1



Diodotos, deployed his Divisions to face both the approaching cavalry and continue to shoot at the defenders on the wall. Those that shot at the cavalry were the more successful.



P6/C2



Xavier and his cavalry arrived near the camp and the rest of his army crossed the ford.



P6/C3



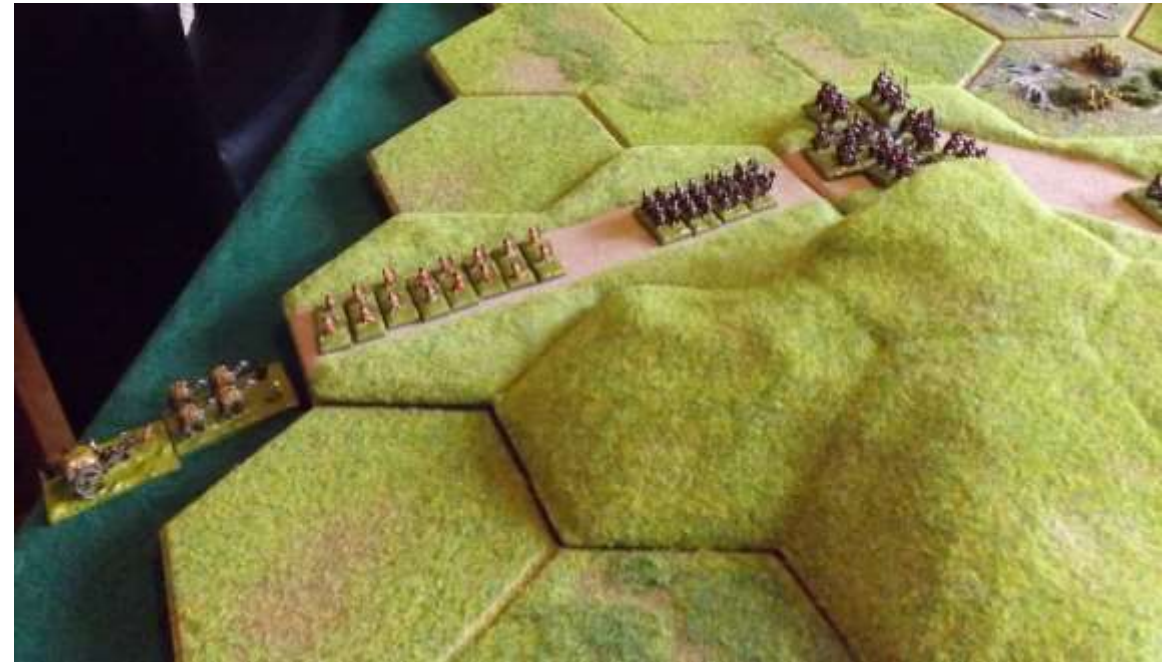
Whilst his archers continued firing on the nearest Bactrians, Antiochos awaited confirmation of Herod's approach.



P6/C4



Herod had indeed arrived at the battlefield and was leading his horse guards along the road with his infantry following.



P6/C5



The Persian infantry had cleared their camp and were starting to circle the town walls.



P6/C6



With all his horse archers shot by close range archery from the Bactrians, Zamaris decided to hang back and shoot from long range with his remaining bow armed troops.



P6/C7



On receiving the message that the Jewish army had been sighted, Cyrus ordered his second squadron to leave the ram behind, mount up and follow him to intercept them.



P6/C8



With it becoming obvious which side the assault was going to come from, the artillerists in the tower turned their engines to face this threat as the local citizens rushed to man that wall with the phalangites.



P7/C1



Diodotos advanced his line of Bactrians towards the approaching cavalry. His Divisions nearest the town were becoming uneasy as the trickle of casualties they were taking from the defenders had reduced their numbers considerably.



P7/C2



Xavier rested his cavalry whilst he waited for more orders from Cyrus and for the rest of his force to catch up.



P7/C3



Knowing that Herod was getting close, Antiochos decided this was the time to sally forth. Issuing orders for the archers and peltasts to remain in the town, he led his cavalry and phalangites out.



P7/C4



Seeing Zamaris' troops isolated against a large number of enemy infantry, Herod rode forward to support him. Behind him his footguards deployed and the Ituraean archers marched forward.



P7/C5



The satrapal infantry Divisions were now grouping around the town walls. One Division was making preparations to start its assault.



P7/C6



Zamaris' horse were getting substantially weaker, but held their ground and returned fire on the Bactrians.



P7/C7



Cyrus rode towards the advancing Jewish Army with his cavalry, sending his scouts to annoy the emerging Commagene contingents. He also dashed off instructions for Xavier to bring his force to join him.



P7/C8



With an assault looming, the townsfolk hurriedly moved to support the peltasts who were manning that part of the wall that seemed under threat. The light artillery batteries were sent to the back wall to annoy the Persians who were gathering there.



P7/C9



Still with his pre-battle instructions to go and watch out for the arrival of Herod and his army, Smerdis led his cavalry Division on to the road.

Behind him the Saka mounted up, ready to ride out.



P8/C1



Despite having one Division completely destroyed and one down to a few men, Diodotos' Bactrians held their positions, but had to split their fire across a range of cavalry opposition that appeared to be surrounding them.



P8/C2



Having received his new orders from Cyrus, Xavier led his cavalry on to the hill to spot any good opportunities for fame and glory, whilst the rest of his force arrived along the road.



P8/C3



Antiochos moved forward with his cavalry so they could threaten the rear of the Barctrians. The leading pike phalanx having been cooped up for so long were eager to get involved and promptly charged the nearest Persian infantry Division. The second phalanx emerged from the town, whilst inside the town the peltasts stood by to repel the assault.



P8/C4



Herod charged his cavalry into the Bactrian chieftain's Division hoping that in breaking them it would cause the rest of the Bactrians to run. His infantry moved forward with the Ituraean archers now able to shoot at the Bactrians on the hill.



P8/C5



The Persian infantry Division that had been charged by the phalangites was destroyed. Their nearest colleagues shot at the phalangites but were not eager enough to charge them. Elsewhere, the Division on the far wall prepared for its assault, whilst the Division on the side wall raised its ladders and attacked. The limited assault frontage gave an advantage to the defenders and the assault was repelled.



P8/C6



Despite being down to his last few men, Zamaris managed to keep their morale high enough for them to keep shooting at the Bactrian chieftain's Division.



P8/C7



Cyrus moved forward with both of his cavalry squadrons. His own squadron opened fire on and practically wiped out the Jewish foot archers whilst his second Division caused some damage to the Commagene cavalry.



P8/C8



Inside the town morale had dropped. Although the first assault had been repelled, it had reduced the number of citizens able to fight. Those that remained manned the rear wall where another assault seemed imminent.



P8/C9



Smerdis' cavalry Division galloped in column of march along the road towards the battle line.



P8/C10



The Saka cavalry finally had the opportunity to leave the Persian camp and following their initial orders, set off to loop around the back of the town.



P9/C1



Despite the damage taken from the cavalry charge, Diodotos managed to hold his three remaining very weakened Divisions together and pulled them back so they could make use of their bows.



P9/C2



Interpreting the situation as good, Xavier ordered a general advance and moved all three of his Divisions forward to surround the phalangites. He decided to weaken them with missiles before ordering the charge.



P9/C3



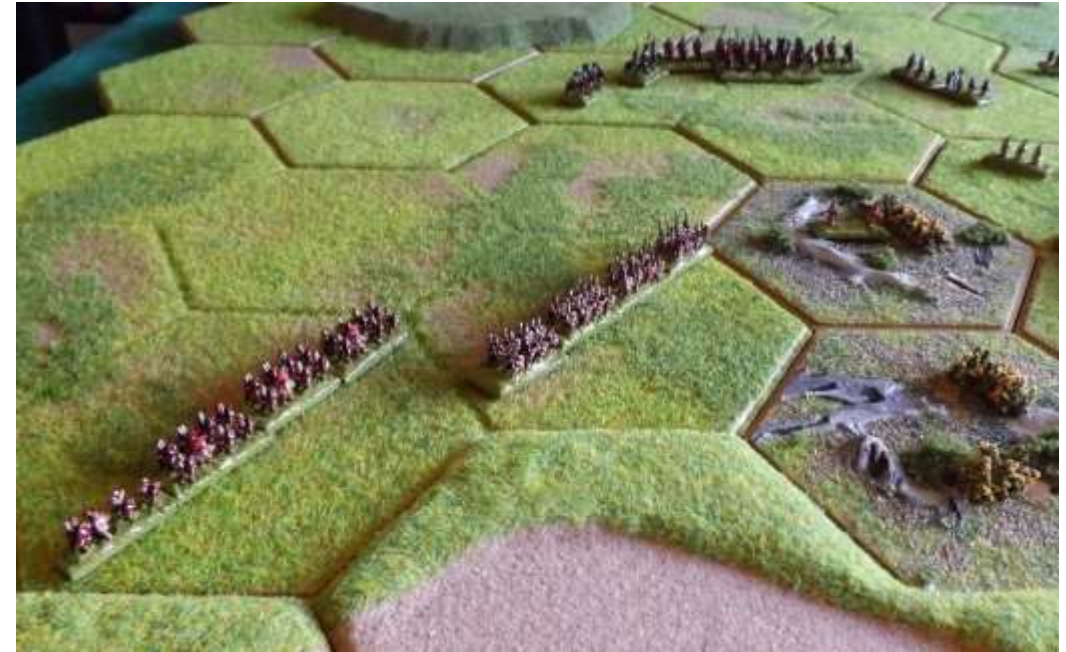
The phalangites that had just emerged from the gateway formed up and charged Xavier's cavalry who decided to stand the charge. Antiochos returned with his cavalry to provide support. The other pike phalanx held its ground despite being fired on from all sides. Inside the town, the archers crossed over to join their peltasts on right hand wall in case there was another attempted assault.



P9/C4



The few remaining Ituraean foot archers scuttled away into the scrub whilst the royal infantry and the foot guards formed up to face the closing Persian cavalry. Herod, annoyed by the persistence of the Bactrians again charged their chieftain's Division, this time with fresh Units to the front, in a second attempt to break them.



P9/C5



With his second Division being destroyed as a result of the failed assault attempt and shooting from the wall, the commander of the satrapal infantry decided to postpone his assault and pulled back out of missile range. His other remaining Division held their ground with their archers continuing to fire on the phalangites huddling in front of them.



P9/C6



Zamaris moved his remaining cavalry to where they could fire on the last of the Bactrians.



P9/C7



With his own squadron being eager, Cyrus led them in a charge against Herod's foot guards. His second squadron moved forward to provide support and to prevent Herod's cavalry from interfering.



P9/C8



With the danger of an assault apparently reducing and the Commagene army holding their own in front of the town, the morale of the townsfolk held, although it remained low.



P9/C9



Assessing the situation as good, Smerdis ordered a general advance and rode towards the nearest enemy. He put his horse archers to the front in an attempt to weaken the opposing infantry with some missile fire.



P9/C10



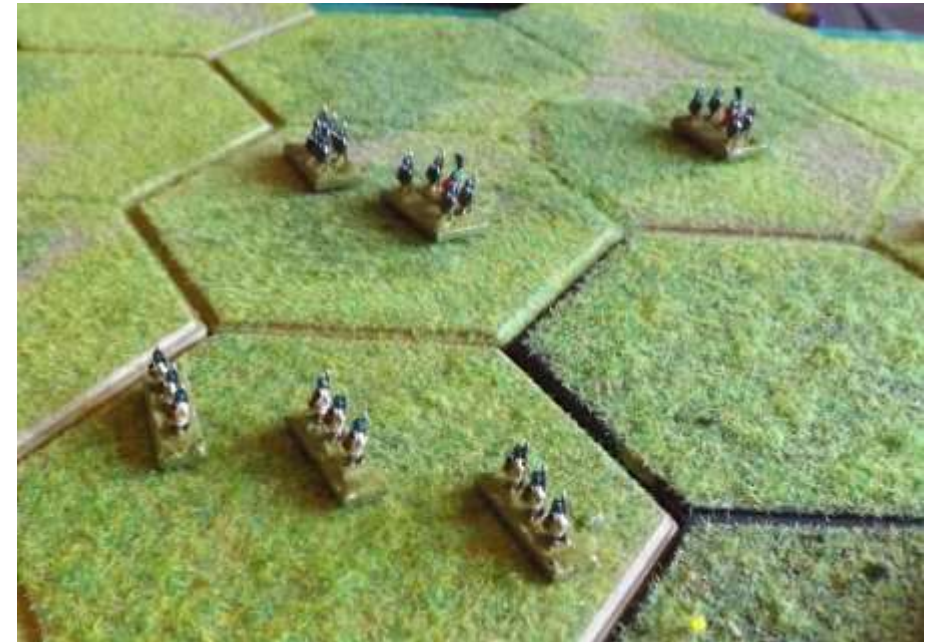
Skunha, the Saka Tsar, led his troops around the intervening friends and headed for the rear of the town.



P10/C1



With Diodotos dead and his Division destroyed, the three remaining weakened Bactrian Divisions broke and started to head for home, taking no further part in the battle.



P10/C2



With his cavalry coming off worst against the phalangites, Xavier pulled back from melee with them but charged the Commagene cavalry with his remaining Units. His peltasts charged off the hill to take his place in melee with the phalangites and the camel mounted archers continued to fire on the other phalangite block.



P10/C3



The Commagene cavalry was more than a match for Xavier's and had soon reduced him to just his guards. The raw pike phalanx, despite winning against the peltasts, dispersed in rout. However, the militia pike phalanx charged into the camel mounted archers and destroyed them. In the town, the foot archers moved to the side wall from where they could fire on the satrapal infantry.



P10/C4



Herod moved his cavalry in closer to the second Persian cavalry squadron to threaten their flank. His foot guards performed so well in the previous melee round that they felt confident enough to leave the Doryphori to continue to fight the Sattrap's squadron and move the Thracians to face the second squadron. The royal infantry charged into Smerdis' cavalry.



P10/C5



With broken Bactrians around him and just two battered Divisions left, the commander of the satrapal foot concluded the situation was bad and ordered a withdrawal.



P10/C6



Zamaris moved the remains of his Division forward to support Herod's cavalry.



P10/C7



With his own squadron down to half-strength, Cyrus pulled them back out of melee but they became entangled in the scrub and could not pull fully back. His other squadron turned to face the threat posed by Herod's cavalry.



P10/C8



In the town, the defenders turned the artillery in the gate tower ready to fire on the enemy on the road to their front.



P10/C9



With his cavalry suffering heavy casualties in the melee, Smerdis ordered a withdrawal, leaving his horse archers to provide a defensive screen.



P10/C10



Still in good spirits, the Saka continued their ride around the outskirts of the town.



P11/C2



Xavier considered that the situation had turned to bad and ordered a withdrawal.



P11/C3



Antiochos ordered his remaining phalangites to return to the safety of the town, whilst he stood by with the cavalry to support Herod.



P11/C4



Both of Herod's infantry Divisions charged the Persian cavalry squadrons forcing them to evade. He moved his cavalry forward to keep a threat on the flank of the stronger cavalry squadron.



P11/C5



Both of the remaining satrapal infantry Divisions continued to withdraw.



P11/C6



Bravely, Zamaris moved his cavalry forward so they could join in harassing the Persian cavalry.



P11/C7



Seeing the situation turning bad, Cyrus continued to pull his cavalry squadrons back to join the rest of his army.



P11/C8



In the town, morale picked up a bit as they were able to see retreating enemy on most fronts. The artillery on the tower gate tried a few long range shots on Xavier's infantry.



P11/C9



Smerdis also considered the situation bad and started to withdraw with his remaining troops.



P11/C10



As he moved between the woods, all Skunha could see were retreating and broken friends. This coupled with news of losses from elsewhere caused him to consider the situation poor and he ordered a halt.



The End

Herod's infantry were still in good shape and continued to advance. Both his and Antiochos' cavalry, although weakened, were still stronger than Cyrus' squadrons.

Given the above and that all his Corps commanders were ordering withdrawals and there was no chance of taking the town, Cyrus too gave orders to withdraw.

So the town had been saved and Herod chalked up his first victory.



The Conclusions

In some ways a bit of a messy battle, but enjoyable as it was something different and I did finally get to use that walled town I had created.

Cyrus was constrained by the dice rolls which dictated the order in which his Corps became active. He might have been better off forgoing his first moves to get some of his cavalry out earlier. As it was the long delay in waiting for the infantry to clear the camp gave Herod time to arrive and get sorted. Now I know why the Romans always had four exits to their camps!

Some aspects of the assault rules had a testing and identified some areas for further clarification and definition. It was a good job the covered ram was not used as I didn't really have any planned rules for that.

The terrain changes with more types seemed to work roughly as anticipated, causing a few upsets to plans rather than totally disrupting them.