Cowpens, South Carolina  
January 17, 1781  
Piquet  
by Jeff Glasco

Revised July 25, 2016

While small in size, the Battle of Cowpens helped end the British control over the backwoods of South Carolina and ultimately led to the withdrawal of Cornwallis' force from the South after the Battle of Guilford Court House. It is one of the most interesting battles to play due to the variety of forces on both sides.

Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stands</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Infantry Skirmishers</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45-89</td>
<td>30-59</td>
<td>30-59</td>
<td>1-2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>90-164</td>
<td>60-109</td>
<td>60-109</td>
<td>3-4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>165-239</td>
<td>110-159</td>
<td>110-159</td>
<td>5-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>240-360</td>
<td>160-240</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>361-435</td>
<td>241-290</td>
<td>241-290</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>436-510</td>
<td>291-340</td>
<td>291-340</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Orders of Battle:

British:

Tarleton's Column (brigade): (7 units/3 = 3 cards)
- Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton (Skilled)
- Ogilvie's Troop/British Legion Dragoons (52): 1 stand, Regulars, Swords
- Troop/17th Light Dragoons (50): 1 stand, Elite, Swords
- Royal Artillery (2 x 3-pdr)¹: 1 stand, Regulars (-1), L SB
- British Converged Light Infantry Battalion (160)²: 4 stands*, Elites, SBM
- British Legion Infantry (200): 4 stands*, Regulars (-1), SBM
- 7th Regiment of Foot (167): 3 stands, Regulars, SBM
- 1st Bn/71st Highland Regiment (263): 4 stands, Regulars (+1), SBM
- British Legion Dragoons (200):
  - 1st Squadron: 2 stands, Regulars, Swords
  - 2nd Squadron: 2 stands, Regulars, Swords

¹ Crewed by 9 men from 7th ROF, 9 men from British Legion and a few artillermen
² 4 Companies: 1st Bn/71st Highland (35), 2nd Bn/71st Highland (34), 16th ROF (41), Prince of Wales American Regiment (25-50).
**Americans:**

**Light Corps (division): (7.25 units/4 = 2 [3] cards)**

Brigadier General Daniel Morgan (Superior)

**Continental Brigade:**

Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard (Skilled)
Maryland/Delaware Light Battalion\(^3\) (@320): 4 stands, Elite, SBM
Triplett’s Virginia Militia (rifleman) Battalion\(^4\) (175): 4 stands*, Regulars, IR

**SC Militia Brigade:**

Colonel Andrew Pickens (Average)
1st Spartan SC Militia Regt.\(^5\) (@200): 3 stands, Trained Militia, SBM
2nd Spartan (Fair Forest), SC Militia Regt.\(^6\) (@250): 4 stands, Trained Militia, SBM
McDowell's & Cunningham's Riflemen (@215): 4 stands, Trained Militia, IR

**Cavalry Brigade:**

Lieutenant Colonel Washington [3rd Dragoons] (Skilled)
Continental Dragoons\(^7\) (82+15): 2 stands, Elite, Swords
+Nelson's Virginia State Dragoons (15)
State and Militia Dragoons (60): 2 stands, Trained Militia, Swords
Clark's North Carolina State Dragoons (15)
Jolly's Georgia Dragoons (20)
McCall's South Carolina Dragoons (25)

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**Game Information and Special Rules:**

**Notes:**

1. **American Strengths:** How many Americans were involved in the battle and how they were organized is really unknown as there was no headcount on the day of the battle and some units seem to have been left out of the official reports. Babits and O’Kelley argue that there were far more Americans present than previously known. I’m not completely convinced of their arguments. In attempting to make a campaign game for this era, I realized that there was no way their numbers for the militia were accurate. Instead, I’ve based the militia numbers on what other primary sources indicated. In a letter to Francis Marion (dated Jan. 23, 1781), Greene listed the American force as 290 (Continental and State) infantry, 80 cavalry, and "about six hundred militia."

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\(^3\) Composed of Anderson’s Company/1st Maryland (@40), Brook’s Light Company/1st Maryland (@80), Dobson’s Company/2nd Maryland (@40), Kirkwood’s Light Company/2nd Maryland (@80) and Lawson’s Virginia Company (@50) and Wallace’s Virginia Company (@30)/Buford’s Regiment.

\(^4\) Composed of Tate’s Augusta County Virginia riflemen (50), Comb’s Fauquier County Virginia riflemen (40), Gilmore’s Rockbridge County Virginia riflemen (40), Buchanan’s August County Virginia riflemen (20), and Beatty’s Burke County North Carolina riflemen (25). Commanded by Major Francis Triplett.

\(^5\) Commanded by Colonel John Thomas Jr., and composed of Thomas’ 1st Battalion and Roebuck’s 2nd Battalion

\(^6\) Commanded by Colonel Thomas Brandon and composed of Brandon’s 2nd Spartan (Fair Forest) SC Militia (100) and Haye’s Little River, SC Militia (150).

\(^7\) Composed of Parson’s Troop/1st Dragoons (27), Jones’ Troop/3rd Dragoons (28), and Barrett’s Troop/3rd Dragoons (27).
2. **British Strengths:** These are based on archival research and accurate.

3. **British Fatigue:** The British had undertaken a very early morning march to catch the American forces. For purposes of Army Morale Tests reduce Tarleton’s command die down 1 to reflect the British fatigue.

4. **Two Figure Infantry Stands:** Units marked with * after the number of stands in the unit are based on two figure infantry stands. They are treated as in open order formation. They may also use skirmish formation (show by separating the stands one base width).

5. **Army Characterization Deck:** Each side receives 3 cards from the Army Characterization Deck to determine morale chips and any Effect Cards (disregard the Stratagem Cards)

**Victory Conditions:**
The first side to break and retreat off the table (see Major Morale Check rules in Piquet) is the loser. The side that remains on the table is the winner.

**Game Length:**
The game continues for up to 8 turns (4 hours). The real battle was settled very quickly, but the longer game duration allows for some more imaginative tactics on the part of the British side. The actual battle began at 7 a.m., so you can go for more than 8 turns if you want, but the 8 turn limit makes the British player "rush" his attack as Tarleton did. The real battle was over in about an hour (2 turns).

**Set Up:**
1. **Americans:** The Americans set up within 36" of the northwestern portion (upper) of the board. The Americans set up first.
2. **British:** The British set up in the southeastern portion (lower) 18" of the board. The upper right corner is north.

**Terrain (see map below, north is upper right corner of the map):**
1. **Wooded Areas:** treat as Class II terrain for movement and visibility in them is limited to 4".
2. **Small Streams:** treat as Class III terrain for movement and visibility within 2" of the streams is limited to 2" (there was a lot of undergrowth around the streams).
3. **Hills (two levels):** the hills have an impact on line of sight, but are not steep enough to have an impact on any unit’s movement (treat as Class I terrain for movement). I have omitted some of the contours on the southwestern edge of the map as they were a gradual down slope and would not impact line of sight or movement.
4. **Map Size:** Each square on the map equals 12" (300 yards x 300 yards using the normal Piquet Field of Battle ground scale of 1" = 25 yards. The overall map is 3' x 5'. Yes, this was a small battle.
**Sequence Decks (use the following decks for each side):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Deck</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Card</strong></td>
<td>1776-83</td>
<td>1778-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery Move</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artillery Reload</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Move in Open</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deployment</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing Lines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elites Reload</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroic Moment</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf-Cav Move in III/IV</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infantry Move in Open</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maneuver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melee Resolution</td>
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<td>Regulars Reload</td>
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<tr>
<td>Militia Reload</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Mobility</td>
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<td>Officer Check</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Optional Cards</strong></td>
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<td>1778-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brilliant Leader</td>
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<td>Crushing Volley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ragged Volley</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Optional Card Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>32</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources:

PRO 30/11/103 Cornwallis Papers Returns of Troops


Moncure, John. The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1996. (a very good source for this battle)


