

CLOUDSHIPS OF MARS

INTRODUCTION

This game – based on the GDW Space 1889 background – uses rules adapted by the Warlords for fast play and ships scratch built in 28mm “scale”.

On Mars

Cloudships fly. That they do so is due almost entirely to the bizarre properties of a special tree grown only in the highlands of Mars which – when correctly cultivated and processed – produces planks of ‘Liftwood’. This rare and valuable liftwood is arranged in ‘Venetian-blind’ style panels which, in the hands of a skilled trim sman, can be opened and closed to generate lift.

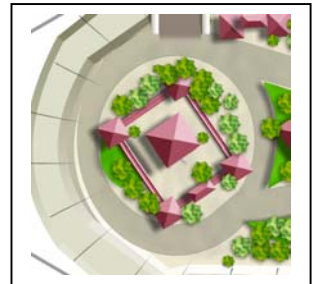
While Earth war ships are armoured, steam driven and carry modern weaponry, the Martians are either powered by sail – called ‘Kites’ – or are driven through the air by the muscle power of their crews: called ‘Screw Galleys’. In the latter case the Martians sailors stand either side of a long crankshaft that runs almost the length of the ship and – via a heavy, momentum conserving flywheel – power the ship via a propeller system in much the same way that renaissance ships (and earlier) were powered around the Mediterranean by oars and the sweat of men’s brows.

Background to the games

The games take place over the contested canal-side town of Syrtis Minor on the Oenotria canal. Until recently claimed by the British, this town has recently ‘risen up’ and ejected the British forces who withdrew to Syrtis Major. The whole area is a hotbed of Martian incursion into British ruled territories and – with allied assistance in the shape of the French and Americans – Martian galleys are challenging Queen Victoria’s rule over her Martian colonies and Syrtis Minor is in the thick of it. The games will involve British attempts to reclaim Her Imperial Majesty’s rightful control over the area by wresting it from foreign interference and native despotism.

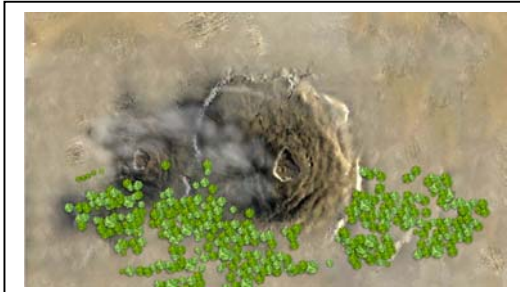
Syrtis Minor – a brief guide

There are two constructed islands within the canal called ‘Main Island’ (or ‘Main’) and ‘Petty Island’ by the British, connected to the two banks by four bridges, two for each island. The banks of Syrtis Minor are usually known as Westbank and East bank (the islands being closer to the East bank) and the bridges are generally known as Main East and Main West; and Petty East and Petty West – the Western bridges are the longer items.



The Governor’s palace is situated on the Petty Island in the walled off compound at one end. Close by to the town are the Syrtis Kraags (sometimes called *Syrtis Mons*), a high area of volcanic vents that once provided power for the town using some form of ancient native steam generators. They are quite a height barrier but could be overcome at high altitude if it weren’t for the thermal activity caused by them. Over-flying these areas safely is impossible in a cloud ship.

The area is farmed a little to supply some local need but most of the town’s activity centres around canal borne trade.



Playing the Game

THE CONTROL PANEL

Each ship has a control panel which shows its guns and their positions on the ship and their arcs of fire, its values for movement, altitude, boarding parties, ram value and the status of any critical hits. It also shows the ranges and damage values of guns, the number of die to roll for a gun when it fires and the scores needed to hit a target. Finally there is a track on which damage is recorded

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The order in which ships take their turn is determined by a deck of cards which has one card for each ship. The umpire turns over the top card from the deck and the ship shown has its turn. When all the ships have moved the umpire shuffles the deck and starts a new round of turns.

DURING A SHIP’S TURN:

- **Check the status of the ship for its current movement and any limitations on turns, altitude changes etc (the ‘Red Light’ section of the control panel).**
- A ship moves and then may fire any guns which are in range and have a target in their firing arc. Any ship fired at may return fire (only at the ‘moving’ ship). All such fire is simultaneous. Any guns fired must be marked as having done so.
- **Mark any damage received, dicing as necessary for the location of guns lost and critical hits.**
- Mark any critical hits with an Amber light.
- **As the last segment of the turn remove any Red lights and then replace any amber lights with red lights.**
- When a round of turns has been completed, all ‘Fired’ markers are removed from guns.

ALTITUDE

There are 4 height bands: Ground, Low, Medium and High. A ship which descends involuntarily to ground level crashes! When a ship takes damage and is forced to drop to a lower altitude it will do so immediately unless grappled by another ship. It will drop to its new maximum immediately it is no longer grappled.

MOVEMENT

Each ship has a movement value, usually between 3 and 6. A ship does not have to use its full movement allowance. Each movement point allows a ship to move forward one hex and change its facing by one hex side left or right. It costs two movement points to go up one level of altitude. A ship may descend one height level as it moves forward at no extra cost or it may remain in the same hex and drop one height level at the cost of one movement point.

Steam ships may make power turns. They may change their facing by one hex side left or right at the cost of 1 movement point.

The **Skylord** is a **kite** and may only make 1 change of face during its entire movement that turn (this represents its lack of manoeuvrability in the wind) unless it rolls a 6 for its movement. It may then make two changes of facing. Both changes of face must be in the same direction.

RAMMING

Each side dices, +1 to dice if steam powered. If the rammer scores higher it hits, if tied or scored less then misses. Rammer inflicts Ram value as damage.

COLLISIONS

If two ships are in the same hex and at the same altitude they may collide. Each rolls a d6. If the scores are the same they collide and inflict their Ram value as damage on the other.

GRAPPLING AND BOARDING ACTION

- Conduct grappling as per a round of boarding action. If successful the attacker grapples and may board
- Boarding action: each side rolls 1d6, adds current boarding value, +1 for each anti-personnel weapon (MG). The lower scorer reduces its boarding value by the difference in scores; the higher scorer by 1. In the event of a tie, both lose 1 BV.
- If defenders are the higher scorer, the boarders retreat to their own ship, the grapples are cut and the defender is free to move off in its next move.
- When Boarding Value of the defenders is reduced to zero the ship surrenders.

FIRING

All guns may fire once each turn. They are marked with a 'Fired' marker when they have done so.

The ship diagrams show the firing arcs for its guns marked in red. A target must be within that arc for a gun to fire.

Count the number of hexes to the target and add one for each altitude level the target is higher than the firing ship. Each gun type shows the distance which counts as short range and long range.

Guns: place a counter on the gun diagram to show it has fired and roll the number of dice for the gun type (1 or 3), count each dice separately:

Short range	score 3+ for a hit	Modifiers: Ships with a 'Superior Crew' add 1 to the die roll. Guns which hit inflict their Damage value, +1 if the die roll was a natural 6 (i.e. it wasn't modified).
Long range	score 5+ for a hit	

Machine guns: place a counter on the gun diagram to show it has fired and roll 5 dice for each MG:

Short range	score 5+ for a hit	Modifiers: Count up the number of hits in total and read of the result from the target ship's Anti-personnel weapons results chart.
Long range	score 6+ for a hit	

DAMAGE - HIT TRACK

- Cross off boxes starting at the left hand end of the top row, at the end of each row start at the left hand end of the next lower row.
- Hull boxes are crossed off with no further effect.
- Gun: dice among guns visible to the firer to see which is hit; mark that gun as hit, it may no longer fire.
- Medium: Maximum altitude now possible is Medium.
- Low: Maximum altitude now possible is Low
- Speed: Reduce the maximum speed by 1.
- Boarding Party: Mark one of the Boarding Party with a hit counter.
- Critical: Roll on the critical hit chart for the target ship.
- Mark any critical hits taken during the ship's turn with an Amber Light (see also Sequence above). At any other time mark the critical hit with a Red light. Any critical hits apply to the end of the Ship's next turn.

LINE OF SIGHT

Guns must have a line of sight to fire on another ship; ships between the two may block the line of sight. Ships at the same altitude as the firer and target automatically do so. Ships at the same altitude as the target block the line of sight if they are nearer to the target than the firer. Ships at the same altitude as the firer block the line of sight if they are nearer to the firer than the target.