

# **Finland Stands Alone**

## **The Finnish Campaign:1713 - 1714**

### **Part 1: The Battle of Palkane (6th October 1713)**

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The Great Northern War (1700 - 1721) pitted Sweden against a powerful coalition of enemies. Many people think that following the disastrous battle of Poltava, and subsequent surrender of much of the Swedish field army, in 1709 very little happened in the rest of the war. This of course is not true and I aim to inform you a little about one of the fascinating campaigns which happened in the remainder of the war - the invasion and occupation of Finland in 1713 - 1714.

Finland at this time was part of the Swedish crown and many Swedish units were in fact Finnish. Up until the invasion of 1713 there had been relatively little action in Finland during the war. There were numerous raids and small scale actions connected with the Swedish defence of the Baltic States against the Russians. In 1708 the Swedish army in Finland, which as later was mainly Finnish, launched a diversionary attack on St. Petersburg designed to tie down Russian forces as Charles XII, the Swedish King, advanced into Russia with the main army. The army under Lybecker failed in its mission and also managed to lose most of its horses when it was forced to evacuate by sea. But generally the fighting had not been serious in Finland.

In the aftermath of the Russian campaign, and the continuing operations against the Swedes, all of Europe expected Sweden to submit to the obvious, and seek terms. Unfortunately the exception to this view point was the man that mattered most in this, Charles XII of Sweden. He was determined to carry on and so Sweden fought on.

In 1712 the Swedes managed to land an army in Northern Germany and the spectre of a Swedish revival once again seemed a possibility. Sweden's enemies were at this time systematically reducing Sweden's remaining German and Baltic province. But something more seemed to be needed to finally convince the Swedish King that it was time to make peace. So it was that Tsar Peter of Russia decided that it was necessary to strike at part of Sweden's core territory - Finland. Conquering Finland, he was sure, would force the Swedes to finally come to terms.

He was wrong!

## Opposing Forces.

Leading the Russian invasion would be the Russian Admiral Apraxin (or Apraksin). Despite his title he had spent most of the war commanding land based troops, although the 1713 - 1714 campaign was to provide him with the opportunity to command at sea. Apraxin had spent the war operating in the Baltic States area, at that time Swedish possessions, and had participated and commanded in many actions. Since the early part of the war his primary task had been to command the Russian army that defended the St. Petersburg area, a city which at that time was still being built and was of crucial importance to Russia and her Tsar.

While not the most dynamic of commanders Apraxin was competent enough and 'a safe pair of hands' for the task. He had with him an army composed of experienced troops both from his own command and also veterans of the main Russian army that had been fighting elsewhere during the war. Apraxin also had control of Russia's growing fleet and in particular her galley fleet. These campaigns were to be the first large scale use of a kind of fleet that was to be very important in Baltic naval battles for some time to come. I do not intend to cover the naval aspects in detail. But suffice it to say that Russia's galley fleet was to prove decisive

At this time it is not certain if Russian units retained pikes within their infantry units. They certainly had used them during the Russian campaign of 1708 - 1709. There is evidence that following this their use was discontinued, at least temporarily. They were not deemed necessary when the major operations the Russians were conducting were sieges and there was no credible threat from a Swedish field army. But there is evidence that in 1715 they were brought back for the proposed invasion of Sweden. This leaves it very unclear whether the forces in Finland had pikes or not. Probably they did not but they were expecting to be engaged in field actions so possibly they did.



*Feodor Matveyevich Apraxin  
Moscowitischer General Admiral.*

Opposing him initially was the Swedish general Lybecker. He had commanded the army in Finland for some time but with little success. Indeed he had managed to get the army severely mauled during the 1708 diversionary campaign against St. Petersburg. Many doubted his fitness to command, but he had been appointed by the King. At this time the King was still in the Ottoman Empire trying to get support for his schemes. In his absence no one wanted to change an appointment he had made and so Lybecker remained in command.

To defend Finland he had a field army composed of 4 cavalry regiments and 8 infantry regiments. Of these 3 cavalry and 7 infantry were Finnish Indelta (regular Swedish/Finnish provincial units) and the others experienced Varvade (non provincial and frequently not

Swedish/Finnish) units. He also had the support of a strong squadron of Sweden's ocean going navy. In theory a strong force to defend Finland.

Unfortunately all was not as it appeared. The 'real' Indelta units were caught up in the various disasters of 1709 and 1710. Along with much of the rest of Sweden's 'first line' units they had been captured or destroyed during the Russian campaign or the loss of most of Sweden's Baltic provinces. Following these disasters all of the original Finnish Indelta units had been lost!

Using a mixture of reserve troops ('Fordubbling', a kind of 1st line reserve unit) and new recruits the Finnish Indelta regiments were reformed. The old units had some experience but they were far from 1st Line troops and now had large numbers of raw recruits. Even the varvade units were a mixed bunch. They were both the combined remnants of many units from the Baltic States.

To make matters worse there were no pikes available. The use of pikes by the Swedish army, and others, during this period has often been seen as a sign of 'backwardness'. Unfortunately while this might be true for Western armies using attritional fire tactics it was not for Swedish tactics which used 'shock'. The army also suffered greatly from disease and desertion. So the numbers of troops available fluctuated greatly during the period.



## The Campaign

At the end of April 1713 the Russians opened the campaign. A fleet of 93 galleys and 110 other large boats under Apraxin's command, but with the Russian Tsar in command of the vanguard, headed for Finland. What followed was a classic example of the advantages of an amphibious strategy in an area like the Baltic. Lybecker's Finns would occupy a strong position against the advancing Russians, only for the Russians to outflank the position by landing forces behind the Finnish army.

Early in May Helsinki (it was then called Helsingfors) fell and the nearby port of Borga. By August the Russians had advanced to Abo and still Lybecker had been able to achieve anything. As Lybecker fell back the calls for his replacement grew. In September he was finally replaced, although it is perhaps difficult to see what he could have done differently. The Swedish navy was not capable of operating in the shallow waters that Russia's galley fleet used and so Lybecker could do little.

His replacement was General Armfelt. A Finn himself he was determined to fight to keep his homeland. He took up a strong position on a narrow piece of land between two lakes, Palkane and Mallas, to cover the next important town on the coast, Tammerfors.. To his front was a channel between the lakes. At this position he constructed trenches along the line of the channel and redoubts for his artillery

Apraxin with the Russian army moved up to the area with the Russian army and based itself at the nearby town of Kangais. It was clear that the Finnish army was in a strong position that would be difficult to force with a frontal attack, but there was another way! The Russians paused to prepare and on October 6th 1713 they move to the attack.

# The Historic Armies

## The Swedish (Finnish) Army

The strength of the Finnish army fluctuated greatly. The exact strength of the army at the battle is not known but was approx. 3,700 men. The numbers below refer to the units size in June. Not all of the units were present or had their full strength at the historical battle.

**Horse:** All Horse use Swedish charging at a gallop tactics, but may be downgraded to a less effective tactic because of their poor quality.

- Abo och Bjorneborgs lans Cavalry Regiment: 736 poor cavalry.
- Nylands och Tavastahus lans Cavalry Regiment: 803 poor cavalry.
- Karelska (Viborgs och Nyslotts lans) Cavalry Regiment: 641 poor cavalry.
- Ingermanlandska Dragoon Regiment: 484 poor cavalry.
- Land Dragoon Squadron: 58 very poor cavalry

Approx. 1,500 cavalry were available for the historic battle. It is not known from which units.

**Infantry:** All infantry are musket armed, no pikes as would be usual. Unless noted the units use Swedish Ga Pa attacking tactics.

- Abo lans Regiment: 791 average infantry.
- Bjorneborgs Regiment: 470 average infantry.
- Tavastahus Regiment: 792 average infantry.
- Viborgs Regiment: 247 average infantry
- Savolax Regiment: 731 average infantry.
- Nylands Regiment: 503 average infantry
- Osterbottens Regiment: 705 average infantry.
- Finska varvade Battalion: 240 average infantry but probably using firing tactics

Approx. 2,200 infantry were present for the historical battle. All of the Bjorneborgs and Nylands regiment were absent and also detachments from the other units.

**Artillery:** 28 guns, mainly light.

## The Russian Army

### Horse:

- Governor's Squadron: about 300 good to elite dragoons.
- Luzhski Regiment: about 1000 average dragoons.
- Viatski Regiment: about 1000 good dragoons.
- Vologdski Regiment: about 1000 average to good dragoons.
- Narvski Regiment: about 1000 average to good dragoons.
- Cossacks: about 1000 poor light horse.

### Infantry:

Grenadier units are all musket armed. All other units are probably all musket armed as well but it is possible that they retained a small number of pikes - 10 to 20% of a unit.

- 1st (formerly Busch's) Grenadier Regiment: about 500 (a detachment) good infantry.
- 2nd (probably formerly Sykov's) Grenadier Regiment: about 1000 good infantry.
- Archangelski Regiment: about 500 (a detachment) average infantry.
- Nishegorodski Regiment: about 1000 average infantry.
- Kazanski Regiment: about 1000 average to good infantry.
- Moskavski Regiment: about 1000 average to good infantry.
- Sibirienski Regiment: about 500 (a detachment) average to good infantry.
- Luzhski Regiment: about 1000 average to good infantry.
- Moskavski Regiment: about 1000 average to good infantry.
- Viborgski Regiment: about 1000 average infantry.
- St. Petersburgski Regiment: about 500 (a detachment) average infantry.
- Galitschski Regiment: about 500 (a detachment) average infantry.

The amphibious force was organised into 3 'squadrons'.

- Buturlin's Squadron (3 Battalions): 1st Grenadier, 1 battalion each from the Troitzki and Moskavski regiments.
- Golitsin's Squadron (4 Battalions): Archangelski, Galitschski, 1 battalion each from the Nishegorodski and Viborgski regiments.
- Tchernishev's Squadron (3 Battalions): St. Petersburgski, 1 battalion each from the 2nd Grenadier and Kazanski regiments.

The land forces were organised into 2 groups under Golovin and Bruce. In Golovin's were the 2 battalions of the Luzhski Regiment and in Bruce's group the Sibirienski battalion. The remaining battalions (1 each from 2nd Grenadier, Nishegorodski, Kazanski, Moskavski, Troitzki and Viborgski) were divided between these two groups, probably evenly.

**Note:** The Russian army had about 14,000 men in total. The units noted as 'detachments' were about battalion strength, other units fought as 2 batalions.

**Artillery:** 22 guns

## The Wargame:

The following is a scenario to re-fight the battle of October 6th 1713 using the Polemos Great Northern War rules. Hopefully I will also include enough information for you to fight the battle using another system.

You may play the game with the historically available Finnish units or with additional forces which were detached during the real battle. Similarly you may play with the historic deployment or with an open deployment.

## Order of Battle: The Swedish (Finnish) Army

**Army Commander:** Armfelt (A: 3)

**Horse:** organised into 3 brigades.

- Abo och Bjorneborgs lans Cavalry Regiment: 3 bases of Raw, D.
- Nylands och Tavastahus lans Cavalry Regiment: 3 bases of Raw, D.
- Karelska (Viborgs och Nyslotts lans) Cavalry Regiment: 2 bases of Raw, D.
- Ingermanlandska Dragoon Regiment: 1 base of Raw, D

A total of 9 bases of cavalry are available. A maximum of 6 bases may be used for the historic battle.

All cavalry may dismount and count as DD. I have rated the units as Dragoons to reflect their poor performance.

**Infantry:** organised into 2 brigades, 3 with the units in italics.

- Abo lans Regiment: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).
- *Bjorneborgs Regiment: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).*
- Tavastahus Regiment: 2 bases of Trained, GP(-P).
- Viborgs Regiment/ Finska Varvade Btn: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).
- Savolax Regiment: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).
- *Nylands Regiment: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).*
- Osterbottens Regiment: 1 base of Trained, GP(-P).

Units in italics are not used in the historic battle.

**Artillery:** 3 Light Guns and 1 Field Gun, Trained.

# Order of Battle: The Russian Army

## Command:

**Army Commander:** Admiral Apraxin (P: 3)

**Wing Commander:** Galitzin (A: 1 + 2).

**Infantry Commander:** Golovin (P: 1)

**Horse:** organised into 5 brigades, the Cossacks must be in a separate brigade.

- Governor's Squadron: 1 base of Veteran Dragoons.
- Luzhski Regiment: 3 bases of Trained, Dragoons.
- Viatski Regiment: 3 bases of Veteran, Dragoons.
- Vologdski Regiment: 3 bases of Trained, Dragoons.
- Narvski Regiment: 3 bases of Veteran, Dragoons.
- Cossacks: 3 bases of Raw, Light Horse (mixed)

**Infantry:** organised into 5 brigades.

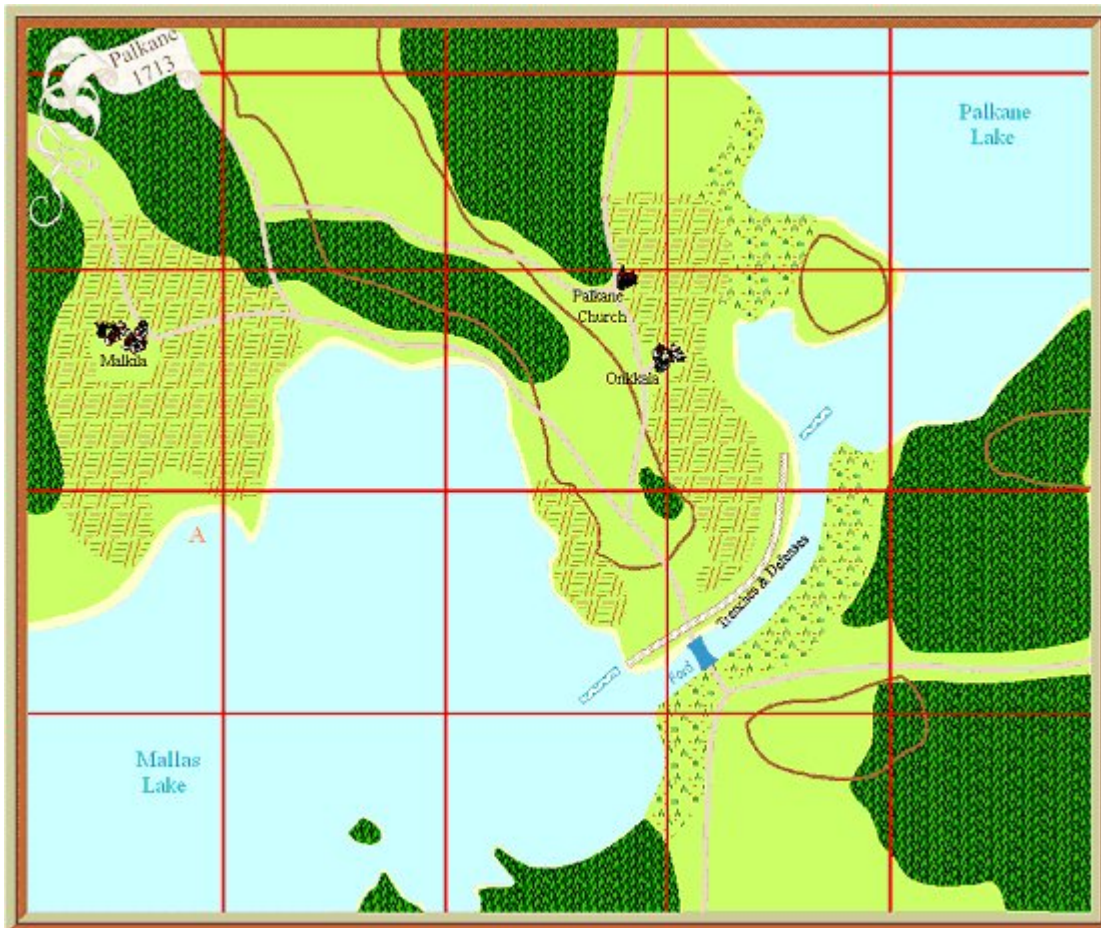
- 1st Grenadier Regiment: 1 base of Veteran AP infantry (Grenadiers).
- 2nd Grenadier Regiment: 2 bases of Veteran AP infantry (Grenadiers).
- Archangelski Regiment: 1 base of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- Nishegorodski Regiment: 2 bases of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- Kazanski Regiment: 2 bases of Veteran AP (RS?) infantry.
- Moskovski Regiment: 2 bases of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- Sibirienski Regiment: 1 base of Veteran AP (RS?) infantry.
- Luzhski Regiment: 2 bases of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- Troitzki Regiment: 2 bases of Veteran AP (RS?) infantry.
- Viborgski Regiment: 2 bases of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- St. Petersburgski Regiment: 1 base of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.
- Galitschski Regiment: 1 base of Trained AP (RS?) infantry.

**Artillery:** 2 Field Guns and 2 Light Guns, Trained.

## Terrain:

The map is courtesy of Sven Luger and I would like to thank him for his excellent work.





Each square on the map is the width of 5 standard infantry battalions (5 BW). In Polemos: GNW terms they are with standard 60mm bases 30cm square. The smaller grey square represents a table 180 cm by 120 cm (6 by 4 feet) and the larger one a table 8 by 6 feet.

For other systems work out the table size you need by calculating the space need for 5 standard infantry battalions in the system. This will give you the size of each of the small squares.

### Map Key:

**Forest:** This is not a continuously forested area, rather it has lots of 'patches' of forest. Movement through it in column is as normal but otherwise it counts as woods (Polemos - defence factor 1).

**Hill:** All hills will block line of sight and give defensive bonuses, if appropriate. Only the 3 level high hills to the left of the Palkane affect movement. This counts as a Slope level 2 for Polemos and should be about half speed for other rules.

**Village:** Standard small villages. Restrict movement and low defensive value (Polemos: Defence factor 1).

**Marsh and fields:** Units charging in marsh/fields should suffer a small penalty and units defending in marsh/fields should receive a small advantage. In Polemos this is -1 when

making a charge test and +1 in close combat if defending in it. All units moving in marsh/field count as disordered (Polemos - receive 1 level of temporary Shaken).

**River/Channel:** The river/channel should be about width of half a standard unit (1BD in Polemos). It takes a whole move for a unit (not artillery) to cross, Polemos obstacle value 2. Artillery may only cross at the ford on the road. All units should be disordered, however that is modelled in your rules, by crossing. In Polemos all units receive 1 level of Shaken in addition to all others that apply.

All Russian infantry units in the main force have improvised rafts which they can use to cross the river/channel. This reduces the difficulty of the crossing to approx. half that of normal but if the unit is hit it should suffer additional damage. In Polemos term this reduces the obstacle value to 1 but if the unit suffers a level of shaken from any sources it will receive an additional one. Each unit can only use its rafts once.

**Ford:** The fords are wide and a single unit can attack across them. The ford on the road can be crossed with no penalty. Crossing the other fords should produce minor disorder (they count as Fords under Polemos).

**Sea/Lake:** These areas may also be crossed but it is risky. Units may move a maximum of half their width per turn (in Polemos this is 1 BD) i.e. at about ¼ speed. Units may must move with one edge of the unit touching land. Any shooting at a unit in these areas automatically should cause a hit (or the equivalent in your rules). Similarly moving in these areas should cause extra disorder to normal and/or hits.

In Polemos terms this means that a level of Shaken is automatically taken whenever you are fired on when in these area, unless the result is worse than this. Each turn that you move in these areas roll a D6. On a score of 1, 2 or 3 you receive an extra level of Shaken which must be rallied. The unit receives a +1 dice modifier if it is cavalry, +1 if it is Veteran or Elite and -1 if it is Raw. If you have 2 levels of Shaken you must rally before you can move.

**Stakes:** Lines of emplaced stakes. A reasonable obstacle to cross but with little defensive value unless charged. Polemos: Obstacle value 1 for infantry but 2 for cavalry. Defensive value is 2 if charged and 1 in Close Combat. Cavalry receive 1 additional level of Shaken when crossing it.

**Trenches and Redoubts:** All trenches and redoubts should provide substantial advantages for units defending inside them. For Polemos they have a defence value of 2. Units in trenches do not block line of sight. They count as a minor obstacle (value 1 in Polemos) to enter, exit or cross. Infantry units in trenches occupy twice there normal frontage.

**A:** Russian amphibious starting point.

## **Deployment:**

**Historic:** The Finnish army deploys first. All bases are organised into brigades and then deployed on table. All units must be to the left of the river/channel. At least 1 infantry brigade must be deployed in the trenches. All others must be within 2 standard units width of the trenches (2 BW). All guns are unlimbered and deployed in redoubts. The redoubts may be part of the trench line or within 2 BW of the trench line.

All Finnish cavalry are deployed dismounted and in, or within 1 BW of, Malkila. If a cavalry unit moves in the first 2 turns it may become disordered. The Finnish cavalry was not formed at the start of the battle. If it moves during the first turn it receives 1 level of Shaken if it moves dismounted and 2 if it mounts. On the second turn, and did not move during the first turn, it receives 1 level of Shaken if it is mounted.

The Russian army must be organised into brigades and then the brigades assigned to the available commanders.

The amphibious assault must be commanded by Galitzin. He must command 3 or 4 infantry brigades and can only command infantry. These forces are placed in the area of point A. One brigade may be within 1 move of land but may not start touching land. A second brigade may be within 2 moves of land but must be more than 1 move away from land. Any other brigades may be within 3 moves of land but must be more than 2 move away from land. All brigades must be within 3 standard unit widths (3 BW) of point A.

The intention of the above is that the brigades are in 3 'waves'.

The remaining forces may be divided between the other commanders but each commander must command at least 3 brigades. These troops may deployed to the right of the river/channel and more than 3 BW from the river/channel. Artillery is limbered but all other troops may deploy as desired.

## **Options:**

**Additional Finnish Troops:** If you wish you may use the additional Finnish troops. These may deploy as above or may be deployed freely. If deployed freely they are deployed after the Russians deployment and must be 5 BW away from any Russian unit.

## **Free**

## **Deployment:**

The Finnish army may deploy anywhere to the left of the river/channel. But they must not be any further south than a line 1BW south of Malkila on the western land mass. The Russian army may deploy anywhere to the right of the river/channel or within 3BW of point A (as above) or may be held off table. An unlimited number of infantry brigades may make an amphibious assault but none have to.

Brigades may be held off table but their turn of arrival on table must be noted at the start of the game. Off table units may be held off the southern end of the table either below point A or to the south of the road that exits the southern table edge. In the first case the units will be making an amphibious landing.

## **Amphibious Assault:**

To unlock the strong position that the Finns had taken up the Russians used an improvised amphibious assault behind the position. They used small rafts they had made themselves. This improvised fleet transported Galitzin's command to the area near Malkila.

You may use a base with small rafts on to represent these units while they are embarked. This should be the same approximate size as the area that the unit would normally occupy but travelling sideways, i.e. like a column. Use one raft base per unit, the commander is assumed to be with the first unit that disembarks.

**Raft Movement:** The boats should move at something like the speed of infantry and movement should be automatic. The command is in something like 'travel mode' and should move relatively quickly and easily. In Polemos GNW units in boats will move 1 BW per turn and do not need to be activated by spending TP's.

### **Disembarking:**

Disembarking is free, but may not be combined with any land movement, other than the actual disembarking procedure. The boat bases are placed next to the land. Then the unit contained is placed on the land with part of it touching the boat base.

After all disembarking in a turn is done the FINNISH player may move up to 1/3rd of the bases that disembarked this turn up to half the width of a unit (1 BD in Polemos) without changing its facing. If any Finnish unit could fire (it does not have to actually fire, just have the ability to fire) at the units disembarking units they all may be moved in this way. i.e. the Finnish player can break up and disrupt the Russian formation, especially if they land under fire.

All units that disembark should be severely disordered and disorganised how ever that is portrayed in your rules. In Polemos GNW terms each unit receives 2 levels of Shaken and the brigade will probably have to perform a 'Reform' order.

**Artillery Fire:** If the boat bases come under artillery fire the boats, and the unit in them, can be destroyed. Each battery needs a 4, 5 or 6 at short range, 5 or 6 at effective range and 6 at extreme range (Bombarding range in Polemos).

**Note:** The above rules should make it near to suicidal to land close to enemy forces. So you have been warned. Find a quiet place away from the enemy to land or suffer the consequences.

## **The Historical Battle:**

Realising that the Finnish position was very strong Apraxin planned to divert their attention with a frontal assault while Galitzin's amphibious command landed behind the Finns. During the early hours of the day the main Russian army closed up on the Finns position and the amphibious command crossed the lake. As dawn broke the Finnish army spotted the Russians and moved into action.

In the West the first wave of Galitzin's command landed but the Finnish cavalry nearby were still in quarters. Armfelt, who was soon in the area, quickly got them moving though. The bulk of the cavalry remained dismounted but some also mounted. Armfelt planned to pin and disorder the Russians with the dismounted cavalry and then hit them with a flank attack with the mounted cavalry. But due to the delay the Russians had had time to organise and the Finnish cavalry, whose performance was distinctly under par, would not close.

In the East, Apraxin and his forces attempted to cross the river/channel using their homemade rafts. In three dispersed groups the infantry tried to cross while the artillery provided support. But the defending Finnish infantry were alert and easily repulsed the attempt. To maintain the pressure on this sector a series of attacks were carried out. At one point the Russian cavalry even attempted to wade through the lake to get round the Finnish position. No matter what was tried the Finnish defenders were up to the challenge.

Meanwhile, with stalemate in the East, additional Russian infantry landed safely in the West using those already landed as cover. Some time earlier Armfelt had summoned the reserve infantry from the area of the river/channel. With their arrival he once again returned to the attack. Initially the attack proceeded well but with the Finnish cavalry still under performing and with more Russians arriving the attack was repulsed. With numbers beginning to tell the Finnish cavalry crowned a less than glorious day by leading the rout of this section of the Finnish army.

With the Western part of the Finnish army withdrawing in disarray the Eastern positions were now vulnerable and indeed could be cut off by the victorious Russians under Galitzin. Therefore Armfelt ordered their withdrawal. But in this area the Finns had tasted success all day and they were reluctant to leave. It was only with some difficulty that they were persuaded that they had to. As soon as these units started to withdraw the Russian cavalry was dispatched to pursue them. Harassed by the pursuing cavalry, and with occasional pauses to beat off attacks, the remaining sections of the Finnish army withdrew from the battlefield leaving the majority of their guns behind.

The Finnish army had been badly battered but it had survived to fight another day. They did not at that time know that this day, the day of the next battle, was destined to be February the 19th 1714. But that as they say is another story, a story I shall tell in the next article.

If you have any questions, comments, etc, on the scenario please contact me directly at [nick@wfgamers.org.uk](mailto:nick@wfgamers.org.uk) or via the Polemos Yahoo group

(<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/polemos/>).