

# Nicholas Le Eyr

By Nick Eyre



I was invited to join in a series of games using Saga, the Dark Age skirmish game, that was to be set in post-Hastings England and when asked what side I'd like to be on I said 'the Normans' without hesitation.

I actually go with the fashionable point of view that the Normans were (and still are) the bad guys, and I always cheer the cowboys in the white hats, but the family name 'Eyre' is a Norman name and it was with that in mind when I chose to be the bad guys.

The name Eyre comes with this founding legend:

*"The first of the Eyres came to England with William the Conqueror . In the battle of Hastings (14/10/1066) this Knight, seeing the King unhorsed, and his helmet beat so close to his face that he could not breathe, pulled off his helmet and horsed him again. The King said: 'Thou shalt hereafter be called Air or Eyre, because thou hast given me the air I breathe.' After the battle the King called for him and being found with his thigh cut off, he ordered him to be taken care of, and being recovered, he gave him lands in the county of Derby in reward for his services, and the seat he lived in called Hope because he had Hope in the greatest extremity; and the King gave the leg and thigh cut off, in armour, for his crest, which is still the crest of the Eyres."*

My ancestor may have had *Hope in the greatest extremity*, but the good folk of Derbyshire had none . The Normans brought rape, pillage and genocide to England, to the extent they had wiped out the English ruling class within a generation and all the land and wealth was in the hands

of those fighters who came over the sea with William, including Eyre, (or Le Eyr).

So I was looking to build a Saga warband based around a peg-legged psychopath. Getting into the mind of Le Eyr, the Norman Conquerors were a complex bunch. They were firstly filled with the violence, paranoia and ruthlessness of a military force trying to suppress a hostile nation, plus they were driven by greed and avarice to seize as much as they could, with little or no constraints by the law, to then settle permanently in England. They were also driven by God. Their invasion had the blessing of the Pope to crush the English Heretics and oath breakers. By the beliefs of the time, they had God on their side by right of victory at Hastings and William had declared anyone who had sided against him from the time of the Edward the Confessors death to be a traitor. (That'll be everyone in England then).

So Le Eyr, deranged with pain from his severed leg, drunk with absolute power and convinced God is on his side over a traitorous, heretical population, is given lands in a region of England that is still described 600 years later as 'inhospitable', 'a howling wilderness' and 'the most desolate, wild and abandoned country in all England' (1). What a scenario.

Unfortunately for Le Eyr, I've been re-reading some old comic books, and the villain Torquemada (2) seems to fit the bill for my ancestor. Maybe Torque's cry of 'Be Pure, Be Vigilant, Behave' is not fully appropriate in 11th Century England, but I can imagine cries of 'Repent' and 'Death to all Heretics' to be fitting.

# The Warband

## The Warlord

With Torgue in mind, I asked Steve Saleh to rework one of the Crusader Miniatures Norman characters to make Le Eyr. A figure stood in a very arrogant manner found his right leg removed and replaced with a wooden one, and an unusually high helmet placed on his head. I passed the figure to Kev to be painted in an appropriate style, to be mounted on a Saga hero base with his horse beside him.

## The Hearthguard

I've chosen to have two Hearthguards made up of mounted Knights. These Knights are the minor landowners who owe a local fealty to Le Eyr. One group is dressed in black, they are closer to Le Eyr's vision of the world than the others.

## Mounted Warriors

These two groups of mounted warriors are the retainers and mercenaries of the local Normans.

## The Warriors

The Sergeants in the employ of Le Eyr are armed with crossbows, the perfect weapon to stalk the forests of Derbyshire with, hunting fugitive outlaws.

## The Levy

The resistance movement after the Conquest was conducted by Saxon fighters called by the Normans *Silvatici*. This is translated as 'woodmen' or 'wildmen of the woods'. They were a guerilla army that lived in the wild regions of England, raiding the Normans but then emerging to form the armies of Resistance leaders, fading back into the countryside after. They were a feature of England for many generations, and although my source for these (3) didn't mention it, they have to be the origin of Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Interestingly, Little John, Robin's right hand man, was from Hathersage, in the middle of Le Eyr's land.

I've included a band of these in my warband, using Artizan Design Viking archers painted by Dave Woodward. I've taken these as turn-coats, paid lots of money by Le Eyr to hunt down and their own countrymen, a poacher to catch a poacher as the saying goes.

## Notes:

- (1) Daniel Defoe, *A tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain* (1724-27)
- (2) *Nemesis the Warlock* from 2000AD. Titan Books.
- (3) *The English Resistance* by Peter Rex. (Tempus Publishing 2004)



# Painting Le Eyr

When Nick asked me to paint a hero commander for his SAGA Norman war band, I thought this is going to be pretty straightforward. Well not quite. Nick said he wanted something a bit different, and he referenced the comic book villain *Torquemada* from the 2000AD *Nemesis* cult stories...

## Nick's Brief

*I'd like him on the large base in front of his horse. Don't feel the need to be historically accurate; I'd like him to look bad and insane, Torquemada being the influence. Make the helmet dark, his cowl/ hood black with white lines in the mouth area to give a grill mouth effect. Black tunic and red cloak feel right but please feel free to use your discretion. I did wonder whether red flames along the bottom of his tunic would be too much. Wide, red rimmed eyes if you can get the brush in there. I'd like the horse to be black with red cloth.*

Later Nick also asked me if I could include a severed leg a shield design! So that's what I did, more or less!

## Undercoating

Undercoating is essential as it provides a consistent surface on which to apply the next coats of paint, and it shows up the detail on a model much more clearly than shiny bare metal.

## The Paint

I used Army Painter War Paints to paint the Norman nut job, mixing up colours to suit my style and preferences. The Mega Paint Set provides an adequate range of colours for almost all needs, but you will often need to mix colours to get the desired results, however I have tried to work out colour combinations to reduce this a somewhat.

Lastly don't get too much paint on your brush, less than a third of the way up the hairs on the brush in the paint is plenty, never dip the brush all the way up to the metal ferrule, or you will ruin that brush in short order.

Not too much flesh on this model, just the face and hands and the face is half covered by the cowl.



## The Eyes

I paint the eyes first so I can get them right before doing the rest of the model, as if the eyes are not good it will spoil the rest of the paint job! I tried to make them a bit mad and staring, but I think they turned out a bit too sensible in the end.

1. The whites are AP-WP1102 - Matt White (no prizes)
2. The irises are AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown

I painted the eyes in with a *Warpaints Insane Detail* brush.

## The flesh

I did the flesh next. Not too much on this model, just the face and hands and the face is half covered by the cowl. For a northern European flesh I use the colour combinations below.

## flesh

1. AP-WP1122 - Fur Brown
2. AP-WP1127 - Tanned Flesh
3. AP-WP1126 - Barbarian Flesh
4. AP-WP1126 - Barbarian Flesh plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White
5. plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White



Undercoating is essential as it provides a consistent surface on which to apply the next coats of paint.

The whole design is painted in AP-WP1102 - Matt White.



The cloak was to be red, so I painted the shade layer for the cloak, and then the design on top of that.



## Flames Of War

The next thing to do was the flaming design. I decided to this would go on his tunic and cloak. Rather than look at real flames for the design I looked at painted flame designs to give me inspiration. I tried to give the design that flickering flame look you see on 70's hotrods!

Basically the flames start light at the bottom gradually getting darker the further up towards the top of the flame you go. As the tunic was going to be black I decided I could paint the flames straight onto the undercoat, however the cloak was to be red, so I needed to paint the shade layer for the cloak, and then do the design on top of that, before completing the red. The shade coat for the red of the cloak is AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown mixed with AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red.

## Flames

I painted the whole design in AP-WP1102 - Matt White, correcting the design as I went along. Painting the design in white has a major advantage in that it give you a nice bright primer for the less opaque colours that the flame design needs. Some of these colours can be a bit of a trial to paint directly onto a black undercoat and benefit greatly for the white underneath.

I then painted over most of the white with AP-WP1107 - Daemonic Yellow, leaving a little white showing at the base of the flames.

The next layer is AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange, again leaving some of the previous layers showing. In fact painting the flames is a lot like my normal dark to light method of shading but in reverse!

The next layer is AP-WP1104 - Pure Red

And the next is AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red, which is the

final flame layer on the tunic, but on the cloak I did a final little touch of AP-WP1101 - Matt Black to the very tips of the flames as a wisp of smoke.

## Flame colours

1. AP-WP1102 - Matt White
2. AP-WP1107 - Daemonic Yellow
3. AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange

I then painted over most of the white with AP-WP1107 - Daemonic Yellow.



The next layer is AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange,



The next layer is AP-WP1104 - Pure Red, then AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red.



4. AP-WP1104 - Pure Red
5. AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red

I was happy with the flame, so now all I had to do was fill in the rest of the model!

The red, including the cloak, quartered parts of his helmet, an oval on the front of the cowl for his *grill mouth effect* and the hose on his remaining leg!

### Red is as follows

1. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red
2. AP-WP1105 - Dragon Red
3. AP-WP1104 - Pure Red
4. AP-WP1104 - Pure Red plus AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange

A final touch of AP-WP1101 - Matt Black at the very tips of the flames.



The Red painted in.





The mouth grill is painted in with White.

## White

I then painted the mouth grill with White as follows

1. AP-WP1117 - Ash Grey plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White
2. AP-WP1102 - Matt White

I then painted in all the remaining black areas of his tunic, his cowl, the other quarters of his helmet and his scabbard.

## Black as below

1. AP-WP1101 - Matt Black plus AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone
2. plus more AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone
3. plus more AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone
4. plus more AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone

With the black all done time to finish off the rest of the model.



## Leatherwork

1. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown
2. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange
3. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White
4. plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White



Black is AP-WP1101 - Matt Black plus AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone.



Leatherwork is AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1106 - Lava Orange plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White



Damage on the helmet painted in AP-WP1131 - Gun Metal.

## Metal

1. AP-WP1131 - Gun Metal plus AP-WP1101 - Matt Black
2. AP-WP1130 - Plate Mail Metal
3. AP-WP1129 - Shining Silver
4. AP-WP1136 - Dark Tone Ink

## Bronze

(and here I had to deviate from the War Paint range and go back to my old ways!)

1. AP-WP1133 - Weapon Bronze
2. Foundry PP036C - Shiny
3. Foundry PP044C - Burning Gold

## Wooden leg

1. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1122 - Fur Brown
2. AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1122 - Fur Brown plus AP-WP1121 - Desert Yellow
3. plus AP-WP1121 - Desert Yellow
4. plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White

## The horse

The horse's body colour is the same black as the tunic. And the other colours are also the same as on the figure but with some additions as follows.

## Mane, tail, socks and blaze

1. AP-WP1121 - Desert Yellow
2. AP-WP1121 - Desert Yellow plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White
3. plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White
4. plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White
5. pure AP-WP1102 - Matt White

## Hooves

AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown

AP-WP1124 - Oak Brown plus AP-WP1102 - Matt White

plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White

plus more AP-WP1102 - Matt White



The Horse. The horse's body colour is the same black as the tunic. And the other colours are also the same as on the figure but with some additions as follows.

The final painting touch was the severed leg design on the shield.



The base itself is a 40mm plastic SAGA hero's base from Renedra. I used superglue to stick the models in place. When positioning the models I made sure the man did not obscure the shield design.

### Severed Legs

The final painting touch was the severed leg design on the shield. I painted on the leg shape in AP-WP1118 - Uniform Grey, and then dotted in a chainmail effect with AP-WP1117 - Ash Grey and then AP-WP1102 - Matt White.

### Varnish

Make sure all the paint on the model is thoroughly dry before commencing varnishing.

### Gloss

The models were then given a coat of Humbrol polyurethane gloss varnish and set aside for 24 hours to dry completely. Be careful not to let the varnish pool, especially under the horse and on the feet. You don't need a very thick coat of varnish.

### Matt

Then they were given two coats of *Anti-Shine Matt Varnish*. Be even more careful when painting on the matt varnish. When applying the matt, brush it out well from any nooks and crannies where it is likely to collect and pool.

### Basing

The base itself is a 40mm plastic SAGA hero's base from Renedra. I used superglue to stick the models in place,





blowing over them to prevent the glue whitening off on the models and I also glued a rough stone or two from the garden as large rocks. When positioning the models I made sure the man did not obscure the shield design.

I then filled in-between the models bases and stones with household filler and then left that overnight to go hard. I then glued on some sharp sand with PVA glue, (4Ground PVA).

When the sand was dried hard I painted the whole base with

1. AP-WP1123 - Leather Brown.
2. I then dry-brushed on AP-WP1121 - Desert Yellow quite heavily.
3. then I dry-brushed on a layer of AP-WP1125 - Skeleton Bone.
4. and finally a light dry-brush of AP-WP1102 - Matt White.

The stones were painted as follows.

1. AP-WP1101 - Matt Black plus AP-WP1118 - Uniform Grey
2. Then dry-brushed AP-WP1118 - Uniform Grey
3. Then dry-brushed AP-WP1117 - Ash Grey



4. Then dry-brushed with AP-WP1102 - Matt White

### flora

I then added some flora. Firstly some tufts of The Army Painter - Battlefields AP-BF4127 - Swamp Tuft, AP-BF4131 - Winter Tuft and Meadow flowers , Then some GFS017 - Hobby Round: Meadow Blend Flock, and he was ready for battle!

