

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For readers who wish to investigate further, the following books have information about tawlbwrdd and about related games in the tafl family.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 2, pp. 43-45. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*, pp. 55-64. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 196-204. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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## TAWLBWRDD

by Damian Walker

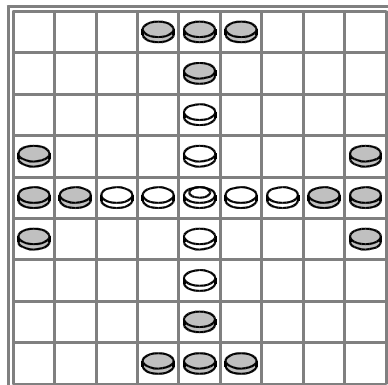
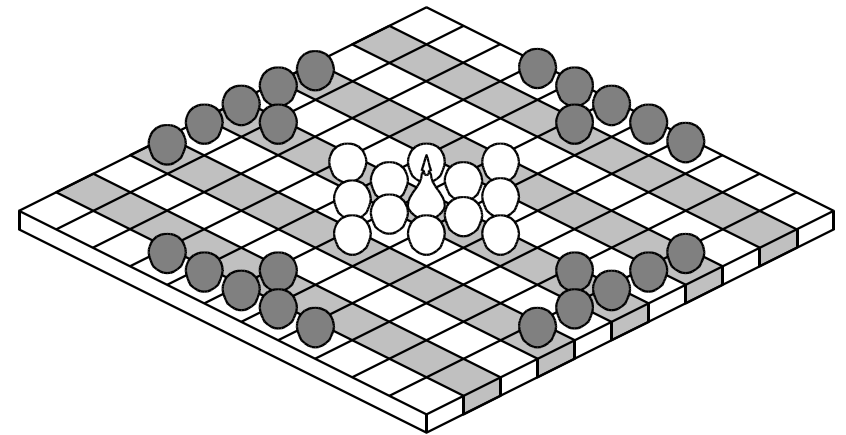


Illustration 5: the starting position for the smaller, earlier game of tawlbwrdd.

## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

*Tawlbwrdd* was a game played in Wales in mediaeval times. It was mentioned in Welsh translations of English romances, and in the Laws of Wales begun by Welsh king Howell Dda between A.D. 914 and 943 and continually until around 1250.

The last mention before modern times was in a 1587 manuscript by Robert ap Ifan, now stored in the National Library of Wales. This document tells us much of what we know about the game.

## HOW TO PLAY

*Tawlbwrdd* is played on a board of 11 squares by 11, with a king and twelve defenders against twenty-four attackers.

### Beginning the Game

1. The king is placed in the centre of the board, with his defenders around him and the attackers at the edge of the board, as shown in Illustration 1. Alternative starting layouts are shown in Illustration 2

*Tawlbwrdd* is a member of the *hnefatafl*, or *tafl*, family of games, which place a king with a defence force against an attacking force twice their number. The king has to escape this ambush, while the attackers have to try and capture the king. This family of games was introduced by Norse settlers, raiders and traders to the various lands they visited, and *tawlbwrdd* is a version adopted by the Welsh.

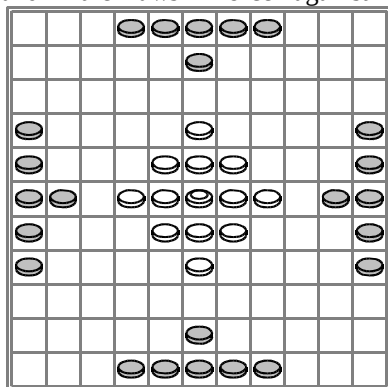


Illustration 1: *tawlbwrdd* set out for play.

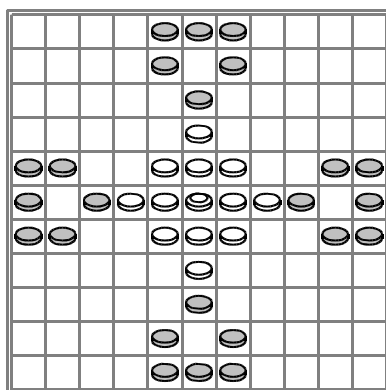


Illustration 2: an alternative layout for the pieces in *tawlbwrdd*, as proposed by R. C. Bell (see bibliography).

and Illustration 3.

2. The attackers make the first move.

### Moving the Pieces

3. In his turn a player may move a piece across the board by any number of spaces in a straight line, horizontally or vertically.

4. A piece may not land on another, nor may it leap over a piece.

5. The king moves in the same way as the other pieces.

### Capturing Enemies

6. An enemy piece is captured by surrounding it on two opposite sides, horizontally or vertically, as shown in Illustration 4. That piece is removed from the board.

7. It is possible to capture two or three pieces

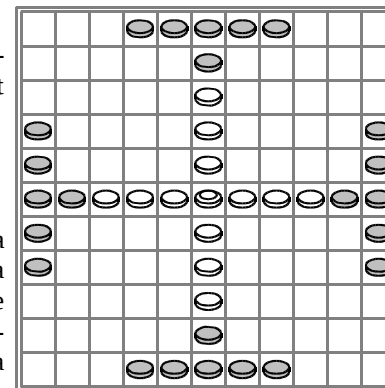


Illustration 3: another alternative starting layout.

10. The attacking player wins by capturing the king.

### Variation

Early games mentioned in the laws of Wales were played with fewer pieces, presumably on a smaller board. So in addition to the choice of 11x11 boards, the game can also be played on a 9x9 board with a king and eight defenders against sixteen attackers, as shown in Illustration 5.

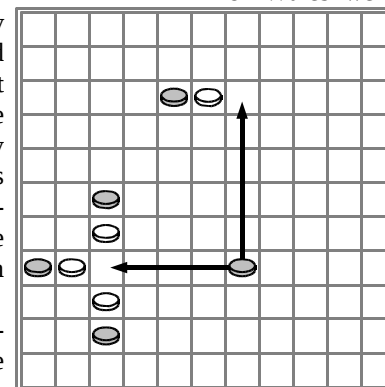


Illustration 4: captures. The indicated piece may either move upwards to capture a single piece, or leftwards to capture three white pieces at once.