

THE GREAT 1218 SIEGE OF TOULOUSE

THERE WILL BE FLYING STONES

The 1218 siege of Toulouse was not only a key event in the Albigensian Crusade but also one of the most significant sieges of the High Middle Ages. It saw intermittent ineffectual confrontations between attackers and defenders, both on land and on the River Garonne. None of the contenders had a clear superiority: the crusaders did not have enough forces to blockade such a large city, and the defenders did not have enough manpower to repel the crusaders.

By Riccardo Bixio and Gianluca Raccagni

After the first successful years, the crusade was running out of steam. The occupied territory included Toulouse, which was the largest city in the region. Lordship over it passed from its count,



Raymond VII, to Simon de Montfort, who took over Raymond's title. Simon removed the town's autonomy, forced it to pay a large indemnity, and demolished its defences, because he did not trust its inhabitants (with good reason).

In 1217, Raymond VII and many exiled knights slipped into Toulouse — which welcomed them — patched up its defences, and rose in rebellion.

The construction of a very large siege engine eventually broke that stalemate, but not in the way the crusaders hoped. Medieval sources call it a cat (*chat*), a term that usually denotes a movable shed or penthouse. Yet historians generally think that this one looked more like a siege tower. The defenders of Toulouse did not wait for the cat to be fully deployed, and on 25 June 1218 they launched a massive sortie to destroy it. Intervention by Simon de Montfort, the leader of the crusaders, saved the cat. However, during that confrontation, his brother

Simon de Montfort, one of the Crusade's leaders, charges forward during the 1209 battle for Carcassonne. He would eventually be killed at Toulouse, after taking a direct hit from a trebuchet.

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Crossbowmen guard the walls of Toulouse. They'll soon have a chance to wound Simon de Montfort's brother.

Guy was hit by a crossbow bolt from the city walls. When he tried to rescue him, Simon's head was pulped by a direct hit from a stone thrown by a mangonel that was allegedly manned by Toulousain women. Guy survived the wound, dying in 1228. The siege continued despite the death of the crusaders' leader, but it petered out.

"Toulouse! Now the blaze is igniting. To death! To death! They will not escape it! – And on the opposite side, Frenchmen and berruyers receive them, shouting: Montfort! Montfort! We will make you lie!"

"And a stone hit where it was needed, and struck the count so straight on the steel helmet that it tore his eyes, brains, teeth, forehead, jaw to pieces; and the count fell to the ground dead, bloody and black."

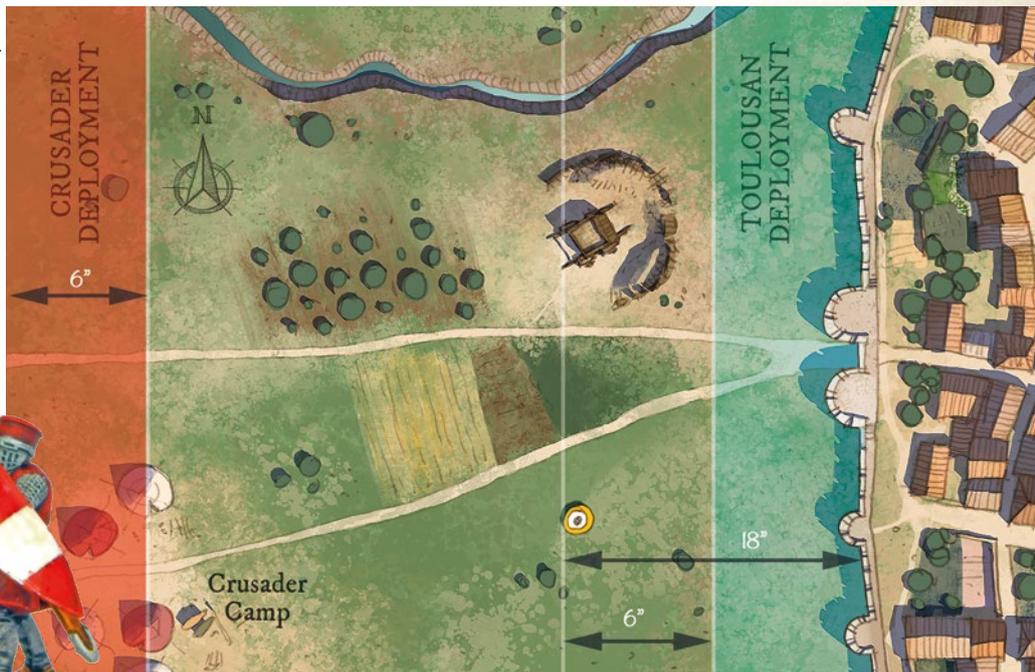
– The Song of the Albigensian Crusade

THE SCENARIO

This scenario re-enacts the sally in which the Toulousains tried to destroy the Crusader siege engine, as described by the *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*. The scenario starts after the wound-

ing of Guy of Montfort, who is lying on the battlefield. He and the *chat* are the two main objectives. The crusaders need to rescue him and defend the *chat*, while the Toulousains wish to destroy the *chat* and

© Rodol Espin



either capture Guy or finish him off. In the meanwhile, the battlefield is battered by stones launched by the Toulousain mangonels.

Set-up

The game board is ideally 4' x 4'. The west edge is limited by the walls of Toulouse. On the east edge is the crusader camp. Use the long sides for the west and east edges for a 6' x 4' table.

The Toulousain player is the attacker; the crusader player is the defender.

The crusader player places the *chat* 18" from the west edge in the northern half of the table and Guy of Montfort 18" from the west edge in the southern half of the table. These two units cannot be closer than 6" to each other. The crusader player then deploys half the points 18" or more from the west edge. The remaining retinue (including Simon de Montfort's unit) is deployed along the east edge (6"). The Toulousain player deploys his entire retinue along the East edge (6"), except the crossbowmen unit which is on the city walls (i.e. off the board; see special rules below).

The terrain should include a couple of minor siege works



CUT IN STONE

The Stone of the Seat, from the Church of Saint-Nazaire in Carcassonne, probably once decorated the tomb of Simon de Montfort. It displays a bas-relief depicting the circumstances of his death, including the mangonel that killed him.



© Michael Wastley

and ditches as linear obstacles and/or light cover and a couple of orchards and gardens as rough ground, ideally one per each quarter of the table. These are cover for the besiegers.

Additional rules

The *chat* occupies an area about 3" square and cannot move. Toulousain units can attack it with a normal attack activation. The *chat* has armour 3 and has 6 damage points. Any unit needs an attack roll of 4+ against it.

Simon is depicted in the contemporary chronicles as a great commander. He has the 'commanding leader' skill. If he is removed from the game, every crusader unit remaining in the game has a permanent -1 morale modifier (including the leader loss morale test). The battlefield was bombarded

by Toulousain engines placed on the walls and on the bell tower of St Firmin Basilica. The Toulousain player has no control over the shooting; thus the targets are random. Divide the table into four quarters: at the beginning of their turn, the Toulousain player rolls 2D6 and checks the following table.

D6	Result
2-4	No hits
5-6	NE quarter
7-8	NW quarter
9-10	SW quarter
11-12	SE quarter

If more than one unit is present in the quarter, one random unit is hit by the stones. That unit removes one model (there is no save from a giant stone hitting your head). Lucky rolls are performed as usual.

Further support was represented by crossbowmen on the Toulouse walls. Those crossbowmen stay off the table and cannot enter the battlefield. On the other hand, they have a range extended up to 21" (instead of 18") and long range from 14" for the advantage of the height of the walls. For uniformity (and for those players with no walls at hand), that range is always measured from the edge of the table, and the crossbowmen are spread along the whole of that edge. Roll as usual for activation.

Guy of Montfort is lying on the battlefield, wounded



Guy's bodyguards do their best to protect their wounded leader from an attack by opportunistic Toulousains.



Simon of Montfort suddenly rushes out of the crusaders' camp, in an attempt to rescue his embattled brother.

by a crossbow quarrel. Either Simon or the Toulousains can retrieve him. When a unit contacts Guy's model, he automatically joins it, but that unit's movement is reduced to 6". If that unit is contacted it fights as usual, but it cannot attack. If that unit is routed or destroyed, Guy is detached from it. His model remains at the location of the fight that caused the rout, and he can be collected by another unit. If the unit controlling Guy contacts the west edge, Guy has been successfully saved by the crusaders, while if the unit contacts the east Edge, Guy has been successfully captured by the Toulousains. In both cases, he is out of the game. If Guy is still on the table when the scenario ends, the resulting glory points go to the player controlling him. If a Toulousain unit controls Guy, it can kill him as part of any successful activation of that unit.

Army lists

Each side chooses a retinue using standard 24-point retinues. Ideally, Simon and Guy de Montfort should be escorted by mounted or foot men-at-arms. We recommend the following retinues:

Toulousain:

1x men-at-arms*, 2x serjeants, 1x crossbows, 2x yeomen

On top of those 24 points, the Toulousains have one unit of crossbowmen on the city walls.

Crusader:

1x mounted men-at-arms*, 1x men-at-arms, 2x serjeants, 1x crossbows

Ending the game and glory

The game ends if the *chat* is destroyed, if half of the Toulousain retinue has been wiped out, or if Guy has been removed from the battlefield (alive). Apart from normal boasts, at the end of the game, assign glory as follows.

Toulousains

- 1 glory point for each point of damage inflicted to the *chat*
- 1 glory point if Simon de Montfort is killed
- 3 glory points if Guy de Montfort is captured.

Crusaders

- 2 glory points if Guy de Montfort is retrieved or controlled by the end of the game
- 2 glory points for every Toulousain unit destroyed.

CONCLUSION

The death of Simon de Montfort at Toulouse was a short-lived success as the French royal house took over leadership of the crusade. That led to yet another siege of Toulouse in 1228, which this time fell to the crusaders. A peace settlement was eventually reached with Raymond of Toulouse in 1229, by which Languedoc eventually fell under the control of the kings of France. Catharism survived the Albigensian Crusade but gradually declined after it, finally disappearing in the first half of the fourteenth century. **WS&S**

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