FURTHER INFORMATION

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


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**INTRODUCTION & HISTORY**

**Tawlbwrdd** was a game played in Wales in mediæval 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.

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.

7. It is possible to capture two or three pieces at once by so surrounding them.

8. It is not possible to capture a row of pieces, however.

**Winning the Game**

9. The defending player wins the game by moving the king to any square on the edge of the board.

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. 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 1: Tawlbwrdd set out for play.

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

Illustration 3: another alternative starting layout.

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

Illustration 3: another alternative starting layout.