

THE DUCHY OF COURONNE

Written by Andrew Fawcett for www.criticalhit.co.uk
A Bretonnian addition for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay.

"They should wave and cheer our King... I bribe the scum enough to show their gratitude." – Jean de Talmont, Seneschal to King Charles.

Couronne is the capital of Bretonnia and traditionally the seat of the Bretonnian monarch. It is a heavily fortified city with bastions and towers spread at regular intervals along the wall. The King's palace, a veritable citadel, overlooks the sprawling city. However, King Charles III favours the quaint and picturesque surroundings of his palace at Oisillon, which are wonderful for hunting, and is rarely in the city itself, except when there are state and religious ceremonies or celebrations that he must attend. In truth Charles hates the big city as it is full of riff-raff and he might catch something from them although what this 'something' is, is anyone's guess. To this end Couronne is governed by Charles's seneschal, Jean de Talmont. This arrangement was intended to be temporary but De Talmont has been governing Couronne for a few years now and reports to the King in Oisillon personally several times a year. Good things are of course to Charles's credit whereas bad things are quickly concealed. Jean de Talmont is an able administrator and some would call him cunning or even Machiavellian. Through Le Maître de le Chambre Noire, a network of spies, assassins, forgers and saboteurs, he ensures both his own safety and the safety of the King through blackmail, extortion, sabotage and death. De Talmont also uses the network to fleece some of the city taxes by forging documents and creating payments for false people, the proceeds of which go straight to him.

Couronne is a famous spa city and lies in one of the most fertile regions of Bretonnia being located in the Sannez valley. The city's numerous springs and natural baths are said to have healing powers and many a traveller comes here to wash and bathe in the waters, hoping to benefit from any mystical magical powers the springs may have. The Cathedral of Shallya is located on one of the major natural baths and many pilgrims as well as the infirm and the diseased from all over the Old World come here in particular in the hope of a miraculous cure. Some of the plush houses of the rich have their own hot spring in their basements, which gives them their own ready and fresh water supply. This helps to make the air fresh at least around the houses of the rich but the majority of the city's population are not so fortunate.

Like most populous centres in Bretonnia, the shops in Couronne city open onto the roadway like stalls in an Arabian bazaar and all manner of artisans and craftsmen -- carpenters and cobblers, tailors and tanners -- can be found plying their trade in the open air for all to see. Housewives gossip by public fountains and children play around in the dirt, fashioning playgrounds out of every available space and alleyway. Being a large city an endless procession of humans and animals clog the rutted, unpaved thoroughfares: peasant women hurry to market with baskets of fruit, herders steer flocks of bleating, jittery sheep; and teamsters shout oaths at obstinate mules. Roving troupes of actors perform morality tales for the crowds, often enlivening popular stories from history or religion with slapstick comedy and satirical asides to the audience. And behind all this hustle and bustle, church bells toll away the hours, dictating the rhythm of people's lives across the city, as in the half-light of the narrow streets, the passage of time is often hard to gage and is heard rather than seen. Along with the actors there are the minstrels singing their ballads to the accompaniment of the vielle and then the clowns who bump and tumble and the equally flamboyant jugglers. All these add to the merriment of the thoroughfares of the city to anyone who has the time to stop and look and listen. From dawn to dusk, the streets hum with activity. The streets of Couronne themselves are rarely paved except for a few major thoroughfares. The majority of the populace have to negotiate marshy pools whenever there is rain.

With the population that Couronne has the disposal of sewage is a problem, with most of it finding its way into the Sannez along with animal cadavers. Rubbish and all kinds of filth often ends up on the streets, where dogs and pigs scavenge among the scraps. Sometimes human excrement finds its way onto the streets when the townsfolk empty their chamber pots from their windows (one notable occasion on this matter happened a few years ago when the Comte d'Arnaud, leading a procession through the main thoroughfare, was doused with the contents of a chamber pot emptied thoughtlessly from an upstairs window.) The city's tradesmen do not help the general sanitary conditions of the city: butchers let the blood of slaughtered animals into the gutters and the dyers let their contaminated water from their vats add to the cocktail; from fishmongers' shops unsold fish are tossed into the street at the

end of the day. Municipal hygiene laws do little to prevent these practices, and those citizens who try to sweep up the accumulated refuse often have to compete with the inevitable porcine scavengers that root in the garbage. Laws have been imposed, however, to fine the owners of pigs who let their animals roam free but these are often only on certain days of the week. The most unsanitary part of Couronne lies on the west bank of the river Sannez called 'the Cesspit'; so-called because the degree of lawlessness there is so bad that the Town Militia and City Watch rarely, if ever, venture there, effectively leaving the place to the criminal underworld who enforce their own law.

Where there are scholars, lawyers, wizards, tradesmen and priests crowding the streets, so to do less desirable citizens. Beggars slump listlessly outside the churches or solicit alms by showing off running sores or the stumps of severed limbs. Thieves move through the crowds with studied nonchalance, ever watchful for a stuffed purse that can be cut loose from the belt with a quick lunge of a knife. Unfailingly, the Couronne gallows displays its reward for those who would break the law: at least twenty or so corpses are left to rot, swinging from their gibbets; the remains of executed criminals.

Couronne is fast becoming a burgeoning city of education for the University of Couronne is an establishment of some prestige rivalling the great centres of learning in Altdorf and Nuln. Many students from wealthy families from all over the Old World come to study at this university. Within the university is the King's attempt to rival the magical scholarship that the Empire enjoys with the Colleges of Magic in Altdorf. It is nowhere near that excellence but an aspiring wizard can at least major in the fields of battle magic, illusionism and elementalism albeit to a limited degree, though the courses are heavily reliant on theory rather than practice. The teaching is nevertheless good if one can afford the huge fees, and favouritism towards noble families is rife.

History

The Couronne region was always popular with the early Bretonni tribesmen and the River Sannez provided an abundance of fresh fish. The Forest of Arden dominated the area and the Bretonni here had to be ever watchful for predatory bears and wild cats as well as for rampaging parties of greenskins. It is believed that some of the Couronne Bretonni sailed up the Sannez and would eventually found a fishing village there, which would eventually become the burgeoning seaport of L'Anguille. Both Couronne and L'Anguille relied heavily on each other to keep the greenskin tide back before the coming of Gilles le Breton. As the demand for new land increased so did attacks from Orcs and goblins as the Bretonni encroached more and more on their territory. During the reign of King Guillaume Barbenoire, grandson of Gilles, Couronne flourished as never before.

In approximately 500 IC Couronne became a city and grew rapidly with the nearby L'Anguille providing much needed trade and revenue along the Sannez.

1001 IC Louis the Rash, son of Gilles le Breton, was crowned first King of Bretonnia in Couronne Palace.

1997 IC Baron Gaston de Bajeau launched a chevauchee against the northern settlements of Gisoreux. A major diplomatic incident occurred when the abbey of St. Henri was sacked.

2007 IC Couronne was besieged by a massive Chaos army and this is recorded in history as the "Battle of Couronne" by the monks of Verena. From across the Sea of Claws the raiders came. Some were Norscans but many others were unrecognisable so twisted in form were they. When it looked as though the Chaos warriors would storm through the battered ramparts of the city another Bretonnian army came from the west, from Lyonesse. It was led by a young woman clad in the armour of a knight and carrying a banner with the image of a white lady on it. The new army surged into the Chaos host and drove them back into the sea. The young woman was Repanse de Lyonesse, a mere peasant girl imbued with divine power to rally the forces of men against the Chaos Beast. She was later rewarded the dukedom of Lyonesse.

In 2300 IC King Gaston sent an army to aid the Empire and Kislev against the forces of Chaos. Many knights joined the holy war against the hordes of darkness and returned with burgeoning reputations.

Military

Unlike the army of L'Anguille the army of Couronne is for the most part ineffectual. King Charles III is a superficial fellow, i.e. he values looks over effectiveness, and this is reflected in the city's army. The standing force basically consists of two thousand crossbowmen, swordsmen, spearmen and a few arquebusiers, all clad in brightly coloured uniforms and shiny, sparkling, mail. Although they look very smart they do not do much training and probably would be the last to stand in a fight. But they are very good at posturing and parading their finery around the walls and parade grounds of the city. Added to this are the nobles, who drill the regiments, dressed in mirror-shiny plate armour and evidently enjoy showing off to the ladies. When King Charles does visit the city he enjoys inspecting these smart regiments.

By far the best troops in Couronne are the *Chevaliers d'Honneur*. They number approximately two hundred mounted knights and by tradition they are the Bretonnian monarch's personal bodyguard. Most of them are stationed in Couronne but a few are stationed at the Oisillon Palace and protect the King when he travels between the two places. There are also about one hundred household sergeants-at-arms who man the Couronne citadel. These troops may look smart and dandy with plumes in their helmets but they're not just for show. They are every bit professional soldiers and wield tall poleaxes.

Theoretically the Duchy of Couronne should be able to call upon a lot of knights in times of war or similar conflict where fighting men are needed. Most of the nobles live in the north of the duchy along the coast and on the northern banks of the Sannez where trade is very good, especially with L'Anguille. Under the Royal ruling called the *Arrière-ban*, which is the obligation that the nobility have to mobilize their forces including themselves for the defence of the realm, many of the nobles here, but not all, ignore the call. Instead they are happy to pay fines so that soldiers can be hired in their place.

Along with the forces listed above Couronne should be able to muster up to ten thousand able-bodied men for war but the way the enlisting system is and how people prefer to avoid the levy it is reckoned that only two or three thousand could be called up. These will mostly be poorly equipped commoners although the several hundred militiamen available are better equipped and better trained.

Couronne also has a few cannons at its disposal notably several bombards and four of the smaller wrought iron breech loading peteraras, which were bought by King Charles after a visit to Mirgaliano (he apparently liked the sharp noise they made when they are fired). The peteraras are mounted on a section of the citadel wall and are fired in salute when the King comes.

COURONNE GAZETTEER

Settlement Name	Size	Ruler	Pop	Wealth	Source of Wealth	Garrison/Militia	Notes
COURONNE	C	The King	82,000	5	Government, Perfume, Textiles, Trade, Wine	500a/10,000c	Seat of King Charles III. Capital of Bretonnia.
Langres	V	The King	57	2	Agriculture, Fishing	-	
Auberuche	V	The King	47	1	Subsistence	-	Ferry
Fresnaye	V	The King	75	2	Sheep	-	
Clisson	V	The King	66	2	Agriculture	5c	
Monde	ST	The King	670	3	Perfume, Sheep	30c	Ferry. Pungent perfume sold here.

Guilon	V	The King	87	2	Fishing	-	
Bronais	V	The King	96	2	Fishing	10c	
Blaye	V	The King	36	2	Agriculture	-	Ferry
Martel	V	The King	72	3	Fishing	-	Ferry
Norte	V	The King	50	1	Subsistence	-	Ferry
ST. ERMESSEDA	F	Abbess Amarante	63	3	Alms	-	Shallyan Abbey.
ST. GILLES	F	Abbot Algrenon	110	4	Rent	-	Shallyan Abbey.
Chateau de Giles	F	Abbot Algrenon	300	4	Government	50a/150c	
Trondais	V	Abbot Algrenon	88	2	Agriculture, Sheep	-	
Vivrais	V	Abbot Algrenon	38	2	Fishing, Timber	-	
Vlois	ST	The King	350	4	Government, Horse breeding	5a/30c	Stud farm. King buys horses here.
TOURENNE	T	Comte Marcel Thibedeaux	10,000	4	Boat building, Fishing, Government, Trade	100a/1000c	Major town on coast.
Chateau Tourenne	F	Comte Marcel Thibedeaux	250	3	Government	20a/100b	Castle on outskirts of Tourenne. Guards coast.
Laxaur	V	Comte Marcel Thibedeaux	57	2	Agriculture	-	
Leotoyes	V	Comte Marcel Thibedeaux	42	1	Subsistence	-	
BAJEAU	T	The King	8,500	3	Agriculture, Wine	200b/800c	
Foix	V	The King	91	3	Agriculture, Wine	20c	Finest wine in the Bajeau region.
Gresoleau	V	The King	60	2	Fishing	-	
CHATEAU CARLAT	F	Baron Jean de Bru	300	4	Government, High tolls.	50a/200c	Toll station on banks of south Sannez.
CHATEAU MONTRA	F	Roland le Marechal	325	4	Government	50a/150b	Major fortress in Marches of Couronne.

Key

Size: Settlements are classed as: (C) City, (CS) City State, (T) Town, (ST) Small Town, (V) Village, (F) Fortress, Castle or Monastery.

Ruler: Refers to the suzerain of a settlement or settlements who is in reality under the rulership (often nominal) of the ruling Duke.

Wealth: Settlements are rated as follows: 1 impoverished, 2 poor, 3 average, 4 wealthy, 5 very rich.

Garrison/Militia: Refers to the quality of men under arms in a settlement: (a) Excellent – these are standing troops such as knights and the private retinues of the nobility, (b) Average – these are good troops and are generally a mercenary contingent attached to a settlement, (c) Poor – these are the number of able-bodied men available (greatly subject to change) to a settlement in times of war, included in this are militia and watchmen roughly making up 20% of the number.