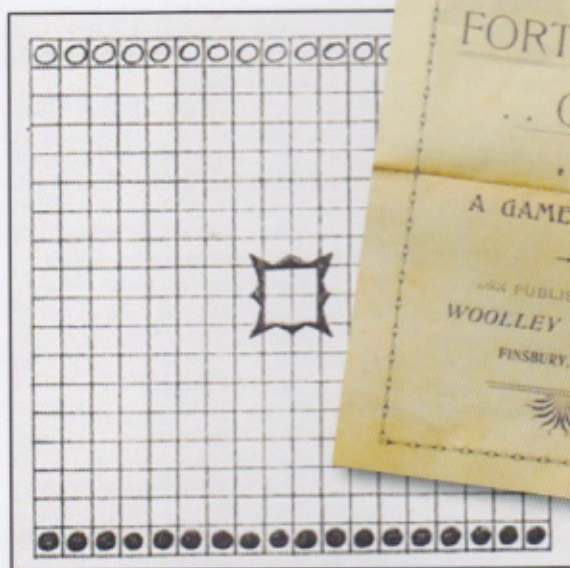


FORT CHITRAL

An Abstract Board Game for 2 Players from the Late 19th Century

Article and photos by Fred Horn



Board and start position; Rule book

26 years ago, in 1990, I was asked by the staff of "Slot Zuylen," a nearby castle to the town of Utrecht, to inventory and sort the contents of a coffer containing old games, because they had heard about me as a "well-known expert on games."

The castle, now converted into a museum, focused on the former family owners and this particular coffer was part of the former household. It now was part of the museum's collection.

Everything in the coffer was jumbled up—boxes, boards, pieces—and it was a complete mess. The staff had no idea what belonged to what and if the remnants were complete games or not.

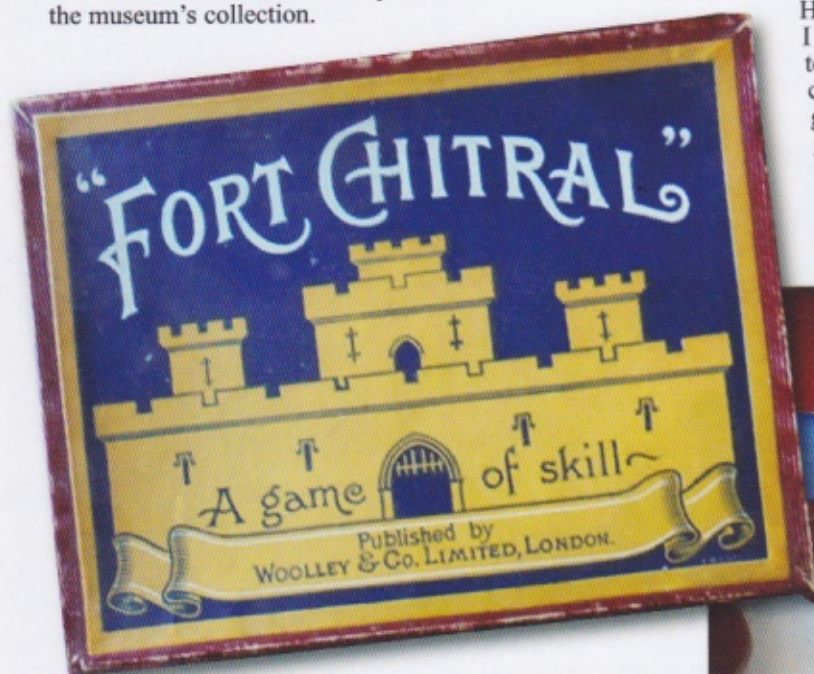
Upon my arrival, the staff had already sorted out the boards, thus that's where my investigation began. A lot of the boards were familiar to me—they belonged to known games like Reversi,

Chess; Dammen; Halma; etc., so I began trying to find the corresponding game pieces, game rules, and if possible, a (part of the) box.

Puzzles, like Tangram and dexterity games like Skittles, were also easy to sort out. Then I noticed a most beautiful game: THE NEW GAME OF THE WASP from J. Jaques & Son from London. This was a rather simple task to collect the board and rule book, and the metal bees along with the wasp. (Editor note: see Horn's related article on the game of WASP on pages 14-15.)

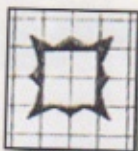
Next up, a Go board, here obviously used for the game of Go-Moku (the pieces were stored in a small box with that name!). There was also a Go-like board with a kind of bastion design in the middle. Luckily the rules were there so I could trace the matching pieces for this game, Fort Chitral.

After some hours of work I made a few notes, but unfortunately I did not have a camera with me, so I could not take any pictures. However, I did write down, from memory, the rules, and drew a picture of the board for Fort Chitral.



Object of the Game

To occupy, with 4 of your pieces, the four squares of the Fort in the middle of the board.



Material

Gameboard.

36 identical game pieces in 2 colors (white and black), 18 of each color.

Rules

White starts first, then turns alternate.

In his turn, a player moves one of his pieces.

The movement of a piece is for the most part like that in the game of Halma:
or — 1 step to an adjacent empty square, horizontal; vertical; diagonal,

or — jumping over an adjacent *own** piece when the square directly behind it is empty,

and multiple jumps are allowed, but not returning to the start position.

When an opponent's piece is trapped between 2 enemy pieces (Custodian capture) it is captured and removed from the board. More than one capture in a turn is possible.

When a piece rests after its own move between 2 opponents' pieces it is not captured and stays in play.

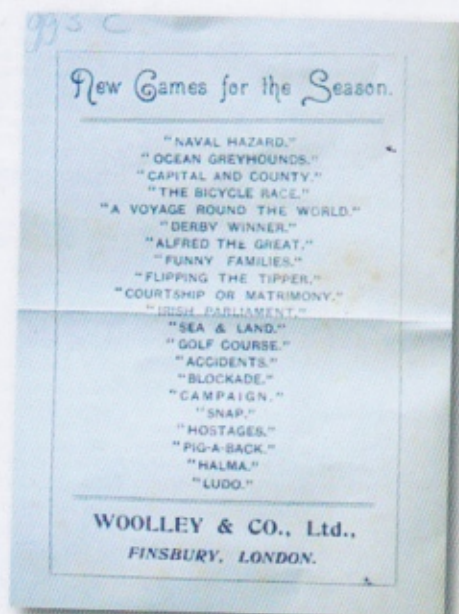
The first player occupying the Fort (the 4 squares in the middle) with 4 of his pieces, wins the game.

(N.B. note from F. H.: A player perhaps also loses the game when he has only 3 pieces left in play—the opponent has reduced his amount of pieces to 3).

*Note: this differs from the HALMA rules.

On January 19, 2016 I revisited "Slot Zuylen" and took pictures of the cardboard chips used for play. Unfortunately for me, after all those years, the game board could not be found. I also determined I did fairly well in remembering the rules.

But what really makes one curious is the list (at right) of all the other games! Are there still existing examples out there somewhere?



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