

# Fetlar2013

## Hnefatafl

### History

Dating back to over 1600 years ago, Hnefatafl is a Viking board game that has been revived in recent years. Older than chess, it is a strategy game that simulates Viking combat.

Hnefatafl, pronounced nef-eh-TAH-full, was one of the most common games played by the Vikings. Played in much of North-West Europe, the game began to decline in the 11th century due to the rise in popularity of chess, and at one stage disappeared almost entirely. Despite its long history, a standard set of rules has not survived, and there are many variants throughout the world.

### The Fetlar Hnefatafl Panel

Established in 2007, the FHP aimed to develop and create a set of practical rules based on an 11x11 board that could be used and published across the world for all players to use. In order to achieve this, FHP play-tested the game to establish both a standardised rule set and board layout for players. Having achieved this goal, the Fetlar Rules are now increasingly adopted by many Hnefatafl players from all over the world.

The most recent version of the Fetlar Rules can be downloaded from [Fetlar.org](http://Fetlar.org); alternatively, an [online version](#) of the game using Fetlar Rules can be played.



Above: The game in play.

Left: Players wait to start their games.

Images provided courtesy of Fetlar Developments Ltd.

### Competitive Hnefatafl

Since 2008, the FHP has hosted a world championship, an annual event that has been held on Fetlar each year with the exception of 2012, when the tournament was played online. In order to ensure that game duration would allow a one-day tournament event, it was decided that for the time being, play would be time limited.

At present, gameplay in the tournament progresses in a quick-play style. Players have just 15 seconds to make their move before a gong is struck, signalling the start of the next turn. It ensures sound and movement throughout the competition, keeps everyone on their toes, and provides a lot of entertainment for spectators!

A gong was chosen over a chess buzzer for the move signal because it is reminiscent of a galley drum-beat.

### Gameplay

Under Fetlar Rules, the board is 11x11 squares, with 37 pieces in total: 24 attacking pieces, 12 defending pieces, and 1 King.

The objective of the game is to capture the central defending piece, the King, or for the King to escape the attacking pieces by reaching one of the four refuge squares at the corners of the board.