

Figure 3: Examples of movement for the leprechaun and friends.

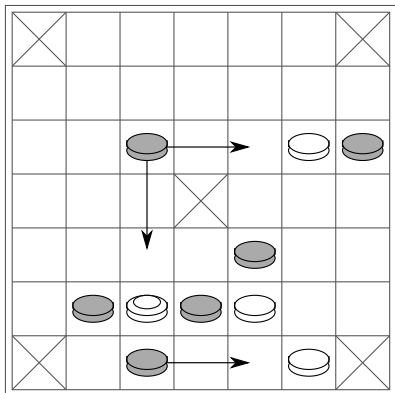


Figure 4: The white pieces may be captured by any of the moves shown. The two white pieces at the bottom right can be captured at once, as per rule 10.

# CYNINGSTAN

HNEFATAFL: THE GAME OF THE VIKINGS

## MAGPIE

### INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Hnefatafl is a game invented by the Norse, often referred to as the Vikings. A king at the centre of the board, with his band of faithful defenders, faces a horde of attackers twice their number, who are lined up at the edges ready to attack from all sides. The king must escape from the board, while the attackers must capture him.

It was first played in the first millennium; boards and pieces from that era have been found in all parts of Scandinavia. As the Norse raiders, adventurers and settlers spread further afield, the game was introduced to other cultures: the Sami in the north, and the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish in the west. Norse traders took the game east with them to Russia and Ukraine.

From the east, however, hnefatafl would have come face to face with another game, one that would eclipse it and drive it from fashionable tables in all the lands it had invaded. By the twelfth century, chess had replaced hnefatafl in Scandinavia itself. Only in remote lands did the game survive, in Wales till the sixteenth century, and in Lapland till the eighteenth century.

Magpie is a variation created by Nigel Suckling for his book *The Leprechaun Companion*. It is designed to be played on a board of 7 rows of 7 squares, with 13 pieces. A leprechaun has discovered some treasure and tries to drag it slowly home with the help of four friends, while eight thieves try to take it from him.

## HOW TO PLAY

1. The game is played with a leprechaun carrying a sack of gold and four of his friends, against eight thieves who are trying to steal his gold. They start the game laid out as shown in Figure 1 or Figure 2.
  2. The thieves take the first turn.
  3. In each turn, a player may move a piece as far as desired along a row or column.
  4. The leprechaun moves differently: as he is carrying a heavy sack of gold, he can move only to adjacent squares, as shown in Figure 3.
  5. No piece may jump over nor land on another in the course of its move.
  6. Only the leprechaun is allowed to land on the marked central and corner squares.
  7. A piece is captured by surrounding it on two opposite sides along a row or column by two enemies.
  8. A piece may also be captured by surrounding it between an enemy and an empty marked square.
  9. The leprechaun must be captured by surrounding him on all four sides by thieves, marked squares or the board edge.
  10. It is possible to capture two or three enemy pieces at once, if all become surrounded against separate enemies in the same move.
  11. The leprechaun and his friends win the game when the leprechaun reaches one of the four corner squares.
  12. The thieves win the game when they capture the leprechaun.
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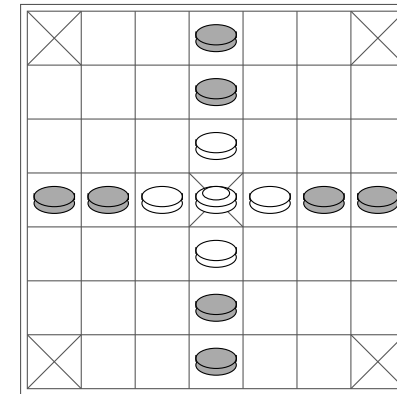


Figure 1: A standard layout for magpie.

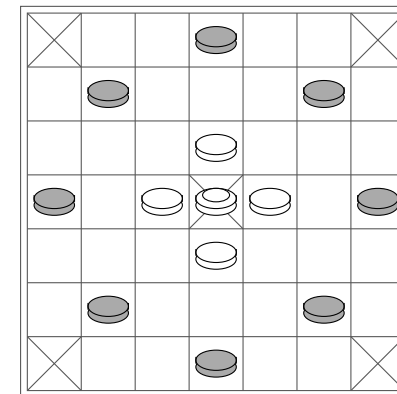


Figure 2: An alternative layout for magpie.