MAESHOWE

by Lee Broderick



30 minutes of desperation and madness for 1-2 Viking survivors

V.1.0.0

COMPONENT LIST



1x Double-sided game board



36x Core game cards



4x Health tokens (blue)



9x Expansion cards



4x Health tokens (red)



4x Food tokens



7x Passage tokens



1x Jarl token

THE STORY

According to the Orkneyinga Saga, Jarl Rögnvald Kali Kolsson broke into the chambered tomb of Maeshowe, on Orkney, in AD 1150. In AD 1153, Jarl Harald Maddadsson and a group of his men sheltered there during a snowstorm. The sagas tell us that Rögnvald found treasure there and that two of Harald's men went mad. When the Victorians opened the tomb in 1861, they found runic graffiti demonstrating that both of these episodes were based on real tomb-breaks. This game combines the two events and casts you as Harald and Rögnvald. Jarls Harald and Rögnvald had landed in Orkney less than an hour ago but the suddenness and ferocity of the snowstorm caught them by surprise.

As they stumbled forwards, head bowed against the wind, they were suddenly aware of a house looming before them. They circled the house looking for a door, but found none. Fearing death from the weather, in desperation they climbed the roof of the house and used their swords to prize apart the stones that roofed the building. Without hesitation, with no room in their minds for anything but the need for shelter, they dived through the hole they'd made and fell twenty feet to the floor. Groping around the dark interior, they quickly realized that there would be no way out the way they had come. They would survive the storm but if they weren't to die in this cell, they would have to dig their way out with their hands and swords...



SETUP

(See the "2-Player co-op" section of this rulebook for a 2-player setup)

1. Place the **game board** in front of you with the 1-player side facing up.
2. Shuffle the **36 core game cards** and place them face down as your **draw deck**.

   The **9 expansion cards** are split into **3 sets** (Gluttony/Garner, Crumble/Conservation and Horror/Hope). Those sets can be shuffled into the **draw deck** to your liking. It is recommended to only use the core game cards for your first game. For future games, it is recommended to use only one of the 3 expansion sets at a time, but it is possible to play several or even all of them at the once.
3. Place **four health tokens** in the color of your liking on the game board filling up all four spaces of the **health** track. Four is your maximum **health** at the start of the game.
4. Place the **food tokens** on the game board filling up all four spaces of the **food** track. Four is your maximum amount of **food** throughout the game.
5. Place the **passage tokens** on the game board, filling up the according spaces from **left to right**. Depending on your chosen difficulty you will need a different number of **passage** tokens (3=Easy, 4=Medium, 5=Hard, More than that? Good luck!). Put the rest of the **passage** tokens back in the box. You never can have more **passage** tokens on the game board than the amount with which you started the game.
6. Dedicate some space for the **card row.**
7. Dedicate some space for the **discard pile**.
8. Draw the **top five cards** of the **draw deck**. This is your starting **hand of cards**.

You are now ready to play.

GAME OVERVIEW

In real life, it took Harald three days to break out of Maeshowe. You have little more than this before you succumb to weakness, thirst and starvation.

- Each turn, you **must play** one card **and discard** another card from your **hand**.
- You **may choose** in which **order** you **discard** and **play** a card.
- When you **play** a card, place it **face up** in front of you to the right of any previously played cards, making sure that all previously played cards are still visible. This is called the **card row** and playing a card here is called **playing to the row**.
- When you **play** a card **to the row** perform the effect next to the  icon (if any).
- When you **discard a card**, place it **face up** into a separate **discard pile**.
- When you **discard** a card, perform the effect next to the  icon (if any). If a card effect forces you to **put** one or more additional cards into the **discard pile** from anywhere, do **not** perform the  effect of those cards.
- You **may** always **play** and **discard** any card from your **hand**, even if it doesn't have an effect.
- After **playing** and **discarding**, **draw** cards from the **draw deck** to replenish your **hand back to five cards.** If the **draw deck** is depleted at this point, you cannot replenish your **hand** back to five cards.
- Now **check** the **rune icons** of your **hand** of cards. If **all five cards** have the **same rune icon** in the top corners ( or ), you **go mad** (see below). If you have less than five cards in your **hand** (e.g. because the draw pile is depleted) you cannot **go mad**.
- Whenever you **go mad**, perform the following steps: **Discard** your **hand** of cards. **Shuffle the discard pile** into the **draw deck** to form a **new draw deck**. **Draw** a new **hand** of **5 cards**. **Lose 1 health permanently** by putting the rightmost **health** token from your **health** track back in the box. Your current **health** will be reduced by 1. Your maximum **health** will be reduced by 1 for the rest of the game. **Note:** Even if all cards drawn have the same rune icon, you do not **go mad** a second time.

GAME END

If you successfully **remove all passage tokens** from the **game board**, you instantly **win**. This is done by playing four **Excavate Passage** cards in a consecutive **row** several times.

Harald and Rögnvald have escaped from the tomb alive and their names will live on in the Sagas.

If you are **unable to both play and discard a card** during your turn or you **lose your last health,** you **lose.**

Harald and Rögnvald have failed to exit Maeshowe before they lost their strength. Their bones will join those already there and, one day, confuse archaeologists.

2-PLAYER CO-OP

1. Place the **game board** in front of you with the 2-player side facing up.
2. Set up and **shuffle** the **draw deck** as usual. Deal **five cards** to **each player**.
3. Each player chooses a color (**red** or **blue**). Place **three health tokens each** on the game board filling up the spaces 1 to 3 of the **health track** of the matching color. Your maximum amount of **health** is four each at the start of the game. Keep the fourth **health** token nearby.
4. Place **1 food token** on the first space of the **shared food track**. Your maximum amount of **shared food** is four throughout the game. Keep the rest of the **food** tokens nearby.
5. Place the **passage tokens** on the game board applying the rules of the general setup. The difficulty level is adjusted to a 2-player game (4=Easy, 5=Medium, 6=Hard, 7=Ridiculous).
6. Choose one player to be **starting player.** That player receives the **Jarl token**.

The gameplay proceeds as described in the single player rules, with each player taking turns to **play** and **discard** a card. The following adjustments apply to the 2-player co-op game:

- Both players **play** to the **same row** but each player has his **own discard pile**.
- If a player is in possession of the **Jarl token**, they **may choose** to **pass** the **Jarl token** to the **other player instead** of **playing** and **discarding** cards during their turn.
- If **either player** is unable to **play** and **discard** a card during their turn or loses their last **health**, **both players lose**.

VARIANTS

SOLO/2-PLAYER CO-OP VARIANTS

Players can opt to use one or more of the following setup rules to alter their game. Each setup rule is associated with a specific expansion set. It is recommended to only use one of the setup alternatives - the one associated with the expansion set used.

- After shuffling the **draw deck** but before drawing your starting **hand**, put the **top 5 cards** of the **draw deck** into the **discard pile** (Crumble/Conservation).
- Start the game with **3 health** and **3 food** if playing **solo** and **2 health each** and **3 food** if playing **2-player co-op** (Gluttony/Garner).
- Start with **1 more passage token** than normal (max. 7) (Hope/Horror).

2-PLAYER CO-OP VARIANT "FEAR OF THE DARK"

In this variant players are not allowed to talk or communicate about the game state or the cards in their hand. They **do not** use the **Jarl token** in this variant.

During their turn players **may choose** to **not discard** a card but instead **pass** one of their **hand cards** to the **other player**. That player **must** immediately **discard a card** from their **hand** to bring the number of cards in their **hand** down to 5. The player receiving the card **may discard** the card just **received**.

CARD EFFECTS



DISCOVER TREASURE

When **played to the row**, **lose** two **health**. When **discarded**, **lose** 1 **health**.

Something glints in the darkness. It's gold. What if you're the only one who makes it out alive? Then all the treasure's yours. Let him wear himself out digging, then you'll act.



EAT

When **played to the row**, you **may** choose to **lose** any amount of **food** and **gain** 1 **health** for each **food** lost this way.

A little nourishment helps keep your strength up.



EXCAVATE PASSAGE

Whenever you **play** the fourth **Excavate Passage** card consecutively (without other types of cards in between), you **must remove** the leftmost **passage** token (**two** if all 4 have the **same rune icon**) from the game board. Once a set has been used to **remove passage** tokens once, those 4 cards do not count towards future sets.



GOOSE

When **played to the row**, **gain** 1 **food**.

Whether a blessing from Frig, or an exhausted animal trying to escape from the same storm you were, you don't know. Whatever the reason, a goose flies into Maeshowe through the hole you made in the roof.

PASSAGE COLLAPSE

When **played to the row**, **lose** two **health** and **add** 2 **passage** tokens back onto the game board up to your maximum chosen at the start of the game. When **discarded**, **lose** 1 **health**.



RAVEN

When **played to the row**, **gain** 2 **health**.

A raven flies into Maeshowe through the hole you made in the roof. You take heart from the knowledge that Odin's watching over you.



RUN OUT OF FOOD

When **played to the row**, **lose** all **food**. When **discarded**, **lose** 1 **health**.

You weren't prepared for this. You've eked out the last morsel but it's all gone now.



SLEEP

When **played to the row**, **gain** 1 **health**.

Rested, you're ready to get back to work now.



EXPANSION CARD EFFECTS

HORROR

When **played to the row**, **go mad**. When **discarded**, **lose** 1 **health** and 1 **food**.

This card counts as both and when checking if you **go mad** after drawing up to **hand** size.

HOPE

Play **to the row** as an **Excavate Passage** card of any rune type. When **discarded**, **look** at the top two cards of the **draw deck**. For each card you **may** choose to **put** it in your **discard pile** or back on top of the **draw deck**. If you **put** both back on top you **may** choose the order. This card has no rune icon on it and so it never counts when checking your **hand** for going mad.

GLUTTONY

When **played to the row**, **lose** two **health**. When **discarded**, **lose** all **food**. You **must** have at least 1 **food**, otherwise you cannot **discard** this card.

GARNER

When **played to the row**, spend any amount of **food**, return up to twice that number of **discarded** cards to the **draw deck** and **shuffle** the **draw deck**. When **discarded**, **gain** 1 **food**.

CRUMBLE

When **played to the row**, put the top 5 cards from the **draw deck** into your **discard pile**. When **discarded**, put all cards in **hand** into your **discard pile**. Do not trigger the **discard** effects of these cards.

CONSERVATION

When **played to the row**, you **may** return another card from the **row** to your **hand**. When **discarded**, you **may** return another card from any **discard pile** to your **hand**.



HINTS & TIPS

- If you would **play** the **Horror** card before **discarding** a card for the round, perform all the actions for **go mad** and continue the round normally by **discarding** a card and then **draw up to five** and check if you **go mad** again. You could potentially **go mad** twice in a round this way.

- ...

It's dark in here. And cramped. Outside you can hear the howling wind and the crashing waves. That is the wind that's howling and the waves that are roaring, right? What about your friend? Is he really helping you or is he just looking out for himself? Maybe you should do something about him, first... What's that noise? Maybe it's safer just to sit in the corner...

CREDITS

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BACKGROUND

Nobody knows what "Maes" means, but "Howe" derives from a Norse word for a mound or cairn, so the Vikings gave us the name by which we've come to know Maeshowe today and they clearly knew what it was. What they were unsure of was its antiquity - some of the sagas suggest it was built by followers of Ragnarr Loðbrók, although some contemporaries clearly knew it was older than that, as we'll come to in a moment.

Maeshowe is, in fact, a Neolithic chambered cairn, similar to others known across the British Isles - and especially in Atlantic Britain and Ireland. Its story begins as a small, low mound on the flat coastal plain next to the Loch of Harray. The mound was levelled and covered with a thin layer of clay to create a floor, upon which a house was built. The monument we can see today was constructed around 5,000 years ago.

In each corner of the chamber of Maeshowe is a large standing stone. A casual glance may suggest that they are integral to the structure but they're not. They may have been removed from a nearby stone circle, suggesting a symbolic significance. In fact the masonry of Maeshowe is as impressive as its size and architecture - recent work as suggested that the flat, even stones and perfect joins reflect sound as well as any modern acoustically engineered structure and there are indications that some of the areas may have been painted. Those so inclined can imagine powerful shamanic rituals taking place involving sound, light and color.

The mound stands 23' (7 meters) high. It has a long passageway, 29½' (9 meters) long and aligned on the midwinter sunset, leading to the square central chamber which measures almost 15' (4.5 meters) across and the same in height. The passage is just 4½' (1.4 meters) high, forcing you to bend over as you enter the tomb - and tomb it is. Chambered cairns were communal resting places where the bones of some individuals may have been grouped and sorted, playing a role in the lives of the living.

Surrounding the mound of Maeshowe is a henge - a circular bank with an interior ditch - which was added to by the Vikings. The monument is mentioned several times in the sagas, as a prominent landmark, but two stories stand out.

In AD 1150, Jarl Rögnvald Kali Kolsson set out on a crusade to Jerusalem. Before departing, he and his men broke into Maeshowe and found treasure, which they buried nearby for recovery on their return. In AD 1153, Jarl Harald Maddadsson was leading a group of his men from Stromness to Firth, when a violent snowstorm blew up suddenly and forced them to take shelter there. Trapped inside, the sagas tell how two of his men went mad there and how they had to dig themselves out, having entered through the roof, high above.

The structure was first excavated in modern times by the Victorian antiquarian James Farrer in 1861. He found the tomb empty but with clear evidence that he wasn't the first there since the Neolithic. Inscribed on the walls inside the chamber of Maeshowe is the largest collection of runic graffiti outside Scandinavia, alongside abstract and pictorial designs. Among these, "This mound was raised before Ragnarr Lothbrock" suggests some awareness of its great age, as suggested at the beginning of these notes. That also illustrates the proto-historic, semi-mythical nature of the sagas. So what to make of the two stories mentioned here? Another piece of graffiti reads:

"Crusaders broke into Maeshowe. Lif the jarl's cook carved these runes. To the north-west is a great treasure hidden. It was long ago that a great treasure was hidden here. Happy is he that might find that great treasure. Hakon alone bore treasure from this mound."



SYMBOLS

 Effect when **played to the row**.

 Effect when **discarded**.

 **Add** a **passage** token.

 **Remove** a **passage** token.

 **Gain health**.

 **Lose health**.

 **Gain food**.

 **Lose food**.

 All.

 **Red** rune icon.

 **Blue** rune icon.

 **Wildcard** (rune icon of any color).

 **Discard pile**.

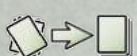
 **Draw deck**.

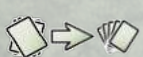
 **Hand** of cards.

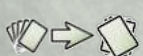
 **Card row**.

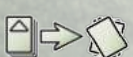
 **Check** the **number** of consecutive **Excavate Passage** cards in the **card row**.

 **Go mad**.

 **Shuffle** cards from your **discard pile** into the **draw deck**.

 **Put** cards from your **discard pile** into your **hand**.

 **Put** cards from your **hand** into the **discard pile**.

 **Put** the top cards from the **draw deck** into the **discard pile**.

 **Look** at the top cards of the **draw deck**, choose for each whether to **put** it into the **discard pile** or to **put** it back on the top of the **draw deck** (you **may put** both back on top in any order).