

Sweep of History Games Magazine #2, Spring 2006. Published and edited by Dr. Lewis Pulsipher, sweep@pulsiphergames.com. This approximately quarterly electronic magazine is distributed free via <http://www.pulsipher.net/sweepofhistory/index.htm>, and via other outlets. The purpose of the magazine is to entertain and educate those interested in games related to Britannia ("Britannia-like games"), and other games that cover a large geographical area and centuries of time ("sweep of history games"). **Articles are copyrighted by the individual authors.** Game titles are trademarks of their respective publishers. As this is a free magazine, contributors earn only my thanks and the thanks of those who read their articles. This magazine is about games, but we will use historical articles that are related to the games we cover.

This copyrighted magazine may be freely distributed (without alteration) by any not-for-profit mechanism. If you are in doubt, write to the editor/publisher. The "home" format is PDF (saved from WordPerfect); it is also available as unformatted HTML (again saved from WP) at www.pulsipher.net/sweepofhistory/index.htm.

Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 1 Playing Purple in Avalon Hill Britannia by Nick Benedict
- 7 Britannia by E-mail by Jaakko Kankaanpaa
- 11 Review of game *Mesopotamia: Birth of Civilisation* by George Van Voorn
- 12 Trying to Define Sweep of History and Brit-like Games by Lew Pulsipher
- 13 Some Tips About Approaching and Playing Britannia (written for novices) by Lew Pulsipher
- 15 Book Reviews by Lew Pulsipher
- 16 Brief enumeration of differences between Brit 1 and Brit 2 by Lew Pulsipher
- 18 Historical Walk-thru of Britannia by Lew Pulsipher
- 21 Poll Results
- 23 The End

This issue has been delayed by the emergence of the Fantasy Flight version of Britannia. Of course, the more contributions I receive, the sooner an issue will appear, as well. My thanks to Nick and Jaakko. I am particularly interested in articles about "Sweep" games other than Brit.

We begin with an article about playing Purple in the Avalon Hill edition of Britannia (most of it also applies to the Gibsons edition). I want to remind those who have the FFG edition that the changes to the game make its details quite different from the first edition; yet the fundamental truths about the unique situation of Purple (now Yellow in the Second Edition) still apply. Keep in mind that point values were all doubled in FFG Britannia to avoid use of half points.

Nick Benedict, like David Yoon who wrote our

strategy article in Issue 1, is one of the "sharks" from the World Boardgaming Championships. Nick has twice won the *Britannia* tournament there, and is also (not surprisingly) successful at *WBC Diplomacy*.

I confess, I'm fascinated to see what strategies the "sharks" will devise for the Second Edition, which I understand will be used at this year's tournament.

Playing Purple in Avalon Hill Britannia

Nicholas Benedict (USA)

In the North American Britannia hobby, purple and red are widely regarded as being the two strongest sides. Tournament results bear this out. Of those two, playing red isn't all that different from the other colors. Of course, there are significant differences between red, blue, and green, but their similarities outweigh these. For example, they all have one big dominant people in England sometime in the mid-game which you expect to score 50 or so points and win some kingships (Saxons, Angles, Danes), a tribe that starts off on the board whose main goal is to survive and pick up 20 points or so (Brigantes, Picts, Caledonians), and a minor nation that's highly dependent on luck (Irish, Belgae, Jutes).

Playing purple is significantly different.

There are two reasons for this. First, structural factors mean that purple's points will generally have a limited upside but also a limited downside. Second, the relative weakness and geographical restrictions of purple's midgame peoples means that the purple player will have less opportunity than the other three to play a "game balancing" role. As experienced players know, you must not only strive to maximize your own score, but also

ensure that no other color gets an undue advantage.

The challenge for purple, then, is that it needs to play game balancing the most. However, it has the least opportunity to do so. Structural factors limiting its upside imply that purple is unlikely to win a high-scoring shootout with another player who is inching toward 125 points. The limited downside means that in a game without a breakout player, purple is usually in it until the end.

Successful players have solved these challenges and leveraged purple's natural advantages (and there are plenty – as noted above, purple and red win a disproportionate number of games). But before we move onto strategy, let's prove our two key propositions: first, that purple is structurally biased to score in a tight range; and second, that purple has a limited ability to play a game balancing role. Once we've proven these points, then we'll turn strategies and tactics that can allow a purple player to be successful.

1. Scoring in a tight range

Purple will generally score around 90-110. It's hard to score less or to score more. There are a few reasons for this:

Unique position of the Romans:

- o The absolute maximum a Roman player can score by turn 3 is 36 points. That includes the Welsh areas, which are hard to conquer and generally a terrible idea to do (we'll explain why when we discuss game balance). Taking out all of the Welsh areas except Devon leaves a maximum of 33. Those 33 are all pretty easy to get – the worst that *normally* happens to the Romans is they only get one of Alban and Dalriada instead of both. So that's 30 points. Maybe a couple of Belgae survived in Lindsey or you didn't get Devon. So for territory, you are looking at only about a 5-point range (28 to 33).
- o Similarly, with Limes, you're just not going to get all of the potential points. You won't have enough units to protect all your forts, and if you do, any

competent blue or red player will realize that you might be running away with the game and will use stacks of 6 Angles or 6 Saxons to blast away 3 point forts. So there's a realistic maximum of about 25 points. On the lower end, you are guaranteed by the rules to have 10 legions for turn 4 and turn 5 (the raiding turns), so 10 legions should be able to defend 15-20 points even with bad luck.

- o The end result is that it's hard for the Romans to score less than 45 or more than 60. You don't want to score 60 or more with the Romans anyway – it will just make everyone pay attention to you, and, as we'll discuss, the purple nations are highly vulnerable to being ganged up on. Don't be the early leader as purple (not until your Scots are well established, anyway)

Limited upside for other peoples: Unlike the Romans, the other purple peoples can easily fall flat on their face (though with the Norwegians it takes some work). However, like the Romans, these peoples' upside is limited by the point cards:

- o The Romano British can't score points for territory after turn 7
- o The Norwegians have a maximum of 14 territory points on turn 15 (and one per area on turn 16),
- o The Scots pretty much only get points for Scotland, and trying to maximize your Scottish score often means spending turn after turn fighting two entrenched enemy armies in a highland area while breeding slowly.
- o Dubliners get two areas that are worth more than 1 point. That's it.

Other players have a lot of time and ability to react to you: Other colors have an ability to strike a "death blow" that gives them a dominant position that can resist even combined attacks from other players and give them the win. Saxons

piling on kingship after kingship can have the game effectively won by turn 13 or so. A Danish invasion that clears the board can do the same for green around the same time. Or a highly-successful Angle game that has not only scored a lot of points but decimated potential opponents of the Normans can have the game in blue hands. Purple – much harder.

- o Roman scores are inherently balancing: Other players can't control how well your turn 1-3 goes, but if you score high and have lots of legions left, nations that raid your forts can take more risks and go after better-defended and more valuable areas to reduce your score. Similarly, when things are going badly, the rest of the board may open up. In the World Boardgaming Championship semifinals in 2004, I played the Romans and was down to, literally, three legions by the end of turn 2. The other players realized that I wasn't the big threat and allowed me some breathing room so that the presumed beneficiary of my misfortune (blue) could be limited. Because my limes were mostly left alone, I ended up scoring more points as the Romans than I did in the finals, where my Romans lost only two legions on turns 1-3.
- o "Mid-game" purple nations are very dependent on other nations' actions:

A dominant Roman game (or one in which it looks like the Scots will do well, if the Romans and/or the Romano-British have beaten up on the Picts) will often leave Angles and Saxons agreeing to carve up the Romano-British, and/or Caledonians and/or Brigantes aiding the Picts against the Scots. None of the Romano-

British, Scots, or Dubliners are strong enough to succeed when their key neighbors are cooperating against them. And no matter how good your Roman game, you need these other peoples (especially the Scots) to throw in 25-30 points at an absolute minimum.

However, if purple isn't doing so well, rewards like a generous deal for the Scots vis-à-vis the Picts, or York being offered to the Dubliners uncontested are not uncommon.

While this type of game-balancing diplomacy moderates all colors' total scores, it affects purple more since A) it's clearer earlier in the game how well purple is doing (by turn 5 you know the Roman score as well as, by looking at the Picts and Brigantes, you should have a general idea of where the Scots are trending), and B) purple's midgame peoples are more dependent on how other players reach to them than peoples in the same era belonging to other colors.

2. Less ability to provide game balance

Once you play purple a few times, you'll realize that a major limitation of your position lies in your reduced ability to bring down a potential runaway leader. And that's trouble, because as we noted above, you're not likely to win a high-scoring shootout.

Generally, it is each color's major power which has the most scope for game balancing. Usually major powers get points for virtually anywhere so,

for example, it's all the same to the Danes on turn 13 whether they use their last armies to take 2 points from South Mercia or 2 points from Lothian...but attacking Saxons in the former versus Angles in the latter can have game-balancing implications, and strong peoples make a couple dozen decisions like this every game

Purple's big power is the Romans. When they are on the board, there is unlikely to be much sign of an "early leader" – unless you as purple did something to create one!

A similar factor is that most game balancing goes on in the mid-game (turns 6-14 or so). These are precisely the turns in which Purple is weakest. The Romano British have a little bit of opportunity to do some game balancing, but mostly against blue. The Romano British are expected to attack Saxons, so attacking Saxons doesn't do much for balance if red is out to an early lead. And the Romano British usually can't do much that is significant against green (advanced players will be aware of exceptions to this). The Scots are usually preoccupied with their own survival. Even if they have extra armies, attacking the Caledonians, Picts, or Brigantes only limits that color's growth a little bit. A red player with a runaway Saxon game, for example, can easily shrug off Scottish attacks on the Brigantes. And finally, the Dubliners need to go for York or Cumbria. They have a major invasion, so they can take a creative way to get there (if red is ahead, you can usually land a big force in Hwicce in round 1 of the turn 13 major invasion to knock off some Saxons on your way to York), but the overall effect isn't all that significant.

Compare this to the flexibility and options enjoyed by other colors

GREEN: The Welsh, provided that they are not back on their heels defending Wales, generally have the armies and scope to raid into England. They can choose whether Angles or Saxons will bear the brunt. Similarly, the Caledonians can intervene in the Pict-Scot dynamic, and taking either side wholeheartedly can yield a devastating result to the other. The Jutes are made for game balancing – they are unlikely to score territory points without a deal with the Saxons. And the Danes score points for almost everywhere in England – you can easily pick the point areas that have the leader's colors in them.

RED: The Irish are great game balancers between

blue and green (can raid Angles on the west coast or Welsh in Wales). The Brigantes, and to a lesser extent the Norsemen, can go out of their way to help or hurt the Picts or Scots, depending on the game situation. And, of course, the Saxons should get so powerful around turn 10 and 11 that they should be able to deploy armies to cut back a presumed leader.

BLUE: Angles can deeply hurt a purple lead with a joint Angle-Pict attack on the Scots. Very aggressive Angle play against the Saxons can limit red (though usually at the cost of helping green). Or, using the Angles even slightly to spite green (denying the Welsh York on turns 8-9 for example, or working with the Saxons to defend against the Danes) can easily reverse an early green lead.

So, that's all well and good, but given all of this, how do you win as purple?

1. Limit other players' points during the Roman era.

You know that with decent play and decent luck that you will get 50-55 points. You don't want too many more so as not to freak out the board. So make sure you limit other player's scores. Avoid giving the Brigantes the opportunity to fight large battles in the mountains or to send a large army after an isolated legion. 3 points per Roman legion killed really can add up. Similarly, don't let the Picts run wild destroying northern Roman forts. You don't get any points for defending forts north of Lothian, but until you need your legions in the south on turn 4, it's a good idea to protect the forts that you can to deny the Picts 3 points for each--especially the lowland forts. For this reason, I find it very useful as the Romans to take Mar. Mar is a great jumping-off point for Pict raiders (they can raid as far south as York from there by sea) and denying to them can be a major blow.

In contrast, the Welsh earn 1 point per legion or fort, the Brigantes earn 1 point per fort, and the Picts earn 1 point per legion. So if you need to give somewhere, let the Welsh blow up your forts (Avalon and March, next to the Welsh border, are only worth one point anyway), and be willing to destroy Picts in the field rather than letting them blow up your forts.

2. "Set up the board" as the Romans and

Romano-British

From turns 1-5, you have most of the strategic initiative. You need to get your points, of course, but you (and the dice) are primarily responsible for deciding what the board will look like on turn 6. You have two goals here – one is to optimize the chances of success for the Scots (and to a lesser extent the Romano British) and the second is to make sure that the game is roughly balanced between the other 3 players.

We'll talk about balance first.

It's assumed that the Romans will kill all the Belgae and make the Brigantes submit. I can't imagine a successful Roman game that leaves a lot of Belgae, so let's dismiss that idea. However, many Roman players let the Brigantes breed or even strike a deal with them. This is usually a mistake. The Angles will have a hard enough job as it is keeping the Saxons under control. Even 2 extra Brigante armies allied to the Saxons can be enough to make an already-challenging task fiendishly difficult. So make sure you get the Brigantes down to 6, and don't let them expand into empty areas or breed. At least until you know what you're doing. All rules are meant to be broken, and there are situations where you may want the Brigantes to grow, but this should be reserved for experienced players only.

The other place that you can go wrong is with the Picts or the Welsh.

The Welsh must be left able to adequately defend themselves from the Irish and Saxons (and possibly Brigantes), and even to launch raids into England to weaken the Saxons. By the time your Romans leave, they should be at or close to their maximum number of armies. You may need to kill some Welsh earlier on, especially if they are being too aggressive, but go easy on them. Those points in Wales aren't worth it. (Take Devon if you can. It's worth 1 point, and it gives the Welsh something to do to recapture it which may distract them from your more valuable forts)

The Picts are trickier. In an ideal world, you would reduce the Picts to 2 areas (where they can submit) and then use the Romano British to wipe them out. You should get a strong Scottish score that way. However, the rest of the board (if they are any good) will not let you do this. For one thing, the blue player will use his Angles to try to save the Picts. Your Scots can't stand up to the

Angles, and even if they could, having Angles distracted in the far north means that the Saxons are not being supervised appropriately in the south. Result is likely a strong red game.

What if you eliminate the Picts so quickly and effectively that there is nothing for the Angles to save? Well, you've most likely cost blue the game. It's very tough for blue to win without any significant Pictish points. The blue player will either wipe your Scots out immediately out of spite, or, when the Normans invade on turn 15 and blue realizes that he cannot win, he'll likely pick someone else to win that isn't you. And you'll deserve what you get.

On the other hand, you can't leave strong Picts. Your Scots may never get ashore. The Picts have the advantage of defense, of mountains, and of Angle allies. And on Pictish turns 6 and 7 there are few major threats to the Picts on the board (assuming the Romano British are in the south). They can spread to some lowland areas and grow very quickly. As a rule of thumb, try not to leave more than 4-5 Picts by the end of turn 5. If you've done that, they won't grow back to an unmanageable side before the Scots land on turn 7.

3. Pave the way for Scots and Romano British

If you've kept the Picts down to 4-5 units, and submitted the Brigantes at 6 units, you've done all that you can be expected to for the Scots.

The Romano-British are not big point scorers, but you can help them out with the Romans. For one thing, make sure you don't let anyone submit in, or occupy, the three English hiland areas (Downlands, Lindsey, Pennines). Romano British need to live there.

For extra credit, if you have a spare legion or two, it can be worth holding onto Devon (or even taking Gwent if the Welsh can be compensated elsewhere). Having Devon and Gwent (with the Downlands) as a base of operations for the Romano British is fantastic. You'll have some influence over the mid-game and also a decent chance to score points.

4. Use the Norwegians as a last-minute game balancing tool

The Norwegians usually have a fairly easy time

getting their 14 points on turn 15, barring something like a Danish stack in York or a Saxon one in North Mercia. And since it's a major invasion, you have even more flexibility. If you're close to one other player, you can usually use the Norwegians to inflict some damage.

Against Red: Plow some Norwegians straight into Strathclyde if there are Brigantes there. Brigantes get 5 points for the area on turn 16, and it's pretty easy to deny it to them with Norwegian help. Strathclyde isn't all that out of the way, either. Remember that you have boats, so you can use the second phase of the major invasion to end up in Cheshire, which, as will be discussed in the new point, is a great place for them to end the turn. Also it clears some space for your Scots.

Against Blue: Slap the Picts a bit. Picts in Dunedin are especially vulnerable, but don't be shy about dropping Harald with 4 friends into Mar on the first phase of your invasion (provided that you don't anticipate problems getting your 14 points). Picts get 3 points for Alban/Mar/Moray and 2 points for just about any area adjacent to those, and Picts are usually held back from lack of numbers (and the fact that they move early in the turn...tough on point-scoring turns) so a Pictish slap can go a long way. As with the Brigantes, attacking the Picts also can clear some space for your Scots.

Against Green: Harder to knock off a lot of green points by turn 15. However, there are a couple of areas where green armies may be hiding out that not only deny points to green but are also great end-of-turn-15 spots for Harald: Lindsey and Powys. Both deny 2 points to green, both make a counter-attack by Saxons or Normans unlikely (provided that you're there in force), and both are near enough the center of the action that you can use Harald productively in turn 16.

5. Get the Norwegian / Dubliner "dance" right

The Norwegians and Dubliners are a mess. They have to do a lot of complicated things in order to maximize their points and not get in each other's way.

Here's what you need to do. None of these are difficult in isolation. Doing them all can be tough.

1. On Dubliner turn 15, get all of your Dubliners out of the Norwegians' way, so

the Norwegians can take or pass through their 5 point-scoring areas of York, Cumbria, North Mercia, March, and Bernicia. Of those, York and Cumbria tend to be the most difficult.

2. On Norwegian turn 15, get all of your Norwegians out of the Dubliners' way, because the Dubliners should be trying to get back to York and Cumbria for turn 16. This means collecting points from, but not ending the turn in, York and Cumbria. For extra value the Norwegians should attack other peoples near these areas, to help the Dubliners hold on.
3. On Dubliner turn 16, occupy York and Cumbria without getting back in the Norwegians' way. This is tough if you have a lot of Norwegian reinforcements coming, because they can only land straight from the North Sea, and going through York is the only way to get to the south with the new armies.

Here are some tips to accomplishing this:

If you can, leave some Dubliners at sea. When you land an army, you need to find places to keep it, and it can get attacked by others. Obviously you need to land some Dubliners to get York and Cumbria and other areas, but if you can afford to hold one or two back, it makes the "dance" a lot easier.

Dubliners should try to get the Pennines. It's adjacent to York and Cumbria and the Norwegians don't need it. Get it early, even during your major invasion, and use it as your base.

Get the Cumbria points for the Norwegians by passing through instead of ending the turn there. If Cumbria has an enemy army in it, use Harald to bring armies NOS-LOT-GAL-CUM or NOS-YOR-CHE-CUM in the first phase of the major invasion. If it's empty, take Galloway or Cheshire on the first phase, and then move an army CHE-CUM-CHE in the second phase. If neither option is suitable (maybe you need Harald for other things in Phase I), and Cumbria is empty, then Harald can walk through in phase 2. Be aware that your Norwegian reinforcements will not be able to get involved in turn 16 battles in the south if you are leaving the Dubliners in York. So position your armies such that the

reinforcements can collect points from northern areas that they can reach (Bernicia, Lothian, Galloway, Pennines) while your turn 15 armies are in areas that allow them to move south (Cheshire is great for this. Lindsey or Powys aren't bad either).

When all else fails, remember that you can attack yourself (rather, two peoples of the same color can attack each other). Just remember to leave yourself a retreat! Be realistic. If there are 4 Danes in Lindsey and you have 2 Dubliners on the board, don't bother with complex maneuvering to slide them into York for turn 16 (unless this is your only chance to win, of course). The Danes get 4 points for York and move after the Dubliners but before the Norwegians. This, by the way, is why it's often a great idea to take Lindsey for the Norwegians, as it gives your Dubliners in York a fighting chance (watch for approaches through North Mercia though).

There are a lot more subtleties and tactics to successful purple play that we barely touched on. The aim here is to get you thinking about the broader context of purple play – especially in how to manage game balance and how to take a long-term view with each people.

C o m m e n t s ? E m a i l
BenedictN@benedictassociates.com

Britannia by E-Mail

How to Game all over the World
 Jaakko Kankaanpaa (Finland)

At first sight, Britannia is not a game that lends itself easily to play by e-mail. With lots of interaction between multiple players, orders and situations so variable that they are impossible to standardize and games that require hundreds of messages to complete, e-mail Britannia is a far cry from the efficiency of play by mail chess and other similar games.

However, despite these limitations, a lively sub-culture of PBEM Britannia has sprung up over the years. While face to face is the most natural way to enjoy a Britannia game, the Internet has emerged as a wonderful tool that allows people

from all over the world to game together, overcoming the limitations of time and space for an occasional friendly game or a more competitive tournament setting.

While PBEM games can be long, often dragging on for months, they have their own kind of fascination, as ephemeral orders come in from distant lands, strategies may be pondered with ample time and then, every once in a while, the daily office routine is shattered by barbarian hordes invading your shore.

Finding Britannia on the Web

At present, there are two web communities, partly overlapping, that have been most active promoting the Britannia PBEM hobby. The World E-Mail Britannia Event at

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/WorldemaiBrit/>

has been hosting the World E-Mail Britannia Championships for some years now, with the final game of the fourth tournament currently running at the time of this writing. A more general meeting point for Britannia fans has been the Eurobrit mailing list, also at Yahoo!Groups:

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/eurobrit/>

Despite its Eurocentric name, the list now caters for Britannia players from all over the world. Both are well worth a look for players interested in PBEM; there are no waiting lists for starting games as such, but any member announcing his willingness to play will usually be greeted by three like-minded punters, ready for a friendly match.

Organizing a Mailing List

It seems that the preferred method for organizing a PBEM Britannia game is to set up a Yahoo!Groups group (effectively a mailing list) for the game. The place to do this is

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>

A group or mailing list, with the players signed up as members, is an easy way of distributing game e-mails to all concerned, and any maps, score sheets and other relevant material may be posted at the group Files area.

The Luck of Dice

There are a number of dice servers on the net, providing PBEM gamers of all kinds with virtual die rolls they need. However, for Britannia players, the most useful tool is the Kenware Britannia II Battle Resolver (B2BR) at

<http://cgi.kenware.com/B2BR.pl>

The page is specially designed to handle Britannia die rolls for PBEM games, and it is quite simple to use. You only need to fill in the relevant information, and with a click of the Submit button the results are sent to any e-mail recipients you want (typically the mailing list address, at least).

For those playing the first edition (Avalon Hill/Gibsons Games) of Britannia, there is a previous version of the Battle Resolver (BBR) available at

<http://cgi.kenware.com/BBR.pl>

In order to get a Yahoo!Groups mailing list to accept die roll messages from the B2BR, the B2BR dice address,

dice@kenware.com

has to be included as a member of the group. However, you should note that while the B2BR is nominally a member, no game e-mails should be ever sent to the B2BR, since they will be bounced by the server, and Yahoo!Groups will ban the B2BR address as a result. Therefore it is imperative that once the B2BR is included as a member, its mail delivery option is set to "No Email" by the moderator of the group.

GM or not GM?

In a friendly game, where courtesy and sportsmanship may be assumed, most problems and conflicts can be solved by the players themselves and a game master (GM) is not required. However, in tournaments and other competitive situations it's useful to have a fifth person involved as an impartial GM, who will act as a referee, settle disputes, resolve problems caused by illegal moves and provide rules interpretations. Ideally, the GM might also facilitate the game by publishing maps and keeping a running tally of the scores, maybe

using the group Files area or a separate home page.

Using CyberBoard

A PBEM player has to somehow keep track of moves and board situations from turn to turn. If you do not want to have a Britannia game set open next to your computer for months at a time, a program called CyberBoard might prove useful. It's a tool designed to electronically simulate various game boards and pieces on a computer. Using the CyberBoard program, you can have on your screen a picture of the game board plus counters you can move around. You can plot and save game situations and, if you want it, save pictures of the game board as well.

CyberBoard is available as freeware (donations accepted) from Dale Larson at

<http://cyberboard.brainiac.com/index.html>

Unfortunately the program only runs on Windows, so Mac users have to look for other means of keeping track of the game.

To play, in addition to the generic CyberBoard program you will need a CyberBoard Game Box file for Britannia, as well as a Scenario file for the type of game you want to play. Game Box files are CyberBoard add-ons, each Game Box providing a set of boards and pieces for a specific game. Scenario files are just what the name says, starting scenarios created from Game Boxes.

There are currently several Game Box files around for the original AH/GG Britannia, having been made by fans of the game over the years. For FFG's new version of Britannia, there should be at least one Game Box file (named BritII.gbx) plus a 4 player Scenario file (named BritII4.gsn) available at the Eurobrit group Files area. (For details of the Eurobrit group in Yahoo!Groups, please see above.)

To use CyberBoard, what you need to do is to download and install the CyberBoard program, then download the Britannia Game Box file and 4 player Scenario file and put both either in the CyberBoard directory or in a same subdirectory. After that, double clicking the CBPlay.exe file in the CyberBoard directory will open the CyberBoard Player program. Click File/New, select Game and click OK. In the "Select Initial

Scenario for Game" window, locate the BritII4.gsn Scenario file and open it. After that, double clicking "Britannia II Board" under "Game Scenario" will bring up the Britannia board. Piece trays open by clicking "A" and/or "B" in the Toolbar. Now you can drag the pieces around, and when you're done, you can save the board situation by selecting File/Save. The game will be saved as a Game file (extension .gam). You should save your Game files in the same directory where you put the Game Box and Scenario files.

With CyberBoard, you can also save snapshots of board situations by clicking Edit/Save Board Image in File. This will make a bitmap picture of the current board and pieces. CyberBoard will only save bitmaps, and to keep file size down it might be necessary to convert them to JPG's or GIF's by some other application.

CyberBoard also has advanced features such as dice rolling and sending move files by e-mail, but we will not go into that here. In a four player game, where mistakes and backtracking are almost inevitable, it is best to keep things as simple as possible.

Keeping track of scores

In a PBEM game, scores are best kept with a paper score form or a spreadsheet application. There are forms and spreadsheets designed for this purpose, available at the Yahoo!Groups Eurobrit Files area.

Best E-Mail Practices

I'll close the article with a set of player instructions I have used while GM'ing in the World E-Mail Britannia Championships. The list might seem prohibitive, but to run smoothly, a PBEM game does require some degree of organization from the players.

Use all of this as you wish, and have fun.

MOVES

Move orders should be written clearly, and they should contain at least the following information: nation name and round number (in the subject field); population points at start of the move; population points after population increase; army and leader positions before the

move; placement of increased population; army and leader move orders; army and leader positions after the move; location and strength of both attacking and defending forces in any ensuing battle; any points earned; invitation for the next nation to play, if the turn is complete. For example:

Subject R10 Picts

Start
Alb 2
Mar 1
Mor 2

IP 4 + 3 -> new army at Mor,
save 1
Move
3 Mor Cai
1 Alb Mor

End
Mar 1
Mor 1
Alb 1
Cai 3 v. 1 Scot

When battles have been fought and your move is complete, please post a summary like this:

Subject: R10 Picts end

Mar 1
Mor 1
Alb 1
Cai 2

The Irish next, please.

Please note that abbreviations can be used for area names, but they should be unambiguous. Especially note that March should not be called Mar but rather Mac or Mah, and I also recommend using NoM for North Mercia and NoS for the North Sea, so that they will not be confused with Norfolk.

If your nation in its turn does nothing more than breed, please indicate at least the movement of the population marker; for example, "Caledos just sit, pop from 3 to 4" This will make backtracking population increase so much easier.

Corrections to move orders will only be accepted if they are sent **immediately** after the

original message **and** if it is evident that they are indeed just that, namely corrections to typos, poor copy/paste or other out of absent-mindedness, in other words expressions of the moving player's true intent. Otherwise, all submitted legal move orders stand and are binding. Also, if dice have been already rolled or subsequent moves have been sent in, no corrections can be made. So please consider your orders carefully.

To speed up play, feel free to move your nations out of game order, if you think there can be no interference with the earlier nations yet to move. For example, the Irish can usually move before the Caledonians and the Picts, since the nations' moves will not affect each other.

If you know you will be unable to play for more than two working days, please inform the other players. If you will be absent for more than a week, please try to get someone to cover for you. Of course, you can always leave conditional move orders with the GM; the GM will execute them at the right time.

BATTLE

For die rolls, please use the Britannia II Battle resolver at

<http://cgi.kenware.com/B2BR.pl>

This is a wonderful service provided to the on-line Britannia community by Ken Guerin, and the use of the web page is fairly self-explanatory. In the E-mail Recipients field you type or paste the address of the mailing list.

For multiple battles, it is usually permissible to roll for the first round of each battle across the board; this will speed up play. Of course, the attacker can also choose to resolve battles one by one. In this and all other cases, please give the defender the opportunity to retreat after the first round, should a retreat be possible; if the defender does not retreat, he must likewise give the attacker a chance to do a full or partial retreat, before dice are rolled again.

Please note that any die rolls that are sent to an incorrect address, and therefore do not reach the players, will be considered invalid, even if the results can be dug up from the Battle Resolver logs. Without this rule, it would be possible to "milk" the Battle Resolver by first calling for a

roll with an incorrect address, and should the result prove unsatisfactory, to roll again, with the correct address. Nobody would suspect there were two rolls made. Please note that I am not accusing anyone of dishonesty, I only feel that there should be an attempt to plug any loopholes as tightly as possible.

MISTAKES

Mistakes will most probably be made during the course of the game; that is the nature of the beast. Usually no-one is to blame, and the most important thing is to find a working solution to the problem. This will require some GM discretion.

Illegal or otherwise impossible moves will be patched together, if the intent of the moving player is evident beyond reasonable doubt. For example, if the Red player orders his Saxons to attack Arthur and 1 cavalry using the move Downlands to March, but Arthur and the cavalry are residing in Hwicce instead, it is clear that the Red really meant Hwicce, not March (which is not adjacent to Downlands anyway). Therefore the move can be corrected and the game may proceed as usual.

Likewise, incorrect area names keyed into the Battle Resolver or the Battle Resolver message subject field can in most cases be ignored. However, if there is any doubt about battle location, the battle roll must be redone.

If a move results in a battle and the number and/or type of defending units is quoted incorrectly in the attacker's post, the move may be redone, since the attacker was obviously unaware of the board situation. In this case, any incorrect dice must be rerolled. However, if there is no mention of defender strength in the attacker's message, such unawareness can not be inferred, and therefore orders stand as they are written. So please include defender strength in your battle orders.

However, incorrect battle dice must always be rerolled. No leader bonuses or extra armies can be added later, for practical reasons.

Thank you, Jaakko, and we have a related announcement:

"We are attempting to run an experimental cloak and dagger Britannia tournament by e-mail. Battle has already been joined by players of many nationalities. If you can check an e-mail inbox once a day, and are very keen to play friendly Brit-like games in any form, you can contact us through our 'front door' group on Yahoo - sacredgrovebritannia@yahoogroups.com Cheers. Master of the Grove."

I think "cloak and dagger" means players are anonymous as they play.

I am not a game collector or even boardgame player, really (except my own, before they're published), so I am not the best person for discussing new games. I have run across one that's interesting, and free, that you may not have heard of. It's "Mesopotamia: Birth of Civilisation" by Garry Stevens, with versions going back to 2002. (Boardgamegeek entry: <http://boardgamegeek.com/game/4199>). Here's a review from BGG, printed here with permission of the author.

Review of Mesopotamia

George Van Voorn (Netherlands, I think)

Review on Mesopotamia: is it worthwhile?

With a few games under my belt a review of this game seems only logical. Mesopotamia is a so-called "sweep of history" game set in the eastern Mediterranean area featuring peoples from the prehistory till the rise of the Persians. The basic mechanics resemble History of the World and Britannia, but it is a nice game on its own, actually, it's one of my favourite middle long games with some type of warfare.

Components

Since this is a web-published free game, all components have to be made yourself. The provided PDFs are quite alright, but still I felt I wanted to restyle the cards and some of the counters. In total there are 25 cards, not too much work. The provided counters are not always enough; some peoples need more counters with successful enough expansion. The map is colorful and practical at the same time, two thumbs up there. All that is needed besides

this are 4 dice, and I'd recommend taking 2 of one color and 2 of another.

Basic game play

Like I mentioned, game play resembles Britannia. The game consists of five epochs, and each epoch every player receives a peoples card representing ancient cultures once dominant in the Middle East. There is a fixed order in game play for the players, so the player with the Sumerians goes first, followed by the Elamites, etc. Expansion goes exactly like HotW (History of the World), with the attacker using 2 dice and the defender 1 or 2, depending on terrain penalties. When all armies are placed and expansion ceases for one player, points are counted and the next player has his turn. When all players are done the game progresses to the next epoch, where new cards are dealt. The player with the lowest victory point score gets the first choice, etc.

Every epoch all peoples that have survived get their turn in the set order. That means that the next epoch (epoch II) the player controlling the Sumerians, if any are left, receives reinforcements and new armies through multiplication (one army per 3 areas held, rounded up or down to the nearest number) and can expand again.

After five epochs the game is over and the player with the most victory points, usually in the range of 100 – 125 points, wins.

Opinion

The first thing that speaks for this game is that it's an epic game in that it encompasses a greater part of history in sufficient detail, yet the set-up time required is less than a third needed for a game like HotW. The game is quite balanced. In every epoch there are 5 peoples, and it has been made such, I suspect, that it doesn't make too much a difference which card you get regarding the strength of the armies. More important therefore is position. Most times the choice whether to keep or pass on a card depends on the starting area. That can be, you want an army to attack enemies and shield off a particular region of the map, to ensure continuous scoring, or you want to start somewhere fresh. These decisions can be hard sometimes.

Battling is easy, but can be exciting. The odds of winning and losing are the same as in HotW, and there is always the occasion in which a player just loses four armies to expand into an area, or loses none and takes over an entire region. But overall, you can take calculated risks quite well.

Some particular points in the game need mentioning. One of them encompasses the strength of the peoples in the latter epochs. Save the last few peoples (Medes, Urarthians) there are a bit too many weak peoples in epochs four and five. The result is that if a player takes firm control over a region with a people in epoch 2 or 3 he will not lose this control and as a result will score a lot of points in the endgame.

Another point is the positions of some peoples. This especially happens with the Egyptians. Once they are settled in Egypt and the Levant, and the Sea peoples have not been drawn in epoch 3, or redirected somewhere else, they cannot be removed from their position anymore. With two bonus areas (Memphis and Thebes) and difficult terrain in Avaris as an extra buffer this means Egypt will score 3 times 6 or 7 points at least. This can be perceived as a weak point by many players.

Another thing is on the reinforcements. Because peoples can receive reinforcements only when they still exist, it can sometimes be a difficult choice to decide and try to wipe them out. In particular this goes for the Assyrians. Arriving already in epoch 3, they get only five armies. However, provided they survive until epoch 5 they'll receive 12 reinforcements, enough to score some nice points in the area of the Tigris and Euphrates. One game my girlfriend decided to just occupy two areas with the maximum allowed number of armies (3 and 2, respectively) and wait it out. This strategy proved successful in that everyone avoided "fort Assyria" until in epoch 5 she spread across the fertile crescent and nearly won the game (I think second place, with just 5 points difference).

Driving a people to extinction can be quite powerful. Most of the times a player that loses his epoch 1 people before he can play his epoch 2 people gets behind rather quickly. I don't remember a game in which a player that lost his epoch 1 people the first round finished first or second. Personally I perceive this as a weak point, although I tend to arm myself against this

by building "fortresses", areas (usually worth 2 points, or even 4) in which I place two armies to persuade enemies in taking another direction of expansion.

Concluding, the game is very nice. It's a "smaller" version of Britannia or HotW with a shorter set-up time and easy-to-understand rules, and don't forget it's free (save the time and parts needed to make it yourself). There are a few lesser points, but mostly they can be countered by adopting certain strategies (an exception being the point on the Egyptians). All in all, I think Garry Stevens made a game that's very worthwhile, not overly deep but sufficient to positively occupy gamers like myself that enjoy "soft" history/war/civilisation games.

Trying to define "Sweep of history" and "Brit-like" games

This is an initial attempt to discuss definitions of two types of games, as indicated in the title.

As far as I know, *Ancient Conquest* originated the idea of multiple nations scoring points; I once read the AC rules while watching a game being played, and that's where I got the idea from. AC is a traditional hex-based wargame with combat factors and movement allowances on the units, in the Middle East from 1500 to 600 BC (IIRC).

When we talk about Brit-like games, then we're adding many other characteristics, including:

- Area board, about 36 areas in many cases
- D6 combat without a combat table, usually a 5 or 6 hits, only a 6 attacking difficult terrain
- Normal units move two areas, three for cavalry/elite/professional
- Difficult terrain and lowlands affect combat, difficult terrain stops movement
- There are stacking limits, which tend to be two in highlands and three in lowlands with one overstack allowed

- Overruns (2-1) allow movement of other armies through the overrun area
- Overpopulation limits (usually two armies allowed per area held)
- Increase of Population IAW land held, as well as reinforcements/appearances of new units
- Major Invasions allow double play (except no second Increase)
- Submissions
- Some units can Raid (successful attacking units can withdraw after combat)
- Leaders improve dice rolls, usually improve movement in some way
- About 16 turns and 17 nations and four players (AC was 4 players and 16 nations)
- Irruption (units just appear on the board on land for a new nation--Boudicca, kind of, Arthur, but moreso in other games than Brit)
- Succession (passing from one nation to another, as in Romano-British succeed Romans)
- Points for territories (hold or touch)
- Points for killing units
- Bretwalda/King/Dynasty/etc.--some sort of domination that provides points and possibly other advantages (such as a free army)
- Sea movement but not usually sea combat

Some Brit-like games deviate from this list, of course (my new ones do!); at some point they're no longer Brit, but are still Sweep of History/Fast Forward games. *Chariot Lords* is an example on the edge of the definition, as I recall.

Characteristics that may be needed for further games:

Something for trading colonies, and trade in general

Something for revolts (a form of irruption)--Boudicca in Brit 2 approaches this, but Boudicca is scripted rather than dependent on circumstances or chance

Something to "skip over" a period when nothing much is happening, then resetting the situation so it is always the same at a certain point partway through the game (this is in my prototype *Iberia*(TM))

Something to further differentiate professional/mercenary armies from "national" armies (in my prototype *Hellenia*(TM) we have completely different economies to reflect this difference)

What might be called Sweep of History or "Fast-forward History" games have just a few characteristics: 1) each player plays one or more sides that have individual objectives, often playing several nations at a given time, not all nations of equal power/size; 2) the objectives convert to/are expressed in victory points, 3) the game lasts for "centuries" of time. And I would add 4) more than two players.

Vinci is clearly a game of this type, with players controlling rising and declining empires, scoring points for their successes. It is rather abstract, using a point limit to end the game rather than specific time periods. Risk is not of this type, though it is a multi-player game. Axis and Allies is very clearly not of this type, covering only a few years, having only two sides (yes, you can play with several players, but either the Axis or the Allies win the war), having few nations, and not using victory points.

All Britannia-like games are Sweep games, but many Sweep games are not Brit-like.

This magazine is intended to be about Sweep of History games, not just Britannia-like games, but I can only include what people send me.

Some Tips about Approaching and Playing Britannia

Lewis Pulsipher

I did not write the "Tips on Play" section in the Britannia rules. I am not an expert player, but I have watched expert players many times, and as

designer of the game I believe I can explain the multi-level nature of the game play.

There's a lot more to enjoying a game than winning. Britannia can be played at several levels. Ultimately it works well as a tournament game, played in a nearly chess-like manner (an odd thing to say for a game with so much dice rolling, but accurate nonetheless). Inexperienced players, no matter how good they are as game players, require several plays to "get up to speed" and have a good idea of what is required to win. In a game with one "shark" player and three casual or inexperienced players, the shark will usually win.

In many though not all Euro-style games, if someone without experience is playing with several experienced players, he has a significant chance of winning. That's not true in Britannia. If the experienced players are win-oriented, the newbie has virtually no chance.

Fortunately, the game can be enjoyed when played many ways, especially when all the players are playing in the same style. These styles include the "conquest" style, the "casual" style, the "history" style, and the "shark" style. These and more-personal styles of play make a difference in which colors tend to do well.

You are unlikely to win if you play Britannia as a "conquest game" in the style of *Risk*, unless everyone else is playing the same way. The objective is not simply to occupy lots of areas and move lots of troops. You can have dozens of pieces on the board, but if they're not in the right places at the right time you won't score enough points. Most nations have "their time", and most decline at some point. Small nations can be almost as important as large ones, because the difference, in the end, is whether you do better than normal with each nation, rather than whether a nation scores a lot of points or relatively few. For example, the Romano-British will never score as many as the Romans, but if the Roman score is lower than usual, a higher-than-usual Romano-British score can save the yellow player. Conquest players, looking to maximize territory rather than points, usually don't score enough.

"History" players play each of their nations independently, trying to accomplish as much as possible for that nation. This would be common in solitaire play. I like to play this way myself,

but this is not the best way to score points as a color.

This FFG edition is a better representation of history than the original versions, but Britannia is a very broad-strokes history game, given the time scale. In the end, the gameplay has always been more important than the history. While Britannia has been used to teach history, people who really know the history can pick all kinds of holes in the game. People who don't know the history can learn a lot.

"Casual" players look ahead a Round or two at most, rather than see the game as a strategic whole. They're aware of how they can score points, and make short-term efforts to acquire those points. This helps them be successful when playing with "conquest" players or "history" players, but is not usually sufficient against the "sharks".

When played at top level, Britannia is a strategy game requiring mastery of detail and understanding of the entire course of the game. Every move (or non-move) is important. The "sharks" know the game so well that they can look at the board at the end of a scoring turn and add up the scores without referring to the written material. They can look at the board at any given time, refer to the current scores, and pretty accurately project who is winning and who is not, and even what the final scores will be. This is analogous to the chess master's ability to look at a chess match and quickly recognize who is ahead owing to strength and position. (As the scoring and strategy for the FantasyFlight version is slightly different at times, it will take the sharks a while to come back up to speed. They will.)

The sharks see the game as a strategic whole, recognizing that a move in Round VI can have repercussions many Rounds later. They play their color as a whole, rather than as separate nations. For example, a "shark" will often make every effort to get the Romans up into Scotland in order to hinder the Picts, because the Scots may need help to acquire a good position in Scotland after the Romans are gone. Strong Picts make it harder for the yellow Scots.

"Sharks" often do not care to have an inexperienced player in a game, because even though that player is most unlikely to win, he

may make "odd" moves that throw off the calculations of the sharks.

At the PrezCon Britannia tournament final in 2006 I asked one of the top-class players how many times he had played. He did some calculations and said "five hundred"! Another one nodded his head to agree with that estimate for himself. If you play a game five hundred times, you're likely to know all the details.

There is no article yet that reflects this depth of understanding of the new version, because no one has played it enough times against other similarly experienced players. You can read an article about playing the original Avalon Hill version to understand this point of view. It is the lead article in the first issue of "Sweep of History Games Magazine", a free electronic magazine that you can read or download at <http://www.pulsipher.net/britannia/index.htm>. Just remember that the new version of the game is different, so you cannot depend on the best ways to play the older versions. Remember also as you read that the points in the old versions were half what they are now (this eliminated half points).

If you want to be a "shark", eventually you'll have to play against really good players. Until then, play solitaire. Two-player scenarios are a good place to start, to help you become familiar with the points that are available. E-mail play is possible. The ultimate "hang-out" for expert players is the World Boardgaming Championships in Lancaster, PA every August.

Book reviews

I don't want to shock anyone, but I've found that highly detailed sources tend to result in "information overload" or a case of "tree-itis"--you see the trees instead of the forest, yet in a game of such huge scope as most Brit-like games, you've got to look at the forest, not the trees.

This is why experts in history can be disappointed by Brit-like/sweep of history games, because the designer concentrates on the forest and the expert wonders what happened to such-and-such trees.

Any one source can be misleading, too. So I start with (*gasp*) historical atlases, lots of them. I'll review a group of historical atlases next time, but for now: anything by John Haywood is bound to be good.

When I originally did Brit, I read a lot of detailed histories. For *Caledonia*, the only detailed history I've read is "Before Scotland", a very entertaining and detailed book, but one which caused me to make only one change in Caledonia. That change was to add/restore The Mounth, now that the book has made it clear just what The Mounth is. It showed me that there are other games in parts of Scots history, but at too small a scale for Caledonia--almost certainly not Brit-like

Here are a couple histories I've read recently that relate to the "Sweep of History".

Warriors of the Steppe: a Military History of Central Asia 500 BC to 1700AD by Erik Hildinger. Paperback (260 pages), 1997 Da Capo Press, \$18 (less at Amazon).

This is written by a former "practicing lawyer" who "now teaches at the University of Michigan". Though lacking scholarly credentials, Hildinger brings some reality to the subject of nomad horse archers (and cataphracts), especially in his descriptions of their capabilities. These are often based on accounts by travellers, including a book translated by Hildinger himself that dates to before Marco Polo's journeys. Hildinger describes horse- and bowmanship in realistic terms (unlike Grousset's fantasy of 400 yard effective range).

(I'll interject here that there is nothing sacred about having a Ph.D. in history; some of the best (non-eyewitness) historical accounts I have read have been written by persons who really like a subject and know how to research it, rather than by scholars. In fact, scholars tend to get lost at times in minutiae. Academic "nazis" (and there are a lot of them) would disagree with me.)

The book is not exactly a military history of Central Asia, but is more an episodic account almost entirely focusing on steppe nomads--Sarmatians and Scythians, Huns, Avars, Magyars, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, Mamluks, Tamerlane, Crimean Tatars, and Manchus

(Jurchids). There are accounts of campaigns and of individual battles, but it is not comprehensive.

The book is written in a readable style. The few maps aren't very helpful. The section of illustrations is good.

I read this because I'm slowly working on a Central Asian version of Brit (LOTS of invasions...). It is useful, but quite insufficient on its own, for my purposes.

Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Fall of Carthage: The Punic Wars 265-146 BC*. Cassell, 2000. 412 pages including notes and index, paperback, purchased from Amazon.

When I've not felt the energy to do much of anything else, I've been reading this interesting summary of this subject. The author takes a particularly realistic view, I'd call it, trying to see things as the participants would without imputing modern values to them. Moreover, his ideas of how battles were fought seems to me far more likely than the wild charges and melees we see in the movies.

My history prof used to say "there were just too damn many Romans", and (including non-Roman Italians) that seems to be the way it was. This, combined with the uniquely Roman determination to fight until the enemy was not merely defeated but subordinated (permanently, it was hoped) meant they, not the Carthaginians, would prevail in the long run. Where Hellenistic states expected negotiated peace with a possible renewal to the struggle later, the Romans fought on. Disasters that would have prompted any other state (including Carthage) to sue for peace only made the Romans fight harder. They thought they had finished it at the end of the First war, but Hannibal's family found a way to continue in the Second. The Third war was terrifically one-sided, a consequence of Roman arrogance and fear of the economic revival of Carthage that resulted in the utter destruction of the Carthaginian state.

Once again we see how much of the history of the ancient world was lost in the Dark Ages. For the greatest prolonged struggle of the ancient world--much larger in scope than Greece vs Persia--we have large holes in our knowledge and often sometimes depend on only one (unreliable) author.

Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (second edition 1984), Oxford University Press, paperback, over 500 pages.

This is one of the standard histories of the Vikings. Jones wrote in an era when the savagery of the Vikings was being downplayed--"oh, they were mainly merchants"--though he does not seem to have been entirely of that party. He does, however, buy the notion that the "Great Army" was only 500-1,000 men, a notion I find quite ludicrous given what that army did in both England and France. But it's inconvenient, if you believe the Vikings were mainly traders, to account for armies of 5,000-10,000, which is the size you'd judge both from the capabilities of the Great Army and from the number of ships reported by the chronicles. (The typical trick here is to believe the chronicles when they report small numbers of ships, and simply disbelieve when they report large numbers.)

Jones says at many points that Scandinavians in general and Vikings in particular (Vikings being those who roved overseas) were motivated by (had a goal of) "land, wealth, and fame". Anyone who designs a Viking game but does not account for this is leaving something out--of course, designers are always leaving things out.

Jones writes with a dry British wit combined with a poetic turn of phrase that is quite enjoyable. There is a LOT of detail, much of it not military in any way.

Brief (and probably incomplete) enumeration of differences between Brit 1 and Brit 2

Lew Pulsipher

I've run this by the Eurobrit denizens, but I've probably missed something. Of course, there are differences between the original editions (two by Gibsons, then one by Avalon Hill, and I'm not counting the WDS German-language edition). So this is a list of clear differences between the two versions.

- **Raiders and Settlers:** There is no distinction between armies; raiding is an attribute of certain turns, not of certain armies. Hence raiders cannot hang out at sea for centuries. This was the designer's original intent.
- **Sides:** there are changes in 3 and 5 player games, not in 4. Purple has become Yellow.
- **Board:** in northern England the "four corners" has been eliminated. Cumbria connects with Lothian.
- **Pieces:** there are different maximums for some nations
- **Points:** there have been many tweaks in the point values (and all have been doubled to eliminate halves); most notable may be Romano-British interaction with English invaders, in points
- **General course of play:** Boudicca's rebellion makes the Roman invasion and Belgae response very different.
- **Roman Roads** make the Roman offense and defense quite different--the Romans are very maneuverable.
- **Changes in submission rules** (points and Increase of Population) mean the Welsh are quite likely to submit.
- **Saxons can sometimes build Burhs** (form of forts) to help them against later invaders.
- **Danish Svein Estrithson** has been added to the endgame to make "Four Kings" instead of three

simply include pointers to Web sites for the maps, even though the ones on FFG's Web site are much nicer, because I want the magazine to be "self-contained". 7 MB is not large for many e-zines.

Generally: strategy is somewhat different, as Red, who were probably strongest in Brit 1, may be weakest in Brit 2. The Blue, who were probably weakest in Brit 1, may be strongest in Brit 2. This will evolve with time, of course.

Owing to the inclusion of maps below, this issue is over 7 MB in PDF form. I did not want to

Historical Walk-Through of the Early Days of Britannia

Lew Pulsipher

The version of this article on Fantasy Flight Games' Web site has much larger maps, with images of the pieces for graphics. I can only provide relatively small maps in this magazine. See: <http://www.fantasyflightgames.com/britannia.html>

The following is intended to accomplish two things: show the history of Britannia as it developed in the real world, and illustrate and illuminate the rules of the game.

This is the historical arrangement, as best we can reconstruct it and shoehorn it into the game. These are not the optimal moves for play of the game, in large part because gamers have historical foresight, and know, for example, that the Belgae will be their enemies in Turn 1 despite having submitted.

Roman Nation Turn 1, first half of Major Invasion. Figure 1 shows the positions before combat.



Figure 1

The Romans can move three areas, not two. They start in the Channel, so can move as far as South Mercia and Suffolk, provided there are overruns in the intervening areas. This requires two Romans in Sussex and Essex to outnumber the Belgae 2-1. To reach Downlands the Romans must have an overrun in Essex or Wessex, as well. The Romans must stop in Downlands, because it is difficult terrain. The Romans could have moved from Wessex to Avalon to Hwicce, if they had wished. But in the actual event, the Romans concentrated on the more civilized (more Romanized) southeast first.

In all the combats other than Downlands, each Roman army needs to roll a 4, 5, or 6 to kill a Belgae, and the Belgae need to roll a 6 to kill a Roman. In Downlands, owing to difficult terrain, the Romans kill the Belgae only on a roll of 6 (and that's why there are three Romans there instead of two).

The Romans specify an order of combat that leaves Suffolk to last. At that point the Belgae have been reduced to four areas and choose to submit before the fight in Suffolk. We'll say that the six Belgae in the other combats are eliminated, and one Roman. Notice that the Belgae in South Mercia could survive one throw of the dice and then retreat to North Mercia. The others have nowhere to retreat to.



Figure 2

The Romans build forts in all the territories taken, but NOT in the Belgae-occupied areas. (The Romans did not actually build forts everywhere; the forts represent Roman administrative control as much as anything.)

The Romans in Suffolk withdraw to Wessex and Downlands via the Roman Roads.

The British did not put up a great resistance, because many wanted the advantages of Roman civilization. Moreover, we portray the Belgae as a single nation, but in fact there were several competing nations in the Belgae area, and a Roman pretext for invasion was to help one of their clients against another British tribe in southeast England.

The Romans score six points for forcing the Belgae to submit. The Belgae score two points for killing a Roman army (they get six for an army on their first nation turn only).

Roman Nation Turn 1, second half of Major Invasion. Figure 2 shows the positions before combat.

The Romans then moved to take Wales, in part because Caratacus, a leader of British resistance, had taken refuge in Wales. Their main thrust was to the northeast when Caratacus fled there.

At this point the Romans have Roads to help them, but they cannot get past the difficult terrain to the clear terrain areas of Wales. They must get an overrun in March in order to get to Clywd.

The Romans fight in order from south to north, assuming that the Welsh will submit when they are reduced to five areas (Cornwall, Dyfed, Gwynedd, Clywd, and Powys). However, the Welsh resisted mightily, and do not submit. (This would probably not be wise in the game, but reflects the difficulty the Romans had in Wales.) The Welsh are reduced to three territories. The Romans build forts in the newly-conquered territories. If the Welsh had submitted at five, then the Romans in Clywd and Powys would have redeployed via Roads to other areas.

We'll suppose that the Welsh army in Clywd survives and retreats to Gwynedd, and the army in Devon survives and retreats to Cornwall. The others, and one Roman, are eliminated. The Brigante in March is eliminated. Notice that the Romans left one army in South Mercia.



Figure 3

The Welsh score two points for killing a Roman army.

It is now the Belgae nation turn, and they rebel. See Figure 3. They have three clear terrain and one difficult, seven Increase points. They get one army and place their marker on the "1" on the Population Track. They also get an army and leader Boudicca. They place all of these new pieces in Suffolk and attack as shown in map 3, three armies and Boudicca in South Mercia, two in Essex, and one in Kent. They can reach Kent thanks to the overrun in Essex. The armies in Lindsey and Norfolk cannot get to Kent, but they can be part of the overrun that enables an army from Suffolk to reach Kent.

In play of *Britannia*, the Romans are usually careful to leave armies in all three of these areas to protect the forts, and the Belgae may attack only one or two areas, rather than three. Sometimes the Belgae leave one (or even two) armies in Lindsey, both so that they won't be overpopulated after attacking one area only, and also because they hope to survive there until Round V scoring.

In Essex the Belgae roll a 3 and a 5, sufficient to eliminate the Roman fort. The Roman fort rolls a 4, which misses (an army would have hit). In Kent, where there is equal strength, the Belgae are lucky and kill the fort without losing the attacking army.

In South Mercia the battle is more complex. The Belgae roll 2, 3, and 4, which are increased by the leader to 3, 4, 5. Because they need to kill the Roman army, and did not get a 6, neither Roman is harmed! The Romans, however, roll a 2 for the army and a 4 for the fort, both misses (the dice must be rolled separately because different "to hit" rolls are needed). The Romans choose not to retreat, and the Belgae choose to stay.

In the next round the Belgae roll 1, 4, and 5. The leader increases this to 2, 5, and 6. The 6 kills the Roman army, and the 5 kills the fort (because the army has also been killed). The Roman army rolls a 4, and the fort a 5, which results in two dead Belgae.

The Belgae have killed three Roman forts (which are turned over to show the destroyed fort side) and one army *in their nation turn 1*, sufficient for 24 points!

Other nations, Round 1.



Figure 4

Figure 4 shows the positions after the other nations have played. The Welsh have five Increase points, not sufficient for another army. A rather wild move would be to attack Powys with three armies, but the Welsh stand in defense where they are.

The Brigantes have 14 Increase points (IP), getting two armies and placing their marker on the two box on the Population Track.

The Caledonians place their marker on the three box, and do not move.

The Picts have seven IP, taking a new army and placing their marker on the one box.

None of these nations attack. In a normal Britannia game the Brigantes might be more active, or might not. The Picts might choose to attack Caithness (assuming the Caledonians haven't abandoned it).

Round II. Roman Turn. See Figure 5.



Figure 5

The Romans do not use Increase points. They have thirteen armies, so do not receive any reinforcements.

The Romans attack the Belgae, and try to force the Welsh to submit. Most of the Romans attack the Belgae; one moves through North Mercia to Suffolk to Essex, and another through North Mercia to South Mercia, so that the Belgae have nowhere to retreat to. The Romans will be able to build forts in those two areas even though they did not stop there.

In the battles all the Belgae are wiped out, and two Romans. The Belgae score four points for the Roman armies. The Romans get six points for killing Boudicca. They cannot build forts in the three areas where Roman forts were destroyed (the "destroyed fort" markers are not shown on the map, but would be there in the game). They do build forts in North Mercia, Suffolk, and Lindsey.

The Welsh submit, and the three Romans in Wales, using the Roads provided by forts, withdraw to March, North Mercia, and Lindsey.

At this point the Romans must be reduced to 12 armies owing to withdrawal of a legion. They have only 11, so there is no change.

Rest of Round II. See Figure 6.

It is now the Belgae turn, but they no longer exist.

The Welsh, submitted, ask the Romans if they can get full rather than half Increase. The Romans say Yes. Five IP added to the five saved gives the Welsh another army, which they put in Dyfed, and their Population Track marker goes to four. [They are going to have overpopulation problems when they get another army, as right now they have three areas and the maximum six armies. At least they're in good shape vs. the Irish next Round.]



Figure 6

Historically, the Brigantes remained neutral with respect to the Romans for some time, but finally conflict occurred, resulting in part from internal competition between Roman allies and enemies. Brigantes have 14 IP again, plus two saved, for 16. They get two more armies, and save four. The Brigs set up to give the Romans maximum trouble.

[Note: **In the game**, the Brigantes cannot have more than 11 armies. Their marker would be put on the "5" on the Population Track. The map shows them with 12 armies.]

The Caledonians get an army, which they put in Caithness.

The Picts expect the Romans to be coming, and decide to mass against them.



Figure 7

Roman Nation Turn III. See Figure 7.

With 11 armies, the Romans receive no reinforcements.

The Romans put four armies into York, overrunning it. Two more go to Bernicia (overrun), and then two to Lothian. Three attack Cheshire. (The Roman roads make this possible—all these armies move off the roads into York. One army moves from Lindsey to Norfolk, then a second move to the roads in Suffolk, then along the roads and as its third move to York, thus securing Norfolk for Rome.) The Romans don't have the resources to force the Brigantes to submit this time (that's why the Brigantes put up the "wall" in York and Cheshire). They will likely be in a good position if the Brigantes intend to counterattack.

In the game, the Romans will try to force Brigante submission in Round 3 so that their Round 3 capture score will be higher (they score for areas held by submitted nations).

In reality, the Romans reached Pictland in the early 80s AD. The game timeline does not perfectly reflect reality; and if it did, there would be a couple very static, downright boring, Rounds, so it's just as well . . .

I hope this walk-through has helped you understand the rules of the game.

Poll Results (so far)

Here is the current results (40 respondents) from my latest "Sweep of History" poll, which remains open at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=807321722096>

I am occasionally updating poll results on my Web site at: _____

1. Your age (choose a category)

	Response Percent	Response Total
15 or less	0%	0
16-20	0%	0
21-25	5%	2
26-35	35%	14
36-45	40%	16
46-55	17.5%	7
56 or more	2.5%	1
Total Respondents	40	
(skipped this question)	0	

As you can see, we (or at least, the Internet-savvy amongst us) are rather "aged", which jives with my general observations about the age of wargamers.

2. About how many times a YEAR do you play a sweep of history type game (which includes Britannia-like games)

	Response Percent	Response Total
0	5%	2
1-5	35%	14
6-10	27.5%	11
11-20	22.5%	9
More than 20	10%	4
Total Respondents		40
(skipped this question)		0

3. Which of the following types of games do you like to play (the list is not exhaustive)?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Sweep of History games OTHER THAN Britannia-like games (Vinci, History of the World, etc.)	72.5%	29
Britannia-like games	90%	36
Euro style games (aka "German" games--Settlers, Tigris & Euphrat, Ticket to Ride, etc.)	77.5%	31
Hard core wargames (usually two player, often hex boards)	62.5%	25
Family games (Monopoly, Pachesi, etc.)	20%	8
Role playing games (RPGs, D&D etc.)	52.5%	21
Collectible card games (CCGs, Magic the Gathering etc.)	10%	4
Miniatures games (using miniature armies)	22.5%	9
Card games using the normal deck of cards, other than Poker	27.5%	11
Poker	15%	6
Console video games (PS2, XBox, Nintendo, etc.)	17.5%	7
PC video games	35%	14
Other (please specify)	12.5%	5
Total Respondents		40
(skipped this question)		0

CCG's seem to be a young person's activity, in general.

4. How do you typically store your pieces in games such as Britannia and others with several colors and many pieces?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Don't own any such games	0%	0
In small bags (usually plastic)	87.5%	35
In compartmented box(es)(such as "tackle boxes")	20%	8
In several small boxes		

	0%	0
In open trays in the game box	12.5%	5
I leave them loose in the game box	12.5%	5
Other (please specify)	5%	2
Total Respondents		40
(skipped this question)		0

5. This question is specifically about Britannia. Which version (number of players) do you play most often?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Don't play	7.5%	3
2 players	0%	0
3 players short version	2.5%	1
3 players full version	5%	2
4 players	85%	34
5 players	0%	0
Total Respondents		40

The End of 13,500 Words

The official FAQ/errata for Brit 2 are on the publisher's Web site:

<http://www.fantasyflightgames.com/britannia.html>. Note most importantly that **Jutes play after Saxons**. This is the order used in the rules, but the board reverses them.

This magazine is both time-driven--my time--and contribution-driven. I have two months off in the summer (there are benefits to teaching), so I could get another issue out fairly quickly IF I had sufficient contributions. At this point I've used everything I have that was written by someone other than myself.

I'll have two new polls, about color comparisons and event frequencies in Britannia, available soon. Check <http://www.pulsipher.net/britannia/index.htm> for links to all the polls and updated results of the older polls. There are two polls because I'm up against the surveymonkey limit of ten questions in free polls (and I'm not planning to spend \$20 a month).

You didn't think you'd escape my lovely Comic Sans font entirely, did you? **Chuck!**

END