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Britannia Haiku are scattered throughout the magazine.

## On the Shorter Game in Britannia Second Edition

Stephen Braund (UK)

*(Editor's note: Steve speaks with great authority about this version of the game, as he is the one who created it (though it did undergo a change or two after testing). It replaced the three player short version that was in the earlier versions of the game, and which he refers to occasionally. Steve and Torben Mogensen seem to know the Britannia rules better than I do, too—my excuse is that I have too many other Brit-like game rules running through my head.*

*I have not changed Steve's British spelling to American, since many readers will prefer the British anyway!*

Ask most players about Britannia and they will tell you all about how it is a four-player game, and that it's 16 turns long, and that it takes about four hours to play, and you have to think carefully about the Romans...

But that is just one of the games provided. Among the seven different games included in the new Fantasy Flight Games (FFG) package there is a Shorter Game which only involves three players, takes half as long, and begins once those pesky

Romans have left the scene. With the new game, people have become interested in ways they can start playing without having to play the whole scenario, and gently introducing themselves and their new opponents to the rules without an overload of information. The Shorter Game may well be ideal for this. Quite apart from that it is an important game in its own right.

#### Shorter Game scenario

As a reminder of what I'm talking about, referring to Page 19 of the rules, the Shorter Game starts on Game Round VI and ends at the end of Game Round XIII. Normally Round VI is the first round after the Romans disappear, and the Roman player would be replacing forts with Romano-British armies. Round XIII, just like Round XVI, is a Victory Point counting round and so just like normal, players will be fighting for turf on the last round before they count their final points to see who's won. Also there is a King at the end of that round. Play of Round XIII may be a little different than usual, since the game stops here, and so players won't be positioning themselves for Round XIV, and may be reluctant to retreat from the areas they hold.

Now the Romans have been and gone, so there is a more appropriate set up showing the nations that were beginning to become established after the Romans left. There are no Belgae. Romano-British, Welsh and Brigantes occupy most of the island, with the Picts and Caledonians in their familiar position in the north. Irish and Scots have already landed on the west coast, while Saxons, Jutes and Angles have bases on the south and east coasts.

Saxons, Scots and Angles will launch Major Invasions. The game will end after the arrival of the Norsemen, Dubliners and Danes. If there is a King at game end it will likely be either Dane, Saxon or Angle, each controlled by a different player.

In the past there was a mix of attitudes towards this game. Firstly, you don't get proper counters, so you had to play with counters that were mixed colours – and that just doesn't look right. Secondly the balance of the game was always questionable. Thirdly some feel that four players is ideal for Britannia, and anything different just doesn't work.

I'd like to tackle some of these unfamiliar issues, for players who are new to Britannia, and provide a little background on the game, for players who aren't.

#### Players and colours

The three players take the Nation cards for the nations as listed in the variant. The first edition of

FFG's rules omit the Dubliners from the list of nations – these properly belong to Player 3 who controls the Angles. The counters in the game won't let you play the Shorter Game with proper colours without a little swapping around. Unlike in the past, the new version of the game does not have the nations' names on the counters. This means they are more flexible than before.

There are three players to furnish with counters. FFG gives these players a number, but Britannia players are used to calling the players by their colours, so:

Red (Player 2): Saxons, Norsemen and Irish are going to be their usual selves. However in this game Red has control of the Picts instead of the Brigantes. So you can use the counters for the Brigantes (Shields) to represent your Picts, only remember the Brigs have 11 army counters and the Picts have a limit of 10, so you'll have to take one of them out, maybe put it on the Pict nation card to remind everyone the Brigante warrior is a Pict now. These Red Picts still score according to their normal Pict Nation Card, as do the other substitute nations.

Blue (Player 3): Angles are the same as usual. However Blue has three different nations to sort out, the Jutes, Dubliners and Scots. In the case of the Jutes, Blue is best using the Norman (Longship) counters – remember the limit for the Jutes is only 6 armies, no more can be placed at any one time (and they DON'T get cavalry!). For Dubliners and Scots the Blue player can use the Pict (Spear) and Belgae (Shield) armies from the standard game. Both have 10 army counters, while the Scots need 11 and the Dubliners need 9. So one army will have to be taken from one nation and added to the other. I think Picts are best to represent Scots here, with the Belgae in the role of the Dubliners, with 1 Belgae moved across to the Scot nation in case it is needed.

Green (Player 1): We are left with Green and Yellow counters to represent Green's five nations. The Welsh, Danes and Caledonians can remain their usual selves. The Romano-British will remain Yellow. Only the Brigantes will need a new set of counters – as a personal favourite, I would use the Scot (Yellow Spear) armies to represent these. Both nations have an army limit of 11, so another good reason to use the Scots.

Then players should decide how to handle leaders. In the case of Fergus, Urien, and Olaf their nations have changed colour. So players have the choice to use the actual counter for that leader with odd coloured armies, or substitute a leader that can't appear in the game (Such as William, Harald or Boudicca) and use that counter. As it happens, none of these leaders need to be identified for point scoring, and leaders will always be with an army of their nation, so should be easily identifiable.

### Set up

Now that you and your opponents can safely tell each others' pieces apart, you'll have to set up. The classical set up of one army per area has been retained. However in the past some areas were left vacant. In this new version all areas are occupied. This was a conscious attempt to give the native British nations some power, and to avoid the 'empty England' situation that was depicted before, and was rather inauthentic. Also previously the Irish and Scots had no areas on land. This meant that they had to rely on the forces that arrived on Round VI and after, which meant they lost all of their forces arriving on Rounds III to V on the Timeline. This seriously weakened those two nations, who typically in a full scenario will have retained some of their raiding forces from previous rounds. As the Irish control parts of Wales initially, the Welsh have been moved further east, into Cheshire and March, which were known to the Welsh as South Rheged during this time.

### Special rules

Given this more powerful British set up, and the fact that Saxons, Jutes and Angles are already on land there was a likelihood that the Romano-British would attack the Anglo-Saxons, as they were permitted to do in the original Short Game, and are free to do in the Standard Game. This doesn't sit right with the particular historical situation we're depicting, where the Romano-British had invited Anglo-Saxon federate allied warriors, known as laeti, to live among them and act as mercenary armies. It would be the Anglo-Saxons, according to tradition, that launched attacks against their hosts and paymasters.

So there is a special rule in this game that says the Romano-British cannot attack Saxons, Jutes and Angles. In fact, the Romano-British may not attack anyone on Round VI given their other restrictions, and as usual may not Increase Population.

The reason the Romano-British may not attack anyone is that on their other borders there are Welsh and Brigantes, and in keeping with our place in history, under the variant rules these two nations are considered as having previously submitted to the Romans. Under the rules any such nation is protected from attack from the Romano-British until Round VIII. There is also usually a rule that says the Romano-British score for eliminating armies of these nations if they attack first. In the Shorter Game variant rules no such points can be scored (this stops any shenanigans by the Green player who might deliberately attack his Romano-British with Welsh or Brigantes to prime those nations to be scored for with a counterattack – not a likely move, but possible).

### Openings

My attitude to the opening of the game is one of being careful and cautious. The nations on the board are spread out and weak. Certain nations receive invaders, but only the Saxons can consider themselves at near full strength, and even they will have to be careful about establishing themselves properly. This is an ideal time for first-time players to be learning about the Population Increase and Movement rules, whether by making the moves themselves or observing the other players. A little time concentrating on the details of the rules here is better spent now, before the game starts to get busy and players will want to be quickly playing through the rounds.

I've seen players view the first round of the Shorter Game as an opportunity to land decisive blows on their opponents, or pick on certain opponents to attack. As the Chinese say about the French Revolution, it's too early to say. Any decisive act on the first round will be a huge risk, and players will be jeopardising the good health of their nations for the remainder of the game if they launch an ill-considered attack on Round VI.

Some ideas for each player:

**Green player:** The Green player moves first, and has to move all their nations before the other players move! This can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand the Green player can make all their moves, and possibly grab some important location first, and then sit back. On the other hand the player may feel that they are a target waiting to be hit by the other two players. All the while the Green player will be awaiting the arrival of the Danes much later in the game on Rounds XI-XIII.

As pointed out above, the Romano-British can't attack anyone initially, and don't even get to Increase Population at first. Their six armies will have to rearrange themselves to their best advantage in anticipation of the Saxon Major Invasion later in the round. The likely outcome will be them massing in the Downlands (up to 4 armies under the Stacking rule), with loose armies spread out so they aren't overpopulated (they will have to occupy at least 3 areas to avoid overpopulation, and can vacate their other areas). An alternative would be to occupy a clear area near to Wales or the North with a large group, where they might have a slim chance to retreat from an attack. The Romano-British do not get Population Increase on the first round, but will do on Round VII and later (if they survive!). Even if they are eliminated, Arthur and his cavalry may still be able to appear on Round VII as per the panel on Page 15 of the rules.

The Welsh are faced with the perennial problem of having the Irish behind them, when they might prefer to be fully facing to the east to counter the Angles and Saxons. The Welsh do get to move before the Irish, and so will likely take the easy option of attacking Dyfed, or less likely the opportunity to take Cornwall while there's only one Irish there. They will also have to think about whether to defend Devon from a potential Saxon attack later, and whether to stay occupying the clear areas to the east of Wales, or to evacuate and move the armies to safer areas in Wales. The Welsh occupy 10 points of territory for Population Increase, and so will gain 1 new army and will save 4 points on the Population Track. Again, now is a good time to be getting new players used to counting these areas.

The Brigantes are spread out to the north. The Angles are weak, but not so weak as to not be a threat. So the Brigantes might want to stay spread out to try and gain some Increase Population on Round VII, or they may wish to mass force somewhere, possibly trying to defend Pennines initially, before deciding where to mass force on Round VII. The Brigs also occupy 10 points of territory for Population Increase at first.

Either Welsh or Brigantes might want to provide a vacant area for the Romano-British to retreat into, but this might become occupied by Irish before it could be used.

The Caledonians will be their usual passive selves, but may wish to unite their two armies into one area for defence. They are likely to stay put – at least their two areas are now connected, so they can retreat from one to the other. They will only gain 2 points for Population Increase, so won't gain an army at least until Round VIII.

Strategically aggressive players might want to make the Romano-British, Welsh and Brigantes cooperate to fight the Angles or Saxons, but ultimately the self-interest of these nations will involve trying to establish somewhere where they can survive into the later game.

**Red player:** The Red player has the Saxon Major Invasion in the early part of the game, but this has been deliberately weakened compared to what is possible in the Standard game. The Saxons only have 2 armies on map, plus their 8 Invaders, and four points of Population Increase isn't enough for another army. In a Standard game they could have up to 14 armies, from reinforcements alone. It will be important, more so than usual, that the Saxons safely establish themselves as a nation on land in the South of England, and build up over time. If the Red player takes risks early on and they don't pay off, they could be in serious trouble, and will be asking for charity from the other players for most of the rest of the

game. The Red player really ought to be cautious in their approach if their coalition is to have the staying power to challenge at the end of the game. All that said, the Saxons do get a Major Invasion on Round VI, so will get to take two moves, and are likely to be fighting either the Romano-British, Welsh, Jutes, or Angles – or all of these. Now is a good opportunity for players to learn about Major Invasions, Leaders, and how Battle and Retreat work.

The Picts begin the game surrounded by enemies, and at medium strength. Like the British nations to the south, they will want to secure their core territory, in eastern Scotland, and this will mean they will lack the resources to attack their neighbours. The Scot and Angle coalition should be seen as the major threat, and the Picts will likely evacuate Dunedin, retreat fighting out of Skye and look to build up strength to expand later as opportunities present themselves. The Picts are likely to build an army on Round VI (if they do not lose a starting area), and can then move to first deny Skye to the Scots on Round VI by putting a second army in that area, dissuading an attack, then try to set themselves squarely in Alban and Moray with two armies in each for Round VII, accepting that they will lose Skye to the Scots on that round.

The Irish will likely be under attack from the Welsh at the outset, and their isolated positions will easily fall. On the assumption that they keep Cornwall, they are likely to want to build up in the southwest peninsula, maybe also using Avalon as a base, although they may wish to allow the Saxons to secure it for them first, by clearing and surrounding it in strength.

The Saxons are likely to be faced with a concentration of Romano-British in Downlands, while the lowland extremities of Kent and Norfolk are controlled by the Blue player, but not in force. They will be faced with a choice of storming Downlands, using Aelle to help the attack, or trying to land all their armies without losing too many in battle, and giving all of them possible retreat paths against the inevitable Romano-British counterattack. Aelle will attract Romano-British attackers on Round VII and it may be hard to keep him safe. The Saxons may also wish to clear Devon of the Welsh, and Aelle might be sent here. The problem with leaving the Downlands with four Romano-British armies is that Arthur and his cavalry can be placed here too on Round VII quite legally, making six armies with a leader, and the Downlands is right in the centre of where the Saxons want to be. However if Aelle is dead, or somehow unreachable, it is always possible the Romano-British might pick on the Angles instead of the Saxons.

**Blue player:** The Blue player has the Angles as the centrepiece of his coalition, and the middle part of his game. The Blue player gets 3 Major Invasions to

plan, Scots, Angles and Dubliners. In terms of scoring power I see the Blue player as slightly weaker than the other two, but he may be in a position to gain from any feuding between them, and mostly does have very active forces. In fact players who are used to the Standard Game quite often feel they are still playing that when they are playing the Shorter Game, and a Red-Green feud can result. The Blue player should do nothing to dissuade them, by not being aggressive and building up the numbers of armies, although this can be a sterile and straightforward route to victory.

The Scots will initially have four armies if they haven't been attacked (Dalriada, Hebrides and 2 in Irish Sea). They will then have the choice to risk an attack somewhere, such as into Skye with 2 or 3 if there's only 1 Pict there while holding Dalriada, or to reinforce their two highland bridgeheads and build up for their main attack on Round VII. The Scots will have more confidence moving into the clear areas of Strathclyde, Dunedin and Lothian as they are allied to the Angles, but they will still want the Angles to do any fighting for them and weaken the other northern nations, as Angle armies are more easily replaced than Scots.

The Jutes are likely going to be roadkill unless the Saxons deliberately ignore them. Here is an issue with the order of play. The board does list the Jutes as going before the Saxons, but the game was intended to be played Saxons first, and this is the official line. This was how the game (including the Shorter Game) was tested, but the benefits to the weak Jutes are mainly in the Standard Game. In the Shorter Game they really would prefer to go first, either to mass a couple of armies in Kent, or even to have a pop at the Romano-British or Saxons. Of course such an attack might put the Saxons in an even more precarious position than usual, and this is why Jutes first is not permitted. If the Jutes score any points at all, that would be a bonus – being bypassed is their best hope. Players of original Britannia might think the Jutes can score for killing Romano-British, but in this new game they do not, apart from Arthur and attacks against his cavalry.

Angles initially have an enclave in East Anglia, plus four invading armies. Dependent on whether the Saxons attack them, the Angles will be looking to establish a position where they are not overpopulated on the east coast, or may launch an attack or two against their traditional enemies, the Brigantes. This might take the form of a low risk attack on a clear area such as Cumbria or Lothian, or it might be a grab of some difficult terrain, like Pennines or Galloway. As ever, ideally the Angles would like to secure the North of England by making the Brigantes submit, containing the Welsh and any Romano-British that threaten them, and then taking on the Saxons, usually in that order.

### Balance

The Short Game in the original versions of Britannia was not balanced in Victory Points. The 'Blue' coalition involving the Angles was the weakest party. In fact this gave me an insight into how to understand points balance generally in Britannia. There was no way the Blue coalition then could score one third of the points that were typically scored in the game by all three players.

When the new version was in the development stage, some attention was given to all the non-standard games, as it was clear that these had not been handled well previously. The suggestion went in to do some work on the Short Game, and the Shorter Game variant is the result of this. While this was developing some of the rules were changing, for example the Burh rules were introduced. In the game as originally published in 1986 Romano-British could score for eliminating Saxons when defending, now they cannot. Further changes to Victory Points, particularly for the Welsh, Saxons and Danes, and changes to the Timeline for the Angles, were made. However all these small changes probably have not had a decisive effect on unbalancing the new version beyond a normal level of doubt that was already there.

The new version has been put together with play and Victory Point balance in mind, and should present a decent and fair challenge.

### Comparisons to Standard Game

Strategically the Standard Game is dominated early on by the Romans, and the Yellow player normally sets a mark by scoring with them, but then retires somewhat from the game as it continues. Many players consider the Red-Green axis as one of continual conflict, and to some extent that is true of the Yellow-Blue axis.

It is important in the Shorter Game to forget this and remember that it is a game in its own right. Consequently it is 'new expression on a familiar face' and players should be trying to understand it without thinking in Standard Game terms.

The Green player will be the one who falls behind in this game, and will then be relying on the Danes to catch up again at the end. So the Green player benefits from not setting a target scoreline like Yellow does in the Standard, and hopefully has more on-board resources than Yellow's Scots and Romano-British for surviving the first half of the game, and having influence on the other players.

Comparison with the Short Game in previous versions of Britannia

There were no short games in the original set of rules submitted by Lew Pulsipher to H P Gibson and Sons, which was the first published Britannia game. However they included it, and the same version was repeated in Avalon Hill's rules. So it looks like it was an idea they had to make the game a little more accessible, although it is likely that this game was largely ignored despite the popularity of the overall design. It seems that they did not consider Victory Point balance in the game, but arranged the nations in an arbitrary way that kept certain opposing nations apart. Their coalitions were Saxons-Brigs-Scots-Norse, Angles-Irish-Dubliners-Picts and Danes-Welsh-RBs-Jutes-Cals. It is likely it did not get much testing. The Angle coalition was weak, and having Brigantes, Scots and Norse on the same side meant that Scotland could be conquered by the Red player, while the Green player had little influence there.

Checking over some of my computer files from the last few years, I've logged 75 games in various forms of the Short Game from that era – I must have had more time then! For the 3-player Short Game I rearranged the nations, but kept the set up, rules and VPs. So for the Avalon Hill/Gibsons version of the game coalitions of Saxons-Brigs-Cals-Irish-Dubliners, Angles-Jutes-Scots-Norse and Danes-Welsh-RBs-Picts seemed to work a lot better. A fuller description of some of my Short Games for original Britannia is posted in a folder on the Eurobrit Yahoo group.

My experiences with these games lead me to make suggestions for a Short game for Brit II, which then Lew tested and finalised. As mentioned above, the set up was changed to fill in the vacant areas, strengthen certain nations and give players some simple choices at the outset. Initially the Welsh were faced with the choice of attacking Irish in Cornwall, Dyfed or Gwynedd, but maybe they were too precarious faced with this position. The Irish have a Raiding Turn on Round VI which was added during the development, and the Scots have them on Rounds VI and VII – in the original game neither nation had any raiding capability as all their raiders appeared before Turn 6. These contribute to helping those two nations survive on the difficult west coast.

Anyway the various changes made in the Britannia II development has resulted in a different 3-player Shorter Game with different nation assignments, set up and Victory Points to my cleaned up version of the 3-player Short Game for original Britannia, and these are quite distinct games.

The rules and the Shorter Game

A great many rules do not affect the Shorter Game. There are no Romans, so all their attendant rules can be ignored. Most odd rules will relate to the Romano-British – they have Population Increase restrictions, have restrictions on who they attack, and also have cavalry, but all these oddities will disappear by Round VIII.

Players learning the rules will get to play 'normal' nations like the Welsh and Picts from the outset. This means players can be drilled into a routine of Population Increase, Movement, Battle, Overpopulation from the outset and so should more easily get to know these rules than when playing the Standard Game, where having to deal with the Romans gets in the way of the normal running of things.

Few Victory Points typically will be scored on Round VI (the only ones to look out for are Aelle getting killed by the Romano-British, and armies eliminated by the Irish and Scots on Round VI) so players need not concern themselves with that, but should be looking ahead a little to the first major scoring round of Round VII, which comes along pretty quickly as the second Round of the game. New players can be given a heads up for this. There are no Limes points to deal with, and no Occupying points until the arrival of the Danes and Norse. The only Eliminate points in the early part of the game are for the Romano-British eliminating their enemies, eliminating Romano-British cavalry and for the leaders Arthur and Aelle. Later there are eliminate points for killing Ivar and Halfdan by the Saxons or Angles. So the VP situation is a lot simpler, and again players will benefit with not being confronted with much complexity.

Petty Diplomacy and the Unequal Defence

Now three-player games seem to get a bad press. A number of players (including the designer!) feel that three-player games are open to the possibility that two of the players are capable of ganging up on the third. This has been called the Petty Diplomacy issue, in a reference to a game of alliances, Diplomacy.

Players feel that in a four-player situation the worst excesses of ganging up are reduced, as if two players gang up on a third, there is a fourth player who will be the main beneficiary, and so the alliance is deterred.

I have already mentioned the opposite situation – the feud – where two players ignore a third to fight each other. Ideally the players should play the board as they see it, and not be carried away with an

unbalanced strategy. Most players prefer a playing style where players pursue their own self-interests, and play the game not 'play the other players'. But what if a nightmare scenario does emerge where a player is the target of an alliance of the others? What can you do? Well, retaliate by taking another leaf out of the Diplomacy players' copy book – the Unequal Defence.

Ultimately no alliance can last if there is no benefit to one of the parties. If one player of a pair is denied any benefit, and the other is allowed to become strong, the strong player will be seen as a threat to win the game, and the weak player should shift over to attacking the strong player and not you, possibly creating a new alliance against the strong player. Any player thus victimised would have to be vocal in pointing out the true leader of the game, and careful that such a lead is pronounced, but not unassailable. Often the biggest challenge for the victim may be in spotting the alliance against them in the first place.

The Green Player would be in an unenviable position if under such an attack. They could try to frustrate either player, but given that they would hope to recruit one against the other later and their Danes are likely to prefer to fight the Dubliners over York, they will likely want to frustrate, but not fatally damage Red first, then try to recruit their Saxons and Norsemen into a fight against the Scots, Dubliners and Angles. It would be important that this doesn't develop into a feud in the meantime. As an alternative the Green player might find it more dramatic to coordinate Romano-British, Brigantes and Welsh to launch attacks against the Angles to hold Blue back, and let Red grow into the monster that has to be slain before the end of the game.

If the Blue or Red players were in this position either they could pressurise Green, and try to recruit the Danes later, or pressurise the other player in the hope that Green became the leader who could then be dismantled by the Saxons and Dubliners late in the game.

Like I say, the hope is that players don't go down these dark paths, and the thoughts suggested above are extreme measures to stop an extreme act.

### Legacy

Short Games have provided me with a lot of entertainment over the years. It seems with the advent of the new game a great many more players will try out Britannia. One concern of mine reading the various online reactions to the game is how long people are taking to play the game, and how that is at odds with my experiences over the years playing it. The Shorter Game may well provide a way of killing several birds with one stone, as it provides a way to

play where you don't have 4 players, you don't have the time to play the full version, and maybe if you don't have the patience to learn all the rules. The Shorter game might be the prototype for how the future of Britannia-like games develops in a form which is less demanding of time and complexity, but without short-changing people on depth and richness.

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## *Italia I/II*

by Phalanx Games

Reviewed by Moritz Eggert (Germany)

[www.westpark-gamers.de](http://www.westpark-gamers.de)

Phalanx continues to manage a successful line of Euro games and "geek" games, or even a combination of the two, like in the excellent "War of the Ring".

*Britannia* has always been a geek favorite. Since Lew Pulsipher was inspired by the now forgotten hex and counter wargame *Ancient Conquest* to create a comparatively simple wargame that creates what he calls a "sweep of history" the mechanics of *Britannia* have been a fan favorite, and there are now many variants of the game that recreate other place's histories.

For an excellent overview on Britannia-like games please visit the website of one of the world-wide leading *Britannia*-experts, Rick Heli.

Andreas Steding, designer of *Italia I and II*, has already created one of the best known Britannia variants, the monster game *Hispania*, that recreates the history of Iberia, today known as Spain. There are *Britannia* variants which simplify the basic system--*Hispania* and *Italia* certainly don't go this road but rather add chrome and special rules that give the players more choices but also more headaches.

*Italia* is, no surprise here, a recreation of the history of Italy from ancient times. Unusual for a *Britannia* game the game comes in two completely different versions that cover two different time periods. The first one – another first – is especially designed for THREE players, and once you consider the history depicted here it makes sense. In 10 rounds the players basically play the rise and fall of the Roman empire, from the Goetterdammerung of the Greeks to the final days of the empire. One player will mainly be busy with the Romans, and his job is to hold and expand the Roman position and deal with pesky revolts and upstarts. The other two players play all the minor or big empires that constantly threatened Rome, most notably the Carthaginians with Hannibal, whose campaign is actually a major event in the game.

The interesting thing is that the game system constantly forces the two non-Roman players to either gang up against Rome – which certainly has

some power to defend itself – or to go for quick victory points against each other.

The second game, *Italia II*, recreates the history AFTER the fall of the Roman Empire, and is designed, like most Britannia games, for 4 players.

I won't go too much into the rules here, instead adding a list of major differences between the *Italia* and the Britannia system (it's not a short list).

Andreas Steding has added a lot of chrome to the Britannia game system here, but avoiding some overly complicated mechanics that made *Hispania* very long to play. Still, this is *Britannia* on steroids - the decision making is much more difficult as there are lots of things large nations can do on each turn: raiding, naval moves, building cities, campaigning. The latter mechanic simulates the long campaigns of Hannibal and the like, something like a mini game in the game as other players can react to the ongoing campaign moves, also something that has not been seen yet in *Britannia*.

All this might be too much for some. This certainly isn't a game that makes *Britannia* more accessible for the common market, rather the opposite. But there are many interesting ideas here – the campaign system for example.

Where the game shines is in its 3-player scenario (or rather "game" - as the 3-player version is completely different from the 4-player version, there are different nations, even partly different rules), which is the first time this has been done right, with basically two sides representing the nations oppressed by the Romans that constantly struggle among themselves, and the third player representing mostly the Romans in their struggle to dominate the peninsula.

Game material is top notch, as usual with the "Phalanx" line, which is always put together with great care and love, although there are some strange omissions (like a historical reference or an overview over when all nations/armies appear). The rules are not for the faint-of-the-heart - even *Britannia* veterans will have some new concepts to struggle with, although they still will feel at home. Recommended, but not for the casual gamer.

Game length: you should have a day free for your first game 8 hours recommended

Summary of what is missing in *Italia* (VERY minor gripes, as the production value of this game is very high – beautiful counters, sturdy board, etc.):

- A handy overview of when all units/nations of all players appear in which round –

something that is usually found with any Britannia-style games. This info is only found on the nation cards themselves, which are covered with tiny print.

- A turn order list of nations on the gameboard itself. This is only found on a separate sheet that is used to look up many other things.
- Some nations easily amass money above 5 gold, there is a +5 counter for the money, but even with that only 10 gold can be recorded, large nations like Carthaginians and Romans easily pass this limit.
- Any kind of historic reference (i.e. what time period a turn represents) – this is a glaring omission that is kind of surprising when one thinks about the detail and chrome that has went into this game.

#### MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN „BRITANNIA“ AS WE KNOW IT AND ITALIA I/II“

##### NEW PLAYING PIECES:

- Consular Legions/Knights (2 hits, regenerate after combat)
- Fleets (transport, naval supremacy bonus)
- Elephants (scare/destroy additional units)
- Cities (earn gold, give defensive advantage)

##### NEW LANDSCAPE:

- there are sea spaces in which battles can be fought
- Marshland gives defensive bonus, but is no hindrance to movement
- Highland works similar to "difficult terrain" in *Britannia*

##### INCOME/SPENDING

All areas produce one "gold" (instead of population points)

Cities also produce one gold.

Gold can be saved indefinitely.

Income can now be spent on:

- Infantry legions, fleets (4 gold)
- Consular Legions (see limit in *Italia I*, 6.3), Knights, Elephants
- City in standard area (6 gold)
- City in "difficult" area, marshland or highland (8 gold)

##### NEW UNITS

May appear in "massing areas" which have to be left, otherwise pretty similar (7.2)

##### POPULATION LIMIT (2 per space)

Does NOT exist!

**STACKING LIMITS**

Works very differently.

In short:

Cities/Leaders do not count against the stacking limit

Normal/marsh: 3

Highland/massing area: 2

Sea area: unlimited

In addition:

When moving into combat: +1

When moving with a leader: +1

When doing a major invasion: +1

(all cumulative)

Declaring as “capital” (presence of a city is strangely enough NOT required): +1

Capital declaration can be changed at any time

Rome is always the capital of the Romans

In a campaign:

Unlimited stacking with leader, or also for the other players during some “reaction moves”

Stacking limits are pretty much always in effect, even in retreating.

**MOVEMENT:**

- highland stops like mountains, can be overcome with leader

- Straits stop movement as in *Britannia*

- marshland does NOT stop movement

- naval transport: ships may carry 2 land units each, can do naval move if starting in a coastal space, and then do nothing but naval move, may stay on sea indefinitely

- friendly cities negate terrain effects (work like Roman Roads in “*Britannia*”)

- leaders increase movement by 1 (of their group)

- units have different movement capabilities that are printed on the counters

- Overrun as in *Britannia*

- Ships move through each other, after all moves other players and the active player have to declare combat in spaces the active nation moved in. If anybody declares combat, combat takes place, otherwise no combat in sea areas (has to be done immediately after movement)

**COMBAT:**

- units have different “to hit” numbers (printed on the counters), that have to be rolled on 10-sided dice, like in “*Hispania*”.

- Elephants, Knights and Consular Legions have special abilities.

- Cities don’t defend with dice, they just add defensive capabilities.

- If victorious, city can be “sacked” and is destroyed (flipped to “ruin” side). The

pillager gets 4 gold. A city that is “sacked” can’t be rebuilt in the same turn.

- Rebuilding: remove one unit (not leader) in the ruined space when it’s your turn, city is rebuilt from ruins.

Modifiers to the to-hit roll

- highland/marsh -1 on roll

- City is defending -2 on roll

- Leader +2 (and this is CUMULATIVE – several leaders can create a super army!)

- Naval Invasion (landing with ships) or strait combat: +2 for the defender in the 1st round only

- Fleets get +1 per transported unit

- Naval Supremacy (if adjacent sea area/s to combat space contain/s fleets of the nation in LAND combat and total number of fleets of that nation is at least double the number of fleets of the nation it fights against in those adjacent areas – I know, it sounds complicated, but that’s how it is, folks...) +1

- Raid combat (see below): one combat round only, and no modifiers to attacker, hits on a 7

Raid combat is a new concept and is directed at pillaging cities if at least one damage is created. Defending land units are NOT hurt. If city is pillaged, attacker receives 4 gold, and the city is “raided”, which is different from “sacking” in that it can be rebuilt IMMEDIATELY out of turn sequence.

**RETREAT**

As in *Britannia*, but Attacker can also retreat to OTHER spaces than the one he entered from, if they are either free or occupied by his own people.

**VICTORY POINTS**

Nation victory points are much more complicated than in *Britannia* and often differentiate between “areas” and “cities” controlled.

**CAMPAIGNS**

This is a new concept. At certain moments in history nations can start campaigns, basically a huge stack of units (no stacking limit) with leader that has to be paid 1 gold for each move. After each of these moves nations adjacent to the campaigning leader can, in turn order, do reaction moves.

Either:

Move to Battle: move any number of units adjacent to the campaigner’s space into battle, disregarding stacking limit.

Or:

Move and See: Move one stack to one adjacent space ANYWHERE on the board, without initiating combat, or to join an already existing combat (either the space with the campaigning leader or an overrun space). ATTENTION: it seems stacking limit is in effect here!

It is also possible to leave the space the campaigner has just entered, thereby giving ground (think of the real Romans reaction to Hannibal's campaign).

Raiding in Overrunning spaces is possible, but only during a campaign (again think of Hannibal).

"BLOCKING" is a new concept that benefits the campaigner: for 1 gold AND 1 unit sacrifice he can prevent movement in ONE adjacent space to the campaigning leader.

#### SUBMISSION:

In general different rules for each nation, as in *Britannia*. Otherwise very similar. The subjugated nation's income is halved and rounded UP, the subjugating nation gets the rest.

Areas controlled by the subjugated nation do NOT count as controlled, only in certain circumstances.

Some nations get the possibility to REVOLT. They can be subjugated AGAIN after such a revolt.

Sometimes submission is FORCED when falling below a certain threshold of units/areas.

It is sufficient to simply move one unit into an area of a nation that has forced submission. No combat will take place and the nation immediately submits.

#### ADDITIONAL RULES:

##### ITALIA I

Is a 3-player game and totally different from the 4-player game (ITALIA II). It has completely different nations and time periods, so one can say that Italia is 2 games in one, not one game with a 3-player variant. Some gamers actually prefer the 3-player game to the 4-player game.

- Rome can only be permanently occupied in Round 10, and is always automatically rebuilt.
- Hannibal campaign has some special rules for elephants and unit drafting (see 13.2)
- Game Turn 10 (the last) has only campaigns, and only three nations move, for all the other nations game turn 9 is the last one where they can act
- Roman legions may defect to another player's side if controlled by Marius or Sulla (leaders), see 13.4
- Major Battles: is a new concept that describes battles with 3 or more units ON EACH SIDE. Some nations get extra points for winning major battles.

##### ITALIA II

Is a 4-player game.

- Knights have 2 hits like Consular Legions, but may not retreat after receiving such a hit

- Patrimonium Conversion: Twice per game the Patrimonium player can convert any one unit of another adjacent nation.

**BGG entry:** <http://boardgamegeek.com/game/25008>

*I have not read an official price, but have seen 45 euros mentioned.*

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*Editor's Note: The World Boardgaming Championships (WBC) are held every year on the east coast (currently Lancaster PA). The Britannia tournament has run since 1991 or thereabouts. Jim Jordan, the GM, has kindly permitted me to post his account of this year's tournament*

## WBC 2006

by Jim Jordan (GM, USA)

with addition by Ewan McNay (Britain/USA)

### Britannia Tournament

45 people, more than the tournament has had in 4 of the last 5 years, journeyed through the looking glass following the glittering promise of the new Britannia just published by Fantasy Flight Games. FFG's repackaging of the classic game was universally admired by the crowd for its eye-catching graphic design. Only one mistake was universally declared by all, whoever decided that the Romans should be yellow when the board background had also been changed to yellow was clearly out of their mind. In the minds of most players, the Romans are purple and shall remain so for many years.

But a change in color did not affect game designer Lew Pulsipher's rewrite of the rules. Lew set out to rationalize the multiple versions of the rules that had been created, encourage more historical accuracy into the game play, and correct some of the clear imbalances of the game. Thus, the raiders floating at sea for hundreds of years that nearly drove the placid Lew apoplectic when he saw it at this tournament are no more, and shockingly, King Arthur will be visiting Scotland no more.

As to balance between the colors, there was evidence that it may have been addressed. More years of statistics will be needed, but the tournament numbers are promising. This year was different from the years of the original Britannia where red and purple wins dominated the tables each year, with green years occasionally showing up, and blue frequently only grabbing one win, if any. This year, in the 17 heat games, yellow (also known as purple) and green each had 4 wins, while red and blue had 5 each.

While the distribution of color wins were a promising statistic, the closeness of many of the games also gave evidence of the rebalancing of the game. One of the heat games resulted in a tie, advancing two

winners to the semi-finals. Another of the heat games came down to a win by 2 points...in which the win was secured by a Saxon infantryman taking out a Norman cavalry in single combat. In the semi-finals, another tie occurred, with it being one retreat away, on the last battle of the game, from having been a 3-way tie. And another semi-final came down to a 1 point win.

Naturally, the balance in the colors did not prevent blowouts in some scores. As usual, high scoring plaques were awarded for each of the colors in the heat games. Ewan McNay came back with a multi-plaque performance again, garnering an astonishing blue high score of 338, and a nearly equal red score of 294. A newcomer, Daniel Farrow, showed very well with green, pulling in a score of 253 in a game with several old hands at the game. Lastly, championing the yellow (purple), Ted Simmons, who has played many games but not won before, won in fine fashion with a top yellow (purple) of 244 points.

Low scores did not abound, but, as Lew keeps reminding the crowd, Britannia is a dice game, and sometimes those dice turn against you. For that, we have the Ethelred the Unready award. Eric Kleist went to the semi-finals with a handsome blue win in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round. But a 3<sup>rd</sup> round game proved not so propitious as the dice turned against Eric's Saxons and he pulled in at the end with 184 points.

And at last, let's go to the final. Although many newcomers were drawn to the republished game, apparently experience in the old game still tells in the new with four of the usual suspects making up the final game. Ewan McNay (Blue), Scott Pfeiffer (Green), Barry Smith (Yellow) and Llew Bardecki (Red) met Sunday morning. In a dramatic opening, 8 of Barry's legions were killed, with 3 of them being lost when 6 of Llew's Brigantes came streaming from the north and descended like locusts on March. Such was their wrath that they killed all 3 legions and the fort they garrisoned, and then had to lose a unit to starvation.

However, Llew's weakly defended Brigantes left behind in the north attracted an attack by the Picts on the Brigantes. Boudicca's rebellion though, a new feature of turn 1 of the game, passed with a whimper, Boudicca storming into Essex and being cast back by the legions with no losses. Meanwhile, Scott's Welsh, as has become the norm with the new Britannia, retired to submission to the Romans after killing 3 legions.

But Barry's spending of the blood of the dead legions paid off with his acquiring every Roman point possible on turns 1-3.

After the passing of the Romans, the Germanic tribes came ashore in usual fine fashion, with the newly

named Saxon leader Aelle building a fort in the Downlands surrounded by his mighty army. Apparently, distracted by the Saxons coming ashore to the south, the Brigantes signed a deal with the Angles and submitted when but a single Angle sauntered into the halls of Strathclyde.

The deal left a crowded invasion for the Angles. But that distracted them not at all from their prime target as 10 Angles piled onto King Arthur, protected by two cavalry and two infantry, and dramatically slaughtered all of the Romano-British with a single roll.

Meanwhile in the north, Ewan's Picts, untouched by the Romans, and able to spread out and grow, maxed out their population, presenting a huge wall before the Scottish invasion. Barry's Scots killed a few Picts, but his dice turned cold and the Ewan's Picts rolled back the Scots into the sea, with a little help from some restless Angles in the south. And so, at turn 9, there were no Yellow pieces on the board, and none to return until turn 12 when the Dubliners appeared.

A quiet mid-game was primarily of interest because of Llew's creeping Brigante presence. The submission deal with Ewan's Angles allowed the to grow. Unfortunately for Ewan's hapless Picts, the only avenue for growth left to the Brigantes was to the North. By turn 10, Scotland became the northern kingdom of the Brigantes with Strathclyde, Dalriada, Alban and Dunedin being held strongly.

With the quiet mid-game, it looked like Scott's Danes would have a completely full board to attempt to storm. But a successful round of raids on turn 11 softened up the coast, and the armies ashore ran to hide from the impending Dane invasion on turn 12. Scott's Danes swept through and killed many of Ewan's Angles and a few of Llew's Saxons, but unlike their more successful raids, the Danes were bled with nearly every battle and ended with few forces left to defend their newly acquired gains.

Turns 13 and 14 were a mostly kingless swirl of chaos as the nations fought each other for enough breathing space to survive and grow. But Scott's Danes, Barry's Dubliners, Llew's Saxons, and Ewan's Angles balkanized England sufficiently for Cnut, even with his weakened armies, to still achieve a very short-lived kingdom.

Turn 15 dawned. A red-green deal yielded Scott's Welsh sending a mighty army of 4 units out to York to defend against Barry's Norwegians. Meanwhile, the Norman's faced a thin shield wall to the South with Llew's Saxons having been thinned out by the strife throughout England in the previous 3 turns.

Of course, when 9 of Barry's Norwegians, along with the leader Harald Hardrada, descended on York, the mighty Welsh army shredded like mist, taking only 1 Norwegian with them. Heartened by their victory, the Norwegians then went to easily take the rest of their points, knocking more of Scott's Welsh out of North Mercia and March for an invasion with a quiet denouement.

Llew's Saxons decided to defend King Harold by sheltering in the friendly hills of Wales and left a tissue thin defense of the coast, with only one Burh, the new wooded towns constructed by the Saxons, sitting on the coast. Scott's Jutes in Kent and Sussex felt very lonely. Ewan's Normans swiftly took advantage of the opportunity given to tear apart the Saxons. But Scott's mighty Jutes took ill to the incursion by the Normans and killed 2 cavalry and 2 infantry, casting William back to Essex.

Turn 16 came with exhausted armies everywhere on the board. Ewan's Picts managed to struggle back into and hold their homelands. And a desperate grab at the end captured the last island for Llew's Norsemen, but the empty lowlands yielded a victory for the Normans as they spread out. At the last though, the Normans were cheated of kingship by the last battle in which a Saxon infantryman killed one of the last Norman cavalry in another deadly single combat.

When the dust settled, Ewan's blue had scored 234, Llew's red 228, Barry yellow (purple) 222, and Scott's green 204. The win makes Ewan the 2<sup>nd</sup> 3 time winner after Scott Pfeiffer. Another great final for the Britannia tournament!

*(Editor's Note: Ewan McNay, who won the tournament described above, posted the following on the Web, which I ran across thanks to my robotic spies; he has kindly agreed to let me append it here.)*

And finally, Sunday morning and the Britannia final: the other finalists are Scott Pfeiffer, the 3-time-champ; Llew Bardecki; and Barry Smith, the latter having knocked off second-seed Nick Benedict in his Semi. I randomly draw Blue, with whom I have finished last in two previous Brit finals - but that was at least under Brit 1 rather than the revised version, and I think that Blue gets to have a little more fun in the new ruleset, a belief supported by my experience in the first heat.

Or at least, that's the theory: this game, my Tyranno Ex dice (which won me the tournament by rolling more than 4 1s, on 7 dice, twice..) appear to have followed me as the Belgae fail to kill anything - even Boudicca, who rolls 7 dice needing a 5 or 6 and scoring 6 VP every time she does so, fails to roll a single kill and is cut down without a single point. Erk. Worse, Llew's Brigantes wipe out 3 legions and

a fort in their first turn and are then allowed full breeding once submitted, while my Picts have to submit without burning even a single fort and are denied breeding as well as having a legion in their back field. It's a black - and yellow - day for Blue.

Fortunately - and possibly uniquely - this actually brings me some sympathy, and the Picts manage to enlist Angle aid in eliminating the Scots and dominating Scotland for a few turns, while the Angles negotiate a dubious deal with the Brigantes: the Brigs submit, giving the Angles a huge point haul for no effort and sufficient forces to dominate England, but also allowing a massive Brigante which then turns on my Picts when I seem to be clawing back into the game. One key battle suggests that I may, however, live by the dice in this game: 5 Saxons attack a 3-high Angle stack in Essex on about turn 9, only to have the Saxons fail to score a single 5 or 6 on 8 dice while the Angles roll 4 hits on 6 dice, killing off 4-of-5 Saxons without any losses themselves and establishing their dominance until the Danes arrive. When said Danes do arrive, the Brigantes are still submitted, so the Angles can stack up and survive for a while, although every Dane-Angle battle results in mutual death and a tide of blood over Northern England; the Angle defense probably puts Scott's Green forces in a hole for their own winning chances.

Barry, who has been out of the game completely since the Angles killed off all of the Romano-Brits and Scots on turns 7 and 8, in revenge for the Roman carnage of Blue forces early on, returns to the game in T13 with a Dubliner major invasion; that mostly hits Brigantes, but the two sides are soon joined in cutting down Picts and Angles while the Danes and Saxons (thankfully for my upcoming Normans) squabble in southern England.

In the endgame, it's close. Llew has huge Norse and Brigantes, very good Irish, but has not been scoring much at all with the weak Saxons; he makes a 9-point play when the Norse get to the Hebrides and hold it, and the Brigs remarkably hold Strathclyde all game, but he still needs to kill off a couple of Picts and Normans; when the Picts win a 2-1 against the Norse in Moray, that's a big swing to Blue. Yellow is also in the mix, as his Dubs and Norwegians have had almost no opposition, but Svein arrives to kick the Dubs out of York and in turn receives the gentle ministrations of Harald; average Norman luck should be enough. But there's a final twist in the dice: as the Normans arrive, 6 opposing dice roll 3 6s and 2 5s to slaughter not only Normans, but 3 of the 4 Norman cav; William, who had gone into Kent leading 2 cav and two infantry against 3 Jutes (yes, the Jutes held Ken throughout, as the Saxons were too weak to evict them), has to retreat at the cost of 3 visitation points that looked to be in the bag. And the Normans are down to 6 units--scary stuff. Thankfully, the last

Angles provide a little defense against the Norwegians, and Harold had been so cowardly in running to Wales that he could not get back to reach William; in the end, there are just too few people left in England to fight off the beaten-up Norman forces, and they spread out to claim a tight Blue victory. I must have been living right; it was a wonderful week.

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### Lament for the Green in Britannia in Haiku Form Simon Bullock

Bleak welsh hillsides  
slewed with rain.  
and the romans have landed.

Don't make me submit!  
I've no danes for 10 turns.  
bugger.

Callies and jutes  
what fun are they?  
where is my beer?

---

### What's important when trying to win FFG Britannia?

Lew Pulsipher (USA)

*(I have chosen to limit this to one page; there will be one page for each color, as well, and one page for each nation, when the project is finished. It was originally produced without columns, which (oddly enough) takes up more space than when columns are used, as here. Lew Pulsipher)*

If you think one color "can't win" (or "can't lose"), you need a different strategy! The sides are "nearly equal".

Like virtually all multi-player games, this one is a psychological game as well as a competition on the board. Perceptions count for a lot. If you are in the lead but not perceived to be in the lead, you have an advantage. You want to "control" the game without appearing to. Give other players a better reason to attack someone else than you. You don't want to get in a situation where someone says "well, you didn't leave me with a choice".

To do well you need to know what new units are coming, and when; and where your opponents score their points. Think of your forces as a whole, not as separate nations. Maximize your entire score, not the score of each individual nation. One of your nations can divert an enemy, or "take it on the chin for the cause", if this will sufficiently improve the score of another.

If you deprive someone of the chance of winning, be sure it's too late in the game for him to retaliate, or that he's too weak to harm you.

Something you do in a round could have an effect several rounds in the future. Every little thing you do is important in some way! And there's plenty of time to recover if you have a bad start.

The question of "who is in the lead" is sometimes unclear, and relates to expected scoring at particular times. The Romans score a lot of points early in the game, the question is, did they score as many as expected? Yellow can have the most points and be in fourth place!

Just because you can take something or kill someone doesn't mean it's the best move. Weakening one color can help another of your opponents too much. Sometimes it's important to keep an "enemy" around (whether a color or a nation) because it can help you against someone else later on. Force preservation can be as important as scoring points. Just because you can make a 2-1 attack doesn't mean you should do so.

Points are important, but position is just as important, because position strongly influences who will score most in the future. So you might choose, for example, to keep some raiders peacefully at sea in order to be in better position in the next round. Your armies don't NEED to DO anything as long as they're scoring points (and breeding more armies, usually).

Leaders are far more effective in attack than in defense; they are especially good for attacking difficult terrain.

Better odds mean less death for you. Preserve your forces whenever possible. Three to two is **poor** attacking odds when defenders are in difficult terrain, as is two to one.

Red and blue have more control over the course of the game during mid-game than yellow and green; red and blue can get very high (or low) scores, green and yellow rarely get very high scores. So green and yellow want to avoid someone (usually red or blue) getting way ahead during midgame. Expect the Romans to max or nearly max their R3 points. The Roman difference comes in position, Limes points, and points scored by opponents by R5.

Don't forget, when running a big invasion, to leave yourself in a defensible position. When it's a Major Invasion, be sure to attack with every army (if you attack at all) in the first half: don't waste them "holding territory" that you'll be able to occupy in the second half.

Advice about multi-player conflict games in general: Never make a threat you're unwilling to carry

through; always honor your deals (never break a deal). If you're inexperienced, don't make any long-term deals. Simple deals help you and your "ally", and usually harm the other two players; e.g., red and blue often agree on a demarcation between the Saxons and the Angles. Simple deals (= "common sense") often work best.

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## "Drafting" or Choosing up Sides in Britannia

Lewis Pulsipher

This is an alternative to using the standard sets of nations and colors specified in the Britannia rules. Choosing nations in this way may result in occasional lopsided results, as players may not immediately recognize optimum strategies (just as they usually do not when playing the first few times with the standard nation sets). On the other hand, this method will usually result in new combinations that will make the game seem "new" to experienced players.

When a player has a choice, he chooses one nation (or a combination, when combinations are being used). If a player has one of the nations in each of the following sets, he is not permitted to choose the other, unless there is no other choice available.

Romans and any of: Angles, Belgae, Brigantes, Irish, Jutes, Picts, Saxons, Welsh

Angles-Danes

Angles-Saxons

Danes-Saxons

Danes-Norwegians

Norwegians-Saxons

Normans-Saxons

This strongly limits the player who has the Romans, considerably limits the player who has Danes or Saxons, and limits the Norwegians and Angles almost as much, and it is conceivable that a late choice must be a "prohibited" combination simply because there is no other choice. For example, if the player with the Romans has the last pick, and only the Belgae remain, he'll have to take the Belgae.

In the following there is no difference between upper and lower case letters, other than to highlight the pattern being used.

Three players:

In order to have the same number of picks for each player we split the Romans and Romano-British apart, and also combine Dubliners with Jutes (one pick takes both), and R-Bs and Belgae (one pick for both) for a total of 15.

The three players are designated, A, B, and C, with the designations assigned in some suitable way (dice roll, age, whatever). The players choose in the following pattern.

A B C C B A c b a a b c

And then roll dice for the order of the last set of picks, 1 2 3. Or use the point option described for five players.

Four players:

The Romans and Romano-British are one pick together, so that there are 16 picks. The pattern is:

A B C D D C B A d c b a a b c d

Alternative: split the Romans and Romano-British apart, and combine the Romano-British with the Dubliners.

Five players:

We split the Romans and Romano-British apart. In order to have the same number of picks for each player we combine the Dubliners with Jutes (one pick takes both), and the R-Bs and Belgae (one pick for both). The pattern is:

A B C D E E D C B A

For the last five there are two choices. First, you can roll dice for the last set of picks, using 1 2 3 4 5. Second, you can tally up the average scores for the nations selected so far, using Pekka Marjola's database (latest numbers below), and then choose in order of points, lowest to highest.

Comments: It is possible to end up with a set of sides that will leave one player with nothing to do for long periods of the game. Drafters need to take this into account when they choose. This is especially likely for five players.

Using the prohibitions can result in "jockeying" for situations where a nation cannot be taken by your opponents, so you can leave picking it until later, and take some other nation. For example, for three players, player A takes the Romans, B the Saxons, C the Angles: now B and C cannot take the Danes, so the Romans may try taking someone other than the Danes with his second pick (sixth overall), hoping that they will still be available at his next pick (ninth overall). (To counteract this player C might choose not to take the Angles, but that's a touch decision to make . . . player C has both third and fourth picks, remember.)

The alternative of not using the prohibitions is available, but can lead to lopsided results even amongst experienced players. A recent game for

three using drafting ended in a score of 441-249-95 when the first player got the combination of Welsh/Saxons/Angles/Brigantes. In the middle of the game virtually all opposition was eliminated.

Testers suggest you may want to use the victory point bidding system described in the rules after selections are made.

My thanks to people who helped me test this: Rob Brockway, Jamie Edmundson, Richard Jones, Pekka Marjola, Torben Mogensen, Karsten Ockenfels, Luke Taper.

Average points from Pekka's (still quite small) database:

Romans 123  
Romano-British 10  
Scots 34  
Dubliners 16  
Norwegians 36  
Welsh 90  
Caledonians 34  
Jutes 16  
Danes 69  
Brigantes 47  
Irish 24  
Saxons 107  
Norsemen 39  
Belgae 20  
Picts 58  
Angles 92  
Normans 40

#### Example of Drafting system

Allison, Bill, Conrad, and David are choosing sides for a four-player Brit game. (The order corresponds to the first letters of their names.)

Allison chooses the Romans/Romano-British.

Bill chooses the Angles.

Conrad chooses the Welsh.

David chooses the Saxons and the Picts. He could not choose Normans, Norwegians, or Danes, as they are prohibited to the Saxons.

Conrad chooses the Normans to go with his Welsh.

Bill chooses Norwegians. He could not take the Danes, as he has the Angles.

Allison chooses, having a limited range of choices because she has the Romans, and takes the Danes.

Now we start the second cycle with "d".

David takes the Brigantes. Saxons, Picts, and Brigantes looks like a pretty good combination, but certainly puts him up against the Roman-R-B-Dane side.

Conrad takes the Norsemen to go with Welsh and Normans.

Bill takes Scots to go with his Angles and Norwegians--a northern axis brewing.

Allison now has Belgae, Irish, Jutes, Caledonians, and Dubliners to choose from. She can't take the first three because she has the Romans. She takes the Dubliners.

She now has another choice, and is forced to take the Caledonians.

Bill now has Belgae, Irish, and Jutes to choose from. He takes the Jutes.

Conrad takes the Irish, as much to protect the Welsh as for any other reason.

David takes the Belgae.

Allison: Romans, Romano-British, Danes, Dubliners, Caledonians

Bill: Angles, Norwegians, Scots, Jutes

Conrad: Welsh, Normans, Norsemen, Irish.

David: Saxons, Picts, Brigantes, Belgae.

Strategy changes drastically. It looks like the Irish may be helping the Welsh against the Saxons, instead of the other way around. The Picts and Angles will be enemies (which was true historically), and the Scots and Angles may cooperate against the Picts. The Saxons, Brigantes, and Picts have the Angles surrounded, in a manner of speaking. We still have the "four kings" controlled by four different players, but that may not always be so. It isn't likely to be as balanced a game as the standard sides, but it will certainly be different in fascinating ways.

Many people in Conrad's position would have selected the Danes to go along with the Welsh, but he wanted to try something different. At first Conrad was going to take the Belgae as his last selection, but saw that it would be best to keep the Irish off his back. Now Conrad has Norsemen and Irish able to cooperate, and not likely to pick on the Welsh--could be interesting. Bill has no pieces on the board until the third round! He may have the weakest lineup, as well. Maybe he should have taken Irish rather than Jutes? It was his choice, nobody made him do it. In the mid-game Allison may have little to do unless her R-Bs survive for a while, as the Caledonians tend to be pretty passive.

And so forth.

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*Britannia Haiku by David Bofinger*

Summer confidence  
Forgot to check the next turn  
The Vikings have come

Coming into Britannia  
There is always someone new  
All the way to the Bastard

## Alternative Combat Systems for Britannia

Torben Mogensen (Denmark)

The combat system in Britannia is simple and relatively fast, so why would you want to change it?

In my opinion, the system suffers from a number of shortcomings, some more serious than others. I'm sure not all will agree, so take the below as suggestions for variants.

Anyway, the main problem I see with the current system is that it is too random, i.e., that you can get results that are far from the average and this not infrequently. Almost every game will have several instances of a single army killing two opponents and survive and you will often see a small force killing all opponents before they even get a chance to retreat. While this can be quite amusing and lend life to a game, it does retract a bit from the sense of achievement when you win (did I win because I was lucky or because I was skillful?), though it also provides an excuse for the losers. Also, for tournaments, you would want to reward skillful play more than luck, though you can argue that managing luck is an important skill when playing the game.

I do not want a completely deterministic combat system, as this may lead to overly scripted games, but I want one where there is less variation in the results than in the current game.

### Analysis of the standard system

The standard combat system has both sides roll a d6 for each army on their side. Each 5 or 6 kill an opponent. This is modified for terrain, leaders and cavalry but I will concentrate on the normal case.

The average number of kills you make in one round is obviously  $N/3$ , if you have  $N$  armies. But it can be anywhere from 0 to  $N$ . If  $N=6$ , you would expect two kills, but the chance of no kills at all is around 9%. This may not sound like much, but if you move 6 armies into an area with a single army and a leader in the expectation that you will kill the leader, then you are going to be mightily disappointed when you don't, as your vastly superior force made it look like a done deal. Even if you add more armies to your force, you can not guarantee killing the single opponent (though you can make failure less likely). Conversely, a force of three armies kills one opponent on average, but it has a 22% chance of killing twice that and 4% of

killing three times that. And this is independent of the size of the opposing force: You can not reduce your own losses (for the first round of combat) by increasing your force.

### Criteria for a replacement system

So, Ideally, I would want a system that:

- Still has a degree of chance (but less).
- Provides guarantees of minimum number of kills if you have a vastly superior force.
- Reduces your own losses if you increase your force.
- Isn't too complex.
- Doesn't use tables.

The last point is mainly a matter of taste, though having to refer to a table after each combat round is bound to slow combat down.

I will look at some alternative combat systems and see how well they fare against the criteria above. Getting all of these right may be too much to ask, so I will be satisfied with systems that do most of the above.

### Suggestion 1: Force points

The idea is to calculate a force for a whole stack and make one roll instead of rolling for each individual army in the stack.

Each normal army adds a force of 2 while cavalry and Romans add a force of 3. Leaders add one to the force of each army.

It takes a force of 6 to kill a normal army and 12 to kill "hard" opponents, i.e., cavalry, Romans or defenders in difficult terrain.

If you don't have enough force to kill an opposing army or if you have left-over force points after killing one or more opponents, you roll a dice against the remaining points to see if you kill one (more) opponent: If you target a normal army, you roll a d6 and kill if this is less than or equal to your remaining force. If you target a hard opponent, you roll a d12 instead.

Example: Four normal armies are up against a cavalry and a normal army. The four normal armies have a total of 8 force points. They can kill the normal opposing army and have two remaining points against the cavalry, so they roll a d12 and hope for 1

or 2. Alternatively, they can target the cavalry first and roll a d12 and kill it on 1-8. They must choose before rolling the die. The mixed force has a total of 5 force points, so they roll a d6 and kill an opponent if this is 1-5.

How does this fare against the criteria?

- For forces of more than one army, the degree of chance is reduced. If there are no left-over force points, there is no chance element at all.

- If you have sufficient points to kill an opponent, you will do so.

- You don't reduce your own losses with a larger force.

- It is somewhat more complex than the standard game and requires addition (though only of small numbers). It also requires two d12s.

- No tables, though.

#### Suggestion 2: Double rolls

-----

The spread of results when you roll N dice is proportional to the square root of N, so a way of reducing the spread relative to the average is using more dice. A simple idea is to roll two dice for every army and require two "hits" to kill an opponent. If you roll the number of hits down to the nearest even number, this actually reduces the average, especially for small forces. Rounding up increases the average, again mostly for small forces, so it is not clear what is best.

An option may be to let one hit wound an opponent and one more hit kill it. This leaves the question of what to do with wounded units after the battle is over or if they retreat. If wounded units can survive by retreating, it is no easier than before to kill a single army with a superior force, so it seems reasonable to prevent wounded units from retreating. To compensate, wounded units that survive the battle should return to full force at the end of the battle.

This can be used to give players more tactical choice: If I roll two hits, I can choose to kill one opponent or prevent two from retreating. Adding more choice seems like a good idea, so let's stick to this idea.

Leaders, cavalry, etc., modify dice in the normal way, for example a Roman hits on 4-6 and requires 6s to hit.

Wounded armies can be marked by rotating them to be diagonal to the board edges. Flipping them over doesn't work in FFG's Britannia, as pieces are identical on both sides. If you aren't too keen on keeping your set pristine, you can mark one side of

each unit with a pen, so flipping over will work. An alternative is to put a wound marker on top of each wounded unit. You can use glass beads or some such.

Let us see how this fares against our criteria:

- It is still random, but has lower spread.

- There is no guaranteed minimum kills, but since you can prevent retreat by giving a single wound, you reduce the chance of the enemy escaping before you kill him.

- You reduce your own losses with superior force against a single opponent, as the chance of a single army killing an opponent in one round is only 1/9 (instead of 1/3) and a superior force will reduce the chance that the single opponent survives to get a second round.

- It is more complex than the standard system as you have to roll twice as many dice and keep track of wounded armies.

- And, of course, it doesn't use tables.

You can use the same variant without doubling the number of dice rolled. This will increase the number of rounds a battle takes instead.

#### Suggestion 3: Risk-like

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In Risk, both sides roll dice and match highest to highest and second-highest to second highest, with the winner of each match removing an opposing die (ties count for the defender).

We can do the same in Britannia: Each side rolls a die for each army and match highest to highest and so on. Since there is no general defender advantage, ties should count for neither side, i.e., no armies are removed.

Risk battles are usually three dice against two, but there can be much larger differences in Britannia. Having superior force is still an advantage, but there is a strong degree of diminishing returns. To reduce this, I suggest the larger force make a number of groups equal to the number of defending armies, with free choice of how these are made. Each group adds the dice it rolls. Example: Four armies attack two. The attacker decides to split his four armies evenly so there are two groups of two dice. He rolls 1+4 and 2+2, so his highest number is 5 and the second-highest is 4. The defender rolls a 5 and a 3, so one match is tied at 5:5 while the other is 4:3 in the attacker's favour, so the defender removes one army. Had the defender rolled two 5s, both sides would have removed one army. Note that when a group

loses a match, only one army is removed regardless of the size of the group.

What about leaders, terrain, and so on? A leader can add 1 to all dice on his side, as in the normal game. Attackers against difficult terrain can subtract one from each die, so this cancels the advantage of a leader, as in the normal game. Cavalry and Romans can use d10s instead of d6s when fighting in non-difficult terrain.

When rolling against a mixed force of cavalry and normal armies, the type of dice (d6 or d10) used on the losing side shows which type of army (normal or cavalry) is removed. If a losing group has both d6s and d10s, a cavalry is removed. If a group having one of more d10 has the same sum as a group having only d6s, the group having d10s is put before the other in the ordering from highest to lowest.

A mixed force of Romans and fort use the same rule, but unless all Roman armies are removed due to losing their matches, the fort can not be removed, even if it should lose its own match.

When comparing against the criteria, we get

- The spread on even-sided battles is actually larger than in the standard game, with a fairly high probability of one side wiping out the other with no losses of its own. But larger forces have a definite advantage because they can make groups, which reduces the spread of results in uneven battles.

- At 6:1 you can't lose an army and at 7:1 you are certain to kill the opponent.

- You definitely reduce your own losses when you increase your force.

- It is by far the most complex of the suggestions.

- But still no tables.

Which to use?

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The three proposals are quite different, and one is not clearly superior to the others. So your choice depends on what you want to achieve:

- If you want the least degree of chance, use method 1.

- If you like extra tactical choice and closeness to the original method, use method 2

- If you want to give a superior force a clear advantage, use method 3.

Obviously, you may still prefer the original method.

*(Editor's note: I, too, am not thrilled with some of the limitations of the old combat system, especially the extreme variations that can occur and the amount of time it takes to resolve ("interminable dice rolling" sometimes occurs). In my newer Brit-like games I usually use a table-based system that resolves a battle with one dice-roll. In other "sweep of history" games I often use a card-based resolution or deterministic (no chance) resolution. In "Advanced Britannia" I am still using the old system, but I will try a table-based system.)*

## Round Names for Britannia

Lew Pulsipher

In an idle moment it struck me that there ought to be names for the Rounds in Britannia. This is what I came up with:

45-60	1	Roman Assault
60-160	2	British Resistance
160-260	3	Romans Go North
260-335	4	The "Saxon Shore"
335-410	5	Britain Under Siege
410-485	6	"Adventus Saxonum"
485-560	7	The Plague
560-635	8	Triumph of the "English"
635-710	9	The Heptarchy
710-785	10	Wessex vs. Mercia
785-860	11	Viking Age Begins
860-935	12	The "Great Army"
935-985	13	Conquest of the Danelaw
985-1035	14	King Knut
1035-1070	15	Three Kings
1070-1085	16	Four Kings

## Listing of "Britannia-like" Games, with Update

Lew Pulsipher

11 October '05 (with additions October '06 below). This is a simple listing of "Britannia-like" games, both published and being worked on, that I know of. It does not include games that may have been devised but not published in the past, which are, as far as I know, dormant. See Rick Heli's list, which includes those games, at <http://spotlightongames.com/list/b-style.html>.

Roughly defined, Britannia-like games use many of the game mechanisms of Britannia, as well as the idea of multiple nations seeking varied point goals, controlled by one player.

#### Published:

Ancient Conquest (1975, Excalibre Games) originated the idea of multiple nations controlled by one player but seeking varied point goals, yet otherwise bears so little similarity to Britannia that I do not consider it "Britannia-like". I read the rules for AC once while watching a game played, then did not see it again until I bought a used copy in 2005.

Ancient Conquest II (1978, Excalibre Games). I have not seen this game.

Britannia (1986 H. P. Gibsons, UK; 1987 Avalon Hill, USA; late 1980s Welt der Spiele, Germany (German language)); Second Edition (revised), Fantasy Flight Games, 2006

Peninsula Italica (Camelot, 1993). I have heard that this is a poor game, but have not seen it. IIRC it covers Rome's rise rather than later Italian history. May be in Italian language.

Maharajah (1994, Avalon Hill; French version by Eurogames / Descartes).

Hispania (1994 Azure Wish, France). 640 pieces!

Chariot Lords (1999 Clash of Arms). This is about as far as I would go in defining "Britannia-like"

Rus (2000, Desktop Published, Simulations Workshop)

The Dragon & The Pearl (2004, Spirit Games UK)

Hegemonia (Greece from Iliad to destruction of Corinth by Romans). Self-published 2004 (City-of-Games), rules presently in German only.

Mediterranea. "Published" on the Web, not for sale. URL:  
<http://www.geocities.com/davidbofinger/darkness.htm>

Of these only Hispania, Hegemonia, Dragon & the Pearl, and Chariot Lords can be purchased brand new, and Hispania's publisher appears to be defunct.

Games being worked on, by geographic area:

Ancient Near East: No title, Lew Pulsipher  
Dark Age Britain: Arthur: the Defense of Britain Against the Saxons: Lew Pulsipher (testing by other people)

Britain: Torben Mogensen (Albion, appears to be complete)

Britain and Ireland: Lew Pulsipher ("Advanced Britannia", designed as an extension of Britannia Second Edition)

Byzantium: Simon Bullock

China: Mandate of Heaven--this game is being played in a Yahoo Group of the same name. It is evidently very very large.

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

Europe as a whole: Lew Pulsipher (Dark Ages (tm) , several versions, in early beta playtesting)

Fantasy: Torben Mogensen (Hy Breasil, appears to be complete?)

Iberia: Lew Pulsipher (Iberia (tm)), in alpha testing; much simpler and smaller than Hispania

Italy: David Bofinger (alpha test)

Romania: Torben Mogensen

Scotland: Lew Pulsipher (Caledonia (tm) in early beta playtesting)

Wales: Lew Pulsipher (Gwallia Cymru (tm) not yet alpha)

I have not listed variants of games, such as those designed by the "Black Prussian". A list of variants would be a nice addition, if someone would care to put it together.

#### Additions October '06

Decision Games has pre-announced a large game covering the entire history of China to the modern day, that by description is clearly a Britannia-like game.

Barbarian, Kingdom, & Empire (Excalibre) is a 1-6 player game that includes scenarios for Fall of the Roman Empire, Alexander the Great, Pre-Roman, Roman Expansion, Western and Eastern Roman Empires, Byzantine, Viking, Magnar, and Saracen. The game depicts the transition from nomadic tribes to settled kingdoms to vigorous empires and their decline. The update will focus on the graphics of the one map and two counter sheets. (Est. retail: \$52; est. pledge: \$39).

Pledge here:

[http://www.decisiongames.com/html/pledge\\_orders.html](http://www.decisiongames.com/html/pledge_orders.html)

At Essen 2006 Phalanx Games issued Italia, by Andreas Stedding (designer of *Hispania*). See review near the beginning of the magazine.

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*Britannia Haiku by Jim Jordan*

Oh Britannia!  
You are a strong attractor.  
There! Whose boats are those?

Romans surge ashore,  
Saxons, Jutes, Angles follow,  
Where's peace? Danes instead...

## Reducing the Overall Effects of Chance in *Britannia*

(or *Risk*, or *Axis and Allies*, or any other game where  
you roll individual dice toward a result)

Lew Pulsipher

While about three quarters of *Britannia* players (according to one online survey) are satisfied with the role of chance in combat, it's certainly true that poor dicing can be frustrating. No matter how good a player is, if his luck is consistently bad he's unlikely to win.

I'm going to describe a simple method that not only "evens out" luck during a game, but also speeds it up, because players don't spend time in physical gyrations before rolling, and in chasing errant dice after rolling.

Get a deck of playing cards (or two) for each player. Take out all but the Aces through 6's, and shuffle. Players turn over the top card for each die roll. Three dice, three cards. When a player's deck of 24 (or 48) is exhausted, shuffle and start again. Over the course of the game each player will "roll" about as many 1's as 6's, and so on.

The only problem that might arise is players "counting cards", that is, memorizing which cards (or how many 5's and 6's) have already come up. If so, two decks of cards per player will make that memorization harder, though it will increase the variance of chance over the course of the game as each player will likely have more cards left unused at game end than when using one deck.

If players still insist on "counting" cards, this will be acceptable to many. After all, this allows players to "manage" their luck. If they know they have a lot of 5's and 6's coming up, they may choose this time to move into difficult terrain; or if they've used up lots of high numbers, they will realize it is not a good time to be fighting Romans or cavalry.

Turning over cards isn't as exciting as rolling dice, but it's a lot quicker and "fairer".

Alternatives to playing cards: Use the "business card" template in Word or WordPerfect to create your numbered cards. Print them on ordinary paper and put them into "card protectors" that are used by fans of collectible card games, or print on business card stock (buy at office supply stores) and use without protectors. Or just write the numbers on paper or business card stock. Or write numbers on plastic chips or cardboard chits and pull them from a cup—just remember to draw all of them before

refilling the cup.

**Don't** use this method for a game where you roll and sum combinations of dice (e.g. 2d6 or 3d6); it skews the results away from extremes (such as a 2 or 12 for 2d6), though the more cards in the deck, the less skewing occurs.

This is not a new idea, of course, but may be new to some readers.

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## FRIEDRICH Review

by Moritz Eggert (Germany, Westpark-Gamers)

In the last years there has been a definite trend to "Europeanize" American board game concepts. Prominent recent examples are games like *Age of Mythology* (a wargame/Puerto Rico-hybrid) and *Bootleggers* (American "theme", Euro-game concepts and game length) by Eagle games. So it was only to be expected that the trend might be reversed, that European (in this case German) game designers are tempted by American concepts (in this case the historical wargame genre, practically unheard of in German produced games). Of course this has happened before, but rarely was the attempt so successful as in *Friedrich* by Histogames.

The game takes place in one of the more interesting periods of European history-- Friedrich (Frederick) the Great's solitary defense of Prussia against enemies from all sides: The French, the Austrians, the Swedish, the Russians and the "Reichsarmee". *Friedrich* attempts successfully to bridge the gap between a detailed but complicated and long wargame, and a playable but still historic "Eurogame".

One player represents Prussia and it's wimpy ally, Hanover. Two or three other players represent France, Russia and Austria. The smaller factions (Sweden and Reichsarmee) can change owner depending on the game-setup or the game situation.

The board is very large and consists of a layer of hundreds of dots (cities and villages) connected by lines, vaguely reminiscent of the boring travelling games like *Deutschlandreise* that we played as kids. The topography is very complicated, and even after several games you will overlook certain connections. But exactly this is what makes the map so beautiful and intriguing!

The factions either are in their own countries and always supplied (like the Prussians), or traveling in large armies (like the Russians or the French) in unsupportive countries. The various color codes used in the game are usually good, the only problem (in

bad light) is recognizing the difference between the light yellow Reichsarmee-objectives or the dark yellow Austrian objectives.

The factions all get a number of “generals” (pawns) and “Trosse” (supply trains). Each country also has a set number of “armies”, represented simply by numbers that are allocated secretly to each general. A general (all the historic leaders are represented) needs at least 1 army to “exist” and is eliminated when he loses the last one. Only when armies are eliminated can they be replaced, so each faction has a set strength that can never be surpassed.

The most important mechanic in the game is the cards, at first glance an ordinary set of playing cards coming in 4 suits and 2 jokers (there are 4 decks that are run through in succession, to assure a relatively equal distribution). Each faction gets a set number of cards each turn (this number can change through events, but doesn't vary wildly).

On the board there are sectors (squares) that correspond to the colours of the suits. The idea is simple: an army attacking or defending while in a certain “suit sector” can only use cards with that suit. As the players know their cards they will usually try to move their armies to positions of advantage, but of course that's not always possible. You might want to defend a spade area but be weak in spades, for example. The combat system itself is very simple, it is basically an open bidding process with players using the cards as a kind of money, once a player can't play the suit anymore (or chooses not to) he loses armies in the amount of the difference between his bid and the other player's bid. If his general still lives, his pawn is moved the same number of spaces away from the winner, decided by the winner, usually resulting in the army being out of supply the next turn, as armies are only supplied when in their home country or within 6 spaces of supply train. Unsupplied armies can function normally the next turn, but are eliminated if they are still unsupplied at the end of this turn.

Of course fighting a massive battle usually means being depleted of a certain suit – the next player in turn will then try to exactly attack in this suit, but of course this is not always possible.

The battles are necessary to conquer “objectives” – a faction that can conquer all of it's objectives wins the game! Generals “protect” objectives not further away than three spaces, which means that even if you move over these objectives, they are not conquered. Beating an army can result in retroactive conquests of already passed over objectives, an interesting mechanic.

The game ends through an artificial mechanic that introduces event cards after the 4th turn. These events either give minor advantages to different players, or

reduce or raise the number of cards they draw, and finally remove one attacking nation after the other from the game (this is when ownership of Reichsarmee and Sweden switch to keep the player(s) whose nation was terminated in the game. These players can still win!). If Friedrich survives, he wins, but he never knows how long he has to persevere.

This mechanic is historical (all the events are based on actual events) but of course it also brings a certain element of luck in the game.

Friedrich has a huge advantage at the beginning, he gets 7 cards, Hanover 2, whereas France and Russia get 3, Austria 4, and both minor factions only 1. Individually no nation stands a chance against Prussia, but the longer the game goes on the bigger the numerical advantage will become, especially if the smaller nations bide their time instead of attacking immediately. Prussia has to move her armies into well-defended positions, constantly avoiding overruns, as bringing new armies into play is costly, and armies move very slowly on the map. The other factions rather have a “motivational” problem: as each of them is weaker than the Prussians, the will to attack first is rather small, as usually your partners will benefit more from the depletion of Prussian resources than you, as you will have to slowly build up your power again after a hard-fought battle. On the other hand Friedrich can't allow enemy nations to build up their hands--if they hoard cards he HAS to attack them to use his advantage! France, although having a rather boring position on the map and little to do, has the advantage of being pitted against Hanover instead of heartland Prussia, which is considerably easier. The well-rounded Prussia player has to take note of this, though, and send additional forces to defend Hanover, a fact that benefits the two other nations.

*Friedrich* is a very subtle kingmaker game, as the decisions of Friedrich basically decide who will win the game. To win with Friedrich is very hard, but you decide where the action is. If you concentrate on one front you basically make it easier for the enemies on the other side of the board. But there is one trait that saves *Friedrich* from being an unbalanced wargame, and that is it's “card shark” element. The basic mechanic is so beautifully simple and elegant that the game never bogs down. The rules are explained on little more than 4 pages, and once they are understood the game can be explained to newbies in as little as 5-10 minutes. Bluffing, hand management and simple gaming joy in a light historical context are the main assets of *Friedrich*, and they make the game a winner. The game also easily adapts to 3 players, is in fact especially playable with that number of players (the distribution of forces is much more equal in the 3-player game).

*Friedrich* can appeal to the strict Eurogamer, the

serious wargamer or even the history buff. It is longish in playing time, and the game can become kind of slow if the Friedrich player is inexperienced (always let the most experienced player play Friedrich!), but it still plays amazingly quick for a game of it's scope. *Friedrich* is a labor of love by the game designer, and it is clear that he spent years honing the game design and balancing it, and the work shows off. As it is the game can be fully recommended, it is much more interesting than it looks at first glance! A next edition could use a different system then writing the armies down, though, it would be nice to have counters or pawns for the armies, and to position them behind a screen, like in *Samurai Swords (Shogun)*. But players can easily find their own solutions here.

Playing time: 150+ minutes

Explaining the rules: 5-10 minutes

Downtime: Yes, if Prussia plays it slow

Excitement factor: high, lots of tense and close battles that play very quick

Luck: considerable, but not overpowering

Skill: high

Brains: required!

Best trait: delivers a fresh concept in a wonderfully simple package

*(Editor's note: While this game is not strictly "sweep of history", as it covers only the Seven Years War, it appears to me that the system might be adapted to a "sweep" game, and it is a multi-player game as most "sweep" games are. I am trying to "Euroize" some of my designs, because many Euro traits (such as "no player elimination") are popular with younger gamers these days.)*

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## Britannia Statistics

Pekka Marjola is maintaining a database of completed Brit 2 games. The very detailed spreadsheet can be found at:

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

The numbers in the Drafting article, above, reflect these latest numbers for each nation.

At 47 games the database is still small (and something like 15 games come from one source). I don't think the WBC games are in the database yet.

Also, as people play more the detail results change--

they certainly did at WBC.

During playtesting people thought Red might be the weakest color, but that's not reflected in the statistics. I occasionally think I should have given the Welsh a leader in round 8 (Scott!), but only time will tell.

In terms of wins, no nation is more than two behind the leader (this includes games without detail scoring, 53 altogether).

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## Britannia Past and Future

Lew Pulsipher (first part written in November 2005)

As many of you know, Britannia was changed by the original publisher in several ways. The map was altered in the north to make the "four corners", and an area was added in the south (which is why there is both north and south Mercia). The bizarre raiders/settlers rules were added, I suppose as a result of misunderstanding the rules. In Brit 2 I have "fixed" the raiders/settlers thing, and undone the four corners (without going back to the original board).

The Brigante leaders were added (which explains why they have no names), and other appearance and point values were tweaked, but really very few.

Finally, a couple colors of nations were changed. I have not changed them back, since the game works well as is, I've just tried to better balance the sides. After watching many games of Brit 1 and talking with people about strategy--I have never played the published version and likely never will--I decided to go back to the color changes and try to imagine how they changed strategy.

Of course, I don't recall anything about play of the original prototype some 25 years ago. I have a letter that refers to records of 26 games we'd played (when I was trying to convince the publisher not to change the colors), but I have not found those records. And it's hard to tell how the board changes may have altered the balance. Nonetheless, we can speculate.

In the original version, the blue were not the Belgae, rather the red were. So blue was only Picts, Angles, and Normans. The Irish were purple rather than red. Right off you can see that this meant the Irish were unlikely to be killing Romans. On the other hand, green (Welsh) did not face the prospect of getting hit from both sides by red (Irish and Saxons) in the mid-game. The purple were much more likely to force the Welsh to submit, being able to hit them from both sides (Irish and Romans). Whether they might also be less likely to rush to the north to clobber Picts is open to question.

So overall, in the original game the purple added the Irish, the blue lost the Belgae, the red gained the

Belgae and lost the Irish, and the green are unchanged. My version weakens Red militarily (as red is widely regarded as the strongest color in Brit 1, that may be a Good Thing), but also strengthened the purple, who can be quite strong in Brit 1. In the original game raiders could not stay at sea indefinitely, and I'm not sure who this would benefit or harm most compared with Brit 1. It makes the Jutes come in, and the same can be said for Norsemen and Irish who might otherwise hover threateningly offshore long after their time has passed.

I'd have to say that the changes in colors probably end up as "a wash", and of course that's one reason why I didn't "change them back".

Brit 2 is mostly tweaks, the major changes being Roman Roads, Boudicca, and raiding. For an **extensive** redesign of Brit (Brit 3 or "Advanced Britannia"), I have added Ireland (and more nations there) and change the sides fairly extensively. The Scots are able to absorb Picts at some point, so that we really have "Scotland". The Romans and Scots aren't on the same side, so that the Romans don't have as strong an incentive to clobber Picts (but they'll still get the points). The R-Bs are three nations, and lots more of them, with some more Saxons and Angles (and a Welsh leader) to compensate. The rules may prevent settled nations from leaving territory empty in order to "hide out" in difficult terrain. And Mar is clear territory (to differentiate it from the highlands). There are other changes in submission and revolts. I am going to try a combat table to reduce wild chance results and speed up combat resolution, though so far in playtesting we've used the old dice method.

I am also working on a new "B2Lite" expansion of B2:

Many people do not want to try Brit (B2) for several reasons, which I have addressed in an expansion for Brit ("BLite"). It's really a re-invention rather than expansion. I've designed a separate stand-alone game that is considerably smaller, shorter, and more "Euro" than Brit, but this is not publishable while Brit is still being sold. I've adapted many of the techniques used and tested in my stand-alone game to the much larger board and large number of pieces in Brit to accomplish the following:

1. **Make the game significantly shorter.** The primary mechanism used is to reduce the game to 10 turns (from 16). I confess I am slightly amazed at how well this has worked with the big board.
2. **Make the game diceless and much less subject to the vagaries of chance.** Battle cards are used to provide variation in combat, though each player uses and reuses his own deck so that, over the course of the game, each has the "same luck", and can "manage

chance" by his use of his cards.

"Diceless" and less chance is not only a good selling point; from the point of view of a good strategy game, a shorter game requires less chance in combat than the longer B2, where luck tends to "even out" over the course of the longer game.

3. **Simplify the scoring** (which also shortens the game). The Brit nation cards are not used. One 8 by 11 map depicts all the territorial scoring for all nations for the entire game. Each nation has one normal-size playing card that contains all of its scoring information, as a supplement to the map, as well as appearance of invaders and leaders for the nation. All the round-by-round appearance information for all nations is on one large card/play aid (each player has a copy) somewhere between 8 by 11 and the size of a Brit nation card. Each player has a graphical scoring card for his color, and a scoring card for everyone for each scoring round.

4. Otherwise, try to **simplify the game yet stick to the B2 rules where possible**. Hence I am leaving out a variety of elements from the stand-alone game.

5. This game will likely include 37 or so cards that are "**National Specialty**" cards, affecting combat. These will inject a bit more history into the game as well as an additional strategic element without increasing complexity. These cards will also be a variant addition to B2.

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## Why the Maximum number of units in Britannia?

Lew Pulsipher

At various times players have complained about the maximum number of units imposed on nations in Britannia.

This maximum reflects the difficulty many "nations" had of organizing large political entities. Often what is depicted in the game as one nation was actually a collection. Often it was loyalty to one person or family that "made" the nation. Often a nation more or less collapsed in in-fighting (Northumbria). How do you depict that in the game?

Also often the whole political organization or food-producing org just couldn't grow above a certain size without self-destruction. The max is intended to reflect this

I have tried other ways to deal with this, for example, giving a nation a victory point when they could build a unit but have missed the maximum.

In Hellenia(TM) I've hit on another method. If a nation is at the "max", they can build additional units for twice the normal cost! There is no limit (use pieces of other nations if necessary).

So if it would normally require 6 IP, a unit above the max requires 12 IP.

This works well so far, though I'm not sure it would work in Brit; nations in Hellenia tend to be smaller, with only four having maximums over 9, and many with maximums as small as three or four. ALL of the nations that use population (instead of money economy) are smaller rather than larger, highest max 6. If I were to use something like this in a future version of Brit, I'd probably reduce the maximums by one, generally.

In "Advanced Britannia" and "Adventus Saxonum" (the Arthur game) I'm using the Disorder/Disunity rule to represent... well, disunity. When a nation doesn't have a leader, only half the units (round down) can move (units that would starve, or start at sea, can also move). Sometimes this is quite a limitation, representing the difficulty of organizing large political entities better than the unit maximum does. In both those games I use the "spend twice as much to get a unit above the max" rule.

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*I am going to give a preview of a "sweep" game that is very likely to be published within the next year (though you never know, it's been in that state for considerably more than a year already). This is what I call a "game treatment", a brief description of the game, really written for potential publishers.*

## Germania

The Germanic Successors of Rome Attempt to Survive Further Invasions

**Summary:** The game broadly represents the situation in western Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire. Each of two to six players represents one of the Germanic invaders who, pushed by the Asiatic Huns, settled in and eventually destroyed Rome. As they attempt to consolidate and expand their holdings, a variety of invading nations threaten to overwhelm them, as they overwhelmed Rome. My intention with this game was to combine "Euro" elements with a light historical wargame. The game uses no dice; players use cards to influence combat, and also use event cards to control non-Germanic invaders and influence other players.

At least one game has been played in which the players, unbidden, did not attack each other directly during the entire game, though there was lots of fighting with the non-Germanic invaders. Nonetheless, successful players usually directly attack another player at some point in the game.

It is possible to be reduced to one area and still come back to win the game. It is also possible to become non-Germanic invaders; hence there is no player elimination.

There are three versions of the game, each version building on the previous one. The first version will satisfy many; the second, more "historically accurate", is the one I'd expect many wargamers to play; and the third is the most complex and lengthy.

The game length varies, in part depending on how long the players want to play when it starts; 90-150 minutes is typical, but a "full-blown" complex game can last much longer.

In general, the game includes the following characteristics of "Euro" style games:

- Players have just a few reasonable choices in each turn
- Uncertainty of information
- No player elimination
- Intervals between playing ("down time") are short
- There are not many pieces--cards, counters, etc.--for a player to manipulate in a given turn
- Great visual interest

**Brief description of play:** Players take turns executing a variety of Actions up to a limit of six Action Points. Some of the Actions are creating new settlers, moving pieces, and playing Event Cards. Three or (in Standard and Advanced games) four rounds of turns are a century. Invasions occur at the end of each Century, or they may occur because of an Event Card played by a player. One player or another temporarily controls Invaders as they invade. Players attempt to increase the number of settled areas, improve those areas, and, in Standard and Advanced games, build cities. They will probably fight Invaders, and may fight one another, using Battle Cards to help resolve these fights. When the game ends, each player tallies his score, and the highest scorer wins.

**Components:** Less than 17" by 22" board of 27 areas including western Europe to Hungary and Serbia, and including North Africa and the Mediterranean; 46 Event cards and 40 Battle cards; 220 figures and markers (for up to six players) including horse, foot, settlers, "improvements", towns, castles, and cathedrals; rules.

**Competition:** Many of the playtesters for this game are video gamers who do not normally play boardgames: it is much more accessible than most "wargames". I know of no similar game.

**Expansion/series possibilities:** Conceivably, eastern Europe and the Middle East could be added to make a much larger game, or that area could be used for a somewhat similar game. Many of the systems (mechanisms) are being used in a science fiction game, an ancient Near-Eastern game, and a Chinese history game, all my designs. There are other possibilities.

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## History of the Roman Empire

I recently read the online rules for *History of the Roman Empire* by Marco Broglia, a game mentioned before in this magazine and now available from Udo Grebe Game Design in Germany (<http://www.uggg.de>). One time through the rules is not enough to be certain of the degree, but it appears to be quite derivative of *History of the World*, with the twist that a player has both a Roman faction and a non-Roman faction to play each epoch.

If anyone has this game, please write us a review.

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## Book Reviews

*The Huns* by E. A. Thompson, edited by Peter Heather, is a revised reissue of the 1948 book *A History of Attila and the Huns*. Heather minimally revised the book based on the wishes of Professor Thompson, who died at a very advanced age during the time of revision. Hence the book shows some old-fashioned characteristics, for example a concentration on the (fragmentary) literary sources at the expense of archaeology. In 1948 there was next to no archaeology to illuminate the Huns. Today this is no longer true, but Heather chose minimal revision rather than complete revision, and points the reader to new sources in his very extensive Afterword.

One of the objectives of the book is to show that Attila was not a genius, certainly not a military genius, and that the Hun empire existed before Attila, and could have existed thereafter (as did the empire of Genghis Khan). Attila died prematurely, however, leaving many sons, and the Hun empire soon fell apart.

Reading a book this detailed is not generally necessary for games as broad as Britannia and its ilk. I do learn many details that aren't so clear in books of broader scope. For example, I knew that Aetius, the patrician who defended (and dominated) the West

Roman Empire for more than two decades, was a friend of the Huns, and used the Huns to prop up the empire despite the crippling loss of Africa to the Vandals in 429. I had not realized that he was a more or less lifelong enemy of the Visigoths, who had settled in southwestern France after sacking Rome in 410. The biggest criticism of Attila is that he managed to fight his friend Aetius, and force Aetius into alliance with his lifelong enemy the Visigoths, at the Catalaunian Fields in 451. While exactly what happened during the battle is unknown, the Huns withdrew afterward.

Thompson and Heather don't spend much time on the Huns before or after Attila's death, but there's more detail here, again, than I've had from broader histories. The Huns didn't just disappear, even after their defeat in 454 by the Gepids. "Huns" were in the Balkans for many decades thereafter (one can trace partial histories of some of Attila's sons), though one of the problems we have is that the word "Huns" became a generic word for steppe barbarians.

The Peoples of Europe series, Blackwell, 1999. I bought a used copy through Amazon.

*The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Civilizations*  
by John Haywood. Penguin, 2005

If I had to give one piece of advice about historical atlases, I'd say "John Haywood". And I'm once again not disappointed by these 144 small-format pages covering many civilizations both well known (Egypt) and obscure (Iberian). As with other Penguin historical atlases, we get about a page of text with a page worth of maps for each entry. A civilization as large and old as China's gets several entries, where the Iberians get one. I'm sure I'll use it as a source for both China games and near east games as time passes.

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## What's important when playing Green to Win in Britannia Second Edition

(I have deliberately limited this to one page;  
there is one page of overall advice,  
and there will be one page for each nation. Lew  
Pulsipher)

Every color in Britannia must be played as a whole, not as separate nations, if you want to win consistently. It is worth sacrificing armies or points of one nation to improve the points or position of another by a greater amount. The action of armies at one end of the board can affect those at the other, in the long run. Remember, at a given time position is just as

important as the number of armies or number of points.

Green is the most defensive of all the colors. It requires patience, not a “conquest” mentality. Offensives that spend lots of armies are a bad idea, even for the Danes, though the Danes will certainly do lots of attacking.

Green (and yellow) are limited in the maximum number of points they can score. Consequently, green must work to keep red and blue in check. Generally, the lower the scores, the better off green will be. Put another way, green’s fate frequently depends on others. Diplomacy can be an important tool.

If red and blue are at peace, it’s almost always bad for green. The Welsh then have to cope with Irish and Saxons, and the Danes may be faced with a “shield wall” of Angles and Saxons.

The Saxons may be green’s biggest enemy. Some people see the game as blue fighting with yellow in the north while green struggles with red in the south.

The Welsh **must** survive and prosper if green is to prosper. Do NOT try to fight the Romans tooth and nail. Submit at five areas to allow for population growth, and strongly consider cooperating with the Roman to occupy his burned fort areas. It is often difficult for the Welsh to maintain a long-term presence in Cornwall and Devon, but that is going to help your score—and especially try to prevent the Irish from settling in those areas. The clear terrain in Wales is often contested by invaders, and Welsh often abandon those areas at times.

Try to negotiate with blue to take your trip to York for 12 points. You may be able to fight your way in, but it will be very costly to Welsh survivability later on. Impress on the blue that the Angles, too, will have difficulty prospering if you have a big battle over York.

The Caledonians “aren’t worth much” if you like offense, but they can score a lot of points if they survive. They need not be aggressive until facing “starvation”. If you think Picts will attack the Caledonians early in the game, move Orkneys to Caithness. This is why the move order changed from original Brit, to give the Cals this chance. Ultimately, the enemy of the Caledonians is the Norsemen.

You may want to sacrifice the Jutes to help another nation. They are one of the lowest scoring nations in the game, though a successful attack on a Roman fort in Kent in Round 5, settling there, is worth 14 points.

Some players believe the Danish invasion is the key to green prosperity, while others think the Welsh are more important. The Welsh score more points, but the Danish have much more variability in how much they can score. The Welsh can help Danes secure the kingship by picking off a few Saxons.

The Danes may not have much left at the end of the game, but it’s points, not troops, that count in the end. The Danes have to preserve some force during the big invasion, or they may be wiped out too soon. It is easy for the big Danish invasion to “melt away”.

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I am ending this at more than 20,000 words, and hope to do another (shorter) issue over Christmas. I have written enough in this one, and I don't want the magazine to become just "Lew Pulsipher talks about whatever".

I don't know what the trends are in boardgaming as a whole, but certainly the trend is upward for "sweep of history" games. Britannia has sold better than I expected, and the publisher is "pretty pleased" with how things are going. We have *Italia* now and some other Brit-like games coming along, as well as new non-Britlike Sweep games such as *History of the Roman Empire*. Many of these new games are quite complex or long (or both); while there's a market for that, I am also aiming at people who won't play a 4 or 5 (or 10) hour game.

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