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# BRITONS

## One Brain Cell Wargame Rules for Tribal Skirmishes in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Britain

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These are rules for playing a wargame with toy soldiers. It is intended for several players - say 4 or more, but can be played with fewer.

Players control heroes (and, of course, heroines), who in turn have contingents of fighters under them.

The setting is the constant inter- and intra-tribal conflict that characterised Celtic society in ancient times. There isn't room to give you a full analysis of how Celtic tribal society probably worked, even if you wanted to read a 20 page essay at this stage.

Put simply, the tribes were run by a noble warrior elite, we can call them chiefs, who themselves were organised in family clans. The tribe was, in effect a big extended alliance of these family clans. Status between clans was important, and rivalry constant. The 'King' (or Queen) of the tribe would be the head of the foremost clan – though the notion of King is more one of 'first among equals' rather than 'supreme ruler.

Tribes would go to war occasionally, calling out the Warband (i.e. all the fighting men of the tribe) and fighting pitched battles. But this was fairly rare. By far the most common form of military activity was raiding.

Raiding happened all the time and was regarded as acceptable by everyone. It was important for a number of reasons:

- a. It gave the warrior chieftains the chance to show how tough they were in a fight
- b. It provided loot for the chieftain's followers, thus increasing his status within the clan and with his followers.

- c. It gave young, new warriors a chance to kill their first enemy, and take a head. Collecting the severed heads of worthy enemies was an important mark of manhood and prestige.

These rules concentrate on the actions in a raid. Raids could involve anything from a few dozen to several hundred, and could involve considerable fighting.

Why 'One Brain Cell'? Well, many sets of wargame rules these days are horrendously complicated, with big thick rule books to read, dozens of additional books to get (at unreasonable expense) and exceptionally complicated rule mechanisms that take ages to work out.

My brain is too simple for this, so I tend to write rules that one require a single brain cell to use and understand. This tends to make games easy to learn and play, and, amazingly, are just as much fun as the dense and complicated game rules for which you have to pay a King's ransom. Odd, isn't it?

So read on, and, hopefully, enjoy.

*Jim Wallman*  
Streatham 2004

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## Setting up the game

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To set up a game you need a reasonable sized playing area. A large table or floor area is ideal. Depending on the story you have in mind, this can be laid out with terrain. A green cloth makes suitable ground. Model trees, lichen etc makes woods, hedges and undergrowth. Roundhouses,

farms etc be easily made out of cardboard.

This is the playing area.

Next assemble the toy soldiers (sorry, I mean finely crafted military miniatures...).

The players should have at least one Big Chief each. This represents the Player. They can take control of more than one each - but this might make the play more difficult in some ways.

Each Big Chief has a **contingent** of chiefs that are their followers in the battle. The way these followers are used is described in the rules below.

I suggest groups of followers should be between 6 and 20 figures strong. The status of the Big Chief usually determines the size of the contingent (see rules for the Campaign Game, later)



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## Actions

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In each game turn everyone gets to perform **Actions**.

All actions are assumed to happen simultaneously.

The Sequence of working things out each turn goes like this:

1. Players declare what **ACTION** they are doing (see below). They do this by placing an action card face down by their personal 'Big Chief figure.
2. Players can move their personal hero and any followers under their

command in accordance with the ACTION they said they were going to do.

- If movement brings groups of followers into weapon range then work out who killed who. Work out slingers/javelins first. Then work out melee.

At the end of the turn, all groups of followers that have been fighting have to take a test to see how they are feeling (called the *Morale Test*)

These are the *actions* you can do:

- Heroic Combat** (against another specific named Big Chief). If you choose this you cannot move your followers around that turn because you are too busy concentrating on your immediate enemy to tell them what to do.
- Shout your Battle Cry** (obviously your clan will have decided on it's Battle Cry beforehand) Your followers will then follow wherever you go - lead your followers towards the enemy (assuming that's where you're heading). All your followers within 8" of your Big Chief figure will follow you by the most direct route to the limit of their movement distance (See **Movement** below)
- Insult your enemy.** This is good for your followers' morale and might impact on the enemy's morale, if it is a good insult. The player must actually think of an



announce an insulting remark directed at the enemy. These will vary from "You ugly bastard!" – which would be a fairly feeble insult, to something showing a little more imagination, like "Hobble back to your fireside you feeble excuse for a motheaten worm". Only a good insult really counts. If the enemy is within 8" then the insult will count for morale purpose.

- Inspire Your Followers.** Sometimes they might get a bit downhearted (especially if they've been taking casualties and their morale is low). You can make them happier by stopping and giving them a stirring speech (See below for **Morale Test**).
- Shout a message / Listen.** Sometimes you need to tell someone something. If you are not within 6" of that person you can't talk to them. This is an action. Listening is an action too – so if the person you're trying to talk to is in a fight, they probably won't hear you.
- Shout "Attack them!"** This is where you can send your followers to attack a specific, named, enemy group. You don't have to accompany the attack. All your followers move towards the enemy you point at as fast as they can move until they get within weapon range - then they fight. If you are not with them they might not fight as well though (see **Morale Test**).
- Take A Head.** A Big Chief can stop at the body of a fallen enemy and sever their head. Heads are important status symbols. Obviously, only the head of someone you have personally killed counts.

## Movement

Each individual figures move as directed by their leader, up to the following maximum distance each turn:

| Type                               | Distance (inches) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unarmoured freemen or slaves       | 6                 |
| Chiefs on foot                     | 5                 |
| Chief on Horseback                 | 16                |
| Chariot                            | 12                |
| Carts, women and other slow stuff. | 3                 |

Obstacles can't be easily crossed. If crossing a low wall or hedge, take one move delay. Wading through a ford or shallow stream, lose half the movement distance.

## Slingers and Javelins

In order to use the sling or throw a javelin, the fighter may not move in the same turn.

Roll 1d6 per figure shooting and consult the 'Shooting Table'

The score in the table is the chance of a hit.

Hit on a horseman/chariot, roll 1d6, score 4,5,6 and rider/crew and horse out of action, anything else and the rider/crew can fight on, on foot.

One hit kills most people, but it takes 4 hits to kill a Big Chief

**Shooting Table**

| Weapon     | Ranges    |           |           |           |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|            |           | Up to 10" | Up to 20" | Up to 30" |
| Sling      | -         | Up to 10" | Up to 20" | Up to 30" |
| Javelin    | Up to 10" | Up to 20" | -         | -         |
| Target     |           |           |           |           |
| Unarmoured | 4,5,6     | 5,6       | 6         | 6         |
| Chief      | 5,6       | 6         | 6         | -         |
| Horseman   | 4,5,6     | 5,6       | 5,6       | 6         |
| Chariot    | 3,4,5,6   | 4,5,6     | 5,6       | 5,6       |

## Morale test

Things can make your followers less keen to fight.

The entire contingent is affected by the morale rules, whatever their type.

Roll 1d6 when:

- The contingent takes a casualty.
- The contingent is surprised.
- If the player in command wants the group to take a test

Add or subtract the following factors:

- 1 for each non-chief casualty this turn
- 2 for each Chief casualty this turn
- 1 for each Chief casualty in game
- 1 visibly outnumbered.
- +2 having a stirring speech from a friendly Big Chief this turn
- 1 having been directly and specifically insulted by an enemy Big Chief within 8" this turn.
- 1 if the group's leader is not present

The check the result in this table:

### Result

| Score   | Outcome   |
|---------|---|
| 3+      | Morale is fine - carry on as desired.   |
| 0-2     | Contingent may not move closer to any enemy forces. It has to pass a morale test next turn to move closer to the enemy.     |
| Under 0 | Contingent must move away from the enemy as quickly as possible. It must pass a morale test next turn to stop running away. |

The figure representing the hero/player leading the contingent is not bound by these results and may fight or run away as desired.

## Melee (or hand TO HAND COMBAT)

### STEP ONE:

Break the combat up into 'fights'. A fight is one fighter vs one or more enemies.

### STEP TWO:

For each 'fight' roll 1d6 per side, add the factors below and compare the scores

Factors in Melee :

- Slinger -1
- Freeman 0
- Chief +2
- Big Chief +4
- Outnumbered 2-1 by unengaged enemies -2
- Outnumbered 3-1 by unengaged enemies -3
- Outnumbered 4-1 or more by unengaged enemies -4

**The highest score wins**

If they win by 1 or more means the loser is pushed back 2"

### EXAMPLE OF MELEE

4 Armed Freemen fight 2 Chiefs. So, this breaks down into two fights, each of 2 freemen fighting one chief. We'll ignore morale for this example.

| FIRST TURN   |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Fight One</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 4<br/>+2 for being a Chief<br/>-2 for being outnumbered<br/>total score = 4</p> <p>Freemen roll 6<br/>No additions, total score = 6</p> <p>Result is +2 win for the Freemen, which against a Chief is a 'push back result.</p>            | <p><b>Fight Two</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 3<br/>+2 for being a Chief<br/>-2 for being outnumbered<br/>Total score = 3</p> <p>Freemen roll 5<br/>No additions, total score = 5</p> <p>Result is +2 win for the Freemen, which against a Chief is a 'push back result.</p>            |
| TURN 2   |  |
| <p><b>Fight One</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 5<br/>+2 for being a Chief<br/>-2 for being outnumbered<br/>total score = 5</p> <p>Freemen roll 3<br/>No additions, total score = 3</p> <p>Result is +2 win for the Chief, which against Freemen is a kill result. One Freeman falls.</p> | <p><b>Fight Two</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 6<br/>+2 for being a Chief<br/>-2 for being outnumbered<br/>Total score = 6</p> <p>Freemen roll 1<br/>No additions, total score = 1</p> <p>Result is +5 win for the Chief, which against Freemen is a kill result. One Freeman falls.</p> |
| TURN 3   |  |
| <p>The knights are no longer outnumbered, so it becomes two one-on-one fights.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Fight One</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 6<br/>+2 for being a Chief<br/>total score = 8</p> <p>Freeman rolls 1<br/>No additions, total score = 1</p> <p>Result is +7 win for the Chief, which against Freemen is a kill result.<br/>The remaining Freeman falls.</p>               | <p><b>Fight Two</b></p> <p>Chief rolls 5<br/>+2 for being a knight<br/>Total score = 7</p> <p>Freeman rolls 4<br/>No additions, total score = 4</p> <p>Result is +3 win for the Chief, which against Freeman is a kill result.<br/>The remaining Freeman falls.</p>              |
| <p>Combat over and all the Freemen are dead, and the Chiefs have won. Not surprisingly.</p>  |  |

If fighting Unarmoured freemen a win by 2 or more is a kill  
 If fighting Chiefs a win by 3 or more is a kill  
 If fighting a Big Chief a win by 4 or more is a HIT (it takes 4 hits to kill a Big Chief)

If the outnumbered side wins, it can kill/hit *only one* of its enemies that turn. Winner chooses which one.  
 This seems complicated, but is, in fact, very simple.

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## Heroic Combat

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Big Chiefs are special cases (nutcases, some might say - though not within earshot). If they fight just the followers of other Big Chiefs, then use the rules above.  
 If they fight other Big Chiefs, then these rules apply.  
 Big Chiefs *never* outnumber other Big Chiefs.  
 In the event of a multiple fight between big Chiefs, those not involved will watch and cheer from the sidelines until their turn comes.  
 Each game turn of combat is three rounds of paper - stone - scissors.  
 The player with the best of three inflicts one hit on their enemy.  
 Big Chiefs may break off combat and try and run away - but then that wouldn't be very heroic would it? Whatever would their followers think?

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## Mounted Combat

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Whilst the tribes use horses for rapid movement to and from raids, the Celts style of fighting did not suit fighting from horseback. Some tribes managed to create fighting cavalry, but for the purposes of this game, and to keep it simple, we will ignore this.

There are no advantages to fighting from horseback in the melee rules above, and horses are more vulnerable to missile fire – so in general you are

encouraged to do what they did historically, and tether the horse before getting into a fight.

### Chariots

In this period, the chariot has virtually disappeared from Celtic martial life everywhere except in Britain. Here in Britain, the chariot is the ultimate status symbol – like owning a Porsche might be today. The Big Chiefs and aspiring chiefs who had chariots would use them to race, perform stunts, tricks and daring feats. In battle their job was to show off in front of the Warband and illustrate to the enemy how feeble their charioteers were compared to them. The chief riding in the chariot would largely dismount to fight (leaving the charioteer to drive off somewhere safe until needed), unless they were able to intimidate their enemy to run away without fighting by charging towards them at high speed. [Footnote – this has precisely no effect on the Romans who just laughed at them].

When not at war, the chiefs would use them to race, perform stunts, tricks and daring feats in order to raise their standing in the clan or tribe. A bit like skateboarders in an urban skate park.

I suspect that Chariots were rarely, if ever used on raiding. They were just not appropriate or particularly useful. However if you want to bring on a Chariot just to show off then that's probably fine.

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## BRITONS: FIGHT AT THE FARM Typical Raiding Scenario

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### Situation.

A border farming community is the victim of a raid. At the hamlet are cattle, some freemen farmers, women and children etc and a few slaves.

A short distance away (off the playing area) is the roundhouse

of a local Big Chief, whose farmland this is.

The Defending force must delay the raiders long enough for the local Big Chief to turn up. If the Big Chief turns up, he will obviously wish to drive the raiders off.

### Raiding Force:

**Big Chief Muradoc** of the Catuvellauni and his contingent of 12 Chiefs and 4 slingers  
 Objectives (in priority order)

1. Kill more fighting enemy than Carannix does.
2. Capture cattle and get it home
3. If possible, take the head of an enemy Chief, preferably a Big Chief

**Big Chief Carannix** of the Catuvellauni and his contingent of 12 Chiefs

Objectives (in priority order)

1. Capture slaves and get them home
2. Kill more fighting enemy than Muradoc does
3. Take the head of an enemy Chief, preferably a Big Chief

### Defending Force

**Headman Willix** and his family (10 armed but Unarmoured freemen, 2 slingers)

Objectives (in priority order)

1. Survive
2. Hold out until Big Chief Boracix arrives
3. Do not lose cattle or slaves

**Big Chief Boracix** of the Trinovantes and his contingent of 12 Chiefs, all on horseback. He arrives on turn 10.

Objectives (in priority order)

1. prevent the Catuvellauni from taking slaves and Cattle.
2. Take the head of an enemy Chief, preferably a Big Chief

**ACTION CARDS : Print on card and cut out**

**HEROIC COMBAT**



Cannot move contingent – must concentrate on fight

**INSPIRE YOUR FOLLOWERS**



Must be stationary and not in a fight at the time.

**SHOUT “ATTACK THEM”**



Your group will charge the enemy you point at.

**BATTLE CRY**



Your followers will follow you wherever you lead, at their best speed.

**SHOUT A MESSAGE**



Cannot be doing anything else.

**TAKE A HEAD**



Cannot be doing anything else. Only heads of warriors you have killed personally count.

**INSULT YOUR ENEMY**



Cannot be doing anything else.

**LISTEN TO A MESSAGE**



Cannot be doing anything else.