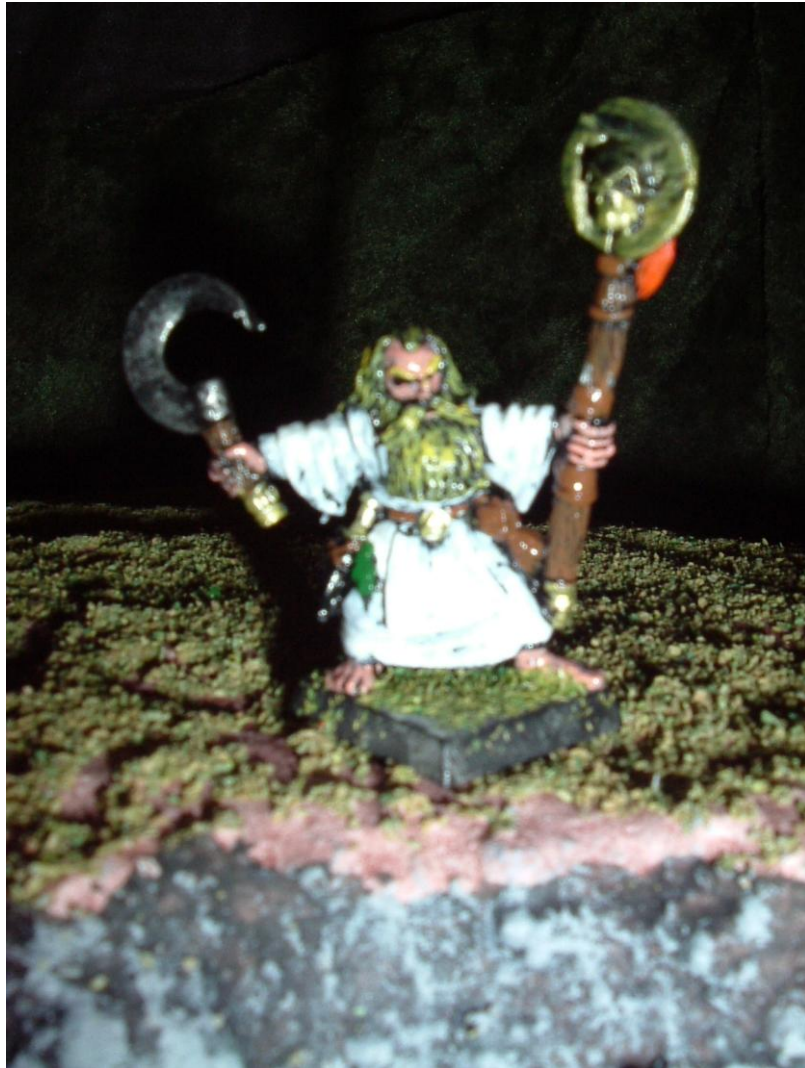


The Druids strike again !

- A Deja vu Encounter in Northern Britain A.D. 193 -



Caledin, the traitorous druid

Britannia Romanum, Dies Saturni VII Julius MMVII

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- A Deja vu Encounter in Northern Britain A.D. 193 -

We travel back in time to the autumn of the year A.D. 60. Suetonius Paulinus, the Roman military governor of Britain appointed by emperor Nero, leads two legions, Legio VI Pia Fidelis and Legio XX Valeria into a campaign in north-west Wales.

When he received orders to break the back of the Druids and therefore the Celts, he headed for the stronghold, Ynys Mons, the island of Mona (Anglesey), a druid cult centre which was fiercely defended. It was a constant irritation for the Romans as it symbolised Celtic independence and the druids invoked one rebellion after another from this place. The druids were the core of native tribal resistance against the Romans, however, AD 60 was the Black Year of the druids. Suetonius Paulinus found a treacherous druid, named Caleddin, who dictated much of the druidic knowledge and power to the Roman governor. The Roman military governor used this to help him plan the attack on Ynys Mons.

Suetonius Paulinus swam his cavalry across the Menai Strait, accompanied by the infantry in flat-bottomed boats. There on the shore of the Penmon Peninsula he encountered a powerful army of Celts and Druids.

Here is an account from the Tacitus Annals written at the time of the battle; *"On the beach stood the adverse array, a serried mass of arms and men with women flitting between the ranks. In the style of Furies, in robes of deathly black and with dishevelled hair, they brandished their torches; while a circle of Druids, lifting their hands to heaven and showering imprecations, struck the troops with such an awe at the extraordinary spectacle that, as though their limbs were paralyzed, they exposed their bodies to wounds without an attempt at movement."* The Romans were frightened as you can imagine but forged on as was their style and they *"cut down all who met them and enveloped the enemy in his own flames."* It did not stop there; the sacred groves on Ynys Mons were cut down and many Celts on the island were tortured and killed. The last druids hung themselves on the Blood Oaks to try to preserve their knowledge. Suetonius, in an attempt to mock them turned the Oaks into a table.

In the meantime the region of the Iceni tribe, ruled by a certain red-haired queen named Boudicca, boiled over in rebellion. The Romans who believed that all druids had been slain, moved on hurriedly to crush this uprising further to the south-east. However, one druid and a few of his followers, who hid away in a cave, were able to make an escape from Ynys Mons across the sea and on into the wilderness of Northern Britain, to be never heard of again, until 133 years later....

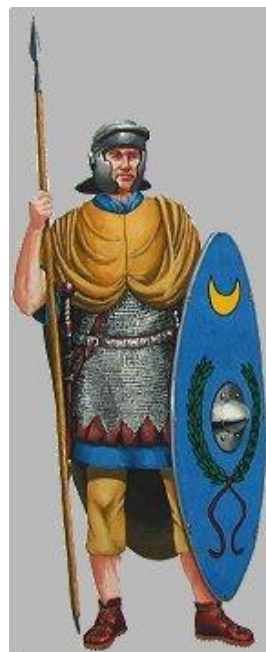
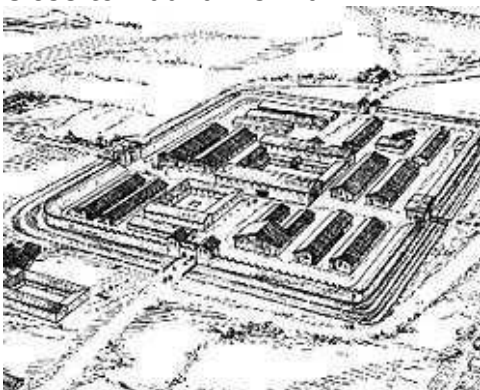
Rome, Junius IX, A.D. 193

Rome had been weakened by civil war for a number of years. It is only now in the late spring of A.D. 193 that Lucius Septimius Severus emerges as victor from the civil war and assumes complete control of the Roman Empire. However, marauding north British tribesmen have taken advantage of the disorder caused by the civil war and severely damage Hadrian's Wall. Severus receives reports about pillaging and unrest as well as the name of the responsible chieftain concerning the damage to the Wall. Cadwallon, chieftain of the Caledones tribe, who has been encouraging others within the Roman pale to resist occupation. But above all Severus is disturbed by the note that druids seem to be in the entourage of Cadwallon. Severus needs to extensively repair the Wall and restore law and order without delay.

Vercovicium, Julius V, A.D. 193

(Housesteads)

Close to Hadrian's Wall.



I and II Cohors
Raetorum Civium
Romanorum.

This is auxiliary infantry recruited in Raetia (modern day Switzerland). They served 20 years before obtaining Roman citizenship. Auxilia Cohors occupied the frontier posts and executed policing actions.

The two cohorts of Raetian auxiliary infantry had assembled at Vercovicium and were preparing for action to put an end to the tribal uprising beyond Hadrian's Wall in the Caledonian marshes. Rumour was flying around the camp that two officers from the famous Legio XX Valeria Victrix (Valiant and Victorious) were to take command of this punitive expedition. This Legion had arrived in Britain back in AD 43 with the first invasion forces and was stationed at Deva (Chester). They had participated in various campaigns against native tribes and received their title "Victrix" for slaughtering the druids on Ynys Mons and crushing the Boudiccan revolt back in AD 60. Legio XX was nicknamed "The Black Eagles" and without doubt was the most drilled and disciplined Legion in Britain.

The Legate (Military Legion commander) of Legio XX, Valerius Messalinus, had received orders from Severus to crush the Caledonian revolt by all means. In a first move the auxilia cohorts on Hadrian's Wall were to be employed and followed-up by a full scale attack of Legio XX if needed. Messalinus decided to send his most capable senior centurion Julius Maximus into action. (Centurions were the backbone of each Legion,

instilling iron discipline and resolve among the common legionaries). Maximus was one of the toughest soldiers in Legio XX who had risen to his post by merit and not due to social background. For pure formality reasons one of the six tribunes of the Legion was placed at his side (Tribunes were non-professional soldiers with an aristocratic background sent by Rome with an observation function over the Legion command). This was Decimus Balbinus, an intimate of Severus, and freshly arrived from Germania Superior. There Balbinus had been the most hated Tribune in Legio XXII Primigenia Fidelis, for his vanity and arrogance. He had collected evidence of alleged treason in that Legion's command which led to an inquiry and the dismissal and conviction of Legio XXII's long-serving Legate, 12 centurions, 8 optios (2nd in command of century), 5 cornicenses (musicians) and 3 signifiers (standard bearers). Although hated, Balbinus was nevertheless respected, if not feared, for his swordsmanship and courage in combat.

Cadwallon's fortified camp in the Caledonian marshes. Julius VI, AD 193 (1 day distance from Hadrian's Wall)

Cadwallon, king of the Caledones tribe, was observing the defensive preparations in his stronghold from the platform of his tower. Word had arrived earlier this morning that Roman forces had passed the Wall at dawn, and were marching in the direction of his position. Messengers reported a force of approximately 1,000 troops carrying the typical oval shield of the Auxilia Cohors. Fortunately these were not the regular Legionaries recognizable at a distance by their square "Scutum" shields, but auxiliary troops which could probably be kept at bay by the warriors under his command. Time was on Cadwallon's side as the nearest Roman Legions were Legio II Adiutrix in Eboracum (York) and Legio XX Valeria Victrix in Deva (Chester), several days of marching distance. The Auxilia would arrive by next dawn and an immediate attack was most likely. By that time the stronghold should be ready to receive them and the trap laid. Cadwallon had altogether 1,500 warriors of his Caledones tribe and of the neighbouring Venicones and Creones tribes at his orders. Queen Calcaga of the Venicones and King Cunowinnix of the Creones had followed his call for unity against the Roman oppressors, and joined him with their warbands. Both Calcaga and Cunowinnix pledged their allegiance to Cadwallon, though reluctantly, as they feared his power. Cadwallon had three druids in his entourage, whose ancestors had allegedly escaped from Ynys Mons 133 years earlier and had carried all of the secrets with them. Druidism had survived in the Caledonian marshes and now the time had come to take revenge on the Romans for the atrocities of AD 60. The one secret which Caledin, the traitorous druid, had not been able to disclose to Suetonius Paulinus was the "Potion of Vigor". This potion, consisting of various secret ingredients, was served to the warrior immediately before contact with the enemy. It instilled courage, bloodthirst and combat strength in the warrior who drank it. The three druids had brewed six large barrels of this potion, which were kept stored away safely in Cadwallon's tower. The potion worked only if a final ingredient was added by the druid shortly before serving. This was Cadwallon's secret weapon. Especially King Cunowinnix had heard rumours about this "Potion of Vigor" and was very keen to get his hands on it for fulfilling his own ambitions. In the meantime preparations of the defensive position were completed by nightfall and the warriors were awaiting the Roman onslaught.

The Characters and their Targets: (max. 100 points per character)

1. King Cadwallon (Combat Strength +2)

Charismatic leader of the Caledones tribe. His aim is to unite the tribes of the north as high king, destroy the Roman forces and carry the rebellion across Hadrian's Wall down south.

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Tribune Balbinus 10 pts.
- Eliminate Centurion Maximus 10 pts.
- 1 point for every eliminated Roman auxiliary 60 pts.

2. Tribune Decimus Balbinus (Combat Strength +2)

Sent by Severus to deal with the uprising effectively by destroying Cadwallon and placing a puppet king in power north of the Wall. Severus who extremely fears druidism has studied all the secrets which were conveyed to Paulinus. However, the secret of the "Potion of Vigor" is still missing. That is why Balbinus has been instructed to capture the potion and the druids. Balbinus is to lead Cohors I into action.

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 10 pts.
- Safeguard Cunowinnix 10 pts.
- For every captured druid 30 pts.
10 points
- For every barrel captured 30pts.
5 points

3. Centurion Julius Maximus (Combat Strength +2)

Legate Valerius Messalinus of Legio XX picked Maximus as his most trusted senior Centurion to accomplish a task of utmost importance. Root out the nest of rebels and see to it that Balbinus never returns to Deva. A similar inquiry by Balbinus for alleged treason, as exercised with the command of Legio XXII Primagenia in Germania superior is to be avoided by all means. Maximus is to lead Cohors II into action.

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Balbinus 23 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 10 pts.
- Eliminate Calgaca 10 pts.
- Elimiate Cunowinnix 10 pts.
- Eliminate druids 9 pts.
3 points each
- Destroy barrels with 18 pts.
potion 3 pts. each

4. King Cunowinnix (Combat Strength +1)

Strong hatred for Cadwallon, as he wants to be high king himself. Has secretly negotiated with the Romans to rule the north. In exchange he will deliver the druids and potion to Tribune Balbinus.

- Survive battle 10 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 30 pts.
- Deliver druids to Balbinus 30 pts.
10 points per druid
- Deliver barrels to Balbinus 30 pts.
5 points per barrel

5. Queen Calcaga (Combat Strength +1)

Fervent priestess and follower of the druid cult. Her utmost aim is to preserve druidism and avenge the slaughter of Ynys Mons.

- Survive battle 10 pts.
- Protect druids 60 pts.
20 pts. per druid
- Eliminate Balbinus 15 pts.
- Eliminate Maximus 15 pts.

6. The 3 Druids (Combat Strength +1)

Ancestors of the Ynys Mons refugee. Maintained the druid cult in the marshes of Caledonia. Aim is to spread druidism throughout the British Isles.

- Survive battle and avoid capture by Romans 60 pts.
20 points each
- Per "Potion of Vigor" served 5 points 30 pts
- Bonus if atleast 2 druids survive 10 pts.

Setting of the Game and Victory Conditions

1. It is dawn of Dies Saturni VII Julius CXCI (Saturday 7th July AD 193. The tribes of the north occupy a strong defensive position. The two Roman Auxilia Cohors are ready for launching their attack to annihilate the garrison. No quarter given!

2. Each player picks one of the six character cards and secretly makes a note of the character he will play until the end of the game. (The game is set out for 2-3 players)
3. The game is played for 10 moves and at the end the player with the most points wins.
4. The game sequence is as follows: At the beginning of each move the six shuffled character cards are evenly distributed to the players. The players will alternately turn the cards and each time play the specified character as desired. Every player has the right of one "freeze" objection per move as regards the character action by one of the other players. In that case a 5 or 6 is needed on a d6 to succeed with an objection. In this way the picked character of each player remains a mystery and offers the possibility of bluffing.

Movement, Archery and Special Rules

1. Movement: foot/boot 20 cm / mounted 30 cm / 1 figure carrying barrel 10cm (foot) or 20cm (mounted).
2. Climbing obstacle or ladder: costs 10cm of a move
3. Opening doors - 5 or 6 on d6 and costs 10cm of a move
4. Archery range - 20cm (hit a group with 5 or 6 / Individual with 6). Saving throws 5 or 6 (Number of saving throws: 1x per small shield, 2x per large Roman shield, 1x if figure carries armour, 1x if figure behind cover)
5. Combat strength besides character figures: +1 point for cavalry / +1 point for Auxilia officers and standard bearers / +1 point for Calcaga's three priestess archers)
6. "Potion of Vigor". Each barrel when opened by a druid with a 5 or 6, will give up to 10 figures (any) close to barrel a +1 point for the present move.
7. Sequence of Game: a) Archery b) Opening barrels (if desired) c) Movement d) Combat
8. In combat +2 is required to eliminate a figure, +1 to wound, push back and/or capture a figure, equal numbers on dice = draw

Epilogue

The elaboration of this game was inspired by a number factors. First of all a great enthusiasm for Roman history, which goes back to my teens when I lived in the Taunus area. Not far away from my home was the ancient border of the Roman Empire, the "Limes" and a finely reconstructed Roman fort named Saalburg (open air museum), which I visited a number of times. Also a hiking excursion together with Neal to Hadrian's Wall, the adjacent Roman forts and a Roman military museum in August 2002

as well as a visit to small Roman fort, museum and remains of a bath house together with Jenny and Neal in October 2004. Also worth mentioning is the recent enjoyable reading of Conn Iggulden's Roman Emperor trilogy, which left its mark. Finally the memory of a short view from the peak of Mount Snowdon in Wales through a gap in the clouds on the sunbathed shoreline of Anglessey (i.e. Ynys Mons, the island of the druids), back in the late 80's, was the reason for me to mention this episode of AD 60 in the introduction.

Historically the Roman attack by Paulinus on Ynys Mons during his Welsh campaign around 60 AD is well documented as well as the annihilation of the druid sanctuary on the island. The possibility of some druids escaping across the sea, in particular to the safe haven of Ireland, is not as remote as it seems due to the fact that druidism did survive in Hibernia out of the reach of Roman power. The choice in the game to have a druid escape to northern Britain is purely for the reason to ficticiously include the druid cult in a setting not far from Hadrian's Wall. Historically accurate, however, is the Roman civil war in the years up to AD 193 and the rise to power of Lucius Septimius Severus. Also the serious damage to Hadrian's Wall by marauding tribes from Caledonia during that period, has been recorded. However, the dimension of a common tribal uprising lead by Cadwallon, is of course again of a more imaginative nature. Cadwallon was a true character, although living around AD 600 in northern Wales. He probably was a charismatic tribal chief who was indeed besieged by his enemies in his stronghold and in the end managed to defeat his adversaries (two kings). The Caledones, Venicones and Creones were indeed tribes in ancient northern Britain, but there is no information whether they ever jointly attacked Roman positions. Also Queen Calgata of the Creones and King Cunowinnix of the Venicones tribes are made-up characters. The same applies for Tribune Balbinus and Centurion Maximus of Legio XX. The facts regarding the 20th Legion and the name "Valeria Victrix" and the garrison in Deva (Chester) are true and have been researched accurately in the internet (there is even a reenactment group in the US dedicated to this Legion). The name of the Legate (Legion commander) Valerius Messalinus is accurate, although the year AD 193 is too late. There is even some evidence that the Legion was named after him, although the experts are of different opinions. I have found no evidence for Inquiries regarding trustworthiness of Legion commands, but this is probable especially in times of civil wars and changing allegiances.

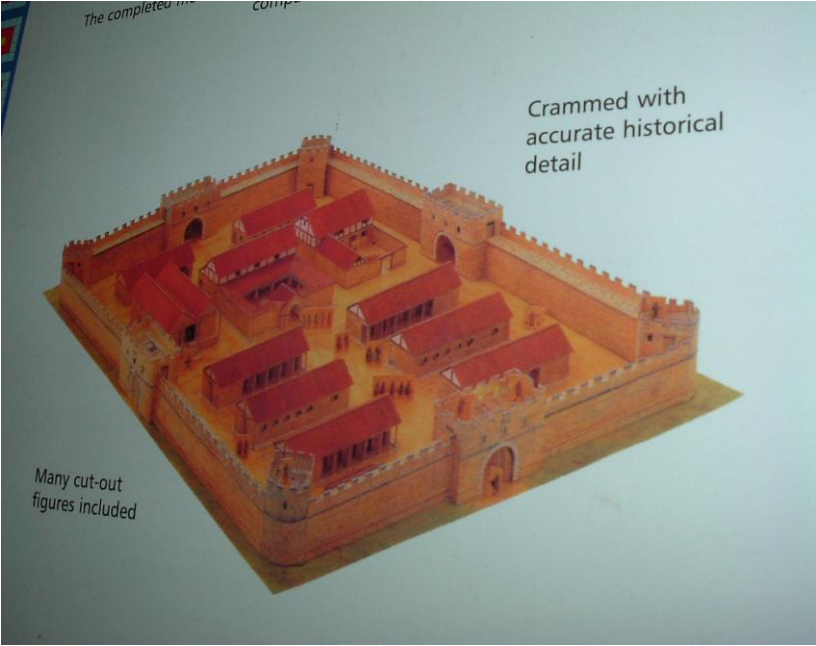
The Auxilia Cohors from Raetia (auxiliary troops from Switzerland) were indeed posted to defend Hadrian's Wall and it is not unlikely that they were employed for policing actions against pillaging tribes beyond the Wall. Auxilia Cohors usually consisted of 500 men who were recruited in conquered regions and then transferred to other parts of the Roman Empire to avoid uprisings in their places of origin. Auxilia was commanded by officers who previously served in the Legions. Therefore the command was placed in the hands of Legio XX officers in this game. The "Potion of Vigor" is an invention, but it is true that the Viking berserks drank an invigorating brew which would drive them wild during battle. So possibly the Celts had similar stimulants.

Some words as regards my sources for this game. The internet was of a very great help and especially the online encyclopedia "Wikipedia" providing valuable information on the Legio XX. I also employed the Osprey uniform books "The Roman Army from Hadrian to Constantine" and "Rome's Enemies: Gallic and British Celts". Another important source on the organisation and command of a Roman Legion was the "Warhammer Ancient

Battles" rules book with very nice illustrations. And finally thanks to the Attic Tabletop Research Group for the useful information on Auxilia units in early imperial Rome.

XX

LEGIO XX Valeria Victrix



The Roman fort at Deva (Chester)



3 Cohors of Legio XX marching northbound.
Dies Domenica VIII Julius CXCI

The Characters and their Targets: (max. 100 points per character)

1. King Cadwallon (Combat Strength +2)

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Tribune Balbinus 10 pts.
- Eliminate Centurion Maximus 10 pts.
- 1 point for every eliminated Roman auxiliary 60 pts.

2. Tribune Decimus Balbinus (Combat Strength +2)

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 10 pts.
- Safeguard Cunowinnix 10 pts.
- For every captured druid 30 pts.
10 points
- For every barrel captured 30pts.
5 points

3. Centurion Julius Maximus (Combat Strength +2)

- Survive battle 20 pts.
- Eliminate Balbinus 23 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 10 pts.
- Eliminate Calcaga 10 pts.
- Eliminate Cunowinnix 10 pts.
- Eliminate druids 9 pts.
3 points each
- Destroy barrels with 18 pts.
potion 3 pts. each

4. King Cunowinnix (Combat Strength +1)

- Survive battle 10 pts.
- Eliminate Cadwallon 30 pts.
- Deliver druids to Balbinus 30 pts.
10 points per druid
- Deliver barrels to Balbinus 30 pts.
5 points per barrel

5. Queen Calcaga (Combat Strength +1)

- Survive battle 10 pts.
- Protect druids 60 pts.
20 pts. per druid
- Eliminate Balbinus 15 pts.
- Eliminate Maximus 15 pts.

6. The 3 Druids (Combat Strength +1)

- Survive battle and avoid capture by Romans 60 pts.
20 points each
- Per "Potion of Vigor" served 5 points 30 pts
- Bonus if atleast 2 druids survive 10 pts.