

# DE BELLIS ANTIQUITATIS

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SIMPLE FAST PLAY ANCIENT WARGAME AND CAMPAIGN RULES  
WITH ARMY LISTS

WARGAMES RESEARCH GROUP

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## INTRODUCTION

These rules derive from an experimental set for battles between Romans and Celts demonstrated by Phil Barker at the 1988 Society of Ancients conference. Its favourable reception led to a more general two page rule set called "De Bellis Societatis Antiquorum" produced for a very successful and popular competition at the 1989 conference. This commercial version extends the combat system, differentiates a few extra troop types, includes fuller explanation of procedures and philosophy than proved possible in two pages and incorporates set-up information, a campaign system by Richard Bodley Scott and suggested compositions for all important armies between 3000 BC and 1485 AD. We hope that it will prove acceptable both as an introduction for new players and as a tonic for the jaded.

Our intent is to provide the simplest possible set of wargames rules that retain the feel and generalship requirements of ancient or medieval battle. The rule mechanisms used are entirely new. They start from the assumptions that the results of command decisions can be shown rather than the minutia of how orders were communicated and interpreted, that the proportions of different troops fielded were decided by availability within their culture and not cost-effectiveness against a current opponent, that differences between troops of the same class and era were relatively unimportant, and that most shooting regardless of theoretical weapon range was at very short distances. The resulting system is more subtle than may be immediately apparent, and is the fruit of much detailed development work.

The average player has memorised the battle rules part way through his first game, but tactical skill, especially in the use of light troops, takes longer to develop. A game lasts less than an hour, so that a five round convention competition could be completed in one day and still leave plenty of time for visiting the trade stands. Since all battles end in outright victory, the organiser's work is minimised. Campaigns for up to six historically opposed armies can also be completed in a single day if desired.

Figure manufacturers may be comforted to learn that the small number of figures required for a DBA army is not as likely as it may at first seem to reduce their business. Many testers have not been content to merely provide a pair of historically opposed armies, or even the armies for a complete historical campaign, and have taken the opportunity to buy all those armies that have tempted them in the past but been ruled out by expense, painting time or storage considerations. 15mm scale figures have been most popular, followed by 6mm.

We see this style of game as an alternative to, rather than replacement for, conventional wargames rules. Each style has its own advantages and disadvantages. It may be that some future synthesis will emerge, and we welcome any suggestions.

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