Recent Changes (December 2025)

Core Rules

In section 4.2.2, the population limit is increased by one unit in order to improve the survivability of very small nations that have no scoring centers in difficult terrain, and the calculation of overpopulation when there are unresolved battles is greatly simplified (both nations involved in the battle count the area and armies, rather than having to subtract one from the other).

Leaders and Raiders

Submission of one nation to another is completely removed from the game, after having originally been expanded to cover all nations and time periods. In the end, it added more complications than value to the game. See below for the effect of this change on the Romans.

Boat Movement is moved from *Romans and Forts* to *Leaders and Raiders,* since it fit much better with the Raiding rules, and is now restricted to the armies of one area per Movement Phase.

Cnut's special rules in section 9.4 are simplified by making his forces "must raid" and then making an exception if the Danes become Rex Anglorum during his nation turn, giving the Danish player more flexibility.

Likewise, *Svein* now only appears during the extra nation turns for the kingship in section 11.6.1 if the Danes became Rex Anglorum during *Cnut's* nation turn; if *Cnut* did not become King, *Svein* has no claim to the Kingship. He now appears in the ENG/FRI, since historically he tried to land in Kent, Suffolk, and Norfolk before successfully invading York with help from *Edwin*.

Romans and Forts

Submission of British nations to the Romans was removed. There is not much historical evidence for the submission of any large British nation other than the Brigantes (who actually occupied only about half the territory they occupy in the game) to the Romans, and even that submission did not last. The replacement of the Romans with British armies outside southern England (not present in the original game) maintains the game balance.

Boudicca's forces are reduced from 4 armies to 2, making it less imperative that the Romans all but wipe out the Belgae, and giving the Romans more flexibility.

The Romans are restricted to York-Cheshire and areas south in Round 1. This is more historically accurate, and keeps the Brigantes and Picts more viable in later rounds.

Overview

Britannia reduX expands upon the concepts and flavor of *Britannia* to create a game which can be played at a wide variety of difficulty levels and playing times. While the focus has been to create a fun, playable game, efforts have been made to preserve a similar level of historical veracity to that found in previous editions of *Britannia*. *Britannia reduX* takes advantage of the proven game balance of previous editions, and would not have been possible without the considerable work that has gone into them.

Britannia reduX began as part of a larger discussion of possible future editions of Britannia on the mailing list. I found many of the design decisions in the proposed new editions unsatisfying, as they increased the complexity of the rules while reducing the options available to the player, leaning away from a game and toward a historical simulation. I thought that a different approach based on a unique mix of ideas from the previous editions and discussions would result in a more satisfying game.

I have only tested the four player game extensively. In dividing up the nations for the 3 and 5 player games, I opted to produce the best gameplay (the least number of cases where a player would feel compelled to attack their own nation) while still trying to equalize the scoring as much as possible based on number-crunching of average nation scoring. I hope that they are reasonably balanced based on my scoring analysis.

Design Guidelines

While the rules of *Britannia reduX* were inspired by the 2nd (*FFG*) edition of *Britannia*, there are a number of changes, both major and minor. In developing *Britannia reduX*, I followed these guidelines:

Minimize Overhead: The rules should minimize the mental and physical record keeping required of the players. Everything necessary to make decisions or resolve outcomes should be plainly visible (generally on the board or in the Timeline and Scoring tables) at all times.

Maximize Flexibility: To make the rules applicable to Timelines of different lengths, specific nations, game round numbers, and units should be mentioned as infrequently and generally as possible. When they are mentioned, the special rules associated with them should be as minimal as possible. (One obvious exception is the Romans, but even their rules have been written so that they could be easily generalized.)

Minimize Coerciveness: The rules should avoid forcing outcomes. Rules, especially rules that restrict the players, should be written in the least intrusive way that will accomplish the goal of the rule. As much as possible, game balance and historical verisimilitude should be provided by the Timelines and Scoring tables (which set the appearance areas, strength, and goals of each nation) rather than the rules themselves.

Britannia reduX includes a core game and three expansions. This divides the rules into easily digested chunks of less than five thousand words each.

Core Rules

These rules strip *Britannia* to its bare essentials. After reading several lengthy essays on game design (including the designer's own), I decided to take a piece of advice from those essays: "A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." Thus, I decided to see how much could be removed, combined, or otherwise simplified in *Britannia*; the Core game is the ultimate expression of this. I first created this as a simple thought exercise about the *Britannia* turn structure, but my playtesting shows it to be a viable introductory game in its own right. It plays quickly (I was able to finish the first two playtests in under three hours total), and appears, to my surprise, to be reasonably balanced. The rules are also intended to provide a simple, consistent base for the expansions.

The biggest change from previous editions is the removal of the Overpopulation Phase at the end of the nation turn. I always found the Overpopulation Phase to be unsatisfying, as it sometimes penalizes nations for lucky rolls, and nations can become very overpopulated by retreating when defending. The new rules replace the Overpopulation Phase with a Population Limit which is integrated into the game similarly to the Stacking Limit; nations are not allowed to exceed the population limit at the end of movement or during a retreat. I am not entirely happy with the calculations that have to go into Population Increase, but haven't found a better method. I have considered adjusting for overpopulation before population increase, but that allows large nation to reshuffle too much.

Another major change is the removal of nation cards in favor of a much simpler system of scoring centers. This has the fortuitous side effect that scoring is spread more evenly amongst each player's nations and throughout the course of the game. The player with the most points at any given point is (probably) leading, unlike in other editions of *Britannia*, where the Roman player typically builds up a formidable lead early in the game.

I decided, based on discussions on the mailing lists, to include a rule preventing nations from reducing the total number of areas they hold during the Movement Phase; thus, they cannot abandon areas unless there are unoccupied areas which they can move into.

Difficult terrain no longer stops movement, but now only prevents overruns. This makes no difference when moving into areas occupied by other nations, but allows nations to move more freely through areas which they occupy or are vacant. This allows invading Scots to move inland (for example, to Dunedin) without requiring a leader, and allows the Welsh to attack out of Wales more easily. However, most of the time, a move which can be made under the new rules can also be made under the old rules by shuffling armies amongst the areas occupied by the nation. Eliminating the need for this shuffling makes movement easier and more intuitive.

Boat Movement was eliminated from the Core game, reappearing as an optional rule in the *Leaders and Raiders* expansion. Instead, invading armies are given the extra "reach" they need by having them appear on sea boundaries, and allowing them to land from either sea area. (This is a cheat, but it works; it increases the total number of possible starting positions by creating new "overlapping" sea areas.)

Finally, I lowered the overstack limit in clear terrain from an unlimited number to six units. Stacks larger than six units are rare due to population limits, and I have changed overruns so that an overrun can occur once the overstack limit is reached, even if the number of attackers is not twice the defenders.

Leaders and Raiders Expansion

This expansion adds almost all the rules from previous editions, except the Romans, to the Core rules. It maintains the short Timeline while increasing the game complexity.

I would like to add more Occupy scoring opportunities that encourage nations to make unusual (but historically supported) moves away from scoring centers, similar to the Welsh and Dubliner points for York, but I am not familiar enough

with the history (if historical data to support further opportunities even exists).

Leaders are now especially powerful. For example, they allow a nation to leave areas unoccupied during movement, and allow an extra retreat phase to a nation which wins an attack. The combination allows a leader to begin the Movement Phase adjacent to an opposing nation's area, move through two other areas, end in the opposing area, and move all units from all three areas into a battle while still preserving the option to reoccupy the vacated areas post-battle. For example, a leader in Lindsey whose nation also occupies N.Mercia and March, with an opposing nation in York, can move Lindsey-N.Mercia-March-York, and all armies in Lindsey, N.Mercia, and March can attack York. All the emptied areas can be repopulated after the battle using the post-battle retreat (assuming sufficient armies remain).

However, during Raiding turns, leaders may not return to sea unless all remaining raiding units also return. This rule prevents hiding Raiding leaders at sea if a nation wants to occupy territory, so that the points for eliminating leaders get scored more often.

In addition, in a battle involving two leaders, neither leader can retreat; this makes it easier to eliminate enemy leaders without also having to block off all possible retreats, and makes it easier to resolve the Kingship in the final round.

The Raiding rules now cover the forced Danish Raiders' return to sea (and this forced withdrawal will be useful later), and points for Raiding areas cover the special Danish raiding points in round XI in previous editions of *Britannia*, as well as other nations which previously scored points for occupying areas.

Bretwalda and Rex Anglorum were changed based on ideas from various discussions on the mailing list. The threshold for each is set so that, in theory, obtaining the victory points is neither too easy nor too difficult. I considered making them contingent on holding some minimum number of scoring centers, but thus far it seems unnecessary.

The events surrounding the Kingship in 1066-1070 could be (and have been) made into a game all by themselves. *Britannia reduX* simply folds Round XVI from earlier editions onto the end of the game using a special nation turn for nations with surviving leaders. *Cnut's Rex Anglorum,* and how many Raiding armies he loses, now has consequences for the Danes in the end game. If the Danish player preserves *Cnut's* forces, *Svein*'s forces are more historically accurate (sources I have read report them to have been nearly as large as *Hardrada*'s or *William*'s). The five player endgame may not be, strictly speaking, historically accurate; the rebellion of the brothers *Edwin of Mercia* and *Morcar of Northumbria* (who attempted to put *Edgar the Ætheling* on the throne in place of *William*) was not particularly successful and involved an alliance with *Svein*, though the rules do portray the confusion of the time well enough.

Roman Expansion

This expansion creates a game similar to previous editions of *Britannia*, with a simpler scoring system (no nation cards), and optional rules and Timelines which allow for variations in the game complexity and playing time.

The Timelines were developed by starting with the 15 round Timeline. The 9 and 12 round Timelines were developed by combining rounds in the 15 round

Timeline. The total number of reinforcements for each nation is roughly the same in all Timelines, and the number of population points needed to receive an army is reduced, so that the total number of units brought into play during a game is maintained for balance. Some changes were made so that leaders appear and major events occur, as much as possible, in their proper historical context, and the order of the nation turns mimics the order in which events occurred historically. (A list of leaders compiled from all editions of *Britannia* and other sources is attached for reference.) I was able to create a fixed play order similar to the original that works for all Timelines; the biggest change is that the Angles are moved up significantly so that their leaders fall in the proper historical context in the shortest Timelines.

The Timeline for the Leaders expansion is just the last six rounds of the 9 round Timeline (after the Romans leave Britain), and the starting position is based on the starting position from the short 3-player game in 2nd edition. The Core game Timeline strips out everything but the armies from this 6 round Timeline and replaces each lone leader with a single army; in addition, reinforcements for the Norse and Danish forces are modified to account for the lack of raiding.

Playtesting thus far indicates that the Timelines are reasonably balanced, and that the effect of die roll randomness is roughly the same as adding or removing one unit; that is, it takes a change of two or more units to seriously affect game balance (though the effect of smaller changes can be seen over multiple games, as the die rolls average out).

I tried a number of variations on the rule for rebuilding Roman forts, but none worked as well as what is there, primarily because the Raiding with forced withdrawal occurs one Movement Phase earlier in the 9-round Timeline.

Since the large, long-lived nations (i.e., the Welsh, Saxons, and Angles) score lower than in standard *Britannia* relative to the smaller nations, I reduced the Roman occupy points so that the Romans also score proportionally lower. The Romans score more points in either Wales or Scotland, but Scotland is generally the better option in order to help the Scots later.

I have replaced the Roman reinforcements table and Round II maximum with a single, simple rule that is generally within 1 unit of the table, and is thus "good enough". This could be enhanced by having Roman armies act as normal armies after a certain round, but that is an unnecessary complication.

The Roman replacement should leave the Romano-British in reasonable shape, and allow British nations some breathing room before the Germanic tribes overrun them. I eventually decided to move Romano-British forts to the optional Fortifications rules to streamline the game.

Strongholds function as advanced Roman forts. I decided to allow any nation to build a stronghold, but only once per game. Strongholds are only useful if the nation has a scoring center in clear terrain, since the only benefit is to create the effect of difficult terrain. There is no discount for building a stronghold; the benefit is powerful enough that, if anything, they're still a bit too cheap. For example, if the number of Romano-British strongholds placed does not reduce the number of armies placed (and especially if strongholds don't count toward the limit on the total number of armies), the Romans can leave the Romano-

British almost invincible.

Burhs were tricky. I have never been happy with Saxon burhs in 2nd edition; they seem to be intended as a game balance to help a weak Saxon nation, though in fact, they help a medium-strength Saxon the most; the maximum number of burhs the Saxon can build is 6, by occupying 4 areas at the beginning of Round XII and increasing that to 6 in round XIII. They are too cheap at one-third the cost of an army (though that allows each area to build a burh using only its own population points), and the numerical limit on burhs is arbitrary (historically, why would a Saxon holding seven areas build just one burh?). After some playtesting, I made burhs slightly more expensive than in 2nd edition (exchanging them two-for-one with armies received during Population Increase), and made them slightly weaker than armies in battle, but gave them the equivalent of Roman Roads. I also switched from the numerical limit on burhs to relative limits that should keep the number of burhs about the same as 2nd edition without feeling quite so forced.

Ireland Expansion

This expansion is inspired by the Jim Lawler article in *The General*. The Belgae are stand-ins for the Ui Neill, to avoiding adding a nation to the game, with *Niall* used to (hopefully) help them survive the Scots and Irish. It could potentially be used without any of the other expansions, and I may eventually add notes to clarify any inconsistencies which might arise in using it in this way.

Leader List

(Various sources; italics indicate not used in Britannia reduX)

Caratacus	*43-50*	*Welsh*
Boudica	60	Belgae
Venutius	*52-71?*	*Brigante*
Maeatae	*c.210*	*Pict*
Niall Noígíallach	378-405?450?	Ui Neill (Ireland)
Hengist/Horsa	c.450	Jute
Cunedda Wledig	*c.450-460*	*Welsh*
Ælle of Sussex	477-514	Saxon
Fergus Mór	c.500?	Scot
Icel of Mercia	*c.515? 527?*	*Angle*
Arthur	c.516-537	R-Brit
Maelgwn the Tall	*c.520-547*	*Welsh*
Wehha of East Anglia	*c.550?*	*Angle*
Ida of Bernicia	547-559	Angle
Urien Rheged	c.550-590	Brigante
Ceawlin of Wessex	*560-591*	*Saxon*
Cadwallon ap Cadfan	625-634	Welsh
Oswiu of Northumbria	642-670	Angle (15 round)
Bruide mac Bili	671-693	Pict
Offa of Mercia	757-796	Angle
Viking Raiders	c.790-865	Dane/Norse
Egbert of Wessex	*802-839*	*Saxon*
Ketill Flatnose	c.850?	Norse
Kenneth MacAlpin	843-858	Scot
Rhodri Mawr	*844-878*	*Welsh*
Ivar/Halfdan	865	Dane
Alfred the Great	849-899	Saxon
Flann Sinna	*879-916*	*Ui Neill (Ireland)*
Æthelstan	*927-939*	*Saxon*
Olaf Sihtricson	941-981	Dubliner (*Amlaíb Cuarán)
Dunmail	c.945	Brigante
Edgar the Peaceful	959-975	Saxon
Brian Boru	1002-1014	Irish (Ireland)
Thorfinn Sigurdsson	*1009-1064*	*Norse*
Cnut the Great	1018-1035	Dane (Rex Anglorum)
Gruffydd ap Llywelyn	*1055-1064*	*Welsh*
Harald Hardrada	1046-1066	Norwegian
Harold Godwinson	1066	Saxon
William the Conqueror	1060-1087	Norman
Svein Estrithson	1047-1076	Dane