

PLAYING THE FOUR EMPERORS CAMPAIGN

# THE YEAR OF THE FOUR (OR MORE) WARGAMERS

Several years ago, some friends and I embarked on a project to run a large-scale display game to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Ligny. We found that working towards a shared goal encouraged us to get our model soldiers painted much quicker than would normally be the case. It also enabled our regular group of wargamers to 'grow' our armies alongside our opponents' and play many smaller (but equally enjoyable) games along the way.

By James Oram

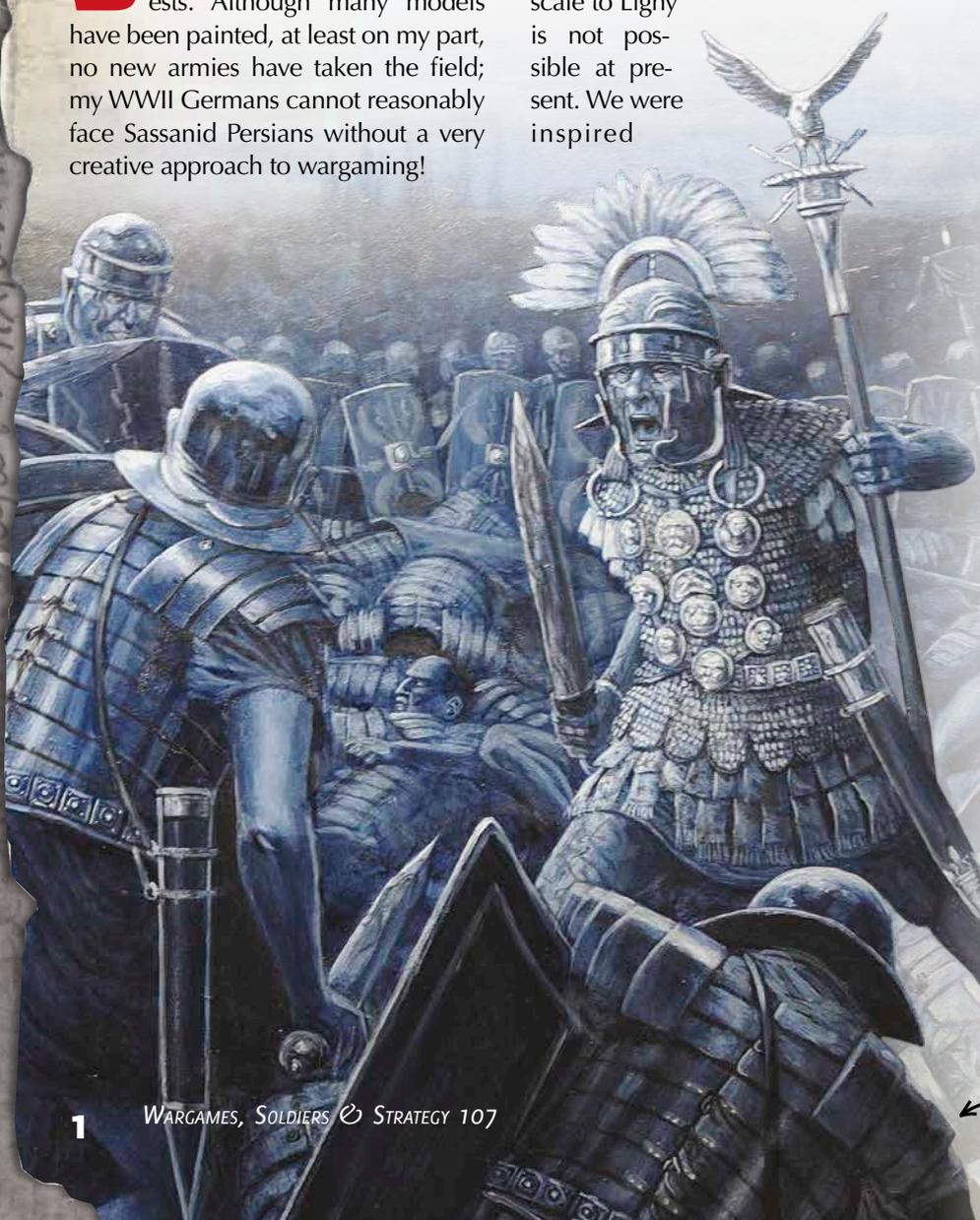
Since 'Project Ligny', our group has dabbled in various wargaming projects appealing to our individual historical interests. Although many models have been painted, at least on my part, no new armies have taken the field; my WWII Germans cannot reasonably face Sassanid Persians without a very creative approach to wargaming!

As a group, we gave some thought to what new project we could organise. However, work and family commitments mean that a project similar in scale to Ligny is not possible at present. We were inspired



by club member Ben's collection of Romans and Macedonians. Ben tends to buy an army and turn up with it assembled and painted a single month or two later. A quick poll of our group's members indicated that the ancients period, particularly that of imperial Rome, held a common interest for most of us. Given that there are plenty of figures available in both plastic and metal, this seemed an ideal choice. One problem: everyone wanted to be the Romans! Thankfully, history provided us with the ideal solution; and thus was born the Year of the Four Emperors – 69 AD, where legion fought legion.

Tacitus' *Histories* will provide us with the inspiration to build a basic framework for our armies. One thing is clear from this work: armies were a mixture of allied and legionary troops, which means we'll be having fun painting some more exotic or unusual units, such as Celts, Germans, and gladiators. As all the players are starting their armies from small beginnings, we will be playing skirmish games using systems in the first instance, with a view to dusting off our old copies of *Warhammer Ancient Battles* and *Hail Caesar* for large-scale actions involv-



← Chaotic and bloody night combat during the Second Battle of Bedriacum, fought between the forces of Vitellius and Vespasian.  
© Sean O'Brien



Bridges are best crossed when undefended.



Gladiators know how to fight, but are they disciplined?



Legionary versus legionary and not a barbarian in sight.

© Simon Miller

ing multiple players. We have agreed to all use 25mm/28mm-scale troops, with infantry individually based on 20mm-square bases and cavalry on 25mm by 50mm, with the occasional multi-based unit. Our intent is to allow our models to be used with various systems, so we are keeping our basing flexible.

I intend to represent Vitellius and am already painting up a warband of tribesmen to assist his bid for power. My friends Ben, Chris, and Guy (Mr. Editor!) will represent the other claimants for the imperial throne, and Malcolm will help out Vespasian by playing as Marcus Antonius Primus.

Finally, our group intends to keep readers apprised of our progress through a blog on the WS&S website. Perhaps you'd like to join in and lend your troops to one of the factions?

## GAMING THE FOUR EMPERORS

Here are some basic campaign rules for the Four Emperors. The campaign is designed to be played for approximately twelve rounds, with players having two to four weeks to complete their turn. Battles can be played out using whatever system the



## LIST OF PROVINCES AND BONUSES

PROVINCE	BONUS	PROVINCE	BONUS
Achaia	Temple*	Italia	Gladiators
Aegyptus	Grain – always have a 10% army point bonus	Iudaea	In revolt – no bonus
Africa Proconsularis	Elephants	Lusitania	No bonus
Alpes Poeninae, Cottiae, Maritimae	Legion light infantry	Lugdunensis	Gallic infantry (barbarian warriors)
Aquitania	Gallic noble cavalry	Macedonia	No bonus
Asia	Cataphract cavalry	Mauretania Caesariensis	Numidian cavalry
Britannia	Barbarian allies	Mauretania Tingitana	No bonus
Belgica	Barbarian warriors	Moesia	<i>Fabrica</i> – heavy armour upgrade
Baetica	Marines	Narbonensis	Marines
Bithynia & Pontus	No bonus	Noricum	Veteran legionaries
Cyrenaica	No bonus	Pannonia	Veteran legionaries
Cilicia & Cyprus	Marines	Raetia	<i>Fabrica</i> – heavy armour upgrade
Corsica & Sardinia	Marines	Roma	Praetorian Guard, temple
Dalmatia	Illyrian cavalry	Sicilia	Marines
Epirus	No bonus	Syria	Camelry
Galatia	Barbarian fanatics	Tarraconensis	Legion light infantry
Germania Inferior	In revolt – no bonus	Thracia	Thracians (Barbarian light infantry with falx)
Germania Superior	Veteran legionaries		

\* A temple allows D3 one use +1 bonuses to any combat in a battle.



players choose – it is the result that matters.

### Becoming emperor

The emperor for the first game round is determined by a simple ballot of the players. The suggested basis for these votes is a painting competition. In the event of a tied ballot, the oldest player (whether or not he bothered to paint a figure) becomes emperor instead.

The emperor gains the province of Rome in addition to his other provinces. He immediately loses the province of Rome should another player become emperor.

If the emperor loses a battle, then his victorious opponent may immediately declare that a challenge is issued to the emperor. A challenge is resolved between the current emperor and the victor of the last game by a dice roll-off, with the current emperor adding 2 to his result.

Should the victor of the last game beat the current emperor's result,

then the emperor is deposed and the victor becomes the new emperor.

Should an emperor be deposed, he is considered slain, losing Rome and another province. The player may then choose either to retire from the game (in which case the provinces controlled by him cease to be controlled by any player) or to name a successor to continue the struggle (we suggest a senior general or son of the deceased).

### The round

Players (with the exception of the emperor) must issue one invitation at the beginning of each round. Should a player fail to do so, then he shall be deemed to have issued an invitation to the emperor.

The emperor may issue a single invitation per round after having received invitations from the other players. Unlike the other players, he is not obliged to issue an invitation but may choose to do so.

Players must play at least one battle per round; failure to do so will result in any and all opponents who issued



an invitation to that player (or received an invitation from that player) being considered to have won a battle.

A player may (but cannot be forced to) play more than one battle per round.





© Andy Singleton



Senior command: a tribune and centurion with the Aquila.

© Andy Singleton



Artillery on the field - nothing will stop those bolts!

The emperor is challenged and his Praetorian Guard (left) takes the field against his enemies.

Should players fight and get a draw, there is a chance (roll 5–6 on a D6) that the province will become devastated. If this happens, it no longer gives a troop bonus nor counts to any player's total for provinces controlled.

## PROVINCES AND MAPS

Control of provinces is key to victory in the game. All players start with one province (ideally a province to which historically they had the greatest connection).

A player will gain a province of their choice at the end of a round by winning a battle, subject to the following restrictions:

- i. The province gained must always be one that is adjacent to one already controlled by the selecting player.
- ii. A province already controlled by another player may only be selected if the selecting player defeated the player controlling that province in the current round, **or** if the player controlling that province did not accept an invitation issued by the selecting player.
- iii. The province of Rome may *not* be selected as the

province gained unless it is the only province controlled by a player. Control of Rome will usually be determined by a successful challenge.

## Sea crossings

Any province bordering the Oceanus Atlanticus can cross to any other. Any province bordering the Mare Internum can cross to any other.

## ARMY SELECTION

Troop selection for each battle is limited to 'basic' types (legionaries, raw legionaries, auxilia, auxiliary cavalry, auxiliary archers, and artillery). Heavy armour cannot be taken by the legion, unless the player owns a province with a *Fabrica*. Additional choices will be gained by control of certain provinces, representing the player being able to recruit troops for which that province is famous. The table on the previous page states the additional units that

may be selected. For the avoidance of doubt, the points for these units must still be paid; control of the relevant province merely gives the option to choose that unit type.

Any player who controls more provinces than his opponent is entitled to field an additional 10% points in addition to the points limit agreed with his opponent for that battle.

## WINNING THE GAME

If, on completion of the agreed number of rounds, the emperor is the player with the most provinces, he wins the campaign. If the emperor is not the player with the most provinces, the player with the most provinces must play the current emperor. The winner of this battle wins the imperial throne and the campaign. **WS&S**

*You can read more about history behind the Year of the Four Emperors in [Ancient Warfare X-6](#).*

