

Contents

Introduction	ii
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Part One – Setting up the Game

Scales and basing	4
Figure sizes	4
Basing options	5
Double depth bases	6-7
Troop types	8-11
Morale	12
Formation	12
Armour	12
Groups	12
Pre-battle activities	13
Deploying the armies	13
Defintions	14

Part Two – Playing the Game

Move Sequence	16
Temp Point Allocation	16
Tempo Bidding	17
Using Tempo Points	17-20
Movement	21
Announcing Charges	21
Move Distances	22
March Moves	22
Changing Facing and Formation	22
March Columns	23
Interpenetration	23
Effects of terrain on movement	24
Shaken levels	24
Ranged Combat	25-29
Close Combat	30-36
Rallying	37
Army Morale	39
Ending the game	40

Part Three – Terrain and Optional Rules

Terrain	42
Terrain effects	43
Terrain and shaken	44
Terrain generation	44
Defensive points	47
Roads and Hill forts	47
Marching Forst	48
Miscellaneous Rules	48

Part Four – Army Generators

Using the generators	50
Late Republican Roman	51
Early Empire Roman	52
German	53
Gallic	54
Parthian	55
British	56
Numidian	57
Sarmatian	58
Dacian	59
Pontic	60
Spanish	61

Part Five – Appendices

Scenario - Charonea, 86BC	64
Scenario - Mons Graupius 83AD	66
Designer's notes	68

Introduction

In keeping with the spirit described above, I have included some references. Hopefully, this will not put off those who just want to play a wargame, as they are confined to the more discursive bits of the rules describing armies and troops, and also to the army lists for specific battles. However, they are there to encourage those who are interested to find where the underlying evidence and assumptions have been derived from, and to supply additional evidence or their own interpretations if they differ from ours. As mentioned, the Polemos email list is set up for discussions of this nature.

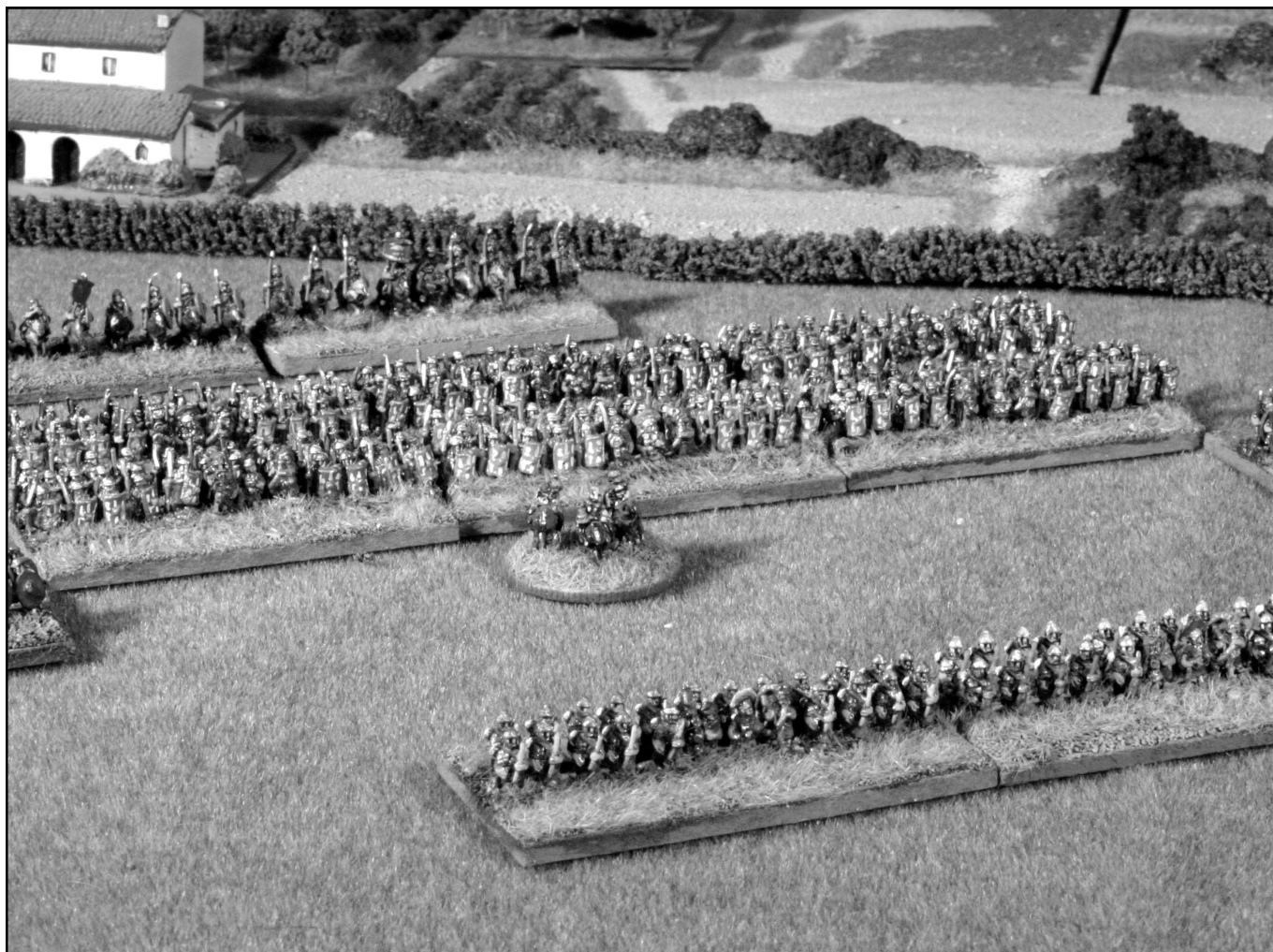
With this in mind, I have tried to use fairly accessible texts. While some of the secondary sources, such as journal articles, may require the use of a university library or inter-library loans facilities, I have given readily available references to texts, usually in the Penguin classics edition.

Where these have not been to hand, I have given a reference to an online version of the text. The version of Appian referenced can be found at Project Perseus:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>

Writing this rule set has been a massive labour, which I have often considered giving up. It has also required ‘unlearning’ much of the received wisdom I thought I knew about the Roman Empire and her enemies. I hope you find the result worthwhile.

I would like to give thanks to those who have helped with the playtesting, proof reading, design and concepts that have gone into these rules. Special thanks go to the Polemos Yahoo group and to Lesley Prince for the wonderful artwork that brightens up the pages.



Part 1

Setting up the Game



Setting up the game

SCALES AND BASING

Figure Scale

- A base of formed or unformed foot will represent approximately 400-500 men - a cohort (or so) for the Romans, a handy sized unit for tribesmen.
- A base of skirmishers will represent 100 or so youths and other enthusiasts dashing around throwing javelins and the like.
- A base of cavalry will represent roughly 250 horses and their riders, formed from 8 turmae (if you are Romans, or Roman influenced).
- A base of light horse represents about 75 men and mounts, or a couple of Roman turmae.
- A base of chariots represents 10-20 vehicles, warriors and drivers.
- A base of artillery represents up to 10 real pieces.
- A general's base represents the great man himself, together with hangers on, relatives, messengers, standard bearers and musicians.

These numbers are approximate and vary, particularly with troop morale and experience (see 4.1). A base of veterans might have less than half the actual number of soldiers as a base of levies, but still be more effective in combat.

Ground Scale

A fighting base width represents 200 paces; a base depth represents 100 paces. These distances may seem on the large side, but cohorts deployed on a frontage of approximately 150 meters, and did not form continuous lines. All units need gaps otherwise they quickly lose control when advancing, and land up in a vulnerable mess. Since Polemos S.P.Q.R. is designed for big battles, the maneuver unit is a cohort or equivalent. Within this base size, you can assume that the centurions respond to the local situation with appropriate orders and formations.

A general's base width is 100 paces square, and represents the area over which his presence is assumed to have some direct effect.

Time scale

There is no specific time scale in these rules. A turn represents a focus of action during the engagement rather than a specific span of time.

We have no truck with fixed duration turns, as these lead to very odd results indeed.

Bases

The basic unit of manoeuvre in Polemos S.P.Q.R. is the **Base**. This is a group of wargames figures mounted permanently on a single base of a given size. The actual number, size and position of the figures on the base is not important.

It is not vital to the rules that the specified base sizes are adhered to. So long as both armies use the same sized bases and the 2:1 ratio of base width to base depth is maintained, the rules will still work.

The suggested principal base size for 6mm to 15mm figures is 60mm x 30mm, and for larger castings 80mm x 40mm. In fact the rules will work with any size bases provided that both sides are organised consistently.

All distances are given in base widths (BW) and base depths (BD).

Messengers denoting the pool of available Tempo Points may be depicted by a single mounted figure on a small round base.

Figure Sizes

Polemos S.P.Q.R. will work with any size of figure provided both sides are based consistently.

The pages of this book are illustrated with examples of 6mm figures which work exceptionally well with the basing concepts. However, many gamers play Polemos rules using anything from 2mm to 30mm figures.

Basing Options

The subject of bases in wargaming is a vexed one. No sooner are your little men safely glued down on their little MDF or card platform with suitable scenic additions, when along comes the new set of rules demanding a radically different approach. It is something which causes much grief and anguish to so many in the hobby.

We are well aware of this problem and have striven to make the Polemos series as 'base-friendly' as we can. Effectively, provided both sides have their figures mounted on bases with similarly sized frontages then all is well with the world. However, we've found that wargamers can make an art form of finding questions and insecurities about the whole subject so this section will show you what options are available to you.

Size of base.

It is fairly safe to generalise that where Ancients rules share something in common it is that where they use an area base mechanic as in Polemos, base frontages have settled down to 40mm, 60mm, 80mm and 120mm. Base depths vary between rules, but this is less important as it can be worked around.

The choice of frontage is dictated by a number of factors including the size of figures used and the preference and therefore recommendation of the authors.

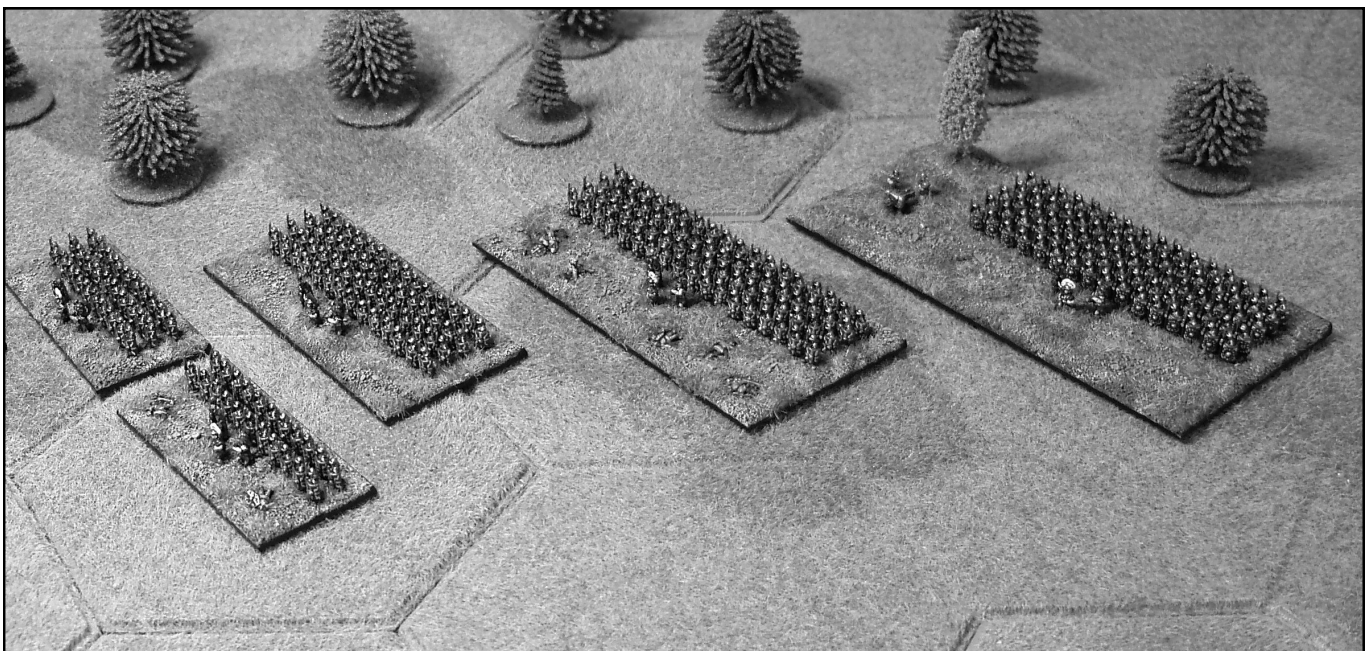
Throughout these rules the examples of painted and based figures are using the 'Polemos Standard' of 60mm x 30mm bases, as these work very well with the 6mm sized figures mounted on them. Many will prefer the smaller 40mm frontage as they fit in with existing armies based for other systems or want to play larger games on smaller tables. Others will want to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the even larger bases and create mini-dioramas. The rules will work with any frontage, provided both sides are based in the same fashion.

Numbers of figures per base.

Some rules systems will state that one figure represents a fixed number of real men, you can then work out that, for example, at ratio of 1:20 a Roman cohort of 480 legionaries can be represented by 24 figures.

Others ignore this link, but do state that you must use a certain number of figures per base. For example, a legionary cohort must contain eight figures as this is important in the game mechanics.

Polemos, on the other hand is much more free and easy. With these rules, it simply does not matter how many figures you place on a base. It is a case of what you think looks best, or how many toy soldiers you want to invest or paint.



A selection of differing basing styles and sizes. Provided both sides used the same size of bases, any of these options would be perfectly usable for Polemos rules.

Basing Options



Double depth basing

For some troop types gamers may wish to adopt a double depth base measuring 1BW x 1 BW. This is done purely for aesthetic or practical reasons and has no effect on game play or mechanics. There are three main troop types that are based in this fashion.

Tribal Infantry

Moving to a double depth base enables you to increase the number of ranks for the unit without making the base look too crowded. Then you can then add some scenic effects and terrain items which makes the end result a mini-diorama in its own right.



Light Horse

Light Horse often fought in dispersed formation or clouds of skirmishing cavalymen. Amongst horse archers a continuously moving circle of riders meant that a steady rate of deadly fire could be maintained against a static target.

Either formation looks cramped on standard sized base but can be reproduced nicely on the double depth version.



Basing Options



Pike

There is nothing more spectacular than a pike unit with levelled weapons bearing down on the enemy. Unfortunately in wargaming terms there is nothing more impractical either.



By moving to double depth base the pikemen can be placed towards the rear edge. This means that the projecting pikestaffs are contained within the area of the base itself. The result is that the fragile pike are protected by the base, which itself can be placed directly in contact with its opponents. It also allows you to add a couple of extra ranks to give the whole unit more visual impact.

Using double depth bases

If you are using such bases in your army, both you and your opponent will have to follow certain conventions to allow their use.

Although the base will physically occupy an area measuring 1BW by 1BW, for game purposes it will be treated as being the standard 1BW by 1BD. The rear half of the base will be ignored.

Where two bases are butted up one behind the other, it must be stated whether the second actually in contact with the rear edge of the front base or if a BD gap is being maintained.

Any combat can only be conducted against the front half of the base.

Setting up the game

TROOP TYPES

Auxilia



Auxiliary soldiers in the Roman army. They split into two groups: archers and auxilia. Auxilia were similarly armed to legionaries but were more able to fight dispersed, in rough terrain.

Archers



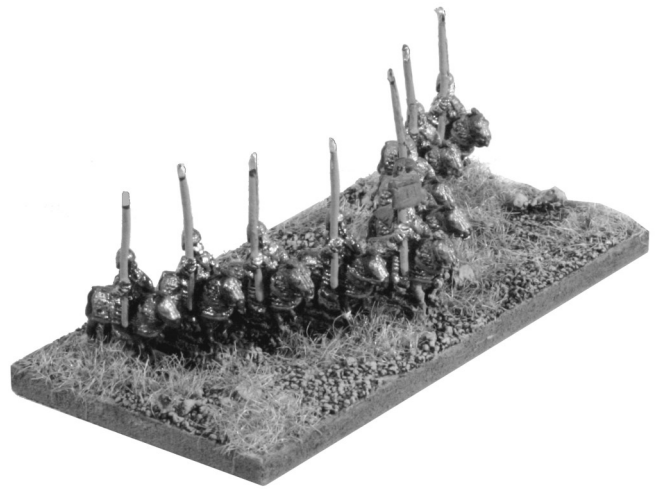
Archers relied on massed firepower for their effects. Roman archers were mainly eastern, and, as you would expect, bow armed.

Artillery



Heavier field weapons, such as the Roman scorpion bolt thrower that could be deployed on the battlefield. They were usually heavily used in sieges,³ but could be mounted on ships.⁴ They were occasionally used in battle, such as the stone thrower Tacitus reports at Cremona⁵. Fired individually, scorpions could fire a bolt around 400 meters, but, despite claims to the contrary, were most often used for suppressive or covering fire as an attack went into a fortified area.⁶

Cataphracts

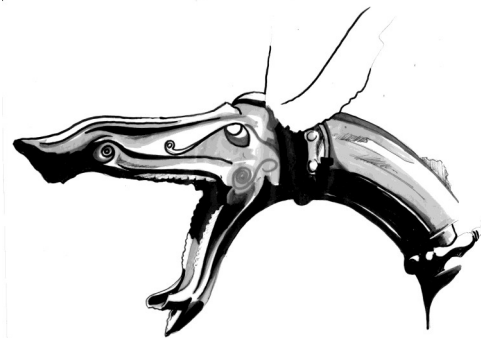


Heavy horse, armed with lance, bow, shield. They are armoured, as their horses may be. In most circumstances they count as cavalry, but resist missiles (except sling stones) a little better.

Cavalry



Cavalry raised, for example, in Gaul and Germany, armed with lance, javelins, shield. Prepared to charge home. Often found as Roman auxiliaries, they frequently landed up fighting others of the same origin.



Setting up the game

Chariots



The Britons still used light, two wheeled, two horse chariots although they were out of favour elsewhere. They were 'battle taxis' designed to deliver elite warriors to the fight and remove them if necessary. The fighters dismounted for combat, although javelins were thrown in motion. Forget the scythes on the wheel hubs, by the way; the Victorians had over active imaginations. Chariots were probably more used, or at least more useful, in 'indirect' or guerilla style warfare, which most tribal armies conducted against the Romans most of the time.⁷

Elephants



The Moors used the North African elephant against Caesar during the civil wars, which caused him a little difficulty, but with training his men dealt with them.⁸ When attacked, they can be as dangerous to their own side as to the opposition, and they are vulnerable to skirmishers and ranged weapons.

All Elephants are automatically classed as raw troops.

Legionaries



The classic Roman heavy infantry, armed with javelins, shield and short sword. Much imitated but never equaled.

Light Horse



Cavalry fighting in a more dispersed way with javelins or bows. Generally only would charge home on severely shaken foes.

Pike

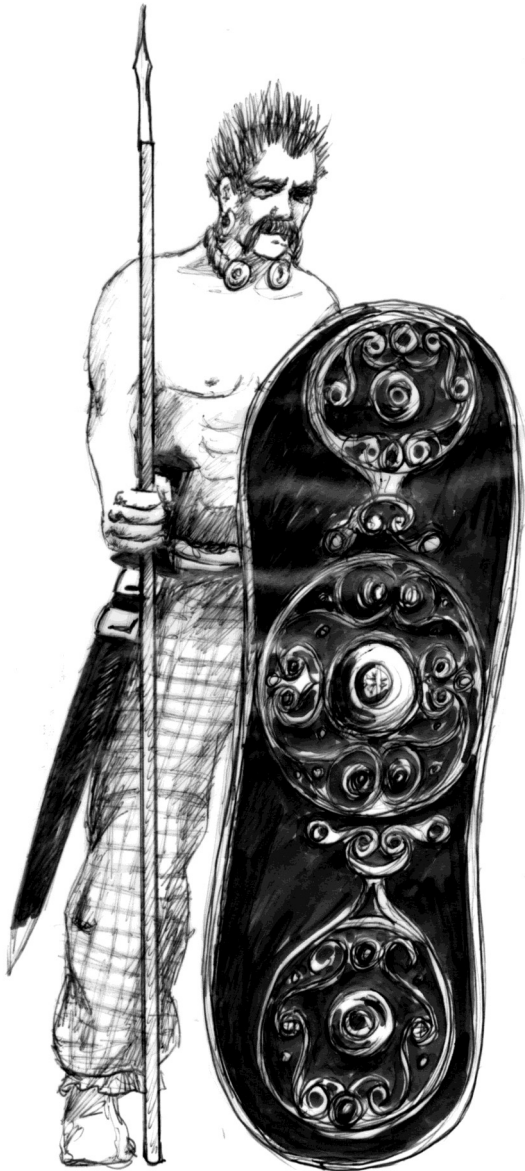


Men, in close order, armed with very long pointy sticks. If well drilled, well supported and commanded by Alexander the Great, they were battle winners. Otherwise, with slow movement and vulnerable flanks, they were in potential trouble.

Army Generators

GALLIC

The Gauls of the centre and south were a highly organised society based around economic and political centres. They could field a large army and call upon numbers of allies. The north-eastern tribes seem to have been less well organised, having perhaps more in common with the Germans. In a similar way to the Germans, raising a Gallic army was slow, although noble retinues seem to have provided a permanent nucleus. Again, the Gauls were forced to either use ambushes of Roman columns or to occupy a chosen battle site well in advance. In exceptional circumstances, such as when led by Vercingetorix in 52 BC, armies could be kept in the field for long campaigns, seeking to wear down the enemy, but this could only be achieved in the reasonably economically developed south and central regions. The Gauls also had some basic experience in siege-craft, unlike the Germans.



The highest quality troops were the cavalry, recruited from the wealthier in society, armed with lance, javelin, shield and sword as well as a helmet and often mail armour. Although of lower morale than the Germans during Caesar's campaigns, the Gauls were often themselves of high morale and fought fiercely, their tactics being a headlong charge, and discipline was poor.

The close order foot were numerous and usually equipped with sword, javelins and shields, with armour rare. The tactics were a mass charge. Skirmishers had the subsidiary role of weakening the enemy with javelins, slings and bows. Again, it is likely that hand-to-hand fighting was prestigious.¹⁴

Composition Table

Name	Designation	Formation	Bases
Warriors	Tribal Foot	Unformed	12
Nobles	Cavalry	Unformed	5
Youths	Skirmishers	Unformed	3

Random Table: Troop Type

1	2	3	4	5
Cavalry	Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot
6	7	8	9	10
Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot	Tribal Foot	Skirmishers

Random Table: Morale

1	2	3	4	5	6
Raw	Raw	Trained	Trained	Trained	Veteran

