

TABLETOP GAMING GUIDE TO THE

Sample file

CELTS



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MYL00406 Tabletop Gaming Guide to the: Celts
1st Edition July 2020

Tabletop Gaming Guide to the: Celts is a sourcebook that includes historical
facts, theories, and speculation regarding the Celtic people.

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hISTORY

The wind swept isles of Albion have long held the popular imagination, and legends are still being invented about the Celtic peoples. In modern times, the Cornish, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and Manx are the heirs to the Celtic line. In ancient times, the Celts were spread across continental Europe and the Isles. They held great kingdoms and were skilled on horseback, at crossing the oceans, and at strength of arms.

There is much difficulty in separating reality from myth regarding the Celtic peoples, especially given their own penchant for interweaving their myths with reality. Theirs was an oral tradition, and much was not written down until far after. This feeds our view of the Isles being a place fogged in myth and legend. They fought against the Romans, terrifying even the most trained of Legions, traded with the ancient Greeks, built castles on the barest of ocean rocks, and more.

Tabletop Gaming Guide to the: Celts is a sourcebook that seeks to convey a handful of polished gems made from the myth and history of the Celts, ensuring you can utilize these people and their legends in your games. Remembered for their ferocity in battle, their bravery that bordered on foolhardiness, and their love of land and place, the Celts are as much a people of story as they are people in history.

ORIGINS

The first origins of the Celts are shrouded in mystery. Proto-Celts originated somewhere in central Europe, largely in what is now southern Germany. They quickly expanded across Europe until reaching their height in 275 BC when their tribes reached from the lands we now know as Great Britain, down into much of Spain, the majority of modern France and Germany, and into modern Turkey and Ukraine.



It is theorized that Keltoi, the origins of the modern Celt, comes from the Indo-European root *kel*, meaning hidden. Some have suggested this was due to their penchant for writing down nothing in order to preserve their store of knowledge and maintain the secrecy of religious and magic lore.



The Celts can be split, due to this widespread reach. There are the Gales (or Gaels, occasionally Gauls) made up of the Irish, Scottish, and Manx (the Manx are a group originating from the Isle of Man in the North Irish Sea, and long had their own empire amongst the sea). The other is the Brythonic Celts made up of the Welsh, Cornish, and Bretons (found in Brittany).

Those that reached into Europe fought against the Romans and were renowned for their utter fearlessness. One of the best-known sources of descriptions for Celtic Warfare comes from Julius Caesar himself in his *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars* (aka *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*). This war included a number of Germanic tribes beyond the Celts, but the Celts in particular terrified the Romans. They would enter battle in various states of nudity, even when fighting in the snow-swept Alps. Caesar himself described one incident where the Celts, camped farther up the mountains than the Romans, began to run down the mountain only to throw their shields on the ground in front of them and ride them down as though they were modern snowboards.

The modern view of the Celts comes from where they settled and lasted the longest: the Islands of Great Britain and Ireland. They settled here and traded with the ancient Greeks, shipping copper from modern Cornwall prior to Alexander the Great.

EARLY CELTS

The early Celts of Britain followed a druidic faith. They had an absolute belief in the Otherworld, where their souls go after death. This helped support their bravery on the battlefield, making them nearly fearless. Later, when converted to Christianity, most Celts would exhibit a similar, almost manic, devotion.

Celtic druidism, or animism, is focused on the land, sea, and sky. This led to an eloquence of speech capable of describing their vast and beautiful lands, again commented on by Julius Caesar in *de Bello Gallico*. Eloquence was, in part, a product of prodigious memories exemplified by nearly all Celts the Romans had dealings with. Emperor Constantine I (305-337) was visited by a Celtic prince who exemplified both comfort in front of crowds, "haranguing the Senate, leaning on his long shield," but also a precise recollection of even the smallest details.

Poetry was used by the Celts as an ongoing and ever-evolving tool for memory, and through the devices of meter, rhyme, repetition, alliteration, and more, they were able to flummox and woo Romans. Their focus on being well spoken and able to engage in rhetoric resulted in many Celts who had dealings with the Romans to be fully fluent in Latin, and it is easy to surmise they were capable of learning other languages when it suited them.

Another reason for the difficulty of the Celts' early history is their unique reckoning of time. Stories would often include specific and spurious claims as to the difference of time between two things. However, all stories focused on the paradigm of Celtic society – the story itself is important, when it happened is much less so. Much of early Celtic history is simply lost as it was upheld through an oral tradition that regularly dropped earlier history when it was of limited use.