

The Siege of ALESIA

by Alan Ray and Steve Carey

Volume XI in the acclaimed *Great Battles of History* (GBoH) Series, the **Siege of Alesia** (Gaul, 52 BC), has already garnished widespread praise for its graphic design presentation and colorful appeal. But how does the game *play*? Very well, I'm pleased to say. Though large in scope, the game is actually quite manageable owing to its lineage to the *Simple GBoH* system and the fact that 2 of its 3 scenarios employ just only one of the two maps.

Being a siege game, one crucial area covered throughout the rules is the *Rampart system*. Despite the very helpful player aid cards, it initially is still rather easy to overlook a Rampart rule here or special exception there. Thus the focus of this article will be to highlight some of the important sections pertaining to Ramparts and to offer a few strategy hints when manning (or assaulting) those particular works (and other associated vallations). We also present here a series of summary charts to assist an aspiring Caesar or Vercingetorix in recalling the exact nature of this crucial battle.

"The Gauls flooded in to the attack...a barrage of slingstones, arrows, and javelins sent at the rampart in an effort to drive the defenders back."

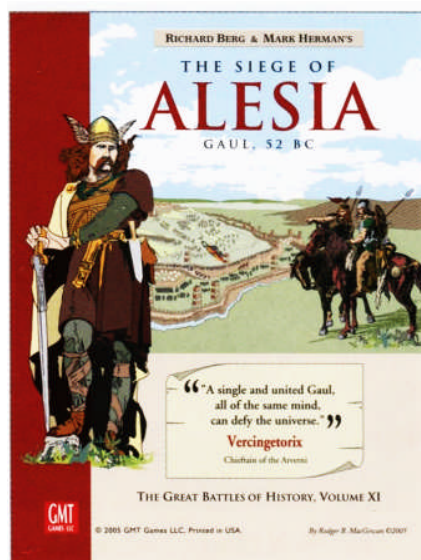
—Adrian Goldsworthy, **In the Name of Rome** Phoenix paperback edition (2003)

Ramparts offer substantial protection against missiles (especially against javelins), and they are very tough to assault. With a -2 (inside) or -3 (outside) intrinsic DRM, together with the -2 DRM for barbarians in combat against veteran Roman cohorts (see *Weapons Matrix*), a defended Rampart hex is a definite challenge (not to mention the nasty effects of the *Gardens of Death* — more on those, later) for any Gallic attackers.

A good tactic for the Gauls is to flood units to a section of a few Rampart hexes and assault (taking the necessary hits from the *Gardens of Death* and resultant Missile/ Shock combat). On their next activation, move barbarians up, on, and over adjacent vacant Rampart hexes.

"There the hard-pressed Labienus had been forced back from the rampart, but had put together a solid fighting line inside the fort from his own troops and any others that he had been able to gather."

— Adrian Goldsworthy, **In the Name of Rome**



Any Gallic penetration through the Ramparts is a serious enough event that warrants an immediate Roman response. The key for the Roman player is to not panic, and to carefully allocate his reserves (*you did remember to maintain some reserves, didn't you?*) with pinpoint accuracy. If not using them to man the interior Ramparts, cadres of auxiliaries can serve as temporary reserves until the cohorts show up. Still, there's nothing like half a legion pouncing on, and crushing, a Gallic breakthrough.

It's important to note that any Roman setup requirements are just that —*for setup only*. Once the game begins, units are free to move as they see fit, unless otherwise restricted.

"Sharpened stakes were set in tight rows in front of the rampart, and in advance of these were rows of smaller stakes concealed in pits... and even further forward rows of iron spikes fitted to pieces of wood and buried so that the sharp point just projected above the ground"

— Adrian Goldsworthy, **In the Name of Rome**

Aptly named the *Gardens of Death*, these barriers form not only a lethal obstacle (automatic Hits) to any Gauls assaulting Roman Ramparts, but they also serve to help break-up the momentum of any Gallic attack due to their increased cost in movement points. Whenever possible, start your BI units with a Fill counter and do your best to methodically dump the debris into the hex.

For the temporary loss of a single movement point (plus the +1 MP to actually place the marker), Fill counters are valuable tools in any Gallic player's arsenal — and note that BI from both the besieged force and the relief force can carry and place Fill counters.

Depending on the type of hex (6.48), successfully placed Fills eliminate Hits and/or speed movement, thus making a Rampart assault a more manageable (*but never easy*) task. But it's important to note, especially to the detriment of Vercingetorix and his besieged force, that a GoD hex bordered by a water-filled ditch has to have *both* obstacles filled to clear the hex. As Chieftain, you may often have to send your barbarians into a GoD hex, take the hits, and then use your Fills to cover a water hexside.

FOOTNOTE — Many hobbyists that I've recently spoken to have expressed a great fondness for Avalon Hill's **Caesar at Alesia** (1976), designed by Robert Bradley (pre-AH **Alesia**, Bradley, 1970). For the record, I too think the earlier design was a terrific item, and while designer Berg's new **Siege of Alesia** covers the same territory (albeit at a different scale) it manages to impart a *grander sense* ("feel") for the battle. The **Siege of Alesia** is a tense, challenging game for both sides and it deserves repeated play by both Regular and Simple GBoH'ers alike. Overall, **Siege of Alesia** is quite an impressive effort, and it's just plain fun to play — the fate of the Roman invasion of Gaul is in your hands. — S.C.

The Siege of Alesia – Gaul, 52 BC

Great Battles of History, Volume XI
Published: 2005
Game Design: Richard Berg & Mark Herman
Game Developer: Alan Ray
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan
Maps: Simonitch **Counters:** MacGowan & Lemick

Contents: Two & 1/2 Countersheets; Two 22x34 inch Maps; Rulebook; One die; Player Aids; Two Charts & Tables; Bookcase Box
Time Scale: no specific time scale
Map Scale: 100 yards per hex
Unit Scale: 500+ men = each strength point
Players: 1-2

THE SIEGE OF ALESIA Rampart Effects Summary Charts GBoH Vol. XI

Map Clarifications

- The dry/water filled ditches in GoD hexes that are adjacent to a Rampart hex are part of the GoD hex and have no additional effect on play.
 - The Rampart should cross the minor river between hexes W4814/W4914 & W4817/4916. There is no additional cost to move across the minor river when along the Rampart.
- Both of the above clarifications are important to note, especially for new players.

Terrain Effects

- Rampart hexes are considered to be one hex higher than the elevation of the terrain they are actually in. LOS is blocked by a Rampart hex
- Any unit in a Rampart hex is considered *on the wall*.
- "NE" on the first row for Ramparts refers to attacks from a connected Rampart (no effect).
- Remove note [I] from the *Up 1 Level* column; the effects are already considered in to the -2 or -3 DRM for assaulting a Rampart hex.

Movement Costs

Rampart hex may be entered from:

- An adjacent Rampart hex for 1 MP
- Any hex *inside the Vallations* adjacent to a Rampart for 2 MP
- From *inside any Redoubt*, onto any adjacent Rampart hex for 2 MP
- Any hex *inside Camp Walls* adjacent to a Rampart hex for 2 MP
- Any hex *outside the Vallations* adjacent to a Rampart for 4 MP
- Romans (only) may *Rapid March* to double their MA if criteria met (6.5)

Cavalry cannot enter a Rampart hex unless crossed by Gate and then only if it has enough MP to exit the hex through the Gate on the opposite side.

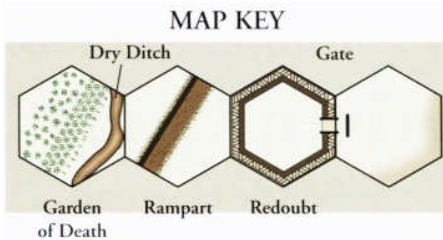
Once placed, *Scorpiones* in Rampart hexes (actually in the towers therein) cannot Move, and are eliminated if forced to retreat.



Missile Fire

(Artillery/Archers in a Rampart hex may fire regardless of position in the stack)

- Rampart related Missile Fire DRMs:
 - +1 target is in a Rampart hex and Archery Fire is from a non-Rampart Hex (from below)
 - +1 target is a Cohort and an Archer is firing at a range of one hex (adjacent) through the frontal hexsides of the infantry. *This does not apply to javelins, nor to fire into Ramparts from below* (i.e., not cumulative with the modifier above).
 - +4 target is in a Rampart hex and Javelin Fire is from a non-Rampart Hex (from below).
- Roman units in Rampart hexes may use Javelin fire only as Entry Reaction Fire
- *Hit and Run* tactics are not allowed if the firer or target begins the phase in a Rampart hex. Hit and Run tactics cannot be conducted through a Rampart hex.



- *Palintonos* (only) may not fire through (over) Rampart hexes. If they do so, however, add one (+1) to the resolution die roll.



In the heat of battle, it's unlikely that the Romans will spend too many activations trying

to set Fill counters on Fire (the odds of using archer Flame missiles to ignite the Fill is only 30%, and can't even be attempted if a Gallic unit still occupies the hex).



Flame Fire

- Gallic Archers may use Flame Missile Fire when activated (only) against Rampart hexes (only). *NOTE:* the +1 DRM does apply
- During a Gallic activation, the Gallic player rolls the die for each On Fire Rampart or Redoubt hex within 5 hexes of the Chieftain whose command has been activated. If the die roll is a '9' that hex has Burnt Down and the Rampart no longer exists as such and becomes Rubble. Place a Rubble marker in that hex. Any unit in that hex at the time it becomes Rubble is eliminated. All Rubble hexes are repaired at the end of each Assault Period.

- Roman Archers may use Flame Missile Fire against non-water filled GoD hexes that are not Gallic occupied. A *Hit* removes all Fill in the hex.

If the Gauls can set a Rampart on Fire, then there is a chance (8.45) the structure will be

reduced to rubble if within 5 hexes of an activated Chieftain. Also recall the rule (6.49) that all Fill counters are reduced one level at the conclusion of each assault period.



Stading

- One infantry combat unit — that's CO, BI or LI — of any type may occupy a Rampart Hex *at any* time. In addition, one artillery unit or one Archer unit may co-exist with that infantry unit. An Artillery/Archer unit may not be Shock attacked, or be affected by Shock attack, if there is a supporting infantry unit therein. Otherwise, if alone it may be so attacked.
- No unit may move through an infantry (CO, BI, or LI) unit in a Rampart hex. Artillery and Archers in Rampart hexes may be moved into/through at no additional cost.
- An infantry unit — CO, BI or LI — in a Rampart Hex may not *voluntarily* move adjacent to a *friendly* infantry unit that is in another Rampart Hex. If it is forced to do so (Retreat, for example, with no other place to so move, or Advance after

Combat), both the moving and the stationary unit are immediately *Disordered*. Enemy units are not so restricted and may voluntarily move adjacent to an opposing unit, nor are they *Disordered* if forced to move adjacent to enemy unit (i.e. Advance after Combat).

Disorder

- Disorder is a result that occurs when the Rampart adjacency restrictions (6.68) are violated.
- Disordered units have MA reduced -1 and suffer a negative DRM in Shock.
- Costs 2 MP to remove Disorder, but can't perform if the unit is in a Rampart hex and adjacent to another friendly unit also in a Rampart hex.

Facing and Zone of Control (ZoC)

- Units moving into/through Rampart hexes do not pay any cost to change Facing if they are moving directly from one Rampart hex into an adjacent one (using the Rampart Walkway as if it were a road).
- ZoCs do not extend into a hex into which movement is prohibited, such as a water-filled ditch that has not been filled. In addition, *they do not extend upwards across Rampart or Wall hexsides*. They do extend down. (*Remember that Ramparts are considered to be one hex higher than the elevation of the terrain they are actually in.*)
- ZoC's likewise do not extend across Camp or Stone Wall hexsides.

Shock Combat

- Units in Rampart hexes with enemy units in their ZoC in non-Rampart hexes outside the Ramparts must attack whether they have moved or not.
 - *Pre-Shock Check:* Units defending in a Rampart Hex being attacked from "below" (not from another Rampart Hex) do not have to make this TQ check.
 - *Moving Attack:* does not apply if the defender is in a Rampart hex and is being attacked from below; would apply to a Rampart-to-Rampart shock.
 - *Position Superiority:* An Attacker doing so against a unit in a Rampart Hex from outside the hex does not gain Position Superiority through a Flank hexside, only a Rear hexside.
- Units on Rampart hexes may Retreat into any available hex they wish, regardless of facing.
- Units in a Rampart hex being attacked from outside (from down below) may choose not to Retreat and instead take 1 addition Hit.
- Mandatory advance-after-combat does not apply to units in Rampart hexes attacking units in non-Rampart hexes.
- Continued Shock does not apply to units in Rampart hexes attacking units not in rampart hexes.
- The -1 DRM for attacking up a level does not apply (it's already built in to the -2 or -3 Rampart modifier).
- Cavalry may not be used to Shock across/into a Rampart.

