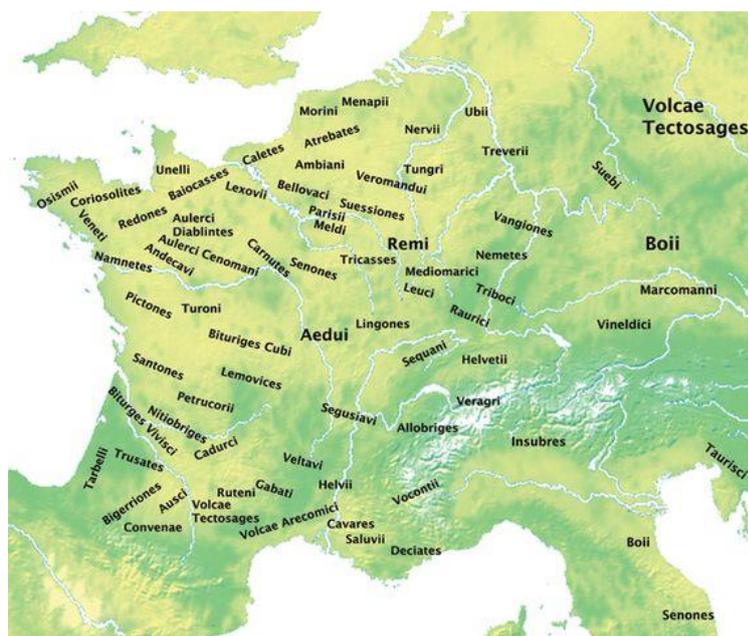


**French Wargame Holidays  
Research Document to accompany  
Hercé Guided Tours  
Romans in Gaul Wargame by Matt Williamson**

## The Romans in Western Gaul

### History

Ancient lands of Gaul in Western Europe, date to the 5th to 1stc BC, a vast region 494,000sq k. Gaul was inhabited by independent culturally Celtic tribal groups living in the countryside, villages, and large defensive walled towns functioning as regional capitals. From the 2nd - 1st BC, the constantly expanding empire of Rome set its eyes on Gaul, with its vast fertile agricultural lands. Roman domination was consolidated by Julius Caesar from 58 BC to 51BC. The Gauls resented and resisted the taxes and cultural imposition of Roman culture and Latin language. At best Gauls and Roman settlers and military, lived an uneasy existence side by side. Throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC there were constant and at times violent rebellions led by the Gallic tribal leaders. By 21AD the rebellions were quelled, with many of the Gallic tribes moved to new lands breaking the deep cultural bonds between tribe and location. The elimination of Celtic regional capitals resulted in an estimated 1,000,000 Gauls killed, enslaved, or resettled into new Roman cities for administration.

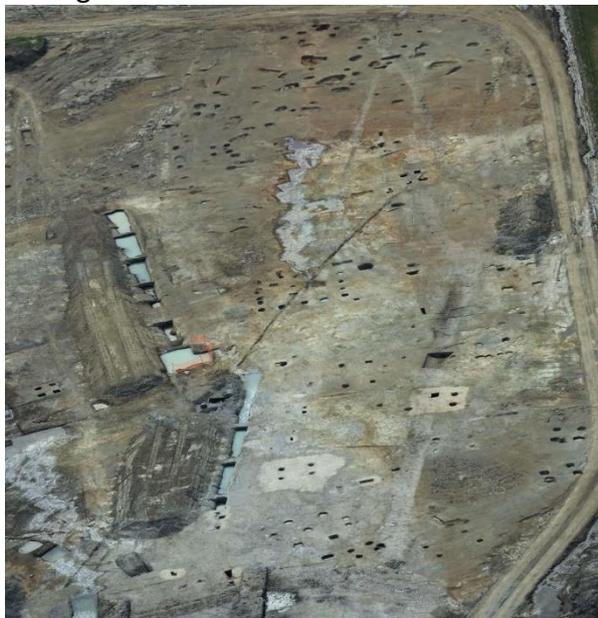


Map of Celtic tribes of Gaul c. 60 BC  
[http://www.celtnet.org.uk/images/gaul\\_large.gif](http://www.celtnet.org.uk/images/gaul_large.gif)

An important part of the western part of Modern France, was represented by the **Aulerici** (Aulerques), a Gallic federation of tribes, including the Tribes of the *Cenomani*, *Diablintes* and *Éburovices*. The Auleric territory was bordered by the Seine river in Normandy in the north, south to the Loire River, west to Mont Saint Michel coast in Brittany, and east to the Huisne river.

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Mayenne Department in France was home to the Aulerici *Diablintes* tribal capital Moulay. Located 6 km outside the modern town of Mayenne, and with a small town of the same name Moulay, still existing today. Modern Moulay is sited within exact area the ancient Gallic capital. The *Diablintes* capital survived until the Gallic rebellions of 21AD and was then moved to populate the new Roman town of Jublains. The 1stC BCE writings of Caesar & Pliny refers to the *Diablintes*. The etymology of their name translates to "the tireless" or "the Very Strong".



**Moulay 2011 Ariel view of the extensive archaeological excavation, clearly showing the site boundaries.**

Photo <https://www.inrap.fr/l-oppidum-gaulois-de-moulay-4130#>

### **Mayenne Roman archaeological and historic sites**

The earliest date for archaeological evidence of the Gauls in the department of Mayenne is from the extensive excavations undertaken in the modern town of Moulay. The excavation identified a 3rd to 2nd century BC Celtic sanctuary in the centre of the later oppidum. Initial excavations between 1972-75, identified a 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century, 12 hectare oppidum (*See end notes for Description of Oppidum sites*) site was identified by archaeologists, a classically defended Iron Age domestic occupation site, sited on a high vast rocky promontory on the junction of the river Mayenne and the Aron giving it a natural three sided defensive site.



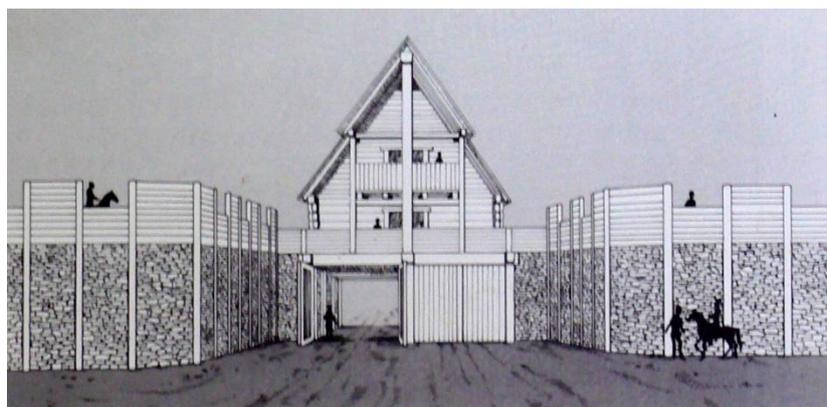
### **Excavated 2011 Moulay France**

**High status ceramic vessel demonstrating the sophisticated skill of Gallic artisans. Displayed in the Jublains Archaeological museum, along with a comprehensive description of Gallic Tribes Iron Age life in the Mayenne.**

A second extensive archaeological excavation in 2011, identified a vastly larger oppidum with a new, second concentric enclosure of 135 ha. Considered the largest oppidum in the *Diablintes* territory; and one of the ten largest in France. The site use was identified as urban, with specialized and aligned artisan districts, qualifying it as a city and capital of the *Diablintes*. Agathe Legros, director of the archaeological museum of Jublains stated "*the cities of the Gaul's appear at a time when they are generating more and*

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*more wealth*". The site demonstrates the Gaul's evolution from a purely agricultural economy to a more complex society, engaging in trade and manufacturing. They mined gold, worked a wide range of metals, manufactured and traded fabrics and beverages. This made the region attractive to the Romans for resources and taxation. As the Romans control of the region was strengthened, the sites use declined and was abandoned over time. This coincides with the establishment & rise of Jublains as a new capital. The occupation levels at Jublains suggest the Diablintes population was significantly reduced, in line with the recorded mass killing of Gauls in battle, and capture Gauls to be sold into slavery.



**Moulay oppidum Pincer gate- Artists impress based on 2011 excavations.**

### The coming of the Caesar

#### TIMELINE

**58 BCE** Caesar campaigns against the Suebi

**57 BCE** Caesar campaigns against the Belgae

**57 BCE** instructs Publius Licinius Crassus and 7th legion to Amorica (*Brittany*), taking Gallic hostages from the American and Aulerici tribes, then building a fleet on the Loire at Angers, to control the central Loire river and sea trade.

**56 BCE** The Veneti tribe & Aulerici federation rebel, fighting skirmishers along the Loire and a sea battle in the bay of Quiberon on the Southern *Brittany* coast.

**56 BCE** Caesar instructs Quintus Titurius Sabinus with three legions north, finally defeating a federation of the Venelli, Curiosolitae, Lexovii and the Aulerici Diablintes tribes. The Legions defeat the Gauls and subdue the tribes.

**52 BCE** Vercingetorix rebellion, the Aulerici federation sends 5000 men to relieve the siege, they are defeated by the Romans.

**52 BCE** Julius Caesar's Lieutenant Titus Labienus clashed with the federation of Gallic Tribes lead by the Aulerici chieftain Camulogene at the battle of Lutetia. The tribes at the battle include Aulerici federation of the Diablintes, Ceonomi, Eburovici and the neighbouring Parisii tribe federation.

Caesar institutes martial law, yet never consolidates his conquest. The subjugated Gauls were embittered and revolt.

**46 BCE** as new spread of Vercingetorix's execution uprisings in outrage spread across Gaul, uprising in Armorica (*Brittany*).

**44 BCE** on news of the murder of Caesar, uprising take advantage of the weakness in political situation in Rome.

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**29 BCE** the northern Gauls Morini and Germanic tribes who crossed the Rhine jointly revolt against Rome. Their suppression formed part of Triumph in Rome by Augustus.

**21 BCE** The Armorican tribes Coriosolites, Riedones and Aulerci Diablintes rebel, this leads to the resettlement of the western tribes into new Roman centres.

Roman colonists and military veterans settle throughout Gaul, in Mayenne the Romans town of Noviodunum (Jublains), replaces the oppidum. Roman towns roads, fortifications, fortresses, temples, marketplaces are built. Outwardly, Roman, and Celtic cultures existed side by side, yet lower-class inhabitants still spoke Gallic and the peace was superficial. In London, a writing tablet was uncovered with a note about a slave girl from Jublains. It read: *'Vegetus, assistant slave of Montanus the slave of the August Emperor, has bought the girl Fortunata, by nationality a Diablintian, for 600 denarii.'*

**27 BCE** Augustus began taxing the province and reorganizing the Gallic borders. 50 years of regular riots and revolts followed in reaction to cruelty and dishonesty of Roman tax-collectors.



**Jublains, France. Aerial view of the Roman Fortified complex and adjacent Archaeology Museum**

### Mayenne's Roman town Jublains: 1-4 century AD

Ptolemy writes about the Diablintes and their new Roman capital," in the midst of the land relative to Venetians, to the south, are the Aulerci Diablintes their city is Noviodunum". Jublains territorial control extended north over two thirds of modern Mayenne department, Pays de Loire into Orne department southern Normandy. Today visitors to Jublains visit archaeological excavations of the bathhouse, amphitheatre, temple, and impressive Fortress. Regional control of Jublains included the large river port town of Entrammes with impressive Bath House excavation open to visitors. The planned town of Noviodunum never reached its desired population. Poor choice of town location, lack of reliable water course, poor soil yields all impacted on the growth of the town. Jublains relied on its location at the junction of trade routes for success.

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2020 Mayenne, France

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Over time new regional roads for trade evolve, new routes to Rennes, Brittany and to Le Mans bypass Jublians via Entrammes to save time. Jublians focus as a junction for regional trade declined, the population and trade and industry declines and eventually in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century the city is abandoned. The Jublains Archaeological museum is in the heart of the town of the contemporary village of Jublains. The museum is of high standard and provides a clear overview of the evolution of Gallic and then Roman life. We highly recommended to visit.

### NOTES

#### Oppidum

An **oppidum** (*from the Latin "city", generally fortified agglomeration*); is the name given by Roman historians to a type of protohistoric fortified habitat that the found in western and central Europe .From 4 to 100 hectares in size, a fortified habitat of the Iron Age located in Western and Central Europe

It almost always benefits from natural defences linked to its location in places of difficult access: either in an overhanging position, such as barred spurs, hills, or plateaus. Or in a location associated with water boundaries such as islands, peninsulas, capes, meanders of rivers, or marshes. It is a permanently inhabited place which fulfils economic, political, and sometimes religious functions.

The Gallic oppida golden age was during the 2<sup>ND</sup> TO THE 1<sup>ST</sup> centuries BC- AD. After the Roman conquest, a good part of the *oppida* were often abandoned often by force, in favour of the lowland locations adopting the new Roman urban model. While others continued their development to give birth to several large current cities such as Bourges (*Avaricum*) or [Besançon](#) (*Vesontio*). During the High Middle Ages, some are also reoccupied like the oppidum of Saint-Blaise and can serve as a place of temporary refuge in the event of conflict as was the case of Chastel-Marlhac (*Meroliacense*).

#### Artists impression of a typical Gallic Oppidum

