

Appendix 1

Interview with 'Homer' (MH) by the author (PC)

PC Could you explain your academic background?

MH Academic background, so I have a Bachelors degree in Archaeology and Anthropology and a MSc in Archaeological Computing and a PHD in Archaeology and also I am now a teacher.

PC A teacher of?

MH History.

PC Nice, so when did your historical interests start? Roughly at what age?

MH History was always one of my favourite subjects at school. I used to love the 'Horrible Histories' books and stuff like that. I really got into Ancient History and Classics which my school did from, I think Year 9 onwards. I did it for GCSE and A Level. In Year 11 we went on a school trip to Greece. I decided to move school so I could do A Level Archaeology at a local Sixth Form College and then I obviously applied to do it at Uni for my Bachelors.

PC Fantastic. So you said it started quite young and in particular Ancient History and Classics, when did you start playing the Total War franchise?

MH So I definitely had Shogun Total War so that would have been fourteen, fifteen

PC So fourteen, fifteen in 2001.

MH When that came out and then I had the Rome Total War after that and Medieval, I think. Then I think by the time, I didn't play video games at all when I was in Uni from like eighteen to maybe twenty-five I didn't at all and then more recently got back into them.

PC Which games specifically?

MH So right now I tend to play strategy games, management games, and role play games.

PC Nice. So, you said you played Rome Total War and you still sort of play Rome Total War.

MH Yes.

PC Did you feel like those games motivated you to want to study these very niche historical periods, for example Ancient History and Medieval History?

MH Yes, I think it gives you a starting point of like exposure. So the primary thing they give you is exposure to different historical periods, different historical cultures, historical figures and then that kind of sparks your curiosity and you want to know more about it. So like what on earth is Pathia? Like what is that? Let's learn more about that. I think particularly what the Civ series are really good at now is that there is a whole range of different cultural reference points and then they have their encyclopaedia entries linked to those, so that as you play it you can open up a window with more historical information about the thing you currently doing.

PC Nice. So of some of the features of the first Total War game which really stuck out for you, like the battle simulations or the grand strategy of the campaign, the new settlement feature on the campaign map for example you can see the reconstructions. What game mechanics in particular inspired that motivation?

MH I think it's the interaction between the grand campaign strategy where you are looking at developing your culture and economy and then how that then translates into the kind of smaller scale strategy of the real time battle, so that you need to understand how to kind of support your army on a kind of grander scale. Even an army that's relatively weak in terms of the strength of its units it has martial superiority because it has a better economic base so it does better overall. So I think it allows you to think about systemic processes in history and how different systems interact to create historical change at the time.

PC Very nice. So do you feel that there is a large degree of historicity in these games, historical accuracy that truly reflects the history or has it been adapted for creative license?

MH I think because I had quite a long standing relationship with it that when I started as a teenager I guess I probably presumed a lot of historical accuracy and then as you gain more critical understanding of the past you realise that they are exploiting tropes of historiography that aren't necessarily true so such

things like in Rome Total War the depiction of the Britain's as head hunters head hurlers using scare tactics like brute force that aren't necessarily a representation of reality. I guess a lot of Rome Total War is Rome centric and how the Roman army is depicted I imagine, I don't know a lot about the Roman army, more accurately than the non-Roman armies because I imagine the developers must have gone to Roman sources as their basis for it. From my own academic perspective, I am not a military historian or archaeologist.

PC Although not all of it has to be military.

MH That's what I mean I would be more interested in most of my research is about urbanism so I know a lot about Roman urbanism and the cities in the Total War series are ridiculously inaccurate. They are like 100 m sq so incredibly small they are little rectangular plans nothing like the real living breathing cities which I always thought was a limitation.

PC That's what I thought with the first one, I would assume this is Rome this is exactly where the Coliseum is, this is exactly where the Circus Maximus is placed and that can be a problem.

MH I think because I more interested in settlement and space and things like that it was very disappointing that idiosyncrasies of particular cities were left out so obviously if you are able to defend the real Constantinople it would be much easier than a procedurally generated square on a map. It's not taking into account the landscape, it's not taking into account the urban environment, that's always been a bit of a missed opportunity for the games.

PC Would it benefit the players, these young students to have a specialist play the game with them to guide them in the inaccuracies or does the inaccuracy lead to that motivation to want to find out it was correct or incorrect?

MH I certainly found it quite motivating. It did always make me go, especially the more bizarre things, like setting fire to pigs.

PC Yes, which is completely inaccurate.

MH Throwing heads that kind of thing. It did make me want to understand did that really exist, is that really how it was used, I think in a lot of cases probably not.

I think it's interesting to compare with something like Crusader Kings you know the Crusader Kings series which seems to have had extensive historical research so that everything is fairly systematised, it's simplified but there is a huge effort gone into who is the Baron of Lower Saxony in 1263 and it has to be the real guy. In some ways that accuracy is surface level. I think we need to think about different types of accuracy in games. I think what Crusader Kings tries to do is the minutia that they want to get right so names, dates, places but I think more important is the spirit of what is in the game. The way the systems of the game are represented do they represent how societies really functioned.

PC So like economics, politics, religion they are better put in the Crusader series you would say?

MH Kind of Maybe, I think they are very hard to compare they are different periods as well.

PC Have you played the more recent Total War game moving away from Rome there is Attila.

MH I have played Attila.

PC Do you feel like there is an evolution in the game that took into account the economy, politics, religion.

MH I like what they did with Attila because well one I am more of a late antiquity fan so it's more my historical interest but I also like that they tried to represent the migration period in a way that actually included migration.

PC The hords for example.

MH The way you can become a movable hoard and you can change your religion quite easily I think that's right you can change your religion in it. So again that seems to be accurate to the kinds of processes that were happening at the time even if certain things may be inaccurate about what type of spear they are using or the kinds of troops they had or whatever it is. But I mean especially with that period that the groups like Ostrogoths and Vandals they are the origins of those groups are highly contested anyway so how you represent

them is quite difficult. And there is an element to which they are kind of a constructed identities anyway so I think there is more room for manoeuvre in terms of who might have been in a Vandal army. I thought that was a nice take on things.

PC Yes.

MH That's the only one I have played more recently. I have another one, I have the Troy one.

PC That's the one I was going to move on to.

MH I have not played it yet though sorry.

PC Do you feel like going into Classics, playing these sort of games will lead to more motivation especially in those disengaged boys?

MH Yes, absolutely I think....

PC Why so?

MH I think personally I feel sometimes we underestimate what the lack of cultural capital that some of the students have in terms of, as a history teacher, we sometimes assume that they have a basic visualisation of what the past looked like and actually making that more immediate and visceral to them through something they associate with fun as well like they associate with games. So I think being able to visualise the past in an interesting and engaging way will create that interest. But I also think that the act of playing a game is a huge learning experience as well so I am a big fan of gamifying things.

PC Gamification!

MH For example I teach Politics as well, Political Literacy that is probably influenced by my love of strategy games and simulations.

PC The undercurrent realism that is inherent in Politics.

MH Conversation concerning role play in Politics. Not digital obviously again understanding systems through taking a role within that system and trying to negotiate successes and failures. So I think that immediate feedback of

having given them control, trying to allow them to make informed choices and them really feeling the impact of those informed choices is a learning experience.

PC It's trial and error, it's definitely strategy games, unless you are playing Legendary where you are not allowed to go back you have to just keep moving on. So one final question. How far can you envision digital games being a core component in the future of Key S3 curriculums?

MH Well I think the problem is accessibility of the software right so we are talking about proprietary software.

PC Licenses software, digital management, licenses. If you took that out of the equation and it's just purely for the education what's your answer?

MH I think you would have....

PC I think core is strong, perhaps complimentary component.

MH I think the problem you would have, even if you get access to the software for students the different members of staff would have different levels of comfort with this kind of thing. The skill and the capacity for the staff to deliver it would vary massively... I think the benefits are huge, if you get to engage with it, I think it would be of benefit.

End of Interview

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Appendix 2

Interview with Caesar (S1)

PC What did you think of the game?

S1 I really like it.

PC You really like it. That's good.

S1 Because you can simulate the battles and life in the ancient times.

PC Have you decided to buy the game?

S1 May be.

PC Which version?

S1 This one and may be the other one if I like it.

PC Because this one that we are doing today is the first one that was made in 2004. It has been remastered for updated graphics. I was really excited so I brought it in so that you guys can see settlements. It's really great you are thinking of buying the game. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you think the game represents history?

S1 Nine.

PC Nine, OK, why nine?

S1 Because like in the campaign you can do what you want and it may not be what really happened. Like it's mostly what units they had.

PC OK. So knowing that it is not completely accurate does that inspire you to go off on your own and buy the game and learn more about history?

S1 Yes, probably.

PC Have you done any of it so far?

S1 Not much.

PC Do you feel that the curriculum at the school covers this sort of history?

S1 Not very much because it deals with all other stuff, not like the battles.

PC So do you feel that this is a good middle ground then? Do you feel motivated to learn about the ancient world?

S1 Yes, a bit more.

PC On a scale of 1 to 10, how much more?

S1 Nine.

PC Nine is pretty high. Does it motivate you to want to study more at school?

S1 No, not very much.

PC You feel it is more about the ancient world. One final question. What's your favourite period of history?

S1 Roman times.

PC When did it become your favourite?

S1 My whole life.

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Appendix 3

Interview with Aristotle (S4)

PC Do you feel like this represents history very well?

S4 I think it's accurate like as to when it comes to history of different wars.

PC On a scale of 1 to 10 how effective does the game represent history?

S4 I would give it a nine out of ten because it might not be accurate in some senses.

PC So does it sort of motivate you to want to go off on your own and find out if it could be may be a 10 or could even be less than 10?

S4 Yeah

PC Have you managed to do that?

S4 No, not yet.

PC So if you did go and try to look up history, what historical source would you use? Wikipedia or would you use a history book?

S4 I would use sources from different types of history books because with Wikipedia you have different writers.

PC How well do you feel like the school covers this sort of history in their curriculum?

S4 I think it covers it well and it gives a lot of sources as well as different bits of history.

PC Do you think that playing with different factions, not just playing with Rome all the time would increase your knowledge of history.

S4 Yes

PC That's good. Do you feel motivated to learn about the ancient world?

S4 I like how basically you can see how different wars were done and how the generals run their military.

PC Does this game motivate you to want to study other stuff?

S4 It makes me like more of history side and ancient civilisations. And it's easier for me to understand that.

PC So this has helped you understand ancient civilisations?

S4 Yeah.

PC Thank you.

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Appendix 4

Interview with Pericles (S3)

PC How many lessons have you done so far?

S3 This is my third one.

PC Did you enjoy the game?

S3 Yes, it's good.

PC What did you enjoy about it?

S3 I liked the battles – they were realistic.

PC Nice. I think they are realistic too. Do you feel then that the game is historically accurate?

S3 It looks accurate.

PC So on a scale of 1 to 10 how accurate do you think it is?

S3 I think it could be eight or nine.

PC So you know in your head it is not 10. So why do you think it's not a ten for you?

S3 It is because there are loads of green spaces and some black.

PC It's tough to actually say, for example, this is what it would actually look like. But knowing that, do you feel motivated to go home and research it more?

S3 Yeah – it does.

PC So have you done any independent research so far?

S3 Not yet. But I might start doing that.

PC Any time. It might be now or may be in a few years' time.

S3 Is the game free?

PC This version is a little expensive. There is the other version which is about £20. It's an investment though – but we can talk about that after the interview. So do you feel you might go off now and do some independent research?

S3 Yeah.

PC Do you now feel more motivated or less motivated or the same to study about the ancient world?

S3 I feel about the same.

PC You already had the motivation – that's good. Do you feel more motivated in school in general when we play it?

S3 Yes.

PC How so?

S3 Because it's really fun to do in school.

PC So does it make you motivated to do well in other classes?

S3 Yeah. It makes me like Wednesdays.

PC That's good. Is there anything about the game that you can tell me is worth playing in the future with other students? What would you like to see more of? What do you think you have done well so far?

S3 I think I like the bits with the battles and the wars and strategies.

PC Nice. Do you think we should concentrate more on strategy?

S3 I think more on strategy and preparation for battles and stuff.

PC Interesting. Any other final comments?

S3 I think it's good.

PC I think that's great. Thank you.

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Appendix 5

Interview with Xenophon (S2)

PC How have you enjoyed the game so far?

S2 It has been fun.

PC Which part of the game did you enjoy?

S2 The fact that you can choose which ones to use from the ones you have.

PC The fact that you have a choice, is really engaging. The fact that you can pick and choose and move people around. Also there are different cultures in the game. It's not just Romans. Different states are introduced. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you think the game represents history?

S2 Nine.

PC Why not ten?

S2 Because it is old.

PC What sort of stuff speaks out for you then that may not be historically correct?

S2

PC Don't worry if nothing comes to mind. You say nine, so knowing that the game is not historically correct, does it make you want to go and research it yourself on your own?

S2 Yeah.

PC Have you managed to do that while we have been playing?

S2 No, not that much.

PC That's fine – because you are busy with your homework and school, which is good. Do you feel like maybe the games cover history that is not covered in your school curriculum?

S2 It covers some of the stuff, but not all of the stuff.

PC Do you think the school could benefit from having a game like this.

S2 Yeah.

PC Why do you think that?

S2 Because it's fun.

PC Really nice. Do you think the game should be part of the school curriculum?

S2 Yeah.

PC Does the game want to make you study more about the ancient world?

S2 Yeah.

PC Why does it do that?

S2 Because it is interesting.

PC Does it make you want to study and do better at school?

S2 Yes, in a way.

PC In what way?

S2

PC Ok you don't need to answer that. I can see a trend, it motivates you to want to learn more about the ancient world, but it doesn't motivate you in other

subjects which is completely fine. It's tough because it is historical, it is mainly classical. Do you go into your maths lesson and think I have just played this game and I am going to do better at maths now?

S2 No.

PC OK. So it is subject specific which is fine. Is there any stuff about the game that you think is worth talking about and include in lessons for students in the future or is there anything you think I have missed out.

S2 I think it's good.

PC So you think the style and the structure of the lesson has been quite nice.

S2 Yeah.

PC Have you enjoyed schoolwork in general?

S2 Yeah.

PC That's good. That's it for now. Thank you.

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