
S P I R I T O F E X C A L I B U R G S - D O X

Part 1 of 2.

Introduction

It is the year 539 in Arthurian England. Arthur has been killed at the battle of Camlann, and his realm is in ferment. You are the Crown Regent, Lord Constantine, King Arthur's successor as the leader of the Knights of the Round Table. You are in York as the game begins, and must make your way to Camelot to take the reins of power. Much of Arthur's power, however, is not yours to command. Sir Lancelot DuLac, Arthur's great companion, incomparable champion, knight, and cuckold, has gone into retreat. He has taken the greater part of Arthur's veterans with him. Many other knights, kings, and powers of the land will not acknowledge your authority. Your Round Table is a shadow of its former glory. To make matters worse, the legacy of Arthur's bastard son Mordred has come back to haunt you. Though Arthur slew Mordred in his final battle, his sons Melehan and Morgolon have grown to maturity and are carrying on Mordred's quest to usurp the throne!

SPiRiT OF EXCALIBUR places you at the beginning of Dark Age England. As Lord Constantine, all your wits and skill, your military prowess, battle strategy, and your diplomacy will be required if Arthur's legacy of peace, chivalry, and union is to endure!

Based upon vast resources of fictional and historical literature, EXCALIBUR takes you through escalating episodes of danger and challenges, as you strive to protect your people and your crown against the raging Saxon hordes, and supernatural opponents whom even your strongest knights cannot stand against. Spectacular graphics and interactive battle scenes emphasize the milieu that you will be thrust into. Sovereign, do you dare take the challenge, OR WILL YOU END YOUR DAYS ON THE ASS HEAP OF HISTORY?

STARTING THE GAME

Please review the reference card for your computer for installation and copyright protection information.

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

This section of the manual will tell you how to play the game. Many things are hidden in the game environment; while the "how-to" is thoroughly described, we will give only hints about many aspects of the game, in particular magic use and on finding potential allies. With persistence, the thrill of discovery will be yours.

In the sections which follow, we will describe how you issue commands to the game. With all commands, several conventions will be used. These are:

1. We will refer to giving commands using the "mouse cursor." You can move the

mouse cursor with a mouse, a joystick or the cursor control keys on your keyboard. To click on an icon, a command menu, or an option box, you can press the left mouse button, the first joystick button, or the ENTER, or I, N, S Keys.

2. Whenever any command sequence is initiated, you can abort it by pressing ESC. Whenever an information dialog box is no longer needed, you can get rid of it by pressing ESC.

3. In all areas of the game, you can make selections from option menus by pressing the first character of any word in that menu. If there is only one option starting with that letter, it will be selected.

If there are several options with the same first letter, the selection cursor will step to each in turn as you press that key again. When the cursor is pointing at the option that you wish, press ENTER to select it. This short cut will take some getting use to, but is invaluable once you are accustomed to it.

LEVELS OF THE GAME

Two levels of screen displays will be used in the playing of SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR. They are, respectively, the MAP level, and the SCENE level.

MAP LEVEL

The Map level provides the strategic platform for your quest to defend the throne. It is a detailed multi-screen overview map of Southern England, with all the major towns, forts, castles, roads, forests, lakes, and rivers represented thereon. No single screen displays the entire map; to move to any other sector of the map, the player must merely move the mouse cursor to any edge of the screen. The screen will scroll in the indicated direction, revealing other sections of the map to the players view.

From time to time, dialog boxes will appear to the player, displaying information or menus selections. The dialog boxes appear as stone tablets on the screen. Information displayed here will include force identifications, encounter announcements, and the status reports, and will often require a prompt form the player for appropriate action.

Heraldic Shields, representing opposing, allied, and neutral forces, will appear on the map and move about on their various journeys and engagements. The Shields are functioning icons, which can be mouse-clicked upon to display their identification and other information. The shields also can be selected and magnified upon for closer scrutiny at the Scene level (see below). Towns or castles on the map are also viewable in the fashion.

The Map level gives the means for you to deploy your forces as you see fit to meet the onslaughts of enemy forces, and to monitor enemy progress.

SCENE LEVEL

The Scene level is the action-animation screen. All interactive combat sequences take places here.

Locations on the Map level may be Magnified to this screen to provide a close-up view of the goings-on there. Movements in and out of rooms in castles also take place here. Your characters are viewed on this level. Game time does not pass here;; the scene level represents, in the role-playing vernacular, "real time."

When individual or army combat is announced on the Map level, the player will be prompted to Magnify to the Scene level to participate in the combat, if he chooses (in many cases he will have no choice but to do so!).

On both the Map and Scene levels, groups of icons appear on the top right corner of the screen. Many single-keystroke commands, corresponding to respective icons and other tasks, are entirely different in function and effect from those of the other level. Please keep this in mind to avoid confusion, as you move about and consider your options. The Icons and keystroke commands for each game level are described in the following sections.

WHAT THE ICONS MEAN

Icons appear in the top right corner of the computer screen. They represent many game functions, and can be activated by placing the mouse cursor over them and clicking the button. There are two major groups of icons, corresponding to the Map level and Scene level screens of the game. The two groups of icons are described below.

MAP LEVEL ICONS

At the map level, the player may use the arrow cursor keys, the mouse or a joystick to move his cursor over the map, icons, or dialog boxes. Pressing a button will select whatever the cursor is resting on. All icons are found at the top-right section of the screen. Icon-activated commands available at this level are as follows:

1) Status Icon. Appears as a Crystal Ball. Selecting this icon will display an informative dialog box relation to the status of the currently selected party, including their nobility and faith levels, strength and vitality, and other factors, as shown below. An alert message is displayed if no party is selected.

NAME	HP	HTH	MAG	COM	ARM	NOB	FTH
* DINAS	5	5	0	12	40	8	10
* HEBES	5	5	0	13	30	8	10

The contents of the status display screen shown above consist of the following entries:

HP - Maximum Hit Points. Shows the number of hits in combat a character can take before being killed. Tougher characters have more hit points. Knights named in the game have 5 each.

HTH - Shows the health of the character, as the current number of hit points left to the character. Usually, 5 points shows full health, and, for example, one hit point will show the character in GRAVE health. Healing potions will restore the character to full health (and thus to full hit points).

MAG (Range 0 - 100) - Shows the level of magic power the character can command. The values are simple levels. Nineve, for example, begins the game with a value of 30. Each use of magic will lower the levels of power left to that character, until the character can be restored by magical means, or by making it to the end of the episode. Also, remember that frequent use of magic can help build up a character's abilities to use magic.

COM (Range 0 - 25+) - Shows the hand-to-hand combat abilities of the character.

Ability can increase slightly with each successive combat. The higher this number is, the better.

ARM (Range 0 - 100%) - ARMOR Levels. All knights start the game with standard plate armor (40%). Subtracting this number from 100 shows the percentage chance to be hit (in most cases 60%). Magical or enchanted armor will improve this number further. The higher the armor number, the better.

NOB (Range 0 - 20) - 10 is average. Shows the Nobility level of the character. The average knight begins with levels of 13-15. The higher the number, the better.

FTH (Range 0 - 20) - The character's faith levels, his belief in God and the rightness of his cause. The average number is 0. Brother Baudwin, for example, starts with a level of 5. The higher the number, the better.

Individual characters entries can be selected to display further information about that character, such as his followers and the inventory of items that he is carrying. To select a character, press the first letter of his name. If there are several with the same first character, the cursor will step to each in turn. Press ENTER when it is on the one you wish. Alternatively, move the mouse cursor to the character you want more information about and select him.

2) Archive Icon. Appears as an Unrolled Scroll. Selecting this icon displays the Archive menu, which has two options: to Load, or Save a game. The user selects accordingly. You can up to 25 games, under different names.

3) Time Rate Icon. Appears as an Hourglass. Clicking this icon allows you to select between three game speeds: SLOWLY, MEDIATELY, and QUICKLY. The currently selected rate is highlighted. Events in the game will move accordingly.

4) Magnify Icon. Appears as a Magnifying Glass. Upon selection of this icon, the cursor will turn into a magnifying glass. The glass may be clicked upon any location on the Map level indicated by a location icon (lake, city, town, village, castle, or fort), to provide a close-up peek at that scene and any forces or character which are there.

5) Movement Icon. Appears as a Knight on Horseback. Selecting this icon causes the cursor to change into an arrowhead. In this mode the player will select the party he wishes to move, and the destination to go to. Once the party is selected, the cursor will change to a Destination icon:

T0- >

The destination may be specified, by a mouse click on a location of the map. Only parties under the players control will respond to such directives. If you change your mind, press ESC or reselect the movement icon to abort the movement command and return to the normal map screen. When selecting a destination for a character or force, keep in mind that obstacles must be avoided. Find the fords and bridges over rivers, the passes through the mountains, and try to find a route using roads for maximum speed.

6) Party or Force Icons. They appear as Heraldic Shields, directly on the map. Parties under your control, along with neutral or enemy forces that have been detected, will appear as shields moving across the screen. If the cursor is clicked over a shield, the party or force will be identified in a dialog box.

SCENE LEVEL ICONS

1) Action Icon. Appears as a Mailed Fist. Upon selecting this icon, a dialog box with a list of options will be displayed.

PICKUP	DROP	TALK	USE
SEARCH	TRADE	REQUEST	MAGIC
SEIZE	GIVE	BRIBE	ATTACK

The proper options will correspond to the situation. For example, it is not a good idea to ATTACK the kind and gentle abbot of a monastery to obtain what you need. Such inappropriate actions will affect aspects of your character in unpleasant ways: in particular, FAITH and NOBILITY, being critical elements of your character, may be weakened (not to mention Divine Retribution upon your noble carcass).

Keep in mind, also, that some things simply cannot be bought (for example, good sailing weather), and the acts such as bribing may greater detail under the FAITH AND NOBILITY sections of this manual.

Exercising the ATTACK option opens up a whole new field, involving interactive combat sequences with mouse, keyboard, or joystick for individual combat, and many command options for full-scale army combat. All this is discussed in greater detail in Handling Combat/Magic chapter.

Dialog boxes will be displayed, showing the player the results of the action he takes. Every action available under the Action command can also be initiated by a single keystroke, which is the first letter of the command: A for Attack, P for Pickup, and so on.

2) Map Icon . Appears as a Map of England. Mouse-clicking this icon will move the player out to the Map Level display.

3) Status Icon. Appears as a Crystal Ball. You can click this icon to see the current status of those characters that are at the currently displayed location. The status display is identical to that displayed at the map level as described in the previous pages.

4) Gate Icon. Appears as a Castle Gate. This icon comes into play when you approach a castle or other building which you can enter. Clicking on the Gate icon will admit you inside. If a gate or door is visible on the castle itself, you also may mouse-click it to enter.

THE BASIC KEYSTROKE SEQUENCES

Keystrokes can be used as direct substitutes for icons. At times, it may be faster or more convenient to employ keystrokes command is the first letter of the desired command. The keystroke commands come in two sets, corresponding to the two levels of the game: Map level, and Scene level. The keystroke commands are not case-sensitive: capital or small letters will work equally well.

The Map level keystroke commands, listed below, are:

A ARCHIVE menu. Allows Saving of current games, and restoring of a previously saved game. Any number of games may be saved. A dialog box will display all available saved games. Any game can be selected with the mouse cursor. The sub-commands for the Archive menu are:

S To SAVE a current game. This method is highly recommended for players who wish to replay difficult situations in the game, or to resume later.

L To LOAD a previously saved game.

G GO command. Commands your character to move whatever destination you select:

a castle, town, or city, a spot in the country, or some other force or character you wish to pursue.

M MAGNIFY command. Allows you to zoom in on your selected region. The SCENE level action-animation screen will be shown.

P PAUSE game. Press any key to unpause.

Q QUIT/SOUND Toggle. Allows you to toggle on/off the music and sound effects of the game.

S STATUS command. A status dialog box will appear, giving information about any character or force you have selected. If you have not already selected a character or force, an alert box will appear.

T TIME RATE menu. Allows you to switch between the three operating speeds of the game: SLOWLY, MEDIATELY, and QUICKLY.

CONTROL-X EXIT game. A dialog box will appear, asking you if you are sure you wish to leave. Type Y or N as a reply. If you wish to save your game, you must do so before selecting the EXIT option. The Scene Level keystroke commands, listed below, are:

A ACTION command. Corresponds in function to the Action icon at the Scene level. Striking this key will give you all the options of the Action dialog box, including:

PICKUP	DROP	TALK	USE
SEARCH	TRADE	REQUEST	MAGIC
SEIZE	GIVE	BRIBE	ATTACK

These options may be selected with the mouse or joystick. Any of these commands can also be given by pressing the first letter of the desired commands: P for Pickup, R for Request, and so on. Each of these commands will be followed by appropriate prompts for you to select what to pick up, how much to bribe with, ect.

G GATE command. Pressing this key will allow the player to enter through castle gates or doors, where appropriate.

M MAP command. Pressing this key will move the player back out to the Map level.

P PAUSE game. Press any key to unpause.

Q QUIT/SOUND toggle. Allows you to toggle on/off the music and sound effects of the game.

S STATUS command. Displays the current status of the character or force displayed in the current scene.

CONTROL-X EXIT game. A dialog box will appear, asking you if you are sure you wish to leave. Type Y or N as a reply. If you wish to save your game, you must do so before selecting the EXIT option.

HANDLING COMBAT/MAGIC

INDIVIDUAL COMBAT

At any time the character you control may be challenged to combat, or you may find it necessary to challenge or attack. The challenge may be simple contest of arms or it might be a fight to the death. If you are at the map level when this happens, you will be given the option to watch/control the combat or to ignore it and just hear about the results. If you elect to watch, you will be brought to the scene level, showing your character's situation and opponents.

When individual combat begins, both fighters will be under their own control and will fight without your intervention. If you think that you can do better, select MANUAL control or just press the SPACE BAR to take over personal control of you fighter. In this mode, you can control the movement and blows of his fighter. There are two separate attack modes. Pressing joystick/mouse button 1, or the INS key, gives you a slow but powerful overhead blow. Pressing button 2 or the Del key gives you a much faster but less damaging thrust attack. The timing and sequencing of these different attacks will work differently against different kinds of opponents. You'll have to experiment to find the best possible combinations.

If you retreat as a blow is being struck by an opponent, any damage resulting will be halved. Your opponent, however, will advance to occupy the ground you just left. During combat, the character's animated figure will default to the Parry position.

Watch closely when you strike a blow, as your opponent has a good chance of falling back. If so, you can advance. You can also opt to retreat, and send another fighter into the combat by selecting a character from the combat dialog box and commanding him to attack. Also, during a fight any character *even bystanders that are not actually fighting) can be commanded to USE some item or CAST a magic spell. You can strengthen a friend or weaken his opponent while they are busy with their battle.

ARMY COMBAT

When hostile armies approach each other, you will be offered several options. You can choose to ignore the coming battle and just hear the results. Or, you can chose to observe and watch the ebb and flow of the battle with a display of the casualties as they \occur. Finally, you can choose to command the forces of the Round Table and try to improve their showing in battle with your superior tactics. When a battle begins, you will first be asked if you wish to GO THERE or IGNORE IT. The latter option will simply give you the report of the casualties without showing you the battle itself. In some cases, your army leader may be challenged to single combat by the leader of the opposing force\s or by a captured foe. If you accept, individual combat will result. The loser's forces will be dispersed.

During army combat, a small graphic screen of the battlefield will appear, with the forces shown in severe miniature. Each of the relevant forces will be listed by name or by clicking on the force on the battlefield display.

Adjacent to the list of forces are the command options that you can use to issue your orders. Whenever you select a character or force, the relevant command options will be enabled. These include:

CHARGE	ENGAGE	USE ITEM
MAGIC	FLANK	RETREAT
DO ROUND		

These seven menu options give the player considerable flexibility for battle strategy. The commands can be issued to any forces under the player's control.

The force commanded to CHARGE will inflict greater damage to the enemy in the current round, at the cost of greater losses in the next round.

ENGAGE places the force into normal combat mode.

If the RETREAT command is given, the force commanded will be taken out of the line of battle, and cannot inflict or suffer further casualties. If the force reaches its stopping point, and is given another retreat command, the force will leave the field altogether.

When you are fighting in the field, and you have lost more than half your forces, you will be advised by your assistants that you have suffered heavy losses and prompted to retreat. If you are defending a city or fortress, this advice will come much earlier, with casualties of only one eighth of your forces since the walls of your defenses are such a convenient asset to your combat. If you are hopelessly outnumbered by the enemy in the fight, however, the option to fall back back will not be available

The USE option is available on to commanders who wish to use objects of power in teh combat; e. g., the Crown of Command.

MAGIC is an option reserved for combatants who have spell-casting abilities.

The FLANK command is only available to knights. Once flanking has been commanded that force will be out of combat for one round, but can strike with crushing force in the next.

Any time during battle, forces can have new orders given to them, by clicking the mouse cursor on the force and selecting from the command menu. Options not available to certain forces (such as MAGIC to a force of archers) will be ghosted. For example, Archers can only engage and retreat, and flank.

The DO ROUND option in army combat, however, is special and will not be available to the player until he finds the Crown of Command (a magic item that allows players to issue commands to individuals and forces in combat rounds, instead of one long block of real time). Until the Crown is discovered, the DO ROUND option is ghosted.

THE USE OF MAGIC

Magic abounds in Arthurian Britain. Much of it can be used by anybody, with or without native magical ability. These items include the Runic Blade in Camelot's treasury, and the healing and vitality potions available from any good apothecary or healer. Other magical weapons and armaments may make your fighters far stronger in combat than unaided nights.

Other Spells and magical items can only be used by the Druidic magic users such as Nineve and Morgan Le Fay. Nineve's Shield spell, the Fascinum Laxus scroll, and Helye's Book are items of this type.

A third class of magical items are the holy objects which can only be used by clerics or others with very high faith. In the hands of the faithful, the Holy Water will restore health (the higher the faith, the more effective the restoration). The Blessed Cross can only be used by the most faithful clerics and then only sparingly.

Effective use of magic may make the difference between the winning and losing in your fight against evil. The best advice to be given about magic (Clerical and Druidic) is to keep a sharp lookout for it. Some magic items will be

beneficial, while other may be dangerous. Find them, learn their strengths and weaknesses, determine who can use them most effectively, and save them for when they can do the most good. Never waste magic casually.

HINTS FOR SUCCESS

ARTHUR's England was not a harmonious union of knights and kings of the realm, cheerfully banding together to do battle with evil. To name one prominent example from the tales: Sir Gawain, leader of Lothian and the Knights of Orkney, has had a long-standing feud with Lancelot and his clan. At the time depicted in the game, Gawain is dead. Other knights (such as Sir Villars or Gahalantine) may continue the vendetta. Thus, sending an Orkney knight to rescue Lancelot may have baleful effects. Further details regarding family feuds can be found in the glossary.

Several knights will have better speed of movement in the field than others. If faster knights are used as a leader in pursuing a quarry, the rest of the party will move at his speed.

Also, keep a watch out for any of your knights who may have an aptitude for magic use. They may be useful as allies for you druidic magic users. Knights with an unusually high faith may be able to use some of the holy objects of power.

Throughout your tenure as ruler of Britain, you will be faced with numerous challenges and quests that you must accomplish to keep the realm intact. While you must always succeed in these tasks to remain the rightful king, they are not, in themselves, the ultimate goal of a good ruler. You must reunite the scattered fragments of Britain to avert the Dark Ages that otherwise will surely follow the breakup of Arthur's realm. Recruiting friendly kingdoms is accomplished by doing good deeds for their leaders, such as saving an ally's towns or people from threats, aiding an ally in battle, and saving innocent dependents that have been kidnapped. The union of the realm is the ultimate goal of you kingship. As a result, many side quests will come your way, and many must be pursued to aid in building your final victory.

THE ROLES OF FAITH AND NOBILITY

Faith and Nobility determine the basic character and qualities of King Constantine and those under his command. These two qualities set the Knights of the Round Table apart from the everyday and evil characters in the game. Evil characters, by definition, have little faith and nobility to begin with. Faith and nobility, if employed with discretion and care, can provide you with an edge in getting things done. Conversely, if a knight's attributes of faith and nobility are abused and disregarded, it can spell doom for that character.

FAITH can be considered as an unshakable belief in God. Resulting from this is the character's strong belief in ultimate victory: a confidence that, come what may, his cause is just and will be rewarded. With high faith comes the ability to use clerical magic such as healing protection, prophecy, and, in extreme cases, divine intervention. Faith is an essential quality for good knights, clerics, monks and other holy characters.

Faith declines if you are hurt during a fight, are forced to withdraw during a fight, or retreat from a battle

Encountering demoralizing enemies or opponents, or an extremely powerful magic attack or a demon, also can indirectly damage a knight's faith level, despite the outcome of the conflict. The ways to increase or restore a character's faith

levels include: success in battle or single combat, the use of religious artifact, or meditation in a chapel, a monastery, or a cathedral. The character must be taken to a holy place, and left there by pressing 'M' (or striking the MAP icon) to go to the map level, for commanding other characters in the game.

NOBILITY is, essentially, the power of command. This power encompasses aspects of charisma, charm, and honor. Doing good deeds, such as rescuing maidens, capturing (rather than killing) a foe, or saving a village from robbers, enhances your nobility. If a good knight commits an atrocity such as executing a prisoner, attacking an innocent person or a village, his nobility levels are damaged. An act of omission, such as declining to rescue a maiden in distress (due, possibly, to time constraints) may also affect nobility levels. A cowardly retreat from a dangerous foe will also have adverse effects.

On some occasions, during a quest, it may be necessary to commit damaging acts to achieve a goal. For example, you may need to threaten or even forcibly seize an object from a recalcitrant peasant. Such acts, however, can be atoned for by the doing of good deeds. In the end, damaging acts MUST be atoned for if your character is to maintain his leadership qualities.

Such an action may not be fatal in that regard; but if a character's levels of faith and nobility decline sufficiently, that character may turn to evil and (for example) ride directly to Morgan's castle and offer her his service as one of her minions. Thus it is important to your character, and to your knights, to maintain acceptable levels of faith and nobility.

EPIISODES OF THE GAME

We have now come to the heart of our game description: the episodes of SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR. They escalate in tension and complexity, reflecting the increasing power of your character as he meets his successive challenges. You, of course, are Lord Constantine. The scenarios, in ascending order, are as follows:

EPIISODE ONE - THE KING MAKING

You, as Lord Constantine, have just been informed of Arthur's death. As his Crown Regent, you are his most likely successor. You are in York, and you must make your way back to Camelot to claim the throne. On your journey, you will come across many nobles, soldiers, and everyday people who may ask for your help, or merely offer advice to you.

It is wise to pay heed to them. If your conduct is timely and chivalrous, you will be rewarded with the Crown of Arthur's Realm.

EPIISODE TWO - THE RETURN OF LANCELOT DU LAC

As Arthur's successor, Constantine lacks the greater part of Arthur's power. Britain has been fragmented, with former followers of Arthur carving out independent, somewhat friendly kingdoms. Lancelot Arthur's great champion, has sequestered himself in a monastery to repent for his passionate affair with Guenevere. Torn by grief, remorse, and self-reproach, he refuses to be drawn away. He has taken with him the bulk of Arthur's surviving lieutenants of war. The episode begins with your Round Table council at Camelot.

Already, your realm is endangered by an invasion of a Scottish force led by Melehan, a son of the late Sir Mordred. Your limited information from the field tells you that Melehan's equally malevolent brother, Morgolon, has dropped from

sight on some mysterious errand.

Furthermore, a Saxon force is threatening London, the city so recently won by Arthur at the battle of Mount Badon. A large part of the forces potentially loyal to you may be bottled up in the city, with limited provisions. Thus the Saxon siege will take time, but can have only one eventual result.

To muster the forces needed to defend the realm, Constantine must find a champion, who the disaffected knights will respect, to stand in his name. The only man who can command this loyalty is Lancelot Du Lac.

As the King, you must send a party of carefully handpicked knights to persuade Lancelot to come out of hiding, to help save the realm. It is also wise to visit the chapel upon the outset of the quest, as brother Baudwin may offer some good advice. You also may wish to consult Nineve, the court's resident enchantress.

While the quest proceeds, you must also gather what forces you can to delay and harry Melehan's army. Many knights and their small forces are scattered across Britain. You may command some of these to unite and move to delay Melehan's advance. In this way, you may buy time; you cannot stop him, however, without Du Lac, and the veterans he commands.

You must also reinforce and replenish as best you can garrison in London. If London falls, the Saxon forces there will unite with Melehan and move against Camelot. If Constantine is killed, you have lost the game. If you, through your lieutenants, can persuade Lancelot to rejoin breathing space for your kingdom, and for your monarchy.

EPISODE THREE - THE ENIGMATIC GIANT

The immediate danger to the kingdom has passed with the destruction of the invading armies. Then, a disquieting event occurs outside Camelot. A great giant warrior appears at the walls, challenging all the knights of the Round Table to single combat. The supreme confidence displayed by the giant in this arrogant challenge suggests that he may not be what he seems. Is this a trick? Should you risk your knights in a possible trap? You must decide.

Meanwhile, the great Du Lac approaches Camelot. King Constantine cannot risk the destruction of his most trusted ally. You, as the King, sense that even Du Lac, with his great sword Joyeux, may not be able to stand against this evil sentinel, and must be diverted from Camelot.

A quest must be undertaken to find the answer to the enigma presented by the giant warrior. At this time, only Lancelot and Nineve, and the few others sent by you on various errands, have free run over the countryside.

The rest of your men are bottled up and Camelot by the intimidation of the Giant. They can only ignore the Giant, remaining inside the castle walls, or risk death or dishonor. Where did the Giant come from? Why is he here? How can he be destroyed? Lancelot and Nineve must solve this lethal puzzle.

EPISODE FOUR - THE ENCHANTED KNIGHTS OF THE FOREST SAUVAGE

For two years after your destruction of the Giant, the kingdom is at peace. The people are harvesting, and the land is healing. Most of your knights have returned to their estates for personal errands.

Disturbing news begins to haunt the countryside. It seems that in remote corners of the kingdom, some of your loyal knights and men-at-arms have been vanishing. Many disappearances have been taking place in or near the Forest Sauvage, to the north. The most persistent rumor is of a mysterious "Brown Knight" who waylays even the most heavily armed passerby. Your close friend, Count Galahantine of Leicester, sent four of his best men into the Forest to investigate. None returned.

Local intelligence suggest that the Brown Knight has a small band of "Enchanted Knights" as his force, and that they are unstoppable by ordinary arms. The byways of the Forest and the surrounding towns are gripped in fear. Folk do not move about after dark. A gloom seems to settle amidst the darker corners of the forests. Once-cheerful glades and clearings are weed-choked and abandoned, and carry a faint aura of danger.

In the intentions of the Brown Knight are unknown. The people of the kingdom are becoming frightened and are beginning to question the protective might of the Round Table. They say that there are hidden powers in the Forest Sauvage that no ordinary knight - even the great Du Lac! - can stand against. The complaints and discontent among the people becoming serious. Minor revolts are flaring up in various parts of the country, and must be down by the forces of Lancelot and Constantine. Small towns are being harried by groups of increasingly bold Saxon bandits. The threat to the realm is insidious but urgent.

While you have succeeded in thwarting several crises in your quest to unite the kingdom, you know the tests of your power and resourcefulness are not over. You must find the answer to the Brown Knight. Your key lies in information sources in the kingdom. This is critical.

EPISODE FIVE - MORGAN LE FAY'S REVENGE

For some time, the kingdom has been calm. You and your lieutenants have begun to piece back together the great Arthur's realm. The rest of Europe is in the blackness of anarchy. Britain alone stands as the shining remnant of Rome's dead civilization.

Yet, the signs of corruption are again beginning to show themselves. Maidens are disappearing from their beds at night. Lone travellers, on the roads of Logres, aEscavalon, Essex, and the other byways of the kingdom, never reach their destinations. The forest are haunted, dangerous places, invested with foreboding even during daylight hours. The people are near despair that, even after the great and victorious battles of the last several years, the evil is still present in the kingdom. An urgent council of the Round Table is called.

Petitioners are present at the council, beseeching help to recover their loved ones. The knights, their hearts torn by their desperation, desire fiercely to go. Unfortunately, they cannot stand against DEMONS! Only your prestidigitators can banish them and succor their captives.

The mages are willing to do all they can; yet they, and you, recognize that something is abroad in the land, which banishing the occasional demon cannot alone counter.

Yes, King Constantine. Your great adversary, Morgan Le Fay, is flooding your kingdom with her evil spawn. Your knights are beginning to disappear and the kingdom is becoming restive. Even Camelot itself is threatened with revolt. You see your kingdom beginning to descend into the chaos of the Dark Ages that have overwhelmed all the lands around you. You must find and destroy Morgan Le Fay, or you will be overthrown, and your head planted on a stake!

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The legends of King Arthur have sustained the imaginations of England and the West since the Dark Ages. It can be said that the legend directly inspired the culture surrounding the Age of Chivalry in the Middle Ages, and inspired, in some part, England's greatness in world affairs. About the actual historical existence of Arthur there is little doubt; however, most of the romantic figures of legend - Lancelot Du Lac, Queen Guenevere, Tristram and Iseult, Sir Gawain, and the list goes on and on - are merely the comfortable fictions conceived by Middle Age princes and nobles who preferred them to the actual heroes and adversaries of antiquity. The elements of sorcery, magical beasts, and The Lady of the Lake were probably derived from Arabian myths introduced from the Crusades, blended with the simpler fictions of the West to form a highly embellished tapestry: however, a tapestry with more than a thread of truth.

The first documented record of Arthur comes to us from Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain. For many years, Arthurian scholars have looked upon this document with disdain; Monmouth's work is filled with puzzling allusions to sources which no longer exist, and references to other works which are patently second-rate in their veracity. Yet, as we shall see, this source may still hold clues to the actual existence of Arthur.

To place in historical context the actual circumstances of Arthur's reign, it may be fruitful for us to explore the recorded history of that time. According to many researchers, Arthur has his beginning during the onset of the Dark Ages, when the extinction of the Western Roman Empire occurred near or on the year 479. For some years, the Roman Empire had been split into Eastern and Western halves, each of which was ruled by a separate emperor.

The Romans had conquered Britain during the first century, during the reign of Domitian. In the words of Edward Gibbon:

"The various tribes of Britons possessed valor without conduct, and the love of freedom with the spirit of union. They took up arms with savage fierceness; they laid them down, or turned them against each other with wild inconstancy; and while they fought singly, they were successively subdued. Neither the fortitude of Caractacus, nor the despair of Boadicea, nor the fanaticism of the Druids, could avert the slavery of their country, or resist the steady progress of the Imperial generals, who maintained the national glory, when the throne was disgraced by the weakest, or the most vicious of mankind.

The native Caledonians preserved in the northern extremity of the isle their wild independence... their incursions were frequently repelled and chastised, but their country was never subdued. The masters of the fairest and most wealthy climates of the globe turned with contempt from gloomy hills assailed by winter tempests, from lakes concealed in a blue mist, and from cold and lonely heaths, over which the deer of the forest were chased by a troop of naked barbarians. "

For nearly four centuries, the Roman laws, technology, and civilization were imposed on the anarchic British isle.

S. O. E. DOX. continued in Part 2