

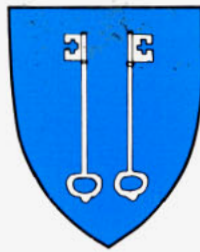
PENDRAGON

2705

The GREY Knight

by Larry DiTillio





YOU SHOULD KNOW these noble people by their arms. Some you can trust, while others are deadly foes. One is Arthur, king of all England, a good and kindly man. Another is the Grey Knight, a fearsome warrior and the King's dire foe. He challenges Arthur's right to rule and accuses him of murdering hundreds of children in northern England.

Sir Gawaine, Arthur's best knight and champion, will defend the King's honor in a duel to the death. But Merlin prophesies that Gawaine will die at the hands of the vile Grey Knight, with only one chance to save him.

There are ancient artifacts of extraordinary, magical power. One of the Thirteen Treasures of Britain is the key to Gawaine's salvation.

Arthur proclaims a solemn quest: comb the length and breadth of England to find these treasures before Gawaine and the Grey Knight meet.

Challenge Death's Champion!

An Adventure
for Pendragon
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Box 6302-GK
Albany CA 94706
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0 12515 02705 2
THE GREY KNIGHT
ISBN 0-933635-35-4 • 795

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PENDRAGON

The GREY Knight

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Designer's Notes

I've never been one for King Arthur, but after one play of *Pendragon* I was impressed. Here at last was a real role-play fantasy, a world in which the sword was still prominent but the man behind the sword was even more so. I saw in Greg's work, a piece of innovation, a system that was simple and elegant and designed to make characters think and feel deeply. That got me interested. I then dutifully slogged through Malory (the "easy" version), delighted in Steinbeck's *Acts of King Arthur*, wrestled with a ponderous Tolkien *Translation of Gawaine and the Green Knight*, read some scattered tales from my *Enchanted World* collection and watched the films *Knights of the Round Table* and *Sword of the Valiant* (this latter piece is an extremely loose rendition of *Gawaine and the Green Knight*. Its principal actor sucks, but its worth seeing if only for Sean Connery as the Green Knight).

Thus armed, I considered my plot. I had warmed up to Gawaine quite a bit through my reading and my film viewing gave me an interest in the Green Knight story. However, I couldn't see simply recounting that. Tales of Silent Knights (i.e., Knights resurrected from the dead) intrigued me and I hit upon the idea

Introduction

The Grey Knight is a *PENDRAGON* adventure designed for 4-8 player-knights of varying ability, which will take about 7 weeks of game time. Play will probably require 2-4 sessions to complete (about 8-16 hours of play), depending upon the involvement of the players, the amount of roleplaying accomplished, and the party's tendency to be diverted.

The scenario is set in the year 515. The players handouts assume that date as well. This date is necessary because the events described here must take place after King Ryon's defeat at Castle Terrabel (year 513), but before the departure/disappearance of Merlin (late 515). Chronological flexibility is possible if you substitute other characters. This adventure can take place earlier by using someone other than Ryon as Arthur's enemy, or shift the scenario to a later time by using a magician other than Merlin.

How to Use This Book

The Grey Knight is presented in a unique format to maximize ease of use and gamemaster pleasure. Familiarity with this format will make your job easier.

THE MAIN TEXT is given in a continuous wide column running the length of this book. Read this section in detail before play begins to learn the whole story and structure. This text includes detailed description and dialogue. Afterwards, review this text for those details, but be familiar with the main plot and other events.

THE GLOSSES are incomplete sentences set in larger, bold type alongside the main text. These are references to information contained in the accompanying paragraph. They indicate main plot events and when game mechanics are used. **IMPORTANT POINT:** when a *ROLL* is called for, the player or players must make a roll of the 20-sided die. When a *CHECK* is indicated, the player of the involved knight automatically places a check-mark next to the appropriate skill, without making a die roll.

COATS OF ARMS are shown in the margins whenever a knight or noble lady first makes an appearance. These arms are reproduced in full color on the back cover of this book, without identification. Whenever a knight or lady makes an entrance, point to the arms on the back cover and state "You see these arms." Any player correctly identifying the arms correctly receives an automatic check for his knight's Heraldry skill. The arms shown in the text margin include a modifier in brackets. This modifier is added to the knight's Heraldry skill value before a roll is made.

GLORY computations are listed at the end of the scenario (pages 43-44). This section includes a workspace in which you can write the names of the knights who performed the various feats.

DESIGNERS' NOTES present insights into the devious mind of Larry DiTillio, author of this work. Reading them will inform you about the creative process and will answer many of the "whys" and "hows" which crop up during the play of this adventure.

PULLOUTS are provided at the center of this book. Remove them by prying-up the staples, pulling out the center 12 pages (lettered from A-L), and then bending the staples back. Use these pieces to help alleviate the problem of you being the only source of information, which creates an information bottleneck. Many of the handouts are designed to be distributed when lots of information must be given to the players all at once.

Finally, a note on freedom of play. This adventure presents a complete story from start to finish, providing many avenues for player-knights to interact with the plot. Given too are methods to keep the players on the right track. Despite your best efforts, players inevitably find a different way to approach a problem than described here. Also, the luck of the dice has a way of derailing the best-planned episode. Allow this creative freedom rather than trying to strongarm a rigid plotline. The freedom to succeed or fail is critical to a roleplaying game. Half the enjoyment of gamemastering comes from adjusting your plans to cope with the players' inventiveness.

Happy Playing!

Arms

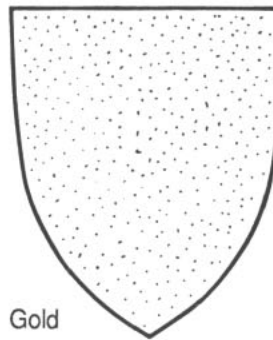
There are several methods to describe the colors used on a knight's coat-of-arms. Three of these methods are used in *Pendragon*.

The first method is simply to write down the proper colors and then draw lines from the name of the color to that portion of the arms design rendered in that color.

The second method is used on the back cover of this book — the use of actual colors to fill the proper areas.

The final method is to use a system of *hatching* to indicate the various colors. *Pendragon* utilizes seven colors in its shield designs. The types of hatching and the actual color equivalents are listed to the right and along the bottom of this page.

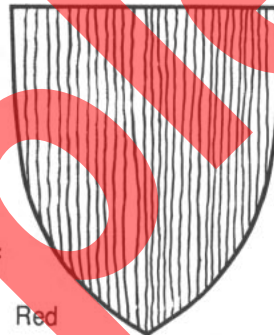
Use whichever method you prefer when creating knights for use during *Pendragon* roleplaying sessions.



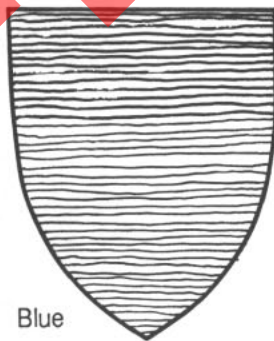
Gold



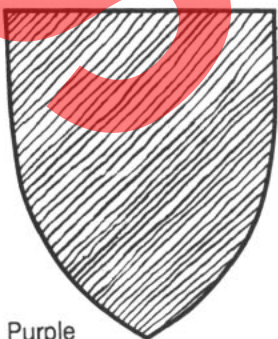
Silver



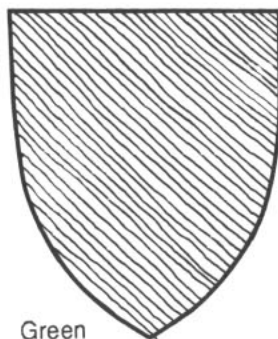
Red



Blue



Purple



Green



Black

of an unkillable Knight challenging Arthur's reign. Since the scenario was designed for the second phase, the May Babies incident seemed a good catalyst for the tale. Thus the Gray Knight rode onto the field and my scenario was underway.

There were several things I wanted in the scenario, one was a lot of interplay between the characters of the Arthurian mythos and the player knights. Being the fiend I am I also wanted the players to be constantly in trouble. Thus the meeting with Agravaine, a minor incident that nevertheless keeps players cautious in all their dealings with the Orkney clan. This is followed by the comic incident with Sir Kay and the subsequent meeting with Gawaine. In short by the time the players get to the grand feast, they're already beset with problems.

The feast continues the problems so that tournament day finds the hapless players challenged for all sorts of reasons. Then all the minor problems disappear as Lady da Vance and the Grey Knight appear and major trouble starts.

Once this section gets going, the actions the players have already taken contribute. They may find their way to the Queen thru the friar, thru dame Ariette or even because of the conversation between Sir Cynwal and Sir Graid. What they do pays off or doesn't as the case may be.

In the Wastelands, the true mettle of the players is tested again and again. Decisions must be made frequently and quickly, decisions resting on both player skill and game mechanics. The Dark Abbey gives players the sense of mystery and horror that permeates the wastelands. The incident in Olbray gives the Knights a lesson in loyalty, chivalry and madness. The Lion and the Serpent forces them to act quickly with no basis for their decision other than their gut feeling (In one test, one player attacked the Lion while all the others went after the serpent. He got roundly trounced and only my soft heart kept him alive).

The final incident with the Sluagh is a real test, the foe is both unbeatable and unescapable. Players must fully commit at this point and generally those who survive are more determined than ever. This is also a good test of the gamemaster's ability to instill utter fear and despair in the players.

The Queen of the Wastelands is a resting point. Here the players can meet one of the most mysterious characters from the Arthurian tales, as well as getting themselves restored for the last leg of the adventure (expect to have many players previously wounded at this time).

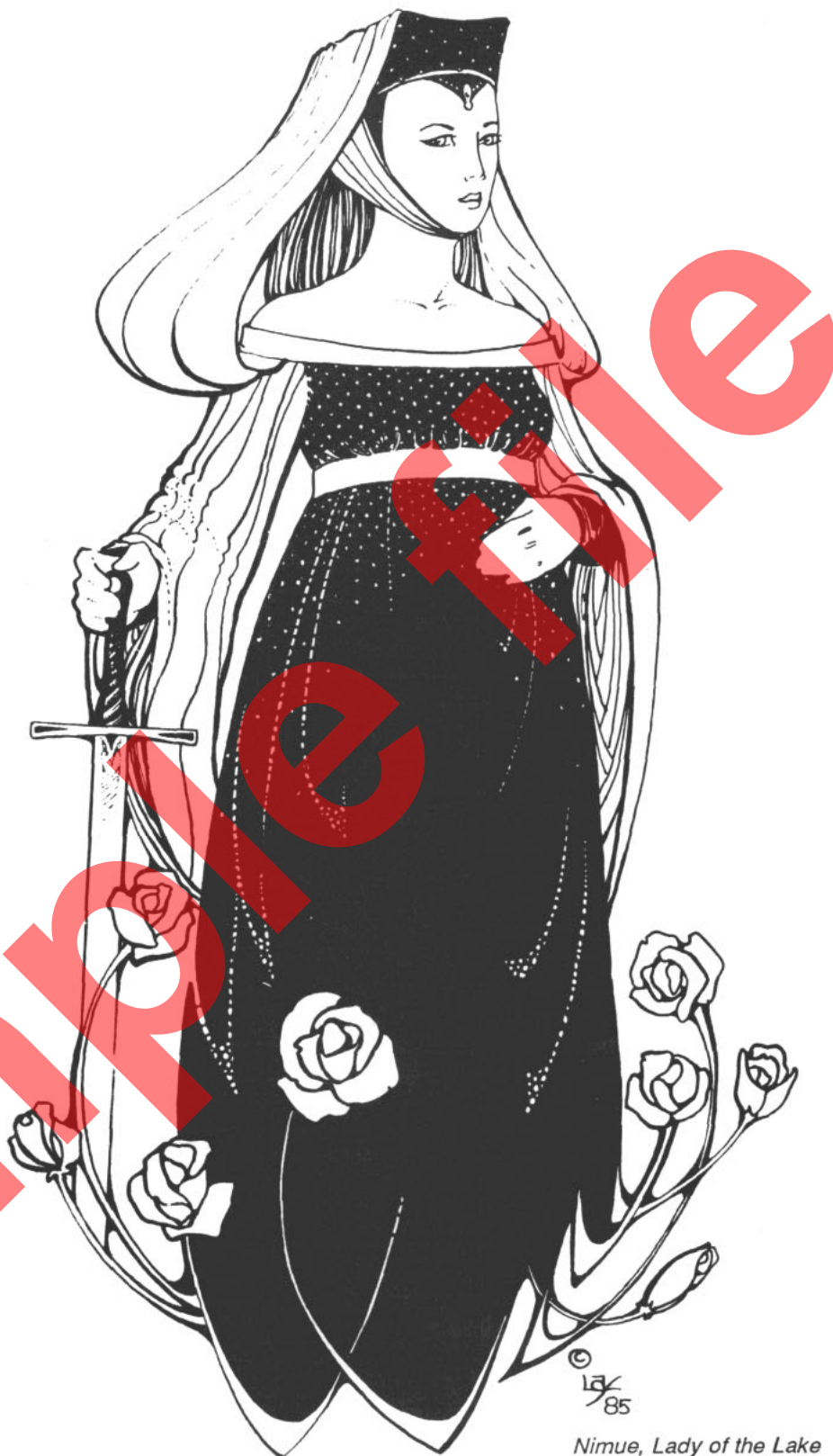
In the Forest Arroy, I made full use of the *Green Knight* tale (I just couldn't resist) and then moved over to the more magical with the players foray into the Kingdom Inapercu. The fight with the Giant is designed to suck in know-it-all players (I'll never forget my elation when one player suggested they simply ride out in a group and challenge the "stupid" giant. Once the rocks started flying

the true measure of stupidity was apparent). Likewise their difficulty in subduing the faerie horse goes a long way to shattering preconceived notions.

The Journey Back is the full cut loose, all or nothing leg of the scenario. Now the players have what they need, but can they get it there. Storms, ambushers, the raven witch and the barguest all contribute to the urgency of their ride back. The hardest part of this to work is the raven witch. The players are warned and most smell a fish when she arrives. In this section the gamemaster may have to think quickly to spring Gilegra on them. Loss of glory points helps (how can you ignore a plea from an innocent maid) as does use of her magic powers. The barguest may seem like overkill, but the whetstone makes its dispatch simple. Here the gamemaster is warned to be subtle about the effects of the whetstone. Its suggested you take all the names of those who've sharpened their swords (generally you can count on all of them doing so), then have them roll their rolls when the weapon in question is actually used.

The final scene of the scenario is again meant to test the player's decision-making ability. They must move fast but are constrained by the code of honor. This can lead to wrong actions (e.g., in one game, a player desperately tried to give Gawaine his sword since it had been sharpened with the whetstone. Of course, only Gawaine's sword could work against the Grey Knight, the use of the whetstone is strictly limited so that Gawaine would have to sharpen his own sword with it to get its power). In most cases, the players will disgrace themselves in some way, this does not hurt overmuch if they succeed in saving Gawaine.

In addition to the actual episode itself, *The Grey Knight* is also designed to meld intriguingly into a Pendragon campaign. The tale is literally fraught with prophecy — The Queen of the Wastelands will lead a pious Knight on a great Quest, Sir Bercilak will become the Green Knight, Mordred will be the serpent who undoes the lion, Morgan Le Fay will launch major plots against Arthur. All these things are foreshadowed so that Knights who survive and play on will have knowledge useful to them in later years. The scenario also bids goodbye to Merlin, a fact gamemasters may wish to alter should they want Merlin to stick around a bit. Beyond all this the scenario also helps put the May Babies incident in perspective, as well as resolving it to the benefit of Arthur (assuming the player knights succeed). It also gives the players great connections with important Knights, particularly Gawaine (though this may be tempered by the way in which the players handle Agravaine). Finally, I am very proud of the imagery in this scenario, the Grey Knight's appearance, the Storms, the Sluagh, the lion and the serpent, the devastated village of Olbray, the Faerie realm etc.



Nimue, Lady of the Lake
Illustration by Lisa A. Free

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Easter

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The year is 515 A.D. It is spring in Britain and the earth is abloom again after a long, hard winter. King Arthur has proclaimed a tournament at Court to celebrate the Easter holiday. The player knights will attend to show their mettle and win glory, either on their own initiative or by command of their liege lords. Camelot would be the ideal place for this tournament but according to the information provided in the *PENDRAGON* rules, Camelot will not be established for another seven years. The gamemaster may ignore this and either establish Camelot earlier or set the tournament in one of other Royal cities — London or Carlion are both good choices.

It is not absolutely necessary for the player knights to know each other at the beginning of the scenario, but it is advisable for the gamemaster to get them acquainted as soon as possible. The encounters which follow may be used for that purpose or the gamemaster may improvise his own incident to meld the players into what will eventually be a questing group.

The Tournament will take place a week after Easter, beginning on the second Monday following. Many of the participants will arrive at Arthur's court before the holy day, for this is a time of great pageantry and celebration, a time when new knights are made. Also, there is a spectacular Easter Mass conducted by the archbishop (benefits for attending this Mass are included in the handouts). At the latest, the knights must arrive on the Friday before the Tournament.

On The Road

Traffic is heavy on the road to court with the usual crowd of nobles, peasants, hawkers and gawkers all eager to catch a glimpse of the Pendragon and enjoy the festivities. While on the road the player knights come upon the following scene:



Arthur Summons Court

- London
- Carlion
- Camelot

Not too many changes were made in the original manuscript, the major one was adding Morgan le Fay's "glamour" on the Journey Back so the players would think they were gaining ground when they were actually riding in circles. This came about from a playtest run at the *DunDraCon '86* game convention held in the San Francisco Bay area, in which it hit me as an inspiration. The players were well ahead of schedule and rightfully asked why they couldn't recognize landmarks that should have been there. Bingo, Morgan's grand "glamour" came into being. Greg who was in on the playtest asked me to add it and I did.

Another interesting change came in the plot phase of writing. I had intended to make the Grey Knight King Lot, raised from the dead, giving Gawaine double problems (He'd have to kill his own resurrected father). Greg said OH NO! So I searched for another Knight and came across King Ryons who worked perfectly. For this I am indebted to Greg and Mac MacMahon, our local working Arthur-encyclopedia who came up with the notion. More debt goes to Phyllis Ann Karr whose *King Arthur Companion* gave me the necessary information on the Queen of the Wastelands, King Ryons and Lady Da Vance.

I believe *The Grey Knight* is the best scenario I've ever written. It opened my head to the richness of the Arthur mythos, as well as being just plain fun to write. Again credit goes to Greg for a fine job of design and writing and to Mac McMahon whose enthusiasm got me involved. Its best played by beginning Knights, if veterans who are already familiar with Arthur's court are involved much of the fun of meeting Star Knights for the first time is ameliorated. It should also remain in 515, if played in a later year it loses much of its impact and can cause problems (due to the prophetic events involved). It could be set earlier, though obviously not before the May Babies incident. I hope *Pendragon* players will receive it warmly and have as much enjoyment in its play as I have. Thus the tale is told. Explicit omnes.

Larry DiTillio - April 15th, 1986

a knight beats a peasant

Sir Agravaine



[+0]

Friar Coombs' story

other opinions

MERCIFUL check

PIOUS or TRUSTING checks

Agravaine's response

A peasant's cart is overturned on the road, the ox in its yoke quite dead, blood gushing from a deep wound in its neck. A crowd is gathered around the cart creating something of a traffic jam. They watch a young knight with a handsome face and a whiplash moustache roundly thump an aged peasant with his mailed fist. Only a short distance away, a younger peasant lies on the ground, obviously having just suffered a beating himself. With this younger man is his wife and two small children; all wailing at the top of their lungs. The aged peasant is clinging to the knight's legs, crying for mercy. He's not getting any, indeed his pleas seem to make the young knight thump him all the harder as if relishing the pain he's causing. Standing in the crowd near the spot where the player knights enter the scene is a brown-robed Friar (Friar Coombs) who seems very upset by what is occurring.

The knight doing the thumping has no shield, but a successful Awareness roll from any player allows his knight a glimpse of a squire standing amidst the watching crowd, holding a shield that has a small bit of mud on its lower quadrant. The coat-of-arms is visible and a successful Heraldry roll reveals it to be the coat of arms of the Orkney clan. A critical success shows it to be the shield of Agravaine. If player knights have had occasion to see Agravaine before, a Recognize roll puts name to face.

If player knights try to discover why the beating is taking place, they need only ask Friar Coombs to get the story. The august Friar tells them that the young knight demanded the peasant (the one now lying on the ground) move his cart from his path; then struck and killed the ox before the man could comply. The cart was overturned as the ox fell. The peasant and his family — wife, children and father (the man Agravaine is now beating on) — were thrown out. As the peasant rose he accidentally splattered some mud on the knight's shield and in a rage the knight began beating him savagely. The peasant's father tried to intervene and after the knight beat the first man to the ground he started in on the older man. The Friar does not know who the knight is but thinks him quite unchristian and unchivalrous. He asks the player knights to help the peasant.

If the player knights ask anyone but the Friar what happened they get another version of the same story, embellished by social viewpoint. For example: a noble watcher may say the peasant tried to run the knight down with his cart; a peasant observer may claim the knight was out to dishonor the peasant's wife; a third viewer may claim that the peasant and his father tried to rob the knight; a fourth may blame it all on the fairies. The gamemaster should be as creative as possible in engendering lots of confusion in the players.

Any player knight who opts to try and stop the beating *before* hearing the explanation of it gets an automatic Merciful check. Once some explanation is given (either the Friar's or some less reliable witness's) this check should not be given. Mercy doesn't wait for explanations, especially when the situation is as painfully obvious as this.

If player knights do nothing but watch, the Friar begs them to intervene saying the knight has no real reason to be so hard on the peasants. He tells them the story, if they ask. Christian knights get an experience check in their Pious trait if they are moved by the Friar's plea to stop the beating. Non-Christian knights get a Trusting trait check if they believe the Friar.

Needless to say, Agravaine is not too happy about anyone interfering with his fun. He demands to know the name of the knight or knights involved. If asked his own name he is certain to play up his relation to King Arthur and Sir Gawaine when he gives it. Player knights must also decide how they attempt to stop Agravaine from beating the old peasant. If they merely tell him to cease, he rains invective on them and says this is none of their business. If a player attempts to stop him physically he