

# The Black Hart of Camelot

Before King Arthur's time, Britain was ruled by mighty warlords. Arthur's father Uther was one such king, and conquered almost all of Britain by force before his death. When Arthur grew to maturity, he called for a new Britain where everyone would be subject to the law, including lords. There was resistance from some of the lords at first, but in time they swore fealty and Arthur became the first king of all of Britain.

The nobility and many of the people are now Christian, and the old pagan ways are being branded as devilry and disappearing. Dangerous creatures such as dragons have also largely been eradicated. Magic still abounds, although its sources are increasingly questioned. Arthur has created the Knights of the Round Table, made up of knights from all the realm, who swear to fight by the new code of chivalry and uphold Christian values. They attempt this with varying degrees of success, and as yet only Sir Galahad has proved sufficiently virtuous to achieve the Holy Grail.

Arthur rules over all of Britain as High King. The kingdoms of Cornwall, Cameliard, Listenoise and Lothian are his vassals. He directly rules the land of Camelot. The armies of each of the five kingdoms are quite evenly matched. Times have been relatively peaceful until recently, but now conflict between the monarchs is brewing.

Cornwall and Cameliard are in dispute over the rule of the land called Gloucheton, where the Lady of the Lake dwells. King Pellinore of Listenoise and King Lot of Lothian have been killed, and there are rumours of a blood feud between their successors. Arthur has ruled that none of his kingdoms may go to war with each other, and disputes must be decided by trial. Yet it is only the good will of his vassal lords that holds Britain together under his laws. This gathering will decide the fate of Britain, and of all those who attend.



## **BRITISH CUSTOMS**

The following customs describe typical practice in King Arthur's Britain. These customs rely on the willingness of the King's subjects to accept his practices and his judgements. To date he has not been challenged, although rulings have sometimes been appealed and he has sometimes reconsidered them.

### **Trials**

If a person is accused of a crime or two parties are in dispute, a trial is held. The highest authority is King Arthur, so he will judge if available. Anyone can give evidence. If the judge deems the evidence overwhelming, they will declare the result immediately. If the situation is uncertain, then the judge can rule a trial of combat is required to decide the question. The two sides may fight for themselves or have champions fight for them, and the winner declares the truth of the matter. Once a ruling is made, the judge will state the punishment or the resolution. Murder and treason are punishable by death. Punishments for lesser crimes are at the discretion of the judge.

### **Chivalry**

Knights of the Round Table are expected to maintain chivalrous behaviour, lest they return to the barbarism of the old knights. A chivalrous knight will do no harm to a lady, and always help a lady in distress. They will be loyal, courageous, fair and merciful, whether with their lords, fellow knights or with the poor and the weak. They will clasp to godly ways, and listen not to the Devil.

### **Swearing fealty**

The kings and queens present have sworn fealty to King Arthur. At any time a monarch may swear fealty to a different character, in public or privately. Please inform the GM of a change of fealty immediately. If war arises after this gathering, the outcome will be determined by the number and strength of the armies on each side.

### **Heirs**

If a monarch dies then succession must be decided. The law says that their declared heir should assume their throne. None of the kings or queens present have declared heirs yet, including King Arthur. If a monarch decides to declare their heir, they should inform Kay the Seneschal so that a public announcement can be arranged.

## **RULES**

### **The Game Master**

The game master will be playing Kay, the Seneshal of Camelot, who is the master of ceremonies for this gathering. Kay will officiate over the timing of events such as trials and weddings, under advisement from King Arthur. The GM will also sometimes speak to players out of character. Please do not approach while the GM is talking to a player privately. If you have any questions during play, please ask the GM quietly away from other players.

### **Combat**

Each character has a number of hit points. Special effects such as being enchanted can increase or reduce the number of hit points a character has. During combat, each blow that lands on you will remove one hit point. Blows that land on your weapon or shield do no damage. Please avoid striking to the head. When you have no hit points remaining, you are defeated and at the mercy of the victor. You cannot fight again until you have at least one hit point. If you are allowed to live, then for each minute that you are cared for by another character you will regain one hit point. Your hit points can be restored back to the number you started with, plus or minus any special effects you may be under.

### **Enchantment**

The word "verily" will be used to indicate that magic is occurring. If you hear a statement beginning with "verily" then you will perceive the statement as true, however unlikely it may seem. A command starting with "verily" must be followed, even if it is against your own interests. Characters do not hear the statement, so they will not realise enchantment is occurring unless the result is very strange.

### **Enchanted items**

Some items may be enchanted. They will either have a ribbon attached that describes the effect of the item when used, or you will be informed of the effect after you use it. Only read a ribbon if you are holding the item.

