

Ironsworn_Story_005

I did a bit more historical googling about Gloucester at the end of the 10th century.

Gloucester Cathedral (famous now for being used as the film location for Hogwarts school in the Harry Potter films) didn't exist until 500 years later. The two big churches at the time were Gloucester Abbey and St Oswald's Priory (a monastery, ruled by a Prior) (<http://www.britannia.com/church/saxchurch/oswdglos.html>). There were some notes that the relics of St Oswald (without the head and arms!) were brought to Gloucester in 909. Oswald had been a King of Northumbria which triggered an association for me with the "Sword of Kings".

From the quick Timeline I found for the 10th century, Gloucester Abbey didn't seem that important at the time. Seems St Oswald's Priory used to have pilgrims flocking to it, but this gradually declined towards the end of the century. There was a much more famous Abbot [Aelfric of Eynsham](#) about 50 miles to the east at this time. I could imagine some major rivalry for pilgrims between Aelfric and the un-named Prior of St Oswald's (I'll be calling him Godmund from now on).

As it's not far from where I live, I actually visited Gloucester at the weekend. St Oswalds has vanished, replaced by a retail park, but I got a photo of the Cathedral Cloister door I'll use instead.

Found a good resource for Dark Age names (at least for Kings) – Handbook of British Chronology... (https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zcgxEvGAK_kC&lpg=PP1&dq=052156350X&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q=052156350X&f=false)

Possibly of more use for RPGs (<https://www.fantasynamegenerators.com/anglo-saxon-names.php>)

Also stumbled on the legend of St Dunstan in Glastonbury (from about 50 years earlier). I'm slightly mixing up two different legends about Dunstan, but he had grabbed a devil by the nose with a pair of tongs and forced him to promise not to enter homes protected by an iron horseshoe on the door. However, if these were IRON tongs, and the "devil" was actually a Faerie, it's easy to imagine how the Prior of St Oswald's might use a similar technique on "Peatbog".

The full story of how Prior Godmund took Peatbog's Sword of Kings, might not emerge in the game, but here it is for anyone interested...

The Prior saw that the church wall was crumbling. The bones of St Oswald lay un-visited in their glass-lidded coffin and the offering plate lay empty. Oswald had been a King in Northumbria and done great works for Christianity in Britain. The trouble was, his corpse just didn't look much like a King – especially as he had no head and no arms and no jewels. “.. and no kingly sword” added Brother Beornfred, whose task was to guard the precious relics, and Godmund realised he must have been thinking out loud.

Later that day he happened to overhear one of the field workers mention the “Sword of Kings” and how the King of the Faeries was often seen with it, in the forests near Malvern – a golden blade with a ruby pommel. It seemed the superstitious locals left offerings of cider for him at a roadside shrine.

It was a warm afternoon in late summer when the cunning Prior took some fine cider, mixed it with the strongest spirits he could find and essence of valerian and added honey to mask the taste. He travelled to the lonely road where the barren hills and peat bogs met the edge of the apple-growing woods. He placed a wooden cup on the flat-topped stone at the side of the track, filled to the brim with the heady concoction.

When he crept back to the spot just after dark, there was no sign of the mighty King of Faeries, just a curious ugly creature less than two feet in length, with a brown and twisted body, lying on its back, snoring loudly. Lying in the grass beside the drained wooden goblet, was a dagger with a red ruby in the pommel.



Quickly and quietly, the Prior grabbed its nose with his iron-tipped tongs. The touch of iron burned its flesh and it woke squealing and tried in vain to wriggle free.

He was disappointed not to have captured a more impressive creature, or to have found a sword. And it was clearly bronze rather than gold, but it did have ruby even though it was a tiny one. He scooped up the dagger and slipped it into his pocket. Keeping hold of the wriggling monster, he realised it was beginning to smoulder and would soon burn completely away. If its nose burned off, it would escape, and the Prior knew how dangerous and wicked such creatures could be. He quickly told it that he would let it go if it promised to never come closer to Gloucester than this. It reluctantly swore an oath to that effect and the Prior tossed it as far back into the forest as he could and scampered off back to St Oswald's.

The jewelled dagger was placed inside the case with Oswald's remains. It wasn't a sword, but it looked sufficiently "royal" and soon the offering plate was brimming with coin once more.

With such an impressive artefact on display, it's hard to imagine why the pilgrims would ever have stopped visiting the Priory.....

... and so we get back to Valgrym's Tale.

THE STORY

Unable to approach Gloucester, the Peatbog Faerie remains in the sodden valley. He explains that the “Sword of Kings”, (a bronze dagger with a bloodstone in the pommel, must be returned to him before the end of the month as it is required for some significant faerie festival.

Promising to return Valgrym takes the reins of the cart and starts the 30-mile journey between the valley PeatBog calls Cors Mawr (Welsh for Peat Bog, and there is a nearby village that would have been called Moor-town at the time) and the great town of Gloucester.

As there is a track and he has a cart, and some of his fellow captives with him, it is likely to be only a Troublesome journey.

At the village of Staunton, he leaves a few of the captives in the arms of their joyful families and presses on.

Dropping off the rest of his grateful companions at villages along the road. It seems likely Valgrym (with Yan’s body) will reach Gloucester the next day.

Valgrym is delayed by an old man who stops him at the edge of town, shouting at him and shaking a stick. The old man seems to sense there is a body in the cart.

THE GAME MECHANICS

I’m giving him +1 Supply (now +2) and he has Health +3, Spirit +4 and Momentum +5

I realised I hadn’t yet made the Move called “Undertake a Journey”

Ask the Oracle D100=88, so Troublesome (3 progress per Waypoint)

MOVE:Undertake a Journey

Action Dice 4 +2 Wits = 6

Challenge Dice 1 & 3, so STRONG HIT

Reaches a Waypoint. Make 3 boxes of progress and choose to move quickly +1 momentum, -1 supply.

MOVE:Undertake a Journey

Action Dice 3 +2 Wits = 5

Challenge Dice 4 & 6, so WEAK HIT

Reaches a Waypoint . Make 3 more boxes of progress but suffer -1 Supply.

I’ll choose to push this a bit by trying “Reach Your Destination” a bit earlier (only 6 of 10 boxes ticked)

MOVE:Reach Your Destination

Progress = 6

Challenge Dice 3 & 10, so WEAK HIT

He arrives but faces an unforeseen hazard or complication. This is a good chance to roll on my Chartopia Dark Ages Encounter Table at <https://chartopia.d12dev.com/en/chart/3090>

You meet an old man. roll again for previous occupation. They appear to be poor and senile. They could be a good source of funds
Rolling again, I get “Pedlars”

THE STORY

The lad is in a hurry but doesn't want to just shove the old fool out of the way.

He tries to pacify the old man. Forcing himself to be patient and kind, he convinces the old man to step aside but has to agree to give Beornric a lift home.

It is late in the day when he finds the house of Yan's family. Yan's son is Elstan and Mathilda is the daughter-in-law.

Valgrym tells the tale of Yan's struggles to get home and gives Yan the credit for the defeat of the Slavers.

They are both, saddened by the news and heartened by it, in equal measure. He is invited to stay with them for a few days, but asked if he will use his silver tongue to convince the local priest to allow Yan to be buried in holy ground. It seems Yan was not a regular church-goer.

Over the next couple of days, Valgrym is well-fed and tended by his new friends. He is able to investigate the Priory of St Oswald using the excuse of trying to convince the Prior to grant Yan a place in the graveyard.



The Prior seems like a very hard-hearted man – perhaps this is to be expected of a man who would trick an innocent faerie into drinking a sleeping draught and then stealing his treasure. He reluctantly agrees in exchange for Valgrym doing some work in the Priory's vegetable gardens.

THE GAME MECHANICS

MOVE:Compel

Action Dice 4 +2 Heart = 6

Challenge Dice 5 & 7, so WEAK HIT

They will do what you want but ask something in return.

<https://www.fantasynamegenerators.com/anglo-saxon-names.php>

I'm going to give V a chance to "Forge a Bond" due to the circumstances. He also gets to use his Storyweaver Asset.

MOVE:Forge a Bond

Action Dice 6 +2 Heart +1 Storyweaver +1
circumstance for granting credit to Yan = 10

Challenge Dice 1 & 10, so WEAK HIT

They ask something else first. Because of the circumstances, and already having a number of unfinished quests, I'll have them ask something that can be done quickly with a Scene Challenge or a single Move. V will agree to try and I'll give him the Bond.

MOVE:Sojourn

Action Dice 5 +2 Heart = 7

Challenge Dice 5 & 8, so WEAK HIT

V gets to choose two benefits, so
Recuperate:+2 Health (now +5) and Plan:+2
Momentum (now +8)

As he now shares a Bond, gets to roll +Heart again to see if he gets more – this time it is a Weak Hit so he gets another +1 to Momentum (now +9).

To resolve the issue of getting Yan into Holy Ground, I'll do a simple Compel on the Prior and rely on my high Momentum to help me succeed.

MOVE:Compel

Action Dice 3 +2 Heart = 5

Challenge Dice 9 & 10, so MISS 😞

I will BURN MOMENTUM to make the 9 a success, re-setting momentum to +2 and they will agree but ask a price.

THE STORY

Although a week's work at the Priory is going to make it tough to get the dagger back to Peatbog in time, it does seem as though it would give Valgrym opportunities to steal it.

The dagger is being displayed in a glass coffin, with the bones of St Oswald himself. It is just impressive enough (with the brass polished to a golden glow and the glittering red jewel) that it makes the pilgrims believe these are really the relics of a man who once ruled Northumbria and built many churches there.

The only real difficulty is that it is constantly guarded by Brother Beornfred. Valgrym keeps an eye on the monk, looking for a time when Beornfred is away from his post.

Unfortunately, the monk sleeps in the chamber of the relic and even has a bucket brought in to him when he needs the toilet. It seems he has sworn a holy vow to keep the relics of St Oswald always in sight!

As it seems like Poetic Justice, remembering what Peatbog has told him of the Prior's trick, Valgrym decides to try and get Beornfred to take a similar draught of cider, whiskey, valerian and honey. Working in the garden, he has access to the ingredients and can cleverly concoct the potion.

All seems to go to plan. On the hot afternoon Beornfred eagerly quaffs the potion that Valgrym manages to leave beside the offering plate. The monk falls into a deep sleep.

Using his gardening tools, Valgrym snaps open the glass coffin and snatches up the dagger. Reacting to the magic inside him, it glows brightly causing the boy to stumble and put his foot through the glass.

THE GAME MECHANICS

As a result of the narrative solution to the "price", I'm going to grant V progress in the Quest to "Retrieve the Sword of Kings". As it is only a Troublesome Quest, that's three boxes.

MOVE:Gather Information

Action Dice 3 +2 Wits = 5

Challenge Dice 5 & 4, so WEAK HIT

The information **complicates** the quest. +1 Momentum (now +3)

I'll say it takes 1 supply to get the ingredients (now down to +1)

MOVE:Secure an Advantage

Action Dice 4 +2 Wits = 6

Challenge Dice 2 & 4, so STRONG HIT

Prepare to act +2 Momentum (now +5)

I'll grant him progress on the Quest for this, taking it to 6 out of 10 boxes.

Sneaking the potion to Beornfred and getting away with the dagger without being suspected is going to either require a Face Danger with Shadow (V's lowest stat) or he can try to "Fulfil Your Vow" based on the 6 boxes of progress.

MOVE:Fulfil Your Vow

Progress = 6

Challenge Dice 6 & 5, so WEAK HIT

There is more to be done! +1 Experience

THE STORY

Beornfred wakes groggily, squinting in the golden light.

Valgrym holds the glowing dagger between them and tries to speak in a “saintly” voice...

“You have been my good and faithful servant Beornfred here long enough. Go now and wash in the river, then travel to Glastonbury to tell the story of my good deeds to all you meet upon the way. I have been called home by the Father but thank you for your loyal service”.

With Beornfred singing loud Hosanas, Valgrym has little problem escaping from the Priory and making his way back to Peatbog in time to fulfil his first Quest.

THE GAME MECHANICS

This will be a difficult Move for V as you are supposed to use Shadow rather than Wits for deceptions. I could use Iron and try to knock the monk out, but I’m going to assume he doesn’t want to hurt a man of god.

MOVE: Compel

Action Dice 6 +1 Shadow = 7

Challenge Dice 2 & 5, so STRONG HIT (☺)

Phew! He believes it and V gets +1

Momentum (now +6)

This will count as Progress towards the Quest and fill all the boxes. I’m going to interpret this as meaning all the requirements of the quest have been met but V still has to Fulfil Your Vow to get the dagger back to Peatbog in time. Because all 10 boxes of Progress are now ticked only 10s would cause this to fail

MOVE: Fulfil Your Vow

Progress = 10

Challenge Dice 4 & 5, so STRONG HIT (☺)

Quest completed - +1 Experience