

Elizabeth Regina



Gloriana

Tobias Farquahersen & James Blome, Basterds for Hiyer, stood before a crumbling house in a dark London street. Their sodden cloaks clung to them as rain hammered down upon them, pooling amongst the thick layers of muck beneath their booted feet. Nearby, a leprous beggar moaned softly from beneath a pile of rags, his bowl more full of foetid rainwater than coinage. Drunks staggered home from the tavern not two doors away, and the bawdy sounds of carousing and pipe-music echoed up to them. James loosened his backsword from its sheath and nodded to Tobias.

"This is it, then?" he said regarding the decaying wattle and daub walls with distaste. His blonde curls were plastered to his face, elaborate moustachios drooping over his mouth. He wiped water from his brow with the back of a gloved hand.

Tobias shrugged, peering out from beneath the brim of a large and exceedingly damp hat. The once bright plumage of a peacock feather hung limply to the side. He tugged at his goatee. "I believe so, yes."

"Lovely place he has. I suppose we should knock," he sighed, stepping forward. As his fist connected with the rotting wood, the door creaked inward. A dim hallway beckoned them in. Exchanging perturbed glances, the Basterds for Hiyer stepped out of the driving rain and into the gloom.

Backswords & Bucklers

Adventuring in Gloriana's Britain

Book One: Basic Rules

By Christopher Cale

With assistance from Benjamin Dale
& Daniel Officer

Fiction by Benjamin Dale

A Fantasy Elizabethan role-playing game based on the
Swords & Wizardry: Whitebox rules.

Swords & Wizardry

By Matt Finch

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A Tied To A Kite game
<http://tiedtoakite.com>

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Elizabeth

An Introduction

This game is based on the rules of *Swords & Wizardry: Whitebox*, and includes new rules and a very minimum of background detail with which to run games with a Fantasy Elizabethan flavour. This booklet includes the basic rules for this kind of campaign, and will be followed by a number of supplemental booklets adding more detail and further campaign options. It is not a complete guide to Elizabethan life. Just as other games provide a framework for Medieval based fantasy games, this game provides a framework for Renaissance (and more specifically Elizabethan) based fantasy. Some further background reading may be desired, an excellent site is linked to at the end of this book. It is not required however, you are free to decide upon or design your own background and tone.

It should be noted that the supplements are not necessary for enjoyable play, with some imagination you should be able to get many, many hours of good gaming from this one book.

Like the system it is based upon, this game is very firmly of the Old School type, despite its new approaches. The rules are intentionally lightweight in comparison to many of the somewhat oversized tomes common today, yet they still provide an excellent framework for continuous campaign play. There is little in the way of mechanical character customisation, as games of this sort do not rely on endless lists of powers or skills. You make your character individual through your roleplaying and your actions, not through picking from a menu of rules.

This approach makes both *Swords & Wizardry* and *Backwords & Bucklers* an excellent tool for a referee. There is little flicking back and forth between vast rule-books mid-play, and rules alterations and new creations may be made and implemented with ease. In *Backwords & Bucklers* in particular, whilst forward planning is encouraged; an excellent evenings gaming session may be effectively made up on the fly by a referee with little time for preparation simply by rolling on some supplied tables for inspiration and working from there.

The key components of the *Backwords & Bucklers* basic game in comparison to *Swords & Wizardry: Whitebox* are a combat system modified to better represent Elizabethan combat, the new Scoundrel and Wise Women classes, appropriate money and price lists, and a focus on town based adventures. *Dungeon Delving* has been replaced with *Tavern Trawling*.

Notes on Historical Accuracy & Gender Equality

This booklet provides only a bare minimum of historical detail. There are plenty of sources available to look through for information about the period, and any attempt to provide serious detail here can be merely superficial. It is not expected for the players and referee's to be experts on the Elizabethan period. The game is primarily a Fantasy, so as long as the flavour of the period is there precise detail can be brought in only when necessary. And it is up to the referee as to how factually accurate and how fantastic they want to run their games. Besides, fantasy has always been an excellent excuse for ignorance.

Despite there being a female monarch, women did not have the same freedoms as they do today. Centuries of tradition still decreed that women of gentle birth spent most of their time on embroidery and music. Luckily this particular volume concentrates more on the lower strata of society. At this level, strong female characters have a great deal more latitude. There are many tales of female gladiators of the time for example. Besides which, it is up to the Referee to decide how far female emancipation has progressed in their campaign. Too much on the higher levels of society however will detract too much from Queen Elizabeth I own extraordinary character. At any rate, any instances in this booklet referring to men should also be taken to refer to women.

Getting Started

BACKSWORDS & BUCKLERS requires two kinds of participants: (1) The Referee and (2) the Player. For Players, the first step in playing the game is to create a Player Character (PC). This is a simple matter of rolling some dice to determine your character's strength and other basic attributes, picking a character class, and choosing in-game equipment. If you're the Referee, however, you've got a bit more preparation to do.

Rule Number One

The most important rule in BACKSWORDS & BUCKLERS is that the Referee always has the right to modify the rules. In fact, it's encouraged! This is your game, after all. There are gaps in the rules - holes left open on purpose - because much of the fun of "old school" gaming is being able to make up rules as needed.

Dice

BACKSWORDS & BUCKLERS uses several different types of dice, and they are abbreviated herein according to the number of sides they have. For example, a four-sided die is noted as "d4." If this text requires a player to roll "3d4" that means to roll three (3) four-sided dice and add the results together. Other die types (six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided, and twenty-sided) follow in the same manner. However, there is no die with 100 sides. When asked to roll d100, instead roll two (2) ten-sided dice, treating the first roll as the "tens" and the second as the "ones." So, if one were to roll a "7" and then a "3", the result would be "73." Please note that rolling two zeroes is treated as "100."

Character Sheets

A character sheet is a piece of paper designed to organize and contain any and all necessary PC information, for the benefit of both the Referee and Player. Sample character sheets may be found at the back of this booklet, and may be photocopied or printed for use, or a simple 3" by 5" index card could be used.

Attribute Scores

The basic abilities are numbers which represent the Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Constitution, Dexterity, and Charisma of a character. The standard way to create attribute scores is to roll 3d6 for each attribute in the previously mentioned order. Once those rolls have been made, it is often obvious which type of character best fits the abilities - though the player always has the option to play any class desired.

Universal Attribute Bonus

Each attribute has the potential to modify what you can do. These rules encourage the use of the following table for the use of all abilities. Referees will have to decide how and when these bonuses apply and should feel free to tinker with the values if desired. (If the Referee decides to even use them at all!) For example, some prefer the “average” range to be 9-12 and will adjust the table accordingly.

Attribute Roll	Description	Bonus
3-7	Below Average	-1 (or -5%)
8-13	Average	None
14-17	Above Average	+1 (or +5%)
18	Exceptional	+2 (or +10%)

Experience Bonus

Each character gets a bonus percentage to their “experience points” (XP) that will increase the amount of experience points gained during an adventure. All characters get to add together their percentage Prime Attribute Bonus and their Wisdom Bonus for a total experience bonus for the character. The maximum attainable bonus is 20%, the maximum possible subtraction is 10%.

Strength

A high Strength lets a character carry more weight and give him a bonus on their damage roll when attacking with a sword or other melee weapon. Strength is the Prime Attribute for Fighters.

Intelligence

Intelligence represents IQ, reasoning, and the ability to solve puzzles or understand difficult concepts.

Wisdom

Wisdom determines a character's insight, perception, and good judgment. It provides an Experience Bonus for all characters. It is also the Prime Attribute for Wise Women.

Constitution

Constitution refers to the health and endurance of a character. A high Constitution score gives a character an additional hit point (or two) per hit die.

Dexterity

Dexterity is a combination of coordination and quickness. A high Dexterity score gives a character a bonus on their "to-hit" roll when attacking.

Charisma

A highly charismatic character has a better chance to talk his way out of trouble and can lead more followers than a character with a lower Charisma. Charisma is the prime attribute for Scoundrels.

Hit Points

Hit points (HP) represent a character's ability to avoid damage at the last moment when a blow has snuck through their defences, and to a certain extent the amount of physical punishment they can receive. They are determined by the amount of hit dice (HD) a character has at their particular class level. If a Player begins the game with a 1st level Fighting Man (1+1 HD) he would therefore roll 1 HD (1d6) and add "+1" to the end result to determine his PC's starting HP.

Hit points are re-rolled each time a Player Character advances in level - however, if the re-roll results in a character having fewer hit points for their new level than their previous level, ignore the re-roll and retain the prior amount.



That evening, the Duck & Drake had been its usual lively self. Thick blue smoke curled around the eaves, the fire crackled cheerfully in the inglenook and the regulars diced, drank and cursed. Long Lucy surveyed her domain from behind the bar, occasionally yelling at the barmaids. Erect Eric tousled drunkenly with Robert the bouncer for a while before being flung through the door to land in some unspeakable gunk outside, causing a cacophony of uproarious laughter. The Basterds for Hiyer forsook their usual place by the fire to lose their earnings from previous nights of adventure and danger to a trio of scarred, burnt or just plain wrinkled men around a battered excuse for a table.

The evening drew on, and the regulars made their farewells. As the room emptied, a cloaked figure walked ponderously over to Tobias and James. The figure favoured one leg particularly, clunking with every step before easing itself down into a chair opposite the Basterds.

"Evenin' gents. Sign outside says you're lookin' fer work. You the right people to talk to?" The figure threw back its hood, revealing a mop of hair and a wide grin.

James grinned back. "Hallo Stumpy! Haven't seen you in a while, how are you?"

"Aye, well enough," growled Stumpy Thomas, glancing towards the door. "I haven't much time, so I'll get this said quick if that's right with yer both." Tobias nodded, gesturing for the man to continue. "Well. It's simple enough work, I just need yer to go and visit a debtor of mine, a certain Jackson. Just need you two to, ah, make sure he keeps up on his payments. You follow?"

Tobias leaned forward. "Oh, I think we understand perfectly. How will we be compensated for our time?"

Stumpy Thomas laughed a long, strange guttural hiccough. He called for drinks, lighting up his pipe with a flourish and the trio discussed details. Not two hours later, the Basterds for Hiyer stood before the residence of a certain Jackson, torrential rain driving them to complete their task with haste.

Character Classes

Characters in Backwords & Bucklers are generally always Human. Fantasy Elizabethan games very rarely include any other playable race, but the referee of course might wish to run a game including Elves and Dwarves and the like.

After generating ability scores, players must choose a Character Class, which determines their abilities in combat, their hit points and the special abilities they have access to.

In this basic game there are but three character classes: Fighting Men, Scoundrels and Wise Women, rules for which are presented below. These classes are the most appropriate for the standard type of campaign. Further classes will be added in later supplements; including Tradesmen, Magic-Users, Seamen and Gentlemen.

Reading Character Class Tables

Level: Refers to the level of experience of the character.

XP: This is the number of Experience Points (XP) needed to advance to this level.

BHB: This is the “Base Hit Bonus” added to the attack roll; it's also added to your Defence rating (See Combat).

HD: This is the number of d6 Hit Dice at that level, determining the characters hit points. Characters re-roll their HD each time they advance a level to obtain a number of hit points.

ST: This is the Saving Throw number for the character trying to avoid something terrible. A Saving Throw is made by rolling a d20 and trying to achieve that number or more. It might also be used to attempt special abilities and certain actions, as mentioned in these rules when required and also as determined by the Referee. When Saving Throws are called for they are often listed as being vs something. This simply gives an idea of the type of thing that has caused the Saving Throw, and characters often have bonuses for use with certain types of Saving Throw. For example, against any Saving Throw vs Death, fighting men receive a +1 bonus to their roll.

The Fighting Man

The Fighting man is a warrior, trained in battle and in the use of armor and weapons. Your character might be a thuggish Swashbuckler, a professional Gladiator, Soldier, Mercenary, Hired Muscle or be an aspiring Master of Defence. Because they are the best equipped of all the character classes to dish out and absorb damage, Fighters often end up on the front lines, going toe-to-toe with muggers, thugs, horrifying monsters and Spaniards.

Fighting Man Class Abilities

Weapon and Armor Restrictions: Fighting Men are trained in warfare and, as such, have no weapon or armor restrictions.

Cool Under Pressure: Against foes of one hit dice (HD) or fewer, Fighters get one attack per level each round.

Saving Throw: Fighters receive a +1 bonus on saving throws vs. death and poison.

Experienced Eye: At the start of a combat, a Fighting Man character may make a Saving Throw to see if he is able to figure out whether an opponent is more or less skilled at arms than he is (i.e whether they have more or less Hit Dice). This will not give him precise details.

Experience Bonus for Strength: Strength is the Prime Attribute for Fighters, which means that a high Strength score grants them an additional 5% or 10% experience. A low one may reduce them by 5%.



Combative Nature: Fighting Men gain Experience Points by fighting foes. This is the only standard method they have of gaining XP, but they generally get double the usual value. Note that they need not kill their opponent, only overcome them. If they win the fight they get double the usual XP for it. If they lose the fight, but are somehow still alive, they still gain Experience Points, but not at their usual doubled rate.

Fighting Man Advancement

Level	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1+1	+0	15
2	1,500	2	+1	14
3	3,000	3	+2	13
4	6,000	4	+2	12
5	12,000	5	+3	11
6	24,000	6	+4	10
7	48,000	7	+4	9
8	96,000	8	+5	8
9	192,000	9	+6	7
10	384,000	10	+6	6

The Scoundrel

You are a scoundrel and a rogue. Your life is spent in seedy taverns and dirty back-streets instead of honest toil. You survive by taking on any dirty work you can find, preferring the quick rewards and loose hours to applying yourself in meaningful employment, but you are unlikely to be truly evil. Scoundrels excel in keeping themselves alive in tricky situations, getting into places they shouldn't be and sneaking around unseen. They are also often fast-talkers, and prefer to get themselves out of an awkward position by persuasion, guile and stealth than by force.

Scoundrel Class Abilities

Weapon and Armour Restrictions: Scoundrels are as familiar with weapons as the Fighting Man, though they may not put the same effort in their training. Scoundrels have no weapon or armour restrictions.

Information Gathering: Scoundrels hear two rumours when drinking in a tavern for each drink bought.

Picking Locks: Two d6 are rolled: the first die indicates the number of turns taken for the attempt, and the second roll indicates success or failure. The pick locks attempt succeeds on a 1 or 2 on the second die. One turn per 2 levels of experience may be subtracted from the required time. Zero and negative results indicate success in a single round. Consecutive attempts are allowed until success is achieved.

Moving Silently: When using proper precautions and dressed appropriately, Scoundrels move nearly noiselessly.

Experience Bonus for Charisma: Being charismatic is important to any aspiring scoundrel. This means that a high Charisma score grants them an additional 5% or 10% experience. A low one may reduce them by 5%.

High Living: Scoundrels gain Experience Points by spending money, but not for overcoming opponents. 5 XP for each penny spent.

Scoundrel Advancement

Level	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1	+0	14
2	1,500	2	+0	13
3	3,000	2+1	+1	12
4	6,000	3	+1	11
5	12,000	3+1	+2	10
6	24,000	4	+2	9
7	48,000	5	+3	8
8	96,000	5+1	+3	7
9	192,000	6	+4	6
10	384,000	6+1	+5	5

The Wise Woman or Cunning Man

The Wise Woman, or Cunning Man, performs several important roles in Elizabethan village life. Using their dowsing abilities they are able to track down missing people and property and often act as a sort of early modern Private Eye in that regard. In the majority of cases, however, missing property often mysteriously reappears as soon as it gets around that the Wise Woman is looking for it. They also act as healers and herbalists, dealing with ailments that the average villager cannot afford to pay a leech or a barber-surgeon for. They avoid being denounced for witchcraft (and being hanged for it) by combining prayers with their actions, although this is still a danger if they are traveling in new places where no-one knows them.

As the majority of Wise Women and Cunning Men types are country bred they may find difficulties settling in to the city. Also, as their starting money is much less than other classes they will need to find work as soon as they can in order to survive. As they will not be known to many in the city, they must be careful not to arouse suspicions of witchcraft.

Wise Woman/Cunning Man Class Abilities

Weapon and Armour Restrictions: Although they may not get much practice at arms, they will have picked up the basics that underlie the use of all weapons when growing up. If they can afford them, Wise Women and Cunning Men may wield any weapon, or wear any armour.

Dowsing: By making a Saving Throw, a Wise Woman or Cunning Man may locate an object, person or something else by using two crossed sticks, or a crystal or weight on a piece of string. On a successful Saving Throw, the tool being used will indicate the direction of the thing in question, allowing the Wise Woman or Cunning Man to track it down.

At 1st level, and each time a level is gained, the player may choose one new type of thing to be able to track from the following list: *Specific Person, Specific Item, Specific Animal, Water, Mineral, Disease, Magic, Traps, Habitation, Evil*. Water, Disease, Magic, Traps, Habitation and Evil are all general terms, the nearest source of the type searched for will be detected. Mineral will locate the specified mineral, for example gold, iron or coal. Specific Person, Item and Animal hunt the location of the specific stated source of that type. For example, dowsing for water will point you toward the nearest spring, stream etc. But dowsing for Clarys, the cow (a *Specific Animal*), will locate Clarys, the cow.

Herb Lore: By collecting plants (which requires access to suitable wilderness, or spending 1d6 pennies in an appropriate shop), spending somewhere between half an hour and an hour to prepare them, and successfully making a Saving Throw; a Wise Woman or Cunning Man may make poultices, tisanes and other preparations to create a variety of effects. In most cases the preparations may be stored for an indefinite length of time.

At 1st level, and each time an odd numbered level is gained, the player may choose one new type of effect to be able to create from the following list: *Poison*, *Antidote*, *Cure Disease*, *Salve*, *Purify Food and Drink*.

Poison - This will create any type of poison the Wise Woman or Cunning Man desires. It can be fatal or debilitating, fast or slow acting. The precise effects are down to the referee to rule on as situation demands, but the poison must be ingested somehow and the victim is usually allowed a Saving Throw.

Antidote - This will create an antidote to a poison. A specific one can be made if the symptoms are known which will instantly nullify the effects of a poison. If desired, a general emetic may be brewed up instead. This can be created in advance without knowledge of a poisons symptoms and will allow the victim to make another Saving Throw to throw off the effects of the poison.

Cure Disease - This will allow the Wise Woman or Cunning Man to cure most diseases. Precisely what disease is to be dealt with must already be known before the cure can be brewed, the Wise Woman will be able to diagnose it from a sufferer's symptoms.

Salve - This will create a soothing balm which can be applied to wounds. Alternatively it could take the form of an invigorating tonic. Either way, it will allow the consumer to recover 1d6 Hit Points.

Purify Food and Drink - This will make spoiled food or drink edible again, though not if its been thoroughly rotted. Alternatively, it can also be used to preserve food for an extended period of time.



Surgery: Wise Women and Cunning Men know enough primitive chirurgy to be able to cauterise wounds and so on. They can rescue a character dying from a Downright Blow from a cutting or firearms attack as described later. In addition, if they are able to administer to the wounded character throughout the entire recovery period, they may reduce this period by 1d6 weeks.

Saving Throw: Wise Women and Cunning Men receive a +2 bonus on Saving Throws against any kind of deceit, including illusions.

Experience Bonus for Wisdom: Wisdom is the Prime Attribute for Wise Women and Cunning Men, which means a high score may give them a percentage bonus to Experience Points, and a low one a penalty. This is in addition to the usual bonus/penalty due to exceptional Wisdom scores that all classes receive.

Helpful Nature: Wise Women and Cunning Men only receive Experience Points for assisting people. Each task, or quest or other sequence of actions that is done deliberately to aid someone in need (such as mending a broken leg, or retrieving an item of importance to them) gives the Wise Woman or Cunning Man 50 Experience Points per level or Hit Dice of person helped. Assisting someone in a major or extended way (such as saving their life, or helping them complete their life's work) will double that to 100 XP per level or Hit Dice of person helped.



Wise Woman or Cunning Man Advancement

Level	XP	HD	BHB	ST	Notes
1	0	1	+0	15	1 new Herb Lore 1 new Dowsing
2	1,500	1+1	+0	14	1 new Dowsing
3	3,000	2	+0	13	1 new Herb Lore 1 new Dowsing
4	6,000	2+1	+1	12	1 new Dowsing
5	12,000	3	+1	11	1 new Herb Lore 1 new Dowsing
6	24,000	3+1	+1	10	1 new Dowsing
7	48,000	4	+2	9	1 new Herb Lore 1 new Dowsing
8	96,000	4+1	+2	8	1 new Dowsing
9	192,000	5	+2	7	1 new Herb Lore 1 new Dowsing
10	384,000	5+1	+3	6	1 new Dowsing

Tobias stood shivering in a pool of water. He removed his sad looking hat and shook it out without much success, simply adding to the puddle beneath him. He looked at the ruined feather mournfully - another fine garment ruined by the weather. A sudden gasp from James somewhere down the gloomy corridor broke Tobias from his reverie.

"Tobias, look!" exclaimed James, pointing at something on the wall. "We seem to have stepped into something far worse than we were expecting."

Tobias replaced his sodden hat and peered through the gloom at the point. Bizarre symbols were scrawled along the walls. Simple, child-like drawings of men and women twisted around themselves in agony, eldritch letters rippling across them. Some otherworldly, unspeakable tongue spoke forth from the wall, it's dark message inscrutable and unknowable. Symbols of some ancient devilry stretched from floor to ceiling. At once Tobias realised that the whole corridor had begun to glow with some unnatural light. Words wriggled like worms across the rotting floorboards, an inherent wrongness that caused a crawling sensation to rise from the base of Tobias' spine to the back of his head. Nail marks raked the walls, droplets of what could well have been blood spattered the myriad horrors as if in decoration. Regarding the devilry, a dull pain emerged somewhere within the depths of his mind.

He felt some strange, sticky wetness on his lips and he raised his hand to wipe it away. Glancing down, he saw that it was a drop of his own blood. Tobias reached for his rapier, any speech inane before such an otherworldly and penetratingly evil spectacle. They shared a nod. Both men knew that they must go on, regardless of their fear. Something called them onward.

Onward, past those eldritch symbols, to the black door - through which neither man knew what fate awaited them.

Equipment & Money

Starting Equipment

Starting characters in a Backswords & Bucklers campaign can be assumed to have the following equipment rather than purchasing items individually.

Fighting Men will generally begin play with:

A backpack or satchel.

One set of reasonable clothing, including boots and hat.

One good cloak or blanket.

One whetstone.

One eating knife.

One good dagger.

Any one weapon.

If a single handed weapon is chosen, a Buckler may also be taken.

Leather armour.

1d6 Shillings in coinage.

Scoundrels will generally begin play with:

A backpack or satchel.

One set of reasonable clothing, probably patched, including boots and hat.

One good cloak or blanket.

One eating knife.

One good dagger.

Any one single-handed weapon, or a staff.

One set of lock-picks.

1d6 Shillings in coinage.

Wise Women and **Cunning Men** will generally begin play with:

A satchel.

One set of poor quality clothing.

One blanket.

One eating knife.

A quarterstaff, cudgel, or dagger.

If desired, a sling and a pouch of stones.

Dowsing tool of choice (sticks, crystal or weight).

A small mortar and pestle.

1d6 pennies in coinage.

Extra small items may be granted at the discretion of the referee, or be bought with the starting coinage.

Money

The usual coins are replaced in Backswords & Bucklers with Pounds (£), Shillings (s.) and Pence (d.).

There are 20 Shillings to the Pound, 12 Pennies in each Shilling, and 240 Pennies in each Pound.

Equipment

The prices given here are only guidelines and should be altered as you see fit. A later volume will give more complete lists of things characters can buy, and where they can buy them.

Adventuring Gear

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Backpack	5 d.	Rations (dry), day	4 d.
Bedroll	2 d.	Rope, 50 feet	1 d.
Candles (12), small	1 d.	Sack	1 d.
Crowbar	5 d.	Satchel	3 d.
Flint and steel	5 d.	Shovel	5 d.
Grappling hook	5 d.	Spikes (12), iron	2 d.
Hammer	2 d.	Stakes (12), wooden	1 d.
Lantern	10 d.	Tent	2 s.
Mirror (small), steel	5 d.	Torches	1 d.
Oil (lamp), 1 pint	2 d.	Waterskin	1 d.
Rations (trail), day	2 d.		

Living Costs

Average living costs can be assumed to total a shilling a week. This includes lodging and food. If this cannot be paid, the character is likely to be turned out and will have to live on the streets until they can afford to take rooms elsewhere.

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Cost
Backsword	3 s.
Battle-Axe	3 s.
Billhook	2 s.
Broadsword	15 s.
Club/Cudgel	-
Dagger	1 s.
Falchion	3 s.
Longsword	£1
Quarterstaff	1 s.
Rapier	£1 (at least)
Spear	1 s.
Welsh hook	3 s.

A **Backsword** is a cheaply produced sort of single edged broadsword, often with a basket covered hilt. Generally about 36" in length.

A **Battle-Axe** is a long hafted, two handed axe roughly similar to a Daneaxe.

A **Billhook** is primarily an agricultural instrument, but is also a terrifyingly effective weapon. It has a long (7 or more feet long) haft surmounted by a blade than can be used to cut, hook or stab with. This is the weapon (alongside the longbow) that made England's armies deadly in earlier times.

A **Broadsword** is a straight, two-edged blade of reasonably high quality. It was designed primarily for cutting, and was a favourite of Gentlemen until fashion brought over the Rapier from Italy. They are generally about 36" in length, and often have a basket covered hilt.

A **Club** or **Cudgel** is just a short length of wood used as a weapon. It may be as simple as a scrounged stick, or be ornately carved.

A **Dagger** is just any two-edged short bladed weapon. Used as a secondary arm, a backup weapon or as a weapon of stealth.

A **Falchion** is a single edged blade of varying (but generally short) length. It has a very thick almost axe like blade.

A **Longsword** is also known as a **Bastard Sword**. The ideal length of its blade is the same as that of a **Broadsword**, but it has a longer hilt that allows it to be wielded in either one hand or two. With both hands you have greater control and more effective use of power, but you can shift to holding it with one hand in order to grip your opponent or deflect a blade. It is the typical Knights weapon of previous centuries.

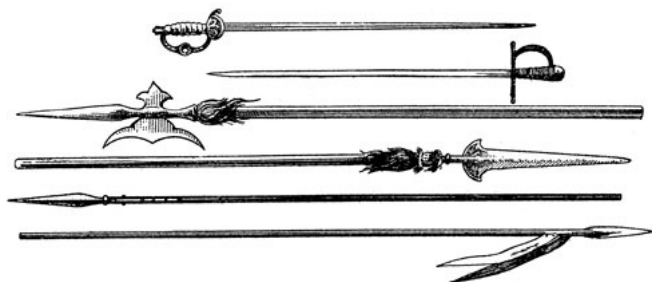
A **Quarterstaff** is a long length of wood generally between 7 and 9 feet in length. It is commonly fashioned into an octagonal shape to provide better grip, and may have the butt end shod in iron to provide greater speed to the tip. It is held two handed, with one hand about halfway down its length and the other a quarter of the way up, hence the name Quarterstaff. It is an extremely effective weapon at both long and close range, and many of the techniques used in the Quarterstaff fight can be equally applied to **Billhooks** and **Spears**.

A **Rapier** is a long bladed, two edged weapon primarily designed for thrusting, though it can cut to a certain extent. It was common for **Rapier** fights to end in both antagonist's death as whilst a thrust could kill with relative ease, it didn't have the stopping power of a **Broadsword**.

A **Spear** is pretty common throughout history. It's a sharp bit of metal on the end of a wooden shaft. Cheap and effective.

A **Welsh hook** is a form of **Billhook**. Its blade was much lighter due to being made as several prongs rather than one solid lump of metal, making it about as fast as a **Quarterstaff**.

All melee weapons deal 1 six sided dice of damage with each hit.



Missile Weapons

Weapon	Cost
Bow	3 s.
Arrows	5 d. For 20
Arbalest	5 s.
Bolts	5 d. For 20
Sling	2 d.
Pistol	£1
Caliver	£2
Powder & shot	1 s. For 10 shots

A **Bow** is the famed longbow that alongside the **Billhook** made English and Welsh armies much feared in prior centuries until they were reorganised into continental pike and musket formations. It requires most of someone's life to master, so unless a character begins the campaign with one they may never use one. It may be shot once every round.

An **Arbalest** is the proper term for a crossbow. It takes one complete round to reload after shooting.

A **Sling** is a surprisingly effective weapon, but like the **Bow** is a skill most townsmen will never acquire. Unless the character hails from the countryside they are unlikely to be able to make effective use of one of these. It may be used once every round.

A **Pistol** is a very light matchlock firearm. It is inaccurate and short ranged, but powerful and relatively portable. They will take 1d6 rounds to reload after firing.

A **Caliver** is a mid-sized matchlock firearm. It was eventually completely replaced by the heavier Musket toward the end of the 16th century. They will take 1d6 rounds to reload after firing.

All missile weapons deal a number of six sided dice of damage equal to the shooting characters level if they hit.

Missile Weapons Range Increments

Weapon	Range Increment
Bow	70 ft
Arbalest	60 ft
Sling	40 ft
Pistol	20 ft
Caliver	50 ft

Each increment accrues a -2 to hit with the weapon. Such distances are unlikely to be used in the confines of a city, but have been included just in case.



Armour

Armour	Damage Reduction	Cost
Leather Jack	1	1 s.
Breastplate & Helm	2	10 s.

Please note that anyone wandering about the streets of London in anything more than leather will certainly rouse the attention of the Watch and other concerned citizens, unless obviously wearing it in some official capacity.

Shields

Shield	Defence Bonus	Cost
Buckler	+1	1 s.
Target	+2	2 s.

James' hand was on the pommel of his backsword as he threw open the door. The powerful stench of blood, urine and incense hit the two adventurers in a wave as the true horror of the sight beyond the black portal revealed itself.

A hall, lit by guttering torches and a lone smoking brazier. The windows, tightly swathed in black cloth forbade knowledge of the bloody scene to the outside world. A gigantic, undoubtedly evil symbol spread itself out across the flagstones of the hall. More scratched figures, bathed in blood gazed down at our adventurers. A corpse, broken and discarded like a doll lay at the side of the room. At the center of it all, a cowed figure clasped a bloody child in one hand and a large serrated dagger in the other. The eyes of a maniac lifted from his sacrifice, rolling wildly in their sockets.

The child squirmed. The dagger fell. James rushed forward. Tobias drew steel. The hall trembled. The door slammed shut. The child shrieked. The maniac began to cackle.

James careened sideways, some presence striking out at him from the shadows of the hall. Tobias looked away from the cowed maniac known on this world as Jackson, to find a bulky black shape towering above him. It had the barest of silhouettes, shifting maddeningly like terrible, thick smoke. A twisted head, if it could be called that, glared down at Tobias with a thousand clustered eyeballs. Mandibles clacked, strange liquid dripping from them.

"Holy Mary Mother of God, what is that?" cried James, sweeping himself from the floor.

Playing The Game

Once characters have been created, the Referee will describe where the characters are and what they can see. The game might start in a rural peasant village, a vast and teeming city spiked with towers and minarets, a castle, a tavern, or at the gates of an ancient tomb. From that point on, Players describe what their characters do. Going down stairs, attacking a Spaniard, talking to other Player Characters (PCs) or Non-Player Characters (NPCs) controlled by the Referee all of these kinds of actions are decided by the players. The Referee then describes what happens as a result: the stairs lead down to a huge tomb, the Spaniard attacks the characters, etc. The rules below are guidelines handling events like combat, gaining experience, movement, healing, dying, and other important parts of the game.

Basically, you and the Referee work together, with the Referee handling the details of a dangerous fantasy world, and you handling what your character does in it. The epic story of your character's rise to greatness (or death in the effort) is yours to create in the Referee's world.

Gaining Experience

Each character class has its own method of gaining Experience Points (XP), which is listed in their descriptions earlier.

Each character class also has a Prime Attribute listed in its description, and the character creation process details how to use your attributes to determine the character's total XP bonus.

Time

Sometimes the Referee will rule that an hour or month passes in the life of the intrepid adventurers, but two important time measurements merit a quick explanation. These are the "turn" and the "combat round." A turn represents ten minutes, and a combat round represents 10 seconds. Thus there are 60 Combat Rounds in a Turn.

Combat

When the party of adventurers comes into contact with enemies, the order of events in the combat round is as follows:

1. The Referee determines if one side or the other is entitled to a free attack or move as a result of surprise - this is either a judgement or a die roll of some kind, depending on the circumstances.
2. Determine initiative. One roll is made for each side, not for each individual in combat. Initiative is re-rolled every round.
3. Party with initiative acts first (missile fire, casting spells, movement, melee attacks, etc.) and results take effect.
4. Party that lost initiative acts; results take effect.
5. The round is complete.

Determine Initiative

At the beginning of each combat round, each side rolls initiative on a d6 - high roll wins. The winning side acts first, casting spells, moving, and attacking. The other side takes damage and casualties, and then has its turn.

Initiative rolls may result in a tie. When this happens, both sides are considered to be acting simultaneously. The Referee may handle this situation in any way he chooses - with one caveat. The damage inflicted by combatants during simultaneous initiative is inflicted even if one of the combatants dies during the round. It is possible for two combatants to kill each other in this situation.

Defence & Armour

Each character has a Defence rating, which represents their ability to defend themselves against blows directed against them.

This is calculated by adding your characters total To-Hit Bonus to the number 10. Shields increase this total.

Armour has a Damage Reduction as listed in the tables above. This Damage Reduction simply reduces the amount of hit point damage a character receives when hit in combat.

$$\text{Defence Rating} = 10 + \text{To Hit Bonus} + \text{Shield Bonus}$$

The Attack Roll

The most important rule to understand about combat is the attack roll.

To attack with a weapon, the player rolls a d20 and adds any bonuses to the result. These “to-hit” bonuses may include a dexterity bonus and any bonuses for magic weapons. The player then subtracts any “to-hit” penalties they might have from their roll. The attack roll is then compared to the targets Defence rating to see if the attack hits. If the attack roll is equal to or higher than the Defence rating, the attack hits.

If an attack hits, it inflicts damage, usually 1d6 points. The damage is subtracted from the defender's hit point total (See Damage and Death, below).

Specific Situations

The following are a compilation of guidelines and instructions for handling certain, specific situations that might arise during combat.

Damage and Death

When a character (or creature) is hit, the amount of damage taken is deducted from his hit points, usually 1d6 points. A character's strength bonus or penalty is applied to damage caused when using melee weapons. When HP reaches 0, the character receives a Downright Blow.

Downright Blows

When an attack results in a character or opponent running out of hit points, that attack has caused in a telling blow being struck. A Downright Blow might also occur if the target is unable to defend themselves. On the roll of a 1 on a d6, the blow is instantly fatal. Otherwise effects depend on the type of blow received as below:

Bludgeoning attacks and **Slings** that result in a Downright Blow knock the character unconscious for a number of turns equal to the number of hit points of damage caused by the final hit.

Cutting attacks and **Firearms** that result in a Downright Blow send the target into shock. They collapse on the floor and may take no further part in the combat. After a number of turns equal to the roll of 1d6 (plus constitution bonus), the character must make a Saving Throw vs. Death every turn or die.

Thrusting attacks and **Bows** that result in a Downright Blow have punctured something vital in the targets body. They are already dead, though if adrenaline is running through their body they may be entirely unaware of it as yet. If the target has been taken by surprise, they die relatively instantaneously (though perhaps with some gurgling). Otherwise, they must make a saving throw vs Death every round to remain functioning. There is no medical assistance possible for a character hit in this way, they will die eventually.

The type of attack being used should be decided upon by the referee depending on situation, and the way the player has described his attack.

The following weapons may make a **Cutting Attack**: Backsword, Battle-Axe, Billhook, Broadsword, Falchion, Longsword, Welsh Hook.

The following weapons may make a **Thrusting Attack**: Backsword, Billhook, Broadsword, Dagger, Longsword, Rapier, Spear, Welsh Hook.

All weapons, shields, and characters fighting unarmed, may make a **Bludgeoning Attack**.

Unarmed Attacks

Players may at times be forced to fight without weapons. In this case, the damage caused by a successful blow will be 1d4.

Improvised Weapons

Sometimes a player may wish to grab a bit of otherwise harmless scenery with which to damage their opponents. In this case, the damage will be the normal 1d6 and the type of attack must be determined by the referee depending on what is being used. An improvised weapon will, however, break and (generally) become unusable if when rolling for damage caused with it a 6 is rolled, though the damage will still be inflicted.

Invisible Opponents

An invisible opponent can only be attacked if their general location is known and the attack suffers a -4 penalty "to-hit." Note that creatures (those with sensitive smell, hearing) will frequently be able to detect invisible opponents; the Referee should determine the chance of this according to the creature concerned and the situation.

Melee Attack

A melee attack is an attack with a hand-held weapon such as a sword, spear, or dagger. A character's dexterity bonuses "to-hit" and strength bonuses to damage are added to melee attacks. Two combatants within ten feet of each other are considered to be "in melee."

Missile Attack

Missile attacks are attacks with ranged weapons such as arbalests, slings, or thrown daggers. A character's dexterity bonus for missile attacks is added to the "to-hit" roll when the character is using missile weapons. When using missiles to fire into melee, it is not possible to choose which opponent (or friend!) will receive the brunt of the attack.

Morale

Certain opponents, such as mindless or undead creatures, are fearless and will always fight to the death. The majority, however, will not continue to fight a hopeless battle and will seek to retreat, surrender, or flee. The Referee will decide when opponents abandon battle and retreat, based upon the situation and the opponent's intelligence.

Negotiation and Diplomacy

Some combats can be averted with a few well-chosen words (even lies). If the party is out matched or the opponents don't seem likely to be carrying much in the way of loot, the party might elect to brazen their way through in an attempt to avoid combat or at least delay it until more favorable conditions arise.

Fighting With Two Weapons

In reality, an empty hand with which to grip your opponent or bat aside thrusts is just as (and often more) useful than wielding a second weapon. All characters are therefore assumed to be on a level ground whether wielding one weapon or two and there is no bonus in any case.

Sneak Attacks

If a character can attack an opponent whilst they are unaware of the character or their intentions, then the character will be able to deal a large amount of damage. This type of attack often automatically hits (unless with a ranged weapon) and causes a number of d6 of damage equal to the characters level.

Healing Hit Points & Surgery

Hit points are regained fully with a good nights sleep, and even a poor one will restore half of them. 1d6 hit points may also be regained by taking a draught of alcohol, several taken at once does not increase the effect.

Surgery in Elizabethan times is primitive, but is the only way to rescue a character receiving a Downright Blow from a cutting weapon or firearm. If noone is playing a Wise Woman, the party will have to find someone else skilled in the art in time to save a dying comrade, usually a barber. This will generally cost 1d6 shillings, and will require a Saving Throw vs Death to succeed. Otherwise the character dies. Treatment is generally a horrific experience, and the character will require 2d6 weeks to recover.

Remember

BACKSWORDS & BUCKLERS is a free-form roleplaying game, meaning that there aren't very many rules. The Referee is responsible for handling situations that aren't covered by the rules, making fair evaluations of what the characters do and deciding what happens as a result. This is not a game in which the players are "against" the Referee, even though the Referee is responsible for creating tricky traps, dangerous situations, and running the monsters and other foes the PCs will encounter during the game. In fact, the players and the Referee cooperate with each other to create a fantasy epic, with the Referee creating the setting and the players developing the story of the heroes. If they aren't skillful and smart, the epic might be very short. But it's not the Referee's job to defeat the players - it's his job to provide interesting (and dangerous) challenges, and then guide the story fairly.



Fighting down a wave of fear and nausea, Tobias thrust his rapier toward the creature. His trembling fingers fumbled the blade and the tip almost touched the floor. Unthinkingly, he retreated before the horrifying apparition.

James tore himself away from the creature to find Jackson bearing down upon him, blade raised high in the air. Loosening his buckler from the folds of his cloak, he brought it to bear against the madman, passing through the air where a head had been a second ago. A serrated blade lashed upwards, catching on his cloak. The two collided and then wrestled to control the situation. A flurry of blows ensued, there was the crack of breaking teeth and Jackson fell limply to the ground.

Tobias lunged, piercing the apparition before him. His blade sank through, smoke parting as it went. The creature howled, swatting Tobias aside like a fly. Tobias' shoulder lanced with pain as the horrors claws dug deep into his shoulder, and he crumpled down crying out in agony, his blood pooling and mixing with that already on the floor.

Wheeling at Tobias' screams, James plunged his backsword into the side of the apparition. It howled once more, a thousand voices from the pit scraping the air. It stumbled away from Tobias swiping with terrible claws at James, who staggered desperately away. The last of the wild strikes connected with the side of his head, flinging him across the room and into black unconsciousness.

Information for the Referee

Opponents

Monsters are rarely encountered in games of this sort. The referee might like to decide that foreign countries are populated by orcs, elves and dwarves; but in general monsters play a limited role in the campaign. Monsters that are encountered should usually be horrifying and terrible, preying on the weak denizens of a city from the sewers or inhabiting dark forests and caves. Referees should feel free to create their own horrifying creations rather than using ones from a list of monsters, and when stock monsters are used they should be wary of using anything not of European mythical or legendary background. Most opponents encountered therefore will be Human, and should either be created as Player Characters if they are important NPCs, or just given an arbitrary amount of Hit Dice as follows.

Basic Monstrous (or Otherwise) Opponent Creation Table

Hit Dice	Hit Bonus	Defence	Saving Throw	XP Given When Defeated
< 1	+0	10	19	10
1	+1	11	18	15
2	+2	12	17	30
3	+3	13	16	60
4	+4	14	15	120
5	+5	15	14	240
6	+6	16	13	400
7	+7	17	12	600
8	+8	18	11	800
9	+9	19	10	1100
10	+10	20	9	1400
11	+11	21	8	1700
12	+12	22	7	2000

Further levels of opponent can be extrapolated from this table if required. You might also like to give extra XP awards for good roleplaying, successfully completed missions or other things. Try to give out around 100 XP to each player per session for such things.

Dealing With Player Actions

Unlike many game systems, BACKSWORDS & BUCKLERS (and its ancestor, Swords & Wizardry) do not make use of a standardised skill system to regulate character actions. Instead it is down to the referee to decide whether a characters actions succeed or not based on their ability scores, their class and abilities, their background and the situation.

There a number of ways in which a referee can regulate these actions. One is to simply decide whether they succeed or not with no luck taken into account. For simple actions and routine things this is usually the best approach.

Sometimes however a referee wants to throw in a little luck. This is usually because they consider the outcome of the situation to be uncertain, or because it is a dramatic situation that would have more tension if dice rolls were involved. In this case we can suggest two options, though the referee is free to make use of any methods they prefer.

The first is a simple six sided dice roll. Simply decide on the odds of the situation working to the characters favour, often 50/50 (i.e. The roll of 1-3 on a d6). Then alter these odds using the bonus or penalty from an appropriate ability score. If you want the players to know the result of the roll, you can get them to roll the dice so they feel more involved, but if it is necessary that the result should be unknown to them you should roll the dice yourself and conceal the roll.

The other option is to use the Saving Throw. This is often the best option for dramatic or dangerous dice rolls, as it ties in directly to the characters level of power. It may or may not be modified by ability score or situation as you see fit. The Saving Throw should also be used if the character needs to make a roll to save themselves from some external influence, such as a trap or the like.

Campaign Information

Adventures in a Backswords & Bucklers game using this booklet are generally of the Tavern Trawling type. Other types of campaign will be introduced in later volumes. Tavern Trawling involves players hanging around their tavern of preference, buying people drinks, listening to rumours and trying to find work.

The game assumes that campaigns are set in London. At the time it was a warren of villainy, as well as being the administrative centre of the Kingdom. It is thus an excellent place to set games of this sort.

The setting for campaigns of this sort is dark and dirty. The bad days of King Henry VIII reign, and the religious persecution of Queen Mary may have been replaced by the Golden Age of Gloriana, but for the average denizen of London, life has changed little. The streets are still full of filth, and there are still plenty of dirty jobs that need doing.

There are plenty of books and websites around that can provide better background material for you than I can fit in a mere booklet, so there is a list at the end of this volume of suggested sources of information.

Treasure

Randomly discovered treasure is unlikely in this sort of campaign, so tables should not be looked up. Magical items should definitely be placed intelligently, and sparingly. Some ideas for such items follow shortly. If you need to find out how much money a person is carrying on them for whatever reason, you might like to roll on the following table after deciding how affluent they are:

Affluence	Money Carried
Poor	1d6 d.
Well off	1d6 s.
Very Rich	1d6 £



Magic Items

Magic items reinforce the fantasy of the setting, but should be used sparingly. They are not common, and must be attained as a reward, by cunning or by force. They should never be available to just buy, although they could be part of a deal. And they should always be carefully crafted by the referee to ensure they fit the campaign.

Some Sample Magic Items

Demon Bones: These dice constructed from the knucklebones of Demons always come in sets of three. When used in gambling the owner of the dice will prove extremely lucky, allowing the player to re-roll any dice used for this purpose and choosing the more favourable outcome. Whilst carried however they will adversely affect the characters luck for all other situations, giving them a penalty of -1 to all Saving Throws.

Broadsword of the True Fight: This ancient blade has been re-hilted many times. It is completely unbreakable, and provides its wielder with an instinctive understanding of combat. A character that is not a Fighting Man wielding this weapon fights with an attack bonus as if they were a Fighting Man of the same level instead of using their own bonus. This also then alters their Defence rating, but they gain no extra hit points or any of the Fighting Man's class abilities. A Fighting Man carrying this weapon immediately gains an extra level, which they lose if they drop or dispose of this weapon.

The Ruff of Danger: This fine, black neck ruff instills a reckless fervour in its wearer. A character wearing this will have to start a fight given any excuse unless they make a Saving Throw. No saving throw is allowed if the fight would include foreigners on the opposing side. However, Fighting Men wearing this item further double the Experience gained from combat. Any other class wearing the Ruff of Danger will gain experience points from combat as if they were a Fighting Man.

Sorcerous Garments: This is more a category of magic item. They are an item of clothing with sorcerous properties woven into them. They provide a +1 bonus whilst worn to a rating or dice roll chosen by the referee. This could be to an ability score, Defence rating, Saving Throws or something else.

The Eavesdropper's Earring: A character wearing this ring is able to listen through doors, walls and windows that they put the appropriate ear to as if the obstruction in question wasn't there.

Tabern Trawling

This is the process by which characters find things to do. In other, similar games, a referee creates a large dungeon or a map of a fantasy world in which to base their adventures. In this game instead we use Taverns as the standard method of finding adventure.

The referee should first create a Tavern which the characters regularly frequent, complete with details of regulars, services and prices. A sample tavern is included after this section. Tables of rumours that characters might pick up whilst chatting to regulars are common. Rumours form the basis of excellent interaction between player characters and the taverns regulars, and may provide useful or not so useful information, or even plant ideas for adventures. Most characters should receive one rumour for each drink they buy for someone. Scoundrels will receive two however.

This tavern will form the characters base of operations during the campaign. You are unlikely to need more than one tavern; but there are a number of situations that could cause the characters to be unwelcome in their regular haunt, or even for it to be destroyed or otherwise made inaccessible. Due to the amount of detail expected of these places, you may like to create extra taverns in advance in case such an event occurs, or in case the characters decide to visit another establishment temporarily.

When characters are looking for work, you should roll on the following basic tables for inspiration. They will not provide you with a complete adventure on their own, but should provide the seed to be able to create an entertaining session on the fly. With a little imagination, these tables should provide entertainment for a very large number of sessions before they start getting old. Remember, these tables are there only to provide inspiration for a referee and should not be followed slavishly. Feel free to ignore or change dice rolls, or make up entries entirely. Bear in mind that its possible you will get through several jobs in an evenings play, so you may wish to generate 3 or 4 at a time in advance.

A later volume will contain more detailed Tavern Trawling tables, as well as guidance on creating taverns and regulars, and a number of sample adventures.

Roll 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10 and 1d12 all at once on the tables following to generate ideas for jobs.



D4	Type of Patron
1	Mysterious Stranger
2	Tavern Regular
3	Passing Acquaintance
4	Officer of the law

D6	Who They're Working For
1	Themselves
2	The Crown
3	A Criminal Empire
4	A Foreign State
5	A Mate
6	Public Spirit

D8	Type of Job Offered
1	Assasination
2	Sabotage
3	Escort
4	Courier/Messenger
5	Theft/Burglary
6	Intimidation
7	Kidnapping
8	Blackmail

D10	Reward
1	A Favour
2	2d6 d.
3	Blackmailed, no reward
4	1d6 s.
5	Information
6	1d6 s.
7	Arms or other equipment
8	2d6 s.
9	Minor Magic Item
10	3d6 s.

D12	Complications
1	Rivals
2	The law is involved
3	Supernatural forces
4	No complications
5	Job is a cover for something sinister
6	It's a trap
7	Characters are being hunted
8	No complications
9	Patron will renege on payment
10	Patron has got it wrong
11	Tight deadline
12	No complications

A Sample Tavern

The Duck & Drake, Newgate, London

The Duck & Drake is a relatively quiet tavern situated in Newgate, London. It is a two storey town house, and offers food, drink and beds, though there is no stable. It is kept reasonably clean by its proprietor, Long Lucy, and the crowd is generally well-behaved, if somewhat seedy. Dice games are allowed, but prostitution is not.

The Staff

Long Lucy is the landlady. She is a tall (hence the nickname) and raven-haired widow of about 40, who has run the establishment since her husband Thomas died 5 years ago in a brawl with swashbucklers. She is an imposing figure and tolerates no misbehaviour in her premises, her authority is backed up by most of the regulars, who wish to conduct their business in peace, and by **Robert**, her hired muscle.

Robert serves as bouncer for the premises. He rarely strays far from the place out of habit. He is an overweight but muscular man in his mid 30's, and is rarely very clean.

Fat John is the potman. He serves behind the bar, rinsing mugs and goblets and doling out the drink. Despite his nickname, he is a short skinny man. He is in his early thirties.

There are 4 barmaids who cook, clean and serve. Their names are **Sarah**, **Meg**, **Rose** and **Elizabeth**.

All members of staff lodge on the premises in the rooms on the second floor, apart from the barmaids who share an outhouse in the yard behind the tavern.

The Regulars

These are the customers who can be found in the bar most evenings, and sometimes during the day too. More may be added by the referee as required.

Small Bill is a discreet man who generally sits in a quiet corner, where he receives visits from many strangers. He is a fence, but this is not widely known. He *is* well known for a coward, and if trouble starts he will be the first to make himself scarce.

Black Jack is another man who does his discrete business in the Duck & Drake. He is an agent of the crown, and this is rarely known at all. Often not even by the

men that visit him for work. If players are looking for a job, this man may be one of the people to give them one. He is generally dressed all in black, and his clothes are finer than you might expect of your average patron. He openly carries broadsword and dagger, and is fond of sack.

Old Jacob is in his late sixties. He dices with **Burnt Marcus** and **Flemish Pete** regularly and drinks ale. He makes his living by selling meat pies of dubious content in the streets outside.

Burnt Marcus was caught in a fire at a young age, and carries the scars on the right side of his body and face to this day. He is in his early twenties, and always wears a glove on his right hand. He plays dice with **Flemish Pete** and **Old Jacob**. He drinks ale. He makes his living by illustrating playing cards.

Flemish Pete is an inveterate dicer and often owes money to **Stumpy Thomas**. He is in his late twenties, loves playing Hazard and generally drinks cider. His dad is foreign, hence the name, and pays him an allowance.

Stumpy Thomas is a one legged money-lender. He specialises in helping people with gambling debts. He has a few thugs he uses to ensure payments are on time. He is also short, wears fine clothing and carries a falchion. He drinks perry for preference. He doesn't like to talk about how he lost his leg.

Erect Eric is impotent. He is also a compulsive liar. See the rumours section later for details. He drinks anything he can get his hands on. Nobody knows anything true about him.

Prices & Services

Ale - 1 d. Tankard

Wine - 2 s. Bottle

Perry - 2 d. Tankard (cider made from Perry pears)

Cider - 1d. Tankard

Sack - 3 d. Goblet (sherry)

Aqua Vitae - 2 d. Measure (any spirits, usually brandy)

Meal (usually broth and bread) - 2 d.

Room (of which there are 2) - 4 d. Per night.

Bedding down on the floor of the common room (palliasse provided, blanket not) - 1 d. Per night.

Rumours

These may be heard by anyone willing to buy one of the more talkative regulars a drink. Feel free to substitute any of them getting too old or irrelevant. Roll on the following table:

Roll 1d8

- 1 - Black Jack is a criminal mastermind (false).
- 2 - Small Bill is the man to go to if you need to shift something (true).
- 3 - Erect Eric is really a cleaner at the Queens Arms in Jacobs Street (false).
- 4 - The abandoned house next door is a haven for thieves (true).
- 5 - Rotten Francis down at the docks has started wearing silks. He won a lot of money at dice. Likely to get himself robbed soon (true on all counts).
- 6 - Ere! I heard the Archbishop has the plague (false).
- 7 - There's a Griffon on Exmoor that's eating everyone's sheep (false).
- 8 - Some blue-bloods had a duel outside the front of the tavern last night. They stabbed each other to death with their fancy rapiers. One of them was foreign (true).

Erect Eric has his own table of lies and misinformation thus:

Roll 1d6

- 1 - I'm the exiled King of Denmark!
- 2 - I'm a carpenter on the side.
- 3 - I'm a forester in my spare time.
- 4 - I met the Queen once! I reckon she fancied me. Kept giving me the eye.
- 5 - I've got the Philosopher's Stone back home. I keep it in a sock to hide it from the Alchemists. They're always after me and my Stone.
- 6 - I'm doing Lucy on the side! (If she hears this one, she will throw Eric out for the night).



A Sample Job

The Unfortunate Spaniard

Players Information

Whilst they are trawling the Duck & Drake for a job, Black Jack motions them over and buys the players a drink. He tells them that a Spanish spy is due to be landing underneath London Bridge that night, and Black Jack needs him neutralised. He also tells them that the Spaniard (who is going by the name of Henry) will be carrying a rat in a cage that will need to be killed and dumped in the Thames. Henry will also be wearing an odd mask, which Black Jack will require as proof of the deed. Black Jack will pay each of you 4 shillings on bringing the mask to him.

Referee's Information

Henry will land at about midnight, and will have 2 men with him rowing the small launch he has used to get up the river. They will defend Henry unless seriously outnumbered, and they are unaware of Henry's purpose.

The rat is a plague rat that Henry hopes to release into the palace.

The mask is actually a magical item. It is imbued with the power to protect the wearer from any disease. It looks like a small black eye mask with hypnotic patterns picked out in green around the eyes.

Most adventures in Backwords & Bucklers will require no more detail than that given for this sample. Any required maps or specific details should be developed by the referee as and when needed in the course of play. This creates a more free flowing experience for everyone, ensures that details can be altered easily if they become too problematic to implement, and allows unforeseen factors to easily be taken into account.

Future Publications

The following volumes are planned for this series:

Men of Magic: Introducing the Magic-User class and its various specialities; including Sorcery, Alchemy, Demonology and Clockwork.

Tavern Trawling: Providing expanded Tavern Trawling tables, Tavern generation (and their patrons) and other adventure ideas.

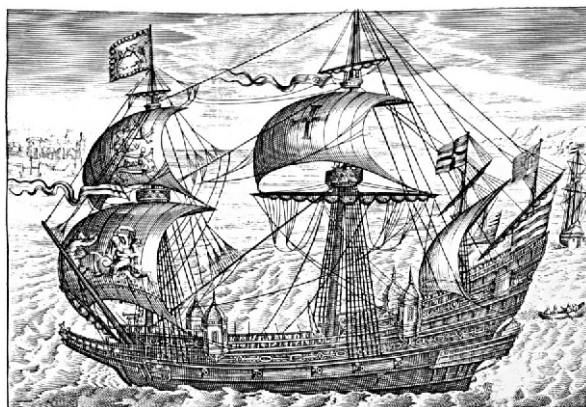
The Company of Maisters: Providing further options for combat and the Fighting Man class, including the ability to progress through the ranks of the Company of Maisters, the body that governs the teaching of defence in Britain.

The Book of Goods: Expanded price lists, and more detail on money.

The Book of Trades: Introducing the Tradesman class and listing a large number of possible trades, including special rules for employing them.

Men of Birth: Introducing the Gentleman class, and the Courtly Intrigue tables for a different style of campaign.

Men of the Sea: Introducing the Seaman class, and rules for exploring the rest of the world by sea.



Recommended Reading

For gaining a better understanding of the period and the genre, I recommend finding and at least skimming through the following:

Gloriana, or the Unfulfill'd Queen By Michael Moorcock pretty much defines the genre of Elizabethan Fantasy.

Kennilworth By Sir Walter Scott will give you a good insight into the period, and especially into courtly intrigue.

Paradoxes of Defence, Brief Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defence By one George Silver, Gentleman and anything written about them will give you a good understanding of the way Elizabethans fought, and why combat works the way it does in Backswords & Bucklers.

Internet Sources

There is much historical information available on the internet for this period. I recommend the following websites for any specific information you may require:

The Compendium of Common Knowledge: 1558 - 1603 may be found at:

<http://www.elizabethan.org/compendium/index.html>

This is also available in print.

The Map of Early Modern London is a valuable resource for campaigns taking place in London. It is located at:

<http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/>

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Fighting Man Character Sheet

Backswords & Bucklers

Name	_____	XP	_____
Player	_____	Needed	_____
Level	_____	Bonus	_____

	Score	Bonus & Other Effects
Strength		_____
Intelligence		_____
Wisdom		_____
Constitution		_____
Dexterity		_____
Charisma		_____

Saving Throw	_____
Bonuses: +1 vs Death/Poison	

Hit Bonus	_____
Defence	_____
Damage Reduction	_____

Hit Dice	_____
Hit Points	_____

Money

£ _____
s. _____
d. _____

Gear

Fighting Man Class Abilities

Weapon and Armor Restrictions: Fighting Men are trained in warfare and, as such, have no weapon or armor restrictions.

Cool Under Pressure: Against foes of one hit dice (HD) or fewer, Fighters get one attack per level each turn.

Saving Throw: Fighters receive a +1 bonus on saving throws vs. death and poison.

Experienced Eye: At the start of a combat, a Fighting Man character may make a Saving Throw to see if he is able to figure out whether an opponent is more or less skilled at arms than he is. This will not give him precise details.

Experience Bonus for Strength: Strength is the Prime Attribute for Fighters, which means that a high Strength score grants them an additional 5% or 10% experience. A low one may reduce them by 5%.

Combative Nature: Fighting Men gain Experience Points by fighting foes. This is the only standard method they have of gaining XP, but they generally get double the usual value. Note that they need not kill their opponent, only overcome them. If they win the fight they get double the usual XP for it. If they lose the fight, but are somehow still alive, they still gain Experience Points, but not at their usual doubled rate.

Scoundrel Character Sheet

Backboards & Bucklers

Name _____ XP _____
Player _____ Needed _____
Level _____ Bonus _____

Score Bonus & Other Effects

Strength

Intelligence

Wisdom

Constitution

Dexterity

Charisma

Saving Throw _____

Bonuses: None

Hit Bonus _____

Defence _____

Damage Reduction _____

Hit Dice _____

Hit Points _____

Money

£ _____
s. _____
d. _____

Gear

Scoundrel Class Abilities

Weapon and Armour Restrictions: Scoundrels are as familiar with weapons as the Fighting Man, though they may not put the same effort in their training. Scoundrels have no weapon or armour restrictions.

Information Gathering: Scoundrels hear two rumours when drinking in a tavern for each drink bought.

Picking Locks: Two d6 are rolled: the first die indicates the number of turns taken for the attempt, and the second roll indicates success or failure. The pick locks attempt succeeds on a 1 or 2 on the second die. One turn per 2 levels of experience may be subtracted from the required time. Zero and negative results indicate success in a single round. Consecutive attempts are allowed until success is achieved.

Moving Silently: When using proper precautions and dressed appropriately, Scoundrels move nearly noiselessly.

Experience Bonus for Charisma: Being charismatic is important to any aspiring scoundrel. This means that a high Charisma score grants them an additional 5% or 10% experience. A low one may reduce them by 5%.

High Living: Scoundrels gain Experience Points by spending money, but not for overcoming opponents. 5 XP for each penny spent.

Wise Woman/Cunning Man Character Sheet

Backboards
&
Bucklers

Name	_____	XP	_____
Player	_____	Needed	_____
Level	_____	Bonus	_____

	Score	Bonus & Other Effects
Strength		_____
Intelligence		_____
Wisdom		_____
Constitution		_____
Dexterity		_____
Charisma		_____

Saving Throw	_____
Bonuses: +2 vs Deceit	

Hit Bonus	_____
Defence	_____
Damage Reduction	_____

Hit Dice	_____
Hit Points	_____

Money

£ _____
s. _____
d. _____

Gear

Wise Woman/Cunning Man Class Abilities

Weapon and Armour Restrictions: None.

Dowsing:

Specific Person	☐	Disease	☐
Specific Item	☐	Magic	☐
Specific Animal	☐	Traps	☐
Water	☐	Habitation	☐
Mineral	☐	Evil	☐

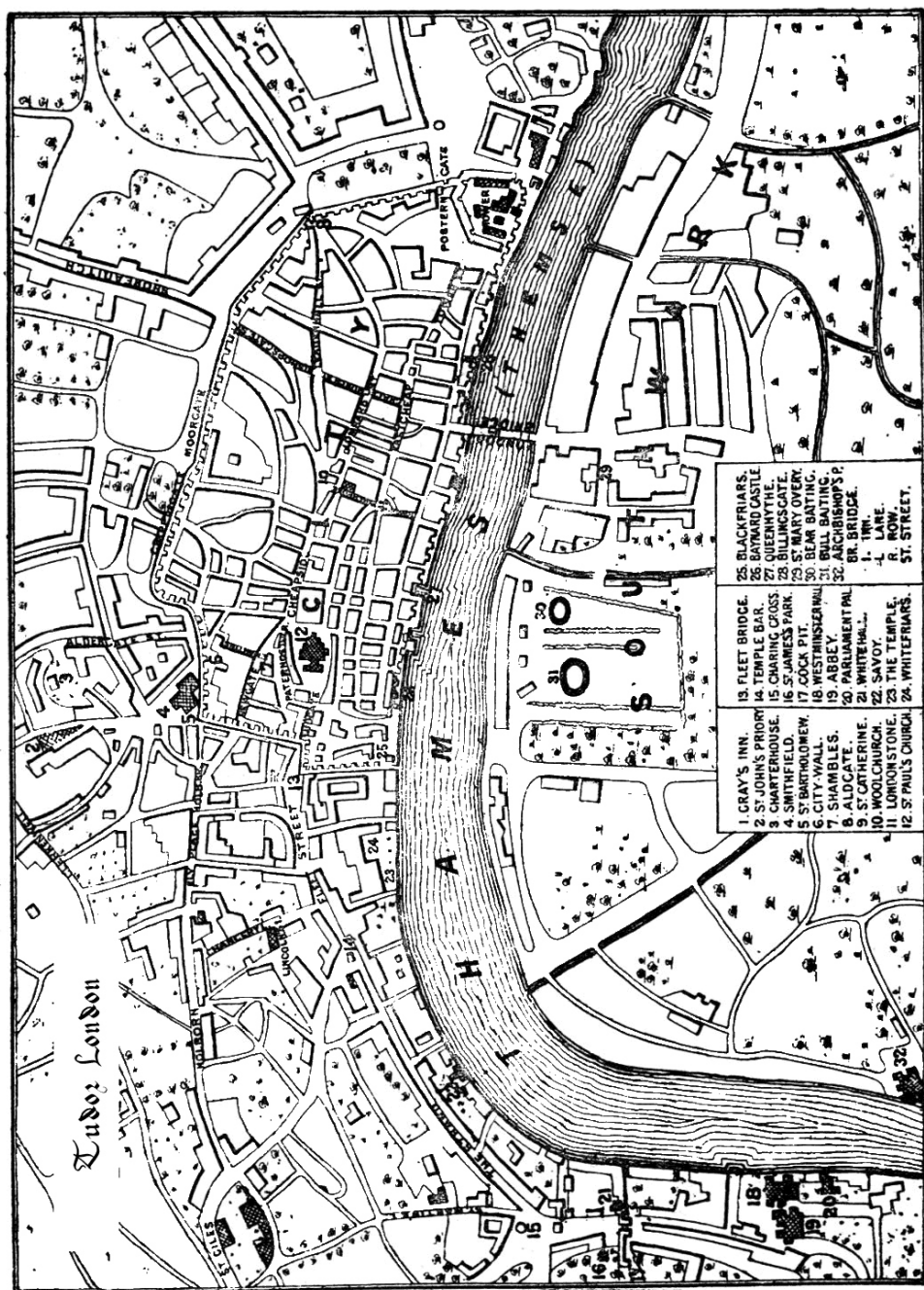
Herb Lore:

Poison	☐
Antidote	☐
Cure Disease	☐
Salve	☐
Purify Food and Drink	☐

Surgery: Wise Women and Cunning Men know surgery. May also reduce recovery time by 1d6 weeks.

Experience Bonus for Wisdom: Wisdom is the Prime Attribute for Wise Women and Cunning Men.

Helpful Nature: Wise Women and Cunning Men only receive Experience Points for helping people. In most cases 50 Experience Points per level or Hit Dice of person helped. Assisting someone in a major or extended way will double that to 100 XP per level or Hit Dice of person helped.



Notes