

Interview with the Cobwebbed Dragon

(Cobwebbed Dragon)

Tell us one or two lines about who the Cobwebbed Dragon is.

My real name is Lee, and I'm a 40-something British guy with a day job in IT and strong opinions about the Oxford comma. Outside of work and Dragon Warriors, I enjoy co-operative boardgaming, creative writing, socialising over coffee, and my fitness.

What was your first experience with Dragon Warriors? The why; the where; the how.

I started picking up the Dragon Warriors books shortly after they first came out. I already enjoyed adventure gamebooks and was part of a role-playing group at school (playing mostly AD&D). Dragon Warriors had a different tone to AD&D, which typically descended into high-fantasy murder-hobo dungeoneering that I didn't find particularly satisfying.

AD&D's complexity appealed to my analytical side, but that same complexity restricted storytelling and character development, plus AD&D's high-fantasy incoherence broke too much of its game world for any real immersion. As I was discovering what it was I enjoyed (and didn't enjoy) about role-playing, Dragon Warriors came along promising simple rules and narrative richness. However, the Dragon Warriors rules didn't seem to inform the style of play that the narrative promised, so playing Dragon Warriors didn't appeal at first – some of the published adventures were too combat-heavy for a game that read like it should be more about lore and role and less about the fighty-stabby-loot'n'glory style of play. It was frustrating to have so much emphasis on combat in the early published adventures when combat was so deadly, so whilst I drank in the lore, the writing, and the evocative language that has shaped my own writing over the years, I didn't play it much.

Where did you go from there? The 80's, 90's, and so on. Did you leave DW awhile and come back, or have you been here all along?

I've never left Dragon Warriors; it became my baseline for how a game should feel (albeit not how I thought it should play). So whilst I continued to play other games (AD&D, WFRPG, Runequest, GURPS, and their ilk), I was always thinking about how the games in which I played could be more Lands of Legend in atmosphere and how to incorporate elements from those game systems that worked well back into the Dragon Warriors rules.

Once I was confident enough to referee my own games, I tweaked the published adventures to fit better with the feel of Dragon Warriors – less combat and more immersion in the haunting folkloric ambience of the Lands of Legend.

Over the decades, I've rewritten the Dragon Warriors rules to suit my gaming style, so whilst I still play something recognisably Dragon Warriorsy (ATTACK vs DEFENCE, etc.), most of the high-fantasy elements have gone, combat – and magic – is likely the last resort for embattled adventurers, and I

place more emphasis on ensuring the lands in which the characters adventure feel genuinely strange, dangerous, and exciting.

Tell us about a memorable character you've played or that someone has played in one of your games.

I mostly referee games so tend not to get too invested in my characters – few last longer than a single scenario, although I did have fun with Bretwald when he accompanied the party into Vallandar's tomb.

However, on one of the rare occasions I'm not refereeing a game, I played in Shaun's play-by-forum adventure, *Vitai Lampada Tradunt*. My character was a sorcerer and particularly memorable in that he didn't cast a single spell for the entire adventure.

What's your favourite DW scenario?

As with any personal preference, what would constitute my favourite one day probably wouldn't be the next. I have a nostalgic fondness for King under the Forest – not only do I appreciate the Arthurian parallels, but it was the first adventure I played. I feel it also makes for a nice gateway drug for those of us previously only exposed to a diet of (A)D&D – it's dungeony enough to be a smooth transition for people used to that structure but steeped in enough lore to give the adventure a strong narrative context.

If I had to pick a published scenario that feels the most Dragon Warriorsy, I'd probably go with *A Box of Old Bones* or *Sins of the Father* (the latter mostly for the... wait, no spoilers). There's also a great adventure on DM's blog called [The Honey Trap](#) that can be adapted into an adventure as Dragon Warriorsy as anything that's been published.

And the adventure I had the most fun running was *The Miller's Tale* – the published adventure is quite light, but with a few more locations, characters, and mysteries peppering Jibb's Hollow and its environs, we had many evenings' hijinks with it!

How did the Cobwebbed Forest come about?

I first registered the domain back in 2009, at a time when I was keen to teach myself web design. I learn best when I have a practical goal towards which to work (rather than just learning by rote or from worked examples). Gaming – and Dragon Warriors particularly – was my predominant hobby, so I made it the focus of my learning project.

And I'm still learning.

Given that my goal is to learn, not to create a quality product, I don't use any frameworks or platforms – I hand-write every line of HTML, CSS, PHP, and MySQL, which explains why the site is still a little amateurish in parts (and why it takes me so long to publish updates). I have a backlog as long as my arm of things to add to (and improve) the site and I'm still actively developing it all these years later.

And the name, in case you were wondering, is taken from the blurb on the back of the old paperback

book that started the whole thing back in 1985. The promise of cobwebbed forests and haunted castles immediately conjured exactly the kind of fantasy adventure I wanted to have as a young kid and it's stuck with me for all of these decades.

Tell us a little about your Dragon Warriors Wiki project.

The Dragon Warriors Wiki was an incredible trove of fan-contributed content for the Dragon Warriors rules and the Lands of Legend setting. However, it was a tangential casualty of the Worldwide Web's convergence towards consolidation and homogeneity. I had a recent-ish backup of the Wiki content before it went dark, so I am currently compiling it all into a [library of PDF documents](#). The Wiki was a work of over a thousand web pages (some quite extensive), so you'll have to be patient – but it is coming.

Other DW resources - any recommendations?

As I alluded above, the content on the Internet is becoming homogenised, centralised, paywalled, and selectively curated. Niche communities are being drowned within a sea of content factories, and Dragon Warriors' presence on the Internet has suffered as a result. One of my ambitions with the Cobwebbed Forest is to provide a master index from which all Dragon Warriors content can be found on the Internet – a good place to start would be the ["Elsewhere" page](#), but there are also pages in the Forest dedicated to indexing the [published materials](#) and [all available adventures](#).

Most of the recent discussions and contributions to Dragon Warriors now appear on [Facebook](#) and [Discord](#).

What does Legend hold for you in the future, and what do you hope for Legend in the future?

I continue to draw inspiration from the Lands of Legend in my creative projects and I am looking forward to [Jewelspider](#), which I hope will be filled with more of the same evocative discomfiting melancholy that makes the Lands of Legend such an enticing place to explore.

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