



Maelstrom was one of the classic Roleplaying games of the 1980's, innovative in design and setting alike.

Revised, rewritten and updated for a new gaming generation, Maelstrom Domesday is a game of supernatural investigation in Anglo-Norman England. Rebellion, horror and fear stalk the villages, towns and cities of the new Norman kingdom, and only a brave and disparate band can prevent a decline into anarchy.

A lifepath system creates characters that are both deep and yet competent for the tasks ahead. Rewritten and expanded rules provide fast and flexible gameplay whilst still covering most in-play situations. The original Maelstrom free-form magic system allows a magical character to accomplish almost anything...at a price.

This core book also includes a full guide to life in 1086 and a richly described setting complete with dozens of important personages, adventure hooks and locations. There is enough in this one book for years of play and hundreds of adventures.

So grab your dice, open this book and enter the world of Maelstrom Domesday...

Based on the Maelstrom RPG by Alexander Scott





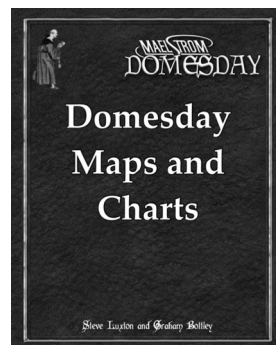
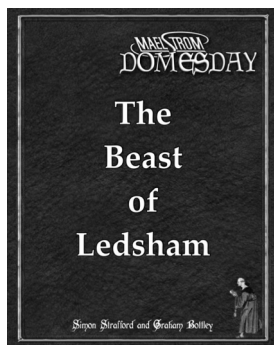
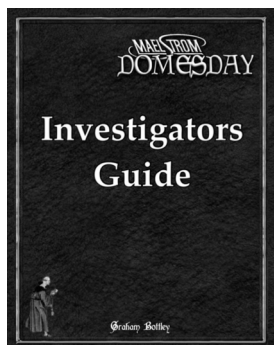
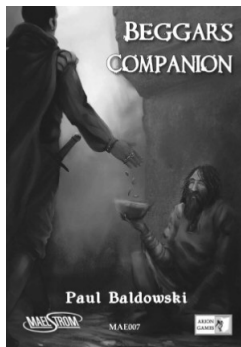
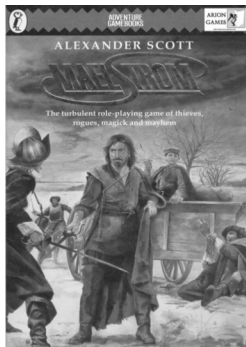


WÆLSTROM DOMESDAY

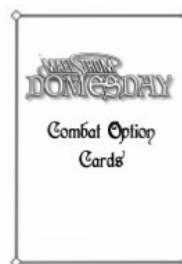
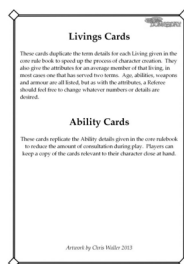
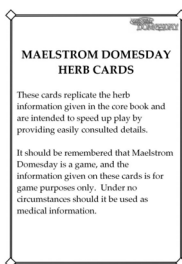
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Introduction



"The present life of man upon earth, O King, seems to me in comparison with that time which is unknown to us like the swift flight of a sparrow through the mead-hall where you sit at supper in winter, with your ealdormen and thanes, while the fire blazes in the midst and the hall is warmed, but the wintry storms of rain or snow are raging abroad. The sparrow, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry tempest, but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, passing from winter to winter again. So this life of man appears for a little while, but of what is to follow or what went before we know nothing at all."

St Bede

Ecclesiastical History of the English People

Adela, hand shaking, reached out towards the heavy iron ring set into the church door. The ring turned, the door creaked as it slowly slid inwards on iron hinges. The night outside was dark, stars glinting through the high branches of yew in the churchyard and the moonlight giving the old stone tower an ethereal glow.

Light came from within the church too. Not the warm flicker of a tallow candle or oil lamp but the cold blue light of a winters' midnight; Moving slowly along the nave at the pace of a funeral procession, the light drifted. To Adela, peering through the gap in the door, the shadows thrown by the strange light seemed to jump and leap like silent flames of ice.

The tanned Norman took a tighter grip on her hunting bow, knowing that her trusty arrows would do her no good here at all. With a deep breath to steady her nerve, Adela pushed the door wide and stood outlined by the moonlight behind.

The investigation had started so well, Adela and her companion Edwin riding into the small village in the warm June sunlight. The taciturn Edwin scowled at the peasants working the fields or tending their vegetables in the toft around each cottage. That was no surprise; Edwin would scowl at anyone from his own mother to the King of England and Normandy! These simple peasants regarded anyone riding horses as their lords and betters regardless of whether, like

Edwin, they were Saxon or whether they were Norman. Adela saw some irony in the fact that she was born in a cottage in Normandy, very like those before her but hundreds of miles away from these Yorkshire hills.

It appeared to be a simple assignment. Strange lights seen in the church at night. Scraping and wailing heard from the woods above the village. An old peasant never returned to his house. Thomas of Bayeux, Archbishop of York and their lord and master, had told Adela and Edwin that it was probably outlaws or rebels trying to stir up unrest amongst the simple folk and get them to rise up against the manor steward. Adela liked simple jobs. They could ride in, track down the outlaws and then she could let Edwin loose on them. Hitting people was his favourite form of entertainment, and if there were no repercussions then even better.

Except that there had been no trace of any outlaws. The people had been scared right enough, but none of them had seen any traces of brigands living wild. Ligulf the Old, manor steward for many years had, in truth, little to fear from the handful of families living here but he was as scared as his peasants. Ligulf had formed a patrol out of all able bodied men and searched the woodlands, they had put men on the church tower and they had even stationed men inside the church itself overnight. This last experiment had seen the men run screaming from the church by midnight and they were still too scared to say what they had seen.

Adela searched the woodlands herself and indeed found no sign of any encampments or men living wild. There was an old and ruined cottage and several natural pits amongst the trees and undergrowth, but nothing more. Years of living as an outlaw herself had made her very comfortable in the countryside away from the villages.

That was the afternoon. Now, at night, in the church and with the strange light bathing her face, Adela felt anything but comfortable. She could feel the hot and beery breath of Edwin on her neck and the comforting smooth bow in her hand, but they both felt...useless.

Taking a step forward, Adela saw for the first time the robe clad form of a teenage girl, long hair braided and throat gashed wide. There was no blood, could be no blood, as the transparent and glowing form turned its pain-wracked face towards the two investigators. The figure gaped like a fish for a few times and whispered but one word in archaic Saxon: "bones".

The form hung motionless for a moment as the door swung shut in the breeze, before continuing its endless promenade through the silent arches of the church.



The Maelstrom RPG

Originally published in 1984 by Alex Scott, then a schoolboy, Maelstrom was arguably the first successful British RPG. Riding on the popularity of the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks (both published by Puffin books) and selling huge numbers of copies through high street bookshops saw this book on the games shelves of many thousands of gamers. The original game was set in Tudor England and had magic as a strange force, able to affect reality in many different ways. Maelstrom broke from common game design at the time by having a completely flexible system for resolving the effects of Mages. Also groundbreaking was the concept of playing ordinary people such as butchers, labourers and beggars rather than Warriors, Wizards and Elves.

However, time moves on and many games have been written, played and forgotten again. Maelstrom for some reason lived on in peoples' memories and hearts. As one of those people, it has brought me a huge amount of joy to bring Maelstrom the RPG back from the dead and republish the original game.

And now I can go one further and bring you what is, in effect, Maelstrom 2nd Ed. I have refined and clarified the rules, revised aspects of the game and fitted it to a new setting; that of 1086. Hopefully this new game will keep this classic RPG in the spotlight and the whole Maelstrom line in the hearts of gamers for another 29 years!

England in 1086

The land of England in 1086, twenty years after the conquest by Duke William of Normandy, is a dangerous place. Ambitious Norman barons struggle amongst themselves for land, power and wealth, caring little for those trampled beneath the hooves of their warhorses. Bitter Saxon thanes, stripped of their ancestral land, plotting revenge from their meagre cottages. Outlaws and wild animals roaming the countryside between villages. Heartless rogues plundering victims of whatever they can get in the towns and cities. And amidst this danger dwell even stranger secrets.

Into this swirling mass of danger and desperation are sent a small and select band, carefully chosen by a Norman magnate for their experiences with the strange and unusual. Identifying the evil that threatens the heart and soul of the kingdom and purging that evil, our desperate heroes are a lone beacon against the howling darkness.

The Maelstrom

This peculiar phenomena is fully discussed in Chapter 5 but is central to the adventures created by this book.

The Maelstrom is the boundary between worlds, between the real and unreal, between dimensions.

When the Maelstrom is close to our world, strange things happen and strange beings can cross from their own reality.

Some of these weak spots are natural, some form temporarily and then fade again and some are created by ancient structures such as barrow mounds and stone circles.

The most dangerous weak spots however are those that are intentionally created by cultists, magicians and followers of ancient religions. These induced weaknesses quite often let through strange and dangerous powers into the world, sometimes way beyond the intentions of the originator!

Maelstrom Domesday Adventures

This is not a game of fighting through dungeons and battlefield heroics. This is not a game of fireballs and rampaging demons. This is however a game of strange supernatural events, Saxon and Danish plots against the King, investigation and horror.

The characters must use all of their skills and experience to untangle the strange goings on that threaten the Norman throne of England.

Saxon rebels hark back to the old days, invoke their warlike gods and the spirits of the land, attempt to drive the conqueror out by occult means where force has so far failed.

Welsh tribesmen, resenting both the new Norman invaders and the much earlier Saxon incomers use their secret Celtic lore to target the fear of the supernatural in all right-thinking folk.

Even Norman lords desperate for more power and wealth, use forbidden texts and secret lore to weaken the boundaries between worlds and displace their rivals.

These threats are all serious challenges to Norman rule, and all targets for investigation by the characters. The Referee chapter (Chapter 6) gives more assistance with planning and running this sort of adventure. It is the players' job to make the investigation fun!

Characters in Maelstrom Domesday

Unlike many RPG's, the characters in a Maelstrom Domesday game are not great warriors, powerful wizards and so forth. Characters in this game are normal people who have led fairly normal lives up until the point they encounter something supernatural. It is not unusual to have a young character who has only been a peasant or some other mundane living for a few years with no other experiences.

Similarly, an effective Maelstrom Domesday character is not only one who is highly skilled in combat, in magic or similar.



The investigative tasks that the characters are required to do for their patron require a broad range of abilities. An ability such as farming, herding or crafting may not seem like an essential skill for investigation, but if the adventure takes place in a rural farming village, these skills will be very useful indeed.

Adventures will often require an element of combat; against wild animals, bandits, enemies of the King, evil cultists or even some supernatural creatures. However, combat is usually not a central theme of these adventures and so a group that is composed purely of men-at-arms and knights may well struggle to be great investigators. Of course, given the threats and dangers the characters will face, some familiarity with weapons will prove useful even for a character who is not a soldier.

Social class and race will again seem to have obvious choices. Noble Norman characters with more starting cash and more political clout, would seem to be the best option. Again, whilst this may on the surface be the best choice, characters such as these will struggle to get meaningful answers from Anglo-Saxon peasants who will see the Norman purely as an incoming despot.

Magickal characters such as Mages and Wisewomen are likely to be rare. They will however be the only characters who can manipulate reality and possibly seize control over the supernatural forces they are investigating. At least one Magickal character in the group will prove useful although not absolutely necessary.

Lastly a note on the subject of age. Older characters have more attribute points and more ranks in professional abilities. They may also have more cash and items accumulated. However, older characters are also more likely to have accumulated injuries, wounds and diseases over the years and may also have started the slow decline into old age. Maelstrom Domesday adventures tend to have significant periods of time between adventures and so time will move on quickly. Characters who are already old will suffer even more ageing effects as the game progresses. Young characters may not have as much experience as their older colleagues but they will also have more time to develop before old age hits.

The character options discussed above demonstrate that the best Maelstrom Domesday investigative group is composed of all racial types, ages, social classes and livings. Of course, if the totally random method is used, the players will get the characters that fate throws up!

Dice

This game requires both standard six-sided dice as well as 10-sided dice. It is a good idea to have at least two 10-sided dice of different colours to allow them to be rolled as a 100-sided dice.

The dice naming conventions used in this book follow RPG standards. D6 refers to a six-sided dice etc. Any numbers before the D indicate the number of dice to be rolled. Thus a 3D6 indicates that three 6-sided dice should be rolled and the total summed.

Rule One

There is just one more thing to say to both Player and Referee alike. Rule One is to enjoy yourself. The rules herein are not absolute and should be used by the Referee to create great stories and adventures. Sometimes the characters will win and sometimes they will fail. Whatever it is to be, everyone should have fun.

If you find a rule hated by your whole gaming group, don't use it. If you want to add in a new rule, do that. As long as you never change Rule 1, you can't go wrong.





Author Notes

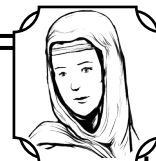
Many, many years ago I used to run and play a British RPG by the name of Maelstrom. Published by Puffin and stocked alongside its stablemates the Fighting Fantasy books, this game was something very different. The other games on my small but growing RPG shelf put you in the role of warriors, clerics and dwarves, spaceheroes, Arthurian knights, superheroes or even Ghostbusters! In other words, great big heroes. But in Maelstrom, you were a lawyer, butcher, labourer or beggar. Not big but still possibly heroic. And it was a historical setting, unusual for the time and again very different.

Time passed and the game slipped away to the edges of most people's recollections, until we acquired the republication rights a few years back. The response from gamers has been fantastic and we put out several supplements tweaking and refining the rules as well as providing setting information.

However, I have long had a hankering to write a game set in Anglo-Norman England, one of my favourite historical settings, and I saw the opportunity with the flexible ruleset that is Maelstrom. As the game developed, it developed a direction and focus; that of supernatural investigators working for a Norman patron. The lifepath system for character creation is a great mini-game all by itself and we have spent many an hour creating the good, the bad and the truly strange! The playtests have shown how the mechanics fade into the background but support the specific style of play. All in all, I have had a huge amount of fun researching, writing and playing the game, and hope that it will also serve you well.

Graham Bottley, October 2013

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