

Stargate 1985 – Victorian SciFi Roleplaying Game

Introduction

In November of 1893 the renowned Egyptologist Lord Conway made an amazing discovery in the Qattara Depression. It was in a previously unsurveyed temple complex, buried beneath the floor of what appeared to be a great tomb. In his journal he described the artefact as 'a giant quoit of an unknown metal, some 8 yards across. Accompanying it were a number of other artefacts also of great antiquity.'

Lord Conway arranged for the artefacts to be taken secretly to his estate in Yorkshire via Tobruk, to avoid the attentions of the antiquarian community, until he could decipher their purpose. He quickly came to the conclusion that it pre-dated any previously known Egyptian finds and that it was a machine of some description. In order to further his research he engaged the brilliant young Scottish engineer John Macfarlane. Over the next year Macfarlane laboured day and night until he worked out how to power the quoit up. Conway meanwhile, with the help of his daughter Felicity, had set about deciphering the many inscriptions upon the quoit and ancillary equipment.

From here on in the story is somewhat confusing and is based on the somewhat unreliable evidence of a surviving footman, one Joseph Higgins, and Macfarlane's hurried notes. Late in the evening of 19th December 1894 Macfarlane powered up the gate and Lord Conway pressed several of the panels on the circular control device. A 'pool' appeared vertically in the quoit and after a few seconds the generators overloaded and the quoit went dark.

The following evening, after Macfarlane had repaired the generators, Lord Conway prepared to make a second attempt. Before he was able to press any panels the quoit lit up on its own and after that there was chaos. Apparently a number of large men in ancient armour, with the heads of Eagles, came through the quoit. They blew a hole clean through Macfarlane and took Lord Conway, Felicity and several of the staff captive, departing to whence they came.

Baffled the police alerted the Government who in turn handed the situation to a Special Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, one Mycroft Holmes. He has seized control of the estate and has summoned a number of eminent scientists and others to his aid.

The newly formed Office of Exploratory Studies has recruited the players as an exploratory team. Their first mission will be to follow the Eagle-headed men, and to attempt to recover Lord Conway and his daughter. It is March 21st, 1895. Throughout the game the player characters are referred to as 'Explorers'.

Rules of Play

When things get interesting the game is played in Turns of about ten seconds in length.

Each turn follows the sequence below:

1. Movement

Explorers can choose to move before or after their enemies. Note that squares are 5' across.

They can move up to 3 + Speed in squares, -1 if in Medium Armour, -2 if they are in Heavy.

You cannot move through a solid object over waist high or another figure (unless they let you). You can climb over or up an object but this is at half speed. Stealthy movement is also at half speed.

2. Bloody Combat

Explorers & their enemies can attack once each in a turn. You can only fight another figure in a square next to your own (including diagonally).

You can shoot at any figure that is in line of sight & range, even if they are fighting.

The Explorers always attack first.

The attacker makes a Fighting or Shooting skill check minus their opponent's DEX.

If there is more than one attacker attacking a single opponent each one gets +1 to their skill check.

A Rogue gets +2 because they are opportunists.

The difference between what the attacker needs & what he scores is the damage. A firearm adds +2 to damage and a Sword adds +1.

Armour stops the first few points of damage:

Light Armour (Buffcoat/Brigandine) stops 1 point.

Medium Armour (Breastplate) stops 2 points.

If his armour doesn't stop all the damage the defender must make a Toughness skill check.

He must roll less than his Toughness minus the remaining damage, or he becomes Wounded.

A Wounded figure has all his skills are reduced by 3 points (including Toughness).

If wounded a second time he is knocked out.

A KO'd figure can be easily killed or captured.

3. Use other Skills

Anything not listed above can now be done.

Creating an Explorer

Attributes (player choice)

New Explorers have ten points to divide between the four attributes below. Each attribute must be given from one to four points.

Strength STR Dexterity DEX
Intellect INT Spirit SPT

Skills

Skill	Aptitude	Examples
Agility	DEX x 2	Climb, Leap, Swim
Craft	DEX + INT	Make, Repair
Fighting	STR + INT	Kill, Maim
Education	INT x 2	Lore, Memory
Perception	INT + SPT	Spot, Hear, Search
Persuasion	SPT x 2	Charm, Con
Shooting	DEX + INT	Sniper
Speed	STR + DEX	Run, React
Stealth	DEX + SPT	Sneak, Hide
Toughness	STR + SPT	Grit, Courage

Training (player choice)

New Explorers are Trained in two skills & Familiar with three others of their choice.

The remainder are Untrained.

Training level	Bonus
Untrained	-1
Familiar	+0
Trained	+1
Experienced	+2
Mastered	+3

Skill Check

Roll less than Aptitude + Training on 1D20.

When using a skill a roll of 1 is an automatic success & a roll of 20 an automatic failure.

Social Class (player choice)

Class	Benefits & Restrictions
Gentry	+1 SPT, cannot be a Criminal
Middle	+1 INT, cannot be a Hunter
Working	+1 DEX, cannot be a Hunter

Backgrounds (player choice)

The explorers have been recruited from a range of useful Backgrounds by Holmes and his assistants. Once in service he can learn and improve skills beyond his initial portfolio.

Soldier

The officers and other ranks of Her Majesty's armed forces are tough, well-trained and self-confident. They form the backbone and tactical leadership of the explorer companies.

Soldiers add +2 to Fighting & Shooting skills.

Criminal

Each of the criminals recruited by Holmes are men who face long sentences for their crimes in the rather grim Victorian prison service. The reward for their participation, other than serving Queen and Country, is a conditional pardon.

They have a +3 bonus to the Stealth skill and +2 bonus to the Craft (Burglary) skill.

Scientist

It is extremely likely, given the devices so far recovered, that the explorers are going to come into contact with advanced cultures. The role of the scientists is to recover, analyse and reproduce this technology on behalf of the Empire.

They gain a +2 bonus to the Education and Craft (Invention) skills. They may also choose a 'speciality' - a single area of scientific Education in which they get a +4 bonus (i.e. A Doctor is a scientist who has specialised in medicine).

Clergy

In the Victorian period most of the foremost antiquarians, ancient cultural scholars and archaeologists were members of the Clergy. It is also considered important that a man of God accompany missions to bring an alternative viewpoint to first contact opportunities. Clergymen add +2 to Fighting (Pugilism), Persuasion and Education skills. They may also choose a 'speciality' - a single area of Education in which they get a +4 bonus. This should be one of the classics or an archaeological or anthropological area of study.

Hunter

This was the age of the great white hunter. Holmes wants each explorer team to be accompanied by a man who is an expert at field craft and scouting.

Hunters add +3 to Shooting. They gain a +2 bonus to the Education (Fieldcraft) and Perception skills.

Initial Equipment

The player may choose three items from the list below:

Lee-Enfield .303 Rifle, Bayonet & 60 rounds.

Webley Service Revolver & 24 rounds.

Sabre and Scabbard.

Light Armour – Buffcoat or Brigandine.

Shotgun, double-barrelled & 24 cartridges.

Elephant Gun, 0.416 Rigby & 24 cartridges.

Machine Pistol, Mauser C96 & 40 rounds.

Other equipment will be provided as needed.

Improving Explorers (player choice)

During an Adventure the GM may give out Fate points. These can be used to buy one-off rerolls of fateful die, or they can them on training to improve themselves.

Cost	Improvement
50	Improve Attribute by +1
10	Improve a Skill's training level by +1