

Grand Tribunal U.K.

the **ars** magica **rpg** convention



CHELTENHAM 16th to 18th AUGUST 2013

What is Grand Tribunal?

Grand Tribunal is a games convention held annually in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

Held over a three day period events kick off with a social on the Friday night, followed by two days of gaming! Games played include roleplaying games (mainly *Ars Magica*, medieval Europe with wizards and dragons!), boardgames, card games, freeform LARPS, and even wargames. The con is dedicated to ATLAS GAMES fine range of games, and in particular *Ars Magica*, though *Rune*, *Feng Shui*, *Unknown Armies* and other ATLAS GAMES are very welcome, as our games based on Medieval Europe which is the setting for *Ars Magica*.



Who Comes to Grand Tribunal?

Dedicated fans, complete newbies, gamers who have never even heard of *Ars Magica* before, and people who have never played any games before – it's a real mix. People come from the USA, Norway, France, Germany and Denmark, and we had a special guest from Japan twice. A number of the delegates are local enthusiasts too, who are happy to help you find your way around.

The numbers are usually around the 30 mark, so this is a VERY small convention, with a very unusual atmosphere. Delegates often go shopping and cook together, help organise every event, and everyone becomes an important part of the convention, which leads to a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Many delegates who arrived knowing no one have made friends for life, and despite attracting a high percentage of professional RPG writers and game designers the con is far from cliquey and is very social.

What's Going On This Year?

Friday evening is the icebreaker: a meal at a local Chinese restaurant followed by games and chat in a private room in the pub. We encourage people to join in!

Every year we have a freeform LARP, a game where you dress up and take the part of a character in Medieval Europe (with Wizards!) This year is no exception, with a large game in which everyone is encouraged to join, dressing up (people will lend you costume), taking the character you are given (before the event) and scheming and plotting your way to victory. This is for many people the high point of the convention, takes place on the Saturday Morning. Alternatively a selection of board and card games are available in one room, and delegates are welcome to run their own games (as they are through the con).



This photo of the 2010 players in the freeform has been made in to a woodcut to spare our blushes!

And then through till 4pm Sunday it's games game games! Some highlights from the programme are given on following pages...

Where is it?

The convention takes place in the beautiful Regency town of Cheltenham, in the Cotswolds of Gloucestershire, roughly equidistant between Oxford, Bristol, Cardiff and Birmingham. Full details on getting here are provided at the end of this brochure or on the website www.grandtribunal.org

What does it cost?

That depends on several factors – how early you book, if you are local and therefore helping out, if you have a job etc. A non-profit event, we don't want anyone excluded by price. The full price for waged individuals is £18, with many discounts available. (Email chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com for more) details or consult our website www.grandtribunal.org

A Few Highlights From The Programme

A Quiet Night In (Freeform Larp) run by Kirstie & Andrew Sceats - the live-action highlight of the weekend. Suitable for all players, and an ideal ice-breaker for getting to know everyone at the convention.

A Ride with the Valkyrie by **Anders Håkon Gaut**. An off-the-beaten-path adventure for a group of characters not very strong in magic, exploring the dirtier (and probably more lewd) parts of the Norse Mythology.

Shadows of the Box by **Anna Jones**. You have each agreed to escort an old, battered-looking Grecian Box that needs to be taken to the forge of the Cave of Twisting Shadows to be fitted with a new clasp. The elder Magi who gave you this duty were very insistent that a strong party should go and go immediately, but they are not always connected with reality these days.

The Silence of the Korrigans by **Andrew Oakley**. Last year, the cathedral city of Quimper, Brittany was nearly destroyed after inexperienced mundanes managed to cast a selection of botched spells. The cause was traced to enchantment in the river, and some knock-off spell pamphlets. A mission of magi recovered the pamphlets, and the buildings have been repaired, yet in the last month several explosions of varying magnitude have rocked the city. Worse still, nobody has heard from the local Covenant of Cournaille for nearly six months. A plea has gone out from the Quaesitors, for magi to investigate. You will go the town of [Briziac](#), in the foreboding [Black Mountains](#), the source of the river Odet and home of the Cournaille covenant. Your job is to find out what happened to the local covenant, assist them in regaining control of the region, and hopefully find a solution to the explosions on the way.

The Italian Job by **Chris Jensen Romer**. Carlos the Bold has an issue. It's just eight weeks to the Tribunal, and the Quaesitorial Investigation has shown he is guilty as sin: that's why he has gathered you, a crack team of loyal grogs together. Your mission - to enter Magvillus during a local festival, penetrate the security and recover the fabled Duresca Scrolls from the vault, and return them to him. It will be tough, but you can do it, if the map of the tunnels is correct, and the magic items he provides actually work...

So Long At The Fair by **Andrew Sceats**. A young Redcap, who has fallen foul of a much older Magus, contacts the Covenant of The Silent Word to claim his right to a Tremere Certamen champion. Unfortunately, the Archmage is busy... A 3rd Edition game for five players. The characters are: a newly-gauntleted Tremere; an assassin; a shield Grog; a sword; some dogs; a young Redcap.

Unquiet Grave 2 by Leif Olav Josang: "Can anyone remember the last time they saw the sun?" It's been raining for three months. It's getting muddy. Even for Yorkshire. Worse, every time a perfect ambush is about to come to fruition, lightning strikes and reveals the plot, usually blinding you and allowing your prey to make good their escape. "Yes, in August when we ambushed the bard, I think..." That was how it all started, and now things get stranger!

Levantine Mystery Hunt by Mark Steedman. Six young magi are searching the Levant for interesting sites... They have a Redcaps report: 'I met an old man in the village of Marwan. He would rather not share his name, but he seemed lame, has long grey hair and dark eyes and stands about 5' 6" tall. e seems to now spend his days sitting under a tree at the east side of the village. He told me a tale from his grandfathers time of a magician who fled inland from Marwan. The magician was being hunted down and clearly needed a bolthole suitable for a magician to hide in. The old man believes they killed the magician near a hill inland.'

It is not much to go on but the place has got to be interesting and isn't far from other locations you are visiting so.....

The Sorrows of Young Werther (freeform larp) by Chris Jensen Romer. This is an unusual kind of freeform, drawing upon the principles of a style of Nordic LARP called the Jeepform. The players will design a simple outline for a magus or maga, called Werther (or Gertrude), and the things that motivate them and the obsessions that drive them. Each player will take the role on for up to four short scenes in the game where they explore how Werther's heroic virtues and flaws get them in to trouble, and the repercussions of it. In the scenes when they are not playing Werther, they take on the roles of his enemies, friends, sodales and superiors in the Order, grogs, faeries or demons, as determined by the needs of the story, changing roles as needed by the dictates of the story. It's a very different approach to a freeform - everything is determined in play, and the plot and story emerges from the interactions, exploring the character. By the end Werther, who lived at Durenmar in the years immediately preceding the Schism War, will have a full and wonderful story to add to our knowledge of Hermetic History!

A Night On The Tiles: One hundred and one years ago, the magi of the Covenant of Vindelís vanished without trace. The Quaesitors who investigated the sudden silence found the magi gone, yet books on tables, dice and beers left in the courtyard, experiments left half completed in labs, meals decaying on the tables. High on Portland rock, above the surging tides, the secret was never resolved, and not one of the inhabitants was ever seen again...

Twenty years ago, a group of brave magi took on the challenge of re-founding Vindelís. Novum Vindelís was formed, and for two decades all was well, but the mystery of their predecessors fate was never solved.

Tonight the moon is high, and the covenant sleeps. Yet this is no ordinary sleep -- it is a deep magical sleep, and no one can be roused. The grogs snore at their watch points, the magi snore in their labs, and sensible folk are sound asleep in their beds. Now something is moving out there, approaching the covenant. The bushes rustle, the long grass moves. Things are creeping up, to take away the inhabitants and once more leave Vindelís lost to shadows.

Everyone is fast asleep, under the influence of some strange sorcery - except you, the animals of the covenant. Can you save the magi, or will Vindelis again be left a terrible mystery?

The characters available are Plumbum Yaps-at-Daisies (an excitable puppy) Augustus Guzzleguts (British Blue cat), Mick the Monkey – playful pet, Captain Beaky – faerie seagull, Barnabas the Dancing Bear & Sophia Sapientia – the Mechanical Owl automaton.

There will be many more games on offer. Consult the website www.grandtribunal.org for details and updates.

How do I get there and where should I stay?

It's all on the website at <http://www.grandtribunal.org/wiki/Venue>

Tickets do not include food or accommodation, but we certainly won't let you starve. The central Cheltenham venue makes it easy to source reasonably priced accommodation, and it is always worth asking for advice on the mailing list.

How do I find out more?

Firstly you can always email chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com with questions.

Secondly, almost everything is on our website at www.grandtribunal.org

Finally there is a dedicated mailing list for the convention you can join at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/grandtrib/>





And What Are Our Principles?

We have two formal policies you can read here (CTRL + CLICK to open) or on our website

[Disability and equality policy](#)

[Harassment policy](#)

Guidelines

Guidelines are good ideas, ethical principles, which shape how we run the event. They express our values, they set goals we should aim for, but there may occasionally be exceptions.

Economic inclusivity

You might call this "value for money" but it's about more than that.

Pencil-and-paper roleplaying games offer an inexpensive hobby which can be enjoyed by everyone regardless of income. Beyond a pencil, a rubber and some paper, the [Ars Magica](#)

[core rulebook](#) is really the only essential purchase that is required to provide many years of gaming enjoyment for a troupe of half a dozen or so players. You can spend more and we strongly believe that the additional Ars Magica sourcebooks offer superb extensions to gameplay at excellent prices (and Lord knows it's helpful to have more than one core rulebook lying around). However, the point is:

- **You can spend as much or as little as you like**
- **You will never feel excluded**
- **You will always get value for money**

We feel this ethos should extend to our convention too. That's why:

- **The ticket price should be affordable to those on low incomes**, including those on state benefits or minimum wage. The basic ticket price should be just enough such that a minimum number of ticket sales will just cover the costs of hiring the venue.
- **There will be no additional costs for participating in any games** and no prerequisites for purchasing anything in order to play a game, beyond a pencil, paper and dice. For example, players must not be expected to buy a specific rulebook. [Story Guides](#) are encouraged to run games using supplementary Ars Magica books, but they will be expected to bring those books with them and share them with their players.
- **Attendees will never be pressured into paying more.** No shaking of donation tins. No guilt trips if you help yourself to a tea bag out of the communal box. You will not be asked to donate. [Unofficial extras](#) inside the venue, such as tea and coffee, or spare stationery, are paid for out of the extra money left over from ticket sales once the venue and other basic expenses have been paid for, or from entirely voluntary donations. If you want to make a donation, thank-you, please seek out an [organiser](#) - you will not be asked to donate. If we've already sold enough tickets to cover these nice-to-haves, your offer of a donation will be politely and gratefully refused.

Fringe events, outside the venue, such as the teashop meet & greet, restaurant, pub, take-aways and café breakfast are entirely optional. You won't miss out on any gaming by not attending those. You can attend them and just order tap water and a bread roll if you like.

- **Attendees should be allowed to bring their own food, drink and stationery.** They should never be locked-in to purchasing from one "preferred", "exclusive" or "contracted" vendor.
- **We will not tie you to specific accommodation, transport, caterers or vendors.** If you want to pay for three nights at the Queen's Hotel, that's up to you (it is *really* nice, and we also have [lots of other recommendations](#)). If you want to ask on the mailing list if you can kip on a local attendee's sofa, that's fine too. The main venue should be located in a town with a good range of accommodation and good public transport links.
- **Nobody is stopping you from spending more if you want to**, and if you do decide to spend more, you should still feel that you're getting your money's worth. You will not be judged on how much or how little you spend. If you're loaded and want to donate towards refreshments, or buy a round of drinks or snacks for everyone - thank you! If you've saved up all year to treat yourself to a blow-out, great! (Cheltenham makes a

good base for a Cotswold holiday, by the way.) If you can barely afford the ticket and have to hitch-hike and sleep on a sofa, no problem, we are grateful that you made the effort.

- **We're not anti-commercial, we're just pro-inclusive.** We want to support the games industry, especially small businesses. For example, if you sell dice, miniatures or roleplaying rulebooks, we could arrange for you to set up a stall. [Contact the organisers](#) if you're interested. Money raised will go towards venue hire, expenses and [nice-to-haves](#) such as refreshments. Sponsorship is also possible, but we will never sign any exclusivity deals.

Respect for our hosts

Our [venue](#) is owned by Gas Green Baptist Church, which is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). We ask that attendees respect our hosts and do not engage in any behaviour that would bring our hosts into disrepute. Not only do we like and respect them, we want them to welcome us back for future events.

In addition to the fact that our venue is not licensed for alcohol, Baptist churches often do not permit alcohol on their property (according to BUGB). So please do not bring alcohol to the venue.

Grand Tribunal UK is not a religious event and does not promote any religion. We just happen to be using a Baptist venue, and they happen to be really nice people. Attendees of all faiths and no faith are welcomed at the church, which is just around the corner on Russell Street.



SO COME JOIN US, FOR A FABULOUS WEEKEND!

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