

The Sword in the Stone, Longsword +5

(from the article, "Swords of Pendragon" which appeared in White Dwarf #85, by Greg Stafford. More game stats by DM Superelf)

The story of King Arthur is a sword Story. The movie Excalibur and the musical Camelot have both helped to remind everyone that the boy Arthur became king when he drew a sword from a stone. A lifetime later, as the high king lay dying, he ordered a faithful vassal to hurl the sword away. Between the two actions, the blade Excalibur is often drawn, to lead in glory in battle and drive down the foes in bloody defeat. Other swords, almost as bright, shine their own light through the heroic stories of the Round Table.

But some confusion exists, especially concerning Arthur's two swords. He had more than one. including two which are both very famous and are often confused.

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Arthur's first famous sword was the one which he drew from the anvil and the stone to become the Pendragon, or High King of Britain. According to John Steinbeck:

"In the greatest church in London, perhaps St. Paul's the lords and knights gathered to pray long before dawn. And when matins and first Mass were over, there was seen in the churchyard, in a place nearest the high altar, a great block of marble, and in the marble was set a steel anvil in which a sword was driven. In letters of gold was written:

*WHOEVER PULLS THIS SWORD FROM
THIS STONE AND ANVIL IS KING OF
ALL ENGLAND BY RIGHT OF BIRTH.*

Thus the appearance of this 'war monument', as Richard Harris amusingly calls it in Camelot, was a surprise to the people of London. The origin of the sword itself is also not given in any medieval source. I am surprised by this since the storytellers often went to great lengths to give centuries-long tales of particular blades.

Mary Stewart, in her second novel about Merlin, connects the sword with one wielded by Maxen Wledig, a Welsh hero. In the story from the *Mabinogion* he dreams of his ideal mate and hunts across the world for her. In history he was Magnus Maximus, who was made Roman Emperor by the British in 383, raised an army, and conquered all his enemies before being destroyed in 388 by a rival claimant. Neither the Welsh stories nor history connects him with any famous swords, but Ms. Stewart's artistic license and poetic intuition are the type which, had her story been told ten centuries ago, would have made this story a firm part of the legend.

So the blade stuck through the iron and marble appeared mysteriously. Arthur pulled it out several times before he was acknowledged king. When the northern kings rebelled against him he carried it bravely into battle. At the Battle of Bedegraine he first used other weapons. Only when things seemed most desperate did he draw it. The blade "gave a light like thirty torches, so demoralizing his foes that Arthur's army gained the upper hand. Arthur drove off his foes, was crowned, and settled down to be High King of the Britons.

Young Arthur was no armchair king, though. He was still a vigorous young man, eager to prove himself. Though some barons protested, most knights were pleased. As Sir Thomas Malory wrote, "all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain, that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did." Once when he learned that an unknown

knight nearby was defeating all comers, including the High King's men, Aruthur decided to test his own mettle against the stranger. Secretly, at dawn, he armed and armored himself and went out to fight. In the struggle, Arthur's sword snapped, and he would have been killed if Merlin had not been on hand to put the stranger, who was King Pellinore, to sleep.

AD&D game stats by DM Superelf:

The Sword in the Stone is a Longsword +5. In the hands of a king, an heir to a throne, or one who is destined to be a king it is a Longsword +5; in anyone else's hands, it is simply a normal, though beautifully made, longsword.

This sword, in the hands of one who it deems worthy (a king), will do its utmost to protect its master. It provides an armor class bonus of +5 and a saving throw bonus of +3 to all saving throws. Once per day it will allow its wielder an automatic 20 on any saving throw roll or to hit roll, or a 1 on any to hit roll against the owner.

XP Value: -

GP Value: -