

The Iron Lord FAQ

1. What is Iron Lord?
2. What is the story behind Iron Lord?
3. What does the game involve?
4. What happens at the end?
5. What are the controls for Iron Lord?
6. Who developed/converted it?
7. How many platforms/versions are there?
8. What do I need to run it under RISC OS?
9. Where can I find a copy for XYZ computer system?
10. Where can I find information for XYZ version?
11. How do I get past XYZ section?
12. I'm stuck on the Archery section, help!
13. The last level of the Labyrinth keeps crashing, why?
14. I can't raise enough money, how do I win the gambling?
15. Why does the assassin keep jumping out at me?
16. How do I work my sword?
17. I have a question which isn't answered on this site, what do I do now?

1: What is Iron Lord?

Iron Lord, Crusader of Justice (to give the game its original title) is a curious collection of games joined together by means of a (fairly simple) graphical adventure game, with varying music and graphics throughout. The games range from sport simulators (such as archery and arm wrestling), through two methods of exploration (on horseback and in the labyrinth), to a complete strategy game.

2: What is the story behind Iron Lord?

Well, that all depends what you mean by "the story behind" it. There are two stories: the game backstory, and the development story.

The game backstory concerns you, as you return home after five years of fighting in the Holy Land. You return to discover that your father, King Tibor, has been murdered by his own brother, your uncle Zolphar, who has become an evil tyrant. Under his reign France has become terrorised by spies and assassins. You are a soldier trained according to the code of honour of the 'Iron Lords', and you are determined to reclaim the throne back from your uncle. The goal of the play is to win the support of your suspicious countrymen, and to convince the population of the Kingdom to join your army. You must then overcome the demons which protect Zolphar, and to finally free France.

The development story has little to do with the Archimedes version (see the answer to question 6), but for those interested, I will give it briefly. Originally developed by French software house Ubi Soft on the Atari ST by six people. The Spectrum conversion was handled by Ashminster Computing, a Leicester-based programming house headed by Roger Taylor, which was later to become Cygnus Software Engineering, originally specializing in Amstrad and PC conversions. Cygnus' biggest problem had been cramming such a big game into the Spectrum - the load for the first 128K game was at that time massive, and was then followed by 48k

loads for each sub-section. At the time of its release, the tape version of the game cost £12.99 and the disk version £19.99.

3: What does the game involve?

Iron Lord is a hybrid RPG/action/wargame in three main sections, each with its own subsections. The first part of the game also includes a number of sports and games simulators, which at the time was a remarkable feat of programming. The first part concerns adventure, where you must traverse the kingdom in search of soldiers. The kingdom is represented by a map, on which you can click on villages to travel to them. In the villages, you can move by means of a small map in the top right-hand corner, while a graphic on the main screen represents where you currently are. It is possible to enter buildings and chat, or negotiate with those within. In some of the villages you can take part in sports or activities such as gambling, archery and arm wrestling.

When you have raised enough armies, you must return to the ruins of your ancestral keep and declare war - you are well advised to save the game here first! The battle takes place as a turn-based map campaign, where you can program up to seven moves before ending your turn. You can also pick up rations to restore your troops' health.

In the event of victory, do not imagine that it is finished, because you now must chase Zolphar through a labyrinth, viewed from above as a maze, collecting keys to unlock the gates as you progress. It is necessary to find the exits from six labyrinths, before the final combat against Zolphar. Between each labyrinth, there is a phase of action to pass. This phase of the play is obscure, involving you firing bolts from your sword at space invader-type demons, and not running out of oxygen.

4: What happens at the end?

Well, that would be telling, wouldn't it?

5: What are the controls for Iron Lord?

Good question. I have never had any original documentation for Iron Lord, and any reviews I have read (including the pages of Acorn User when it was released on a cover disk) have never contained any useful control listings. Most of the work is done by mouse, however, and the buttons to click on are usually self-explanatory. The arrow keys (or z x / ? return) are used on the mini-map when visiting villages, and also in the labyrinth. In villages, pressing return or clicking the mouse gets you into a building; you can tell when you're near because the text for the map changes. Sometimes, however, it's not so obvious where the doors are, so I tend to just hold the return key down as I walk and so automatically go into any doors I pass. If anyone out there has a controls listing, please email me (ironlord@filecore.net).

6: Who developed/converted it?

To answer this question, it is perhaps simpler to use the words of James Byrne, author of the Archimedes conversion:

"The Archimedes version of Iron Lord was developed on and off (mostly off) between autumn 1988 and November 1990, starting off when the Archimedes still ran Arthur. The original game was developed in France by Ubi Soft for the Atari ST and Cygnus Software Engineering were responsible for conversions to other machines. I was a student and worked at Cygnus during my holidays. [Cygnus] was contracted by games publishers to do conversions. As I'd just got my Archimedes (with the full power of Arthur OS) I wanted to do a game for it, and since Cygnus were working on Iron Lord, I started doing that in my spare time. I started prototyping it in BASIC, but discovered that the Arc was so fast that I could do almost all of it in BASIC, which I thought was amazing at the time.

"My version wasn't a straight conversion as the original game hadn't been finished when I started looking at it, and I never had access to any of the source code. I just took the original graphics and data and wrote the code from scratch, comparing to the ST occasionally to see that things worked similarly."

Interestingly, the music used in the game is sampled from genuine mediaeval music, played with samples of real medieval instruments. As James Byrne says, "That was Roger's [Roger Taylor, who owned Cygnus Software Engineering] idea. He likes medieval music and is quite knowledgeable about it, so he chose the various pieces and created the music data." The sound effects are mostly home-made, using a Clares sampling podule.

7: How many platforms/versions are there?

There are many incarnations of Iron Lord and details of these can be found on the links page (<http://ironlord.acornarcade.com/links.shtml>), however it is known that there are versions for the following: Spectrum 128 (date unknown), Amiga OCS (1988), Amstrad CPC (1989), C=64/C=128 (1989), Acorn Archimedes (1990), and PC (date unknown).

8: What do I need to run it under RISC OS?

Since it was originally written for Arthur OS as a programming exercise, it isn't exactly demanding on the processor. The ARM Club's Game On!/StrongGuard program compatibility database tells us that Iron Lord is StrongARM compatible and so does not need StrongGuard, but that it runs very fast on that processor without Game On! installed. It has been tested on my own machine, and runs at a perfectly playable speed (RPC700 RO3.7 StrongARM 202MHz). It is, however, not RO4 compatible.

9: Where can I find a copy for XYZ computer system?

There are many incarnations of Iron Lord, for many platforms. A copy of the Archimedes conversion can be found on the downloads page (<http://ironlord.acornarcade.com/down.shtml>), and websites for other versions (some with downloads) can be found on the links page.

10: Where can I find information for XYZ version?

There are many incarnations of Iron Lord and details of these can be found on the links page.

11: How do I get past XYZ section?

For help on getting past any of the sections, go to the hints and tips page (<http://ironlord.acornarcade.com/hints.shtml>).

12: I'm stuck on the Archery section, help!

First of all, make sure you understand the controls. Use the mouse to change horizontal and vertical angles, taking into account the wind strength and direction (the green flag accompanied by a number). Then click and hold the button on top of the arm, and you will see it draw back the bowstring. When you decide how much force to use (between 1 and 99), release the mouse button, and *vóilá!* Correct your next shot based on where your arrow landed.

Once you've mastered the controls, then it's simply a matter of practice until you get high scores. You can practice by aiming at the bush in the top right area, or use one of the cheats on the cheats and mods page (<http://ironlord.acornarcade.com/cheat.shtml>) to get better scores. There are 12 rounds in the game and you must get high scores almost consistently to win the trophy.

Advice from comp.sys.acorn.games:

"This is a bit more complex. Basically, you have to point your bow in the general direction of the bull's eye. Then put the elevation to about 15 degrees. Fire off a shot and note the power you used. Also note where the arrow landed. Next you have to realign your bow. If the arrow landed to the right of the target, move the bow left. If the arrow landed short of the target, try using a bit more power. If it flew over the top of the target, try using less power. The trick is to either keep the elevation constant throughout and adjust power accordingly, or vice versa. If you change both factors on every attempt you just end up confusing yourself. It's not easy to get the hang of, but once you've got the basics it's OK. Bit like riding a bike, really, just a bit more pointy. Hm..." (Simon Jones)

"I personally found the best way to be to keep the power as high as possible - between 80 and 99. The elevation would be used for coarse adjustment of the vertical position and the power for fine tuning. I found that an elevation of about 10 to 12 degrees was needed for the earlier targets, and 15 to 17 for the later ones." (Steve Lee)

13: The last level of the Labyrinth keeps crashing, why?

There is a corrupt piece of maze in the the bottom right corner of the level. Unless you fancy hacking your way through the code to correct the problem, the simple solution is to keep away from that area and move very slowly. The game finishes on that level - so just find the exit!

14: I can't raise enough money, how do I win the gambling?

There are three ways to raise money by gambling: keep playing and hope you get lucky, use one of the cheats on the cheats and mods page, or by the time-honoured expedient of gamble-win-savegame / gamble-lose-loadgame.

15: Why does the assassin keep jumping out at me?

The assassin is sent by your uncle to stop you (as you find out when you kill him), and usually appears after you have visited the Knights templar in the Abbey. He will haunt you as you have visited the towns, and only when you're back at the Abbey and you kill him again, do the assassins stop. This is because you are being watched by the Knights Templar, and if you survive the assassination attempts, you will have proven your bravery and the Knights will join your cause.

16: How do I work my sword?

You obviously haven't read the answer to question 5 if you're asking this, but you might find these quotes from comp.sys.acorn.games useful...

"Smash your mouse to pieces. Just ram it from side to side, up and down in random motions and the knight soon kicks the old rusty bucket. It takes a bit of practice, but once you've got it you never lose it. Bit like riding a bike, only more pointy." (Simon Jones)

"That may well work; I found it more effective to go more slowly though. There's a finite speed at which your knight can swing his sword, and it's quite possible to make quite slow, deliberate movements with the mouse to control each stroke. The mouse buttons are used; ISTR that holding down the left button was a Good Thing." (Andy Cawte)

17: I have a question which isn't answered on this site, what do I do now?

You have two options: you can leave a message for me on the Icon Bar forums, or try a search on Google or somewhere. Failing that, you could go and do something completely different.
latest news

Hints and Tips

Speed Through France : the quickest and best route through the game

This is the quick and easy guide to completing the first section of Iron Lord. Note that you don't even have to go near the archery competition to complete the game - it's just a decoy! But it's a fun decoy and definitely worth a try, especially if you aim for the lone bush toward the top right hand side...

- Go to village of Lorando.
- Go to the inn with the salesman.
- Ask the salesman for help. He should Ask you to help him find a necklace.
- Go to the town of Corantek.
- Go to the gaming room.
- Have an arm wrestle in the contest and win!
- Then Ask the serving girl in the gaming room for help.
- She should give you a pendant that was given to her by the Mercenary.
- Then go and see the Mercenary.
- Give him the pendant.
- Ask him about helping with rising an army. He will say he needs a ruby for payment.
- Ask him about the necklace.
- He will say he has one but needs a suit of armour as payment.
- Then go back to village of Lorando, and go into the inn with salesman again.
- Ask him about suit of armour.
- He should have it for sale. Buy it! Then Ask about the ruby.
- He should say he has it for sale but needs the necklace first.
- Go to the town of Corantek.
- Go to Mercenary and give him the suit of armour. He will give you the necklace in return.
- Return to the village of Lorando, and the inn with the salesman.
- Give him the necklace. He will offer you his 'Milliants' to help fight the war.
- Then Ask him about the ruby. He will say he has it for sale - buy it!
- Go to the town of Corantek.
- Go to the Mercenary and give him the ruby. He will now help you in the war.
- Return to your castle and raise your armies!

You can also help the Knights Templar in the chapel, and the peasants, among others, but this - like the archery competition - is not necessary for the completion of this section of the game. Doing so will, however, give you larger armies with which to play during the battle section.

If you wish to gain extra armies of Herbalists, Monks and Peasants, however, you can enter the archery competition and do the following:

Win the archery competition and give the trophy to the Herbalist in the same town (to the northeast) for him to offer his Herbalist army.

The Innkeeper will get his army together if you get the Priest to sell him some wine. Give the Priest the antidote and he will agree.

Once you have the Innkeeper's army, go to the Miller and discuss. You should now tell him that the Innkeeper agrees to pay for the flour. Problem solved, and everybody is happy, and it's time to have a war.

The Battle : best tips on how to survive massive combat against your enemies

The battle scene follows a classic turn-based RPG layout - your soldiers are represented by companies, rectangular blocks on the battle field, each with their own crest depending on who is fighting. You lay out a course for each company to move on and then end your turn. Your armies move, then the enemies move, and so on.

In the battle scene, if you move your armies around, you will notice that their maximum strength will increase but then their actual strength will decrease so you then have to rest them. Your maximum strength also increases if you move onto the enemy armies, as you have the advantage; it also makes more sense to attack the enemy armies when they have a lower strength than you.

You can check this by pointing at the armies and clicking with the left button. You should ideally have about ten armies but you might get away with fewer than this. If you use this as a battle strategy, the battle section should be very easy, and you will be free to progress onto:

The Labyrinth : there's only one way through the demonic caverns...

The Labyrinth is a top-down view of a cavern system, similar to the small map when you move around in villages in the first section of the game. Swords, keys and energy must be collected to survive and open locked doors. The Labyrinth is a tricky place in which to get lost; therefore, I have the following maps to help...

The key to the maps is S = sword, G = gate, K = key for gate, B = beginning, E = exit, * = energy.

The following links take you to GIF images stored on this website. A downloadable drawfile containing all six maps will be available shortly.

