



OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role - Playing Magazine for JRR Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

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Fineprint

Submissions

You can submit your contributions by sending them via email to

othermindsmagazine@gmx.net

Please send as plain text for all text contributions. For artwork and maps, please send the files as .PNG or .JPEG/JPG (**please no TIFF or GIF**) at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and no greater than 600 dpi. If your file is too large to send by email (more than a couple of MB), then you can create an account on the Other Minds website

<http://www.otherminds.net>

and upload your contribution there. Then send us an email notifying us of your submission on the website.

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Other Minds Magazine is an unofficial fan-based publication (both online and sometimes in print) created for those who love to role play in J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth (and beyond) using any game system they wish. This magazine provides original scholarly articles of interest to Tolkien enthusiasts – whether they are role playing gamers or not. There is no affiliation between the creators of this publication and any current or previous owners of the Tolkien copyrights, including but not limited to Sophisticated Games, Cubicle 7, Decipher, Mithril Miniatures, The Saul Zaentz Company, Tolkien Enterprises, the Tolkien Estate, New Line Cinema, or any other Tolkien license holders. This publication is 100% free and Other Minds Magazine does not accept any kind of financial reimbursement in any way. Online issues are available in PDF format at <http://www.otherminds.net>

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EDITORIAL: BACK FROM THE DEPTHS

Fifteen Years and going strong!

In July 2007 an online magazine saw the light of the day to serve roleplayers and Tolkien enthusiasts alike. Now, more than 15 years later we are still around, providing you with material for roleplaying set in Middle-earth as well as articles dealing with manifold aspects of the world itself. This span matches the run of MERP (1982-1997) – the longest-lasting licensed Middle-earth roleplaying game so far. In these times of fast game system cycles, this is remarkable indeed and we are happy that so many of you have accompanied us through all these years! It is a pleasure for us to receive all our readers' feedback and contributions that explore so many takes on Middle-earth. This diversity lies at the very core of *Other Minds* – being open for all gaming systems and ideas.

Originally I planned to have this Issue out sometime in August, but as always real life and its demands intervened, so that now you get this Issue as a Christmas Gift.

So far, so good. Now let's explore what this Issue has in store.

We start with an essay on spell magic in a Middle-earth RPG. *Learning "Spells" in Roleplaying games set in Middle-earth* is my own take on the subject. It covers the metaphysical background, the relevant citations for the matter and a discussion on interpretation. Thus it is more about the basics rather than mechanics. More detailed takes on an actual implementation for game system might come in a later Issue.

Second is *The Rangers of the North* – a piece by long-time contributor Gabriele Quaglia. This explores the history and organisation of the eponymous Rangers. Though they are Aragorn's Folk and ancestry, Tolkien never went into greater detail like he did with so many topics of Gondor. Based on Tolkien's remarks on the matter and using information from previous Issues of *Other Minds*, Gabriele develops a comprehensive picture of the

Rangers that can be used in a campaign set in the late Third Age of Eriador.

Third in line is a Review of *Ruins of the Lost Realm* – the first supplement for the second edition of *The One Ring*. It delves into the content and specialties of this new publication, together with a summary like in other reviews in previous Issues of *Other Minds*.

Now we come to the part with material for direct gaming. *A New Stronghold* is the next instalment of the *Ravens in the North* campaign, whose previous parts (*Other Minds* Issues 23 to 25) already took you into the north of Eriador. Here we see the heroes venture to the antagonist's primary stronghold and – hopefully – foiling its plans here. The chief villain is not defeated yet though, and I am sure that Andreas has more instalments in store.

Next comes *Wild Men of the South* – another adventure for TOR by first-time contributor Adam Brown. He makes use of the *Ruins of the Lost Realm* reviewed earlier and his adventure takes the Heroes from Eriador far to the South in Drúwaith Iaur to stop a servant of the Shadow from achieving his sinister goals there. Thank you Adam for joining us and your patience for this Issue to happen!

Last but not least we have *Where in Bree-land is Combe Valley?*. This article by another first time contributor (Kris Goldsmith) explores the details of the geography of Bree-hill – and especially Combe. This may seem a bit odd, as this is described in *The Lord of the Rings* and mapped in Karen Wynn Fonstad's *Atlas of Middle-earth*. But as with the global mapping in Issue 1 and 2, this micro-geographical topic has more to it than might be surmised at first glance.

That's it for me as your editor – now have fun with reading this Issue, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your loved ones!

For the OM team
Thomas Morwinsky, December 2022

THE ROAD GOES EVER ON

Certainly it reminds me [Frodo] very much of Bilbo in the last years, before he went away. He used often to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary. "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to..."

—*The Lord of the Rings. Book I (A Shortcut to Mushrooms)*

There are many paths on the internet waiting to take you somewhere for Tolkien gaming. The vast reaches of the worldwide community harbour numerous roads and paths—some dangerous and some not—but it also has many havens of lore and respite where the weary traveller or loremaster seeking knowledge may find what he is looking for. In order to aid people on their journeys, this column of *Other Minds* (not exactly new, but with a new name) which will be a regular feature from now on offers a quick overview and pointer to potentially interesting Tolkien roleplaying-related websites.

For each site we give you a short description of its primary purpose and content to give you an overview for better judging how it might meet your needs.

The following list does not claim to be exhaustive or representative. In fact, I believe it is only a beginning. All the content of these pages is the responsibility of their owners. They are organised according to their primary gaming focus (e.g. TOR, MERP or whatever else) and, within each category, in alphabetical order.

This listing is intended to be “living”, i.e. constantly evolving and updated. So, **if you know any other sites that present information of value for Tolkien gamers, do contact us at othermindsmagazine@gmx.net so we can include it here for others to enjoy as well.**

The following abbreviations are used:

TOR—*The One Ring*, the currently licensed game since 2011. Formerly by Cubicle 7 and Sophisticated Games. Now from Fria Ligan and Sophisticated Games for the Second Edition.

AME—*Adventures in Middle-earth* by Cubicle 7 and Sophisticated Games. The content of TOR re-statted and adapted for D&D 5e

LotRRPG—*The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* by Decipher. Ran from 2002 to 2007.

MERP—*Middle-earth Roleplaying* by Iron Crown Enterprises. The licensee from 1982 to 1999.

TOR AND AME



UPDATED

Abenteuer in Mittelerde 5e: a group for the german translation of AME. Has 214 members as of December 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/418209615569312/>

Adventures in Middle-earth (AME) RPGGeek forum: After the demise of the Cubicle 7 forums this is the place where some AME-related discussions take place:

<https://rpggeek.com/forums/family/40055/adventures-middle-earth>

James Brown's TOR resources: James has set up a Google Drive with lots of material for TOR. Don't miss out this material. In addition, he also maintains a blog on the topic.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PNNmis-EMAQalCBa05RuTpl3coEmvAh9/view>

<https://advancementpoints.blogspot.com/p/the-one-ring.html>

MERP

I.C.E. product listing: Contains a listing of MERP products for reference.

<http://www.icewebring.com/ice-products>

Facebook MERP groups: There are several groups/sites dedicated to MERP here.

UPDATED

Guardians of Middle-earth is a private group and has now (December 2022) 863 members. It was brought to our attention by a reader of OM.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1905369979694358>

UPDATED

Middle-earth Roleplaying by Iron Crown Enterprises, now (December 2022) has 1,397 members and has been merged with the former *Middle-earth Roleplaying* group on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1614785935491947/>

UPDATED

MERP UK is a closed group (December 2021: 62 members) dealing with “untold stories” in Tolkien’s world. By December 2022 it seems to be no longer existing.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/231370666959142/>

UPDATED

It seems I overlooked this one named *MERP*. Nothing new here for years though. Membership stands at 35 as of December 2022.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/5519656692/>

Lindëfirion: A campaign log and resources for a mid-Third Age campaign set in the Northwest.

It is now closed though and only an announcement remains.

<http://www.lindëfirion.net>

Loren Rosson’s Blog “The Busybody”: A blog with reviews (“retrospectives”) of a selection of old and long out-of-print MERP modules. The relevant section is named “Middle-earth Retrospectives” and can be found on the left side of the links section (you have to scroll down a bit). <http://lorenrosson.blogspot.com>

NEW

MERP Fan Modules: This Groups.io site started as a Yahoo site (Fan Sourcebooks; formerly fan-modules) in 2001 after the demise of *Other Hands*. Includes the former site’s email list.

<https://groups.io/g/merp-fan-modules>

MERP printing edition reference: A great reference for all the editorial changes and different printings of MERP 1st edition. If you are interested in the various editions of MERP up to 1992 (i.e. 1st ed.), this one is for you! Online again at a new site.

http://www.icewebring.com/MERP_Print_Ref/PrintingEditionReference.html

MERP Wikia: A Wiki-based collection of articles detailing the MERP canon and expanding it.

There is some info on other sources like the LotRRPG (depending on subject), but the focus is the published MERP canon and its expansion by fans. Highly valuable for everyone focusing on the MERP canon. http://merp.wikia.com/wiki/Middle-earth_Role_Playing_Wiki

SYSTEM-NEUTRAL OR MIXED

UPDATED

Facebook *Other Minds* group: We are happy to greet new fans, so don’t hesitate to swing by and become a member. In the two months since last Issue, our membership has increased by 37 to a total of 927 by December 2022!

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/othermindsmagazine>



Gondica: Blog of former MERP author Anders Blixt with some of his Middle-earth stuff on it.

<https://gondica.wordpress.com/>

UPDATED

Iron Crown Enterprises: Publishers of Rolemaster, HARP and more. Visit their website.

<http://ironcrown.co.uk/>

ARTWORK

Aegeri: Find her colourful and inspirational art at:

<https://www.deviantart.com/aegeri>

Antti Autio: See his fascinating artwork at <http://aautio.deviantart.com>.

Sergio Artigas (Artigas): You can browse through his inspiring art in deviantart.

<http://artigas.deviantart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Onur Bakar: Find more of his art on <http://bakarov.deviantart.com/>

Steve Bellshaw (Seraph777): Explore his great characters here:

<https://www.deviantart.com/seraph777>

Matej Cadil: Found on deviantart at <https://www.deviantart.com/matejcadil>

Andres Canals (Jakdaw): Found at <https://www.deviantart.com/jakdaw>

UPDATED

Nacho Fernandez Castro: Visit his site on <https://www.deviantart.com/nachocastro>

Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska (Kasiopeia): Found on

<https://www.facebook.com/katarzyna.chmielgugulska>

Thomas Cole: Famous american painter. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cole

John Cook: Historical artwork is his specialty. See <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jhcook/>

UPDATED

Ralph Damiani (ralphdamiani): You can find him and his magnificent art here

<https://www.artstation.com/ralphdamiani>

Liz Danforth: The famous artists who skillfully illustrated numerous MERP books. You can find her Patreon page (preferred, as it is up-to-date) at <https://www.patreon.com/LizDanforth> and her webpage (outdated) at <http://www.lizdanforth.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Jenny Dolfen (Goldseven): A great german artist who focuses on the Eldar of the First Age. Her watercolour images are fantastic. You can also buy prints in several versions and sizes as well as originals. <https://goldseven.wordpress.com/> or <https://www.patreon.com/jennydolfen>

IN THIS ISSUE

Dyson Logos: He creates floorplans (mostly dungeons) that can be downloaded and used for free. <https://dysonlogos.blog/>

Anke Eißmann: She is one the greatest Tolkien illustrators. Check her art out at

<http://www.anke.edoras-art.de>

Marya Filatova (rittareart): See her art on <https://www.deviantart.com/filat>

IN THIS ISSUE

Olanda Fong-Surdenas (Wynahiros): Find her inspiring art on

<https://www.artstation.com/olandafs>

IN THIS ISSUE

Wouter Florusse (woutart): Check out his page on <http://woutart.deviantart.com/>

Caspar David Friedrich: Famous romantic painter. See the Wikipedia page for examples of his work: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_David_Friedrich

Raymond E. Gaustadness (shockbolt): You can find his fine work on

<http://www.digitalartwork.no/>

Olga G (steamey): Her beautiful art can be found at <http://steamey.deviantart.com/>

Donato Giancola: Find more from him at <https://donatoarts.com/index.html>

Daniel Govar: A great artist whose website can be found at <http://danielgovar.com>

Gin Hardiarso: He focusses on a theme popular in Fantasy - Warrior Women. He does it, however, unusually well since his subjects are not bikini-armoured amazons, but realistic heroines. Check his work out under <https://gambargin.deviantart.com/>

Arvid Hjorth: You can find his great works under the following link:
<https://www.artstation.com/arvidhjorth>

Jon Hodgson: The primary artist and artistic director for *The One Ring*. It's no wonder that the game is so well received (beside the good rules) if you look at his art. He now even has his own company named 'Handiwork Games'!
<http://www.jonhodgsondesign.com> and his Patreon page
<https://www.patreon.com/jonhodgsonmaps>
<https://handiwork.games/>

IN THIS ISSUE **John Howe:** The second of the great Tolkien artists that allowed the use of his artwork within our pages. Check out his great index. <http://www.john-howe.com/>

UPDATED **Thomas Jedrusek:** One of the illustrators of *The One Ring*. Currently under construction. See his page at <http://www.morano.pl/>

Milek Jakubiec (EthicallyChallenged): Thanks for giving permission to use your work! See more at <http://ethicallychallenged.deviantart.com/>

UPDATED **Pierre Joubert:** A well-known illustrator of youths' books. The official page (in french) seems down. <http://www.pierre-joubert.org/>

Jowita: Her exceptional work focuses on the darker themes of Middle-earth. Find it at <https://www.deviantart.com/dead01>

Pawel Kardis (KardisArt): Meet his stunning work under <https://www.deviantart.com/kardisart>

Liiga Klavina (LiigaKlavina): Check out her awesome art at <https://www.deviantart.com/liigaklavina>

Kotorigaro: A very talented young artist is found at <https://www.deviantart.com/kotorigaro>

Joona Kujanen (Tulikoura): Find his amazing art at <http://tulikoura.deviantart.com/>

Elena Kukanova: Check it out on <http://ekukanova.deviantart.com/>

Olga Kukhtenkova: You can find her work on the Tolkien Gateway
<http://fan.theonering.net/~rolozo/cgi-bin/rolozo.cgi/collection/kukhtenkova>

IN THIS ISSUE **Anna Kulisz (kuliszu):** do not miss out her fascinating works at the following DA link.
<https://www.deviantart.com/kuliszu>

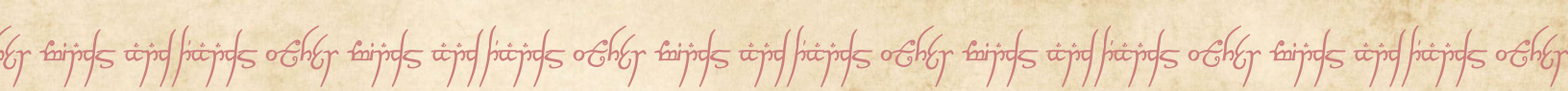
Julien Labit (Ilanthar): An inspiring artist whose work can be found under <https://ilanthar.jimdo.com/>

Janka Lateckova (Jankolas): Have a look at this beautiful artwork at <https://www.deviantart.com/jankalateckova>

J. Lazarus (JlazarusEB): Find him and his numerous and diverse historic warriors under <https://jlazaruseb.deviantart.com/>

Alan Lee: The third of the famous Tolkien artists.
<https://www.facebook.com/alan.lee.5496>

Carl-Friedrich Lessing: A famous romantic painter. See his Wikipedia article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Friedrich_Lessing



Angus McBride: The famous illustrator of numerous historical books as well as MERP. The Facebook page of his estate can be found under <https://www.facebook.com/mcbrideangus/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Turner Mohan: Find out more of his excellent work at <https://www.artstation.com/turnermohan>

My Clipart Store: The webstore holds many useful designs. https://www.etsy.com/de/shop/MyClipArtStore?section_id=11138275

IN THIS ISSUE

Ted Nasmith: The official site of renowned Tolkien artist Ted Nasmith, who was so kind in allowing us to use so much of his artwork within *Other Minds*. For more information, see <http://www.tednasmith.com/>

UPDATED

Nolanos: Her artwork was on Deviantart, but the account seems inactive: <https://www.deviantart.com/nolanos>

J G O'Donoghue: A fantastic artist focussing on historical artwork at <http://liniocht.blogspot.com/>

Gabriel Oliveira: Found at <https://www.deviantart.com/think0/>

Abe Papakhian: Check out his artwork at <http://abepapakhian.deviantart.com>

IN THIS ISSUE

Jereme Peabody (jjpeabody): Find more of this this skilled artist at <https://www.deviantart.com/jjpeabody>

Pegasusandco: Very well worth a look. <https://www.deviantart.com/pegasusandco>

UPDATED

Daniel Pilla: Great stuff. See it at <https://www.artstation.com/danielpilla>

IN THIS ISSUE

Vincent Pompetti: See his celtic-focussed artwork on Deviantart: <https://www.deviantart.com/vincentpompetti>

IN THIS ISSUE

Jan Pospisil (Merlkir): One of our “old” artists, whose images we have used already in past issues. Check him out at <https://www.deviantart.com/merlkir>

Bunny Powell: The artist who drew the map for The Black Arrow in Issue 19.

Peter Xavier Price (peet): See him at <https://www.facebook.com/peterxavierprice> and <https://www.deviantart.com/peet>

Rolozo: Among the oldest artwork-related sites around <http://fan.theonering.net/~rolozo/cgi-bin/rolozo.cgi/news>

Carlos Gordo Sacristán: A spanish artist, unfortunately by now I have no homepage for him.

UPDATED

Tara Rueping: Her site at <https://www.trueping.com> seems to be down.

Sampsa Rydman: He has published fantastic maps and a great campaign, especially maps. His site at <http://www.lindefirion.net/> is closed though.

John Emanuel Shannon (jeshannon): Find his great artwork on devianart and his page: <https://www.deviantart.com/jeshannon/> and <http://www.jeshannon.com>

Sarka Skorpikova: Her great portfolio of Middle-earth (and other) art can be found here: <https://www.deviantart.com/sarkaskorpikova>

Matthew Stewart: This talented artist’s work can be found on the following webpage: <http://www.matthew-stewart.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Ari Suonpää: Please visit his beautiful art at <https://www.facebook.com/artofarisuonpaa>

Mark Taylor: Another great artist specialising in historical themes <http://www.wyrdart.co.uk/>



OTHER STUFF THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING FOR ROLEPLAYING IN MIDDLE-EARTH

UPDATED

Facebook “Fans of Mithril Miniatures” group: Lots of photos of painted minis plus some awesome dioramas. The group has 646 members (December 2022)
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/107518272188/>



Elroi’s Mithril: The blog of a highly talented painter of miniatures. Please make sure you don’t miss out his marvellous versions of Mithril Miniatures’ figurines. Please be aware that this is in Spanish, but the images speak for themselves.
<http://paintingmithrils.blogspot.com/>

UPDATED

Forge of Doom: A new miniature company - run by our veteran contributor José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa. By December 2022, he has 1,517 followers at:
<https://www.facebook.com/forgeofdoom>

Frothers Unite miniature forum: It is related to miniatures for sure!
<http://deartonyblair.blogspot.com.es/>

Gamerboard: Here you can order a cool gaming supplement for your sessions!
<http://gamerboard.at/>

Games Workshop: If you are interested in miniatures made according to the movie design, then the Games Workshop miniature line (for skirmish-level tabletop wargaming) is for you.
<http://www.games-workshop.com>

Many Mithril Pages: A site run by fans of Mithril Miniatures (see next entry). Here you can find extensive information and fan support for both current and out-of-stock minis.
<http://mmp.faerylands.eu/index.php>

Mithril Miniatures: They have been producing Middle-earth figurines since 1988; thus being one of the oldest Middle-earth related companies still in business. They now have a general line (though diminished in volume compared to earlier times; in fact practically non-existing anymore) and an exclusive ‘Fellowship’ one which anyone can buy too, but the Fellowship members may vote on the next figures to be made. They also have a board, which is mostly miniatures-centred but some general Middle-earth related information can be found as well. Recently they have been refurbishing their website and the selection of minis seems to have narrowed down even further. They also have started to switch to 3D-printing for modelling, but as they show CGI of these models rather than the final metal figures, the quality and outlook of these cannot be judged from the website. Their forum is no longer existent.
<https://www.mithril.ie>

UPDATED

Wargames Terrain: Looking for the latest tabletop miniature wargaming and roleplaying news? Make sure to check out the Wargame News and Terrain Blog which is daily covering new miniatures, tabletop scenery and wargame rules from companies worldwide. Venture into the magnificent world of tabletop miniature wargaming and engage in fantasy, science fiction and historical warfare on your miniature tabletop battlefield. Check them out at (seems dead by Dec 2022).
<http://wargameterrain.blogspot.com> and Twitter @wnt_news

UPDATED

Facebook “Wargaming in Middle-earth” group: Lots of photos of painted minis with no default manufacturer or style. In a way, it mirrors *Other Minds*’ approach; only in the field of miniatures. By December 2021, the group has 4,071 members.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/151243738922969/?hc_location=group



EÄ

THE WORLD THAT IS

Eä:
*Ilúvatar called to them, and said:
'I know the desire of your minds that what ye have seen should verily be
not only in your thought, but even as ye yourselves are, and yet other.
Therefore I say:
Eä! Let these things Be!
And I will send forth into the Void, the Flame Imperishable,
and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be;
and those of you that will may go down into it.'
And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame;
and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing:
Eä, the World that Is.'*

—J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, *Ainulindalë* (The Music of the Ainur).

Arda in the First Age
from the building of Thangorodrim
until the War of Wrath

The Eä RPG system is dedicated to role playing gaming in J.R.R. Tolkien's universe.
Eä d20 is currently well along in it's development with the "Races & Cultures" tome nearing completion. Eä d20 is the adaptation of the Open D20 (D&D 3.5) role-playing gaming system modified to more accurately fit the "feel" of Tolkien's Middle-earth.
Tomes of lore include:

- Races & Cultures (near completion)
- Magic in Middle-earth (core mechanics complete, conversion charts in progress)
- Destinies & Lore (Classes, Skills, Feats, etc. - in early stages)
- Creatures & Monsters (Ancalagon through Zigurim) (planned)
- Valar & Maiar (Includes Vala, Maia, Istari, Lords and Characters of Renown) (planned)



THE TOLKIEN EMAIL LIST

The eldest of the lists.

This Tolkien discussion group has existed since the First Age before the world was made round.....

Join and contribute.

Our list has existed since the early 1990s with many members who have been here for years beyond count....

Now we have moved to Google and have become a private Google Group.

To request to subscribe to this group, please visit the following page:

http://groups.google.com/group/tolkien_list/subscribe

or contact rossiele@yahoo.com

(Elena Rossi, ½ Listowner)



LEARNING “SPELLS” IN ROLEPLAYING GAMES SET IN MIDDLE-EARTH

Thomas Morwinsky
(tolwen@gmx.de)

per the terms of the CC license: 

middle-earth
scholarship



Magic in Middle-earth is an all-time favourite for Tolkien aficionados and roleplayers alike. Here we see a specific topic of magic covered – learnable spells.

While Middle-earth is full of magic, the obvious parts are almost always manifested in living beings (Istari, Elven craftsmen like Fëanor or Celebrimbor, Dragons, Balrogs etc.) or items like the Rings of Power, Amon Hen, Glamdring, Sting, Galadriel’s Mirror, palantíri (to name but a few). Although such instances are present in all RPG’s, the availability of learnable spell magic is a central theme to almost all

INTRODUCTION

[...] From the outside nothing will move them [the doors of the West-gate of Moria] save the spell of command [...] I [Gandalf] once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs that was ever used for such a purpose. I can still remember ten score of them without searching in my mind.

*—The Lord of the Rings.
A Journey in the Dark*

For almost any Fantasy roleplaying game, the existence of learnable magical “spells” – and by extension – some kind of “Wizard”, “Magic user”, “Mage” etc. playable character class is a must-have. Things get a bit trickier when we look at this topic in the context of roleplaying in Middle-earth. So far, the officially licensed games have approached this question quite differently:

Middle-earth Roleplaying (MERP) had a ‘Mage’ profession¹, which was a fairly generic Magic-user. Other spell-users like the “Animist” (the MERP version of the well-known D&D “Cleric”) the Ranger (sic!) and Bard also had a definite (though smaller) set of learnable spells at their disposal. The roots of these classes lay in the generic High Fantasy Rolemaster (RM) game, of which MERP was a toned-down and simplified version. At various places in the Rulesbook and line supplements, RM is also referenced to. In case of the spellcasting professions, sometimes higher-level spells are referred to (like “Raise Dead” being a 12th level spell

¹ The three games have different terms for defining character classifications (“Character Class” in D&D); MERP has “Professions”, the LotRRPG has “Orders” while TOR terms them “Callings”.

Istari: Despite their similarities to Men in terms of appearance, their inherent power is far greater and thus they are not a good example for “spells” used by Men. Still, the following are examples, where one of them might have used a learnable “spell” (or an inherent power with similar effects)



Saruman with the palantir © by Anna Kulisz, used with permission



Black Victory II © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

Men:

- Gandalf: Frodo suggesting Gandalf may turn Sam into a toad if he does not keep his secret (highlighting at least the **belief** among Hobbits that Gandalf could be able to do that), using a spell in Hollin against the wolves in *The Lord of the Rings*, defending against Wolves in *The Hobbit*, perhaps on Weathertop when defending against the Ringwraiths).
- Saruman (perhaps when incarcerating Gandalf, Saruman’s voice coming from Isengard’s gate even when he sits in Orthanc).
- Mouth of Sauron, Ringwraiths (some of them being named as “sorcerers of old”; see quote above): The positive evidence only covers “evil” magic as mentioned above and it is not clear whether the Nine Rings facilitated the sorcery for them in the first place or whether they “only” enhanced pre-existing capabilities.
- Númenóreans taught by Sauron: Though not directly mentioned as such, the second quote above can be seen as referring to sorcery too – this time one taught by Sauron to the Númenóreans in the days of his stay on the island.
- Beorn: Labelled in *Letter #144* as “[...] no doubt a bit of a magician, Beorn was a Man.” He is not seen casting spells though.



LEARNING MAGICAL "SPELLS?"

The ability of Men to learn magical "spells" (to use some classic RPG terminology) is not easy to pinpoint in the *legendarium*. First we have a very exclusive statement:

Anyway, a difference in the use of 'magic' in this story is that it is not to be come by by 'lore' or spells; but is in an inherent power not possessed or attainable by Men as such.

—*Letters.#155*

This would preclude from humans by large all of the standard RPG spell magic, which is usually some kind of lore that can be researched and mastered. It is however not so easy, as this passage is from a draft to the previous letter #154. This passage (plus more text) was not included in the letter that was actually sent. The exact reasons are not known, but one possibility is that in the end Tolkien was not so sure whether this statement could be sustained. A note by Tolkien to the text of Letter #155 seems to support this view, when he questions his remark above and writes:

"But the Númenóreans used "spells" in making swords?"

—*Letters.#155*

This can be seen as a hint that Tolkien had second thoughts on the topic and therefore discarded this part in the final letter – whether for further consideration later or dismissing it altogether. The passage quoted at the beginning of this contribution on the other hand seems to suggest that such learnable spell magic did exist:

I [Gandalf] once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs that was ever used for such a purpose [opening a magically barred door]. I can still remember ten score of them without searching in my mind.

—*The Lord of the Rings.
A Journey in the Dark*

This latter passage is among the primary instances cited when it comes to the questions about spell-magic for use in Middle-earth RPGs. It seems to prove that there were many magical "spells" in existence designed for the opening of enchanted doors. This is somehow qualified though, as the mechanism that Gandalf is referring to, seems to be simply a spoken phrase (or single word in the end). This could suggest, that the knowledge of the correct word(s) and language (plus perhaps intonation) would qualify as a "spell".

In addition to this it could also imply that – naturally – different words and phrases would be used in different languages and that this does not include the conjuration of any "mystical" or "magical" energy to achieve the desired effect (here: opening the magically sealed door), but only speaking the correct verbal "key" to trigger the built-in opening mechanism. Unfortunately we do not know whether the actual "opening energy" for such cases is stored in the door by default, or whether it can be provided by the spell itself.

In contrast, the usual RPG "spell" has a vocal component (like *mellon* in the case of the West-gate), but often also somatic (i.e. gestures of some sort) and material (specific items or substances that are consumed) components that are needed to channel the summoned/conjured "magical energy" to achieve the desired effect.

The quote also refers to languages of Elves, Men and Orcs in which spells for such purposes existed. Of course this does not mean, that people using it were from these races/cultures too. In my opinion it is strongly implied, and therefore the likelihood that Men used magical opening "spells" seems to be quite high.

Earlier, Tolkien uses the term "spell" in a more magical context though:

A Barrow-wight had taken him, and he was probably already under the dreadful spells of the Barrow-wights about which whispered tales spoke.

—*The Lord of the Rings.
Fog on the Barrow-downs*

These two examples demonstrate the possible range in the use of the term “spell”. Of course, the context before the West-gate of Moria does not exclude a “magical” component. At least none is explicitly named – perhaps the necessary magic is stored in the door itself and needs only to be activated by the proper phrase.

Later on in the story, we find a more precise passage:

[...] And he [the Mouth of Sauron] entered the service of the Dark Tower when it first rose again, and because of his cunning he grew ever higher in the Lord's favour; and he learned great sorcery, [...].

—The Lord of the Rings.
The Black gate opens

This is a clear indication that at least the corrupted variety of spell magic is learnable through lore rather than strictly being only an inherent talent of a person. Literally, it only supports the view that “evil” spell magic can be learned by lore. It does not say anything about uncorrupted spells and it could be argued that teaching such sorcery was a specific way to corrupt and a power derived from the Enemy. In contrast, the “good” side (i.e. those following the commandments of the Valar) would not use any such “spell” powers.

But on the other hand, the mere absence of any evidence for this latter (or the contrary – that it is possible) is no evidence of its non-existence (the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*). Therefore, in my opinion, this makes it more likely that non-evil magic can be learned too. The main difference is the amount of risk of falling into evil ways: For non-sorcerous spells, this would be relatively low, whereas for sorcery, it would be high.

In order to develop this topic further, a point about the possible source of “spell magic” is worthwhile exploring: The idea is that Men do not have the necessary “critical mass” of inherent power to learn and cast magical spells as cited from Letter #155. The following chapter explores this subject further.

The source of power

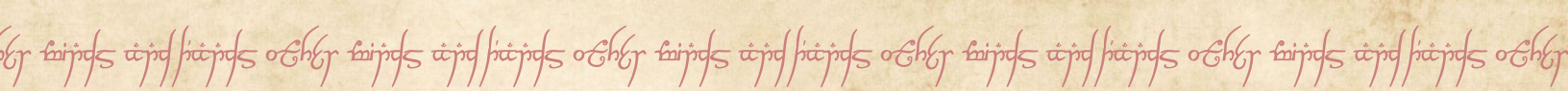
The intent and design of a spell will govern the amount of potential risk it carries. This is a principle we encounter in many ways in Middle-earth: The ends do not justify the means – whatever noble the ends are. Saruman's fall is a prime example for this. Thus spells should reflect this underlying principle – a spell developed to do damage to other people (e.g. directing a natural Lightning Bolt to hit your enemy) will always carry a higher risk for accruing “Shadow”. Spells for healing or singing for example (being non-dominating) would be less risky and carrying almost no amount of Shadow than sorcery which is by design made to enforce your will upon matter and people. This “imprint” of primordial energy is discussed by Tolkien:

To gain domination over Arda, Morgoth had let most of his being pass into the physical constituents of the Earth - hence all things that were born on Earth and lived on and by it, beasts or plants or incarnate spirits, were liable to be 'stained' [...] (It was this Morgoth-element in matter, indeed, which was a prerequisite for such 'magic' and other evils as Sauron practised with it and upon it.)

—Morgoth's Ring.
Myths Transformed

This passage already supports the view that this external “Melkor ingredient” in matter is the source of evil magic (i.e. sorcery) that can be learned.

In this context it is of interest to question the source of this “magical” power. For Men it is “magic” (i.e. something beyond their normal scope of abilities and thus “magical”). Therefore, they have to rely on an external source to achieve the necessary “critical” mass for learning and achieving magical spell effects. The question is, which “external sources” are available for such a purpose. In my opinion, the disseminated power of the Ainur is the best source for this. First, the “echo” of the Ainulindalë is a good



As Arda came into being through the Ainulindalë, the matter of Middle-earth itself carries the residue of the Great Song, and as all matter (and with it the above-mentioned of the Ainulindalë) in Middle-earth is to some degree touched and therefore “tainted” by Melkor/Morgoth, the spells using this as a source are also to varying degrees “tainted” and potentially dangerous to use. This taint is called the *mordo* henceforth. Thus the *mordo* is present in all learnable spell magic – only very small in some, but dominating in others. This view is based on the following passage, which explains that the *mordo* is not evenly distributed among the matter of Middle-earth, but in varying degrees, dependent upon the actual substance/matter:

It is quite possible, of course, that certain ‘elements’ or conditions of matter had attracted Morgoth’s special attention (mainly, unless in the remote past, for reasons of his own plans). For example, all gold (in Middle-earth) seems to have had a specially ‘evil’ trend – but not silver. Water is represented as being almost entirely free of Morgoth. (This, of course, does not mean that any particular sea, stream, river, well, or even vessel of water could not be poisoned or defiled – as all things could.)

—Morgoth’s Ring. Myths Transformed (Notes on motives in the Silmarillion)

Therefore, all magical spells would carry the risk of accumulating Shadow (a term used in TOR and useful for describing the idea behind it), but to varying degrees. For spells focussing on healing or learning (as an example), the risk is low, as the influence of Melkor on these aspects is very small. But for anything that dominates, rules or destroys, his residue is much stronger.

In terms of game mechanics, performing spell magic in the form of a song or instrumental play would also enhance its power, as the whole world is based on the Great Music.

This might also be the reason, why the Eldar used it – for example Finrod’s famous “song battle” with Sauron in the *Silmarillion*:

Thus befell the contest of Sauron and Felagund which is renowned. For Felagund strove with Sauron in songs of power, and the power of the King was very great; but Sauron had the mastery, as is told in the Lay of Leithian:

*He chanted a song of wizardry,
Of piercing, opening, of treachery,
Revealing, uncovering, betraying.*

*Then sudden Felagund there swaying,
Sang in a song of staying,
Resisting, battling against power,
Of secrets kept, strength like a tower,
[...]*

**—The Silmarillion.
Of Beren and Lúthien**

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

At the Westgate of Moria Gandalf states:

“I once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs, that was ever used for such a purpose.”

**—The Lord of the Rings.
A Journey in the Dark**

This suggests that spells for the same purpose existed in several languages. Going further, this could mean that you need to learn a spell in a specific language and cannot simply transfer that by using another language in the casting. Though this cannot be defined with a high level of confidence, it fits the overall approach of this article and therefore will be followed here.

The spells are imbedded in the metaphysical concept of a language and use the specific structures of languages to channel their power. Taking the example above it is of no use if the caster knew both Sindarin and Westron – the spell has to be learned/researched for each language anew.

The language in which is used in casting spells influences the effect. Therefore a spell has



THE RANGERS OF THE NORTH

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BACKGROUND STUFF



Compared to Gondor, the kingdom of Arnor, its successors and institutions get relatively little attention in Tolkien's writings. For a RPG campaign this is somewhat unfortunate — especially since the famous Rangers of the North with their most prominent Chieftain Aragorn II. belong to this region.

In light of this, long-time contributor Gabriele Quaglia has taken up the challenge to develop some background and more in-depth information on this group and give a LM more material for use in a campaign.

Enjoy his great ideas on the ancestors and contemporaries of Aragorn and be ready to encounter these mysterious, powerful and yet benevolent people in your Eriador adventures!

'Few now remember them,' Tom murmured, 'yet still some go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in loneliness, guarding from evil things folk that are heedless.'

The hobbits did not understand his words, but as he spoke they had a vision as it were of a great expanse of years behind them, like a vast shadowy plain over which there strode shapes of Men, tall and grim with bright swords, and last came one with a star on his brow.

—*The Lord of the Rings.
Fog on the Barrow-downs*

INTRODUCTION

Among the most fascinating characters in Tolkien's books are the Rangers: silent wanderers, seeking neither glory nor riches, but relentlessly fighting evil in the darkness and loneliness of the wild lands. They have become in a way, a distinctive element of stories set in Middle earth, and have since defined an archetype in Fantasy literature.

The Lord of the Rings introduces us to two kinds of Rangers: the Rangers of the North, descendants of the Dúnedain of Arnor, and the Rangers of Ithilien, guarding Gondor's eastern frontier and carrying out raids against Mordor's forces. But the origin of the figure of the Ranger in *The Lord of the Rings* can be traced to the early stories of Tolkien, those set in the First Age: the trope of the hunter features prominently in those stories: the exile, walking unseen in the wilderness, holder of a secret lore of beasts and plants. Such is Beleg Cúthalion, when he leaves Doriath to search for Túrin, and tries to save his friend from the clutches of the Orcs; such is Tuor, walking unknown paths guided by Voronwë to Gondolin; and Beren, who wandered Dorthonion as an outlaw against Morgoth and was said to be friend of bird and beast. The trope of the hunter is mixed with that of the forest outlaw fighting an invader, such as Barahir's band in Dorthonion and later Túrin and

The Divided Kingdoms (T.A. 861-1975)

When Arnor was divided into three Sister Kingdoms in T.A. 861, so were the Rangers split into three separate organisations, each serving one of the three kings and operating within his realm. Service naturally followed one's rightful lord depending on the location of a family's lands: as a result, Arthedain, being the heart of the kingdom where most of the noble families lived, took the lion's share of Rangers whereas Cardolan and Rhûdaur were left with comparatively smaller shares.



But regardless of land ownership and feudal relations, true loyalties were much more complicated. Most of the Rangers were naturally dedicated to one king, one land and one brotherhood, and the idea of division was ill-received by many, especially among the Master Rangers. Fighting between Rangers of different allegiances put their loyalty to a hard test. On more than one occasion they were reported to keep away from direct confrontation and they actively avoided to kill their foes, their attitude at time bordering insubordination. Even after the division, when political relations allowed it, Rangers still cooperated and kept close relation-

ships, exchanging messages and even meeting at the borders of the kingdoms to hunt together.

This was a concern for the kings, especially for the monarchs of Rhudaur, who came to mistrust their Rangers so that their organisation fell into a steep decline, with Dúnedain being supplanted by new local lords who perceived membership as an occasion of social advancement more than service. Likewise, the Rangers of Cardolan slowly saw their numbers decline along with discipline.

In Arthedain the total number of members shrunk to half of what they had been in the past, but in this period these Rangers gradually developed into a more professionally organised structure: Now the former noble hunters informally accompanying the king in his hunts and travels became members of a more standardised military Order tasked with the protection of the borders, now beset by many dangers. They were also active outside the kingdom's borders, travelling incognito in the old lands of Cardolan and Rhudaur, where they liaised with former members of the King's Rangers, and carried out missions for the king of Arthedain. Later, after the rise of Angmar, they would focus their patrols on the northern borders against the new threat and their missions now even brought them as far as Rhovanion to gather intelligence and foil the plans of the Witch-king and its minions. Their ways became more secretive and their training involved dealing with the new dangers that arose in the North in the form of Angmar.

When Cardolan accepted Argeleb I's claim as king of Arnor (c. T.A. 1349), and the last Dúnedain were expelled from Rhudaur (T.A. 1409) the Arthadan Rangers also formally resumed the title of the "Rangers of Arnor".



The fall of the North-kingdom (T.A. 1975-1976)

What remained of the old realm of Arnor was laid to waste by Angmar's forces in T.A. 1974. King Arvedui perished in the waters of the Ice-bay of Forochel the following year, and although the forces of Gondor and the Elves of Lindon destroyed Angmar soon after, there was little to recover from the ruins. Aranarth, Arvedui's son and heir, was faced with a decision that would change the destiny of his line and Middle-earth: whether or not to reclaim his father's title and attempt to rebuild Arnor – or to choose another path that seemed to offer less hope in the immediate future:

The war had caused enormous material and human losses and a large part of its remaining population emigrated to Gondor over the following years while the rest mostly had to build new communities. These remaining Men joined in scattered settlements in the North, concentrated in and around the Hills of Evendim, Bree and Tharbad, while the Hobbits survived in the Shire. Although Angmar had been vanquished, the Witch-king had merely been forced to flee and would not forget his vows of vengeance against the Heirs of Isildur.

If Arnor had tried to rise again from its ashes, Aranarth reasoned, the Shadow would come back to destroy it for sure. Therefore the only way to protect the surviving peoples of Eriador as well as the Line of Isildur, was to disappear from sight along with what remained of the Dúnedain of the North. But they would not renounce their rights or relinquish their duties: surviving in secrecy, the Dúnedain would still be the guardians of the northern lands against what evils may trouble them.

At a solemn, secret meeting of the surviving – and willing to remain – Dúnedain lords on Amon Súl Aranarth took for himself the title of Chieftain of the Dúnedain and Captain of the Rangers of the North. He sent the heirlooms of his line to Elrond Half-elven for safe-keeping: the star of Elendil, the sceptre of Annúminas, the Ring of Barahir and the shards of Narsil. He gathered those Dúnedain still loyal to him and led them away from their ancestral lands to start

a new life in isolated and self-sufficient communities, far from the remaining settled areas of Eriador. There, ever mindful of the near-complete destruction of their people, the descendants of lords built a new life by toiling with their hands, much like the children of the Three Houses of the Edain of the West had done when they were saved from the destruction of Beleriand and were brought to the land of Elenya in the middle of the Great Sea.



The Rangers of the North

Whereas the King's Rangers had once been the companions of the king, later turning into an order of selected and superbly trained Dúnedain sworn to protect the borders of the kingdom, the new Rangers of the North created by Aranarth, were to become the central and key institution of the Men of the West.

To understand this shift, one must remember that, unlike the Edain escaping Beleriand at the end of the Elder Days, the Dúnedain did not feel like they had truly defeated their enemy and were ever watchful of his return. They carried the memory of a near-total destruction and extermination of their people, without the consolation of true victory. The threat of a return of the Shadow, in one form or another, was

always present in their minds, along with the feeling that, the fall of Arnor had not occurred just because of the machinations of the Witch-king, but also because of their own failures as rulers and guardians of the land – primarily their disunity after T.A. 861.

Vowing that the horrors of the past would never happen again, the Rangers were founded once more, no longer a military order like before, but a true brotherhood among the surviving Dúnedain in the North.

ERIADOR AFTER THE FALL OF ARNOR (T.A. 1976-2740)

Although the northern realm was no more, civilisation had not completely disappeared from Eriador: several areas, such as Breeland and the Shire, had weathered the storm and elsewhere new domains rose under the leadership of local Men.

To all of them, the kings were a thing of the past, and it was generally assumed that the last Dúnedain were either dead or had left for Gondor. From their Hidden Settlements the descendants of the Men of the West still watched over them, no longer as rulers but as wardens, advisors and brokers. The Rangers walked among the peoples of Eriador but no one recognized them, assuming them to be nomads or vagabonds, like many men were at that time. Through their efforts, Eriador started to slowly recover from the devastation of war, there was peace among the different communities and the roads between them were safe again. But soon evil things started to multiply again, wolves began to plague the lowlands and

orcs built strongholds in the mountains: against these threats the Rangers remained ever watchful, protecting the communities of Eriador from these dangers.

The Great Orc Invasion (T.A. 2745-2748)

It was in Arassuil's (T.A. 2719-2784) time that the Orcs of the northern Misty Mountains repeatedly launched large-scale raids into Eriador from T.A. 2740 onwards, which culminated in the invasions of 2745-48. During these three years a great horde of Goblins marched to the heart of Eriador and then splintered into smaller armies and warbands, plundering the lands as far as the mouths of the Baranduin and the Gwathló.

At this time the Rangers of the North not only did everything they could to protect the Eriadorian communities, but they fought for the survival of their own people, too. They built alliances, gathered local forces, trained warriors and, on different occasions, even marched to full battle, for the first and last time after the fall of Arnor.

Their courage and organisation allowed many regions to survive the onslaught, but others were laid waste by the invaders and never recovered again. The Dúnedain settlements, hidden as they were, did not escape the Goblins and suffered heavy material and human damage. Moreover, now that their existence was known they were at risk and with them all the surviving Dúnedain.

For these reasons, Arassuil took the hard decision to abandon the settlements in the North and the South Downs and concentrate what remained of his people in an even more remote region, in southern Rhudaur. After T.A. 2750, the last Dúnedain abandoned the lands west of the Mitheithel and retreated into the woods of the Angle.



The Troll © by Anke Eibmann, used with permission

The Long Winter (T.A. 2758/59)

Not ten years after the end of the Great Orc Invasion, Eriador was hit by another catastrophe that would be remembered for centuries. During the Long Winter, snow covered the ground from November to March, causing uncountable deaths by cold and famine. The newly founded settlements of the Dúnedain in the Angle were not yet prepared to withstand such a harsh winter, but with the help of Elrond, Lord of Imladris, they avoided the worst consequences.

The relationship between the Elves of Rivendell and the Dúnedain had always been strong, and the heirs of the Chieftains would spend their early years in the house of Elrond, to be educated by the best elven loremasters. But after the Elves saved the last Men of the West from complete disaster, the two people grew even closer. The Eldar shared with the Rangers much of their wisdom, teaching skills and lore that had been forgotten in the decline of Arnor.

The Late Third Age

In the years between the Reconquest of Erebor and the War of the Ring, the whole Dúnanad population in the North numbers about ten thousand and is concentrated in a number of villages and forts in the woods of the Angle. The number of Rangers is around three hundred: they spend a limited time in their home region, and frequently travel across Eriador relying on a network of hidden outposts and secret allies, which are to various degrees aware of the Rangers' true identity.

Because of their limited numbers and the scope of the territory they protect, Rangers are scattered in small groups in charge of watching a particular area. This, combined with a creeping lengthening of Shadow over Eriador (and all of Middle-earth) puts the Rangers increasingly into danger of meeting foes they cannot match. This happened, namely, in T.A. 2933, when their Captain Arathorn was ambushed and killed by hill-trolls. Following this incident, his wife Gilraen moved with their only son Aragorn, a baby of two at the time, to Rivendell, and the rulership over Rangers and Dúnedain was delegated to the Great Warden Haldagol.

RANKS AND ORGANISATION

The first King's Rangers were an informal group: young Rangers were trained by their seniors in outdoor skills such as hunting, foraging, scouting, and at the same time learned discipline, frugality and loyalty. Most of all, they learned to be part of something larger and to trust their companions like brothers. Their relationship with the land became intimate, fostering a love and sense of duty for the kingdom and the people that lived in it.

As the Rangers developed into a more tightly knit order, young recruits were also trained in combat, military tactics and organisation, strategy, administration and leadership.

Already in the 6th century of the Third Age, a distinction had emerged between regular Rangers, who served for a limited time (usually 5 years), and a minority of Master Rangers, who joined the order for life and, besides their roles of leadership and training, carried out important and potentially dangerous missions.

As the challenges that the North-kingdom had to face increased, regular Rangers saw increasingly frequent action, being deployed in border missions where they risked their lives. By the time of the wars with Angmar, a third rank had been established: Field Rangers would serve for a time between 5 and 35 years, before either becoming Master Rangers or leaving the order for employment in the regular army or administration. These were usually second sons of the nobility, who did not have a title to claim after receiving their training. Field Rangers quickly grew in number until they became the majority of the order.

After the fall of Arnor, the Rangers of the North largely maintained the same structure as the King's Rangers, except that all recruits (now called Companion Rangers) would, after their five years training, go on and become Field Rangers (now simply called Rangers). Master Rangers continued to provide training and leadership.

Just like the King was the ultimate leader of the Rangers of Arnor, after T.A. 1975 the Rangers of the North had their Captain in the Chieftain of the Dúnedain. He would control

the vast territory of Eriador through four Wardens, each overseeing a quarter of the land. The Warden of the North was in charge of the borderlands north of the Hills of Evendim, the North Downs and the lands closer to the ruins of Angmar; the Warden of the West oversaw the region of Lake Evendim, the Lhûn valley and the lands of the Shire; the Warden of the South would protect the lands of old Cardolan and Breeland; and the Warden of the East would look after the lands of old Rhudaur. Wardens were not exclusively military figures but they were also in charge of the Dúnedain families living in their territories: they were responsible for public order, security and upholding of the law.

After the retreat into the Angle in the 28th century, the Warden of the East, in whose territory all the Dúnedain communities were located, became known as the Great Warden. The other three wardens were only responsible for the activity of Rangers away from the Hidden Settlements. This arrangement lasted until the War of the Ring.

Duties and Activities

Even though all the Dúnedain are descendants of the aristocracy of Arnor, they are all equals and commoners within the Hidden Settlements. Here they need to carry out all the activities necessary for the survival of a community with virtually no economic links to the outside. The Dúnedain are farmers, shepherds, carpenters and blacksmiths. Each Dúnadan male (and female volunteers) is trained as a fighter, serving in the militia of the community. The most talented are selected to become Rangers.

Of the few hundred Rangers active at any time (300 at the time of the War of the Ring), about one third (100) are on duty in the Angle, guarding the borders and making sure spies, scouts or lost travellers do not enter them. To this end all paths leading to the Hidden Settlements are disguised and permanently watched by lookouts. Trespassers are assessed by Rangers disguised as shepherds or woodsmen, who offer their services as guides and lead them onto the main road. Should trespassers appear as

a threat, they would be interrogated and, if proven hostile, eliminated.

The remaining two-thirds of the Rangers (200 at the time of the War of the Ring) are dedicated to missions abroad, half of them active and the other half either preparing or recovering from them. This allows any of these Ranger to spend about half of his time abroad and the other half in the Angle.

The Hidden Settlements

Since the fall of the North-kingdom, the Dúnedain have been living in secret communities called Hidden Settlements. These are invariably far from settled areas and trade routes. Villages are built around an easily defensive position, such as a fortress: this would usually be dating from the high days of Arnor, but they are allowed to look ruined or abandoned, with moss and creepers growing on their sides, and no banners flying over their towers. Houses and other buildings are often built in hollows among the hills or within woodland areas, to avoid being detected from a distance. Fields would also be hidden from sight, and village fortifications would be disguised to look natural (like moats and earthen walls) or ruined (like palisades or actual stone walls). Woodland settlements have buildings that blend with the environment and can be detected only at close scrutiny.



The whole population of each settlement is composed of Dúnedain who engage in all the activities needed for the village's survival. Farming, fishing, hunting, lumbering and all related activities are carried out locally. Other more specialised activities like mining and smithing are localized in one of the main villages, which then supplies its neighbouring settlements. Settlements are headed by a Reeve, an

elder elected by the villagers and confirmed and installed by the Great Warden: his main duties are the organisation of labour and the settling of disputes among the locals.

Immediately after the fall of Arnor, Hidden Settlements tended to concentrate in one area in the North Downs and one in the South Downs, with a small number of families living beyond these. After the Great Orc Invasion in the 28th century, all settlements west of the Mitheithel were abandoned, and the Dúnedain moved into the Angle where, at the end of the Third Age, all the Hidden Settlements were located in a confined and heavily protected area.



Oritar takes leave from Isildur © by Anke Eibmann, used with permission

RANGER OUTPOSTS

Rangers operating in a certain area always have an outpost where they can fall back for recovering, resting and restocking their supplies. Outposts are always hidden: the larger ones are located within the ruins of abandoned settlements or old fortresses; smaller ones can be built in natural caves or ruined towers.

Important outposts are permanently manned by Rangers, among them a Master Ranger and a healer. They are stocked with food, weapons and other supplies. Minor outposts are simply protected by disguised, sturdy doors and various spells of concealment and contain non-perishable supplies and encrypted logs that Rangers use to communicate with those visiting later.

Outposts never produce the materials they need: instead, when conditions allow it, they tend to rely on local allies, more or less aware of the true identity of the Rangers. Isolated villages, communities of nomads, hobbit clans or large inns all may sell or donate food and supplies. In some cases, the Rangers have to regularly re-supply the outpost themselves (e.g. to maintain secrecy in a sensitive area).

A few outposts are additionally protected by friendly beasts, such as bird colonies, which have built a symbiotic relation with the Rangers, warning them about potential threats and, in turn, being protected from predators by the presence of their allies. These alliances are made possible by communications skills that a few talented Rangers are able to learn from the Eldar.

RANGERS IN DÚNADAN SOCIETY

The Dúnedain of the North in the late Third Age are relatively egalitarian: everyone among them is of pure Númenórean descent, and as such counts among his ancestors lords and knights of the North-kingdom. But in the simple and secluded life of a Hidden Settlement labour division is limited, personal wealth scarce and social ranks almost non-existent. This is not to say that everyone is equal: those who are selected as Rangers enjoy a special respect, which repays them of the considerable hardships and sacrifices they must face in their service. The longer the years of duty, the higher the status that Rangers enjoy, with Master Rangers being highly honoured and Wardens being only second to the Captain of all Rangers.

Among non-Rangers there is no hard distinction, save for the Reeve who is always a well-respected figure. Land-ownership is not hereditary but rather assigned by the community. When they near adult age, young Dúnedain are faced with a choice to either continue their parents' trade, learn a new profession (which is encouraged if a position has fallen vacant) or apply to become a Ranger.

Traditionally the first son continues the father's trade. When a young Dúnadan applies for a new profession, he or she is assigned by the Reeve to a position that is either vacant or needed, most often in other Settlements where the youth starts a new life. The profession always comes with the necessary tools – for a

farmer, land and animals, for a craftsman, a workshop. A request to join the Rangers is the hardest path: applicants are led to the training site of Garth Lothren, where they are drilled and tested for half a year. At the end of that period, only a few are promoted to Ranger status, thus continuing with their training; the others are sent back to their homes to start a life in the community.

WARFARE

All Rangers are equipped with swords, spears and light armour. About a third of them is also given a horse for greater mobility. Their style of warfare is highly mobile, preferably applying ambush: they gather information and strike when the enemy is in a position of weakness. Typically faced with numerical inferiority, Rangers launch lightning strikes with the purpose of damaging supply lines and deteriorate the enemy's morale, only to retreat when their purpose is achieved. They use terrain to their advantage, dividing larger forces into small bands that can be easily picked off one by one, drawing foes into traps and harassing them from the back and the sides when they are marching.

Training with the Elves of Rivendell gives the Rangers skills that would look supernatural to other Men, which include stealth, mimicry, animal languages and simple spells and wards of secrecy.

When the Hidden Settlements are threatened, the Rangers may summon their total strength, enlisting common people as militias. They are called Beriedain (S. "Defenders of Men") and receive regular training with spear, sword, shield and bow. They are lightly armed but strong and well-disciplined: in battle they are led by Ranger officers and a match for regular forces of other Men. Counting all able-bodied men and women in the Hidden Settlements, the Beriedain represent a large force that may rise up to considerable challenges. The last time the Beriedain were called into battle was during the Great Orc Invasions: since then, the Rangers have avoided mustering them for fear of revealing the position of the Hidden Settlements to the Enemy (and losing people – every killed member counts all the more in a small community).

Outside Relations

In spite of their key role in defending Eriador and its communities from the Shadow, Rangers are by most people considered vagabonds with no trade and looked upon with suspicion by the settled inhabitants of the countries they visit. They do not attempt to change this situation, as it helps them hiding from attention. Most outsiders, while being oblivious to the existence of the Hidden Settlements, do not even suspect the Rangers to be members of a larger organisation.

Yet there are a few to whom the Rangers choose to reveal a glimpse of their true identity: Friends and allies who support them, trusting them to be a force of good. In times of need, Rangers may send envoys to the leaders of the communities of Eriador, acting as counsellors and alliance-brokers with other communities; they promote peace and foster cooperation towards a common goal as well as facilitate the ability of groups to defend themselves from threats.

Elves tend to be an exception: some in Rivendell are aware of the existence and location of the Hidden Settlements, and most of the Wandering Companies of Eriador respect the Rangers and readily share information with them: they may not know their true identity but they can easily read their hearts as true and opposed to the forces of Darkness, and some elves may even guess them to be descended from the old Men of the West.



Last Homely House © by Anna Kulisz, used with permission

PLACES OF NOTE IN T.A. 2965

See page 42 for a map with all the places listed.

Bar Minerdhyl – at the time of Arantar, a few years after the founding of the King’s Rangers, a school to train future members of the fellowship was established on the western side of the Weather Hills, in a sparsely inhabited area within the king’s own lands. The location of the place was kept secret to all except the Rangers themselves. Bar Minerdhyl (S. “The house among the lonely hills”) was the headquarter of the Rangers until the invasion of Angmar in 1974 when it was completely destroyed by the enemies’ forces, so that nothing remained of the original buildings and gardens.

The Rangers of the North established a memorial shrine among the charred ruins, replacing the original statues of the founders, Arantar and the two Master Rangers Súlve-rain and Bronweg, and adding a fourth to honour Arvedui, the Last King.

Among the ruins the Rangers have created a hidden outpost where members of the order may find a safe haven and hidden supplies.

Brónacoll – one of the first Hidden Settlements to be established, Brónacoll (S. “Enduring Hollow”; formerly *Foronarth* from T.A. 1980 to 2747) is nested within the North Downs. Once a large fortified village with a strong keep, it served for over seven centuries as the seat of the Chieftains of the Dúnedain in the area. Completely destroyed during the Great Orc Invasion, it was partially rebuilt in the 29th century and today is the main outpost of the Rangers in Northern Eriador, permanently manned by at least five Rangers, among them the Warden of the North. In T.A. 2965 the position is held by Maegind the Stern, a middle-aged Dúnedain known for his boldness and cunning in battle.

Thurincaw – originally built as a Ranger outpost to watch over the north-western borders, Thurincaw (S. “Secret Shelter”) lay in the northern part of the Hills of Evendim,

a hidden mansion among the fells. Here Arvedui hid for a night during his flight to Forochel, and soon after that the outpost was discovered and destroyed by the orcs of Angmar. After the defeat of the Witch-king, the Rangers of the North established an outpost among the ruins, which is occasionally used as a base for ranging into the Rammas Formen and the lands around the Ice-bay of Forochel.

Tîr Fioncor – a high castle located in the north-eastern Hills of Evendim, Tîr Fioncor (S. “Watchtower where the hawks circle”) was the seat of several Dúnedain lords, sworn to protect the northern frontier of Arnor first and Arthedain later. The castle enjoys an unmatched view of the northern lands: it was destroyed in T.A. 1975 and rebuilt – even though more modest – by local lords. The fort was again stormed and pillaged by Orcs in T.A. 2747. In the following years the ruins were occupied by Rangers as a semi-permanent outpost used to monitor the lands north and east of Evendim. The sentinels communicate with other outposts by smoke signals or, in case of extreme danger, by fires lit on the top of the tower.

Lofthope – a village on the hills west of Nenuial, it grows around an exceedingly old castle whose foundations are said to have been laid in the First Age. The village is sometimes called Bereg’s Terrace, after a legendary king of Eriador, the son of Bëor who returned from Beleriand, or by its original Sindarin name Orfinsant (S. “Applegarden”). Lofthope is well defended and partially hidden by its position on a high cliff, and it enjoys a wide view of the lake. In the high days of Arnor, it was considered one of the most pleasant settlements in the kingdom. In the late Third Age the village is a large farmstead inhabited by a couple hundred people, ruled by Saelbeth. He is a friend of the Rangers and, while being oblivious to their secrets, he knows them to be the descendants of the Dúnedain of old. The old castle is now an almost complete ruin. Lofthope is invisible from the lands below, and can only be reached through narrow and steep paths that are not suitable for carriages, but only

for horses and mules (the last bridge allowing easy access to the settlement was destroyed in T.A. 2747). From the lakeside below it takes a two hours hike to reach the settlement above.

Amon Thônion – the Hill of Pines is one of the greatest heights south-west of lake Evendim and it offers a view both of the lake and the lands to the south and west. In ancient times local lords built a watch-tower here, of which only crumbling stones remain, but the Rangers have established a permanent strong-house here. Amon Thônion is the seat of the Warden of the West. In T.A. 2965 the office is held by Darthanor the Peacemaker, a middle-aged man with a gift for diplomacy who cultivates friendships among elves, men and hobbits all over western Eriador.

Lunney – many towns have been built over time at the confluence of the rivers Lune and Evendim. The location is a natural meeting point for the riverfolk and the hunters of the area, it is protected from enemies by the marshes, but it is at constant risk of flooding. A common Westron name of the town is Lunney (pr. Lune-ney), although in the past it has been known as Evenisle, Spearpoint or, in Sindarin, Caras Celairnen. In T.A. 2965 Lunney is a village of about 800 indigenous inhabitants plus a floating population of 100-300 shepherds and seminomadic boatmen; it is ruled by a thane on friendly terms with the Elves of Mithlond. Rangers are welcome in Lunney, as they are recognised as Elf-friends, but they retain an air of suspicion due to the secrecy of their activities beyond the Evendim Hills. They own a house in town, always manned by at least one member who is in charge of keeping contacts with Círdan and other elf-lords of the West: in fact the house is sometimes visited by elvish travellers and messengers sharing intelligence with the Dúnedain and meeting with Darthanor.

The White Towers – these white towers, rising to the east of the Grey Havens, were built by Gil-galad for Elendil and they once marked the western border of Arnor.

Elendil set one of the *palantíri* in the tallest tower, Elostirion, but the stone would only watch westwards. Besides a meeting point between elves and men, the towers offered their selected visitors a chance to look over the sea with the *palantír*: Elves would access it to have a glimpse of the Immortal Lands, but men would rather look to the sea, hoping for a vision of the hallowed tip of Meneltarma, soaring above the waves of the Great Sea. The visions were source of inspiration and consolation for those who visited. After the fall of Arnor the guardianship of the towers was entrusted by Arnanth to Círdan. The Shipwright entrusted Braswen with the care of the towers, an exile from Valinor sworn to remain until the last ship leaves. Once a follower of the Vala Lórien, she is also named Tíraguir after her ability to read the hearts of others and to guide them in their visions and dreams. She is one of the few Eldar to be fully aware of the Rangers' identity and true purpose; occasionally a Dúnadan may visit the Towers to look into the Stone; for the Captains and the Wardens, this is a rite of passage necessary to their office.



Annúminas – the city was founded by Elendil on the ruins of older settlements, some of which were inhabited by the Eldar. It served as the capital of Arnor until T.A. 861, when the royal seat was moved by the kings in favour of Fornost and it entered a slow decline. A sack by Angmarean forces in T.A. 1409 led to a second wave of emigration and, by the time of the fall of Arthedain, Annúminas was already a partially dilapidated city. Because it is built on a hill overlooking Lake Evendim, its ruins can be seen

from a great distance. The Rangers have established an outpost in the basement of one of the ruined houses that is used as watch station in times of need. Other Men avoid Annúminas and consider it to be a ruin haunted by the ghosts of the dead – a belief that the Rangers carefully maintain to avoid too many people visiting the place.

Fornost – Norbury-of-the-Kings was founded in the early days of Arnor and it became the capital of Arthedain in T.A. 861. It was pillaged by the armies of Angmar in 1974 and subsequently abandoned. Since it rests in a high and strategic location, its surviving towers are a frequently visited spot by Rangers, even though they never established a permanent outpost among the ruins. Over time, many people tried to settle within the old city: whereas orcs and trolls would be slain without mercy, leaving none alive, the Rangers learned to scare outlaws and treasure-hunters away by the cunning use of sounds and lights (in a similar way to that of Annúminas), thus giving rise to the notoriety of Fornost as a place haunted by the spirits of the slain: Deadmen’s Dike.

Stonehill – since the early days of Arnor, a fort north of Iach Sarn was the site of a settlement watching over this important river crossing. Even though the North-kingdom has long since vanished, this remains a crucial site for all folk wishing to travel to the Shire. The castle and the town remained inhabited even after the fall of the North Kingdom, only to fall during the orc invasions of the 2740s. Since then, a small village established itself around its ruins, called Stonehill. Since the Shire Grant it has been at least in part inhabited by the hobbit-clan of the Stonehills. By long-held tradition, they offer supplies and occasional hospitality to Rangers in exchange for help in keeping dangerous Outsiders on the other side of the Ford. The Hobbits understand little of the Rangers’ motives and they are wary of them; on top of this, they are keen to keep their dealings with these Men inconspicuous, lest their reputation with other hobbit clans and the Bounders suffers. The relationship isn’t always easy, but Stonehill remains the most

important ally for Rangers in south-western Eriador, and it is the key to maintain and supply a number of temporary outposts in the area and to monitor Sarn Ford effectively. In T.A. 2965 the Elder of the village is Oskar Stonehill, a cantankerous old Hobbit known for his shrewdness in dealing with the Big Folk.

Barad Caranthir – the original town dates from the time of Arnor, but was abandoned and resettled many times. After the fall of Arnor, it was for a long time the main Hidden Settlement of the Dúnedain in the South Downs and called *Carathir* in this time. The settlement was abandoned during the Orc Invasion of T.A. 2745-8 and never resettled; it survives as a permanent outpost. Barad Caranthir’s name (S. “Red-faced Fort”) comes from its old tower, now partially ruined and overgrown with grape ivy that turns red in winter; the structure is a good lookout over the lands around it. Barad Caranthir is the seat of the Warden of the South: in T.A. 2965 this is Cúithil the Hunter, the youngest of the Wardens and an unparalleled Ranger, often on the move in the lands of old Cardolan.

Fennas Drúin – legend has it that the poetic name Fennas Drúin, which in Sindarin means Gateway of the Wild Waters, was given by the ancient Elves of Eregion to the confluence of the Mitheithel and the Bruinen. The first mannish settlement may be even older than Eregion but its name is lost, along with those of many other successors founded by immigrants from Dunland, Minhiriath, northern Rhudaur or even the Vales of Anduin beyond the Misty Mountains. For ages the Angle has been a land of passage and a haven for peoples on the move, protected as it is by water on three sides and hills on the north. In 2912 the town was badly hit by the floods following the Fell Winter and half of it was destroyed, including the ancient castle of Erthad Celyn which overlooked the confluence; it was at this time that Haldagol, posing as a Hereweald, Lord of Rode, stepped in to provide relief to the population and thus strengthened the bonds even more. Even though the members of the Council of

Fennas Drúnin are vaguely aware of mannish settlements to the north, they keep this to themselves – being aware of the efforts of its people to stay hidden. In this, they actively avoid too much knowledge to prevent any accidental information leaking out. In 2965 Fennas Drúnin is still recovering from the damage of the floods, but counts 1,500 inhabitants and is the largest settlement regularly in contact with the Dúnedain of the North, even if most of its inhabitants are unaware of this. Rangers occasionally visits the town, posing as emissaries from Rode and his lord.

Andring – hidden among hills and deep woods of the Angle lies the centre of political and military power of the Dúnedain, the seat of the Chieftains and the Great Warden. Established as an outpost sometimes in the early 21st century, Andring (S. “Long cold”) consisted of an old tower built in the high days of Arnor but left to ruin under the kings of Rhudaur. In time, the outpost grew into a small Hidden Settlement until, in the early 2750s, the surviving Dúnedain of the North and South Downs moved into the Angle and Andring became their *de facto* capital. In T.A. 2965 its population numbers 1,400. The settlement is built on a slope and protected by high stone walls, the tower at its top overlooking the heartland of Dúnadan territory. At present the Great Warden is Haldagol the Old, a man descended from a minor branch of the line of Isildur. Andring can be reached by only one road coming from Sainbar; smaller paths lead in other directions. All access routes are well guarded by Rangers.

Sainbar – while Andring is the political and military centre of the Dúnedain in the Angle, Sainbar is the economic hub. Less isolated, it is built not far from the banks of the Bruinen. From here, a path follows the river towards Fennas Drúnin and another one, which is carefully hidden, appears to end in an old ruined settlement, but truly leads west to Andring. Unlike most of the settlements in the area, Sainbar has been built from scratch and not over an older settlement: its fortifications are made of wood and

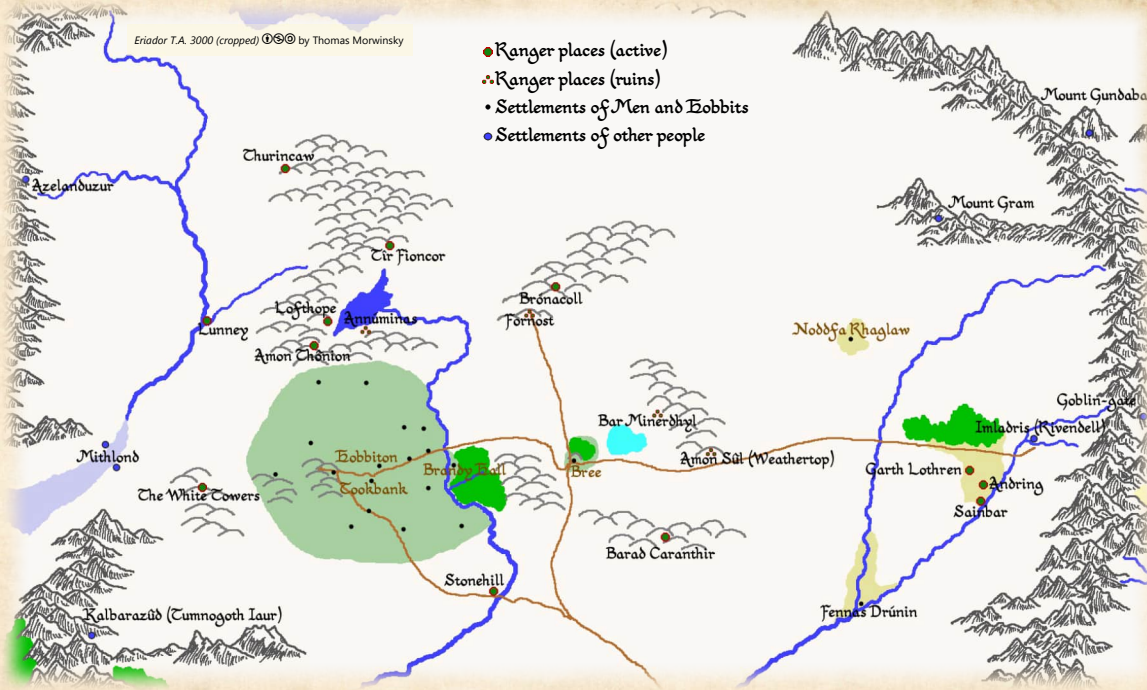
it looks quite inconspicuous to outsiders. All of its 400 inhabitants are Dúnedain. Sainbar is overseen by a Reeve, which in T.A. 2965 is Dirhael the Old; his wife, Ivorwen, is a wise woman and said to be gifted with foresight. They are the parents of the Lady Gilraen, who now lives in secrecy beyond the Angle, and the grandparents of Aragorn, the young heir of the Chieftains. These relations give them a particular sway and authority over the local population, which is sometimes at odds with the rulings of the Great Warden Haldagol.

Garth Lothren – the current training site for new Rangers was established when the Dúnedain left their lands in the West and moved into the Angle. The compound is based among the ruins of an older castle built at the height of Arnor and later occupied by Hillmen lords. Destroyed in T.A. 1975 by the forces of Gondor, parts of the castle have been rebuilt and the extensive basement which has been enlarged is now able to house as much as 50 people at any time, together with enough supplies and weapons to withstand a siege. In T.A. 2965 Garth Lothren is under the authority of Master Ranger Orodal, an old veteran with a scarred face and a limp from an old wound. He has a reputation for being exceedingly harsh on new recruits, but also of being one of the best teachers among the Rangers.

Amon Sûl (Weathertop) – After Angmar was completely vanquished, the surviving lords of the northern Dúnedain met at Weathertop to decide the future of their people. Even though the original fortress built by Elendil had been a ruin since T.A. 1409, the place was still considered the traditional centre of Arnor. In the ring of stones of the old tower, the lords of the Dúnedain swore to continue the task of protecting the lands of the North against Shadow. Before the Orc Invasions of Eriador (T.A. 2745-8), it was tradition that every seven years the Rangers would hold a great meeting here: each Warden visited with twelve of his men in addition to the Chieftain of the Rangers. The Gathering of Amon Sûl was a way to preserve tradition and the memory of the

ancestors of the Dúnedain, and to debate current events and plans. After the Hidden Settlements were moved into the Angle, this tradition has been abandoned, but the Gathering of Amon Sûl is still held for the succession of the Chieftain of Dúnedain and the appointment of the Captain of the Rangers. The tradition of the Gathering has always

been kept secret to all except the Captain, the Wardens and those who travel with them: if the servants of Shadow should know how to find all the highest ranks of the Dúnedain in one place, they would be sure to target it with all their power and try to wipe the Rangers of the North from history.



Map for Ranger places in 30th century Eriador: This map shows the places mentioned in the text. Fennas Drúnin and Noddfa Rhaglaw are names taken over from MERP and later re-used in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador* (Other Minds, Issue 13). Noddfa Rhaglaw is not further mentioned in this article, but will be the subject of one in a future Issue of *Other Minds*. Azelanduzur and Kalbarazûd are original names for dwarven settlements from *A Brief History of the Dwarven Mansions* and *Amending "A Brief History of the Dwarven Mansions"* in Other Minds Issue 4 and 5, respectively. The unnamed settlements in the Shire are all named in *Population and Urbanization in Eriador* (Other Minds, Issue 13).

Key Dates (All Third Age)

- 250 Traditional date of foundation of the King's Rangers by Eldacar.
- 350 The school of Bar Minderdhyll is established by Arantar.
- 861 Arnor splits into Three Sister Kingdoms. Each king establishes his own order of Rangers, with Arthedain retaining the majority of the former Rangers of Arnor.
- 1349 Argeleb I claims kingship over all Arnor. Cardolan becomes a vassal principedom: its Rangers merge with the Arthadan order. Many of Rhudaur's rangers defect or are purged, and the local order quickly declines.
- 1409 First Angmarean invasion of Eriador. The tower of Among Sûl falls into ruin. The last Dúnedain are driven from Rhudaur.
- 1974 Fall of Fornost to Angmar, end of the North Kingdom.
- 1975 Death of Arvedui, last King of Arnor. Destruction of Angmar.
- 1976 Aranarth takes the title of Chieftain of the Dúnedain of the North and Captain of the Rangers of the North. The crown and sceptre of Arnor are sent to Imladris.
- 1977 Around this year the Dúnedain establish the Hidden Settlements, concentrating them in the North and the South Downs. In other parts of former Arnor local men create new, self-governed communities.
- 1979 Bucca of the Marsh is the first Thain of the Shire.
- 2327 Aragorn I slain by wolves, which plague Eriador for the following centuries.
- 2740 Orcs renew their invasions of Eriador.
- 2745-48 The Great Orc Invasions of Eriador. The Hidden Settlements in the North and South Downs are either destroyed or abandoned. In the years after the surviving Dúnedain migrate into the Angle where they found new Hidden Settlements.
- 2758 The Long Winter.
- 2793-99 The War of the Dwarves and Orcs frees the Misty Mountains.
- 2911 The Fell Winter: as rivers freeze, white wolves haunt Eriador from the North.
- 2912 Great floods devastate Enedwaith and Minhiriath. Tharbad is ruined and deserted. Fennas Drunin is partially destroyed: Haldagol, the Great Warden of the Rangers, provides relief to the survivors.
- 2933 Arathorn II is slain by hill-trolls. His wife Gilraen takes his only son Aragorn, aged 2, to Rivendell to be fostered by Elrond. Haldagol, the Great Warden of the Rangers, takes charge of the Rangers in the absence of a Chieftain.
- 2951 Sauron declares himself openly. Aragorn, now 20 years old, learns from Elrond of his ancestry and receives the shards of Narsil. He returns among his people but does not yet take the title of Chieftain of the Dúnedain and Captain of the Rangers, leaving it to Haldagol.
- 2957-80 Aragorn takes a period of time to journey Middle-earth under the guidance of Gandalf. In this time he lives and fights in Rohan, Gondor and Harad.
- 2980 Aragorn returns to the North and takes the title of Chieftain of the Dúnedain and Captain of the Rangers.
- 2987 Haldagol's death. He is succeeded by his son Thaldalgond.
- 3018 Aragorn joins the Fellowship of the Ring.
- 3019 Aragorn travels to Gondor and helps lead the armies of the Free Peoples in the victory against Sauron. The Grey Company, led by Halbarad, meets him in Rohan and delivers to him a standard made by Arwen. They fight in the battles of Pelargir, the Pelennor Fields and of the Black Gate. Aragorn becomes High King of the Reunited Kingdoms.

REVIEW: RUINS OF THE LOST REALM

Reviewer: Thomas Morwinsky
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Product in Short	
Title	Ruins of the Lost Realm
Author	Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, Francesco Nepitello, Michael Duxbury, David Esbri, Lorenzo Fanelli, Sara Gianotto, Diogo Nogueira
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INTRODUCTION

Recently an update was sent out to the Kick-starter Backers that *Ruins of the Lost Realm* is being expected at the warehouses in North America and Europe and it may already have shipped to the Backers when this Issue of OM is published. Mine arrived recently and it looks fabulous! This first full supplement for the 2nd ed. of TOR sets the scene for the new focus of the games' setting.

The Core Rulesbook (CB) already showed us that TOR has moved slightly forward in time compared to the 1st edition: The new default time is now T.A. 2965 instead of 2946. The CB already gave a broad overview over the regions of Eriador (including a map), making it clear that the games' geographical focus will be here for the time being and thus moves away from the 1st edition's default area Rhovanion.



CONTENT

After a short general introduction to the region and its history, the book is structured into three parts: The first one “Fog Over Eriador” (p. 5 to 29) describes several key regions (Tharbad, Swanfleet, Lond Daer, the Dwarf halls of Hamlet in the Blue Mountains, Cardolan, Eryn Vorn and Minhiriath) and their main inhabitants. Here Tharbad plays a similar role as Dale in the 1st ed., as it provides the Heroes with a place to rest and generally offers lots of chances of interaction with LM characters.

Second comes “A Gathering Storm” (p. 31 to 49). This provides three campaign suggestions for Eriador. The interesting part is that these are interconnected, but not interlocking: Depending on which of the campaign ideas you play, the course and outcome of the remaining is changed. In my opinion these are good campaign ideas for the setting despite some minor issues (like normal scouts of the Shadow being able to locate Rivendell). They are also not highly detailed, which can both be an advantage or disadvantage. In addition to these concrete three campaign ideas, it also gives some basic ideas for other campaigns. These however, require a lot of fleshing out, as there is nothing here beyond some broad ideas and starting points.

Section Three titled “Landmarks” (p. 51 to 117) details 12 sites in Eriador that can be used for adventuring in or use as a backdrop. These sites include some from Tolkien like the White Towers or Mount Gram, but mostly original ones. The places are scattered all over Eriador,

so that you will be able to use at least one or two of them, regardless of the part of Eriador your game is set in.

Finally, an Appendix (p. 118-123) provides some errata for the CB, optional rules and a map for use with this book.

The regions of Eriador we are most familiar with from Tolkien’s books – the Shire and nearby Breeland as well as Rivendell – are not treated in this TOR supplement. The latter is briefly covered in a separate very short booklet (16 pages overall) from the 2nd ed. Kickstarter campaign while the former will probably be dealt with in more depth by a separate book.

The included map of Tharbad I found fascinating, and its basic layout might be a *déjà vu* for those of you familiar with MERP’s design in *Thieves of Tharbad* from 1985 vintage.

No RPG book is complete with only text. The artwork often plays a crucial role – not only by pleasing the eye (and thus in itself an argument for purchase), but also in supporting the text with illustrations that transport the text’s message. In my opinion, the 2nd ed. does this excellently. The style has changed from 1st ed. TOR, but this does not detract from its exquisite quality and evocative appeal. If you have the 2nd ed. Core Rulesbook, you know what to expect. Everyone else can be assured that the excellent artwork quality of the 1st ed. has found a worthy successor in the 2nd edition. The cutout below (and the cover on the previous page) gives you an impression of this.



THE THIRD AGE
The Bridge of Tharbad — oh, to look upon it one more time!

Cardolan and Rhudaur, Tharbad maintained considerable independence — which rankled with the kings of Cardolan.

USING THIS BOOK IN A GAME

In my opinion the main advantage of *Ruins of the Lost Realm* is also its primary drawback: While it covers all of Eriador and thereby provides clues and hooks to play in almost every region of it, the individual descriptions remain brief and mostly lack interconnection. They may be best described as islands of illumination in a sea of darkness. This has the advantage that each LM can shape them into his own campaign without colliding with official material, but on the other hand it fails to support LMs in need of lots of developed background material, when they lack time to develop lots of details on their own, which can be a hindrance in an interconnected game. Here the LM either has to use existing material (e.g. from TOR 1st ed. or MERP which had a lot on this region) or wait for future publications. Similar to TOR 1st ed., the provided settlements are not given raw data (i.e. inhabitant count of a settlement), giving the LM more flexibility in fleshing out more details. The adventures are described in sufficient detail to play them, but they do not provide a detailed course of events, precise sequence of suggested events etc. and thus require individual fleshing out. If you prefer to have adventures not fully developed with a preset chain of events, but more like a setting description which will develop according to the actions of the Heroes (like I do), you will feel immediately at home. Interestingly, especially in 2nd ed. MERP this was often similar.

The – in my opinion – singular most problematic thing of this book relates to a background info or lore topic: This is the choice of Tharbad as beaten but still working settlement in T.A. 2965, which according to Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings* was “ruined and deserted” in T.A. 2912 following spring floods after the Fell Winter of 2911/12. The authors were very well aware of this fact too and inserted a prominent notice right in the introduction of the book, explaining their choice:

THIS EMPTY LAND

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Making Southern Eriador a living, breathing setting for a roleplaying game required a loose interpretation of those parts of the stories that dealt with the region. For example, in the Tale of Years presented in Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*, the entry for the year 2912 states that Tharbad was 'ruined and deserted' as a consequence of great floods that struck the area – in the

present volume, we've chosen to read that as Tharbad being mostly abandoned, but that the town limps on under the unlawful rule of bandits for another two generations. The land is still lonely and underpopulated, but roleplaying games need people to talk to, so wherever possible, we've added characters. If you choose to interpret the words of Tolkien differently, then Tharbad and Lond Daer might both be desolate and empty by 2965.

I find this interesting, as in 1st ed. TOR, the authors took great care not to get into conflict with definitive statements from either *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* (other topics sometimes were at odds from secondary sources like *Unfinished Tales* or *The History of Middle earth*, but due to the nature of these sources this was less clear-cut). Whether such a “bending” of a clear statement from *The Lord of the Rings* in order to make it more compatible with the needs of an RPG campaign is something acceptable or not is a very personal choice. At least it is important to know about it and then decide whether it fits one's game style or not. If not, the status of Tharbad as described would in my opinion fit very well for the period between T.A. 2759 (after the Long Winter, which very likely also caused massive flooding) and T.A. 2912 when Tharbad was finally abandoned by its last residents.

In any case, Tharbad takes a central role in *Ruins of the Lost Realm* and thus this potential issue should be considered before a purchase.


CONCLUSION

Overall I judge *Ruins of the Lost Realm* a very useful product for a late-Third Age campaign set in Eriador. The – in my opinion – issue of Tharbad, as described above, is only a problem if closely sticking to *The Lord of the Rings* timeline is a priority for a LM. If this is not the case, this supplement will be highly useful and provides an excellent resource to populate Eriador with interesting adventures and sites to visit – even if they are far apart. This isolation can also be useful, as you can use them as nuclei for developing your own setting around them. If you prefer to stick closer to the canon from *The Lord of the Rings*, you will have to rework a central element of this book or re-locate its roles (trade, interaction, location for a sanctuary etc.) to other settlements in Eriador.

A NEW STRONGHOLD

RAVENS IN THE NORTH, ADVENTURE # 3

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Andreas Erdmann has done it again! For the third time in a row, he provides us with a new instalment of his **Ravens in the North** campaign. Again the heroes have to choose how to continue their quest. Now it will lead them to the site of their major adversary and this brings new challenges.

Enjoy this continuation of a great campaign and foil the plans of the Dark Lords' minions for a subjugation of northern Eriador that may lead to further threats if left undisturbed!

SETTING

This TOR adventure is the third instalment of the *Ravens in the North* campaign outlined in *Other Minds*, Issue #23. It is located in former Angmar and takes place in spring, as soon as the snowmelt makes it possible to travel again (after the 2nd adventure *A Chief's Challenge*, Issue #25) or in autumn the year before (if the heroes skip the 2nd adventure). The story will lead the companions from the village "Bar-Raduk" near Mt. Gram (near Cr1 in Figure 1) to Eldanar (Mo2 in Figure 1) in order to save the kids that have been kidnapped by the Great Orc Burzash during 1st adventure *A Mass Abduction* (Issue #24).

For the sake of continuity, the adventure will mainly stick with the rules of the 1st Edition (1ed). NPC stats for the 2nd Edition (2ed) have been added for convenience though.

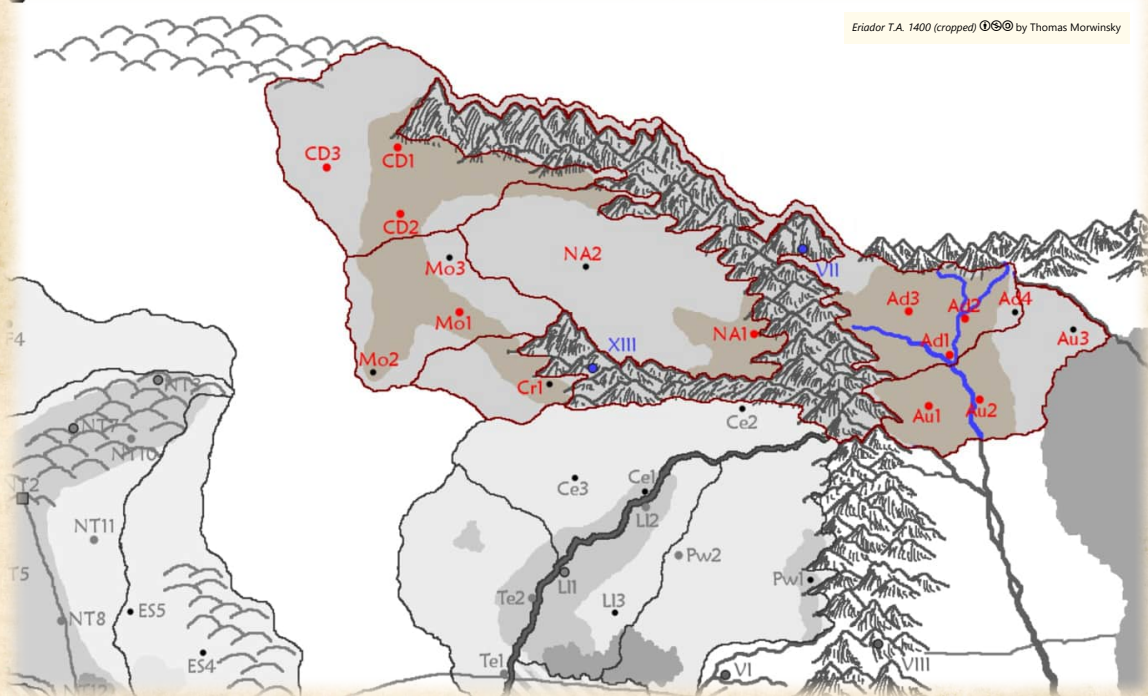


Figure 1: Angmarean cities in TA 1400

SUMMARY

During the 1st adventure the Great Orc Burzash kidnapped all children of a village of Hill-Men under Raduks lead. The heroes were able to save some of the children, but the majority remained in the hands of Burzash. During the 2nd adventure, Raduk himself went in search for those children, but got into trouble with Mendamar, a nearby rival chief. If the heroes have been able to save Raduk, he will support them in the showdown of the campaign. Whether the heroes have played the 2nd adventure or not, affects only the showdown of the campaign and does not matter for this adventure.

By the time the heroes reach Eldanar, enough time has passed for Burzash to deliver the children to Carn Dûm. The heroes will only be able to discover this once they reach Eldanar. Eldanar is a fortress that was once a seat of the Dunedain, fell long ago in the hands of the Witch King, was destroyed in the War in the North and is now an old decaying ruin. Burzash has been commissioned by Gorlanc to rebuild the fortress as best as he can. He is in competition with Muzlug, another Great Orc, who has received a similar order in Morkai (*Mol* in Figure 1). The winner of the competition is to become commander-in-chief of the whole newly formed army. Burzash spares no effort and torment to push his workers to their limits and train his soldiers. As a result, Eldanar is currently a place of suffering and despair, involving much loss of stamina and gain of Shadow for the heroes. Burzash's guards are quite attentive, so that none of the forced workers might escape. Conversely, it is only a matter of time before the guards become aware of the heroes and capture them. The challenge for the heroes in this adventure is to figure out the children's whereabouts and to understand the development in Eldanar, while not acquiring too much Shadow, and finally to survive and escape Eldanar.



LOREMASTER CHARACTERS

Burzash

Burzash is the bad guy in this adventure. He is always surrounded by numerous warriors or guards, so it is difficult to get close to him. If the heroes finish him off in this adventure nevertheless, Gorlanc will replace him with another Great Orc for the finale of the campaign.

Burzash is determined to win the competition against Muzlug. Sometimes he disappears for a few days to observe Muzlug's progress in Morkai for himself. When he returns, he is usually enraged and even more ruthless than usual. During his absence, the work in Eldanar is led by Grimbuk, an Orc Chieftain.

BURZASH, GREAT ORC (1 st ed.)	
Attribute Level: 7	
Endurance	Hate
48	8
DARRY	ARMOUR
5+2	4D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦♦	Custom ♦♦
Perception ♦♦♦	Vocation ♦♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Heavy Scimitar ♦♦♦	07/10/14 Break Shield
Heavy Hammer ♦♦♦	8/☞/14 Break Shield
Special Abilities	
Horrible Strength, Hideous Toughness, Commanding Voice, Great size, Driven (Commanding Voice)	

BURZASH, GREAT ORC (2 nd ed.)	
Attribute Level: 7	
Endurance	Hate
48	8
DARRY	ARMOUR
2	4D
Weight: 2	
Weapon Skills	
Heavy Scimitar ♦♦♦	5/18 Break Shield
Heavy Hammer ♦♦♦	8/16 Break Shield
Special Abilities	
Horrible Strength, Hideous Toughness, Yell of Triumph, Thick Hide	

Grimbuk, Orc Chieftain

Grimbuk is second in command in Eldanar. He is chief of all Orcs and no less cruel than Burzash and pushes workers and warriors to their limits. Still, he grants all guards entertainment in the evenings. While Burzash is away, he organises fights in the arena, the "cauldron of joy" every evening for their amusement.



Misty Mountain Orc 2C by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

Grimbuk, Orc Chieftain (1 st ed.)	
Attribute Level: 5	
Endurance	Hate
20	5
Parry	Armour
4+2	3D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦	Custom ♦
Perception ♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Orc-Axe ♦♦♦	5/👁️/14 Break Shield
Spear ♦♦	8/9/12 Pierce
Special Abilities	
Snake-like Speed. Horrible Strength, Commanding Voice	

Burzash, Great Orc (2 nd ed.)	
Attribute Level: 5	
Endurance	Hate
20	5
Parry	Armour
3	3D
Weight: 1	
Weapon Skills	
Scimitar ♦♦♦	3/16
Spear ♦♦♦	3/14 Pierce
Special Abilities	
Snake-like Speed, Horrible Strength, Yell of Triumph	

Grenar, Hill-Men Warrior

The name of Grenar was mentioned by guards in Mendamar during the 2nd adventure of the campaign. He left Mendamars tribe and joined Burzash some while ago to one day become 1st warrior of all Hill-Men. He proved worthy so far and quickly rose among the ranks in Eldanar. Currently he is chief of the Hill-Men in Eldanar, while Grimbuk commands all Orcs. Like Burzash he knows he must outperform his rival in Morkai – whoever than might be – to become 1st warrior of all Hill-Men indeed.

Grenar, Hill-man Warrior (1 st ed.)	
Attribute Level: 4	
Endurance	Hate
18	6
Parry	Armour
5	2D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦	Custom ♦
Perception ♦♦	Vocation ♦♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Orc-Axe ♦♦♦	5/👁️/16 Break Shield
Spear ♦♦	5/9/14 Pierce
Special Abilities	
Curse of Hill-men*, Raven Spirits**, Cruel Stroke***, Eager	

Grenar, Hill-man Warrior (2 nd ed.)	
Attribute Level: 4	
Endurance	Hate
18	6
Parry	Armour
2	2D
Weight: 1	
Weapon Skills	
Long-hafted Axe ♦♦♦	6/20 Break Shield
Spear ♦♦♦	3/14 Pierce
Special Abilities	
Curse of Hill-men*, Raven Spirits**, Cruel Stroke***, Eager	

* Dreadful Spell: Spend one point of Hate to force a Corruption check (1^{ed}: TN16) upon a hero. A hero who fails the Corruption check loses 1 point of Hope every time he makes a roll and produces an EYE result. The curse lasts until sunrise or sundown.

** When the first Hillman dies in combat, a flock of raven swoops down on the battlefield. When this happens, the Parry rating of all companions is

Scene #2 - Ruins along the way

The second leg of the journey leads the group further north-west through daunting lands (5 HEX - 50 Miles - 12,5 days - 3 Fatigue Tests TN18). The area is a barren, sandy strip of land. An eternal wind blows from the north, causing the sand to permeate all clothing. Apart from the snowfields, the ground is mostly dry. Occasionally trees and thorn bushes can be seen, but mostly the area presents itself as a vast endless steppe. But the region has history. At least once a day, wary eyes can discover the remains of old towers or castles, sometimes further away, sometimes directly on the route. Small groups of trees or bushes can often be spotted nearby a ruin. The ruins themselves are all covered in grey ash dust. However, they offer good protection against the wind and are therefore suitable for spending a night. Some of the ruins might be haunted by ghosts though.



Barrow-wight III © by Olanda Fong-Surdenas, used with permission

If the LM wants to offer experienced heroes an additional challenge, the encounter of a Spectre can add variety to an otherwise monotonous journey.

Spectre (1 st ed.)	
Attribute Level: 4	
Endurance 28	Hate 6
Darry 5	Armour 2D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦
Movement ♦♦♦♦	Custom ♦♦♦♦
Perception ♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
none (incorporeal)	
Special Abilities	
Ghost-form*, Strike Fear, Dreadful Spell**, Visions of Torment***	

Spectre (2 nd ed.)	
Attribute Level: 4	
Endurance 24	Hate 6
Darry 0	Armour 2D
Wight: 1	
Weapon Skills	
None (incorporeal)	
Special Abilities	
Ghost-form*, Strike Fear, Dreadful Spell**, Visions of Torment***	

- * Ghost Form: The creature is incorporeal and almost invisible. It cannot normally harm nor can be harmed physically by the living. When this creature's Hate score is reduced to 0, it disappears and reappears the next night with its hate score refilled. Weapons that do not possess Enchanted qualities cannot affect this creature.
- ** Dreadful Spell [1ed]: A hero who fails a Corruption check (TN 16) experiences a harrowing sorrow, causing him to gain an additional number of Shadow points equal to the creature's Attribute level. If the check failed with an EYE, then the companion is also Wounded, as an old injury reopens.
- ** Dreadful Spell [2ed]: Spend 1 Hate to force a player-hero to gain 2 points of Shadow (Sorcery). If the hero fails their Shadow Test, they are Wounded as an old injury reopens.
- *** Visions of Torment [1st ed.]: Reduce the creature's Hate point score by 1 to make a companion who failed a Fear Test and thus was daunted to additionally lose a number of Endurance points equal to twice the Shadow score of the hero (to a minimum of 2).
- *** Visions of Torment [2nd ed.]: Spend 1 Hate to force a player-hero to gain 1 point of Shadow (Dread). If the hero fails their Shadow Test, they lose a number of Endurance points equal to twice their current Shadow score.



ACT 2 - THE STRONGHOLD

Scene #3 - Eldanar

After about two weeks, the area becomes more hilly, which is a welcome change. On the 17th day after leaving Raduk's village, the companions can smell smoke coming from the North.

Before they can approach any further, an arrow hits the ground before them and a voice asks them regarding their business in this area. A Ranger has spotted them and wants to know who is obviously heading for Eldanar, where dangerous folk is to be found. He has seen them for some time before revealing himself and is sure that they are decent people, but to be sure he first shot and keeps in cover. Once he is convinced he has their attention and they pose no danger (Persuade TN12), he will come forward briefly and signal them to come to him. He leads them into the dell he has been hiding in and which is surrounded by bushes and small trees.

Here he introduces himself as Tarannon and tells them that he tried for some days to find out what is going on at Eldanar. He shares his judgment that this is only possible from within, as the area is heavily guarded and a stealthy scouting is almost impossible. He tried it and was almost caught, when his pursuers were distracted by someone else – probably an escaped slave as he carried shackles. This man wasn't killed (as could be reasoned), but carried back to Eldanar. Thus Tarannon suspects that there is some slave labour used there, but what details are behind it, he couldn't find out. He also reveals that he stumbled upon the site and the work here by chance, as he was on his way to other business. The doings at Eldanar looked suspicious enough for him to pause and try to investigate, but now he can't tarry any longer and thus is very glad for the heroes to appear. In his opinion, the only real chance to gather more information is from within the site.

He asks the heroes to investigate this further, as he has to leave now, but will be back as soon as possible.

The LM can use Tarannon to supply the heroes with suggestions or tips what to do. You should see him as a useful means to provide the heroes some assistance in planning their course of action. If asked (or deemed prudent by the LM) he could suggest that the heroes let themselves be caught to get access to the site. Depending on their responses, he might also suggest that one or more (depending on the company's composition and size) might stay outside and free to assist those inside. If the heroes come up with a good plan, you don't need to use him as a means to guide them, but if not he will be available for this.



Figure 2: Eldanar (from Pixabay)

An old fortress can be spotted on top of a hill at some distance. Large parts lay in ruins, but a fresh dyke has been heaped up to the south of it. Every now and then sounds of hammers can be heard.

THE SITUATION AT EL DANAR

Eldanar is a large construction site. The well has been put back into operation, so there is enough water. Away from that, however, there is plenty to do. Numerous workers and warriors, mainly Hill-Men and Orcs, are carrying out various tasks. The inhabitants of Eldanar can essentially be divided into four groups:

- **Slave-workers** are rebuilding the fortress. They have to cut stones in a nearby quarry, transport them to the stronghold, repair the ruined ramparts, deepen the ditches in front of the outer walls and dig a

Replenishment and supply

Wagons from the north reach the fortress at regular intervals. All of them are driven by two men and display a small red flag with a black crow fastened to the driver's bench. Some wagons are covered with a tarp, others are open-topped, so one can see what they are transporting. The wagons mainly carry wood, food (mainly dried meat, grain and rarely some wine), tools and weapons or new personnel (Orcs or humans that are assigned to either the slave-workers or the warriors). The numbers given above therefore increase over time. Approximately 10 Orcs or humans are added each week (transported on two wagons).

Approaching Eldanar

When the heroes approach the fortress, they can make an interesting observation: a single person runs down the hill from the fortress. The figure stumbles, falls, gets up again and keeps running. The person takes small steps and therefore does not move very fast. Heroes who manage to make a successful Awareness roll (TN16 / -1d) can hear the clink of a chain as the figure moves. Shortly after they spot the person, a couple of mounted wargs appear at the edge of the fortress. They quickly encircle the person, knock him down and drag him back into the fortress.

It should be clear to the heroes that they must approach the fortress very carefully. Observing the fortress from a distance is a normal manoeuvre (awareness TN14 / ±0d). Moving or investigating near the fortress is a hard (TN16 / -1d) and moving in its proximity or even inside the fortress is a severe (TN 18 / -2d) manoeuvre. Dunlanders may consider approaching the fortress openly with the intention of (apparently) joining Burzash. Such aspirants are questioned by Grenar [Burzash is currently not in the fortress]. If the interrogation is successful, they are assigned to the overseers and are free to move about the camp. If the questioning is not successful, they are enslaved and sent to the slave-quarters instead.

If a hero fails a manoeuvre in the vicinity or in the fortress (it is probably only a matter of time for this), the hero is spotted by a guard who immediately sounds a horn. Within one round, the hero is surrounded by five guards or five Orc-Riders who threaten the hero with spears and grimly ask him to lay down all weapons. If several heroes are discovered, the guards blow the horn twice, whereupon more guards appear. It should be clear to the players that a fight is hopeless here. If nevertheless a fight does take place, guards will keep coming until the heroes are lying on the ground or are laying down their weapons. The guards do not have the goal of killing the heroes, rather Burzash has given the order to bring all prisoners alive into the fortress in order to enlarge the workforce.

After their weapons have been collected, the heroes are escorted into the fortress and taken to the forge, which is close to the well. There the dwarf puts anklets on them without blinking an eye. He wears an anklet himself, which is attached to a large stone. The dwarf does not react to questions or attempts to speak to him, even cautiously. He becomes more talkative if one is able to speak to him in an unguarded moment. The heroes can watch their weapons and valuables being locked into a shed near the forge.

The heroes are then brought to Grenar and questioned. If one of the heroes openly wears a tattoo of Raduk's tribe (see OM #25, p.33), Grenar recognises it immediately. He is from Mendamar's tribe, which is at odds with Raduk's tribe. He will react accordingly in a snidely manner. He wants to know what the heroes are doing in Eldanar. He also wants to know where each hero's strengths lie, like proficiency in craftsmanship or endurance in strength. The heroes will then be put to the slave-workers but will be given different tasks according to their abilities (see below – working for Burzash). If time permits, the heroes are divided up and assigned to different work teams or – if the day is already drawing to a close – directly taken to the tents of the slave-workers.



The following description of the adventure assumes that the heroes will be captured and dragged into the fortress. This may seem like “railroading” and will probably frustrate some players. However, it is simply the case that the necessary information and clues can only be obtained within the fortress (see Box Investigations within the fortress). To move within the fortress unnoticed is very difficult and risky as described above. Moreover, the inhabitants are very suspicious and will not tell anything to a person they do not know. First, the persons’ trust must be won, which is extremely difficult from outside the fortress. The descriptions in Scene #4 depict this in more detail.

That being said, skilled and talented heroes may nonetheless be able to evade capture and still gain some information. Also, heroes outside the fortress do not have to stand idly by and watch those inside the fortress making progress. They can support them by, for example, distracting the guards, leading them on false trails, smuggling weapons or food into the fortress, etc. The LM should be generous here and give those heroes as much freedom as possible for their creativity.

Scene #4 - Working for Burzash

The tents of the slave-workers are only sparsely guarded. Guards occasionally patrol between the tents, making sure everything remains quiet. Between the slave-workers tents one can move around largely unhindered. However, too frequent changes will cause attention by the guards. Outside the slave camp, movement of slave workers is immediately prevented by guards.

Among the slave-workers there are only men and teenagers.

Most of the men are in bad shape, the teenagers even worse. There are no children to be found. Most slaves are tight-lipped and distrustful, but grateful when their emaciated bodies are treated (healing with at least one **G**). Otherwise, it takes some efforts at persuasion to get into a conversation with a slave. Most are afraid that it could be a feint by the overseers. Not all slaves have good intentions, some try to improve their situation by reporting incidents to the guards. Depending on whom they approach in such a manner, the heroes might get into trouble if they are too open-hearted. Talking to slaves from Raduk’s tribe is easier if one of the heroes wears a tattoo of the tribe (see OM #25).

Among the slave-workers there are three “leaders” to whom most slave-workers listen: Surat, Nathan and Redwyr. Not all of these three have good intentions, Redwyr is the only one who does not only think about his own fate. He is not of Raduk’s tribe, but has a good connection to Ormal, who bears a tattoo of the tribe, albeit hidden. If the heroes gain Redwyr’s trust, he can help the heroes during the escape (see Act 3 below). Surat and Nathan on the other hand collaborate with some (not all) guards and overseers. Both offered to support them and demanded better food and more freedoms in return. They in turn use these in part to consolidate their power within the slaves.



In Mordor © by John Howe, used with permission

Background information for investigations within the fortress

Slave-workers: *When the slaves are asked about the children, they report that the children are no longer in Eldanar. The children were packed onto wagons and taken away several weeks or months ago depending on whether the heroes reach Eldanar in Winter or Spring the following year. Where the children were brought to, the slaves do not know. But they were taken away by the same wagons that regularly arrive and leave Eldanar.*

Regarding an escape / uprising, all the slaves are firmly of the opinion that escape from Eldanar is impossible. Some have already tried and it did not end well. Therefore, they do not bother to try. None wants to risk an uprising either, as long as they do not know their children are safe.

Guards and overseers: *The wagons come from the mountains in the north. That's probably why the food is so bad. Burzash is obsessed with the contest against Muzlug. Hopefully he will stay away longer this time than last time. When he comes back, he'll be even more of an ass than he already is, and the cauldron of joy will be over for the time being. The competition is apparently about who can build the best castle. The guards have no further information about the competition.*

Wagon drivers: *There is only one road to the north, it leads to the ruins of Carn Dûm. The road is long and dusty. But there are 5 way-stations where you can feed yourself and the horses. The wagon drivers can't say much about Carn Dûm. It is a big old ruin and they are not allowed to go further in than the old town behind the walls.*

WORKING AS A SLAVE-WORKER

All slave-workers must perform strenuous tasks throughout the day. They are divided into groups in the morning. This may mean that the heroes must follow different activities on different days, which may be easier or harder for them. This gives the LM the possibility to

control the burden on the group. Save-workers are used for the following tasks:

- **Repairing the walls** is a hard task (TN16 / $\pm 0d$). It involves mixing mortar and placing stones in or on the walls according to their size. The task requires primarily **craft**.
- **Deepening the ditch** is a hard task (TN16 / $\pm 0d$). Shovels and wheelbarrows are used to spread earth from the ditch in front of the castle. The task requires primarily **athletics**.
- The **work in the hole** is severe (TN18 / $-1d$). What exactly is being built here remains unclear. In any case, the workers have to build a cave under the inner courtyard of the castle, i.e. they have to move earth out and sufficiently support the cavities. The task requires primarily **athletics**.
- The **work in the quarry** is daunting (TN20 / $-2d$). The quarry offers relatively little shade. Stones must be driven out of a wall and placed on trolleys. These are then pulled into the castle by the trolls. The task requires primarily **athletics**.

WORKING AS AN OVERSEER

At first glance, overseers seem to be better off, because they do not have to do any tedious work. Nevertheless, they are under a lot of pressure, because every delay in construction is blamed on the overseers personally. Chief-overseers hold the overseers directly accountable with lashes for any delay. Overseers have to use an appropriate skill (e.g. awe) to see if they can effectively drive the slave-workers. It is a mentally hard task (TN16 / $\pm 0d$).

The overseers, of course, pass on the pressure and do not hesitate to crack the whip themselves. Heroes who (must) take on such roles are put under substantial mental and moral stress. Misdeeds happen regularly and are inevitable. Each hero serving as an overseer acquires 1 point of Shadow per day, which cannot be avoided or reduced by a Corruption Test. Heroes who cannot or will not cope with these conditions are assigned as slave-workers.

To give the overseers a short break from the struggle, the LM can decide to assign them to the combat training of Hill-Men or Orcs for a day instead. This is usually mentally unproblematic and handled with a simple battle test (TN14 / ±0d).

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS FOR SLAVE WORKERS AS WELL AS OVERSEERS

All slave-workers and overseers must roll the dice three times a day for the activity assigned to them. If they fail a roll, they are whipped and lose 2 Endurance. If they fail a roll with an Eye, they also suffer an injury. Heroes who fail two rolls on a single day are sent into the “cauldron of joy” (see below) in the evening.

If a slave-worker or overseer becomes weary or even reaches 0 Endurance he/she will be grabbed by an chief-overseer. He gives the hero a bitter orc-drink, which restores 6 Endurance, but also brings one point of Shadow per treatment (not per sip). The sips are administered until the hero is no longer weary. It is sufficient if the Endurance simply exceeds the fatigue to shake off the weariness. An additional rest, as described in the core rulebook, is not necessary.

There is a map at the end of this article to illustrate all activities available for slave-workers and overseers. Your group might find this helpful.

NIGHT'S REST

At night, the guards who patrol around the tents watch for silence. All slaves sleep on the straw laid out in the tents. The heroes can regenerate Endurance as they would on a journey: +2 Endurance (if uninjured), +1 Endurance (if injured, but with a tended wound) and +0 Endurance (if injured, but with an untended wound).



Scene #5 - The “cauldron of joy”

The cauldron of joy serves to entertain the guards and overseers in the evening. It only takes place when Burzash is not in Eldanar but is then held every evening. It is an improvised arena in which fights are held. The spectators can bet and spur on the fighters. There is no fighting with weapons, only with fists (make use of the dagger skill). Nevertheless, every now and then fighters are injured so badly that they cannot work the next day. Burzash therefore does not actually tolerate the fights.

Heroes who land in the cauldron of joy must fight either another hero or a Warrior of the Hill-Man. The fight proceeds as follows:

- Roll for Combat Advantages (omitted in the 2ed).
- Choose your stance and attack with Dagger (1ed) or Brawling (2ed) combat skill.
- Whoever loses more than 5 Endurance or becomes weary, loses the fight and additionally loses 1 hope.
- If the fight lasts too long, a chief-overseer cracks the whip and all heroes involved in the fight lose 2 Endurance each. This happens every 5 rounds.
- If a hero becomes weary or faints, he gets a sip of the orc-drink, with the effects described above.

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ACT 3 - LET'S GET OUT OF HERE

Scene #7 - The Escape

Escape from Eldanar is difficult. As long as the heroes wear anklets, escape is hopeless, the chains make noise when they walk and restrict their movement too much. So the first thing the heroes have to do is get rid of the anklets. If one of the manoeuvres listed below fails, a hero is discovered and several guards are called. If the heroes then

- still have their anklets on, they are seized and whipped until they are weary. They are thrown back into the tent of the slave-workers and do not get the orc-drink until the next morning, when the work begins (then they are no longer weary).
- have already managed to take off their anklets, they are eligible for an athletics manoeuvre (TN14 / ±0d) to avoid capture.
- even managed to get their weapons back, they can confront the guards and a fight may begin.

The Anklets

Removing the ankle chains is not possible without suitable tools. The tools used for the construction site are unsuitable, but there is the smithy. The dwarf in the forge will help if the heroes can convince him (which is easy). The challenge is not to make too much noise on the way. Getting all the heroes in chains to the forge unnoticed is very difficult: they all must manage a prolonged action consisting of two stealth manoeuvres (TN18 / -2d) without being able to help each other. It is easier to bring the forging tool into the tent of the slave-workers somehow and carefully loosen the chains there.

In the forge, the dwarf can loosen each chain easily (no roll needed). In the tent, the heroes have to do it on their own. A successful roll in craft (TN14 / ±0d) or a suitable trait is needed. In my sessions, I handled it in such a way that each PC used an appropriate trait only once. At least for some heroes, a dice roll should be nec-

essary. Keep in mind, that in the tent there is the possibility that the heroes will be betrayed by another slave. The heroes should (of course) not make it too obvious.

If the guards recognise that the heroes have loosened their anklets, they are sent to the “cauldron of joy” as punishment or are whipped as described above. The anklets are – securely – fastened again. The difficulty of loosening the chains then increases to TN18 (-2d).

Weapons and equipment

Near the forge is also the shed where the heroes’ weapons and equipment were taken when they were captured. The shed is locked with a padlock, to which Grenar has the key. The lock is not of high quality and can be opened with suitable tools from the forge easily (Craft TN12 or Burglary Trait). If it is smashed, which also works, it makes enough noise to alert the guards, who immediately understand the situation. It then depends on whether the heroes manage to grab their weapons quickly enough (successful athletics roll). However, the shed is not very big, so only one hero can attempt this per round. This means that at the beginning of a fight only one hero can face the guards (without armour). Others can join as soon as they have their weapons.

Apart from the heroes’ equipment more weapons and armour are stored in the shed. Most of it is of poor quality, but if you are lucky, you can find something of value there. If the heroes take enough time to search the shed, they will find valuables worth 6 Treasure per hero and can roll the Feat Die once for special items (see Rivendell rules). However, the heroes may be in a hurry and skip a search.

Distraction

To move unnoticed in the camp is a severe (TN 18 / -2d) manoeuvre. In chains it is a prolonged manoeuvre, which requires two such rolls. It is easier if you create a distraction in the camp. For example, a fire could break out or contaminated water could make sure that not all guards can do their job. Depending on the extent of the confusion, the difficulty of moving around the camp drops to a normal manoeuvre (TN14 / ±0d).

However, it is likely that such an action will affect not only the guards but also those who are held in Eldanar. The LM should therefore consider to what extent Shadow Points are appropriate here too. This can be countered by the heroes if they were able to gain Redwyr's trust during their stay and confide him in their plans.

The Escape

Once the heroes have reached the edge of the fortress unnoticed, there is only one challenge left. They have to cross the open space around the site (TN14) without being noticed by the Orc-Riders. If the guards have been put on alert, the Orc-Riders patrol the area, so this is more difficult (TN16). The challenge can be done by the LM as a skill-challenge (1ed, see box). I would set a medium difficulty for the escape across the open space. So if the group consists of 3 heroes, nine successes are needed to escape from the site unnoticed. If failures occur, the following happens:

- first failure = an Orc-Rider notices the tracks and follows
- second failure = the Orc-Rider notices the group and blows a horn
- third failure = 4 Orc-Riders attack

Alternatively, the challenge can be handled as a skill endeavour (laborious endeavour with, short time) according to the new 2ed rules.

Notes for the Loremaster

The hSkill-challenge (1ed)

I like to handle situations in which I want to challenge the players as a group as a skill-challenge. The idea comes from Mat Colville (<https://youtu.be/GvOeqDpkBm8>): the group must collect a certain number of successful actions collectively before three failures happen. The heroes can support each other (B counts as an additional success), but each hero may use each specific skill and each trait only once. This is to prevent the same ability from being rolled over and over again. Which skills are used is up to the players, there are obvious and creative possibilities. The number of successes needed to end the skill challenge is calculated according to its difficulty:

- *Easy: 2 successes per hero in the group*
- *Medium: 3 successes per hero in the group*
- *Hard: 4 successes per hero in the group*

This sounds like a lot at first glance, but you have to take into account that in TOR (1ed) it is relatively easy to generate successes with B, suitable traits and Hope. I have had quite good experiences with the above values.



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Epilogue AND Fellowship Phase

If the heroes manage to escape, they can take a short rest somewhere behind a hill. After some time, an attentive lookout can make out a person cautiously approaching the heroes' camp. It is Tarannon. When he realises that the group are not Orcs or Hill-Men but the heroes, he steps out of his hiding place and greets them. He wants to know what the heroes have found out about the construction site. If the companions are willing to inform him of what is happening, he suggests they go to a nearby hideout and discuss the matter there in detail. The hideout is a safe place that also has a small amount of food, so the group can recover any Endurance losses more easily and quickly.

There the group can discuss what they want to do next. The most obvious option is to follow one of the wagons north, to Carn Dûm. Tarannon winces and reports that this is an ominous place, far worse than Eldanar. But when the heroes tell him about Gorlanc, he can agree that the place would serve him well as a retreat.

In addition, the heroes can ask the ranger to pass messages to the elves or the other rangers to let them know what is going on here.

Time does not allow for an extensive Fellowship phase; the next adventure follows immediately. Nevertheless, all heroes can recover enough to start the next adventure with full Endurance. XP and AP can also be used to further develop skills and other abilities.

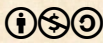


Figure 2a: Eldanar (from Pixabay)

WILD MEN OF THE SOUTH

Adam Brown

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adventure

THE
ONE RING[™]
ROLEPLAYING GAME

The paths of adventures often trace the footprints of the popular and well-known stories. Therefore Eriador, Rhovanion and eastern Gondor are the most familiar adventuring locations in Middle-earth gaming.

First-time contributor Adam Brown has taken another path and leads the Company southwards into Drúwaith Iaur – the wilderness west of Gondor and south of Westmarch. Enjoy his take on a seldom-visited area of Middle-earth and prevent the sinister plot of a servant of the Shadow!

PREAMBLE

Wild Men of the South is an adventure that can fit into any campaign in the region of Bree. It could be the introductory adventure for a company of heroes, or it could be slotted in later to challenge an experienced company. A company that has completed one or more of the adventures in Ruins of the North would be perfect for this adventure.

To prepare for this adventure, I suggest that Loremasters keep in mind the following points:

- This adventure will take the Company far south of Bree, and down towards the borders of Gondor. It could likely be part of a trek toward Rohan or Gondor, but that is not required.
- The adventure will include the Drúedain, a race of wild men who lived in a land south of Eriador and the river Isen called Drúwaith Iaur. They fled from this land and into the mountains of Andrast at the end of the 2nd Age to escape Númenórean settlement and depredations in Eriador. There are still some of this race that live in the Drúadan Forest south-east of Rohan in Anórien, but the Drúedain in the mountains of Andrast are known neither to the Rohirrim nor the Dúnedain of Gondor.
- The Drúedain are Men, but in size they are more like Dwarves. They are highly secretive and have lived in isolation for millennia. They will not accept the coming of the company well, but they are ultimately good people and will oppose the servants of the Shadow. They also have magical abilities granting some limited clairvoyance, healing, and the ability to create animated statues as guardians. This last power is critical to the plot of this adventure.
- Because Andrast and Drúwaith Iaur are relatively unmapped, it is possible that there are isolated villages that exist outside of regular trade networks. It is also relatively close to Dunland, so travel encounters may include Dunlendings.

BASICS

- When:** Anytime after T.A. 2951 when Sauron openly declares himself once again from his tower in Mordor.
- Where:** The adventure starts in Bree and leads southward, beyond Eriador.
- What:** The company is alerted to the presence of a villain that has attacked and killed a man. They soon discover that this man was robbed of something extremely valuable.
- Why:** The companions are capable adventurers, and Breelanders might trust them more than the Rangers.
- Who:** Bilford, a farmer from Bree land, was attacked on the road south of Bree by someone who had been shadowing him for weeks. Bilford was robbed and left dead on the side of the road.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Bilford, a farmer from Bree-land, is not who he pretends to be. “Bilford” is the assumed identity of a man named Balforth, an outdoorsman and surveyor from Pinnath Gelin in Gondor. In T.A. 2915, Balforth was tasked with surveying the lands west of his homeland, including the regions of Andrast and Drúwaith Iaur. In his years of travel, he met the Drúedain and befriended them in the western White Mountains. These wild men urged Balforth not to reveal their existence, but he could not return empty-handed. Instead, Balforth had his chief assistant, Aelen, return to Minas Tirith and tell the lords there that Balforth was lost in an avalanche along with all of their records. Balforth then travelled northward and took up a new life as Bilford the farmer. However, he kept his maps and notes of Drúwaith Iaur and Andrast – which includes detailed paths and locations of the major Drúedain caves and many notes about the culture and magic of the Drúedain.

Years later Aelen, now living in Gondor and working as a scholar, is visited by a friend named Gildor, a minor scholar from Minas Tirith. Unbeknownst to Aelen, his friend Gildor had pledged himself to Mordor in exchange for knowledge of Sorcery. But this wasn't enough for Gildor. Aelen had, at some point in the past, drunkenly told Gildor about Balforth's covert survival and vaguely referenced the existence and powers of the Drúedain. Gildor then used his new powers to extract more information from Aelen, killed him, and set out northward to find Bilford. After two years of searching, Gildor located Bilford and shadowed him for weeks. Gildor attacked Bilford alone on the road south of Bree and left him dead. Gildor



took the key Bilford carried with him, went to the latter's house, and stole all the notes before setting out southward. Bilford is found just over a day later by a local.

SUMMARY

The adventure is divided into five parts:

Part One - A Murdered Man

The Company is alerted to a man found dead on the road, a black knife sticking in his body. They investigate the murder at the murder site, are directed to the man's house, and find evidence of his past. They are tasked with following this mysterious murderer, thwarting whatever plans he may have and if possible, bring him back to Bree to face justice.



Part Two - The Journey South

The Company will travel southward following the murderer's trail. They follow him through the ruins of Tharbad, along the river Greyflood, and south along the coastline. Outside the ruins of Lond Dear, they meet some potentially friendly locals who have no love of the stranger.

Part Three - Wandering in the Wilds

The Company must now track the murderer in the wilds of Drúwaith Iaur and up into the western slopes of the White Mountains. Throughout this, they will encounter strange magical enemies that seek to stop them.

Part Four - Battle in the Caves

The Company assaults the sorcerer's cave, battling his minions before capturing or slaying him and freeing the Drûg captives.

Epilogue - Concerning Orughu

The Company must decide what to do with Bilford's notes, and what they will do with their knowledge about the Wild Men of Drúwaith Iaur. Whatever they choose to do, Gandalf the Grey will wish to know what they found in that place.

The Adventure

Part One - A Murdered Man

The Company can either be contacted by a runner meant specifically to notify them, or they might be alerted by a distant voice calling for help. Either the runner or a local man travelling along up the road is calling for help and will alert the company to a dead body found and evidence of foul murder.

When they arrive at the murder site a few hours south of Bree, they meet two strangers in dark cloaks. These are Dúnadan Rangers, and they introduce themselves as Halbarad and Camden. (If the characters have completed the *What Lies Beneath* adventure from "Ruins of the

North" with Edrahil alive, Camden can be replaced with the young Edrahil acting as Halbarad's squire and assistant). These Rangers met the runner on the road and came to investigate. They will reveal the following information:

- Camden knows the dead man as Bilford, a farmer from southern Bree-land.
- Halbarad does not believe this is the doing of an ordinary highwayman on account of the exotic murder weapon.
- No one knows why he was attacked, as a normal farmer's possessions are unlikely to attract the attention of highwaymen.

The following clues can be found at the scene:

- A **SCAN** check of the area will reveal that there was not much of a fight, and the attacker escaped on a horse, leaving an obvious set of tracks.
- The soft soil has preserved a peculiar mark in the horseshoe prints, left by a design on the bottom of the horseshoes. A **LORE** or **CRAFT** roll will determine that such intricate designs could only be produced by a craftsman from the South-kingdom.
- (Alternative) In addition, a single soft leather riding glove will be found pushed into the mud under the horses hooves. A **LORE** check will reveal that this glove is made of fine leather (either a companion or a Ranger will note that such quality leather could only be made in Gondor) with a symbol sewn onto the back of the wrist. A success that generates at least 2 Success icons on the roll will also identify this symbol as the mark of a noble family, though only a man of Gondor could identify the exact family.
- A **HUNTING** check reveals that the tracks lead directly south along the Greenway.
- A **SCAN** or **HEALING** check over the body will reveal that the blade that stuck Bilford is coated with a rare poison. In addition, a broken silver chain around his neck reveals that he was robbed of some presumably valuable item fastened to it.
- A **HEALING** check reveals that the murder took place about one day ago.

- A **PERSUADE** or **RIDDLE** check when talking to the Rangers will prompt Halbarad to remember a key piece of information. He remembers a stranger appearing in Bree a few weeks ago but did not have the time to investigate this matter thoroughly, a decision he now regrets.

Once the Heroes are done and they present even one of the previous clues to Halbarad, he will tell them where Bilford's farm is south of Bree (and also south of the site of the murder) and that they should go there as quickly as possible to investigate whether the murderer also got there. At this moment, a new traveller appears on the road coming from Bree, Gandalf the Grey. He mentions that he heard of a murder and came to investigate. He wishes to accompany the group to Bilford's farm. He believes that they might be able to catch the murderer there.

The walk to Bilford's farm will take several hours. When the company arrives at Bilford's farm south of the site of the murder (and about



a day's walk south of Bree), they will find the farm relatively mundane. Simple observation will indicate that the farmhouse has been recently searched, but only further investigation will reveal additional information.

- A **SCAN** check of the area will reveal that the house was broken into, and Bilford's bedroom was the focus of the search. However, the intruder did not even attempt to loot any of the valuables (like some silver or porcelain) that lie about the rest of the house.
- Once the heroes have searched the house themselves, either they or Halbarad will find several scattered papers including a

letter lying under Bilford's bed. The letter reveals his real name and origin. It is a writ, stamped with the seal of the Steward of Gondor. It empowers one "Balforth of Pinnath Gelin" to fully survey the lands of Drúwaith Iaur and Andrast. (The rest of the papers mostly consist of purchase records for travel supplies and contracts written for caravan guards, cooks, assistants, scholars, and labourers. In addition, there is an itinerary of his expedition, and a letter to his parents and siblings explaining the plan and when he expects to return.)

- The Company will find Balforth's personal journal fallen from a bookshelf, now lying half-buried below some other items. Balforth's journal begins in Bree and details his life and struggles as he learns to be a farmer. It also details his regrets and his longing to see his family again.
- An **INSIGHT** check on his personal journal will reveal that Balforth found something in Drúwaith Iaur. He doesn't mention it by name but does refer to "his old friends" quite a bit. He seems to have faked his death and repeatedly logs his paranoia regarding his secret. Among his daily musings, an astute investigator can determine that he befriended some unnamed people there and has sworn to keep their existence a secret.
- A **RIDDLE** check will conclude that there is a key piece of evidence missing, Balforth's official surveyors log; this must have been stolen. The man who took it probably also robbed the lockbox key from Balforth since the box shows no signs of violence and the key is still in the lock.

One of the Company that can achieve success with a **LORE** check, or Gandalf himself, will know where Drúwaith Iaur is. Halbarad seems ready to conclude this as a simple murder and will agree with any Heroes that think so. However, Gandalf is a bit more concerned that something else is at work here. If none of the company raises such concerns, Gandalf will state that the thief did not care to take any of Balforth's valuables that could easily be fenced. Instead, he took survey notes of Drúwaith Iaur, a supposedly empty and faraway land. There-

ure hunter. Though it is just as likely that nameless monsters have moved in that may make acquiring such treasures very dangerous...

Loremaster Note

According to the canon, there are likely no mannish settlements anywhere north of Dunland, especially around Lond Daer. The settlement mentioned can be removed if the LM wishes to keep his campaign closer to canon.)

Part Three - Wandering in the Wilds

The next part is a 10-day journey southward following the sorcerer's trail along the coast. From there, the sorcerer's trail leaves the coastal path and turns abruptly eastward, through the wilds and into the White Mountains (all hexes past Lond Dear are considered Dark Lands). The party will now have to actively track their quarry through the wilds.

This is a Laborious Skill Endeavour (Resistance 6) (2nd ed. Core Rulebook, pages 131-132) that will primarily use **SCAN**, **AWARENESS**, **HUNTING**, and **EXPLORE**. The environment quickly changes from grassy plains to densely forested mountain slopes. Every roll takes a single day, and an eye result will trigger an ambush. It is likely that this endeavour will take 3-6 rolls (and thus 3-6 days).

During this time, the Company will see the following things. Reveal any of these on any successful roll made during the skill endeavour:

- Stone statues that look shockingly lifelike. They initially may be mistaken for Dwarves due to their size, but are not carved in a dwarven style. Instead, they have clearly mannish features, though shorter and wilder than any stock of men known to the Company.
- Ruins of old villages, long abandoned and nearly overtaken by nature.

- Dead orcs, with their bodies crushed and battered, often surrounding wrecked stone statues.

If an ambush is triggered, the company will likely be attacked by one of the stone statues that comes to life. [These statues use the stats of a Great Orc Bodyguard (2nd ed. Core Rulebook page 149), but they attack with fists that are equivalent to an Orc-axe. These statues are also immune to damage from bladed weapons that do not contain magical enchantments.] If multiple ambushes are triggered, the LM may wish to attack the company with wolves or other beasts instead of repeated statue encounters.

Once the company has completed the Skill Endeavour, they have successfully tracked the Sorcerers' group to a cave in a dense forest. The bodies of men resembling the statues, orcs, and broken statues are strewn about. Strange sounds emanate from the cave; a successful **AWARENESS** check will identify the sounds as that of wailing men, active mine work, laughing orcs, and cracking whips.

Part Four - Battle in the Caves

The sorcerer has been found. He has come here with a company of orcs to enslave the Drúedain and has found one of their caves. The company can sneak their way inside the cave or charge headlong into it. The cave is a carved path that leads to a large, cavernous chamber at least 200 feet high.

What the company finds depends upon how much time the sorcerer has been given to work uninterrupted. The sorcerer captures Balforth's notes the day he kills him and immediately begins his journey south; Balforth's body is discovered a day later. The sorcerer's journey takes 30 days to travel to this place and enslave the Drúedain (the powers of the Shadow have hastened his efforts). Every day beyond that point is considered a day of work, including the day the Heroes find the cave.

The following is the default scene that the company will find within the cave:

- 30 captive Drûg villagers, including women and children. They are working as slaves to set up a stone quarry within the

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cave for the making of more animate statues.

- A single Drûg chieftain who is teaching the sorcerer to animate the statues. He is bound in chains that enslave his will to the Sorcerer.
- 8 Orc Soldiers and 4 Goblin Archers (2e Core Rulebook page 150). They are all that remains of the Sorcerer's orc minions. Their camp is also littered with bones and rotting meat from the villagers that they have eaten.
- 2 Drûg stone statues. They will attack the Company on Gildor's command but will turn to aid the Heroes if the chains binding the Drûg chieftain are removed. In addition, if either statue is destroyed, the Drûg chieftain suffers the effects of a Wound. If

both are destroyed, the Drûg chieftain will begin dying. A successful **RIDDLE** check will reveal the first clue and the second clue will be revealed if the roll also generates at least 2 Success symbols.

- The sorcerer, a pale-skinned man with sunken eyes and a dark cloak. [He has the stats of a Barrow-Wight (2nd ed. Core Rulebook page 154), but with the *Hate Sunlight* Fell Ability removed].

Modify the default scene based upon how many work days the sorcerer has been allowed:

- **1-5 Days:** The sorcerer has barely got the structure of his quarry set up and has not finished enslaving the will of the Drûg chieftain. Remove the 2 Drûg stone statues and add 10 Drûg villagers.



- **6-10 Days:** The Drûg chieftain has barely taught the Sorcerer the basics of statue making, and the quarry is finally up and running. Remove 1 Drûg stone statue and add 5 Drûg villagers.
- **11-15 Days:** Default Scene
- **16-20 Days:** The sorcerer has learned the secrets of statue making from the Drûg chieftain but cannot control them yet. Add 1 Drûg stone statue and remove 10 Drûg villagers as they are worked to death.
- **21-29 Days:** The sorcerer has learned to make and control the statues and killed the now useless Drûg chieftain. Remove the Drûg chieftain, and 15 Drûg villagers. In addition, the statues will no longer turn to aid the company as they are now under the control of the Sorcerer. This also means that destroying any of the statues forces the Sorcerer to suffer the effects of a wound. If he is killed before the statues, they will return to an inanimate state.
- **30+ Days:** The sorcerer has learned that there is no way to make the statues without investing part of yourself and thus suffering some of the damage done to the statues. He kills the remaining Drûg villagers and leaves with his orc band and a single Drûg stone statue on a journey back to the Misty Mountains. He hopes to continue his research and perhaps discover a solution in the future.

When the Sorcerer is defeated or slain, the Drûg civilians and chieftain will rejoice and rise against their captors to slay or chase off the remaining orcs. If the chieftain is killed or already dead, the villagers will be too devastated and broken to aid the Heroes. Should the Company flee, the sorcerer will not chase them

as he is much more concerned with his work in the cave quarry.

Searching the campsite will find the following items

- Balforth's surveyor logs with detailed maps of this land and an assessment of the Drúedain people.
- The sorcerer's notes about the Drúedain and their spells for animating the stone statues. It seems he is most concerned about overcoming the need to suffer part of the damage done to the statues that one crafts.
- An enchanted and cursed sword given the sorcerer by his dark masters.

If the company arrives after 30+ days of work, they will find only a hideous smell emanating from a pile of Drûg bodies (some partially eaten), 2 inanimate stone statues, and tracks that lead through the forest east. It is obvious that the orcs relished in torturing and slaughtering the villagers. Anyone who views this scene will gain 2 points of Shadow that cannot be reduced by a Shadow test. They can choose to follow the orc band with the sorcerer if they wish to get revenge.

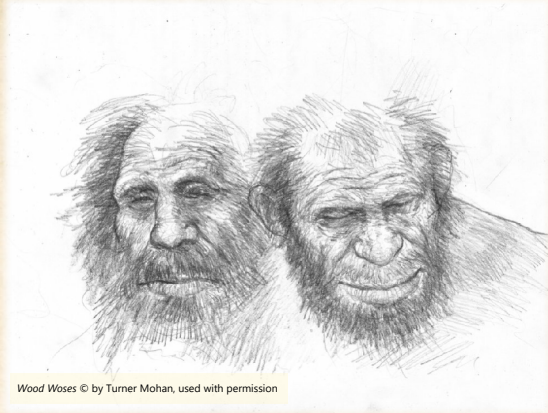
Many of the villagers do not speak a language any of the company would know, but the chieftain learned the Common Tongue from his father who met Balforth many years ago.

Epilogue - CONCERNING DRUGHU

When the villagers are freed, they will attempt to thank the company. Though they cannot communicate in words, it is simple to understand their intentions.

Once the villagers are out of the cave, the Drûg chieftain (if he is still alive) will ask them what they plan to do with the maps and log that the sorcerer stole from Balforth. The chieftain will want them to destroy everything and never speak of this place again. If the company wishes to keep the log and maps, they must either hide them or engage in Council with the chieftain to convince him otherwise. If the sorcerer is captured alive, the Drûg will also request that they

be allowed to punish him themselves; if the Drûg chieftain is dead and the sorcerer is still alive, the villagers will corner him and attempt to stone him to death.



Wood Woses © by Turner Mohan, used with permission

Here the Heroes face a tough choice since they were also asked to bring the murderer back to Bree to face justice there.

Council with the Chieftain

The chieftain and the villagers are thankful for being rescued from the Sorcerer, but they also know that their position here is only maintained through secrecy. Asking them to allow maps of their homes to be taken away is completely against their interests, so the Resistance of this Council is 9.

Since the chieftain is the only one that can understand the language of the company, they must make their case to him. Formally introducing themselves will require either **COURTESY** or **RIDDLE**. The chieftain will always respond well to kind and courteous words, but also respects the fact that the party may be suspicious or reluctant with information; the Drúedain themselves are secretive.

The chieftain is friendly to the Heroes because they just saved his life and that of his villagers, so all rolls gain 1 success die. The interaction is only with the chieftain, so it will require **PERSUADE**, **RIDDLE**, **COURTESY**, **INSIGHT**, or **SONG**.

- **Success:** The chieftain reluctantly trusts the company to keep them secret, though he admits his people will have to move deeper into the mountains of Andrast to

avoid the inevitable travellers that will come.

- **Failure:** The chieftain will not let them leave with the notes and maps. He may let them leave with a stone charm necklace as a memento of his tribe, but he cannot risk the secrecy of his people.
- **Disaster:** The chieftain is now worried that the Heroes will betray them to enemies in the future and decides that they must be killed to keep his people safe. (The chieftain has the stats of a Ruffian Chief, and all of his people have the stats of a Footpad) [2nd ed. Core Rulebook page 147].

Return to Bree

Once the company returns to Bree, Gandalf will meet them at the Inn of the Prancing Pony. He will be very inquisitive about their findings:

If the Company presents him with log and maps, he will be incredibly thankful and very impressed. He will want to take these documents to study them thoroughly. Gandalf will surely trust the company's capabilities (this could be the justification for Gandalf requesting their assistance in the *Shadows over Tyrn Gorthad* adventure).

If the Heroes tell Gandalf of their findings but do not produce any materials, Gandalf will listen intently and thank them for stopping the Sorcerer. He expresses disappointment at the loss of documents but admits that such information is perhaps better off lost. He will also trust them for tasks in the future.

If the Company does not tell Gandalf of their findings, he will thank them for their efforts in stopping the Sorcerer but expresses his disappointment with them for hiding information from him.

If the Company did not stop the Sorcerer, Gandalf will curse them for their incompetence and leave, disappointed about how the company has allowed a great evil to linger on.

If the Company does not choose to meet him at Bree, he will find them later and express his anger for being snubbed. Should they speak to him then, his response will be lukewarm thanks at best, or thunderous anger at their cowardice to face him and admit their failings.'

Loremaster Note

If the company decides to hide information from Gandalf to keep the secrecy of the Drúedain, they will gain no Shadow. However, if the company hides information or refuses to face Gandalf for reasons of personal gain or to hide their failings, they will gain 2-3 Shadow points for Misdeeds.



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The Shire: A View of Hobbiton From The Hill — Copyright © Ted Nasmith. All rights reserved.

WHERE IN BREE-LAND IS COMBE VALLEY?

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Last but not least in this Issue you find an insightful article on a topic that is easily overlooked. It shows however, the issues with properly locating a site mentioned in The Lord of the Rings. The existence of maps (first among them Karenyn Wynn Fonstad's well-known atlas) suggest an easy solution, but the close look of Kris demonstrates that things are not as easy as they might seem at first glance.

The locations differ more or less wildly in all publications so far (both scholarly and official RPG maps) and you will find this article very helpful in making your own mind up on it and how to integrate the location into a game of yours if you place an adventure in the Bree region. Have fun reading!

INTRODUCTION

It would probably be fair to ask, “Where in Bree-land is anything, really?” Besides Bree-land’s eponymous main settlement, the sections in *The Lord of the Rings* that contain descriptions of the region offer only vague and sparse references to the exact positions of its other settlements. This has led to changing, often unsatisfactory, and occasionally odd selections on atlas and game maps for the locations of Bree-land’s other named settlements: Staddle, Archet, and Combe. Among these three, Staddle – “on the gentler south-eastern slopes of the hill” – has been the easiest to place satisfactorily and with any semblance of precision and stability across a range of game systems and companion materials. The other two settlements, and Combe in particular, pose signifi-



Barliman Butterbur © by John Howe, used with permission

cant problems for cartographers of the region. In this article, I offer some corrections, however small, to the location especially of Combe as it appears in a range of companion maps and role-playing game supplements.¹

THE LOCATIONS

The most detailed descriptions of Bree-land and its settlements appear in the chapters “At the Sign of the Prancing Pony” and “A Knife in the Dark” of *The Lord of the Rings* (plus a brief first glimpse of Bree and Bree-hill at the very end of “Fog in the Barrow-downs”).² The location and layout of Bree receive significant attention throughout these chapters and have resulted in a fairly solid understanding of Bree as wrapping around the foot of Bree-hill from west to south; all maps and descriptions here under discussion display Bree accordingly and

accurately. With one caveat, on which I will expand below, Bree can therefore function as a sort of anchor point in this discussion.

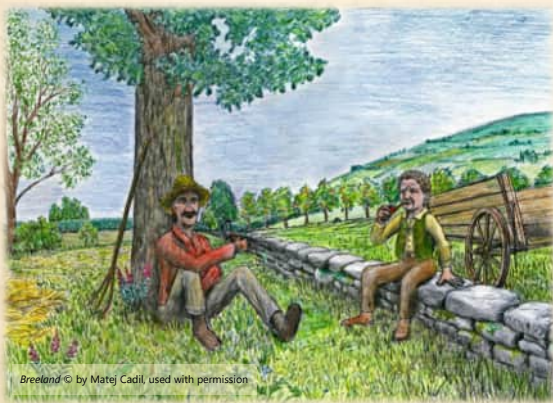
Beyond Bree, the brief description that opens “At the Sign of the Prancing Pony” offers a first, quick overview of the region:

[...] there was Staddle on the other side of the hill [from Bree], Combe in a deep valley a little further eastward, and Archet on the edge of the Chetwood

—*The Lord of the Rings. At the sign of the Prancing Pony*



Maybe in part due to its brevity, this description has led to some of the greatest placement errors when it comes to Combe in particular.³ At first glance, the description seems to indicate that Bree, Staddle, and Combe lie along a more or less straight line running east to west, roughly parallel to the Great East Road’s trajectory. Hence, one presumes, comes the decision of Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE) and their cartographer Pete Fenlon to place Combe in a steep valley just north of the Great East Road and far east of Bree and Staddle.⁴ This placement is in line with the description above, and it also satisfies one element of the second, much



¹ In this short article I will focus on depictions and descriptions of Combe in supplemental materials for Iron Crown Enterprises’ MERP game system (especially the descriptions and maps in the *Arnor* modules as well as in the *Bree and the Barrow-downs* module that preceded them) as well as in maps of Bree-land in Karen Wynn Fonstad’s *Atlas of Middle-Earth*; Barbara Strachey’s *Journeys of Frodo*; the *Fellowship of the Ring Sourcebook* for Decipher’s *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*; the Players’ map that accompanies Cubicle 7’s *Bree* sourcebook for the first edition of *The One Ring*; and an in-set vignette in the margins of the large-scale Eriador map that accompanies the Starter Set for Free League’s second edition of *The One Ring*. The conglomerate map that accompanies this article (see p. 77) tries to compile and thereby make visible the sometimes vastly disparate locations especially of Combe and Archet within a single map; for ease of reference, a side-by-side of all the maps used in this study have been provided as well.

² Chapters 9, 11, and 8 respectively. All page references for quotes from *The Lord of the Rings* are to the one-volume illustrated edition published by BCA in 1991.

³ Archet is unsurprisingly a close runner-up when it comes to uncertainties and variability in its placement, though many maps agree with Fonstad – correctly, I think – that the village lies to the northeast of Bree-hill, a little ways into but still “on the edge” of the Chetwood; *The One Ring* first edition moves Archet much further west and north; and Strachey seems to interpret “in the trees beyond” not in relation to the mention of Combe that precedes it but to the company’s movement, placing Archet far east and much further south than most other maps, barely north of the Great East Road (and ironically close to the erroneous placement of Combe in the Fenlon map).

⁴ The same arrangement was adopted for maps depicting the region in Iron Crown Enterprises’ *Lord of the Rings Adventure Game*.



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longer description of the areas east and north of Bree-hill, which readers encounter after the hobbits have left Bree by the South-gate and, under Strider’s guidance, are making their way towards Weathertop by way of the Great East Road, the Chetwood, and the Midgewater Marshes:

Passing through [the South-gate], they kept on along the [Great East] Road for some miles. It bent to the left, curving back into its eastward line as it rounded the feet of Bree-hill, and then it began to run swiftly downwards into wooded country. To their left they could see some of the houses and hobbit-holes of Staddle on the gentler south-eastern slopes of the hill; down in a deep hollow away north of the Road there were wisps of rising smoke that showed where Combe lay; Archet was hidden in the trees beyond.

After the Road had run down some way, and had left Bree-hill standing tall and brown behind, they came on a narrow track that led off towards the North. [...] No one was in sight; and [Strider] led the way quickly down towards the wooded valley.

**—The Lord of the Rings.
A Knife in the Dark**

Between this longer description and the short introduction at the start of the chapter, we can see why ICE’s regional modules and Fenlon’s map locate Combe east of Bree and north of the Great East Road: the village is said to lie “in a deep hollow away north of the Road” and

“in a deep valley a little further eastward” of Bree, and the company is described as descending “quickly down towards the wooded valley” once they leave the Road and head north.

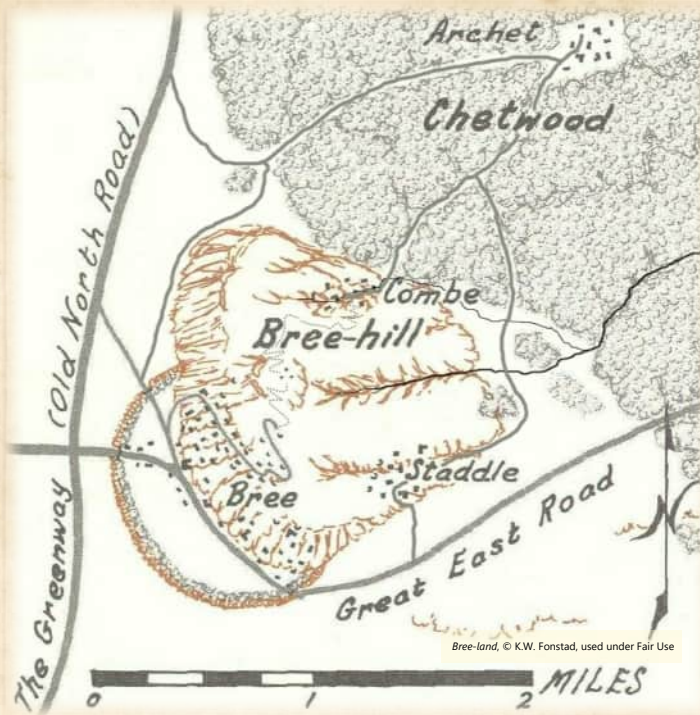
Such a placement, however, assumes that the company had passed by Staddle and Bree-hill by the time of the second description, such that both village and landmark lay “to their left” while Combe made its presence known “north” of them. In other words, the ICE materials and Fenlon’s map assume that “to their left” and “north of the Road” are two different directions relative to the travelers. This is further affirmed in the ICE/Fenlon depictions by drawing the Great East Road in a long curve that follows the contours of Bree-hill in something like a half-circle. Entering Bree from the west, the Road describes a right-hand curve and diverges from its more or less straight east-west line towards the south-east, then turns left and loops first east and then north-east around the hill before finally describing another curve to the right to reassume its eastward trajectory. In fact, all maps and descriptions here under consideration with the single exception of Strachey’s map, follow this depiction and logic: that the Great East Road loops around Bree-hill in such a way that those parts of it that stretch away to the west and east form a roughly continuous line; that it would form a continuous, straight east-west line through the region if only a tunnel through Bree-hill were manageable. As a consequence, these maps also place Bree’s “South gate” in an easterly or south-easterly section of the settlement’s hedge and dyke.

Yet Tolkien’s description of the Road’s trajectory as it leaves Bree eastward clearly indicates that this assumption of the Road forming a clean, more or less symmetrical loop around Bree-hill is wrong, and not only because one would assume that Bree-landers know their cardinal directions perfectly well and would thus have labeled a gate in the eastern section of the hedge the “East-gate” rather than, as they did, the “South-gate”.¹ More importantly and to the

¹ It is of course possible that the people of Bree named this second gate for a more southerly positioning in relation to the first, western gate, so that naming a gate in the eastern section of the wall the “South-gate” would make some sense. Tolkien’s description, however, indicates that the company does not leave Bree in an easterly direction at all, as I intend to show here.



Bree-land, © K.W. Fonstad, ICE, Decipher, Strachey Fria Ligan used under Fair Use

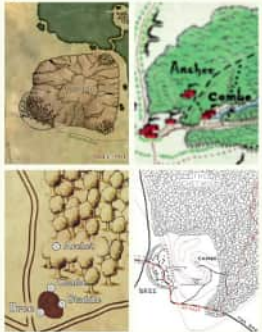


later in the same chapter indicates, the “great loop of the Road, which further on bent southwards to avoid the Midgewater Marshes” east of Bree, in fact makes it advantageous from a road-building perspective for the Road to lie further south on Bree’s eastern side than it does on its western side. Barring any geographical features or other obstacles that would require a diversion towards the north, there would be little reason to run the Great East Road north before turning south for the great loop around the Midgewater Marshes, and none of the available descriptions of the region between Bree-land and the Weather Hills indicate that such geological features or obstacles exist.¹

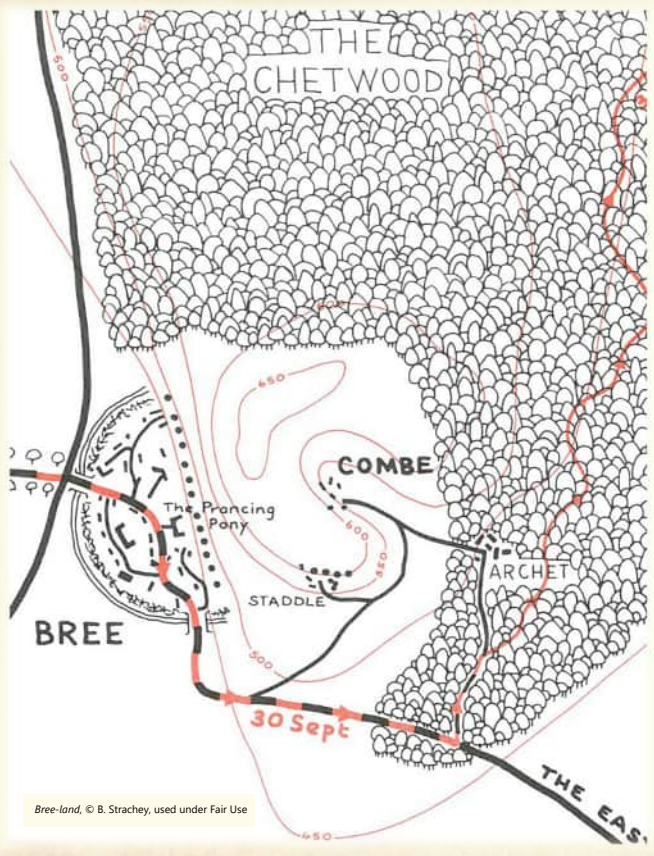
point, Tolkien’s description explicitly has the Road “ben[d] to the left” and “curv[e] back into its eastward line” only after the company has left Bree through the South-gate. Rather than following a road that gradually curves in a leftward arc around Bree-hill both within and outside of the town, as depicted in the ICE materials and the Fenlon and Fonstad maps, the company in *The Lord of the Rings* leaves Bree in a more or less southerly direction before curving left/east once they are out of town. We also do not hear of another curve to the right in order to reassume its “eastward line,” as the ICE, Fenlon, and Fonstad depictions require. Rather, the road’s turn to the left after passing through the South-gate has already accomplished the required “curving back into its eastward line,” with the consequence that the Great East Road’s section east of Bree must lie somewhat south of its complementary section west of Bree. Arriving in Bree-land from the west and being forced south around Bree-hill, the Great East Road exits town in a southerly direction through Bree’s “South-gate” before reassuming its eastward course outside of town (but now somewhat further south than before). Indeed, none of the available descriptions of the Great East Road or of Bree-land east of Bree-hill indicate that the road *should* curve further north to reassume its original east-west direction. As Tolkien’s description of Strider’s intentions a little

Such an adjustment in our understanding of the Great East Road’s trajectory must directly lead to a readjustment of the company’s trajectory as they leave Bree, which in turn will require us to reconsider their lines of sight and the locations of the things they see. If the hobbits and Strider are in fact not traveling away from Bree in a double-s, left-right curve that has them facing east, then north-east, and finally east again; then the relationship between what lies to their left and what lies north of them differs drastically from the view presented in the ICE and Fonstad maps. In the ICE and Fonstad maps, the company face east and especially north-east for much of the “some miles” they cover as they travel along the Road, such that Bree-hill would remain on their left for most of their journey before they leave the Road. Accordingly, anything “north of the Road” would lie closer to the direction in which they are traveling, somewhere between their left and straight ahead. In the second, more accurate case (depicted in Strachey’s map on the next page), after they have left Bree and followed the Road’s left-hand curve to once again orient in an eastward direction, “to their left”

¹ Strachey offers the only major description and mapping project that correctly depicts this feature of Bree-land and the Great East Road. As a consequence, her choice of locations for Staddle and Combe is also more accurate than in any other major map or description.



Bree-land, © K.W. Fonstad, ICE, Decipher, Strachey Fria Ligan used under Fair Use



crosses the open country immediately surrounding the hill, the Great East Road “run[s] swiftly downwards into wooded country” and continues to “run down some way” until the company leaves the Road “down towards the wooded valley” to cut north and east past Archet. Eventually they turn east until they reach the eastern edge of the Chetwood and “a wide flat expanse of country” that will take them into the Midgewater Marshes, but

Not once does the description of their

The land had been falling steadily, ever since they turned aside from the Road.

—*The Lord of the Rings. A Knife in the Dark*

and “north of the Road” describe the same direction. If Staddle thus lies “to their left” while Combe signals its location “away north of the Road,” it follows that Combe lies “down in a deep hollow” somewhere north of Staddle, hidden in a fold of Bree-hill’s slopes (and one that is at this point lower than the Great East Road on which the company are traveling) rather than in a deep valley due east of the hill. It also follows that Archet lies even further north, “in the trees beyond” Combe and roughly in a line with Staddle and Combe as seen from the Great East Road shortly after leaving Bree.

Furthermore, while none of these readjustments to our understanding of the geography of Bree-land preclude the possibility that a valley indeed cuts across the southern Chetwood along an east-west line just north of the Great East Road (after all, when Strider and the hobbits leave the Road, he leads them “quickly down towards the wooded valley”) the descriptions of the company’s travels across Bree-land throughout “A Knife in the Dark” also suggest that the downhill trajectory of their journey out of Bree is primarily the result of a general decline of the land from Bree-hill all the way to the Midgewater Marshes. After the company leaves Bree and

journey mention them traveling uphill in any significant way; their voyage from Bree to the Midgewater Marshes is defined by downhill travel. And while this does not preclude the existence of valleys and dips here and there, it does suggest that earlier mentions of the “deep valley” and “deep hollow” in which Combe lies are less likely to refer to geographical features of Bree-land east of the hill and are instead more likely a reference to features of Bree-hill itself.

Among the major descriptions and mapping projects here under consideration, Fonstad and Strachey locate Combe where it more or less accords with the text. Strachey’s Combe might be a tad too close to the Great East Road to justify its description as lying “away north of the Road,” whereas Fonstad’s detailed map of Bree-land probably locates it a little too far north and west behind the bulk of Bree-hill, where it might have been all but invisible to travelers along the Great East Road (though it might explain why the hobbits and Strider only see “wisps of rising smoke that showed where Combe lay”). The large Eriador map included in Free League’s Starter Set for the second edition of *The One Ring* only indicates locations for Bree itself as well as a settlement marker that is probably meant to represent Staddle on the southeast slopes of Bree-hill. A map insert depicting a perspectival view of Bree-land from the south, however, shows Combe in its proper place on the northeastern slopes of Bree-hill and barely



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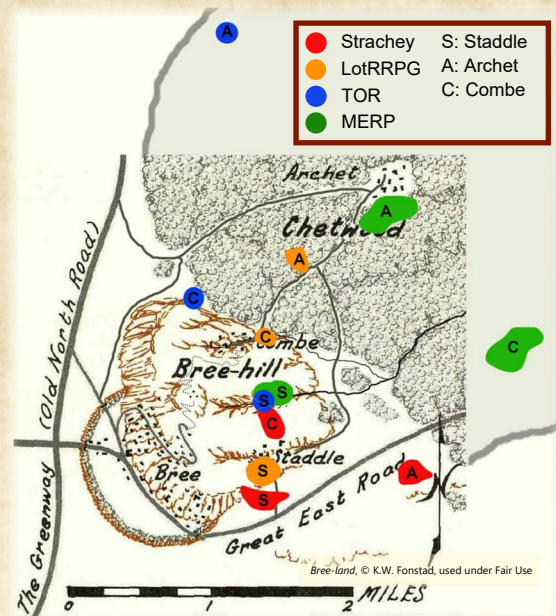
peeking over one of the hill's shoulders (though Staddle may have been moved a little too far east in a bid to accommodate the artist's detailed, expansive rendition of Bree itself). Fonstad's large-scale map of Eriador may come closest to a mapping of Bree-land that matches the descriptions in *The Lord of the Rings*, with Combe located in a more or less direct line northeast of Staddle and southwest of Archet.

CONCLUSION

As this article shows, scholarly as well as game publications have wrestled with the placement of the Bree-land settlements. To render the sometimes considerable variation in the placement of Bree-land's settlements visible, we offer (at top right) a map that collates the various locations from the maps I discuss in this article and overlays them on the Fonstad atlas map.

To develop this conglomerate map, the Prancing Pony was selected as the central reference and anchor point for all maps since Bree, as has already been mentioned, receives the most detailed description of all settlements in the region.

As this map shows, the interpretations vary considerably, highlighting the difficulty that scholars and cartographers have faced in exactly pinpointing the location especially of the smaller settlements. While most locations are fairly close to each other, the MERP locations for Archet and Combe and the TOR location for Archet represent significant outliers.



Overlay-map: Map of Bree-land with approximate locations of the smaller settlements superimposed in various colours. The legend above details abbreviations used and the colour codes.

Though none of this discussion offers groundbreaking new insights into Tolkien's canon or lore, I hope it does help to clarify in some small way the geography of Bree-land and to offer some small adjustments to our understanding of how the settlements of Bree-land relate to each other in space – and how to read and assess the maps from popular secondary sources for the region's geography.

