

5E

THE LORD OF THE RINGSTM ROLEPLAYING



SHIRETM ADVENTURES

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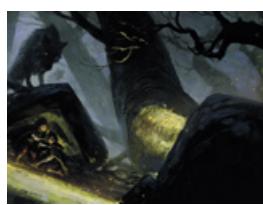
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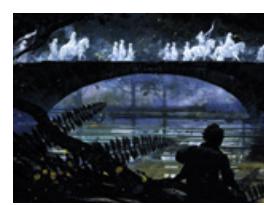
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Dearest Balin,

almost six years have passed already since the last time you were here. I remember very well everything you and Gandalf said when we met. You were alarmed, and I took your warnings to heart, but I don't think you would find it surprising to know that news of a nameless threat is hard to believe here in the dear old Shire. Gandalf came to see me again, on several occasions. He seems to care about our friendship, and he says I should indeed be worried, but his vague words of warning make even less of a dent in the general sense of peace and protection that we enjoy here, away in the north-west.

But don't think that I am completely clueless! All I need to do is have a look at... the things I collected in my adventures to remember that there is a wide and dangerous world out there. Sometimes I even miss it, the road, the thrill, the narrow escapes. It's my Tookish side. But then I look at my beautiful garden, my snapdragons and sunflowers, my trailing nasturtians... how they glow, red and golden, more beautiful than any dragon-hoard that ever was, and I am back to being a Baggins.

I hope that what I say won't be too much of a disappointment to you. You haven't asked yet, but I know that you mean to invite me to join you in that Moria adventure you are always talking about. I am afraid that I have spent enough time crawling in the dark under the Misty Mountains not to wish to do that ever again! But there's a good bunch of eager Lads and Lasses here that you might find to your liking. Why, they are just waiting for no more than a nod in their direction from me or from our grey friend to go off into the blue on mad adventures! Theirs is an age that is more appropriate to that type of business, believe me, and I have taught them a thing or two. I suspect that Gandalf has too...

from a letter from Bilbo Baggins,
esq. to Balin son of Fundin.

PROLOGUE

"His sword, Sting, Bilbo hung over his fireplace, and his coat of marvellous mail, the gift of the Dwarves from the Dragon-hoard, he lent to a museum, to the Michel Delving Mathom-house in fact. But he kept in a drawer at Bag End the old cloak and hood that he had worn on his travels; and the ring, secured by a fine chain, remained in his pocket."

For generations of fans, the Shire of the Hobbits has been the gateway to Middle-earth. Both the Quest for Erebor told in *The Hobbit* and that to Mount Doom described in *The Lord of the Rings* start here, with Bilbo and Frodo Baggins providing the readers with a first-person perspective — a point of view allowing them to unravel the complexity of the world of Arda step by step.

The Shire is a small world, almost fable-like, where a single Wild Wolf poses a serious threat, and a Wizard is maybe nothing more than an eccentric fireworks-maker.

In the same way, this volume describes the Shire as an introductory, less dangerous setting for new (and maybe younger) players of *The Lord of the Rings™ Roleplaying*. By using the material provided herein, the players will get a taste of the world of Middle-earth, going on adventures within limited boundaries. Once they familiarize themselves with the scope of the game, the players will be ready to venture across the vast expanses of Eriador and beyond.

The first section — *Regarding the Shire*, is a geographical compendium covering the four Farthings of the Shire, all the way from Greenholme in the west to Buckland and the Old Forest in the East.

The second section — *The Conspiracy of the Red Book*, presents five exciting adventures, particularly suited to those wishing to play as Hobbit adventurers.

Finally, the Appendix presents eight pre-generated characters, offering players the opportunity to take the mantle of some Hobbits whose children will go on to do extraordinary things, such as Drogo Baggins, Rory Brandibuck, and Esmeralda Took.

WEAPONS IN THE SHIRE

At no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves. In olden days they had, of course, been often obliged to fight to maintain themselves in a hard world; but in Bilbo's time that was very ancient history.

As a peaceful people for countless generations, very few (if any) Hobbits possess weapons of war, let alone forge or sell them. The only weapons available in the Shire are simple implements used mainly as tools, such as axes, clubs, hammers, hatchets, and staves. Daggers, being easily concealed, are considered too dangerous and therefore are not normally sold in stores, except in Buckland where longer hunting knives are commonly available. Bows and arrows are crafted, but are only issued to Bounders or stored in secret stashes in case they are needed one day, and they are not available for sale. Short swords, often nothing more than long daggers made by the Big Folk and given as gifts to the more adventurous Hobbits of yore, are regarded as mathoms and are only to be found on display in Michel Delving's Mathom-house, or as ornaments in the smials of a few Hobbit families of noble descent.

In any case, wandering around the Shire armed with anything other than a walking staff will surely arouse the attention of a Bounder or a Shirriff, who will question the unwary Hobbit about the weapon carried, going so far as to confiscate it.

Bounder

Small humanoid (Hobbit)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

ARMOUR CLASS 13 (leather shirt)

HIT POINTS 9 (2d6 + 2)

SPEED 25 ft.

SKILLS Perception +3, Stealth +4

SENSES passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Westron

CHALLENGE 1/8 (25 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

HOBBIT-SENSE. The Bounder has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against Shadow.

ACTIONS

STAFF. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

BOW. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.





REGARDING The shire

“Forty leagues it stretched from the Far Downs to the Brandywine Bridge, and fifty from the northern moors to the marshes in the south.

The Hobbits named it the Shire...”

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SHIRE

Thus began the Shire-reckoning, for the year of the crossing of the Brandywine (as the Hobbits turned the name) became Year One of the Shire, and all later dates were reckoned from it.

Though no one in the Shire recalls the time before they passed over the Bridge of Stonebows, Hobbits did not spring wholly into existence out of nothing. Ancient legends speak of a small, stout, river-folk that was driven out of the Anduin River valley and made their way west. There are suggestions that during their long, meandering journey, they spread into the North-realm of Men, perhaps making their way as far south as the region now known as Dunland. Tales forgotten by most and often considered unreliable claim that Hobbits once swore allegiance to that ancient North Kingdom, and took part on at least one occasion in feats of arms when evil things came out of dark places.

It was after taking up brief residence in the Chetwood and the area surrounding the village of Bree that a company of Hobbits petitioned the King of Men for a land of their own. They were granted his leave to occupy an area of verdant lands and build a realm for themselves that would ensure a bountiful life, hopefully free of danger and woe. Led by the brothers Marcho and Blanco, that company of Hobbits crossed the Brandywine, claiming as their own domain the land ranging from its banks to the Far Downs, some forty leagues west. They named that realm and all the surrounding land fifty leagues from north to south the Shire.

Originally ordered to maintain the great East-West Road and the Brandywine Bridge as a service to the King, the Shire-folk and their humble domain were soon left to their own devices. Even the title of Thain, granted to a single Hobbit of worth who spoke with the King's authority, rapidly became little more than an honorific among local residents. With the passing of only a handful of decades, few recognised the existence of the Shire to be of any importance. Few, except the Hobbits, of course. Free to tend to their own affairs, the denizens of the Shire prospered, and soon all the Hobbits of the wide world took up residence within its borders (save for those few still making their home in and around Bree).

This first generation of Shire-folk would suffer greatly at the hands of the Great Plague less than forty years after the foundation of the Shire (S.R. 36)*, but though the terrible sickness caused the death of innumerable Hobbits and Men alike, the resilience of the Shire proved to be greater than that of the North Kingdom.

The days of the King were finally over in the year 375. The Shire became truly independent, though it mattered little to the world beyond its borders (save as a curiosity to the most inquisitive). Severed from larger history, Hobbits continued their lives in peace and plenty for countless generations. Villages and communities seemed to flourish endlessly, their precise dates of appearance largely unrecorded in any local chronology.

It is indeed due only to gossip and family history that we know that the Oldbucks, who could trace their lineage back to Bucca of the Marish, first Thain of the Shire, were so bold as to cross the Brandywine River going east and establish the community of Buckland, now home to Brandy Hall and the great Brandybuck family. It was Brandy Hall's founder Gorhendad Oldbuck who changed his family name to Brandybuck, in honour of his new community in the same year of its founding, S.R. 740.

It was during this same period of prosperity that Tobold Hornblower would learn the art of the cultivation and smoking of pipe-weed, an enduring art that remains almost unique to the people of the Shire even unto this day. Isengrim Took II would begin construction of the Great Smials in Tuckborough in 1083, which still stands as the ancestral home of the Took family. It is also likely that in this time the Messenger Service (and later the Quick Post) were established to carry news between the ever-growing number of communities.

* To those outside the Shire their method of reckoning the passage of time may seem odd or even out of touch with the rest of Middle-earth. Quite so. Hobbits do not concern themselves with the affairs of Men or Elves, and it was in the 1601st year of the Third Age that they began living according to their own calendar. As such, outsiders can simply add 1600 to the Shire Reckoning year to get its equivalent in the Third Age. —G

No Hobbit knows what prompted Golfimbul and his Goblin horde to descend from Mount Gram and cross the borders of the North Farthing. Instead, everyone from Michel Delving to Buckland knows that it was Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took of Long-Cleeve who led the Hobbity-in-arms against the foul invader in the spring of the year 1147. Standing well over four feet tall and capable of riding a full-grown horse, Bullroarer Took charged screaming across the Greenfields and straight into the Goblin lines. With a single swing of his mighty club, he knocked the goblin warlord's head right off his shoulders. The head is said to have sailed straight over the entire enemy army, eventually landing in a rabbit hole. So terrifying was this sight that the entire invading force fled. Oh, and the game of golf was invented in that very moment as well.

But the history of the Shire is not without its less violent troubles, and the first real threat to its existence came not from Goblins, but from famine. The winter of 1158 saw the beginning of the Long Winter. The ground froze hard and cold, with ice that came in the early days of November and did not leave until the last days of spring. Crops were destroyed by frost, and the delay in the turning of the season left planting to be done late, if indeed it could be done at all. The Days of Dearth that followed

claimed the lives of many Hobbits for a full year, and it was long before joy and celebration returned to the Four Farthings. But perhaps it was this difficult time that reminded Hobbits that they were of hardy stock and strong hearts — for they endured.

Minor horrors continued to plague the Shire, culminating in another terrible cold spell, known now as the Fell Winter of 1311. It was during this brutal season that the Brandywine River froze over, and that dire White Wolves came down out of the north and crossed into the Eastfarthing. On that terrible night the Horn-call of Buckland was sounded, and for the first time in almost two centuries, Hobbits took up arms to defend their own lands from invaders. Though victorious, the losses of that battle were grievous, and combined with the famine from an absent growing season, the people of the Shire suffered many deaths. But hope often comes when unlooked for, and it was in that time that Gandalf, the Grey Wizard, came to the aid of many. It is believed by some that this kindness may have saved the Shire all together, though few Hobbits living now would make such a claim, considering that Gandalf is now seen as quite the disturber of the peace (stories also abound concerning how Gandalf was helped by a group of Men, who returned to the wilds when their task was completed).



THE ART OF SMOKING

The habit to smoke the herb known as pipe-weed or leaf using pipes of wood or clay is a peculiar art that is almost certainly the invention of Hobbits. Adopted in recent times by travelling Dwarves and wandering Wizards, it is very popular among the inhabitants of Bree. Indeed, the idea to put the leaf into pipes for smoking can almost certainly be attributed to Bree-Hobbits.

The true mastery of that art began over two hundred years ago when Tobold Hornblower of Longbottom grew, dried, and smoked his first crop of Longbottom Leaf. Even to this day, though other flora can be smoked, no Hobbit, nor Dwarf, nor Man can argue that Longbottom is not the finest smoke in Middle-earth.

It is likely that Tobold, being rarely one to travel, brought the practice back into the Shire after one of his rare trips to Bree, though he never gave details as to what possessed him to bring the plant to the Southfarthing and cultivate it on the farmland he had claimed as his own. Though the details of its arrival will remain forever a mystery, Tobold was determined to grow this wonderful herb, and within a few generations it was found in the many variants now known to flourish throughout Longbottom and across the Shire.

Pipe-craft, like the art of smoking, is a matter of pride for many Hobbits of Longbottom and the Southfarthing,

and their products range from stubby clay pipes smoked by simple farmers to ornate and intricately carved wooden pipes that are the treasured heirlooms of many of the wealthy families across the Shire. Indeed, it is not uncommon for several Hobbits to get together and engage in impromptu contests seeing who can blow the biggest smoke ring from one of these grand creations.

BLOWING SMOKE RINGS

Those who find themselves drawn into a smoke ring blowing contest (which most often occur inside inns or on summer nights in the Southfarthing), make either an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check, contested by the adversary's Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma check (each participant chooses the ability to use). Proficiency with pipes allows a contestant to add its proficiency bonus to the check. The character that wins the contest is declared the winner, and ties are common, as Hobbits dispute the quality of one ring or another in the seconds before it disperses. Tradition holds that the winner gives as a gift to those who have lost a pouch of their finest tobacco, so that they might further study the art. However, the winner is still kept in high regard, and can expect a filled tankard and a free meal at the losers' table within the next few days.

In the decades following those dark days, peace and comfort became once again the rule in the Shire. The largest trouble to strike this green country in recent years was the disappearance and surprising return of Bilbo Baggins, of Bag End. Once a respectable Hobbit, he went off on some adventure with a troupe of Dwarves and the mischievous Wizard Gandalf, only to return, nearly two decades ago now, astride a pony laden with riches, according to rumour. Since that day, Bilbo was officially considered 'cracked', and all sorts of trouble was attributed to him: Dwarves started to be seen more often on the great East-West Road, and strange, hooded wanderers were sighted by more than one bounder. And wouldn't you know it — since then that trouble maker Gandalf seems to appear and disappear about the Shire whenever he pleases! No doubt coaxing tweens and Tookes alike into all manner of adventure as he did that poor, mad Baggins of Bag End.



The Tale of Years Of the Shire

Described below in brief are important events in the history of the Shire, noting both the dates as they are recounted in the calendar of the Shire Reckoning and the years of the Third Age as recognised by those outside its borders.

- ◆ **1 S.R. / 1601 T.A.** — Marcho and Blanco establish the Shire in the lands between the Far Downs and the Brandywine River, with the blessing of the King of the North Kingdom.
- ◆ **36 S.R. / 1636 T.A.** — The Great Plague sweeps across the Shire and many Hobbits die of the pestilence.
- ◆ **375 S.R. / 1975 T.A.** — A company of Hobbit archers travels to aid the King. They never return. With the fall of the North Kingdom the Shire effectively becomes an independent realm.
- ◆ **740 S.R. / 2340 T.A.** — Gorhendad Oldbuck abdicates the Thainship of the Shire and travels east to establish a new settlement on the far banks of the Brandywine River, where he takes the family name of Brandybuck and begins construction of Brandy Hall.
- ◆ **1070 S.R. / 2670 T.A.** — Tobold Hornblower cultivates the first recorded crop of pipe-weed.
- ◆ **1083 S.R. / 2683 T.A.** — Isengrim Took II begins excavating the Great Smials, ancestral home of the Took family.
- ◆ **1147 S.R. / 2747 T.A.** — The Battle of the Greenfields. Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took defeats the Goblin horde

of Golfimbul and routs his invading army that had come down from Mount Gram.

- ◆ **1158–1160 S.R. / 2758–2760 T.A.** — The Long Winter. A brutal winter destroys crops, and snow covers the Shire from November through March. The famine, sickness, and death that follow for over a year become known as the Days of Dearth.
- ◆ **1311–1312 S.R. / 2911–2912 T.A.** — The Fell Winter. A long, hard winter freezes the Brandywine River solid. White wolves cross its waters and are driven back by Hobbit defenders after the Horn-call of Buckland is sounded. Famine again briefly grips the Shire through the season, and into the spring. Gandalf the Grey comes to the aid of the Hobbits, and saves many lives with the help of mysterious wanderers.
- ◆ **1341 S.R. / 2941 T.A.** — Bilbo Baggins of Bag End departs the Shire in the company of Gandalf the Grey and thirteen Dwarves.
- ◆ **1342 S.R. / 2942 T.A.** — Bilbo Baggins returns from his travels in foreign parts, proves he is very much alive, and reclaims ownership of his home as it is being auctioned on the presumption of his death. He retires, becoming a local oddity, and living off the wealth he acquired in far off lands.
- ◆ **1357 S.R. / 2957 T.A.** — Cotman Bunce resigns. Pott Whitfoot elected Mayor of Michel Delving.
- ◆ **1360 S.R. / 2960 T.A.** — Current year.

THE HOBBITRY-IN-ARMS

Among the notable organisations established within the Shire are its oft-forgotten martial institutions. The first of these is the Hobbitry-in-arms, which acts as a militia to defend the Shire in times of dire need. It exists now as little more than a ceremonial company overseen by the Thain, who serves as its captain.

As to day-to-day matters, these are instead tended to by the Watch. The Watch consists of twelve Shirriffs, with three assigned to each of the four farthings, and by a variable number of Bounders. Shirriffs are easily identifiable by the single feather in their cap, and are led by the First Shirriff — an honorific bestowed upon the Mayor of Michel Delving. But little trouble occurs within the borders of the Shire, and like the Hobbitry-in-arms, being a Shirriff is little more than a ceremonial position in all but the darkest of times. The most numerous element

of the Watch, and by far the busiest, is the Bounders, tasked with 'beating the bounds' — that is, seeing that outsiders and mischief makers don't cross into the Shire. Tasked with reporting any trouble they encounter to the Shirriffs, what they do is little more than nosing about the Shire, dipping into local inns to catch up on the most recent gossip, chasing naughty Hobbit children from a farmer's crop, or helping retrieve the occasional wayward cat from a tree.

In recent years, as Dwarves and other travellers have begun to enter the Shire more and more, the job of the Bounders has become a little livelier, much to their consternation. Some blame the coming of the Wizard Gandalf, while more than a few consider Bilbo Baggins to be responsible for bringing ill-fortune to the Shire, along with his piles of gold and jewels that he has stuffed away in Bag End.

FAMILIES AND CULTURE

Since the fall of the North King, the people of the Shire have lived in their own way for generations. To outsiders, Hobbits are seen as a simple or even backwards folk, with little concern for affairs that are not their own. While it is an absolute certainty that the latter is a statement of fact, the former is a falsehood perpetuated only by fools and the unwise.

At first glance, a casual observer could claim that food and drink are chief among a Hobbit's concerns, and that wouldn't be too far off the mark. But the real centrepiece of the life of each individual Hobbit, and the Shire as a whole, is the family. Very nearly every Hobbit of the Shire can place everyone they meet somewhere along their family line, from second cousins twice removed to great-great-great grandparents — and they can do so from memory.

Hobbit families gossip and spat, argue and snipe, but the bonds of kinship are never so far from their hearts that they forget both where and whom they came from. No one can help but be filled with great pride when recalling the notable deeds of an ancestor, often as if those actions were their own. Unfortunately, no one ever forgives any insult or damage suffered either, if amends are not made, and petty rivalries can last generations.

This love of lineage means that more than a few personalities are recorded forever in the collective memories of all the people of the Shire, starting with the founders Marcho and Blanco. Their names are known and celebrated by every Shire-Hobbit, even though their family affiliation has been lost to time (it is the secret hope of every Hobbit patriarch and matriarch to discover proof of a common heritage, and attempts have been made by more than a few Took or Brandybucks over the years — to no appreciable results, so far). Other notable ancestors include the unknown members of the company of archers that centuries ago went north to aid the King, never to return. While their family names are lost like those of Marcho and Blanco, there is scarcely a mantelpiece in the Northfarthing that doesn't sport some rusty knife blade, pitted arrow-head, or rotting feathered cap held as proof of kinship.

The average Hobbit's love for genealogical lore is not limited to ancient history. It is indeed only thanks to this passion that most Hobbits can orient themselves in the complex web of relations between modern families like the Took, Baggins, Brandybuck, Hornblower, Boffin, and Bolger — just to name a few. As these families intermarried with one another, it did not take long before a great many Hobbits were claiming kinship with folk from across the Shire who would otherwise be little more than strangers. Because of this, there is a sense of

fellowship between Hobbits not found in Men, Dwarves, or any of the other Free People of Middle-earth.

Perhaps this is the root of the Hobbits' love of food, drink, and leisure. All these things are brought to their fullest joy when shared with loved ones, and the more with whom to share, the greater the joy. Parties celebrating even the slightest occasion are common in the Shire, as they are excellent excuses to gather in good company, and six meals a day seems perfectly appropriate when one endeavours not to dine alone.

The most common of these celebrations is, of course, the Birthday Party. In a custom that would only seem strange to one from outside the Shire, Hobbits accompany the tradition of feasting, drinking, and dancing with the giving of gifts, not to the Hobbit celebrating their birth, but rather to their guests. Mathoms, serving as tokens of esteem and affection, are given to those near and dear to a Hobbit's heart on their birthday. Outside the Shire, in the world of Men, the opposite is done — as if a reward is deserved simply for being born. A strange notion indeed.

ALL IN A HARD DAY'S WORK

This brings us to the next misconception regarding Hobbits. That they are lazy and overly concerned with leisure. Hobbits enjoy a fine afternoon fishing, or a good game of golf, to be sure, and tweens (like any young rascals) will often avoid their chores in favour of lighter pursuits. But one does not master the fine art of baking, cooking, preserving, cultivating food, raising livestock, and tending the garden without wiping a bit of sweat from the brow now and again. In fact, no other people of Middle-earth were so industrious as to discover the secrets of herb-lore necessary to grow and prepare pipe-weed. The art of pipe-smoking is truly the art of the Hobbit, although it has since been adopted by Men, Dwarves, and even a Wizard. Instead, many Hobbits view this work as not a source of toil or drudgery, but simple activities necessary to live a good life among their people. As such, misery is rarely found in these tasks.

Instead, sorrow finds the heart of even the merriest of Hobbits when tragedy strikes. To be sure, a burnt pie or trout that slipped the hook is a source of consternation, but the losses that cut to the root are those things that were toiled for over generations or cannot be recovered. To see a great tree felled foolishly, or lose a loved one before they have had a long and joyful life, are among the greatest of tragedies to a Hobbit. These are the things that cannot be replaced.

NO BUSINESS OF OURS

As we have seen already, Hobbits have little concern for the affairs and doings of those beyond their borders. Dwarves, in their constant search for riches above all else, are often seen as dangerous or too greedy, and the world of Men is large, loud, and uncouth. Indeed, the last time Hobbits got involved in the affairs of Men many lives were lost to no avail. As for Elves, they are so far beyond a Hobbit's understanding as to be nigh indecipherable — no matter how wonderful the stories make them out to be. So, for most Hobbits, it is best to keep to one's own affairs, so as to keep a level head upon your shoulders, unclouded by the fancies of outsiders.

That is not to say that all Hobbits shun what lays beyond the Brandywine. Nor that visitors never come into their lands. Since the Fell Winter of 1311 and 1312, a regular interloper has made his presence known to Shire-folk. Gandalf the Grey, who is by all accounts, a Wizard, seems to hold Hobbits as a merry curiosity. In spite of his glorious fireworks and fanciful tales, he has a reputation as a troublemaker and his encouragement has led more than one foolish young Hobbit to disappear, never to return. He seems to have a particular fondness for the Took clan and its cousins. In recent years, he has even been held responsible for driving the previously predictable and respectable Bilbo Baggins quite mad, only to return him to the Shire with unlikely stories and foreign gold. It is even feared that his appearance during the Fell Winter may have drawn the attention of Men, as rumours have persisted since that time of Big Folk, hooded and cloaked, being seen near Sarn Ford and the North Moors.

AS FIERCE AS A DRAGON IN A PINCH

If nothing else, Hobbits continue to be underestimated by the other Free Folk, a fact that would be of great comfort to most inhabitants of the Shire. Call them fat and simple, but we know that history marks a fair few to be fierce and doughty. Like a good meal, they must be long stirred (often over fierce heat), before the truth of who they genuinely are is revealed and set to table. Marcho and Blanco had the courage to travel west and found the Shire. The nameless Hobbit-archers travelled to foreign parts to fight in a foreign war. Gorhendad Oldbuck dared to live in the shadow of the Old Forest, as do his descendants today. Bullroarer Took led his brave fellows in battle when fell Goblins dared to invade his beloved Shire. Even in this current generation, that tenacity remains. The Horn-call of Buckland brought Hobbits to arms against the White Wolves. And Bilbo Baggins, for all his strangeness, ventured beyond the horizon and over the edge of the wild only to return, and by some accounts he was made richer for it in more than gold and silver.

As to what the coming days will bring for the people of the Shire, none can say. What is known is that, as before, so shall it ever be in the land between the Far Downs and the Brandywine. A fierce love of all that is simple and good will remain strong and steadfast as the Hobbits of the Shire stand together with kin and countrymen against whatever threatens their traditions. But until called to such duty, they shall celebrate this simple life they have made for one another.

GANDALF THE GREY

To the great discomfort of many of the more traditional Hobbits, and to the great joy of Tooks, tweens, and young children, the Wizard Gandalf the Grey is known to arrive in the Shire on seemingly random occasions. Whether this is a quiet and secret trip to see Bilbo Baggins, or a visit heralded by Hobbit children crying for fireworks at the sight of his cart and pony, the strange figure has become a signal of mischief to come within the confines of the Four Farthings.

What his errands are, and when he will arrive remains his own business, though certainly he only comes to the Shire to stir up trouble and disturb the peace. Most often,

his visits take him to Bag End or into Tookland, but his reasons for visiting remain a mystery. As often as not, some young Hobbit disappears for a week or two after Gandalf has gone on to other business — or at least that's the claim of local gossips and busybodies.

But Gandalf is not without his admirers, particularly when it comes to the matter of his fireworks. These most excellent creations have become the talk of the Shire since when the Old Took started to have them at his Midsummer-eve Parties, and every Hobbit, whether they will admit it or not, secretly hopes the wandering Wizard will grace their celebrations with his fantastic displays.

The Geography of the Shire

*Forty leagues it stretched from the Far Downs to the Brandywine Bridge,
and fifty from the northern moors to the marshes in the south.*

As is known to any Hobbit of good sense, the Shire comprises the territories known as the Four Farthings, which are named the Northfarthing, the Eastfarthing, the Southfarthing, and the Westfarthing. This covers the whole of the land originally granted to its residents by the King, and it was only after old Gorhendad Oldbuck grew too cross and his family to be confined that Hobbits moved beyond these traditional borders. Pushing beyond the Marish and over the Brandywine, he founded Buckland between the river's eastern shore and the edges of the Old Forest. It has, since its founding in S.R. 740, been the primary domain of his people and their innumerable relations: the Brandybucks.

Even with the establishment of Buckland, the Shire has grown but little over the centuries, and still holds for the most

part to its original bounds between the Far Downs in the west and the Brandywine River in the east. In fact, more than a few folk on the west side of the river regard Bucklanders as little better than the far-off Bree-Hobbits, with their fancy for boats. But we shall come to that in time.

Meanwhile, far beyond Overhill, on the edges of Oatbarrow, the North Moors see the first and heaviest snows of the winter each year, and the warm summer sun allows the land to flourish all the way down to Longbottom. Though Buckland is the only outlier beyond these formal borders, many Hobbits that dwell in the smaller communities along them, such as the miners of Scary and the fishermen of Deep hollow, have a reputation for being out of sorts, even if their status as true Hobbits of the Shire is beyond question.

THE THREE-FARTHING STONE

To properly relate a list of the places of importance within the Shire, it is only appropriate to begin at its very heart, and then explore each of these domains in turn. Whether it was erected by the high king at Norbury, by the brothers Marcho and Blanco, or some other thoughtful Hobbit of surpassing good sense, the Three-Farthing Stone stands in the middle of the Shire.

Tall as two Hobbits, and worn little by age or time, this column serves to mark where the borders of the Westfarthing, Eastfarthing, and Southfarthing meet. Indeed, it is easily visible to any Hobbit or the rare outsider travelling on the East-West Road. Though it serves no formal purpose beyond indicating the true and proper centre of the Shire for all to see, the Stone is held in great esteem by all residents of the Shire — save for naughty Hobbit-children roughly playing “King of the Stone” as they attempt to best one another by seeing who can scramble up its slick, rocky sides the fastest (before inevitably tumbling down or being knocked about by their playmates).

More than one such rascal’s name has been heard all the way in Bywater, carried nearly five miles on a northwesterly wind, as an angry gaffer or gammer bids them stop such foolishness before they rightly hurt themselves — or worse, knock down the stone. But through all the generations of the Shire-folk, the Three-Farthing Stone has endured.



A NIGHT AT THE STONE

Recently, strange white shadows have been drifting around the ancient Three-Farthing Stone at night. Stories of ghosts, mournful spirits, or even a magical curse have begun to be whispered at the tables of the Stone's Throw, the inn closest to the ancient landmark, and now many are afraid to pass near it after sundown. It would be a kindness, some locals say, if a few brave Hobbits spent the whole night near the stone, to dispel the probably baseless rumours.

The small inn stands just a few miles east of the Three Farthing Stone, and is owned by Thomas and Gilda Bunce. They do a brisk business thanks to this mysterious tale. In fact, many west-bound travellers prefer to stop and sleep here when the stars begin to appear. This is no accident... Thomas and Gilda are responsible for spreading the rumours themselves, and from time to time, they deck themselves in white sheets, and wander for hours at night, or bid their mischievous children do it in their stead.

The WATER

The river running across the Shire from its source in the Hills of Evendim to where it flows into the Brandywine is simply called "the Water" by the Hobbits of the Four Farthings. Little more than a slow-rushing stream where it spreads into the Rushock bog, it eventually resumes its eastward course and runs parallel to the road connecting Little Delving and Nobottle to Hobbiton. From there, it joins with another watercourse from the north to create the Bywater Pool before continuing on, along the East Road all the way to the Brandywine. Passing beyond the borders of the Westfarthing, the Water continues to flow east, its meandering curves dampening the soil near Frogmorton and serving as the heart of Budgeford with its ruling Bolger family.

Good fishing can be found along its banks at very nearly every point, save where it narrows in the Rushock, and it's not uncommon to find a Hobbit angling for a fresh catch or napping on the bank while they hope for a good supper.

The EAST ROAD

If the Three-Farthing Stone is the heart of the Shire, then the East Road acts as its feet. Very nearly every Hobbit of the Shire has walked this pathway at some point in their lives, and legends say that it runs as far west as the Dwarven realm of

the Blue Mountains and all the way east to Bree and beyond that to the very edge of the Wild (few, if any, Hobbits have ever tested this theory...). To most it is simply a wide, well-kept thoroughfare that leads travellers to tea times in Budgeford or to a party in Michel Delving. As far as the Shire-folk are concerned, the East Road might as well begin at the door of the Town Hole in Michel Delving and end at the Brandywine Bridge.

On rare occasions, some foolish young Hobbit will get it into their head to walk its entire length. These boasts rarely amount to more than that, for such an endeavour would encompass walking for about forty leagues. Still, it is not an insurmountable task, and the East Road itself brings such a journey within the realm of possibility for enterprising tweens and adventurous Bucklanders.

Given that most Hobbits like to maintain a leisurely stroll, and regularly enjoy a walking party now and again, they're not likely to achieve more than a dozen miles or so in a day, unless they set a brisk pace. Even without taking regular breaks for tea or a nap, a trek from one end of the Shire to the other on foot is likely to take close to a week, though given the ease with which a Hobbit can be distracted by a fine meal, afternoon rest, or a stop off at the local inn, such a trip is likely to take closer to ten days or more.

Though the land does indeed consist of mainly green rolling hills, as one draws closer to the Brandywine, it flattens considerably, and an already easy walk becomes all the more so due to the well-maintained road. Fortunately, there are few dangers in the Shire for even the most adventurous Hobbit, but those who are foolish enough to camp near the Bindbole Wood or other untamed region may draw the attention of nosy wildlife intent on sniffing out the delicacies from their travel packs.

No sight-seeing expedition from one end of the East Road to the other would be complete without several stops at the many fine inns across the Shire. Many travellers make it into a sort of game to stop at every tavern along the way as they cross the Four Farthings, which can delay even the fastest rover. The further east one is, the more such local watering holes one will find: The Golden Perch in Stock, the Floating Log in Frogmorton, the Stone's Throw near the Three Farthing Stone, and of course, the Green Dragon in Bywater. But beyond Waymeet and its Walking Party Inn, there are only a few noteworthy taverns. Michel Delving hosts no less than three fine establishments of its own, though the long trek across the Far Downs will leave most travellers with a powerful thirst before they reach Greenholm and its unusual inn, the West End.

HOBBIT WALKS

No road-weary Man, doughty Dwarf, or wandering Elf would consider travelling through the Shire as anything more than a pleasant country stroll. It has no real natural dangers and its people are, for the most part, courteous. The greatest trouble a foreigner may face while visiting the Shire, beyond a strange look and a few pointed questions, is found at the bottom of a tankard or on a dinner plate, given the abundance of inns that fill the little land.

While not ones to push themselves or maintain a steady pace at the cost of pausing for a meal, Hobbits crossing the Shire mostly stick to familiar roads and familiar lands, but there are some dangers if a curious tween or errant walking party strays into more untamed lands, even within its borders.

SHIRE JOURNEY EVENTS TABLE

D20	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
1-5	Trouble!	Chased by dogs, wading through stick bushes and hedgerows, etc. If one or more Player-heroes fail the check, the Loremaster improvises a trouble (see examples below).
6-10	Delay	Spent too much time at the inn, took a wrong turn, bad weather, etc. If one or more Player-heroes fail the check, increase the length of the journey by 1 day.
11-15	A Quiet Walk	A pleasant stroll with nothing adventurous.
16-19	Short Cut	The journey took less than expected. If all Player-heroes succeed, reduce the length of the journey by 1 day (to a minimum of 1 day).
20	Chance-meeting	Wandering Elves sighted, guests of travelling Dwarves, wandering Wizard, etc. Each Player-hero who succeeds gains inspiration.

These are a few examples of the type of trouble that might be encountered on the road. The Loremaster is encouraged to develop and expand the list of things that may go wrong.

- ◆ **FOG ON THE EAST ROAD:** One night, a heavy fog rolls down from the North Moors and blankets the land, and growling noises and hoots can be heard from beyond the edge of sight. The Player-heroes must pluck up their courage, as they each gain 2 Shadow points from Dread, resisted by a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, a Player-hero also gains one level of exhaustion, as those ill-sounding creatures and glowing eyes in the fog linger in their mind for hours to come!
- ◆ **CHASED UP A TREE:** A local farmer's guard dog runs off the property, and sets out to chase the Hobbit travellers, believing them to be interlopers. Each of

When a Company of Hobbits is travelling across the Shire, the Loremaster must roll on the table below once, using a d20 (twice if the journey is particularly long – 50 miles or more). Each entry requires each traveller to make a DC 10 Wisdom (Travel) check. The check is made with disadvantage during autumn and winter. A Player-hero who succeeds by 5 or more can turn another Player-hero's failure into a success.

Each entry in the table below specifies what happens in game terms to the Company, based on whether the ability checks fail or succeed. After each event, each Player-hero additionally must make a DC 10 fatigue saving throw to avoid exhaustion (see *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying*).

those who fail a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw must spend the rest of the afternoon stuck uncomfortably up a tree to avoid his bites, suffering one level of exhaustion from hours of being crammed awkwardly in its boughs. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, they also take 5 (1d10) piercing damage as they graze themselves on the tree's bark!

- ◆ **UNEXPECTED DRINKING COMPANION:** While resting one night at an inn, the characters find themselves drawn into a lively conversation and they imbibe more than a few mugs of finely brewed bitters. If they're not watchful of their own actions, each of those who fail a DC 10 Constitution saving throw wakes up the next morning with one level of exhaustion. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, they are also poisoned for 24 hours!

THE HISTORY OF SARTRING



NORTH SARTRING

OXENFIELD



WEST SARTRING

EAST
SARTRING
BRIDGE
FIELDS

THE OLD FOREST
LANDS

the Vale

FOOKLANDS

GREENHILL COUNTRY

the Marlin

the Forest

the Woods

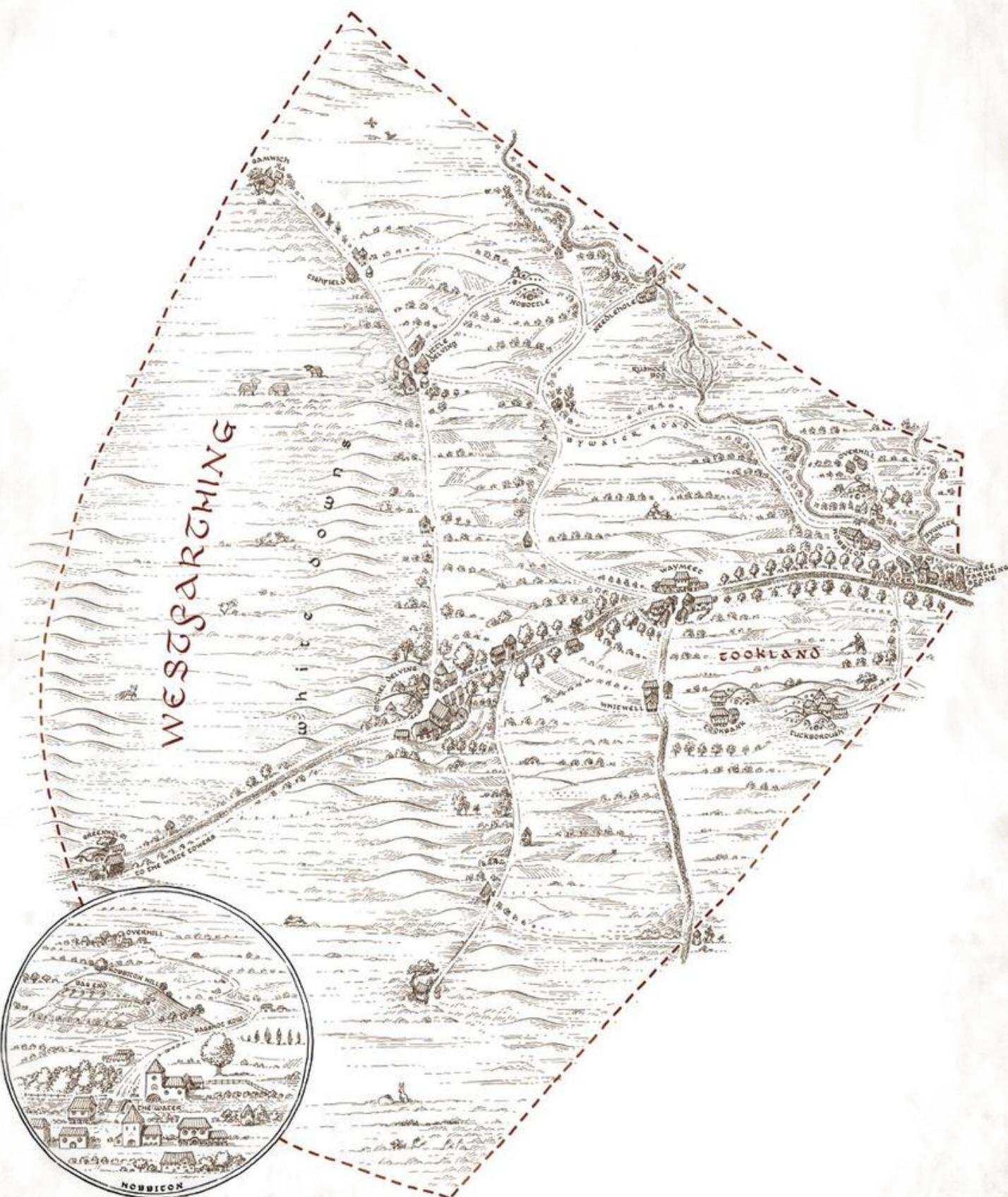
the Woods

SOUTH SARTRING

BUCKLEBURY
LAWNS

HORN HILL
BUCKLEBURY





THE WESTFARTHING

... in the Westfarthing, especially in the country round Hobbiton Hill, there grew up a custom of making holiday and dancing in the Party Field, when weather permitted ...

Considered by many, especially its own residents, the most important of the Four Farthings of the Shire — Buckland being not counted at all, the Westfarthing runs west to east from the Far Downs to the Three-Farthing Stone, and north to south from beyond Little Delving to deep into the heart of Tookland. A land dominated by soft, rolling countryside, it is home to many of the more well-known families of the Shire, including the Tookes of Tookland, where the Thain resides, and the Whitfoots of Michel Delving, where mayor Pott Whitfoot lives.

BYWATER

If you take the road from Hobbiton going south along the Water, you'll soon come to the village of Bywater and its wide, grey pool. The first building you encounter is The Green Dragon Inn. A popular meeting-place for the inhabitants of both Hobbiton and Bywater, the Green Dragon saw its reputation besmirched when it was invaded by Gandalf and a company of Dwarves on a spring morning some twenty years ago. Indeed, the inn was the last place where Bilbo Baggins was seen before he disappeared. Ruthie Overwater, a local gossip, claims to have witnessed the whole affair when she was barely out of her tweens — her tale tells how young Bilbo was hauled away in a sack down the East Road by the Wizard himself! But the inn's excellent ale and sweet mead (not to mention the fine fried fish and potatoes served up right) have done quite a bit to restore the Green Dragon to proper status in the eyes of the local community.

In Bywater itself, many houses gather around the Pool. A long line of proper Hobbit-holes dots its northern bank, all fronted by small gardens running down to the water's edge. A pleasant tree-lined avenue forms the section of the road where it borders the water, giving it the name of Pool Side.

From Bywater, one can take the South Lane, leading to land held by respectable farmers like Holman Cotton, who moved to these parts with his two sons, soon after his wife passed, and has set up a right respectable plot of land, or Old Noakes, who keeps a regular table at the Ivy Bush — when he's not found at the Green Dragon Inn. Old Noakes and family keep orderly hives of honey bees, allowing them to provide the Green Dragon with the stock of honey they require to craft mead, to trade with the locals, or to give away as birthday presents to deserving friends and relatives.

GAMWICH AND TIGHFIELD

Though little used, the cart-road that runs out of Little Delving heading into the northern corner of the Shire leads to the oft forgotten villages of Gamwich and Tighfield. There are no Hobbit-holes here, instead, small wooden houses serve as farms where locals tend to fields of swaying flax that dance in the summer breeze.

Set between the two communities is the great rope-walk, a long and narrow stone building, likely the only one of its size and type in the Shire — where strands of fiber are spun and woven together to make the finest rope in the region. Here works Andwise 'Andy' Roper, the most skilful rope-maker in the Shire, the heir of a long tradition going back at least three generations. While Hobbits are certainly willing to labour at many tasks, some find rope-making to be akin to Dwarf-work, and in recent years, many families from both villages have considered migrating to less remote spots in the Westfarthing (among them, Andy's brother Hamfast, who has taken on gardening as his trade and has moved to Hobbiton).

THEFT AT THE ROPE FACTORY

A bit of chaos has come to Tighfield. A mob of angry Hobbits led by Andy Roper surrounds a small, isolated farm not far from the rope-walk, waving clubs, pitchforks, and torches, and it looks as though they could set the farmhouse ablaze at any moment. But their consternation is easily understood: three Dwarves have barricaded themselves inside the besieged farmhouse after becoming the prime suspects in a brazen rope theft from the factory! The Tighfield locals are angry after their polite offer of a tour (which they were only offering as a matter of courtesy and never expected to be accepted) has been repaid with larceny!

The Dwarves, led by Ergi Broadbeam, have denied all charges, and replied to insults with stones thrown from windows and arrows shot through half-open doors. Poor Bess, Andy's mule, was even wounded in the crossfire! Birba Muggins, the owner of the farm that housed them, and her son Bobbin, escaped just before the violence began. They heartily support forcing out the Dwarfish scoundrels at any cost — even if it means seeing their own home burnt to the ground. Dwarves are horrid people, Birba claims, and deserve what's coming to them.

PROVENDER AND PALAVER AT THE INN

Both the Green Dragon and the Ivy Bush are known for their beer and their fine meals, but equally appealing is the endless amount of gossip that flows from the loose lips of curious Hobbits that drift in and out of these fine establishments on a daily basis.

INN GOSSIP TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Bree Bullies	A pair of Bree-hobbit merchants have stopped for a pint while passing through the Shire, and have had a bit too much. Irritated by a poor sale recently, they've decided to try to pick a fight! Unless they can be calmed down with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a brawl may be imminent.
2	Spell-bound Seedsman	Rumour has it that old Holman Greenhand is about to retire from tending the gardens at Bag End. It's said that he's been bewitched by Gandalf the Wizard, and that his gifts at tending the earth have been passed on to Master Hamfast Gamgee.
3	Mismanaged Mushrooms	Gerda Boffin's secret crop of mushrooms has run dry, and quite a few visitors are panicked that Boffin's Crock may become a thing of the past!
4	Spying Strangers	Strange men shrouded in brown cloaks have been seen south of Longbottom, lingering and spying Hobbit farmers from a distance before vanishing. What's worse, the same kind of folk have been seen nosing about the North Moors too!
5	Ruthie's Ramblings	Ruthie Overwater is sitting in her rocking chair in a corner, stroking the cat in her lap. She's got a crowd of Hobbit children at her feet, repeating the tale of how Bilbo Baggins was stolen away and returned some twenty years ago. The tale gets stranger and more embellished every time she tells it.
6	Hamfast's Harvest	The inn is serving up potato and bacon stew tonight, the finest in the Shire, on account of Hamfast Gamgee's recent bumper crop of potatoes. He's in attendance and awkwardly accepting praise from all the locals feasting on the fruits of his labours.
7	Beleaguered Bounder	A local bounder, quite deep into his cups, is drunkenly rambling to anyone who will listen about all manner of impossible things he's seen in his recent beating of the bounds. He demands to be taken seriously.
8	Took Tales	Everyone seems to be swapping stories tonight about the unlikely deeds of the Old Took, his midsummer-eve parties not the least of these!
9	Celebrating Childhood	One of the local Hobbits is being toasted for the announcement that he is going to be a father! The drinks are flowing freely, and telling childhood tales is mandatory tonight.
10	Fairy Phantasms	Rumours of Elves crossing the Shire and even being seen passing by the south banks of the Bywater Pool are the topic of conversation tonight!
11	Birthday Banquet	The Player-heroes have arrived amidst the birthday celebration of a local Hobbit. Dancing, feasting, and even the gift of a mathom are in order!
12	Bilbo Baggins!	Bilbo Baggins himself stops by the inn for a rare visit while on one of his solitary walks. He's as clever as ever, talking circles around patrons with fanciful stories and double-speak. Anyone who is able to keep up with Bilbo with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Riddle) check will earn themselves an invite to Bag End for tea next Wednesday!

The Loremaster can roll a d12 on the table below to determine a random rumour or event that the Player-heroes overhear the next time they drop by.

If the Player-heroes get involved in this mess, they must decide whether they want to help the Hobbits, the Dwarves, or if they want to broker a truce between the two parties. Resolutions aimed at harming the Dwarves see the full and enthusiastic support of Bobbin and his mother. Conversely, any offer of attempting to negotiate with Ergi and the Dwarves is met with strong resistance from them. Level heads can prevail with a few pointed questions and a short investigation. Should the Player-heroes attempt such a thing, they may learn several details that offer insight into the current troubles:

- ◆ The Dwarves are angry, very offended, and ready to fight. They are also completely innocent. The theft was in fact committed by Bobbin, as directed by his mother, with the Dwarves serving as scapegoats for the crime. (The ropes are hidden in a cellar under the Muggins farmhouse).
- ◆ If the Player-heroes question locals not participating in the chaos, they learn that, eight years ago, Birba's husband Golfo kindly offered to accompany some Dwarves on a journey to Greenholm, near the Shire's western border. Sadly, he never returned from that journey: he got lost on the way back somewhere in the Far Downs, and disappeared in the wild. His body was never found, but Birba is convinced that the Dwarves murdered him in his sleep and stole his few possessions. Years have passed, and an overwhelming grief has turned to hatred towards all Dwarves in the hearts of Birba and Bobbin. This hatred spurred them to action when Ergi came into town, leading them to believe he was the murderer of their beloved father and husband.

Ergi Broadbeam and the 'scoundrel' Dwarves

Medium humanoid (Dwarf)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

OCCUPATION Traders

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES Secretive, Wilful

ARMOUR CLASS 12 (leather corslet)

HIT POINTS 13 (2d8 + 4)

SPEED 25 ft.

SKILLS Insight +3, Intimidation +1, Travel +3

SENSES passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Khuzdul, Westron

CHALLENGE 1/8 (25 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

ACTIONS

STAFF. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

BOW. Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

GREENHOLM

More than a true village, Greenholm is a collection of modest houses and a few humble Hobbit-holes dug in the last hills upon the western border of the Shire, where the East Road becomes just a trail and then disappears. Few bounders go all the way to Greenholm, out of Michel Delving, and they don't have much to say about the place, when they say anything at all. By those rare accounts, the folk in Greenholm are strange, but kind and determined, and don't seem to need much assistance from the Watch to look after themselves and the borders.

The most prominent family in Greenholm, and the source of the locals' unusual resolve, is that of Folcred and his brothers, a small clan of hunters who are said to have regular contact with Dwarves out of the Blue Mountains, and to be more familiar with Elves than is considered proper. More than one witness is said to have seen them hunting in the hills along with strange, hooded individuals with an 'elvish' look.

THE FAIRIES OF THE FAR DOWNS

The Far Downs beyond Greenholm are travelled by few Hobbits. There, a heavy fog clinging to the green grasses often rises with the moon and burns away with the new sun. The Hobbits of Greenholm speak of strange little creatures that conceal themselves in this mist, enchanting travellers that dare step off the East Road and into the gloom. These fairies, as they call them, hope to snatch wayward Hobbits to take as their spouses. Those so enchanted are returned to the edges of the Shire after the mist burns away, with dreamlike, fragmented memories of a grand wedding and great revelry. Marked by the people of Greenholm and the rest of the Shire as having "taken a fairy wife," the common belief is that encounters with these curious creatures leaves a strain of madness in the blood that lasts for generations.

NEW HOBBIT DISTINCTIVE FEATURE: FAIRY-BLOOD

One of your ancestors is said to have "taken a fairy wife". Whether this is true or not, a vein of rebellious foolishness runs in your family and manifests in you as a deep streak of mischievousness, often leading you to cause trouble for its own sake.

HOBBITON

Before the Master of Bag End went running off into the blue and turned back up again about twenty years ago, earning his reputation as an ‘adventurer’, the village of Hobbiton was a quiet, untroubled place. Possibly the oldest of all settlements of the Shire, it lies placidly against the southern side of the Hill, and the currents of the Water run straight through its middle. Where the road crosses the Water over a stone bridge is the most prominent building of the area, the old water-mill, property of Mr. Sandyman, rising next to the Old Grange. Together, those two establishments have brought respectability (along with bread and beer) to Hobbiton for generations.

Most of the residents of Hobbiton make their homes in traditional *smials*, or Hobbit-holes, within sight of the Old Grange and Sandyman’s mill, with more than a few taking up residence in the neighbourhood of Underhill. Still, some of the notable families still have homes of wood or stone near the banks of the Water where they fish or keep small farms.

Families from both Hobbiton and nearby Bywater often travel along the road connecting the two villages, to meet their neighbours and keep up with the latest news — locals have yet to agree upon where the road stops being the ‘Hobbiton road’ and where it becomes the ‘Bywater road’ instead. It’s quite common for folk from both communities to sit down for a pint over dinner or supper at the Ivy Bush. More than one Hobbit has been drawn by the prospect of a fresh serving of Boffin’s Crock and a mug of ale, but as often as not they find themselves staying for the local gossip and tale-telling that inevitably comes when one of the foolish young Hobbits (or cantankerous gaffers) starts to spin a yarn. Often these exchanges grow into competitions of balderdash, where the rules are known to all, but spoken by none.

THE HILL

While formally recorded on the maps of the Mathom-House as Hobbiton Hill, it is rightfully called simply The Hill by everyone in the Shire. Rising north of the Water where it crosses the town, its top can be seen for miles around in all directions. Halfway up its slope, the long lane of Bagshot Row runs, serving as home to such prominent families of the Shire as the Twofoots and Greenhands — all of whom maintain root gardens and flower boxes to brighten the lane from the first thaw of spring to the inevitable frosts of winter. The laughter of Hobbit children at play can be heard echoing down the Hill all the way into Hobbiton.

BAG END

Nearly one hundred years ago, when Bungo Baggins brought his new Took wife out of Tookland to live among sensible folk, he built for her a home of the type to which she was

HAMFAST GAMGEE

Known to every Hobbit around the Hill, Hamfast Gamgee is a simple, proper Hobbit that has tended the gardens at Bag End as an apprentice to Holman Greenhand for nigh on twenty years now. It was Hamfast and Holman that kept Bilbo’s garden in order for over a year in spite of his absence. Originally from Tighfield, and a younger brother to Andwise Roper, Hamfast moved to Hobbiton on invitation from Holman, a distant relative, who knew that the young Hamfast didn’t intend to continue the family tradition of rope-making.

With the master gardener slowly surrendering to old age, Hamfast will soon be taking on the role of head gardener at Bag End sooner rather than later. He has developed a fierce loyalty to Master Baggins, and will have more than a cross word with any who speak ill of him. He isn’t afraid to swat those who go prying into Bag End’s business when they’re not invited — as Mr. Bilbo likes his privacy. Hamfast uses this as an excuse to keep up on all the gossip around Hobbiton and Bywater, which he secretly enjoys almost as much as gardening itself. Recently, he has acquired a property at 3 Bagshot Row, and he is building a house to move into with his future wife Bell.

accustomed. With a few silver pennies of his own, and more than a few that Belladonna contributed to the marriage, he bought up a good portion of the land in Underhill, the part of Hobbiton near the top of the Hill, and built for her the most lavish Hobbit-hole outside of the Great Smials of Tuckborough and Brandy Hall in Buckland. Set at the end of Bagshot Row, it was appropriately and simply named Bag End.

Belladonna must have been well-pleased, for she set aside her Tookish ways and remained by his side until her passing in 1334. Since that time, Bag End has been the sole estate of local oddity and Wizard-friend Bilbo Baggins. The respectability brought to Bag End by Master Baggins’ father has been worn away by the antics of Bungo’s son, who once disappeared from the family estate under rumour of being kidnapped by Dwarves, only to pop up just as the place was about to be sold out from under him.

With the passing of the years, Bilbo Baggins has gone from being considered a respectable Hobbit, to becoming the topic of all manner of strange gossip in Hobbiton and beyond. In fact, some would go so far as to call him a trouble maker. To

all appearances, he is a well-preserved gentlehobbit, and by all accounts he is generous with the treasures he recovered in foreign parts — especially to some of the less well-off families and the young children of Hobbiton (legends insist that Bag End is a veritable cache of gold and silver, jewels and trinkets, but Baggins himself will say nothing on this matter, save to spin nonsense tales of Trolls and Dragons to gullible children and Tookish tweens). More and more though, lately he's taken to living an increasingly private life. In fact, except for the Wizard Gandalf, the occasional Dwarf visitor, and a few close relations, no one has been invited to tea at Bag End in nearly a decade.

South of Bag End, just beyond Bagshot Row, opens a large field. There stands an old, tall tree. For as long as any Hobbit can recall, this tree has been standing there, the centrepiece of many a great celebration in Hobbiton. Weddings, festivals, and of course, birthday parties, have been held under its

boughs, gaining the tree its nickname: the Party Tree. Banners and lanterns hang from its branches on such occasions, and its trunk has served as backdrop for more than a few long-winded and best-forgotten speeches

OVERHILL

Just over the northern slope of the Hill, at the end of Northope Lane, is the small community of Overhill. Most homes there are built above ground, to leave more soil for tending and growing. Its residents are well known for their habit of going north to pick mushrooms and to hunt. In fact, Gerda Boffin, whose reputation is tied to her uncanny ability to find a veritable wealth of mushrooms, has made quite a fortune for herself by selling her finds to the Green Dragon Inn (which is renowned across the Shire for its mushroom and thyme soup, affectionately called "Boffin's Crock").

THE SECRET OF GERDA BOFFIN

Boffin's Crock, and the mushrooms it uses, are the talk of the Westfarthing. But no one knows where exactly Gerda Boffin finds them. She keeps no gardens or mushroom tents near her home, and is never seen trading for mushrooms with anyone. It's a mystery to everyone from Overhill to Bywater, and she's not giving anyone any explanation. As she's getting on in years, many are afraid the secrets of her recipe and her crop may pass on when she does. But a few have puzzled out that she does head a few times a week north towards the Bindbole Wood at the crack of dawn, and always returns a few hours later with a basket full of fresh mushrooms.

Tracking Gerda to her secret mushroom 'spot' requires a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check. A single failure means that the players lose sight of the sly Hobbit and need to succeed on a DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Hunting) check to pick up her trail again; a second failure means she notices them and will shoo them away, unless they succeed on a DC 11 Charisma (Deception) check to convince her they are just going on about their business. Failing a third roll means that Gerda leads them on a wild goose chase to a false location, making the players lose her tracks for good.

Player-heroes who manage to track the wily mushroom farmer to her secret spot discover that the secret ingredient for Boffin's Crock grows in but a single location: a great hollowed-out tree in the Bindbole, where, away from sunlight and prying eyes, great white-capped mushrooms of amazing size grow on the moist soil and on the interior of the bark. Gerda would go to great lengths to keep her spot a secret, striking very nearly any bargain — though she would be quite cross with the busy-bodies who discovered her secret.



Those who discover Gerda's secret will undoubtedly draw her ire at first, though once she realizes her secret is safe with the Player-heroes, what began as a most awkward relationship could develop into a genuine friendship. It's quite possible the characters may be invited to Gerda's personal table to sample the freshest and best mushrooms available!

LITTLE DELVING

Due south of Nobottle, with a short trail across the White Downs connecting the two, is the village of Little Delving. Named as if it was a younger sibling to Michel Delving, its people like to think that the two settlements are very alike. In truth, the Hobbits of Little Delving remain humble in comparison to their counterparts in Michel Delving; small houses with neat gardens are packed tightly together on rolling hillsides. Little Delving is particularly well-regarded for its livestock — flocks of sheep graze freely on the untended grassland to the west of the village.

The main building of Little Delving is an old rounded tower house, once serving as a watchtower and beacon for the western border of the Shire. Now it is used mainly as an enclosure where the livestock is herded in times of particularly bad weather.

MICHEL DELVING

If Hobbits followed the ways of Men and named a town as their capital, that would be Michel Delving. The chief township of the Shire is nestled in the rolling countryside that is the heart of the White Downs. Many wealthy gentlehobbits are proud to call this their home, and mayor Pott Whitfoot keeps a fine home in the largest Hobbit-hole in the West-farthing outside of Bag End: the Town Hole. From here, the Mayor of the Shire ensures that the Shirriffs maintain what

few duties they have in these days of peace (mainly, presiding at banquets), and oversees the Messenger Service and the Quick Post in his position as Postmaster.

The true jewel of Michel Delving, however, is the local museum. Called the *Mathom-house*, it sits upon the hill just south of the Town Hole. There, cantankerous custodian Malva Slowfoot and her husband Bingo tend to a veritable hoard of Hobbit-treasures, or ‘mathoms’, as Hobbits call them. These range from a pair of sparkling diamond studs once owned by Gerontius Took, to a coat of silver rings supposedly worn by Bilbo Baggins that was gifted to him by a Dwarven king. Other oddities include a collection of wheeled contraptions known as ‘velocipedes’ constructed by Tom Sandyman some time ago, and the first tobacco pipe used by Tobold Hornblower himself (as can be readily seen by these examples, Hobbits call ‘mathoms’ all those objects they come to own that they have no immediate use for, but are unwilling to just throw away).

The Mathom-House is particularly renowned for its extensive collection of cookbooks, genealogical records, compilations of Hobbit-lore, old weaponry, and maps. Some of these maps date as far back as the days of Marcho and Blanco themselves, or so the legend claims. Particularly troublesome young Hobbits sometimes take it upon themselves to see if they can snatch some mathom of minor importance from under the nose of the Slowfoots, who take pride in their meticulous care of each and every item in the museum’s catalogue. In recent years, the couple have even gone so far as to put locks on the door of the Mathom-House, to deter what they call “the worst folk to invade the Shire since the days of Gollimbul the Goblin.” All this confustication has only driven naughty Hobbit-boys and Hobbit-girls to find new and more devious methods to drive Malva and her husband to distraction for their own entertainment.

THE FREE FAIR

Every year, during the high summer days of Lith (around Midsummer), a Free Fair is held on the White Downs, a few miles west of Michel Delving. For three days (four in a leap year) Hobbits from across the Shire join in merriment to celebrate the bounty of the land, feast among friends, and set up stalls in hopes of selling their own wares. Great stores of food and ale are drawn up from the storage tunnels where they have been gathered in the preceding weeks, and one can be assured that all corners will, in fact, be quite filled up during the Free Fair.

Once every seven years the Free Fair also hosts the election of a new Mayor (or the confirmation of the previous one); the last election occurred in the year 1357 S.R., when old Cotman Bunce resigned his office, and Pott Whitfoot was elected in his place.



Until a few decades ago, Gandalf the Grey himself appeared regularly at the Free Fair. He used to hold a special show based on his magical fireworks, during the Old Took's Midsummer-eve

parties — a display no Hobbit could ever forget. Unfortunately, the Wizard hasn't shown up for the occasion in the last forty years or so, since his good friend the Old Took died.

CONCERNING THE GREY PILGRIM

If the Player-heroes ask around about the latest news or rumours concerning Gandalf, the Loremaster can roll a

d12 to see what is being said regarding the latest disturbances brought about by the Grey Pilgrim.

GANDALF GOSSIP TABLE

D12 RESULT

1	A small group of Bounders or some ill-tempered gossip accuse the Player-heroes of being in league with the Wizard in some conspiracy that will come to a bad end. The Player-heroes will need to succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) or Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince their accusers of their innocence.
2	"Bilbo is digging new tunnels into the Hill on orders from Gandalf! If he goes any deeper, the whole of the Hill and everything upon it is going to collapse in upon itself and we'll be buried in dirt and gold!"
3	"Gandalf is in league with Gerda Boffin, I say! That's how she makes her crock, I tell you. I won't be eating no soup with wizard-enchanted mushrooms. Who knows what kind of deal she's made with that conjurer!"
4	"I heard that Paladin Took has made some kind of deal with the Wizard, trading blessed farmlands for some strange promise. It's not right I say."
5	"I don't rightly know what he's up to, but last I heard Gandalf was wandering the North Moors, chasing giants and casting curses. I saw lightning strike the hills to the north at night!"
6	"Found another Dragon, I tell you! That's what I heard! He's looking for some new Hobbit to drag off into the wilderness now that Baggins has gone all cracked!"
7	"It's no business of mine, but I saw Gandalf arguing with Lalia Clayhanger down in Tuckborough on some matter related to the Old Took. Even if I was a wizard, I wouldn't tangle with that one."
8	"Saw him coming up south from Sarn Ford near Longbottom and he wasn't alone. Talking to some fierce-looking and dirty traveller he was. Nothing good will come of it, mind you. Nothing good at all."
9	"Trundling down the Stock Road on his cart he was, on some errand all his own. Paused and as easy as I talked to my gaffer at Sunday dinner he struck up a conversation with a bird. He's cracked, I tell you."
10	"I heard from Mr. Mudwort down in Deep hollow that he was knee-deep in the mud of the Overbourn Marshes, trying to conjure the dead! Keep that one and anyone who dares call him a friend away from me!"
11	"Stayed the night in Brandy Hall, he did. Sat at the Master of Buckland's table like he was some long-lost kin! Imagine that?! Then, pleased as you can be, he opened the Hay Gate and disappeared into the Old Forest like it was just a Sunday stroll."
12	Inquiring into the affairs of the Wizard has drawn his personal attention, and Gandalf himself shows up. Now, what errand or adventure could he have in store for the Player-heroes?

MAYOR POTT WHITFOOT

Elected Mayor just over three years ago, Pott Whitfoot fancies himself a consummate Hobbit about town, and attributes to his role as mayor an importance that is scarcely recognised by anyone else in the Shire. His obligation to preside at all public events, ensure the Bounders and Shirriffs are doing their due diligence, and to see that the speed and quality of the Messenger Service and Quick Post are beyond reproach, is of supreme importance to him. After all, if he's not doing his proper mayoral duties, he won't have a place of honour at the many tables he's invited to across Michel Delving, and he is the first to point out that dinner with the Mayor is a high honour indeed.

For all his self-importance, Mayor Whitfoot is a sensible enough fellow and hopes to avoid any trouble or gossip-worthy activities during his tenure. He is quick to pass along any requests to address strange goings-on to his Bounders, and send them after any foolish young



Hobbit reckless enough to trapse into the North Moors or beneath the eaves of the Woody End. Best to wash his hands of such concerns, and leave them to younger, less dignified Hobbits.

Mayor Pott Whitfoot

Medium humanoid (Hobbit)

STR	DEX	CON
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

OCCUPATION Mayor

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES Fair-spoken, Honourable

SKILLS Insight +2, Persuasion +6

SENSES passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Westron

THE MESSENGER SERVICE AND THE QUICK POST

Hobbits like to keep in touch with their friends and more likeable relatives, and those who know their letters enjoy writing almost every day. This regular correspondence is delivered anywhere within the boundaries of the Shire by the Messenger Service and the Quick Post. The first employs numerous Messengers, tasked with delivering letters and small packages between the homes and businesses of the Four Farthings. The Quick Post is employed only on official business, to deliver messages from the Mayor, or between the Shirriffs, for example, and is manned by a smaller number of quick runners.

Every larger township, like Hobbiton or Bywater, has its own post-office, and a number of postmen making the rounds, but the main Post-office is in Michel Delving. Postmen and Messengers can be seen carrying out their duty from there to Greenholm, Stock and everywhere in between. No postmen

reach Buckland though, as most letter carriers are wary of the communities along the eastern banks of the Brandywine.

Existing for as long as any Hobbit can recall, serving as a postman is a position of respect among the communities of the Shire. Perhaps this is why a blind eye gets turned when a jar of preserves arrives at its destination a little less than full or no one bothers to mention that their sack of apples arrived a bit light. After all, walking one's appointed route can be hungry work.

NEEDLEHOLE

A village in the northern reaches of the Westfarthing, Needlehole is cut in two by the Water as it comes down into the Rushock Bog. A small stone bridge crosses the stream here, allowing the road to continue eastwards towards the village of Oatbarton. The Hobbit families of Needlehole live in sturdy homes of wood and stone within sight of the Water, and have something Dwarvish about them — by most accounts, they wear boots when they go wood-gathering and duck-hunting in the Rushock Bog to the south!

If Needlehole is known for anything, it is for the pipes that their inhabitants craft using bog-wood, tree-trunks that have lain buried in the southern wetland for centuries, if not millennia. Hard as stone, the trunks of bog-wood must be carved with special tools that the inhabitants of Needlehole obtain by trading with Dwarves. Bog-wood pipes are dark in colour, their hues ranging from a deep brown to black, with the deeper shades coming from the most ancient and most prized qualities of bog-wood.

NOBOTTLE

Tucked away in a remote corner of the Westfarthing, where the chalky heights of the White Downs become low knolls covered in thick grass, is the tiny community of Nobottle, a village home to no more than four or five families of Hobbits. Unlike most other villages of the Shire, the residents of Nobottle make their homes primarily in Hobbit-holes, with only one or two houses constructed along its outer edges. They keep mostly to themselves, quietly tending their land and growing their crops of bilberries and wheat. They will, when the occasion strikes them, venture upon a day trip to Little Delving or Needlehole, but will rarely go any further. By all accounts they mind their own business, and expect others to do the same.

But if the inhabitants of Nobottle can be considered to be somewhat unwelcoming, they are considered to be jolly fellows when compared to the Banks, their neighbours, a handful of closely-related families of fishermen dwelling on the shores of the Water a few miles to the northeast of the village. Already regarded with suspicion for their connection with the North-Tooks of Long Cleeve, their reputation is made even more sinister by their preference to move about on boats along the Water.

RUSHOCK BOG

As the Water rolls off the North Moors into the Shire, it slows down upon reaching Needlehole, until the river vale becomes almost flat, and the stream starts to meander in a hundred rivulets. The surrounding landscape is that of a vast marshland stretching for several miles, and a walk across it is likely to leave mud between one's toes. No Hobbit has reason to venture there for leisure though, as the area is thick with stingflies and gnats — in the warmer months of the year they can be seen rising as a cloud at sunset.

Despite these terrible threats, daring duck hunters and gatherers of bog-wood from Needlehole enter the marsh several times a year. They can be seen traipsing around wearing boots, the duck hunters armed with bows and carrying the carefully-painted wooden ducks they use as decoys, the wood gatherers leading sturdy ponies that they will use to pry their prized tree-trunks out of the bog's cold embrace.

Following the course of the Water through the bog is a back route to reach Hobbiton, and some hunters from Needlehole walk all the way there to sell their catch to the local inns and families.

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Although it is true that adults like to spin tales and gossip about it over a pint, no true strangeness or oddity has ever been observed in the Rushock Bog by any grown Hobbit. In fact, only the younger

lads and lasses can say that they have ever seen the little black creatures with large, luminous eyes that crawl through the mud at night...

Once in a while, tales told by Hobbit children about these shy and disturbing entities surface in Overhill, Hobbiton, or Needlehole. Described as more unusual than threatening, they have always been promptly dismissed as imaginary bugbears by parents and relatives, leading the children to keep their sightings largely to themselves, a secret whispered from ear to ear. The most adventurous among them have developed all manner of unlikely theories, and have started keeping watch for long hours at the edge of the bog, setting rudimentary traps at seemingly random locations, in the hope of capturing one of what they have collectively come to call the "Bog Beasts."

To this day, in spite of many claims that some little Hobbit-boy or Hobbit-girl "very nearly got one," a Bog Beast has never been captured. Strangely, as Hobbits grow from child to tween, their interest in the Bog Beasts fades, and by the time one has reached the age of maturity, they seem to preserve no memory of the creatures at all.

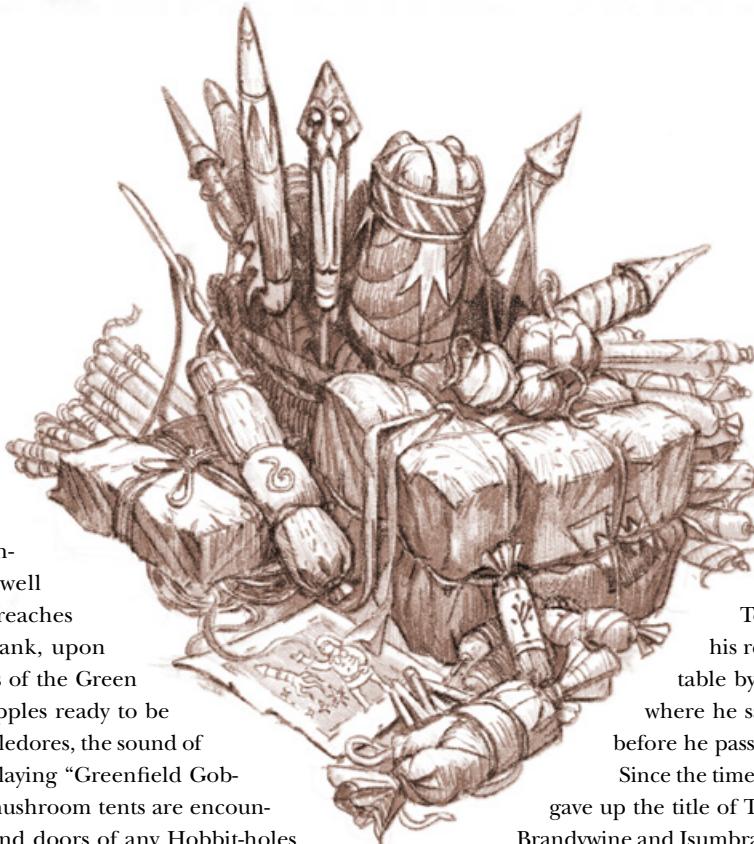
THE TOOKLAND

The western range of the Green Hills rising in the Westfarthing has always been known as the Tookland since time out of mind. It is aptly named, for it is the ancestral home of what is considered by many to be the chief family of the Shire, the numerous and well-respected Took clan. Here, small farms dot the rolling hills where one Took cousin or another grows grain and barley for bread and beer, keeps hives of buzzing bees for honey and mead, or makes their living hunting small game for fur and meat.

The Tooks are renowned for being a bit too adventurous for traditional Hobbit tastes, and while that may be so, there's a charming irrepressibility about the entire clan that often reveals itself in the wit and wisdom that pervades the gaffers and gammers of that family. This reputation for mischief is of little concern to the Tooks, and in fact, is a point of pride to more than a few of that line.

Unlike in many other regions of the Shire, the Wizard Gandalf always receives a warm welcome whenever he passes through the Tookland, as no one among the members of the clan forgets that the Grey Pilgrim was a good friend of the most famous Took of them all, the Old Took himself.

In spite of their propensity for the outlandish and the friendship of Wizards, the Took Clan is greatly respected by everyone in the Shire. This is likely due to the legacy they carry as the holders of the Thainship since Isumbra the First accepted both the title and role from Gorhendad over five hundred years ago.



TOOKBANK

A winding trail running east off Whitwell on the North Road reaches the village of Tookbank, upon the westernmost rises of the Green Hills. The scent of apples ready to be plucked from the appledores, the sound of delighted children playing “Greenfield Goblin,” or the sight of mushroom tents are encountered before the round doors of any Hobbit-holes become apparent.

Tookbank is a small village, much smaller than the nearby Tuckborough, to the chagrin of its inhabitants who feel they are looked down on by their neighbours. A wish to avoid any contact might explain why no road leads from Tookbank to the nearby town, and why no one in the two communities has ever demonstrated the desire to build one.

Rumours outside the Tookland speak of an extensive network of tunnels dug under the Green Hills and joining Tookbank with the Great Smials, and comprising vast underground halls where the Tookes join in secret merriment several times a year.

TUCKBOROUGH

Tuckborough is the largest village in the Tookland, and the one counting more Hobbit-holes than any in the entire Shire. It is here that Great Smials stands, the many-tunneled mansion of the Took clan, dug three centuries ago at the time of Isengrim the Second. Known also as the ‘Great Place of the Tookes’, it’s a veritable maze of bedrooms, parlours, kitchens and dining halls, serving as the home of a multitude of family members. Deep inside it lies a place known simply as ‘the old room’, the large hall where Gerontius, the Old Took, spent most of his life. It is said that the room didn’t see changes to its decor and furniture for decades, for the Old Took liked it exactly as it was, and that to this day no Hobbit — Took or

otherwise — has dared to move so much as a leaf of parchment, let alone Old Took’s rocking chair! In fact, his reading glasses sit on an end table by the chair next to his pipe, where he sat them down on the night before he passed forty years ago.

Since the time when Gorehendad Oldbuck gave up the title of Thain and moved across the Brandywine and Isumbras the First assumed it, Great Smials has also been the seat of the Thainship. Though the title is little more than an honorific these days, respect for the position is still maintained — especially among the Hobbits of the Westfarthing. Fortinbras the Second has been Thain nigh on thirty years now, and by all accounts he is as good and wise a gentlehobbit as any could ask for.

WAYMEET

A merry stroll east out of Michel Delving along the East Road will lead a wandering Hobbit to the crossroads at Waymeet. Appropriately named, it is not only a crossroads, but also where Hobbits from across the Westfarthing come together to trade goods and gossip in equal measure. In fact, many of the homes have adjacent or attached sheds to act as both storage and storefront for trinkets and wares readily available to any passersby travelling along the East Road.

A collection of tables sits right along the road in the middle of Waymeet, before the doors of the Walking Party Tavern. It serves as an open-air tap house of sorts, where visitors can quench their thirst before going about their business, and maybe purchase whatever mathom catches their eye in the tiny shops that line the thoroughfare. More than one Dwarf crossing the Shire has stopped at the tables of Waymeet for a pint and a game of ninepenny marl, while being forcefully brought up to date on the latest gossip offered by the idle gamblers and shopkeepers.

A DAY IN WAYMEET

A trip to Waymeet is never boring, and if the Player-heroes opt to spend an afternoon, the Loremaster can

roll a d12 on the table below to determine a random event or design one themselves.

WAYMEET JOURNEY TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Robbed!	A Player-hero must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, or they realise someone has picked their pocket during the hustle and bustle of the day. An item very important to them has been stolen!
2	Mistaken Identity	A local Hobbit mistakes a Player-hero for a distant, long absent relation, and insists on recalling old family stories the character has no knowledge of.
3	A New Friend	The Player-heroes strike up a pleasant conversation with a fellow visitor at Waymeet who invites them to tea the next time they're about.
4-5	A Foolish Trade	The character finds they've made a bad deal at the market and is down a few coins or has swapped a valuable item for some useless junk.
6-7	A Peach of a Deal	The character was able to strike a good bargain and walked away with a new tool or item that may be of some use in the future, as determined by the Loremaster.
8-9	Rumours	The Player-heroes spend a long evening swapping news with the locals and learn a piece of information or clue that offers insight into one of their upcoming adventures.
10	Idle Words	The Player-heroes hear news about some other person or place in the Shire that turns out to be false but seems credible at the time.
11	Tales from Beyond the Brandywine	The Player-heroes learn some news from beyond the borders of the Shire while having a drink at the Walking Party Tavern.
12	Chance Encounter	The Player-heroes encounter a well-known local or famous visitor as they pass through Waymeet. Examples include Bilbo Baggins, Gandalf the Grey, Balin the Dwarf, or even catching a glimpse of an Elf moving west just at the edge of town.

WHITWELL

A sure sign that one is about to enter the village of Whitwell is the sound of the crowing roosters and clucking hens that wander its coops and farms. This small community is known for its chicken farmers, and many members of their flocks find their end at tables across the Shire. In spite of its humble appearance, Whitwell serves as a hub of travel in the Tookland, with pipe-weed coming up from the farms of Longbottom, travellers going south from Waymeet, and Tooks arriving endlessly from Tuckborough. These visitors will find the finest roast chicken in the Four Farthings if they sit down at a table

at the Fairest Fowl Inn, which sits right upon the crossroads at the heart of Whitwell.

The latest news heard over these fine meals is that of a young enterprising Hobbit by the name of Paladin Took who has recently come to Whitwell from Tuckborough. A first cousin once removed of Thain Fortinbras (on his father's side), Paladin stands out as an oddity among the many chicken farmers, for he has begun tilling land and planting seeds in hopes of turning his new farm into a grand enterprise worthy of attracting a fine wife.



THE SOUTHFARTHING

How Old Toby came by the plant is not recorded, for to his dying day he would not tell. He knew much about herbs, but he was no traveller.

As the land of the Took's rolls east and gives way to the Green Hill Country, the wide fields of the Southfarthing spread southwards from the Three-Farthing Stone. It is a sparsely-populated land by Hobbit standards, traversed in the north by the Stock Road that runs through the Yale in the East-farthing, and bordered by the Shirebourn river to the south-east. Largely made up of isolated farms and wide fields, it is here that the best wine found in the Shire is produced, and where the most prestigious varieties of pipe-weed are grown.

LONGBOTTOM

Longbottom is the pride of the Southfarthing. Perhaps less a town and more a collection of many farms with stout homes of wood and stone, Longbottom outgrew its boundaries at the time of Tobold Hornblower, the first Hobbit to grow the true

pipe-weed in the Shire. Each farm is surrounded by vast, furrowed fields, from which the leaf is harvested and processed.

It is from around here that the three most popular brands of pipe-weed come from: 'Longbottom Leaf', 'Old Toby', and 'Southern Star'. Carts loaded with barrels carrying the Hornblower brandmarks can be seen travelling up and down the road at any hour of the day, headed to the farthest corners of the Shire. There are even rumours of enterprising Hobbits making the journey all the way to the Blue Mountains, west beyond the Shire, or eastwards over the Brandywine all the way to Bree — though perhaps those travelling in that direction are doing so more to reinforce the superiority of the Shire leaf over the Southlinch crop grown in those parts.

Wherever their destination may be, travellers leaving Longbottom and taking the road north are likely to stop at the inn at Sparrow's Rest, located about a day's travel towards

THE INN AT SPARROW'S REST

Travellers stopping by the Sparrow's Rest for a pint and dish of strawberries and cream are sure to hear a tale or

two. Loremasters can choose or roll a d12 to determine the nature of the most recent tidings.

SPARROW'S REST GOSSIP TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Bloodthirsty Beast!	Bounder Burt Underhill, from Woodhall, returned home last week, bloody and wounded! In a sheer, raving panic, he claimed he was ravaged by the Black Wolf of Woody End!
3	Mole Mischief	Moles have been digging long tunnels under the lands of farmers in the Yale and leaving mounds in curious geometric patterns in the soil.
3	Raucous Rooks	Flocks of large black birds have flown up from the south of Dunland and begun nesting in the trees around Sarn Ford. They seem to take a keen interest in travellers, watching them with an uncanny level of intensity.
4	Pine Peaks	Large piles of pine cones have been found along the edge of the Bindbole Wood, stacked nearly as high as a Hobbit. None of the locals have claimed responsibility or seen who or what is doing this, and no animal tracks or footprints have been seen near the piles.
5	Missing Merchants	A Hobbit grocer from Willowbottom taking a shortcut through the Woody End on his way to Woodhall became lost and was discovered three days later, asleep on the Stock Road. He claims to have no memory of falling asleep, only that he stepped into the forest and woke up on the road a moment later.
6	Southern Strangers	While returning from a trip to Longbottom, a solitary Hobbit claims he encountered a pair of sallow-faced big folk who had an ill-favored look about them. They even drew knives and moved to approach him before he escaped in the tall grass.
7	Mysterious Minstrel	Young Gilly Brownlock is sitting in the Sparrow's Rest, playing a melancholy song on her tin whistle. If asked where she learned it, she says from fairies that live in the White Downs.
8	Finches Flock	Many of the folk gathering firewood from the woods near Pincup have seen a small flock of finches following them, singing gentle and soothing songs.
9	Garden Gifts	While picking strawberries in her garden in Willowbottom, the normally pesky squirrels that plague her crop came right up to Scarlet Kettlebottom and began to pick them right off the vine and set them at her feet before running off into the forest.
10	Murmuring Melody	For the past three nights, whenever the wind blows out of the north, everyone in Deep hollow can hear a gentle song upon the breeze that lingers for a few hours after nightfall. No one knows the source.
11	Bosco's Badger	Bosco Rumble from Longbottom claims he was cornered and very nearly attacked by a badger near Sarn Ford, until one of the Big Folk seemed to step out from nowhere, whisper strange words to the beast, and then motioned for it to run off. The Man had fierce eyes and a beard, but pulled his hood up before Bosco could get a better look.
12	Elvish Encounter	A Hobbit child became lost in the Woody End recently and was feared to have perished, but two days later she was seen being led to the edge of the village by nothing less than an Elf! Onlookers claim that after the child came safely within the bounds of the village, the Elf vanished right before the eyes of everyone looking.

the border with the Westfarthing. A welcome sight to the weary eyes of every travelling pipe-weed merchant, the inn used to be a small watchtower, and takes its name from the many birds nesting under its eaves. By all accounts, no inn offers a better serving of strawberries and cream anywhere in the Shire, and a more diversified source for gossip — pipe-weed merchants hail from all over the four Farthings, and find the inn to be the perfect place for the exchange of news.

PINCUP

Nestled on the southern slopes of the Green Hill Country, Pincup is home to a handful of Hobbit families that live quiet lives in relative isolation. Most live in modest Hobbit-holes among the shaded hillsides, others keep small farms just beyond the shadows of those mounds for growing autumn crops like radishes, turnips, and carrots.

But it is going west that one reaches Pincup's true and only claim to fame: its vineyards. Raised on the steep hillsides facing south, it is here that the grapes used to produce the best wine in the Shire are cultivated — known simply as Old Winyards, it is a strong red wine that grows in value as it ages, so much that older bottles are treasured. Bottles of vintages from as far back as a century have been given by Tookes to their relations and close friends on birthdays and special occasions since time out of mind.

SARN FORD

Far beyond what any reasonable Hobbit would call a proper part of the Shire, is the stone river crossing of Sarn Ford, at the southernmost border of the Southfarthing. During the drier seasons, the Brandywine becomes so shallow here that it can be waded without any danger. In Spring and Autumn the thaw and heavy rains make it less safe, if it wasn't for a number of large, flat rocks, set across the ford in times of old, allowing travellers to use them as stepping-stones.

Sarn Ford is a deserted place, and for some reason, no Hobbit in their right mind would think of spending more time there than what's strictly necessary to cross the river — more than one traveller on the South Road claims to have seen strange, hooded men wandering about in its vicinity.

THE WATCH OVER SARN FORD

A long time ago, in an age of the world beyond the reckoning of Men and Hobbits, Sarn Ford was the site of a terrible battle. An invading army out of the Black Land was broken with great

slaughter, leaving an indelible mark across the region that can still be perceived after long millennia — Hobbits rarely linger here for any length of time, as the air itself seems to disagree with their cheerful disposition.

Whether they themselves know about the past history of the place or not one could not say, but the Rangers of the North keep a constant watch over the crossing. The ford is the first safe passage over the Brandywine river — the next one being the Bucklebury Ferry, more than fifty miles upriver to the north, and travellers coming from the south along the road must use it to enter the Shire. The Rangers take great care not to reveal their presence, disappearing quickly into the wilderness if they are in risk of being spotted. A few secret caches of supplies, such as firewood and dried meat, and at least one store of weapons, have been set up close to the ford, marked with runes and easily overlooked as another minor oddity from outside the Shire by all but the most educated of Hobbits.

HALLAS AND HALBARAD

The captain of the Rangers tasked with watching over Sarn Ford and the southern borders of the Shire is a Man called Hallas. Wise in old lore and a veteran fighter, Hallas has grown fond of the pipe-weed of the halflings. In the company of his son, Halbarad, they sometimes enter the Southfarthing disguised as merchants from Tharbad, and visit the Inn at Sparrow's Rest to keep up with the latest rumours (and to fill their pipes with the best Hornblower leaf).



THE SHIREBOURN RIVER

A good part of the eastern border of the Southfarthing is marked by the Shirebourn, the watercourse flowing from the Green Hill Country across many miles of lowlands. Once it meets another stream, the Thistle Brook, flowing out of the Eastfarthing at Willowbottom, the Shirebourn slowly winds its way for about fifteen miles, until it reaches the Brandywine near Deep hollow. The Overbourn Marshes spread at the river mouth, among reeds and willow thickets.

Residents of the Southfarthing rarely venture so far east though, except for a number of angling enthusiasts who dare go boating on the Shirebourn in small rowboats. Certainly no one enters the marshes — not even the nearby residents of Deep hollow in their Dwarf-boots would dare go about trudging in this bog. Nothing dangerous has emerged from the marshes in living memory, but mournful noises and barely heard songs seem to drift above its still waters, carried by the breeze from the Old Forest.



THE NORTHFARTHING

Except on the high moors of the Northfarthing a heavy fall was rare in the Shire, and was regarded as a pleasant event and a chance for fun.

The Northfarthing is the only quarter of the Shire whose borders are not marked by the Three-Farthing Stone. Most folk come to this area by way of the Northway Road, between Bywater and Frogmorton, heading on up over the Water and across the northern half of the Eastfarthing. The surest sign that you have crossed into the Northfarthing is the fresh, fragrant air that sweeps across the Greenfields and slips between the trees of the Bindbole Wood. Winters in this region tend to be a bit cooler and longer than in the rest of the Shire. Still, in those seasons of lesser sun, a blanket of winter snow is no small beauty to awaken to each morning as one sets the kettle to boil.

THE BINDBOLE WOOD

Filled mostly with pines, junipers, and yew, the Bindbole remains evergreen year-round, with several of the trees producing lovely red flowers in early spring. Older than the Shire itself by most accounts, and exceedingly dark and tangled at its heart, this wild wood is all that is left of a larger forest

that once ran all the way to the Hills of Evendim, beyond the North Moors.

Few Hobbit walking trails run under its spreading branches, as more than a few tales speak of wolves lingering in the shadows (though no wolves have been seen in the Shire since the Fell Winter). More likely, they're as real as the Green Dragon rumours about wayward Big Folk from the days of the King, or those talking of giants taller than trees walking seven yards to a stride in the North Moors. Even if these fanciful yarns are just that, the truth is that there are no easy trails through the Bindbole.

GREENFIELDS

No exploration of the Northfarthing would be complete without mention of Greenfields. Known throughout the Shire as the place where Bandobras 'Bullroarer' Took drove back Gollimbul and the Goblin horde from Mount Gram, it is bordered on the south by the Norbourn, a watercourse descending

from the North Moors that joins the Brandywine just beyond the borders of the Eastfarthing, and running into the Northfarthing. It's a vast land, mostly flat in between the two rivers, rapidly rising as one turns north towards the Hills of Evendim.

Here, visitors are likely to see small groups of Hobbit rabbit hunters carrying bows. They spend long hours looking intently at the ground for coney tracks, or kicking and stomping at their hiding places. If one should start a conversation with any of them, they would hear the same story about how the game of golf was invented by the Bullroarer on that precise spot.

HARDBOTTLE

To most Hobbits, to call Hardbottle a remote village would be an understatement — the only residents of the Shire travelling so far are hunters, Bounders, and the members of the Bracegirdle family and their numerous relatives. The village itself stands at the confluence of the Norbourn and the Brandywine rivers, and can be reached only by crossing the Norbourn on a boat.

This relative isolation hasn't prevented the Bracegirdle family from rising to a certain level of prominence in the Northfarthing. Known for their size (many family members are said to be of great girth), outspoken nature, and superior skill as masons, the Bracegirdle name is associated with the building of every new home or Hobbit-hole constructed this side of the Water. In particular, Blanco Bracegirdle and his son Bruno seem to have placed a brick or two in every home in the Shire, with Blanco having brokered deals with most mining businesses represented in Dwaling in the last three decades.

In recent years, Blanco Bracegirdle's wife, Primrose, born a Boffin, raised a flurry of gossip with her decision to leave Hardbottle and return to her family estate in the Yale — everyone in the

Northfarthing knows the 'real reason' behind her decision — from a bout of 'wandering-madness', the discovery of the secret cache of gold of her late father Otto, to the sudden appearance of a disfiguring disease.

LONG CLEEVE

One can reach this little village on the edge of the Northfarthing by following the course of the Water towards the North Moors, well beyond Nobottle and Needlehole. Composed of a handful of houses along both sides of the river, it is the home of the North-Tooks, a smaller branch of the renowned clan who claim direct descent from Bandobras the Bullroarer himself, though there is a bit of a rivalry as to whether or not they can rightfully say so. Every Took knows that Bandobras left his home in the Tookland to settle in the Northfarthing only after the Battle of Greenfields, and that is why they dispute the North-Tooks appropriation of the Hobbit hero. Fortunately, the dispute is kept friendly by holding shared family reunions, which include "tests of heritage" — nothing more than drinking contests, games of conkers, and the obligatory golf tournament.

THE NORTH MOORS

This wide upland rises to meet the Hills of Evendim to the North, and marks the northern borders of the Shire. It is an area known for its heavy winter snowfalls and untamed wilderness,

filled with scrub brush, heather, and the occasional tree. All sorts of cautionary tales and rumours spring out of the North Moors, and only the most hardened, or most foolish, hunters dare venture this far north, and they do it exclusively before the sun sets, for fear of encountering wild beasts or things far worse.

Where the Norbourn river flows out of the North

Moors stands what the Hobbits of the Northfarthing call 'Kingsworthy', a large stone house with a round tower, believed to have been a hunting lodge at the time of the Kings in Norbury. The origins of the site are probably more prosaic, but the legend seems to have found confirmation when a few years ago a hunter dug up the life-size head of a marble statue, representing what resembles a young prince wearing a crown.

OATBARTON

The Northway ends in the village of Oatbarton, a settlement of modest size, surrounded by extensive oat fields. Its stone houses seem to emerge from a veritable sea of long stalks, bright green in Spring, golden by late summer. In winter,



VENTURE INTO THE NORTH MOORS

Stories of what lies concealed and undiscovered along these northern boundaries of the Shire range from hidden camps of shadowy big folk who lurk and watch

Hobbit-kind from a distance, to fanciful tales of the trees themselves walking about in the light of day. To find out what happens during a trip to the North Moors, the Loremaster can roll a d12 and consult the following table.

NORTH MOORS ENCOUNTERS TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Wrathful Spirit	A ghastly spirit rises out of a darkened shadow to plague the Player-heroes, the hiss of "Angmar" on its spectral lips as it passes through them and leaves a chill far deeper in their bones than any winter ever could. They will have dark dreams about it for a few days.
2	Moaning Trees	An eerie and unnerving moan rings through a tiny grove of pine trees, as a cold wind blows down from the hills to the north.
3	A Fissure in the Ground	The Player-heroes stumble upon a great hole dug directly into the ground, large enough for several Hobbits to enter. Inside, they find a skeleton of prodigious size, a bear or a large Orc, and a crude club thrice their height.
4-5	A Crash and a Laugh	A large stony crash is heard echoing down from the north, followed by a distant, booming laughter.
6-7	Ancient relics	The Player-heroes discover an old object, like a pitted and rusted sword or knife blade, a brooch, a broken jar or pot, etc. . They are mostly useless, but they make for perfect Mathoms.
8-9	Followed from the Shadows	The Player-heroes get the uncomfortable sense they are being watched and followed. A cloaked figure seems to linger for an instant behind a far-off tree, then disappears into the wilderness.
10	Wolf Carcass	A large dead wolf is found, slain with arrows too large for Hobbit bows still stuck in its side.
11	Uprooted Tree	Though the ground looks otherwise undisturbed, there are signs that a tree has been ripped from the ground, roots and all. Large depressions in the soil can be seen trailing off to the north and west.
12	A Wanderer's Campsite	The Player-heroes come upon a Man in travel-worn clothing cooking a pair of rabbits on a spit. There is a welcoming quality about him, in spite of his rugged look. He offers the Player-heroes a spot by the fire. If they accept, they hear him tell stories about the lost realm of Arnor, the land of the High King...

heavy snows regularly blanket Oatbarton, and Hobbit children delight in re-enacting the Battle of Greenfields using snowballs and snowgoblins, which they promptly trounce with the largest stick available.

The village itself would be quite unassuming, if it wasn't for its great cobblestone courtyard, situated right in its heart. Surrounded by granaries, wooden homes, barns, and sheds, the courtyard becomes crowded at noon, when all farmhands

from the nearby fields gather to eat lunch — the simple, hard-working folk of Oatbarton sit at long tables set up on trestles, under tents and pavilions during the harvest season.

The produce of the fields of Oatbarton is used by breweries all over the Shire to make a particularly bitter beer, called by some the 'Dwarven Stout'. A drink that needs growing accustomed to, it is favoured by travelling Dwarves, who don't seem to mind the sharper taste at all.



THE EASTFARTHING

The Hobbits of that quarter, the Eastfarthing, were rather large and heavy-legged, and they wore dwarf-boots in muddy weather.

While not quite the largest of the Four Farthings, the Eastfarthing is most certainly the oldest, as it is this land that the founders of the Shire encountered first, when they crossed the Bridge of Stonebows long ago. From the Three-Farthing Stone in the west to the Brandywine Bridge in the east, the quarter is divided in two by the East Road and the course of the Water. The northern half is an upland, dominated in its middle by stony hills, and slowly rising towards the North Moors. The southern region is wilder, crossed by innumerable streams and brooks, sometimes leading to vast patches of marshland. The main townships of the Eastfarthing are Frogmorton and Whitfurrows, along the East Road.

Many Hobbits living in this part of the Shire bear some distinct physical features, when compared with their neighbours. They are generally heavier in build, and some even sport a trace of beard on their chin (no Hobbit living elsewhere ever displayed anything so uncanny). Esteemed Hobbit ‘historians’ attribute these peculiarities to the fact that the ancestors of the Hobbits of the Southfarthing belonged to a southerly branch of Hobbit-kind, where most of the other first settlers came from the West.

THE BRANDYWINE

Running for uncounted leagues from its source in Lake Evendim to its faraway mouth at the sea, the Brandywine River serves as the eastern border of the Shire. With the founding of Buckland, the river also demarcates the division between a land inhabited by proper Hobbits, and the wrong side of the river, where the Bucklanders dwell. Whether east or west, the watercourse occupies a prominent place in the lives of a great many Hobbits. Many boats, both fishing and leisure, can be seen crossing it, or moored along its banks, especially on the eastern side.

The main crossing is the Brandywine Bridge, also called the Bridge of Stonebows, a marvel leaping across the river in three graceful arcs. No Hobbit can recall the days when it was built, but the Shire-folk keep it in good repair as they were instructed to do so at the time of the Northern Kingdom. The bridge is wide and strong, allowing carts, ponies, and wagons to easily cross.

The other crossing, though less used and less trusted, is the Bucklebury Ferry, found approximately ten miles downriver, in the northern part of the Marish. This large, flat boat can be reached via a narrow lane off the Causeway running parallel to the Brandywine, and makes its mooring on the opposite bank in the heart of Buckland, near the village for which it is named. Though tended by a ferryman by day, no one remains in service after nightfall, and it is seldom used at such times for fear of some poor Hobbit slipping over its edge and plunging into the waters of the Brandywine.

GIRDLEY ISLAND

Ten miles north of the Bridge of Stonebows, the Brandywine River bifurcates around a narrow island, about two mile in length. Called Girdley Island, it is covered with wild shrubs and low trees, and is rumoured to be a haunted place. Those few who have moored their boats there and made their way through the vegetation claim to have heard scratching noises or stirrings beneath their feet. As a consequence, the island is abandoned to its waterfowl and wild vegetation, save for some brave Bucklander or foolish Eastfarthing youth who visits it on a dare to test their valour.

Unbeknownst to everyone in the Shire, the secret of Girdley Island lies not in cursed spirits, but in hidden guardians. In the middle of the island is a secret refuge, built in recent years by the Rangers of the North. It is a small fortification, mostly underground, concealed in a great copse of trees. From here, the Rangers use their small, flat-bottomed boats to move swiftly up and down the Brandywine, easily moving as far north as Lake Evendim or south to Sarn Ford.

DWARVES ON THE ROAD

Much to the Hobbits' consternation, Dwarves make regular use of the East Road, travelling to and from their home in the Blue Mountains far to the west of the Shire. It is not uncommon for local travellers to encounter these

bearded wayfarers on their errands to foreign parts as they pass through the heart of the Shire.

When the Player-heroes are on the East Road, the Loremaster can roll a D12 to determine if an encounter occurs.

EAST ROAD ENCOUNTERS TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Appalling Accusations	A particularly cantankerous Dwarf halts one of the Player-heroes as they pass, accusing them of theft and mistaking the befuddled travellers for someone else. The Player-heroes will need to do some fast talking if they hope to avoid an awkward confrontation.
2-4	No Encounter	No special encounters are made.
5	Boasting Brewers	The Player-heroes meet two Dwarven brewers from the Blue Mountains, burdened with beer-barrels bought at the Golden Perch. They claim to have discovered the secret of the 'best beer in the Shire', but appear to have sampled their wares a bit too much.
6	Renowned Relatives	A lone Dwarf stops the Player-heroes and asks for directions to Bag End, claiming to be a distant relation of one of Thorin's Company.
7	Sullen Smith	An irritated Dwarven blacksmith is hauling ore from the mines at Scary, upset and irritated at what he calls a "cross deal", and shoots the Player-heroes a mean look as he passes.
8	Bent Blades	Shouldering a mighty wood ax and leading a pack mule, a Dwarf claims he tried to chop some wood from the Old Forest on his way here, but that the trees made groaning noises and dulled the edge of his ax.
9	A Song for a Song	A Dwarf is strumming on a harp as he sings to himself. He offers one of the Player-heroes to teach him a Dwarven song in return for a local one. If obliged, he kindly gives the character a silver tin whistle engraved with Dwarvish runes as a thank you.
10	A Nice Nap	A Dwarf has fallen asleep on the road, fat and content. A cooked sausage is still held in his meaty fist. If disturbed, he awakens with a start and asks for directions to the nearest inn.
11	Beleaguered Beards	The Player-heroes spot a group of Hobbit children running down the East Road, their leader holding a tuft of hair in their fist. Behind them comes a lumbering Dwarf, shouting and holding the end of his beard.
12	Merry Merchant	A particularly jovial Dwarf is returning to the Blue Mountains after a long trip from the Lonely Mountain. Delighted and glad to soon be home, he gives each character a gift, claiming that he is following the tradition of the locals and celebrating his own birthday! The gifts are nothing less than fine, and indeed magical, toys from the markets of Dale!

BRIDGEFIELDS

Bridgefields is the name of a long stretch of fertile land extending for about three leagues west of the Brandywine Bridge, and likely named in reference to it. The most prominent village of the district is certainly Whitfurrows, the first township of the Shire one encounters when travelling west along the East Road.

WHITFURROWS AND BUDGEFORD

Acting as an eastern counter to Waymeet in the Westfarthing, Whitfurrows lays at the crossroads of the East Road and the winding path that leads north to the Brockenbores and Scary Hobbits from across the Eastfarthing come to Whitfurrows to do a bit of brisk trade, as do Dwarves going west towards the Blue Mountains — though they get a bit of a cold shoulder from most locals. In years past, even a few Bree-Hobbits showed up to trade with the Shire-Folk, but those days have long gone by. The district includes to the north the community of Budgeford, a village built upon both banks of the Water. Budgeford is the seat of the Bolger clan, an ancient family with a long tradition of high-sounding names.

DEEPHALLOW

The village of Deepallow is nestled near the corner where the Shirebourn meets the Brandywine, just north of the Overbourn Marshes. It is reached by taking the road that branches out from the East Road near the Brandywine Bridge and by following it to its very end.

The Hobbits that make their homes here have a reputation as a cantankerous lot, perhaps due to their feud with the Buckland Hobbits of Haysend, on the other side of the Brandywine (theirs is a Hobbitish rivalry, expressed mainly in words and surly looks). They seem to have less love for merriment than other Hobbits, and most even bar their doors at night. This lesson is one they undoubtedly took up in a manner similar to their Buckland rivals, though if reminded of this they will vehemently deny even this most tenuous connection. Those rare visitors that travel so far south are given a cold reception, though this is not due to malice — the Hobbits of Deepallow seem to know better than their western counterparts what lies just beyond their borders, and are reluctant to have such dangers fall upon their neighbours.



FORGOTTEN FOXGLOVE

In a time when the rivalry between the folk of Deepallow and that of Haysend ran deeper, there lived a Hobbit girl whose name has been forgotten. She fell in love with a Hobbit of Haysend, and the enmity between their families kept them



forever apart, until she was driven mad by sorrow and walked into the Overbourn Marshes and was never seen again. Some among the more superstitious folk of Deepallow claim that she still lingers there, singing a lament for her one true love in hopes of luring him — or any young Hobbit foolish enough to be enchanted by her voice — into her arms and to a watery grave. Known by the locals as the Forgotten Foxglove, she wanders the Overbourn Marshes, her gaze forever cast downward.



FROGMORTON

Travelling out from the Three-Farthing Stone along the East Road, one will first come to the village of Frogmorton on the southern banks of the Water as it splits in two flowing westward, creating a large eyot. Named for the croaking chorus that fills the air on summer nights, this community marks the halfway point between Hobbiton and the Brandywine Bridge. Frogmorton is perhaps most well-known for the Floating Log, the first good inn one encounters on the East Road heading west (the establishments of Whitfurrows and Budgeford are not worth mentioning). A fine establishment certainly, if only its proprietor Juniper Broadbelt would give up her family's endless quest to somehow prepare frog legs as a proper meal.

The hills of Scary

Going north on the road from Budgeford, one travels towards a range of hills that rises almost along the border with the Northfarthing. Against the side of the hills one finds first the village of Scary, then the Brockenbores to the west, and on the other side, the township of Dwaling. It is under the hills of Scary that the first settlers found lodes of iron ore, and it is from here that the Shire-Hobbits still extract the mineral and quarry the stone required to build their many houses above ground — the number of tunnels dug under the hills, from the Brockenbores to the quarries at Scary, are an indication of this centuries-old practice.

A bit too dour for the likes of their merrier cousins to the south, the Scary Hobbits and those of the Brockenbores rarely venture into the heart of the Eastfarthing. Most seem content to stick to their own business, undisturbed, a very Dwarvish attitude for a Hobbit to display. The Hobbits of Dwaling are friendlier and more open towards strangers than their neighbours, and they often act as intermediaries for the mining folk of the hills — they broker deals for them, and provide them with all they need to continue their work without distractions.



THE BROCKENBORES

Hobbits are natural tunnellers, and have no fear of the underground. In recent years though, some miners from the Brockenbores have started to suffer from a coughing sickness and malady of the spirit that slowly drains their strength. This is no brief thing, and seems to take years before the condition takes hold, but no one has been able to find the source of this strange illness.

Some say it is the growing greed of the Hobbit brokers of Dwaling, driving the miners to delve ever deeper into caverns never before explored — and never meant to be opened. Others claim that the skull of Gorfimbul the Goblin, which lay in a rabbit hole since time out of mind, has slowly worked its way deep into the soil and begun to poison the land. A few more cynical Hobbits claim it is simply the newest generation of miners trying to find an excuse to do less work. Whatever the source, the mining officials in Dwaling have finally decreed that no Hobbits be in the mines after dark, and that everyone who goes into the tunnels stay in pairs for safety.



The Marish

The home of the Oldbuck family who famously migrated to the other side of the Brandywine river long ago, the Marish is a fenland that saw the first house-dwellers of the Shire. When they found it impossible to dig proper Hobbit-holes

in the soggy ground of the region, the original settlers of the area started building farms, barns, and sheds above ground. This tradition continues to this day, and many farms dotting the area are stout buildings built of brick and with thatched roofs. The road traversing the Marish is peculiar in itself, as it is a causeway, a raised road built to carry travellers above the watery ground.

RUSHEY

The tiny hamlet of Rushey is one of the main settlements of the Marish, the other one being the larger village of Stock. Rushey stands upon a low hill, and houses a small number of families. The locals pride themselves on their harvests of cabbages and rhubarb, as well as their ability to draw bog iron from the surrounding swamps day and night — sometimes even working by lantern light. They trade their ore in Stock and the Bridgefields, and with the people of Deep hollow, and even across the water in Buckland.



PALE, COLD LIGHTS

The Hobbits of Rushey aren't ones to speak of their troubles to outsiders. But in recent days, some of the locals have been reluctant to go into the surrounding marshlands in search of bog iron — especially after the sun goes down. Some fear has set upon them, and whispers of strange, scintillating lights that dance between the reeds and carry off wayward Hobbits into the marsh, never to return, are starting to be heard over drinks as far north as Stock and even over the Brandywine in Bucklebury.

Travellers who fail a DC 15 Wisdom (Explore) check while moving through the reeds and swamps of Rushy at night might encounter these flickering lights, and be drawn into a dreamy haze as they become completely lost in the marsh. Snapping out of it several hours later, they are overcome by an unnatural fear and must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw to avoid gaining 1 Shadow point and regain their composure before they can find their way back to safer ground.



STOCK

The town of Stock is certainly the busiest village in the Marish, if not the entire Southfarthing. It can be reached easily, by following the Stock Road out of Tuckborough, by slipping out of Woodhall following the Stock-brook, or simply by walking on the causeway. This bustling community is just as full of life as Hobbiton or Michel Delving, and has the best fish market

in all the Shire. Fresh catch can be found almost every day of the week, plucked right out of the Brandywine or the Stock-brook. But a good part of the popularity that Stock enjoys must be attributed to the Golden Perch, the inn known for the best beer served in the Eastfarthing (of no less repute is its plate of fish and chips). Here, it is not uncommon to find the occasional thirsty Took, who has come all the way from Tookland on a beer-tasting walk.

WILLOWBOTTOM

Willowbottom lies at the southern edge of the Eastfarthing, in the deep valley cut by the Thistle Brook as it flows out of the Woody End. Populated by a handful of families boasting many fishermen and the occasional hunter and woodsman, Willowbottom is connected to Deephallow by means of an easterly road. The locals fish from the waters of the Thistle Brook and the near course of the Shirebourn, and hunt along the edges of the Woody End. They build simple wooden homes, and rarely venture outside their vicinity, except to trade with the Hobbits of Deephallow. It has been probably a century since someone from Willowbottom has ventured outside the Eastfarthing — at least that's what they say in Stock.

WOODY END

Though this great upland forest of oaks and beeches, white-beams and rowans, begins on the edges of Pincup in the Green Hills, its heart rests in the Eastfarthing. Here, foxes, badgers, and wild rabbits mingle with finches, starlings, and robins. From all the noise they make in the spring-time among the great thicket of wood, one would suspect they are constantly gossiping with one another. It is not uncommon for Hobbits from the Yale to go on picnics along its edge. Indeed, the Stock Road from Tuckborough runs under its northern boughs on its eastward course, and both the River Shirebourn and the Thistle-Brook begin there before descending south. But apart from these infrequent intrusions, the Woody End can be considered to be sparsely populated at best, if not outright uninhabited. In autumn, the Woody End takes on a blazing golden hue, and the busy community of beasts and birds falls silent. By the time the first snows begin to fall, the hearth smoke trickling up from its eastern end leads travellers to the welcoming fires of Woodhall.

WOODHALL

As one would suspect from the name, the village of Woodhall sits nestled in a tiny valley at the northeastern edge of the Woody End. It's a tiny community of woodsmen, hunters,

THINGS TO DO IN STOCK

Though not as prestigious as Michel Delving, or Hobbiton, Stock is quite a robust community. Player-heroes can find a surprising number of things to do given its large population, active community of fishermen, and the reputation of the Golden Perch that draws visitors from all the Four Farthings.

Visitors to Stock might find themselves drawn into one of its many regular fishing tournaments, enjoying a fine meal of fish and chips at the Golden Perch while they hear the latest tall tales out of Buckland and the Old Forest, or trading stories with a Dwarven traveller taking a break for the night. Player-heroes might be hired to carry a load of salted trout to Hobbiton or even as far as Michel Delving, or even tasked by a curious local with making an expedition to far off Bree to see if all the foolish tales from that town are true.



and farmers, enjoying the isolation and fresh air of their wild corner of the Shire. Despite the remoteness of the place, the local bilberry cake is a popular dish in the Eastfarthing, and is served as far away as the inns at Stock and Frogmorton.

A famous personality from Woodhall is the pipe-maker known as Old Rosefield, an artisan who has carved the finest briar smoking pipes in all the Shire for nearly seventy years. They fetch quite a good price on the rare occasion they appear in the markets of Whitfurrows. Although only a few people know it, in his house, Old Rosefield keeps an incredible collection of pipes he acquired from strange and foreign lands over the decades (in addition to a precious selection of those he has carved himself in his lifetime). Some of the older and most precious pieces are said to be of Dwarf-make, while another is even rumoured to have been crafted in a great Wizard's tower far to the south. Such strange creations must undoubtedly have equally strange enchantments upon them, and Rosefield is said to give them away to those who perform a great service to the people of Woodhall. On rare occasions, he will even trade them with those who offer a piece of fine craftsmanship in return.

WANDERING ELVES

Before Hobbits took root in the Shire, great forests covered the land, and Elves used to roam freely across the area. Today, one can meet them sometimes in the Woody End, as they wander on paths that are seldom trodden by Mortals.

The Loremaster can roll a d12 to determine whether or not the Player-heroes encounter such a traveller, should they find themselves beneath the eaves of the Woody End under bright-burning stars.

WOODY END ENCOUNTERS TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	Wounded by Sorrow	A sad Elf travels alone. He sees the Hobbits, smiles without mirth, then gazes to the stars and vanishes into the darkness. The sight of one so bright and beautiful laid low by the weight of the world's troubles leaves a stain on the heart of the Player-heroes, causing them to gain 2 Shadow points (DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to resist).
2-8	No Encounter	No special encounters are made.
9	Sleeping Fairy	A fox behaving curiously invites the Player-heroes to follow her. She leads them to what seems to be a fair Elf-maiden lying unconscious on the ground. If they help her with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Medicine) check, she wakes up, thanks them and then disappears into the forest. From that moment on, when they are in the Woody End they never encounter bad weather.
10	Dancing Stars	Dancing lights dart to and fro in the Woody End, and a merry laughter is heard, as if someone were playing a prank. A tinkling of bells is heard, and then a warm breeze and the scent of flowers fills the air.
11	Tales from the Trees	Hidden among trees, a few Elves call to Hobbits unknowingly passing by. After polite greetings, the Elves ask about the goings-on in the Shire before offering a tale of their people and proceeding on their journey.
12	An Unexpected Guest	The Player-heroes have come upon a merry gathering of Elves and are invited to join them for an evening of fine food and lovely singing. They wake up the next morning filled with an invigorating zest (they each gain inspiration).



The yale

The lowland region known as the Yale lies to the north of the Woody End and south of the Bridgefields district. The ancestral seat of the Boffin family, the Yale has no prominent village or township, but is instead dotted by many farms. For as long as any can recall, its inhabitants have tended fields of corn, cabbage, wheat, and many other crops. In recent generations, some among them have even taken to tending wandering flocks of sheep and keeping dairy cattle that nibble the grass of the long fields surrounding their homeland. This pleases the folk of the Eastfarthing to no end, and contributes to many a fine table kept in the region.



THE BLACK WOLF OF WOODY END

Children of the Yale are taught from an early age that if they're naughty they'll get more than a light supper. The worst punishment that any child in the Eastfarthing could possibly imagine is to be taken by the Black Wolf of Woody End. Locals say it is descended from one of the terrible beasts that came down during the Fell Winter. Now it lingers in the deepest part of the forest, watching for wayward children, and leaping out from the darkness to snatch them away and devour them.

With fur as black as night and eyes as red as fire, it only comes out from its secret den at night to stalk its prey. It is said to have a particular fondness for Hobbit children, especially naughty ones — or so the gaffers and gammers say. Grown-ups know the Black Wolf to be nothing more than balderdash, but in recent years, adventurous souls who've gone off into the Woody End in search of Elves at sunset claim to have seen gleaming red eyes staring at them from the long shadows of the fading day. More than one child, and even a tween or two, has come running from the forest stammering and spluttering about a low, rumbling growl and the sight of a pair of fiery eyes glowing in the darkness.

The hysteria has gotten to be a bit much for the people of the Yale and calls have rung out for a Bounder to make a proper investigation. The Bounders are not very inclined to investigate, and it may fall to more adventurous locals to get to the bottom of things.

BUCKLAND

... a thickly inhabited strip between the river and the Old Forest, a sort of colony from the Shire. Its chief village was Bucklebury, clustering in the banks and slopes behind Brandy Hall.



No Hobbit east of the Brandywine would dare be so outrageous as to call Buckland the fifth Farthing of the Shire, but by all reasonable conclusion that is what it is. It was founded over six hundred years ago, when Gorhendad Oldbuck decided the Shire was getting too crowded for his liking. The enterprising Hobbit took himself and his relations over the

Brandywine River and travelled almost to the edge of the Old Forest, where he stopped to set down stakes. He even went so far as to rename himself Gorhendad Brandybuck and built the great complex of smials we now call Brandy Hall.

These days, Buckland has a reputation for all kinds of oddities that range from river-boating and even river-swimming Hobbits, to legends that whisper of hateful trees that move on their own beyond the High Hay. Though they might seem strange to most Hobbits residing elsewhere, Bucklanders are a proper folk, after their own fashion.

BUCKLEBURY AND BRANDY HALL

Bucklebury is quite a bustling little village, serving the heart of Buckland with its ferry. Brandybucks of all stripes and their closest kin live around here, fishing along the banks of the Brandywine, tending chickens, and growing crops like any other Hobbits. Buck Hill rises up at its very heart — it is a large mound covered in green grass and wildflowers in both spring and summer, and the seat of Brandy Hall, where the Master of Buckland rules over his numerous relations.

Regardless of the day or season, one hundred Brandybucks seem to be ever present, moving along the deep-dug tunnels of Brandy Hall, and there's always a collection of kin-folk setting to work on new passages and chambers to make more room for the growing family. As it is now, Brandy Hall has three large front doors, several secondary doors, and a hundred windows, all opening on the sides of Buck Hill. Each door is fitted with a stout lock, an enduring habit from the days of Buckland's founding as a protection against the dangers of the nearby Old Forest.

CRICKHOLLOW

The biggest news out of Buckland in recent years came last spring when a young gentlehobbit by the name of Rollo Boffin came all the way from the Westfarthing and built himself a small but homely house. For his new residence he chose Crickhollow, a pleasant corner a few miles north of Bucklebury. Taking little heed of the advice of locals, Rollo has built his home closer to the High Hay and the Old Forest than is considered proper, much to the consternation of his neighbours.

OLD BROADBELT

The current Master of Buckland is Gorbodoc Brandybuck, or Old Broadbelt as he is known by many – on account of his ample waistline and his considerable age. He has shown his good character by serving as a shrewd and stout patriarch over both kin and land for fifty years now. In spite of his stiff demeanour, he's shown nothing but kindness to his own kin, even when his daughter Primula went and became engaged to Drogo Baggins out of Hobbiton. A gaffer's wisdom keeps him well aware of any mischief which his relations get up to, whether causing trouble or planning some foolish expedition into the Old Forest. Though he was once a tween himself, and loves to recount to his younger relations the stories of his days as a reckless youth, Gorbodoc is quick to undercut such tales with reminders that this mischievousness come at a cost, and one must always keep a keen eye and a sharp mind in all deeds.



HAYSEND

A small village, little more than an outpost, stands at the southern edge of the High Hay, where the Withywindle flows out the Old Forest to join the Brandywine. Only the most hardened loners of Buckland live here, with the Old Forest almost at their doorsteps. Caught between the river bend

and the trees, they constantly drive away curious visitors with their dour stories and cold demeanour. The folk of Haysend seem to have a particular dislike for the Hobbits of Deephal-low, with whom they are always arguing over fishing rights and fair trading prices.

FISHING COMPETITION

The disagreements between the Hobbits of Haysend and Deep-hallow over fishing rights may finally come to an end. The people of both villages have agreed to hold a fishing competition! Whoever wins will enjoy exclusive fishing rights over the tract of the Brandywine dividing the two settlements for one full year. Both villages will choose a fisherman champion – whoever pulls the most fish out of those coveted waters from dawn till dusk will be declared the winner.

But nothing is ever that simple when it comes to settling such disputes. Neither village trusts the other, so they're both in search of impartial judges for the contest. The folk of Deep-hallow don't trust anyone from Buckland, and the Haysend locals don't want any Shire-Hobbit.

The Player-heroes may find themselves in this unlucky role if they get drawn into local politics. Judging the competition will be an exercise in frustration, as members of both communities argue with one another over everything, from the proper bait, the exact time for sunrise and sunset, whether the winning boat should be determined by quantity or weight of the fish caught, or any other tiny detail they can think of. This can require an Intelligence or Wisdom check, depending on what the character is judging, and no matter who ends up being the victor, the judges will surely be accused of having cheated or even having been bribed by the winners, and nothing will truly be settled!

BRANDY HALL BALDERDASH

Old Gorbodoc keeps a fine table, full of hearty fare and endless talk. Anyone who sits down for a meal at Brandy Hall is likely to hear a story or two about the strange

goings-on in the Old Forest just beyond the Hedge.

The Loremaster can roll a d12 to see what odd tale is the topic of the night.

BRANDY HALL TALK TABLE

D12 RESULT

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | "Been twenty years since it took her, my dear Daisy May. We walked hand-in-hand into that cursed wood. We were adventurous back in those days. Got down on my knee in front of the biggest tree of the wood. It was like a dream, slow and hazy. Last thing I heard before we both fell into that slumber was her saying 'yes,' but when I woke up she was gone, and I swear that tree looked bigger than it did when I first went out." |
| 2 | "I tried to tell that Rollo Boffin fellow that I saw a black dog prowling about his garden last night after coming straight out of a thicket in the High Hay, but he waved me off as if I was mad!" |
| 3 | "A Dwarf I tell you! I saw a Dwarf dancing and singing in the forest as clearly as I see you now! Speaking some kind of nonsense, he was, too." |
| 4 | "Mad Baggins didn't find any treasure in some far-off Dwarf-hold. He snuck away and got lost in the Old Forest for nigh on a year. Drove him right mad it did, and all his stories we've heard these past years are nothing but fairy stories and idle gossip." |
| 5 | "Hobbits I tell you! Living right there in the heart of the Old Forest and right upon the banks of the Withywindle. No, I ain't got no proof, but they've got a mischievous light in their eyes and seem a bit too merry for ones to be living in so dour a place. Never you mind how much I've had from Gorbadoc's personal brew!" |
| 6 | "I say ain't no strangeness in that forest except the ones put there by that wizard Gandalf. I'd bet my gaffer's soup spoon he's got some secret tower with all manner of magic leaking through the stone and twisting the forest." |
| 7 | "Wrapped right around my ankle it was, as strong as a fist that root! I took my ax to it and wouldn't you know, it recoiled like a serpent waking from a summer nap. I can't rightly say if the trees in that forest get up and walk as some would have it, but I know what I saw with my own two eyes." |
| 8 | "Been slippin' into that wood since I was a tween and I tell you, I ain't never seen no path that runs that way. Ain't no roads nor game trails that close up behind a Hobbit as he walks. Not outside of tavern tales and children's stories." |
| 9 | "I heard it speak as clear as I hear you! It told me to leave. Yes, I know the branch full of leaves told me to leave, but you mind what you're laughing about when you know nothing." |
| 10 | "So there I was, as lost as I could be. I knew if I didn't get back before nightfall, I was in for trouble, and I'm not afraid to say I called out for help - but the air itself ate my words right up. But wouldn't you know it? A badger came plodding out of the brush as pleased as punch, and looked me in the eye as if he understood every word I said. Led me home he did, but I never saw him again." |
| 11 | "That branch tried to reach right over the Hedge, and snatch poor Marybelle clean off her feet and into the forest. I saw it myself, but by the time the Hedge guard came over, it seemed like it was nothing but wind and the drooping of a low branch." |
| 12 | "I heard there's an Elf-maiden that lives in the Old Forest, singing songs upon the banks of the Withywindle and walking upon water lilies. They say that if you brew tea from those lilies she's walked upon you can speak the fairy tongue as if you were born to it!" |

BREREDON

Often forgotten or even wilfully ignored by even the Hobbits of Buckland for their willingness to dwell beyond the High Hay, there is a tiny community of fishermen somewhere just beyond the Hedge inside the borders of Old Forest itself. Known as Brereton, it stands near a small landing on the Withywindle, protected by a barrier they call the Grindwall that extends into the water.

The folk of Brereton, when encountered at all by other Hobbits, are a fey lot even by Buckland standards. They

are prodigious smokers, and have a particular fondness for rhymes and riddles, which even they do not recall from where they learned — though these nonsense songs have been passed down for as long as any can remember and new ones even spring unbidden into the minds of Brereton Hobbit children from time to time. The Hobbits in Haysend claim to hear these merry and foolish songs coming up over the High Hay on warm summer nights — if you can pull such a tale out of those ill-tempered folks.

STRANGE SONGS

Visitors staying the night in Haysend, or in Brereton itself, may get to hear one or two of the outlandish songs sung by those strange Old Forest dwellers.

The Loremaster can roll a d12 to see which songs are sung on such a night.

BREREDON TALES TABLE

D20 RESULT

1	"Go not, go not, for trees remember! First to burn in blackened embers!"
2	"Lights they dance, from Rushey to the Forests of Cardolan. Spirits in the Woodlands, Ghosts of Northern Kings of Man."
3	"Whisper not words and threats to Old Man Willow. Unless blue your jacket be, and your boots be yellow."
4	"Badger-Brock is a friend of mine! Treat him well, treat him kind!"
5	"Wandering dog, he's not returned! Blackened beast in bonfire burned!"
6	"Hear you not the song of the Master and his River-Wife? Take his gifted lilies or instead take strife!"
7	"Trespass, trespass, walker in the wood. Hateful trees, and harmful wood. Raise no ax and no secrets tell, lest you be forgotten, and you be felled."
8	"In the house, in the house the Master waits. Greet him kindly at his gates. Remain awake if you are able, until you sit at Orald's table!"
9	"Gold be the berry unplucked from the tree, dancing upon the lilies fairest among the free."
10	"Old songs are foolish, yes it's true. But such was power when the world was new."
11	"Blades in barrows, deathless kings entombed, Elf-Lord spoke Black Captain's doom."
12	"Saw the golden lady I did, walking upon the Withy waters. As fair as morning dew she was, a River and her daughter."

The high hay

The High Hay is a thick hedge rising thrice the height of a Hobbit, and running for the length of the eastern border of Buckland, almost ten leagues from the East Road in the North, to the village of Haysend in the south. If you listen to those living in Buckland, the High Hay is the true border of the Shire, a claim disputed only by those traditionalists who live west of the Brandywine. Three openings allow passage to the other side — the North Gate, leading to the East Road and guarded day and night, a private tunnel near Crickhollow used by members of the Brandybuck clan, and a southern gate opening in the vicinity of the village of Haysend.

Old lore holds that the Hedge (another name for the High Hay) was planted by order of Gorhendad Oldbuck upon the very day he claimed the surrounding land as his own. According to the stories, the trees of the Old Forest itself rose up in revolt years later, enraged at having a border forced upon them. They leaned over the Hedge, threatening

to smash through it, and were driven back only when the Buckland Hobbits burnt hundreds of trees, feeding a bonfire that went on for days on end, gaining them the hostility of the Forest. A glade opens on the spot where that fire raged, as no trees will grow near it.

The Hobbits of Buckland maintain a constant vigilance over the High Hay. Guards armed with axes as well as flint and tinder walk its edge, planting fresh seeds and cutting away wayward vines to ensure that the Old Forest remains in its place.

NEWBURY

Nestled just a few miles north of Bucklebury and cradled along the edge of the Old Forest, the village of Newbury is considered a recent addition to the region, even if its foundation goes back to a time no one in Buckland can remember. With no Bounders crossing the Brandywine and the shadow of the Old Forest on their doorstep, many of the folk in

Newbury keep a wary eye on the darkness when the night comes, tending to the Hedge and even making rare expeditions into the woodland proper. Still, they always return before nightfall, and there's never been a tale of one going without a proper bow and quiver along with their sturdy walking stick. More than one has even gone in with an axe at their belt!

The locals that gather at Hugo's Gruff, a tiny local inn of comparatively poor quality to those found in the Shire, regularly hear tales of unnatural goings on in the Old Forest, and on windy autumn nights, many locals claim that they can hear baleful noises echoing up from over the High Hay.

STANDELF

Standelf is found at the end of the road going south from Bucklebury. Built around a stone quarry that was abandoned long ago, the village is composed of ancient and sturdy stone houses with thatched roofs. The folk of Standelf carry on a good trade across the Brandywine with the Hobbits of Rushey, forging the bog iron harvested there into axes and other tools. In return, they keep that community well stocked with pork and wild berries, both of which are found in abundance in the village.



A DINNER AT HUGO'S GRUFF

Though not as hospitable as the tables in Bucklebury and Brandy Hall, the folk of Newbury tell outlandish tales on quiet nights, even for Bucklanders.

The Loremaster can roll a d12 to see what yarn they're spinning on any particular night.

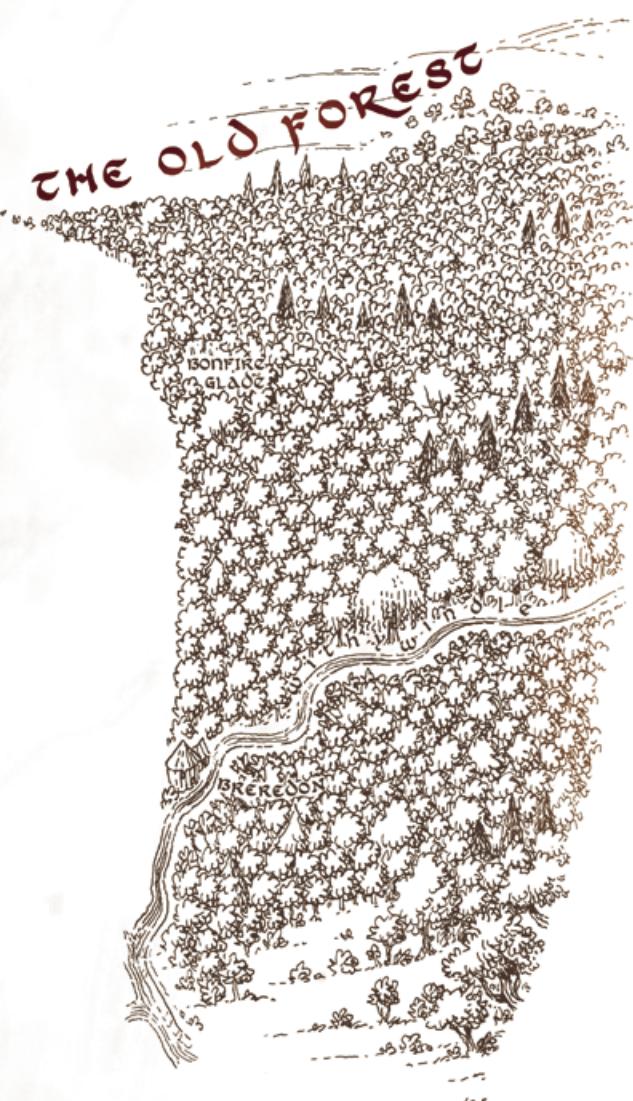
NEWBURY TALES TABLE

D12 RESULT

1	"Of course the animals in the Old Forest can talk! Everything can! The birds, the beasts, the trees! Got a sorcerous master they all do, and he'll transform you into a furry critter just to bind you to his service he will - all with a promise and a song."
2	"All those birds and beasts you see in the woods? They used to be Hobbits. But you go too deep and you get transformed - forever."
3	"A bearded Hobbit lives in those woods and he's taken a fairy wife. It's true. I seen 'em dancing together beneath the trees in midsummer."
4	"Watch the trees, they say. I say watch the thorns. You prick a finger on a thorn in the Old Forest, and the oaks and elms and willows get a taste for your blood. Drain you dry they will, leaving your husk out for the crows that lurk in the Barrow-downs beyond."
5	"Brandybucks didn't come outta no Shire! They came from the east, I tell you. Walked right out the Old Forest planning on taking the Shire for their own. Ain't real Hobbits, but spirits that just look like Shire folk."
6	"Bees in that wood are as big as sparrows. Swarm on you and carry you away they will - never to be seen again."
7	"They say if you die under the eaves of the Old Forest, your body gets wrapped in vines and sunken into the soil forever, until the land claims everything about you - even your memory, and no Hobbit remembers you ever existed."
8	"Only thing keeping the forest from reclaiming Buckland are secret runes written on the North Gate. Put there by Gandalf the Grey they were, and invisible to the likes of you and me."
9	"Yes, I tried to join the guards that mind the High Hay, but I wasn't willing to go into the Old Forest alone and make a pact with the dark spirits near the Bonfire Glade. It's not right, I tell you. Not right at all."
10	"All a bunch of poppycock, I say. Ain't nothing strange about that wood except for the mine at the center. That's right, a mine! Dwarves moving through the Shire are slipping into the Old Forest where they dig for gold. That's where Baggins really got his 'Dwarf gold.'"
11	"Ain't the trees moving in that place, but a family of Trolls living on the banks of the Withywindle. Want nothing to do with the likes of you and me. Just want to be left to their own peace."
12	"Anyone foolish enough to drink the water from the Withywindle ages a hundred years in a day. Why do you think they call it the 'Old' Forest?"

THE OLD FOREST

It was not called the Old Forest without reason, for it was indeed ancient, a survivor of vast forgotten woods; and in it there lived yet, ageing no quicker than the hills, the fathers of the fathers of trees, remembering times when they were lords.



Not part of the Shire proper, even by the standards of the Bucklanders, the Old Forest warrants more than a bit of discussion, in spite of what proper Shire-Hobbits might claim. Unwillingly bordered on its western side by the Hedge, it runs clean over the Withywindle in the south before very nearly touching the dreaded Barrow-downs, farther from the Shire than any sensible Hobbit would dare to walk. Its northern end is visible to anyone crossing the Brandywine and making their way east to Bree. To the few Hobbits that dare to make such a journey, the road takes a northerly turn and moves further away from the shadowy eaves of the Old Forest as it goes.

Little is said of the Old Forest by folks in the Shire, and even less is believed. Many hold it to be extremely old, much more than its name would suggest. Trees that were ancient when Marcho and Blanco were young still grow there, and many tales claim that they offer naught but malice to any that dare to invade their domain. Particularly foolish tweens, reckless even by the standards of a Brandybuck, challenge each other to sneak beyond the High Hay and touch the closest tree within its borders. Even this game is only played on the brightest of summer days, and it is never a solitary endeavour.

All manner of queer tales find their origins in the Old Forest. From enchanted fairy maidens that use scented flowers to entrap foolish travellers, to the fearsome Master of the Forest capable of ordering the trees to rise from their roots and devour trespassers. Even the river that runs through the heart of the Old Forest, the Withywindle, is said to lull any who drink from its water into a magical slumber from which they will never awaken.

In the end, no Hobbit of any sense thinks too deeply about the truth of the Old Forest, let alone ventures within it. Even so, legends persist that there are some among the Shire-folk who dare to make such journeys in search of some secret wisdom, which they keep private from their fellows.

STRANGE ENCOUNTERS IN THE OLD FOREST

Should the Player-heroes choose to venture into the Old Forest, the Loremaster can roll a d12 on the following

table to determine what the ill-tempered trees and savage beasts have in store for these wayward wanderers.

OLD FOREST ENCOUNTERS TABLE

D12	RESULT	DESCRIPTION
1	The Great Willow	The Company has been drawn by the malicious queerness of the forest towards the Withywindle valley, close to where Old Man Willow lives. The evil-hearted tree tries to lure them with its spell (see page 55).
2	Clawing and Falling Branches	The trees sway and rock as the Player-heroes pass by, seeming to claw with hard wooden talons at their skin, and heavy branches fall suddenly and hard upon them. Attempting to pull free or dodge out of the way of these dangers requires a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Those who fail are struck by a fallen branch or find their arms and legs cut by clutching limbs that refuse for a long time to release them, and take 5 (1d10) slashing damage.
3	Dazzling Leaves	The wanderers find themselves entranced by the dance of the leaves in the bright, thin rays of the sun. This vision of enchantment lingers in their minds, causing each Player-hero to gain 2 Shadow points (DC 15 Intelligence saving throw to resist), as they try to drive away the haunting images that continue to plague them during their time in the Old Forest.
4	Irritating Flies	Swarms of stinging flies assault the Company, mercilessly biting any exposed flesh. Swatting and dodging seems to do no good. It is long before the cloud moves on, and each character must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 1 poison damage and become poisoned for 24 hours due to the miserable, lingering pain.
5	Mad Eyes Upon You	The trees! You swear they're watching you! They haven't eyes, but you know they're watching you as you pass, an unwelcome guest waiting to be expelled. Any minute they could strike, and their predatory gaze is driving you mad! Each Player-hero gains 2 Shadow points from Dread (DC 15 Charisma saving throw to resist).
6	Tangling Roots	Roots and vines seem to twist and writhe, binding the Player-heroes' legs. Slowly they tighten, until becoming quite painful. Unless they succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw, they take 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage.
7-9	Twisting Paths	The trees appear to have moved when the Player-heroes weren't looking, and the path they were following seems to have closed off. Looking back, they see the road behind them is not as they remember it. Roll two more times on this table.
10	Ivy Most Unkind	The Player-heroes have walked through a patch of leafy ivy and lichen that has caused their skin to break out in painful welts. They each must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (1d10) poison damage. The damage can be avoided also with a successful DC 15 Intelligence check using either Medicine or a herbalism kit.
11	Caught in a Thorny Garden	The Player-heroes have stumbled into a great bramble of thorns, startling a family of badgers. Several of these beasts chitter and seem rather cross at this intrusion. Tearing themselves free of the thorns requires a Player-hero to succeed on a DC 10 Strength or Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) piercing damage on a failure. If the Player-heroes ask the badgers for aid and succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, the badgers will lead them from the thorns without injury.
12	A Song in from the Rushes	The low and gentle voice of a lady singing is heard to the south, filled with hope and beauty. It stirs the hearts of all who hear it before fading away. All Player-heroes who succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw (their choice) gain inspiration.

GOLDBERRY, THE RIVER-DAUGHTER

Beautiful and calm, the elusive maiden some call Goldberry possesses an Elvish kind of beauty. She is an enchantment and a mystery to all whom she encounters. Golden-haired and clad in a dress of reeds and living flowers, she springs lightly as the wind upon the banks of the river. Singing with the natural beauty of a summer rain, she shares songs that raise the hearts of all who are blessed to hear her. She conceals herself well in the Old Forest, and though some believe her to be a river-spirit,

no one knows her true nature – only that she is the lady of the Master, Tom Bombadil, and that he regularly dotes upon her by plucking water lilies from the banks of the Withywindle to present to her as token of his love.

The blessed few who hear the song of Goldberry the River-Daughter find their fear driven back, and all darkness seems far away. Hearts are lightened by the joy of her presence and the fairness of her voice, and those who hear her gain inspiration from the gift of such a song and a smile.



TOM BOMBADIL, THE MASTER

Tom Bombadil is a truly unknowable being. His simple, joyful existence is one spent in song, gathering tokens for his beloved wife Goldberry, and playing mischievous games with the woodland creatures. He walks with a merry step, singing songs that seem to be naught but nonsense. In spite of his lightness of heart, or perhaps because of it, no ill thing of the Old Forest can set itself against him. Indeed, there is no evil that has touched his heart, and his true nature is unknown, even to the Wise. He stands taller than a Hobbit, yet less so than a Man, and is clad in a blue jacket, great yellow boots, and sports a full beard as brown as the fertile soil upon which he dances.

It would be foolish to dismiss his strange songs as nonsense though, for Tom is as old as old, as wise as wise, and for all his merriment, has knowledge beyond measure. Whether it is the gladness in his heart that prevents any evil from threatening him or it is the nature of his spirit no one can say — Tom is the Master

of the Old Forest, and unconcerned with affairs beyond his domain.

Should Player-heroes find themselves invited to stay by Tom Bombadil in his house, they will find their hearts lightened and their hope restored. They will be invited to feast and sing and tell tales to Tom and his beloved wife Goldberry in return for this hospitality.

Anyone acting in a respectful manner and joining Tom in this merry making can make a DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check. Those who succeed gain inspiration. In addition, if the check succeeds by 5 or more and the characters bring with them any beasts of burden or hounds, those creatures will be blessed to remain keen of mind and stout of heart for the rest of their days. The Intelligence score of such a creature increases to 4, and it gains proficiency in all saving throws. Such a beast will understand the verbal commands of their master, and will always be able to find their way back to Tom if they become lost in the Old Forest or Barrow-downs.

The house of TOM BOMBADIL

Just beyond the Old Forest to the east, where the Withywindle runs down from its spring in the Barrow-downs, and known to few save those who were brought to it by the Master himself, is the warm and inviting House of Tom Bombadil. Found over a hill and under that same hill, those who are guided there and invited inside find comfort and lightened hearts beyond any they could imagine in the Old Forest. The grass nearby is shorn, and the forest is tended as if a garden or manicured hedge, and an easy path leads to a house of stone with golden light shining through the windows.

Those who take refuge here do so only by the will of Bombadil and at his invitation. Under his roof and at his table, they will find their heart contented with peaceful slumber, fine company, joyous song, and all the simple pleasures that come with a humble heart. Lamps hang, casting a warm light over a wooden table that is often laden with food, with a single empty chair set before it as if awaiting a woodland queen to take her proper seat.

Guests are welcomed with plates of berries and honey and given warm mattresses to sleep upon. They will find sleep comes easy, and none of the nightly noises will set fear into their hearts.

The WITHYWINdle

This small dark river of brown water owes its name to the many ancient willows that border its banks, arch over it, and sometimes even block its course with fallen logs and thousands of faded willow-leaves. It gently flows from the uplands of the Barrow-downs to the east, into the Brandywine to the west, and crosses the entire width of the Old Forest. Mist clings to its banks on autumn mornings, and no Hobbits of Buckland or the Shire dares to set a boat into its waters, in spite of its easy flow. Only the Hobbits of Brereton keep a small landing from where they mostly cast rods for fishing.

The folk of Haysend claim the Withywindle belongs to no one, save the River-Daughter, whom they say to be as fair and beautiful as summer, and as elusive as a dream. They say that the occasional water lily that is seen floating along in its current is a sign of her presence, and should be taken as an omen of good luck. Some even believe that those who listen closely can hear her singing, though no one has ever seen her when these songs of soft joy are heard on spring winds.



OLD MAN WILLOW

Deep in the Old Forest, somewhere along the banks of the Withywindle, grows a great and twisted willow tree, gnarled and hoary, with its great branches hanging over the dark water and its roots drinking deep. Unlike the River-Daughter, it has a fearful reputation, and the Hobbits of Buckland speak of it only in whispers and fearful verses. Its grey and yellow leaves sway softly in the breeze, though there is an aura of ill-will that seems to radiate from its trunk. The few Bucklanders that have seen it say this tree is as old as the earth itself, while the Hobbits of Breredon believe it is a thirsty earth-bound spirit that has been imprisoned in the greatest willow of the Old Forest. Whatever the truth is, it is likely known to no one.

Old Man Willow, as he is named by the Master, is a hateful thing that sets his ill will towards any Hobbits or other interloping invaders of the Old Forest. His swaying leaves put a spell on all those who see them or hear their rustle, setting weariness in their body until all they wish to do is lean against his trunk and surrender to the foul enchantment. Once asleep, under those shading branches and with their back against that gnarled bark, Old Man Willow opens his roots. The slumbering traveller falls in and is never seen again.

Old Man Willow

Huge plant

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	1 (-5)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

ARMOUR CLASS 16 (natural armour)

HIT POINTS 138 (12d12 + 60)

SPEED 0 ft.

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES fire

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, charmed, deafened, prone

SENSES blindsight 120 ft., tremorsense 120 ft.,

passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Westron, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP, proficiency bonus +4)

ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. Old Man Willow makes two root attacks.

GREAT WILLOW'S SPELL. Every creature within 500 feet of Old Man Willow gains 2 Shadow points from Sorcery, resisted by a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a target becomes charmed for 24 hours. While charmed by Old Man Willow, a target is incapacitated. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target gains 4 Shadow points instead of 2 and has disadvantage on Intelligence saving throws while charmed in this way. If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away from Old Man Willow, the target must move on its turn toward Old Man Willow by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into a hazard, such as thorns or water, and whenever it takes damage, a target can repeat the saving throw. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

If the charmed target ends its turn within 5 feet of Old Man Willow, it falls asleep and is unconscious and no longer charmed. The target awakens if it takes damage or another creature takes an action to wake it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to Old Man Willow's spell for the next 24 hours.

ROOT. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is prone and restrained, has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity checks, and Old Man Willow cannot use the same root on another target.

TRUNK CRUSH. Old Man Willow crushes a Large or smaller creature grappled by it. The target is blinded and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or take 32 (4d12 + 6) bludgeoning damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage.





The CONSPIRACY OF THE RED BOOK

*"Then we formed our conspiracy; and as we were serious, too,
and meant business, we have not been too scrupulous."*



INTRODUCTION

In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit.

This section contains five adventures, to be played using the pre-generated characters included in this publication. While they can be played as separate scenarios, the adventures can be linked together, allowing the players to explore the width and breadth of the Shire and beyond. They all take place in or around the year 2960 of the Third Age (or 1360 by Shire Reckoning), though the date is flexible and the Loremaster can adjust it if need be.

When run as linked scenarios, the Loremaster should run *A Conspiracy Most Cracked* first, *Involuntary Postmen* as the next to last, and *To Soothe a Savage Beast* as the finale. The remaining adventures can be run in any order.

The Loremaster can reference the locations detailed in the adventures by consulting the geographical section of this book, and make use of the various suggestions, rules, and tables found therein.

With the exception of *To Soothe a Savage Beast*, all adventures share the same approximate level of difficulty.

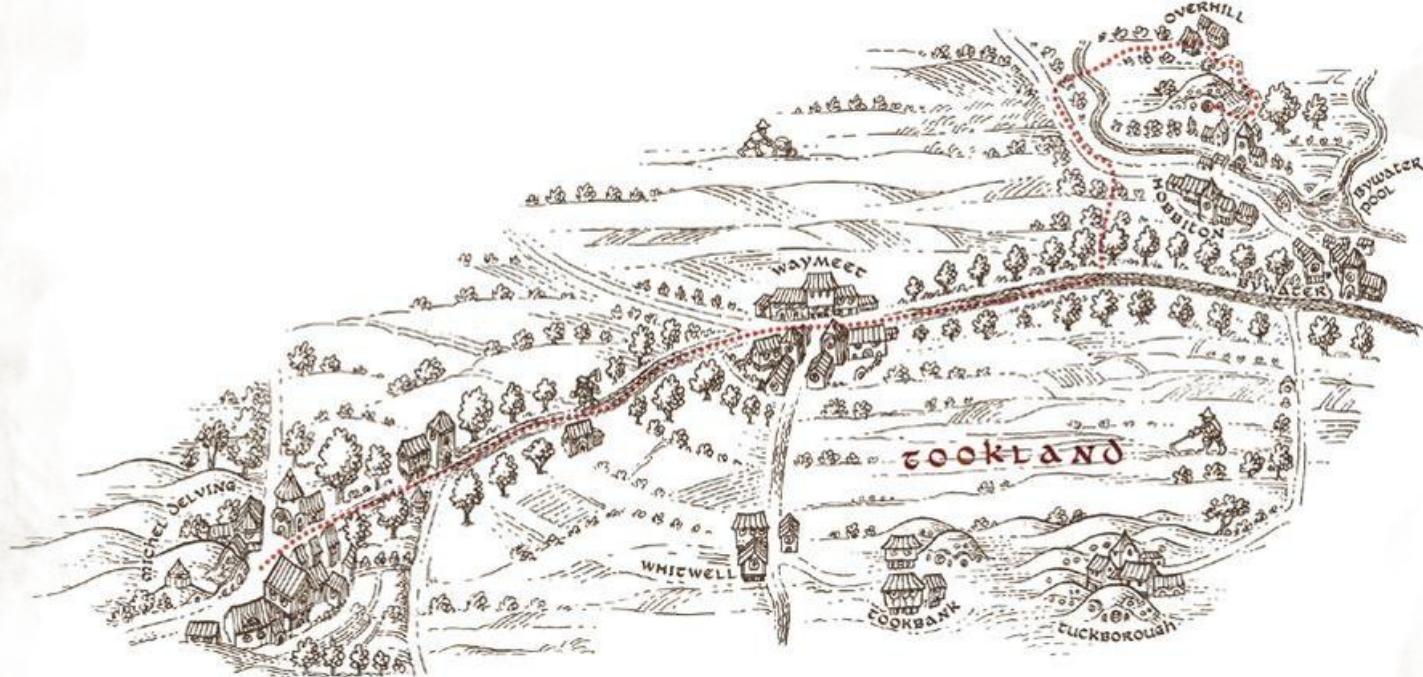
USING THE PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

This publication includes eight pre-generated Player-heroes. Initially, the players may each select one of the six Hobbits: Drogo Baggins, Paladin Took, Rorimac Brandybuck, Primula Brandybuck, Esmeralda Took, and Lobelia Bracegirdle. Loremasters should allow the players the opportunity to review each of these pre-generated characters and choose which one they'd like to play through the scenarios detailed in this book.

As the story unfolds, two new heroes will become available as Player-heroes. The Loremaster is encouraged to keep these new heroes a secret until they become available, so as to not spoil the surprise for the players. These additional pre-generated characters are the Dwarf Balin, son of Fundin, and Bilbo Baggins himself!

A CONSPIRACY MOST CRACKED

“... we formed our conspiracy; and as we were serious, too, and meant business ...”



Mad Baggins is at it again, and has gathered in Bag End a new cabal of adventurous spirits whom he has named the Conspirators of the Red Book (the Player-heroes). In an effort to gather notes for his book, he has asked these friends, under promise of payment and a bit of adventure, to help him confirm some important details about the history of the Shire and its people. The first and most important item is a map of the Shire that is kept locked away in the Mathom-house, at Michel Delving, which he believes was sketched by none other than the Old Took himself! These conscripted conspirators will need to travel there, slip past any watch without arousing suspicion, and pilfer the ancient map before returning to Bag End.

This should be the first scenario run, as it sets the stage for all the others. It occurs during the spring or summer of 1360 Shire Reckoning (2960 Third Age). The action begins at Bag End, and then moves on to Michel Delving and back.

PART ONE: OFF INTO THE BLUE

The first part of this adventure is little more than a Hobbit walking party, an easy entry into the life of an errant adventurer. It will take the Player-heroes over the river west of Bywater and to the village of Waymeet, where they'll need to avoid local gossip mongers.

The Loremaster is encouraged to read or paraphrase the following text to open the adventure.

After quite a long walk under stars that have come out blazing and bright after an afternoon of heavy rain, you've finally come to the round green door of Bag End, the home of the strange and famous Bilbo Baggins. Standing there upon the mat, you find yourself surrounded by distant relations. It seems as though Bilbo called for a collection of cousins to join him this evening. Just as one of you is about to ring the bell, the door is pulled open and you see standing in the front hall none other than Master Baggins himself. He offers each of you an energetic greeting and quickly ushers you in with a plethora of welcomes, thank yous, and lovely to see yous.

Before you can gather your wits about you, you've been swept into the warm embrace of Bag End, and led into the parlour where a lovely fire, fresh mugs of ale, plates of dainties, and several cushioned chairs and sofas offer a much-needed spot of rest and relaxation. Bilbo, a twinkle in his eye, ushers you each into a seat but takes none for himself. A few moments after you've finished the first plate of food, the obviously excited Master Baggins can no longer contain himself. He places one hand behind his back and another in his vest pocket, standing tall to ensure he has your attention.

"You are all, undoubtedly, curious as to why I've called you here this evening. Well," he leans in, the firelight causing the twinkle in his eye to dance merrily. His hand sweeps from behind his back towards the parlour window. "I am hoping you will partake in a little adventure! Nothing so grand as my own, I'm afraid: but in return for your aid, I will provide each of you with a place in my memoirs, and a fair share of my eternal gratitude."

He grabs a glass of wine off the table and takes a sip, pausing for effect. "Now, I know what you're thinking: There goes Old Bilbo again, taking after that Wizard Gandalf and sending you Hobbits off into the blue. Well, I can assure you it is nothing of the sort. Just a little trip to Michel Delving and back to recover what one might call a family heirloom from the Mathom-house: a map of the Shire supposedly made by the Old Took himself, with all sorts of precious annotations. Now, I've sent many letters to the custodian, Malva Slowfoot,

asking if I could have it back, even offering fairly generous donations: but for some reason, she has provided no replies.

So, I thought that we needn't tell her or her husband — after all, we're talking about something that belonged to my grandfather, and that would not be out of place here, in Bag End. Most of all, we needn't alert that pesky dog that the Slowfoots have set to guard the place! Sharp as a tack, that beast, and he sniffs me out every time I've come near. Besides, I know some of you place more value on local gossip than others — and even just being seen at night in the Company of 'Mad Baggins' might be enough to ruin your reputation forever. But for those of you with spirit — which I know you all have in spades, or I'd have not called you here tonight — won't you aid me on this errand of particular importance, my fellow conspirators?"

Bilbo will offer each of them a fine night's rest in one of the many spare bedrooms of Bag End, and a hearty breakfast, before telling them he plans on sending them out the door after second breakfast.

To keep the trip away from the prying eyes of the nosy Hobbits of Hobbiton and Bywater, Bilbo has laid out a path for the conspirators, instructing them to head north from Bag End into Overhill and turn west across the country for a few miles, before crossing a shallow point in the Water. Then, after crossing the Bywater Road, they will reach the East Road and set out west towards Waymeet, where they'll take rest for the evening before arriving at Michel Delving the next day.

GETTING ACROSS THE WATER

The morning dawns bright and clear, perfect for a nice walk about the Shire. The first true obstacle reveals itself soon after they leave Overhill — the Water has become swifter with recent rain, and the shallow ford where Bilbo told them to cross looks a bit more treacherous.

The Player-heroes must now consider their circumstances and find a solution.

Crossing the Water requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Player-heroes who succeed by 5 or more swim across with flair, or can help others who find it harder to wade across. Hobbits who fail their check suffer one level of exhaustion and return to the near bank, coughing and spluttering, and fully soaked.

If the Player-heroes look for other means of crossing, a successful DC 5 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check allows them to spot a large hollow log on the other side of the Water, which could easily bear the weight of a Hobbit.



Bilbo Baggins

To retrieve the log, the Hobbits must summon their adventurous side and get inventive.

For example, the feat can be accomplished by using a rope and hook (a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check), or even by shooting an arrow with an attached line (AC 10). Success means that they manage to get a good hold on the log and can easily pull it to themselves. Another way could be to have the best swimmer among them get to the other side, fetch the log and swim back.

Dry or soaked, the Hobbits will eventually find a way, and reach Waymeet after a good walk on the East Road.

WELL MET IN WAYMEET

Waymeet itself is quite active on the evening when the Player-heroes arrive, as the tables set outside the Walking Party Inn are still occupied, thanks to the fair weather and lengthening daylight hours. The locals are polite, though very curious about what brings a crowd of Hobbits so diverse this far west at such a late hour.

Avoiding inquiries as to the nature of their business without offending the locals can be done with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Riddle) or Charisma (Deception) check. On a failure, they reveal a bit too much about their involvement with Mad Baggins: the conversation soon dries up among puzzled and disapproving looks, and all checks when interacting with Bounders to have disadvantage until the end of this adventure.

Finding lodging for the night proves a little harder... It seems that all beds at the Walking Party Inn are taken, booked by a group of pipe-weed merchants headed for Longbottom. Asking around, they are pointed to a local farmer, one Baldo Bunce, who appears to have some spare room in his stables. Bunce offers to let the Player-heroes sleep in his premises (which are comfortable enough, given the warm nights and soft hay) — but only if they can drive off a huge and menacing owl that's been troubling Gertrude, his poor old plough mule.

If the players accept, Bunce offers to pay for their meal that night at the Walking Party, before leading them to his farm, less than a quarter mile south of the Waymeet cross-roads. He shows them into the barn and then brings them blankets, along with a small basket of some leftover bread and ale from the afternoon as an evening snack. Baldo never noses into their business and apologises profusely for his lack of hospitality, saying he doesn't have much room inside his small cottage. Nevertheless, he fully expects them to have that damned owl gone by morning. When Baldo is done talking, an eerie hoot rings out through the barn, as if on cue, and the tiny mule sitting idly in the rear of the place stirs.

The Player-heroes can get rid of the great owl if they politely inform him with a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check that there are no more mice in the barn and that he's bothering Gertrude. If the check is successful, the owl flies off almost as if he understood them. Alternatively, a DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check can scare the bird away, but it counts as a Misdeed worth 1 point of Shadow.

If the large bird is scared off rather than politely urged, it leaves, but first looks pointedly from the Player-heroes to Gertrude, the mule, and hoots at her to which she replies with a brief bray. It seems almost as if the two are talking! The owl is commenting to the mule about how he was treated by the Player-heroes and will inform the other animals he knows about these rude Hobbits (the Loremaster should remember to make any future interactions with the beasts of the Shire more difficult).

The rest of the evening passes uneventfully, and a few minutes after the rooster crows, Bunce wakes the characters and bids them a polite but firm farewell.

PART TWO: MATHOMS OF MICHEL DELVING

Setting out from Waymeet, the conspirators will arrive at Michel Delving by the end of the day. Here, they will begin their adventure in earnest, having to confusticate Bounders, confuse custodians, and face curious canines as they attempt the clandestine recovery of the Old Took's map from the Mathom-house. Once the deed is done, they'll need to make a hasty retreat from Michel Delving before their dubious activities are noticed!

After a bit of a stiff sleep in Bunce's barn and a long westward walk, the conspirators finally reach the edges of Michel Delving upon the White Downs. The Loremaster may read or paraphrase the following text.

You pass the spot where a southward path leads off from the main course of the East Road, just as the sun sets and the first stars begin to reveal themselves. Ahead, you get a good look at Michel Delving upon the White Downs. Quite a bit larger than Hobbiton, it is a tightly packed collection of homes built of wood, brick, and stone, and the occasional Hobbit-hole. But as the last of its people go about their evening business, your eye cannot help but be drawn to the massive smial to one side of the great cobblestone thoroughfare running through the centre of town: the Town Hole, seat of the Mayor of the Shire.

But more important to your business is what lies south of the Town Hole, on an adjacent hillock not quite so tall and green — it is a large wooden building with a great red round door that is connected to the main road by way of a small stone path. This is the Mathom-house, the museum of the Shire, your destination.

As candles flicker to life behind windows, and Hobbitfolk settle in for the evening, you notice a handful of Hobbits carrying stout cudgels and tiny lanterns strolling about. Bounders, undoubtedly making their usual rounds. Best to avoid them, though, lest your mischief be discovered and thwarted.

BURGLARS IN MICHEL DELVING

The conspirators face their greatest challenge so far — to reach and gain access to the Mathom-house without anyone noticing.

To get to the Mathom-house without the Bounders noticing requires each character to succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check. A single failure slips by unnoticed, but a second failure means a Bounder approaches and questions them.

The Bounder approaching the conspirators is Ada Burrows, a young and enthusiastic Hobbit from Little Delving. This is one of her first assignments, and she takes her duty to ask questions of wanderers found outside after nightfall very seriously.

Convincing Ada that they are doing nothing untoward requires the Player-heroes to make a DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check, should they try to confuse her with clever words or distractions.

Failing to convince Ada worsens the conspirators' predicament considerably — the Bounder questions them extensively before she lets them go, and then she walks to the Mathom-house and locks the front door! Now it will be impossible to gain entrance through it.

Inspecting the grounds surrounding the Mathom-house for other ways to enter reveals that, though the door is locked and the windows barred, there is a small skylight opening on the roof. Additionally, at some distance from the Mathom-house and sticking out of the side of the hill upon which the museum sits is an old door that may lead into the basement of the establishment.

Climbing up to the roof requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Failure results in a fall causing the loss of 3 (1d6) hit points. If two or more Player-heroes fail the check, they get caught up in a tumbled mess and everyone lands with a loud clatter that alerts the surprise guest waiting inside!

Once up there, the conspirators find the skylight to be unlocked. Landing safely on the floor inside the main hall of the Mathom-house requires a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (for the consequences of failure, see above).

Characters choosing to try the door on the side of the hill find that it leads to a narrow, cluttered underground chamber, a basement filled with all kinds of forgotten trinkets and thick

cobwebs. In fact, a small pack of rats has taken up residence here, fearful of the guardian that lives on the ground floor.

Scaring the rats off causes them to scurry away noisily and awaken the guard dog: avoiding this requires a successful DC 11 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

A trapdoor leading into the Mathom-house opens on the ceiling of the cellar, above a massive pile of antique pots and pans. To move them aside carefully requires a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check, lest they clatter to the floor and make all manner of noises (and awaken the guardian).

THE MATHOM-HOUSE, INSIDE AND OUT

Whether they entered the Mathom-house by way of the unlocked main door, or through the roof or the basement, the conspirators find themselves inside a great, high-ceilinged series of rooms, containing an impressive display of artefacts from across the history of the Shire. Shelves of books chronicling family genealogies and recipes passed down for generations line the walls, while a set of perfectly polished diamond studs are set on a pedestal under glass, and a pair of strange crossed walking sticks are mounted on one wall. Countless other knick-knacks and mathoms are on display. From old brass buttons mounted on a velvet board, to a gleaming coat of silver rings set to rest on a post in the corner. Though a wonder to behold, it is going to take a bit of doing to find the Old Took's map in this collection!

But the most concerning sight appearing in front of the searching conspirators as they enter is the grey and brown furred terrier, the fearsome guard dog kept by Malva the custodian! If the Player-heroes gained access to the museum without making noise, the dog is curled up asleep under a writing desk, letting out heavy snores. If they made noise entering, the terrier (whose name is "Firework") is well awake.

Malva Slowfoot
and Firework



If the dog is asleep, the Player-heroes may search for the map, but must do so quietly. This requires a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check — failing twice or more means they make noise and stir the dog. If they succeed, the conspirators locate the map of the Old Took — buried behind a stack of cookbooks on the bottom shelf of one of the bookcases. It is in surprisingly good condition, if a bit creased.

If the dog is awake, or if the Player-heroes stirred him, they all must make a Dexterity (Stealth) check against his passive Perception (see below). If they fail, the dog eyes them before letting out an inquisitive bark. He is not fierce, but friendly and energetic. Unfortunately, he expresses his excitement at having found new friends by barking. Calming the dog requires a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. If the check succeeds, then the dog is lulled back to sleep.

If Firework is not pacified, sooner or later the noise will draw the attention of some local Hobbit — a Bounder, or, worse, a Shirriff!

Beating poor Firework unconscious, or worse killing him, counts as a vile Misdeed, earning the perpetrators of such a dastardly deed 4 Shadow points each!

SLIPPING OUT OF TOWN

Once they have what they came for, the conspirators can easily unlock the front door from the inside and escape.

If Firework has been alerted, slipping out of Michel Delving will require some further planning to avoid someone noticing a group of sneaking Hobbits followed by a barking dog. If the Player-heroes are not wary on the way out, a Bounder or two might still notice them slip away, and remember their faces in days to come.

Finally, if they were not explicitly careful, the conspirators have in all likelihood left evidence that something is missing from the Mathom-house. By mid-morning of the next day, the news that someone broke into the Mathom-house is all over Michel Delving, and within a few more it spreads across the Westfarthing.

EPILOGUE

Once the conspirators return to Bag End, the Loremaster should read the following text:

After your successful recovery of the Old Took's map of the Shire and swift journey home, you're greeted by the green door of Bag End being thrown open like a pop gun to reveal a grinning Bilbo standing on the doorstep, walking stick in hand. "You found it! Wonderful, simply wonderful!"

STEALING MATHOMS

The Loremaster is encouraged to remind any players who bring up the idea of purloining any of the more choice mathoms in the Mathom-house that such behaviour is unbecoming of a respectable Hobbit. It's one thing to take something on a mission sponsored by Bilbo Baggins himself, but quite another to take advantage of the situation! Characters that even bring up such an act should be ashamed of themselves.

Though eager, Bilbo ushers you in with a hasty wave of his hand. "Come on, we'll need to review my grandfather's map quickly tonight if we're to set off on our next adventure! This remarkable find of yours makes me believe I'm quite ready for another adventure!"

Bilbo and the other conspirators can relax for a time. Bilbo prepares a fine meal for everyone and asks about the whole affair. After hearing the story, he cannot help but laugh, adding that he is ready to join them on their next adventure!

Bilbo Baggins is now available to be chosen as a Player-hero for the next adventure! The Loremaster should give everyone in the play group the opportunity to choose the veteran burglar as their character.

At the end of this adventure, the Loremaster should award each Player-hero 75 to 150 XP, depending on how brilliantly they completed Bilbo's "errand".

Firework the Guard Dog

Tiny beast

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

ARMOUR CLASS 14

HIT POINTS 1 (1d4 - 1)

SPEED 40 ft.

SKILLS Perception +5

SENSES passive Perception 15 (20 when relying on hearing or smell)

LANGUAGES -

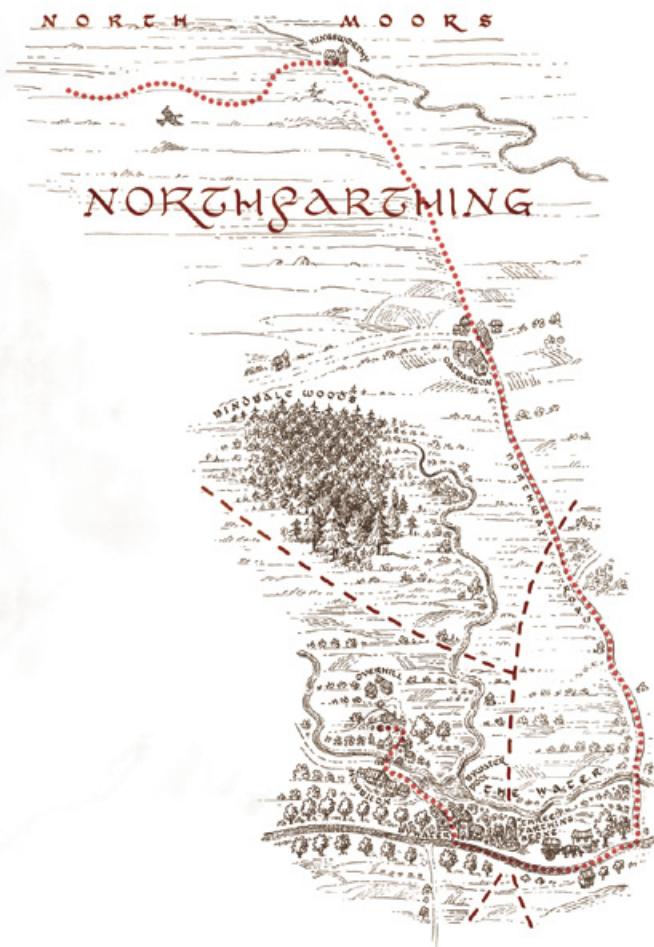
CHALLENGE 0 (10 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

ACTIONS

BITE. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage. If the target is a Small or smaller creature, it must make a DC 7 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

EXPERT TREASURE HUNTERS

Old Took's great-granduncle Bullroarer ... charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Golfsimbul's head clean off with a wooden club.



His passion for history reignited by recent events, Bilbo studies the Old Took's map and discovers a clue concerning the whereabouts of the lost club of the Bullroarer. At once, he organises a trip into the Northfarthing, where the clue seems to point. After questioning the Hobbits of Oatbarton, the quest leads them further into the North Moors, and deeper into danger.

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, but before *Involuntary Postmen*. If played in sequence, it is now the spring of the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

With their efforts to purloin the Old Took's map having been successful, Bilbo is delighted. He invites everyone to stay for several days as his guests at Bag End, during which time they live in the lap of luxury. Though they never want for food and drink, Bilbo remains locked up in his study, before eventually coming out on the afternoon of the second day.

Popping out of his study like a cuckoo from a clock, Bilbo rushes into the parlour where you are all relaxing after a fine second breakfast, map still clutched in his hand. "My wonderful friends! You won't believe what I've found on the Old Took's map: I believe I know where the club of Bandobras Took is located! Or at least the Old Took did. Or rather he thought he did. Maybe he wasn't sure." He shakes his head, as if to physically force the rambling thoughts from his head. "Never you mind. I might need to do a bit more research, but I was hoping for — nay, counting on your help once again!"

"After hearing all about your little adventure in Michel Delving, I'd like a taste of adventure myself. It says here on the map that the club of the Bullroarer may be somewhere around the village of Oatbarton, in a place called Kings-worthy! Exciting, isn't it? So, I was thinking perhaps in return for my generous hospitality, we could take a walk north and do a bit more investigating into the matter. Imagine it, being credited with being the Hobbits who found the club of Bullroarer Took! Wait right here, I'll run and get you the right gear to suit a proper adventure!"

And like that, Mad Baggins disappears in a flash around the corner before returning as you all exchange looks of excitement and confusion. He drops a large chest before you, and smiles. "There you are! Take what you need. There's no knowing where we'll be swept off to!" He turns to dash off again but turns around back to you, almost laughing at his own forgetfulness. "I've muddled my wits, staying up all night making a copy of the Old Took's map. No need to damage the original, after all!" He shoves the fresh copy at you before throwing open the front door to Bag End and stepping out onto the road. "Come on!" he cries, "We'd best be off!"

BILBO'S GEAR

Before setting out for Oatbarton, the characters can draw from the equipment contained in the old trunk provided by Bilbo. It contains basic travelling gear such as cloaks, backpacks, pocket handkerchiefs, other standard supplies, and few battered weapons. Among the weapons are three staves which can also serve as walking sticks, a pair of small hunting bows left behind by Dwarvish visitors (with two quivers of 20 arrows each), a short sword he had used for decoration instead of warfare, an axe for cutting wood, and a dagger. Sting is not among the weapons, as it is carried by Bilbo.

OATBARTON INVESTIGATION

To go to Oatbarton, the conspirators must first take the road to Bywater to the south, and reach the East Road. Then, they enter the Eastfarthing leaving behind the Three-Farthing Stone, and take the Northway Road to their left. It's more than a leisurely stroll to reach Oatbarton, taking more than three days on average, but searching for the fabled club of Bullroarer Took is certainly worth the effort (to enliven the journey, the Loremaster can use the rules for Hobbit Walks found on page 16).

It's almost midday when the conspirators catch sight of the first houses of the village. It is spring, but the last hints of winter still nip at their toes, making them particularly eager for a hearty meal. Even before they take their first steps into the cobblestone courtyard that serves as the heart of the village, they catch the scent of roast chicken and potatoes! The hard-working farmers of Oatbarton are gathered in the centre of their village for their lunch, sitting at long tables, shaded by large pavilions and tents. The search for the famous war hero's great club can wait...

The villagers are happy to share their lunch with the Player-heroes, and as soon as they place a plate in front of each of them, they start asking questions about what their business may be so far north. Luckily for them, they are not shy about answering questions themselves, especially if they concern local history.

Gathering information about the Bullroarer and a place called Kingsworthy requires a series of successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

The conspirators can pose their questions in any way they see fit, but any Player-hero who fails a check cannot make any more checks to inquire further. The Loremaster can spread the information described below among the Player-heroes, so that each of them uncovers a new clue and they can piece together the information as a group.

- ◆ Upon a first success, the Player-heroes learn that the 'Kingsworthy' is an abandoned structure, about a day's travel into the North Moors.
- ◆ A second success allows the Player-heroes to learn that some of the rowdier local children play a game called "Bullroarer's Club" that seems to involve them roughing up one another with a stick from the field they claim to be the artefact.
- ◆ A third and final success means they hear some rumours about a ghost haunting the abandoned Kingsworthy.

KINGSWORTHY

Kingsworthy can be reached by taking a northward path from Oatbarton, and walking for a full day across the North Moors (see also *The Shire*, page 34 and beyond, for more about Kingsworthy and travelling across the North Moors).

Once it is in sight, the Player-heroes may attempt to identify the purpose of this large stone house and round tower with a DC 10 Intelligence (Old Lore) check. On a success, they conclude that it might have been a hunting lodge at the time of the Kings in Norbury.

Upon a closer inspection, the conspirators find the place to be deserted. They find evidence of it having been used as a shelter by wanderers, but it certainly isn't inhabited regularly.

They spot a fresher set of tracks. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Hunting) check reveals that they quite clearly belong to one or more Hobbits.

But the most important find of the day is that no club hangs over the large mantelpiece of Kingsworthy, but probably used to. Above the cold fireplace is a large wooden plaque, bearing the signs of having been used to display a long object, as tall as a Hobbit.

Careful examination and a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Intelligence (Riddle) check reveals that something was mounted on the plaque and was removed. A wooden chair sits near the fireplace, as if someone used it to reach the spot above the mantelpiece.

Could the club have been stolen recently?

TRACKING A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

The most likely course of action for the Player-heroes is to set themselves to following the tracks they identified inside Kingsworthy. Luckily for them, they are easily followed, as the individual leaving them is moving with great haste.

Unbeknownst to the conspirators, they are following the tracks of one Mort Mudfoot, a farmer of Oatbarton. He is after his daughter Myrtle, who disappeared yesterday after having heard everyone in town talking about the club of the Bullroarer — a very competitive player of Goblin Nocking, a game involving balls, holes and the use of clubs, Myrtle left town with the intention of securing for herself the ‘most famousest’ club in Hobbit history, before some stranger took it. Thinking this ‘Kingsworthy’ place to be much closer to her home, she pressed on anyway, until she reached it, finding that a club was indeed hanging over its mantelpiece. Having found her prize, she took it and set off on her way home. She is now wandering across the North Moors, her father looking for her.

The Player-heroes can catch up with the beleaguered father by succeeding in a DC 5 Wisdom (Hunting) check. When they do so, they spot the lean, brown-haired Hobbit, desperately following the tracks of his daughter as fast as he can find them.

If asked about the club of the Bullroarer, Mort will say he doesn’t know anything about it but that Myrtle does love to play Goblin Nocking with the other children, and that must be why she came all the way out here this morning. A life-long resident of Oatbarton and a reasonable Hobbit in his sixties, Mort is beside himself with concern. Myrtle is his only child, and he fears even returning home to tell his wife Marigold that she is missing because of how panicked she will become.

Determined to find her no matter what it takes, Mort will accept any help he is offered. He will tell little stories about his daughter to any of the Player-heroes that will listen. He speaks of how adventurous she has always been, her love of the stories of the Bullroarer, and how she dreams of exploring places beyond Oatbarton.

PART TWO: SHADOWS AND RUMOURS

The quest for the club of the Bullroarer has led the Player-heroes into the North Moors, and now they are out there at night, in search of a missing Hobbit girl. As they scour the land, strange and potentially dangerous obstacles reveal themselves.

Myrtle Mudfoot



The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

The night is clear and cool. A waxing moon and a veritable symphony of starlight offers some light as you trek across the lightly rolling landscape. But this is no well-trodden road. The ground is uneven, and your foot can easily be caught in a hole or your legs grow weary as you plod through the moss-covered terrain. A long yawn escapes your mouth and you fight off the weight of your own eyelids — all the while searching for signs of the wayward Hobbit lass. Even in this dim evening light, the growing concern is evident on Mort’s drawn face.

The Player-heroes are pressing into the small hours of the night, without any real opportunity to rest or recover. As such, they all must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.

INTO THE NORTH MOORS

As the Player-heroes scour the North Moors for some sign of Myrtle, the Loremaster should ask them how they are going about doing so, and determine which skill is appropriate based on their preferred methods.

Those attempting to identify an area where she may have tried to find shelter in the night may make a DC 10 Wisdom (Explore) check.

Characters looking for signs of where Myrtle may have wandered in this wide landscape can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Hunting) check.

Those looking for signs of anything out of the ordinary can attempt a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

WISDOM (EXPLORE). Clever Player-heroes may consider that Myrtle must have sought shelter somewhere in the wilderness instead of wandering around in the dark. With a successful check, the Player-heroes do indeed discover the remnants of a camp, but only succeeding by 5 or more do they notice that it's set up so skilfully that it can't be the work of a child. It even has a small fire pit, hand dug and ringed with stones.

WISDOM (HUNTING). A success allows the Player-hero to notice that Myrtle's meandering set of tracks is not leading her back to Oatbarton. She is definitely lost. Succeeding by 5 or more allows the characters to recover a tiny scrap of a pretty yellow dress, which Mort confirms as being a colour that matches the one Myrtle was last seen wearing.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION). A success reveals that there is another set of tracks following those of Myrtle. With a success by 5 or more, the tracks are identified as large, booted footprints that do not belong to any Hobbit.

Following this last set of tracks is easier than expected, and does not require any further checks. If the Player-heroes follow them, after a while they even seem to be able to make out the silhouette of a wanderer just on the edge of their vision, always barely in sight. Player-heroes succeeding in a DC 10 Intelligence (Riddle) check realise that, given the figure's long stride and apparent skill at woodcraft, it is likely remaining in sight intentionally and actually leading them.

A FATHER'S AID

Mort can help the Player-heroes, for he is sharp-eyed – one Player-hero searching for evidence of Myrtle gain advantage on their checks.

PART THREE: DAWN BE STONE!

The climax of this adventure occurs once the Player-heroes follow the tracks they are after to the edge of a wide patch of shrubland, where an unexpected adversary hides among ancient ruins.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Hours of pursuit mean that when you see the darker patch of bracken and heather ahead, the sky has started to turn from the deep blackness of night into the deep blue of the hours before dawn. You've followed Myrtle's tracks for miles now. You've little doubt that she came this way. As you get closer, you start noticing that the dark patch is not due simply to a different vegetation — there are ancient stones jutting out of the ground, low crumbling walls hinting that this once was a very different place. A fort, a town maybe. Few Hobbits have seen this place, and as you take your first steps forward among the stones, stories of kings and armour-clad warriors fill your mind.

Just as you and your fellow conspirators are about to explore the heather-covered ruins, a rumbling growl seems to rise from the ground itself! It's a bellowing shout bearing some resemblance to human speech, echoing among the ancient stones. You then hear a high, panicked voice call out from nearby: "Shoo you old Troll! Go away! Go!" Breaking through a thicket of brambles, you see none other than Myrtle Mudfoot, who has scrambled up a ruined wall and is swinging a heavy wooden club at a massive creature looking like the grotesque imitation of a large Man — it's a Stone-troll! Between the two of them, leaning weakly against a wall, is a cloaked stranger, hood thrown back to reveal the rugged face of a Man with grey eyes, clutching a large, bleeding gash across his shoulder that has all but incapacitated him as he desperately tries to keep the monster from reaching the child. The Troll is clearly angry, and does not seem to have noticed you and your companions. Myrtle, on the other hand, sees you and immediately cries out for help.

Fighting an angry Stone-troll is quite a dangerous endeavour, as the cloaked stranger has just found out. The creature is large and powerful, but quite stupid. If the Player-heroes take on the Troll head to head, he fights ferociously, though he flees once he's reduced to 1 hit point.

If the Player-heroes attempt to trick the Troll with some clever stratagem, they may succeed in buying enough time and allow the light of the dawn surprise the creature.

To trick the Troll, a Player-hero must make an Intelligence (Riddle), Charisma (Deception), or Charisma (Persuasion) check as an action, contested by the Troll's Wisdom check. If the Player-hero wins the contest, the Troll hesitates, confused, and is stunned until the start of the Player-hero's next turn. If the Troll takes damage or wins the contest, it becomes enraged and attacks the nearest Hobbit (no more attempts at trickery are allowed).

After 1 minute, the Troll is surprised when the first rays of the sun hit the clouds above — suddenly terrified, the Stone-troll breaks away from the fight, looking for shelter!

Jack, the Stone-troll

Large giant (Troll)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

ARMOUR CLASS 14 (natural armour)

HIT POINTS 34 (4d10 + 12)

SPEED 40 ft.

SAVING THROWS Str +5, Con +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons

SKILLS Intimidation +2

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 8

LANGUAGES Westron

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

HIDEOUS TOUGHNESS. If Jack the Stone-troll takes 7 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

SUNLIGHT CURSE. Jack the Stone-troll becomes petrified if it ends its turn in sunlight.

ACTIONS

SLAM. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13). If the target is Small or smaller, it is also restrained until this grapple ends. While grappling the target, Jack the Stone-troll has advantage on attack rolls against it and cannot use this attack against other targets.

EPILOGUE

With Myrtle rescued, she is delivered by the wanderer and the Player-heroes back to her father Mort, who rejoices. It is then that the cloaked Man reveals his identity.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Throwing back his hood, with one arm clutching his shoulder, the cloaked wanderer reveals himself. He has long grey-brown hair and bright, steely eyes. He smiles through the pain of the wound he suffered at the claws of the Troll. "It is not often that I find myself needing protection. Less often that it should come in the form of you little, wondrous folk. It would seem I still have much to learn."

"My name is Halbarad, and I am a Ranger, although that title may not tell you much. Suffice it to know that I, like yourselves, was searching for young Myrtle for two reasons. First, for fear that she might find true danger. Second, because she took something I was meant to guard. I certainly didn't expect a burglar like Myrtle, and she fooled me."



"What Myrtle took from Kingsworthy is indeed a rare relic, a token of an ancient past, best forgotten. It was hidden in plain sight, and has remained safe for a long time, until today. But now I think I have found someone worthy of its safekeeping. I think that if you have it, it may be in better hands than mine." He chuckles softly and his hard eyes brighten a bit. "Now, if you would be so kind as to see the Mudfoots home, I am certain they have a fine meal waiting for them. I have wounds to tend to, but I hope this will not be our last meeting." He turns without waiting for a reply, and in a matter of seconds the shadows of the heath swallow up the Ranger as if he were one of their own, and he is gone.

Once back at Oatbarton, Mort explains to his wife Marigold what happened. She chastises him as only a wife worried sick can, but prepares a grand feast for everyone as a thank you for their efforts. After a fine meal and a long sleep, the Player-heroes can begin their journey back to Bag End, with the club of the Bullroarer hidden among their gear.

To their surprise, as they come up the lane of Bagshot Row, they see a Dwarf in a red hood peeking into the window of Bag End. He turns at their approach and casts off the hood, revealing a keen smile and a long white beard.

"Bilbo, you old rascal! You told me to drop by for tea any time and here I am!" The Dwarf pauses with a grin and collects himself before offering a polite smile. "Forgive my exuberance. Balin, son of Fundin, at your service." With a bow, he casts a knowing smile at Bilbo, "What kind of trouble have you gotten yourself into this time, my little burglar?"

Balin, son of Fundin is now available to be chosen as a Patron by the Company. Having just arrived for tea, he's glad to help out his friend's fellow conspirators with whatever local trouble they get themselves into.

At the end of this adventure, the Loremaster should award each Player-hero 75 to 150 XP, depending on how they completed the investigation, and whether they found Myrtle or not. If the Player-heroes defeated or otherwise neutralised Jack the Stone-troll, they should also be awarded with the XP noted in its stat block.



Balin, son of Fundin

THE BULLROARER'S CLUB

Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took used this massive club to win the Battle of Greenfields and defeat the Goblin warlord Golfigbul. Legend has it that one blow from the great club knocked the Goblin chief's head off and sent it sailing into a far-off rabbit hole – winning the battle and inventing the game of golf at the same time! At the end of the adventure, Bilbo will keep the club at Bag End for study, and he will later donate it to the Mathom-house of Michel Delving, for everyone to admire.

The Bullroarer's Club is a great club with the Fell and Grievous rewards. It also grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.



MOST EXCELLENT FIREWORKS

The fireworks were by Gandalf: they were not only brought by him, but designed and made by him; and the special effects, set pieces, and flights of rockets were let off by him.



Once again, the affairs of the Shire and those of Gandalf the Grey seem to be entwined. To better understand the nature of the Grey Pilgrim's wizardry — and for a bit of fun — Bilbo asks the conspirators to find out what became of the last of Gandalf's fireworks, left over from the Old Took's birthday parties. The conspirators must travel to the Yale and discover what became of them.

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, but before *Involuntary Postmen*. If played in sequence, it is now the summer of the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: UNEXPECTED PARTY FAVOURS

The conspirators are gathered in Bag End for yet another fine dinner on the lawn beside the Hill, when the horizon to the south-east suddenly lights up with a display of dazzling colours! You can see thin tendrils of smoke curling up in the darkening sky. Bilbo bolts upright and snaps his fingers.

"Those have to be Gandalf's old fireworks! What are they doing with them?" Before you can say so much as 'pop and hop,' Master Baggins is already planning a new mission, to set off and retrieve what he calls 'the last of Gandalf's party favours.' He informs you that years ago, Gandalf entrusted the remainder of his fireworks to none other than Primrose Boffin, now Bracegirdle, Lobelia's own mother. Primrose, who went to live in Hardbottle after her marriage, recently moved back to the Yale, where she was born, setting off all sorts of gossip. Now, judging by where those dazzling lights seemed to come from, someone in the Yale must have tried to put those fireworks to use again and may have set a fire going with them. Bilbo continues: 'Fireworks are not things to be handled carelessly. And if they won't be responsible then I know a safe place for them!'

Balin, who has turned a visit for tea into a stay of several days, offers to join the Company as he'd like to get to know the Shire a bit more.

A YALE YARN

This adventure can dispense with the Hobbit walk required to bring the Player-heroes to their destination, by having them start the game already in the Yale. Their walk had them follow the East Road all the way to Whitfurrows.

After asking for directions several times (or following Lobelia's, if she's present), they reach the Boffin family estate late in the morning, several miles south along the road that leads from Whitfurrows to the Stock Road and the Woody End. It's a large farmstead, recently renovated, composed of a stately house surrounded by farm buildings, in the middle of wheat and barley fields and orchards. There are scorch marks in a couple of the fields and a larger one closer to the house. A rutted lane between low hedges leads to the front door.

Once they knock at the door, it flies open, and you see the rather sour face of Primrose Bracegirdle greeting you. "Aye, what do you want?"

As it is immediately clear, Primrose is not terribly glad to have visitors, not even her own daughter, especially after she's

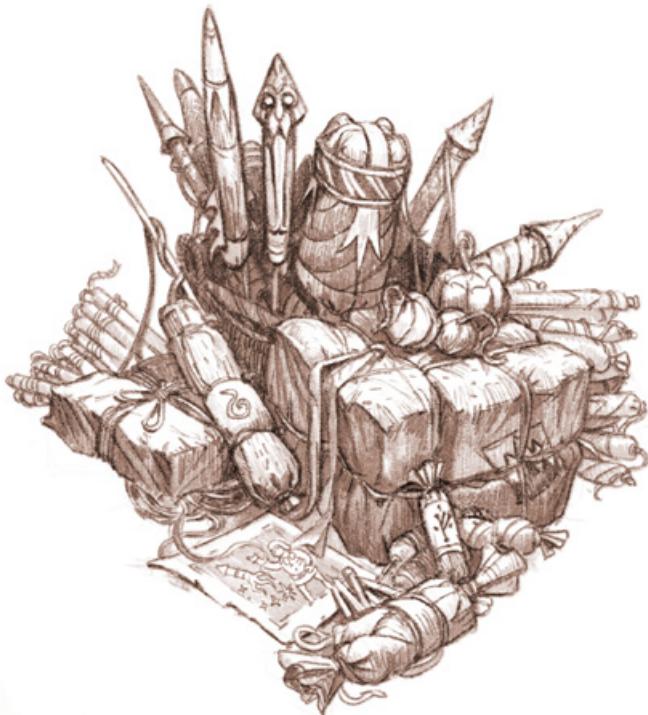
been wandering around the Shire in questionable Company. When asked about the fireworks, she says that her son Bruno came to visit last week and was fooling around with them. After Bruno set a few off to entertain the local children, she put a stop to all that nonsense and sent him back to Hardbottle to store the blasted things back at her husband's house. If they reveal that they have come so far specifically to retrieve the fireworks, Primrose assures them that possession is the greater part of the law, and if they want them, they'll have to buy them properly.

WALKS AND WANDERINGS IN WHITFURROWS

The trip back to Whitfurrows is an easy walk, but by the time the Player-heroes arrive, it is late afternoon, and most of the trading is done for the day. After a bit of looking and asking around among the throng of traders, they find Bruno drinking in the company of a Dwarf mason. Bruno is about fifty, and looks very much like a meaner and larger version of his younger sister Lobelia.

When asked about the fireworks, Bruno is initially adamant that he has no idea what they're talking about. He is suspicious of anything that has to do with 'Mad Baggins', and if Lobelia is present, he reprimands her for getting involved in such 'adventurous nonsense'.

Bruno can be coerced into revealing the truth with a successful DC 10 Charisma check, using any skill the Loremaster deems appropriate.



On a success, he tells the Player-heroes that he passed the fireworks off to one of the Hobbits working for his father Blanco — one Otho Sackville-Baggins, who agreed to take them back to Hardbottle, after a stop in Scary for a pint. If the roll is a failure, Bruno just says that he sent the fireworks home.

STORMS IN SCARY

Setting off north out of Whitfurrows and Budgeford, the Player-heroes begin their journey towards Scary late in the evening. If they want to catch up with Otho, they must press on for at least a few hours in the dark. Before long, the sky clouds over, and a heavy rain begins to fall.

Slogging through the rain, even in a place as gentle as the Shire, is no comfortable task, and each of the Player-heroes will need to make a DC 10 fatigue saving throw to stave off the weariness of a wet and cheerless evening, with failure resulting in suffering one level of exhaustion.

With their slowed pace on the muddy road and a brief stop in an abandoned building to wait for the rain to cease, the conspirators arrive in Scary about one hour after dawn.

Scary is an unwelcoming village by Hobbit standards, nestled as it is on the south side of the Hills of Scary. It's populated by hard-working, no-nonsense Hobbits living in homes made of grey stone. Most folk are terse and a bit unkind, but if the Player-heroes ask around about other travellers from the south, they are told that the last visitor seen coming into town took a late bed at a building owned by some mining officials from Dwaling.

The building is a small, single-story house, with a couple of small bedrooms and a tiny common room containing three tables. When they get there, the conspirators find a Hobbit from Dwaling, a mining accountant by the name of Filibert Banks, busy scribbling in a large tome.

If questioned, Filibert seems to take for granted that the Hobbits are on some business errand, especially if he hears Lobelia's family name (the Bracegirdles have a flourishing local business in construction), and thus proves to be quite cooperative.

Useful information can be extracted from Filibert with a series of DC 10 Charisma checks using any skill the conspirators and the Loremaster deem relevant.

The Player-heroes can play the conversation freely, but any Player-hero who fails a roll cannot make any more checks to inquire further.

- ◆ Upon a first success, Filibert reveals that he and Otho had a long 'business' conversation while in their cups. Filibert told his roommate for the night that based on his accounting, there was a tunnel in the quarry that proved to be very fruitful, but that no one, not even Dwarves, had been able to penetrate it deeply, for the rock was too hard.

- ◆ On a second success, Filibert regales the Player-heroes with ghoulish tales about ‘the lost miner’ haunting that specific tunnel, stories of passages abandoned after flooding, and rumours of ghostly voices echoing in the empty chambers.
- ◆ A third and final success has Filibert relating how Otho, inebriated with Filibert’s story of an untapped ‘treasure mine’, started blathering about how soon everyone in the Shire was going to be speaking to him with proper respect, while he kept patting the large sack he brought with him.

The final revelation from Filibert about Otho is that he stumbled off more than a bit tipsy a few hours before dawn, after having asked Filibert for directions to reach ‘his treasure mine’. He left with a lantern, a tinderbox, a coil of rope, and his large sack.

PART TWO: QUEST IN THE QUARRY

Having been mined by Hobbits since the days of Marcho and Blanco, the Hills of Scary are riddled with holes, tunnels, and all sorts of excavations. During the day, the area is bustling, with workers going in and out of their mines, or tending to the stone pulled from the quarries. Almost as grumpy as busy Dwarves, they have little news to offer to nosy strangers — no one seems to have seen Otho entering or leaving.

If the Player-heroes try to reach the ‘treasure mine’ openly, possibly following directions provided by Filibert, they soon discover that it’s impossible to reach — as soon as they get near, they are stopped by mining officials and sent back to the village. After a brief investigation, it should be clear to the Player-heroes that slipping in during the day is impossible. Coming back after sunset seems to be the only way.

You wait for the sun to set. As you follow the rutted track that Filibert showed you, you get closer and closer to the dark that lies at the feet of the Hills of Scary. Here, the night air makes you shiver, as you carefully try not to stumble on the many broken rocks littering the path. In time, your eyes adjust and the outline of the hilltops appears, contrasting against the night sky. On the side of the hills, you make out the many tunnels gaping like bleak mouths leading into a seemingly impenetrable blackness.

It’s a scary prospect to go underground at this hour of the night, but you must discover what happened to Otho Sackville-Baggins before it’s too late.

Exploring the mines at night with only the light of a few lanterns is a daunting task. As a consequence, once the conspirators enter the dark beneath the hills, they all gain 2 Shadow points from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist).

A SOUGHT-AFTER SACKVILLE

To find where the foolish Hobbit has gone, the Player-heroes must explore the branching tunnels of the ‘treasure mine’.

The conspirators must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Explore) checks every hour they spend in the tunnels. To determine whether they find Otho, the Lormaster rolls a d6 after every check, subtracting 1 if the check fails, and adding 1 for each previous success, and then consults the table below.

1. **FORGOTTEN SUPPLIES.** You find a crude map of the mine left behind by some workers. Add 1 to the next roll.
2. **A NARROW SQUEEZE.** Maybe you shouldn’t have had that extra morsel at breakfast! Squeezing through a particularly tight passage has led to scraped knees and torn knuckles. Each Player-hero loses 1 hit point.
3. **AN ILL WIND.** A chill wind seems to sweep up the passage from nowhere, extinguishing your lanterns. Relighting them takes some time, but the long dark and flickering lights are disturbing, and each Player-hero gains 1 Shadow point from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist) before the lanterns are relit.
4. **SORROWFUL SONGS BENEATH THE STONE.** An indecipherable and ominous lament echoes across the stone and fades to nothing. Each Player-hero gains 1 Shadow point from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist).
5. **A HORRIBLE END.** A broken pickaxe, a torn piece of cloth, and a smear of blood on the wall hint that some poor Hobbit miner met a terrible end. Each Player-hero gains 1 Shadow point from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist).
6. You have found the lost Otho Sackville-Baggins! Go to *Mad as an Orc*, below.

MAD AS AN ORC

A flickering flame casts jagged shadows at the end of a passage that ends in a pile of tumbled rocks. The Player-heroes hear a mad cry echoing against the rock and into the darkness. As they round the corner, they see a lantern set upon a stone, casting long shadows over a terrible sight: a terrified Hobbit stands in front of a massive pile of fireworks piled up at the blocked end of a tunnel, feebly brandishing a shovel at what appears to be a grey Orc. Otho is screaming madly at

the creature: “It’s my treasure, ye monster! Mine! Mine! I’ll blow it to rubble before I let ye have it!”

On your arrival, the Hobbit turns and screeches in renewed fright. He stiffens and stammers, failing to hide his abject panic. If the players don’t act quickly, Otho will likely bury them all in the mine.

The Orc is a very decrepit Orc veteran, who was lost long ago, and took refuge deep in the mines and in the natural caves under the Hills of Scary. Since then, he has been hiding, trying to drive the Hobbits from his lair whenever they would come too close to discovering his presence. The players will have to take up arms to stop him from attacking Otho, an act that will most likely end in a quite spectacular explosion and the destruction of the mine.

At the arrival of the Player-heroes, the Orc turns his attention to the newly arrived threat and attacks. He will fight to the death only if cornered, otherwise he will flee into the dark passages of the mine if close to defeat.

EPILOGUE

If Otho is saved, the Player-heroes receive little thanks from the wayward Hobbit. Despite having his life spared by their timely arrival, Otho fully intends to stake his claim on this part of the mine. So, he proposes the following deal: if the conspirators agree to serve as witnesses to the signing of contracts giving Otho exclusive mining rights to the tunnel (seven signatures in red ink, all right and proper), he will give them half of the Wizard’s excellent fireworks. If they agree, Otho informs them that he’ll pass the contracts on for Lobelia to sign, and they can take half the fireworks with them to Bag End — he’ll personally repay the Bracegirdles for the fireworks out of his own pocket.

As for the Orc veteran, the Player-heroes can inform the mining officials of his presence. They will then investigate the mine and eventually discover a deep passage that was previously undiscovered, littered with bones of small animals and remnants of an encampment, but no signs of Orcs...

Upon their return to Bag End, Bilbo stores the remaining fireworks in one of his cellars, under lock and key.

At the end of this adventure, the Loremaster should award each Player-hero 75 to 150 XP, depending on how they completed the investigation, and whether they found Otho or not. If the Player-heroes defeated or otherwise neutralised the Orc-veteran, they should also be awarded with the XP noted in its stat block.

Orc-veteran

Medium humanoid (Orc)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

ARMOUR CLASS 16 (hide armour, shield)

HIT POINTS 16 (3d8 + 3)

SPEED 30 ft.

SKILLS Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Orkish, Westron

CHALLENGE 1/2 (100 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

NIMBLE ESCAPE. The Orc-veteran can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

SNEAK ATTACK (1/TURN). The Orc-veteran deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Orc-veteran that isn’t incapacitated and the Orc-veteran doesn’t have disadvantage on the attack roll.

SUNLIGHT SENSITIVITY. While in sunlight, the Orc-veteran has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

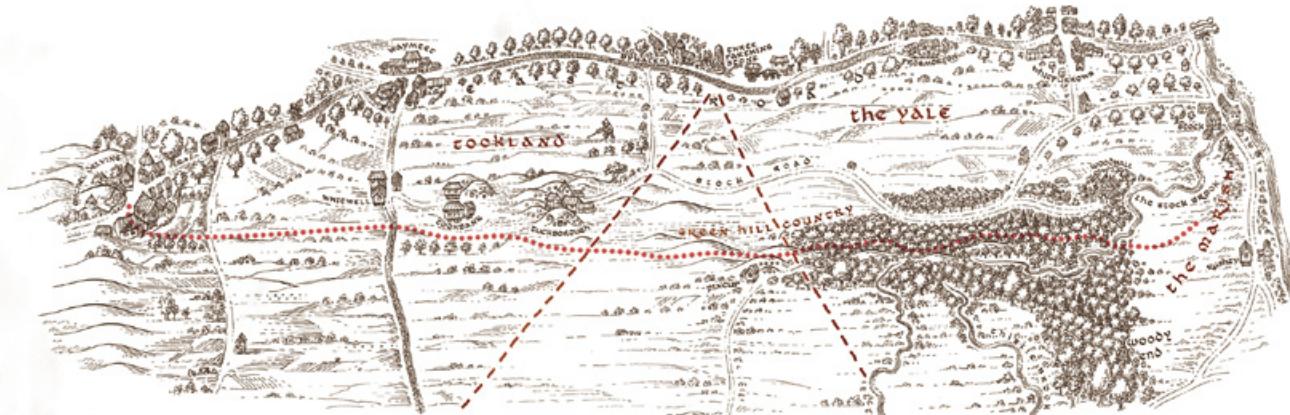
SCIMITAR. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

SPEAR. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.



INVOLUNTARY POSTMEN

... the offices of Postmaster and First Shirriff were attached to the mayoralty, so that he managed both the Messenger Service and the Watch.



No trouble goes unnoticed in the Shire, and the Bounders have finally decided to take action against the conspirators and their ongoing mischief. By order of the Shirriffs, Bilbo Baggins' Hobbit collaborators have been sentenced to cleaning the cold storage and wine cellar underneath the Town Hole at Michel Delving! But the sympathies of an overworked member of the Quick Post and the promise to deliver a letter clear across the Shire to Brandy Hall could earn them early release, and a new adventure to boot!

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, immediately preceding *To Soothe a Savage Beast*. If played in sequence, it is now late summer, in the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: CAPTIVE CONSPIRATORS

This adventure opens with the Player-heroes (not including Bilbo) having already been rounded up by several local Bounders after news of their troublesome misadventures have turned the Shire into a buzz of concern and gossip. As time passed while they were wandering about, several Hobbits for whom they've caused trouble have reported on their misdeeds. This can include custodian Malva Slowfoot, Bounder Ada Burrows, Primrose and Bruno Bracegirdle, and any other busybodies they have disturbed during their adventures. Their troublesome ways have finally caught up with them!

This is intolerable! You always wanted to visit the Town Hole in Michel Delving, but not like this. It appears the conspirators have finally met one trouble they could not escape. After being confronted by a group of Bounders and charged with claims of disturbing the peace and on-going rowdiness, the lot of you have been detained in the storage tunnels beneath the Town Hole until Mayor Pott can decide what to do with you.

While there are worse things than being locked in a storage cellar beneath the Town Hole, it is an uncomfortable place. A heavy wooden door, barred from the other side, blocks you from freedom, and other than the occasional Bounder coming by, no one has so much as brought you a seed cake to munch on for hours! When Bilbo finds out about this, they will regret their actions... he will find out, right?

OUT OF THE CELLAR

The incarcerated conspirators take a few moments to investigate the storage cellar: they see a number of sealed beer barrels and several cuts of salted meat, inedible without preparation, and several large loaves of crusty bread and wheels of hard cheese (the Loremaster should note if any Player-heroes take some of the foodstuffs as it may become relevant later in the adventure).

The ground here is packed dirt, and the walls are the same, save for a few support beams. A single, weak lantern is set on one of the barrels for light (using it to start a fire in the middle of Michel Delving is probably not the best idea). Their usual possessions and any weapons have naturally been taken from them by the Bounders, and have been stored in

Odo Proudfoot



the corridor outside the cellar door (the gear can be easily retrieved if they find a way to get out).

The conspirators remain here without news from outside long enough to make them despair about their fate. Just when they are getting too restless, a soft knock is heard at the door and a reluctant voice hisses out. Awkwardly, the voice introduces itself as Odo Proudfoot. They recognize the name as belonging to someone working for the Quick Post in Michel Delving. Odo asks if he can come in, which will likely seem strange to the company, seeing as the door handle is on his side.

THE LETTER TO BAMFURLONG

Hobbits have a great respect for propriety and privacy, and that includes matters of the Quick Post. The letter is sealed by wax, but has no symbol set into the seal. Player-heroes would know that opening the letter would be a most improper invasion of privacy, and the Misdeed would gain them 1 point of Shadow.

If he receives a positive response, he and Mayor Pott step within the chamber. He leaves the door open, allowing the characters to see their gear stacked up neatly against the wall. Odo explains that the Quick Post is short-handed and he has a letter that needs delivering to Bamfurlong, in the Marish.

He has no one to send and got the impression from the tall, hooded figure that accosted him outside town with the letter that the message was urgent. Furthermore, there's a lot of traffic on the main road – Dwarves mostly, heading west or east as the case may be, trying to get home before the year grows too long.

The Mayor speaks up, saying that the conspirators owe community service for their transgressions and that they have been volunteered to deliver the letter, ‘unless you'd rather stay here.’

If they accept, then Odo hands them the sealed letter, instructing them to take it to Bamfurlong, staying off the East Road and taking the Stock Road instead, thus cutting across the Green Hills and going through the Woody End.

Before he lets them go, Odo adds that he promised the hooded figure that the letter would stay sealed — only to be opened by Farmer Maggot, to whom it is addressed.

LEAVING MICHEL DELVING

Once the characters gather up the gear, Mayor Pott leads them back upstairs and out through the Mathom-house. Player-heroes who mention that they are scouting for anything of use notice that a series of strange, two-wheeled contraptions made of wood and metal have been lined up against the wall of the Mathom-house — certainly some newly-delivered acquisitions of the museum. Malva Slowfoot has labelled them with a tag, identifying each one as a ‘velocipede’.

Whether they're a strange creation by some eccentric Shire craftsman or a Dwarven smith, these velocipedes look like vehicles that can be ridden at some speed! Mayor Pott harrumphs if the player-heroes ask to use the velocipedes; he reminds them that they are doing community service and he expects them to suffer, at least a little bit.

If the Player-heroes ‘borrow’ the velocipedes to leave Michel Delving in a hurry, they must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to master the strange contraptions without anyone noticing their clumsy attempt. A failure indicates that some local takes notice of the Player-heroes’ suspicious activities, and the theft of the velocipedes is added to the conspirators list of misdeeds!

If the Player-heroes leave Michel Delving riding the velocipedes, whenever they must make a fatigue saving throw they have advantage.

PART TWO: ROUND AND ROUND

Having escaped Michel Delving, the Player-heroes now begin their journey east towards the Marish and Bamfurlong. Normally, such a trip should take about four or five days to complete, and require the rules for Hobbit Walks described on page 16. But while the Shire is a peaceful land free of many of the troubles that plague other regions, travelling across its length is not without its own challenges.

From your first hours on the road, you realise that what Odo told you seems right — more Bounders than usual are out making their rounds. So, you have no other choice than to stay off the roads. This means riding along well-trodden country paths and tracks, heading east towards Whitwell, and Tookland beyond.

But what could be little more than an extended walking party soon proves troublesome... You have set out on your post-man duties across the Shire without provisions, save for a few bits of old and stale bread and cheese from beneath the Town Hole of Michel Delving, and this is a problem of capital import!

The first day of travel brings the Player-heroes to the outskirts of Tookbank — they may consider the possibility of sneaking into town and purloining something to eat — but that is a risky business. Alternatively, they can search for wild fruits and berries growing in the open land, or even attempt to ‘borrow’ carrots or other choice vegetables from one of the many farms of Tookland. Hunting small game is right out, given that the tiny creatures found in the region are not likely to make more than a mouthful even if they could be snared.

On their second day of travel, dawn comes bright and clear, with all indications that it will be a perfectly fine day for walking. However, as midday draws near, the sky turns grey, and heavy clouds roll in. By the time lunch has passed, a heavy rainstorm has released its fury, and the Player-heroes find themselves trudging through muddy terrain as they head towards the Green Hill Country.

Each Player-hero must succeed on a fatigue saving throw to avoid suffering one level of exhaustion, as the weight of hard travel begins to press down upon them, body and soul.

The rain subsides at sunset, and soon the night sky clears. Plodding in the dark on hilly terrain is not a wise idea, and while the Player-heroes might press on into the Woody End that evening, it is probably best that they bed down for the night. Just as they are about to sleep for the evening, a pair of red squirrels wander curiously into their camp, and try to

steal some food from the travellers. If shooed away rudely, they flee into the woods and each Player-hero gains 1 point of Shadow (no saving throw to resist), but if treated kindly or even offered a bit of food by the Hobbits, they take a few bites off whatever they are offered, chitter excitedly, and flee into the woods.

As the Player-heroes enter the Woody End itself on their third day of travelling, the Loremaster must consider how the Player-heroes interacted with the beasts they have encountered in their adventures so far. This includes Firework the dog from *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, Gertrude the mule and the owl in Waymeet, and the curious squirrel couple encountered the previous evening. Word of their actions has spread among these creatures across the Shire, and now their reputation precedes them.

FINDING FOOD TO GO

The Loremaster can resolve any foraging action attempted by the Player-heroes as follows (each player has one ability check for each day of travel):

- ◆ Player-heroes attempting to sneak into a village to steal food must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Dexterity (Stealth) check.
- ◆ Those searching the wilderness for wild fruit can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check.
- ◆ Anyone looking for a vegetable field to pluck a cabbage or two from must make a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check.

Success means they have found enough food for themselves for one day. Succeeding by 5 or more yields enough food to feed themselves for an additional day — or to feed themselves and another Hobbit.

Any Player-hero who goes to bed each day with an empty belly must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid suffering one level of exhaustion and gaining 1 point of Shadow, as they suffer the incomprehensible fate of going to bed with no supper!

If in the majority of cases the animals were treated kindly and shown compassion, then the Player-heroes find their journey in the forest light and easy, discovering convenient berry bushes along the road, allowing them to eat, and finding the finch songs reaching into their hearts. Each of them gains inspiration.

If most animals were treated poorly, the forest is oppressive: the sounds of the beasts and birds have a dour and unwelcome note to them, and each each Player-hero gains 2 points of Shadow from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist). Those who fail the saving throw by 5 or more also gain one level of exhaustion.

PART THREE: ENCHANTMENT IN THE WOODY END

As the Player-heroes reach the eastern edge of the Woody End and they hear the babbling waters of the Stock-brook, a new enchantment reveals itself.

The stars burn bright and free tonight, in spite of your weariness and the hunger you have faced along your journey. A lightness enters your heart as you rest upon the banks of the Stock-brook. Then, as if the starlight were given form and voice, you see a being from legend step out of the soft embrace of night to shine upon you. A voice like music says "Elen síla lúmenn' omentielvo."

As if given form by that song, you see an Elf, clad in blue raiment with hair as fair as gold. He smiles at you and your companions, "Whether it be a merry chance or some greater will that has brought us together, I am glad for it. I am Galdor of the Havens, and I have long been curious about the mischievous Hobbits that have been going about causing all manner of stories to be spun by birds and beasts across the Shire. Why, I spoke only a few days ago to Badger-brock of the Withywindle, and he told me of your company, each by name, as he had heard it from a finch, who heard it from a fox. I suspect that by now, even Iarwain in the Old Forest has heard of your merry mishaps. But I am forgetting myself, adopting rustic ways for these rustic realms. May I trade some simple Elvish travelling fare in exchange for sharing your Company and your camp this evening?"

If the Player-heroes accept Galdor's Company, he does indeed provide them with loaves of fair white bread and a light, golden beverage.

The Elvish provisions restore both heart and spirit, granting all the benefits of a long rest.

Galdor is a kind but curious guest, and subtly questions the Player-heroes. This attempt goes unnoticed unless a Player-hero succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. If they fail, he draws the truth of their adventures from them — but he offers laughter, a light heart, and a fair song in return for this information. He tells them to sleep peacefully tonight, for they have nothing to fear.

When the Hobbits wake in the morning, they find fresh fruit and nuts to serve as breakfast, and Galdor is already awake. He tells them that he has an errand to attend to, and must now depart. He offers them blessings and cautions regarding further adventures. Moments later, he vanishes into the forest of the Woody End.

Galdor of the Havens



Farmer Maggot



epilogue

Later that same day, the conspirators finally cross the Stock-brook at a spot where it meanders shallowly and can be forded. After having asked some fishermen for directions, the Player-heroes arrive that afternoon at Bamfurlong in the Marish.

Bamfurlong is a long brick farmhouse with a thatched roof, surrounded by great fields of vegetables in their full bloom of the season which run up to a high wall with a gate that marks the entrance upon the lane. It is located approximately halfway between Stock and Rushey.

As the Player-heroes approach, they see a young but broad Hobbit in his tweens working the fields, and stopping to watch them closely as he leans upon a shovel. Upon spotting the Player-heroes, he shoulders the shovel, saunters towards them, and tersely asks them their business. He regards them cautiously, one by one. He offers them nothing but a stern look and his name, Farmer Maggot, dismissing them out of hand unless they mention that they carry a letter for him. He asks them to produce the letter, which he snatches from them and tears open on the spot. After reading a few lines, he lets out a deep laugh, and seems to relax into an amiable Hobbit.

"I was told you were coming, but I wasn't sure I would have actually seen you in the flesh. It's quite a long road from Michel Delving! Please, please, follow me. You must be hungry, and thirsty, and quite weary by the look of you."

Farmer Maggot invites the conspirators to follow him to his home, where he leads them into his kitchen. There, they see a fine table has been laid, and none other than Bilbo Baggins himself sits at it, eating a bright-coloured apple!

Bilbo smiles impishly at Maggot, and winks at the Player-heroes.

"Oh, I see you got my letter, good Mister Maggot! Now that we're all here, we'll get to the business at hand!"

At the end of this adventure, the Loremaster should award each Player-hero 75 to 150 XP, depending on how they fared during the journey.

TO SOOTHE A SAVAGE BEAST

*There was victory and defeat; and towers fell,
fortresses were burned, and flames went up into the sky.*

One final favour, and Bilbo will leave his beloved conspirators in peace. He joins them for a visit with young Farmer Maggot, freshly of Bamfurlong, as he is a shrewd farmer with much insight into the misunderstood ways of Bucklanders. But Maggot has his own troubles with a terrible beast from over the High Hay, and before long, the conspirators find themselves in the heart of the Old Forest after dark and face to face with the true wonder and danger that awaits when simple Hobbits move beyond the borders of the Shire.

This adventure should be played as the last one taken from this volume. If played in sequence, summer is now waning, in the year S.R. 1360.

Having arrived before the others at Bamfurlong, Bilbo returns as a playable Player-hero available to the players. If they need to swap out an existing character it is recommended that Lobelia be the one to leave the conspirators — clearly having had more than enough of this nonsense, and quite infuriated to have anything to do with Bucklanders and any business beyond the Shire proper, she returns to her mother's home in the Vale.

PART ONE: BUCKLAND BOUND

The adventure opens with the Player-heroes awakening once again in comfortable beds inside the farmhouse of Bamfurlong to the scent of eggs and mushrooms cooking for a late breakfast. The last few days have been a welcome comfort after their long journey across the Shire.

The Loremaster should grant each character the benefits of a long rest.

Bilbo and Maggot both dismiss any ‘business talk’ until after the table has been cleared, but soon after the crockery has been cleaned and pipes have been lit, Maggot’s demeanour turns grim.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Sitting upon a long bench under the eaves of Bamfurlong, Farmer Maggot takes a long draw from his pipe and gazes out to a small ruined building on the far side of his wide



farmlands. “Chickens,” he says suddenly as he blows out a long line of blue-grey smoke. “It is because of my chickens that I sent my letter, Master Baggins.”

Any hint of jest fades away as he leans in to you and your friends. “And to be honest, I’m glad you have not come alone. When I saw that thing that night, blood in its teeth and fire in its eyes, I knew it was something beyond the ken of myself or any other folk in the Eastfarthing. It was a beast, I tell you, and not some hungry wolf that came up from Dunland starving. This was a black thing, as if its fur had been burnt like kindling, with nothing natural about it, and it set chills down my spine — no easy task, mind you. But when I heard it growl at me, we locked eyes and I saw naught but a lust for death in its gaze. It meant to kill more than my chickens in their coop that night. I grabbed a lantern in one hand you see, and my chopping axe. If it was going to take me, I wasn’t going down without a fight. Before I knew what happened, it was on me, crossing the field in a bound and pinning me to the soil, snarling and slavering.”

Maggot's eyes glaze over in memory and you see him tremble at the recollection. "In a fit, I swung my lantern up and it shattered, pouring oil upon its muzzle. It yelped and screamed as the fire blazed, and it fled into the dark. The last things I saw before it disappeared towards the Brandywine were those horrible, fiery eyes."

He sets his pipe on the bench beside him. "It's still out there. I swear I've seen it beyond the edges of Bamfurlong on more than one night since then, those eyes burning into me from the dark. And if the stirrings from Buckland are any hint, it is causing no end of trouble there too. Master Bilbo, sir, I was hoping that you and your friends here might help me and the Buckland folk put a stop to that foul thing's hunting before it gets a taste for something more than chickens."

Maggot has little to offer in reward for their aid, but will give the conspirators a bed at Bamfurlong should ever they need it in days to come, and send them off with a basket of his mushrooms, which can serve as fine provender as they search for the 'Burnt Beast', as he calls it, with a promise of more any time they wish after the matter is settled.

Finally, Maggot adds that he only ever saw the beast at night, and he believes it has somehow crossed over to Buckland and is troubling the Brandybucks now, based on news he's heard from Bucklebury. They might want to begin their search for the creature by crossing the Brandywine at Bucklebury Ferry, and should probably depart this same evening.

UP THE CAUSEWAY TO BUCKLEBURY FERRY

The trip up the Causeway to reach Bucklebury Ferry is an easy one, but the evening air feels strangely still. No Hobbits are seen relaxing out of doors on their farms in the Marish, and no children are found catching fireflies.

One hour later, about halfway to the Ferry, the Player-heroes feel a growing sense of dread creeping over them, as if a rabbit were sensing a nearby predator. It's a disheartening feeling, seeping into their very bones.

As they continue on, each Player-hero gains 2 points of Shadow from Dread (DC 10 Charisma saving throw to resist). Those who fail are unable to spot something specific that is causing their unease, but those who are successful see a pair of red eyes here and there. Once behind a fence, another time obscured by a row of hedges, and again slipping away behind a small house.

Upon finally reaching the winding road that turns east off the Causeway, they begin walking down the path towards Bucklebury

Ferry. Indeed, they can see it for themselves in the distance, illuminated by starlight reflected in the Brandywine River.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

At last this uneasy night stroll reaches its destination. You see as you turn off the Causeway, further down the lane, the square floating platform that is the Bucklebury Ferry. With no ferryman tending it at night, you will have to cross on your own, but the water is calm, and the stars are bright. A sigh of released tension is prematurely interrupted when you see a pair of red eyes come up from the ditch along the western side of the Causeway.

It may have once been a dog or wolf, but its fur is burnt and stiff, the colour of cold ashes. Fiery eyes gleam in the night as it prowls towards you, never flinching. Its predatory confidence grows with each step. Never once does it make a sound, not even its footfalls. Nearly as tall as a Hobbit at the shoulder, its silent snarl reveals white fangs stained pink, as it breaks into a charge towards you!



This is a true battle. The Player-heroes have little time to prepare for it, and indeed it might be wiser for them to consider the option of escaping, for example using the Ferry.

Racing down the road and leaping onto the ferry requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, and the choice of whether to stand and fight or flee must be made quickly.

The Loremaster should press the players, and force them to make their choice swiftly. Those who fail their check to flee fall behind and become a prime target for the terrible black beast.

Player-heroes who muster their courage and decide to stand and fight in hopes of delaying the creature or protecting their friends start the fight 30 feet from the beast. If the creature is reduced to half or less of its hit points, it turns and flees, leaping over the far side of the Causeway and disappearing into the night.

Once the characters have begun their crossing, they can gaze back upon the western bank of the Brandywine River, noticing a pair of red eyes watching them from the darkness, before the beast darts north along the river bank.

Burnt Beast

Medium beast

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

ARMOUR CLASS 15 (natural armour)

HIT POINTS 45 (7d8 + 14)

SPEED 50 ft.

SKILLS Intimidation +1, Perception +5, Stealth +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15 (20 when relying on hearing or smell)

LANGUAGES -

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP, proficiency bonus +2)

FEAR OF FIRE. If the Burnt Beast takes fire or radiant damage, it must succeed on a Charisma (Intimidation) check (DC 10 + damage taken) or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

POUNCE. If the Burnt Beast moves at least 20 feet straight towards a creature and then hits it with a bite attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the Burnt Beast can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

KEEN HEARING AND SMELL. The Burnt Beast has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

MULTIATTACK. The Burnt Beast can use its Strike Fear. It then makes one attack with its bite.

BITE. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

STRIKE FEAR. Each creature of the Burnt Beast's choice that is within 60 feet of the Burnt Beast and aware of it gains 1 Shadow point from Dread, resisted by a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a target becomes frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target gains 2 Shadow points instead of 1 and is also stunned while frightened. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Burnt Beast's Strike Fear for the next 24 hours.

PART TWO: BUCKLAND TROUBLES

After crossing the Brandywine, the Player-heroes enter Buckland and head towards Brandy Hall in the late hours of the night. Right after leaving the ferry, they are approached by a Bucklander watchman carrying a lantern, with his other hand resting on the pommel of a sheathed short sword. He is terse with the Player-heroes, telling them that they shouldn't be using the ferry at night, and that any strangers are to be escorted to Brandy Hall for their own safety. He offers to guide them the rest of the way. If they refuse, he insists, saying it's the Master of Buckland's orders.

While walking to Brandy Hall, any Player-heroes that ask the guard what is causing the extra security measures must make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get him to open up — though no check is necessary if Rory or Primula Brandybuck are among the Player-heroes present. If successful, he introduces himself as Braddoc, and reveals that there are rumours of a savage creature threatening the locals. If they succeed by 5 or more, he tells them some kind of wild dog matching the description of the beast was seen prowling around Crickhollow, terrorizing the area.

Upon arriving at Brandy Hall, the Player-heroes are given a chance to rest and recount their troubles. The Master of Buckland himself, Gorbadoch Brandybuck, comes to hear their tale, for it concerns him greatly, as Rory and Primula are his children and Drogo is to be his son by marriage.



Gorbadoc Brandybuck

Loremasters can read or paraphrase the following text to open the scene.

Braddoc the watchman leads you up the road and to the main entrance of the grand Hobbit-hole that is Brandy Hall. Much to your surprise, given the time of night, you see none other than the Master of Buckland, Gorbadoc Brandybuck himself, pacing on the front walk. Pipe clenched in his teeth and leaning on a heavy wooden cudgel, he looks up at the light of Braddoc's lantern and smiles. "Glad to see you, my lads and lasses."

Trouble is visible on Gorbadoc's face, but he waves it away after offering Braddoc a quick thank you and asking the group if they'd like to come in for some late-night vittles. Once they've all sat down at the table, Gorbadoc assures everyone that they'll have proper lodging for the night. It's only then that he brings up the subject of the creature, asking anyone injured in their previous encounter with the beast where they got their wounds. He tells them that the beast has been prowling about Buckland as well, and it troubles him to hear it's somehow crossed the Brandywine — such a thing makes no sense to him, as the creature was only spotted last night, and he finds it hard to believe that the beast swam the length of the Brandywine and then back again to trouble Farmer Maggot.

The beast, Gorbadoc tells them, has been taking livestock from Newbury, and just last night Rollo Boffin sounded the alarm, claiming he saw the beast on the edge of his property at Crickhollow. He fears it's only a matter of time before the creature hurts someone.

Before going to bed, Gorbadoc adds that even as Master of Buckland, he's got no right to tell others how to live, but if they're going to stick their nose into this matter they'd best be careful.

CRISIS AT CRICKHOLLOW

An hour before dawn Saradas Brandybuck (brother of Rory and Primula) wakes the Player-heroes, and tells them that there's been another attack. Rollo Boffin came running from Crickhollow all the way to Brandy Hall, screaming that he'd seen the beast again, and that this time the thing had been snarling at his very window. Saradas tells the Player-heroes that Gorbadoc is asleep, and he didn't want to wake the old Master, so he came and got them instead.

Saradas leads them to a parlour in Brandy Hall where the newly arrived Rollo is sitting with shaking hands, nursing a cup of tea. Fearfully, and with stumbling words, Rollo describes the beast he saw, with fur burnt black and red fiery eyes, stalking back and forth near the edge of his property. He panicked and fled, running as fast as he could until he reached Brandy Hall. He begs the conspirators to help him.

When Rollo's story ends, the players turn to see Gorbadoc who has been standing in the doorway listening quietly. With a reluctant look upon his face, he nods, saying Rollo is right. He needs to keep the watchmen here and it's only proper that the Player-heroes investigate since they've encountered the creature before. Once all is agreed upon, if Drogos is in the Company, then Gorbadoc puts a hand on his shoulder and tells him "Thank you, son. For what you're doing for my family and my daughter. You and your family will always have a room at Brandy Hall."

The characters arrive at Crickhollow after a brief early morning walk from Brandy Hall a few miles away, but find no damage to the house itself. Anyone who searches the property discovers signs of disturbance — trampled flower beds, bark ripped from trees as if by animal claws, the carcasses of a few dead rabbits, and most disturbing of all, great gouges in the rear door of Rollo Boffin's house.

Anyone who succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots a small trail leading towards the eastern end of the property that appears to dip and run to the very High Hay itself. Once they get near it, the Player-heroes get the uncanny sense that they are being watched.

It is then that the beast strikes again! Leaping from a long shadow cast by the rising sun against the High Hay, the horrid creature lunges at the nearest Player-hero! But the creature is not moving in for the kill — after a single successful attack or after being hit, the beast runs down the narrow path to the end of the property and disappears.

The path from Crickhollow to the High Hay dips very low as it goes on for some time, eventually coming to a brick lined gap in the Hedge where it ends in a set of thick iron bars. Though once forming a sturdy barrier, the gate appears to have been bent and twisted by some creature from the Old Forest trying to get in.

Careful examination of the gate via another successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a few tufts of black fur caught in a hinge. It is clear that the black beast came this way, from somewhere inside the Old Forest. If they do not dare to take the hunt for the terrible creature into such a gloomy and dangerous place, it will only continue to plague the people of the Eastfarthing for countless nights to come.

PART THREE: THE OLD FOREST

The Player-heroes have now truly passed beyond the safety of the Shire. After slipping through the tiny iron gate beneath the High Hay and into the Old Forest proper, they catch their first full look at this strange and legendary wood.

The Old Forest. Countless tales are told, from Buckland to the White Downs, about the strange affairs of this untamed wild. To your surprise, the forest itself does not immediately leap out and attack you as soon as you step past the bent iron gate and fully into the woods.

Instead, a thin collection of trees, bent and gnarled, surrounds you, just out of reach, their full branches not quite touching you. A wide path, barely visible from the gate, runs east and slightly to the north, over a low rise where you see a break in the trees. After a brief walk through moss-covered trees growing in countless shapes and sizes, you come to a wide, bare space where no trees grow. It forms a wide circle, and the sun reaches down, unobscured by the thick canopy of reaching branches and wide leaves.

Beyond this, the Old Forest grows thick and free. Trees, gnarled and twisted, with great roots sticking up from the ground and dipping back down again, grow freely, and there is little in the way of a path as the ground continues a slow ascent, and the sense that you are an unwanted visitor and are being watched grows in your mind. In this wild and twisted place, it is clear that the Burnt Beast will have the advantage, and your hunt will be most difficult.

Player-heroes asking the Loremaster what they know about tales of the Old Forest may make a DC 10 Intelligence (Old Lore) check. With a success, they learn that rumour has it that the forest is alive and actively dislikes visitors, with some believing that the trees themselves actually move to obstruct travellers with twisting roots and tangling branches. Long ago some Hobbits actually drove the Old Forest back when the wood itself moved and tried to attack the hedge. Bucklanders travelled beyond the High Hay and drove it away with fire. Succeeding by 5 or more includes knowledge that the Old Forest is said to be the home of a wandering spirit that speaks to trees and bends the beasts that live in it to his will.

THE HUNT FOR THE BURNT BEAST

The Loremaster should ask the players which one (and only one) of the Player-heroes will act as the scout for the group. The scout is in charge of trying to maintain orientation and prevent them from getting lost in the strange and shifting Old Forest. All Player-heroes not serving as the scout are instead searching for signs of the beast's passage as hunters. This could include tufts of fur, blood, or paw prints. There is no limit to the number of Player-heroes attempting to track the beast, though no character can be both scout and hunter.

For every hour of search, the scout must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Explore) check, while the hunters must accumulate three successful DC 15 Wisdom (Hunting) checks. If the Wisdom (Explore) check fails, the Wisdom (Hunting) checks have disadvantage; if it succeeds by 5 or more, they have advantage instead.

ANGERING THE OLD FOREST

Player-heroes who brandish axes or speak ill of the forest may find the trees treat them with even more contempt and malice than before. Insults and threats spoken aloud in the Old Forest can make this journey even more dangerous, and the Loremaster should consider increasing the number of successful Wisdom (Hunting) checks required if they speak so foolishly!

After each check, the Loremaster must roll a d12 to determine what type of strange encounter occurs, using the table found on page 51. Likewise, for every failed Wisdom (Hunting) check, the Loremaster rolls on the table again.

Once the required successes have been reached, the Company finds the Burnt Beast, which prowls near the banks of the Withywindle, prepared to ambush the characters. Go to Part Four.

PART FOUR: BURNING BATTLE

The Player-heroes have finally cornered the Burnt Beast, and can put an end to the troubles it is bringing to the Eastfarthing!

The thick woodland opens ever so slightly to reveal a great thorn thicket that is impossibly large and twisted. From under the strangling vines, you see a familiar pair of burning eyes, as the Burnt Beast slithers forth from the darkness. An instant later, a chill runs down your spine, as a second pair of eyes appears in the darkness only a moment before another of these horrid creatures comes forth, intent on devouring you and your friends. It is not one of these shadowed predators prowling the Old Forest, but a fierce mated pair that has been cornered and driven to defend the bramble-ridden thorn hedge they've taken as home. They leap forward, prepared to finish you and your friends off now that there are no people of the Shire to hear your screams.

The Burnt Beasts, now revealed to be a pair and not a singular creature, are cornered and threatened, fighting fiercely. More dangerous than anything the conspirators have faced so far, this seems a true life-or-death situation — the Burnt Beasts have drawn the Player-heroes out of the Shire and into their territory.

The Loremaster should refer to the stats presented on page 81 for both Burnt Beasts.

ANCIENT SONGS AND NEW FRIENDS

Fortunately, all the commotion going on in the Old Forest has not gone unnoticed. Depending on how the Player-heroes have acted through the course of their adventures, aid may soon arrive to help them in this dire time.

After a number of turns of battle, Tom Bombadil arrives and chases away the beasts. The number of turns is equal to 10, minus 2 for each instance that the Player-heroes have shown kindness to the animal inhabitants of the Shire (including, but not limited to, the owl at Waymeet, Firework the dog, the squirrels of Woody End, etc.).

If the Player-heroes defeat the Burnt Beasts before Tom's arrival, this changes little, and the situation still plays out narratively as before. They simply flee into the forest and Tom arrives moments later.

Breaking through your fear and weariness, you hear a strange voice rise, and the black beasts draw back from you, looking towards the sound. Dancing as though at a spring festival, you see a wanderer merrily skipping about in yellow boots. Taller than a Hobbit, though not as tall as a Man, his face sports a careful smile, and he sweeps off his great floppy hat with a bow to you, and then again to the two beasts! Rising again, replacing his hat and straightening his blue jacket, he speaks in a kind of sing-song rhyme.

*"Hey ho, silly ho, tramp across the forest
Little creatures under foot, black dogs are the sorest
Go now, silly dogs, cast away your ire
Hobbits only hope to help,
Come now, little dogs, no need to be so dire"*

Tom prances over to the Player-heroes, and the Burnt Beasts break off their attack and flee from his presence. He pays them little heed for his part, much more interested in the Player-heroes. Instead, he sings his brief rhyme and then merrily bids the Hobbits to follow him to his house, where they can find refreshment and recover (see page 53).

While the Player-heroes rest for the evening in the House of Bombadil, Tom reveals what he knows about the true nature of the Burnt Beasts: They were once hounds owned by a lord of Men, residing long ago in a tower of stone which rose among the hills which are now known as the Barrow-downs, beyond the Old Forest. In a time of terrible war, the lord perished among the flames, and his faithful hounds with him. When evil spirits descended upon the Barrow-downs, many years later, the hounds returned as dark reflections of what they once were.

They are now terrible creatures, but yet, they are not entirely evil, says Tom — something of their faithful nature

epilogue

Having released the hounds from their curse, the Player-heroes make their way through the Old Forest back towards the Shire, and oddly enough, the woods do not seem to impede their travel. Once back in Buckland, the Player-heroes are given a warm welcome by Gorbadoch, and another night of fine eating and resting before crossing the Brandywine back into the Marish.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

You arrive at Maggot's house just in time for dinner, and find the farmer intent on rebuilding his chicken coop. As you greet Maggot, to your surprise and amazement the once-cursed dogs appear out of nowhere and run to Maggot, barking merrily. At first, the farmer is a bit fearful, but both dogs tackle him and begin to lick him and play with him. Slowly, Maggot's demeanour changes, and he begins to pet and play with them. In time, Maggot gently brings them to heel and calls you to join him for dinner.

As you sit at the dinner table, Maggot asks if these fine beasts have names. You recount what happened in the Old Forest, and as you do so, you realize that the friendliness of the two dogs towards Maggot must be a sort of gift from Tom — could it be that they know each other?

Over a hearty home-cooked meal, Maggot says that he was not one to keep beasts around, but these dogs seem rather fond of him, and they might make fine breeding stock for years to come. If any fierceness remains in their hearts, they'll be fine protectors for his family. He thanks the Player-heroes for their aid and asks them if they'll stay for the night.

Come morning, Bilbo declares that he has had a wonderful little adventure, and enough proper research has been gathered for his book. He kindly thanks the Player-heroes for their involvement and declares that they all shall be invited to the next great party he throws, and every party to come.

As time goes on, Bilbo becomes more reclusive, and the other Hobbits return to their lives. Gossip regarding their mischief fades away over the years, and life once again returns to normal in the Shire, for a few years at least...

At the end of this adventure, the Loremaster should award each Player-hero 150 to 300 XP, depending on whether they released the Burnt Beasts from their curse or not.



remains, and they seldom attempt to kill. But their malice is growing year after year, as if the ill-will of the Old Forest itself is slowly taking over. Can it be that something can be done to remind them of what it means to be steadfast and true? Can they be given peace? Perhaps, Tom asks, if the Player-heroes are willing to help them find their way back to being fine companion hounds, they could be released from their wretched state.

If the Player-heroes agree, Tom tells them that the Burnt Beasts must be again given proper names, and if the Player-heroes will give them such names, the true and loyal nature of their hearts can perhaps be restored. When asked why Tom couldn't name them himself, he says:

"Tom doesn't fear the hounds, and the hounds leave Tom be, my merries! Listen to Old Tom's songs and sing them back, recalling hearth and home. Gentle voices and kind souls will cast away the doom."

Tom teaches them several of his strange songs, as if they were simple children's rhymes, then merrily bids the characters get a good night's rest in his home. Come dawn, they can set out with a song in their hearts to restore the Burnt Beasts.

RETURN TO THE LAIR

At dawn, the Player-heroes awake to find Tom has gone out to collect river lilies for his wife. Goldberry tells the Player-heroes that the Burnt Beasts are still prowling around their lair in the nearby thorny thicket. Upon returning to the thicket, the Player-heroes spot the mated pair of creatures at once. They move to attack as soon as the conspirators arrive.

Though the Player-heroes can kill the Burnt Beasts with their weapons, their death is not permanent. They will rise again, and return to plague the Shire, unless they are slain using blades of Westernesse or similar magical weapons. Instead, some among the Player-heroes must hold off the savage beasts while others sing the songs they learned from Bombadil.

This requires the conspirators to succeed on three DC 12 Charisma (Performance) checks. Any number of Player-heroes not engaged with the Burnt Beasts can sing as an action.

If successful, the Burnt Beasts become light of heart, as all darkness and sorrow is washed away from their spirit. At that point, the Player-heroes can give them a name. Once the power of Tom's song and their new names have taken hold, the ashen features of the Burnt Beasts fade away, and their eyes brighten from fiery red to a gentle colour. The hounds, joyful, cheerful creatures once more, run away to play on the paths of the Old Forest, running beyond the edge of the Player-heroes' sight.



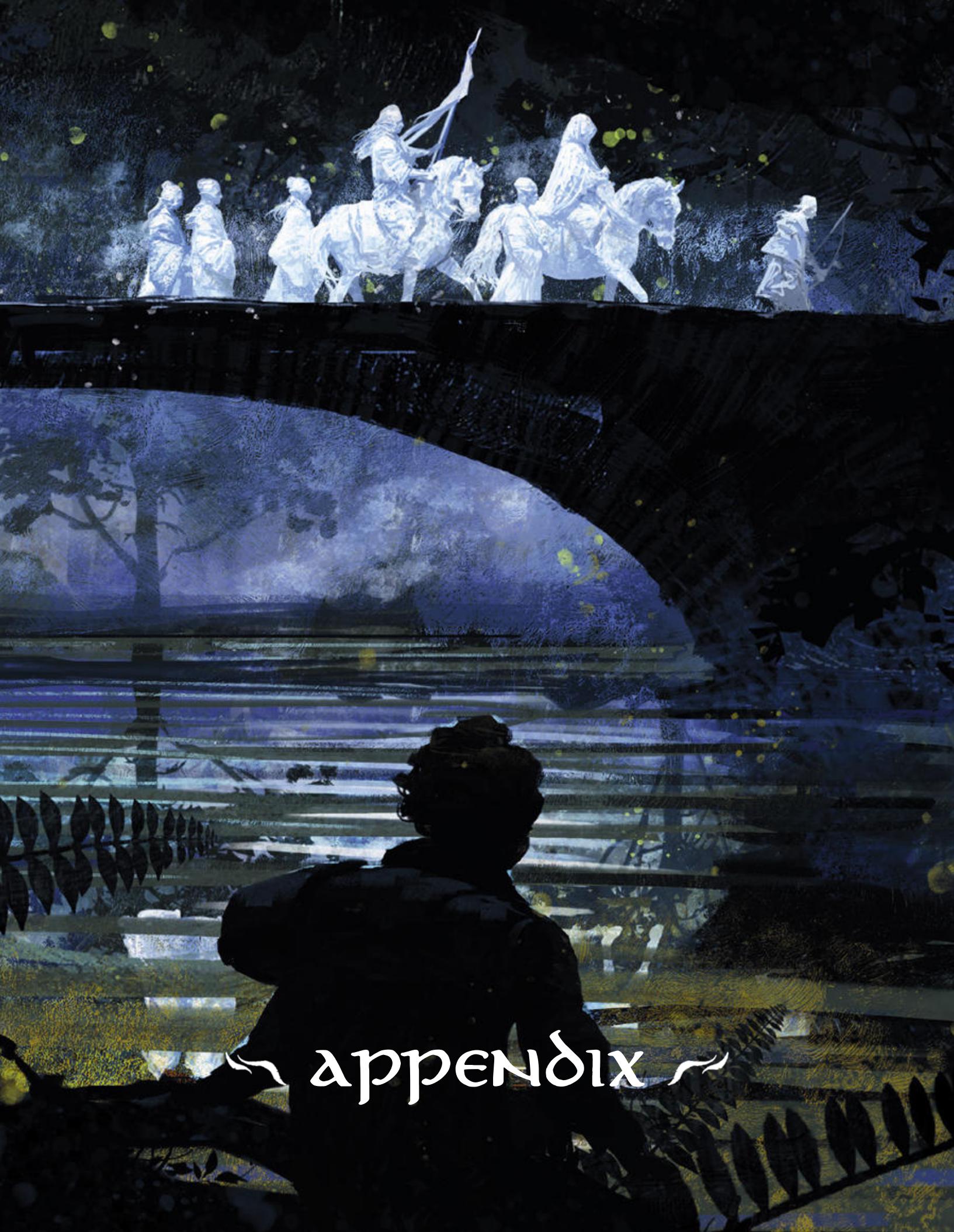
*He looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges:
maps made in the Shire showed mostly white spaces beyond its borders.*



This page marks the end of your adventures in the Shire for the moment!
You can continue by creating your own, using the information contained in the *Regarding The Shire* chapter.





A person is sitting in a dark room, facing a wall that displays a large projection of a scene from a Japanese woodblock print. The projection shows several figures in traditional white robes on horseback, moving across a landscape with stylized trees and foliage. The overall aesthetic is dark and atmospheric, with the figures being the primary light source.

appendix



☞ DROGO BAGGINS ☞

I get myself all settled in Buckland and ready to get married with a nice wing of Brandy Hall all to myself, and Cousin Bilbo goes calling me to Hobbiton! It's not quite proper, mind you. But I've done my fair share of improper things, I suppose, like packing up to live across the Brandywine like some boot-wearing river-Hobbit. Primula tells me I need to buck up my courage (a little Brandybuck humor, that) and get past my fears if I'm ever to earn a proper place at Brandy Hall. So, I suppose we'll see what strangeness Cousin Bilbo's got planned, so long as there's no boats involved. I'm still a proper Westfarthing Hobbit, and not comfortable with those untrustworthy contraptions yet.

Drogo Baggins is about fifty years old at the time of these adventures, and is quite the proper Hobbit, if a little overweight. One day, he will marry his lovely Primula, and the two will have a son, Frodo Baggins.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ ROLEPLAYING

NAME

Drogo Baggins

Messenger I

Calling and Level

Harfoot Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

10

+0

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

10

+0

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

Strength

Dexterity

Constitution

Intelligence

Wisdom

Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

12

+1

Acrobatics (Dex)

Animal Handling (Wis)

Athletics (Str)

Deception (Cha)

Explore (Wis)

Hunting (Wis)

Insight (Wis)

Intimidation (Cha)

Investigation (Int)

Medicine (Wis)

Nature (Int)

Old Lore (Int)

Perception (Wis)

Performance (Cha)

Persuasion (Cha)

Riddle (Int)

Sleight of Hand (Dex)

Stealth (Dex)

Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

WISDOM

14

+2

CHARISMA

15

+2

12

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Tools: Chess, fiddle, herbalsim kit, pipes

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

12

ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

30ft

speed

10

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Heir Name

Investment

heir

Disadvantage on ability checks

Speed halved

Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws

Hit point maximum halved

Speed reduced to 0

6- Death

EXHAUSTION

WEAPON Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Folk-lore, Hobbit-sense, Tireless and Swift,
Unarmoured Defence, Unobtrusive

Traveller's clothes,
pipe (10 uses)

Copper Coins

Silver Pennies

Gold Pieces

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



~ ESMERALDA TOOK ~

Oh, this is going to be delightful! A true Baggins Adventure right here, set out by the Master of Bag End himself! Yes, I know I'm technically here because Great Aunt Lalia wanted me to make sure "that Mad Baggins didn't stir up any nonsense", and more likely to get me out of Tuckborough for a few days after the to-do at her birthday party last year, but that wasn't my fault, and truth be told, I plan on coming back with a good story or two in my pocket. In fact, I've no doubt that I'll have more yarns to spin than Gammer Rosa keeps by that creaking old rocker of hers.

A great-granddaughter of Gerontius, the Old Took, she is still in her tweens. She was about five years old when Bilbo Baggins left Bag End to go and claim the gold of Smaug the Dragon. She'll marry Saradoc Brandybuck, and one day become the mother of one Meriadoc Brandybuck.



NAME

Esméralda Took

Treasure Hunter I

Calling and Level

Fallohid Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

8

-1

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

17

+3

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

- Strength
- Dexterity
- Constitution
- Intelligence
- Wisdom
- Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

10

+0

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- Explore (Wis)
- Hunting (Wis)
- Insight (Wis)
- Intimidation (Cha)
- Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Old Lore (Int)
- Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- Stealth (Dex)
- Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

WISDOM

12

+1

CHARISMA

14

+2

15 passive wisdom (perception)

Tools: Cartographer's tools, flute, pipes, quoits

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

13

ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

25ft

speed

10

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

CURRENT HIT POINTS

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Heir Name

Investment

heir

- Disadvantage on ability checks
- Speed halved
- Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws
- Hit point maximum halved
- Speed reduced to 0
- 6- Death

EXHAUSTION

Weapon Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Expertise (Perception, Stealth),
Hobbit-sense, Sneak Attack (1d6),
Unobtrusive

<input type="checkbox"/> Copper Coins	Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Pennies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Pieces	

Equipment

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



☞ LOBELIA BRACEGIRDLE ☞

Can you believe the gall of that... that... Brandybuck! Oh, he calls himself a Baggins, but no right and proper Baggins would run off with a pack of mad Dwarves and a half-cracked wizard into the blue, let alone have the audacity to show his face over a year later with a pony full of gold and pretend everything's right as rain! I'll not have it, I tell you. And I'll not have him bringing anymore undo scandal to the proper people of the Shire. He's up to something, calling Tookes and Brandbucks to Bag End for some nasty, troublesome business no doubt.

The daughter of Blanco Bracegirdle and Primrose Boffin, Lobelia has yet to marry Otho Sackville-Baggins. She's about forty years old, and she has already seen her ambition to enter Bag End as rightful owner disappear once, when Bilbo returned from his adventure against all odds.



NAME

Lobelia Bracegirdle

Champion I

Calling and Level

Harfoot Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

12

+1

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

16

+3

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

15

+2

- +3 Strength
- Dexterity
- +4 Constitution
- Intelligence
- Wisdom
- Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

10

+0

WISDOM

14

+2

CHARISMA

8

-1

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- Explore (Wis)
- Hunting (Wis)
- +4 Insight (Wis)
- +1 Intimidation (Cha)
- +2 Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Old Lore (Int)
- +4 Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- +5 Stealth (Dex)
- Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

14

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Tools: Cook's utensils, pipes, weaver's tools

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

13

ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

25ft

speed

12

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

CURRENT HIT POINTS

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Disadvantage on ability checks

Speed halved

Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws

Hit point maximum halved

Speed reduced to 0

6- Death

EXHAUSTION

WEAPON Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Fighting Style (Duelling), Hobbit-sense,
Surge of Vigour (1d8 + 3), Unobtrusive

<input type="checkbox"/> Copper Coins	Fine clothes, umbrella (1d4, Finesse, Light)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Pennies			
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Pieces			

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



☞ PALADIN TOOK II ☞

Minding my business in Whitwell and who should come trundling up the lane of my farm but young Esmeralda! Off to see Cousin Bilbo she is, and I thought to myself, that is a right fine idea. What's wrong with a Took having a touch of fun before settling down and becoming a proper farmer? I'm still a tween myself, why not set off responsibility for another season or two and honor my great-grandfather with a bit of adventure? Seems only proper.

Underage brother to Esmeralda Took, and future Thain, for the moment his only claim to fame is being the oldest son of Adalgrim Took, and a newly-settled farmer from Whitwell. One day, he'll have a son, and name him Peregrin.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ ROLEPLAYING

NAME

Paladin Took

Captain I
Calling and Level
Fallohid Hobbit
Culture

Distinctive Features
Shadow Path

Player Name
Experience Points

STRENGTH

12

+1

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

15

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

- Strength
- Dexterity
- +4 Constitution
- Intelligence
- Wisdom
- +5 Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

8

-1

WISDOM

10

+0

CHARISMA

16

+3

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- +2 Animal Handling (Wis)
- +3 Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- Explore (Wis)
- Hunting (Wis)
- Insight (Wis)
- Intimidation (Cha)
- Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Old Lore (Int)
- Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- +5 Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- +4 Stealth (Dex)
- +2 Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

10

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Tools: Darts, drum, pipes

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

13
ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

25ft
speed

12

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary
Hit Points

HIT DICE

Successes
Failures

DEATH SAVES

ATTACKS

Weapon Atk Bonus Damage Range

Rewards

Hobbit-sense, Leadership, Unobtrusive

<input type="checkbox"/> Copper Coins	Leather shirt, backpack, tinderbox, waterskin
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Pennies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Pieces	

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



~PRIMULA BRANDYBUCK~

It's quite proper that Drogo and I head back to Bag End for a bit. We've not seen his Uncle Bilbo since Drogo promised to marry me right there in front of everyone under the Party Tree. Dear Drogo may be stiff at times, but he's got a touch of his uncle in him. Rory's coming along, shrewd as ever and convinced something strange is afoot. Esmeralda is convinced we're going to find a dragon or some such nonsense. As for Lobelia, well the less said the better. Someone's got to keep a level head in this whole affair, and it seems like I'm the only one fit for the job.

A cousin of Bilbo Baggins (on her mother's side), Primula is the youngest daughter of Gorbado Brandybuck, the Master of Buckland. Soon, she will marry Drogo Baggins, and the two will have a son, Frodo.



NAME

Primula Brandybuck

Scholar I

Calling and Level

Stoor Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

8

-1

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

12

+1

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

14

+2

- Strength
- Dexterity
- Constitution
- Intelligence +4
- Wisdom +4
- Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

15

+2

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- Explore (Wis)
- Hunting (Wis)
- Insight (Wis) +4
- Intimidation (Cha)
- Investigation (Int) +4
- Medicine (Wis) +4
- Nature (Int) +4
- Old Lore (Int) +4
- Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- Stealth (Dex) +3
- Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

CHARISMA

12

+1

12 passive wisdom (perception)

Tools: Calligrapher's supplies, herbalism kit, pipes, water vehicles

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

13

ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

25ft

speed

10

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

CURRENT HIT POINTS

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Disadvantage on ability checks

Speed halved

Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws

Hit point maximum halved

Speed reduced to 0

6- Death

EXHAUSTION

Weapon Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Crafts (Leech-craft, 1 slot), Hobbit-sense, Rhymes of Lore (1d6), Unarmoured Defence, Unobtrusive

<input type="checkbox"/> Copper Coins	Fine clothes, healer's kit, herbalism kit
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Pennies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Pieces	

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



⚡ RORIMAC BRANDYBUCK ⚡

All those dragon tales and children's stories aren't without some truth, I tell you. Mad Baggins is up to something, and I mean to find out what. Plain and proper he was before that wizard dragged him off into the blue, only to plop him back down over a year later with a pack full of gold and a twinkle in his eye. I'm not judging him, mind you. We Bucklanders get called strange enough by these stiff Westfarthing Hobbits, but if Baggins is up to some new strangeness, I mean to witness it first hand and see what's going on for myself.

Brother to Primula, Rorimac (called 'Rory') will soon inherit the title of Master of Buckland. For the moment, he's a stout Hobbit, suspicious of anything uncanny, and always ready to defend his sister.



NAME

Rorimac Brandybuck

Warden I

Calling and Level

Stoor Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

10

+0

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

14

+2

+2

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

16

+3

- +2 Strength
- Dexterity
- Constitution
- Intelligence
- +4 Wisdom
- Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

8

-1

WISDOM

14

+2

CHARISMA

13

+1

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- +4 Explore (Wis)
- +4 Hunting (Wis)
- +4 Insight (Wis)
- Intimidation (Cha)
- +1 Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Old Lore (Int)
- +4 Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- +3 Stealth (Dex)
- Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

14 passive wisdom (perception)

Tools: Bowls, pipes, water vehicles,
woodcarver's tools

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

ARMOR CLASS

13

INITIATIVE

25ft

speed

13

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Heir Name

Investment

heir

Disadvantage on ability checks

Speed halved

Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws

Hit point maximum halved

Speed reduced to 0

6- Death

EXHAUSTION

WEAPON Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Hobbit-sense, Shadow-lore (Beasts),
Unobtrusive, Warded Lands (Buckland,
the Old Forest and the Shire)

Dagger,
leather shirt,
pipe (10 uses)
Copper Coins
Silver Pennies
Gold Pieces

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES



~ BILBO BAGGINS ~

They call me cracked, odd, and even a touch mad. I suppose, by Shire standards, they might be right. But, and perhaps I'm being a bit overly Tookish here, I say, is there anything wrong with a little adventure now and again? I dare say these silly simpletons and gallivanting gossips could do with more excitement in their lives. I've certainly had my fair share in my years - and a grand helping it was all at once, I tell you! What with that business with Dwarves and wizards and dragons and all. Ask a Bolger or Boffin, and they'll say no good came of it, but they don't know what they're missing!

A friend of bears and a guest of eagles, Bilbo Baggins is Ringwinner and Luckwearer, and even Barrel-rider! He is at the same time the greatest Hobbit adventurer of all time, and the most peace-loving one. But behind his joyous manners, he hides a terrible secret...



NAME

Bilbo Baggins

Treasure Hunter 6 (Burglar)

Calling and Level

Fallohid Hobbit

Culture

Distinctive Features

Player Name

Shadow Path

Experience Points

STRENGTH

8

-1

INSPIRATION

DEXTERITY

18

+4

+3

PROFICIENCY BONUS

CONSTITUTION

10

+0

- Strength
- Dexterity
- Constitution
- Intelligence
- Wisdom
- Charisma

SAVING THROWS

INTELLIGENCE

14

+2

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- Explore (Wis)
- Hunting (Wis)
- Insight (Wis)
- Intimidation (Cha)
- Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Old Lore (Int)
- Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Riddle (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- Stealth (Dex)
- Travel (Wis)

SKILLS

CHARISMA

13

+1

15 passive WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

Tools: All gaming sets, calligrapher's supplies, cartographer's tools, cook's utensils, pipes

Languages: Westron

TOOL PROFICIENCIES AND LANGUAGES

19

ARMOR CLASS

INITIATIVE

25ft

speed

33

HIT POINT MAXIMUM

Temporary Hit Points

CURRENT HIT POINTS

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVES

Heir Name

Investment

heir

Disadvantage on ability checks

Speed halved

Disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws

Hit point maximum halved

Speed reduced to 0

6- Death

EXHAUSTION

WEAPON Atk Bonus Damage Range

ATTACKS

Rewards

Features:

Clever-handed, Cunning Action, Expertise (Riddle, Stealth), Hobbit-sense, Sneak Attack (3d6), Tree-climber, Uncanny Dodge, Unobtrusive

Virtues:

Brave at a Pinch, Sure at the Mark



Bilbo's ring (Blessing of Stealth, ...?), Mithril mail-shirt (Ancient Close-fitting, Mithril), Sting (short sword with the Bane of Orcs, Keen, Luminescence), pipe (10 uses)

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES, TRAITS, AND VIRTUES

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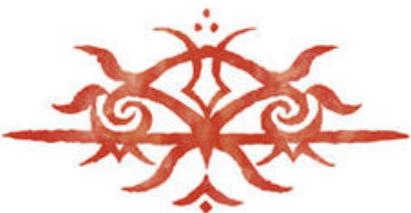
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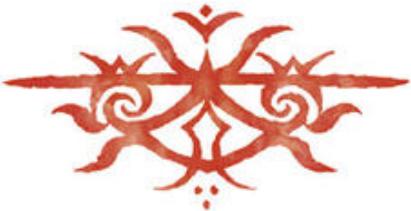
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