NOTE ON THE TEXT

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is often erroneously called a trilogy, when it is in fact a single novel, consisting of six books plus appendices, sometimes published in three volumes.

The first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was published in Great Britain by the London firm George Allen & Unwin on 29 July 1954; an American edition followed on 21 October of the same year, published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston. In the production of this first volume, Tolkien experienced what became for him a continual problem: printer's errors and compositor's mistakes, including well-intentioned 'corrections' of his sometimes idiosyncratic usage. These 'corrections' include the altering of *dwarves* to *dwarfs*, *elvish* to *elfish*, *further* to *farther*, *nasturtians* to *nasturtiums*, *try and say* to *try to say* and ('worst of all' to Tolkien) *elven* to *elfin*. In a work such as *The Lord of the Rings*, containing invented languages and delicately constructed nomenclatures, errors and inconsistencies impede both the understanding and the appreciation of serious readers – and Tolkien had many such readers from very early on. Even before the publication of the third volume, which contained much hitherto unrevealed information on the invented languages and writing systems, Tolkien received many letters from readers written in these systems, in addition to numerous enquiries on the finer points of their usage.

The second volume, *The Two Towers*, was published in England on 11 November 1954 and in the United States on 21 April 1955. Meanwhile Tolkien worked to keep a promise he had made in the foreword to volume one: that 'an index of names and strange words' would appear in the third volume. As originally planned, this index would contain much etymological information on the languages, particularly on the elven tongues, with a large vocabulary. It proved the chief cause of the delay in publishing volume three, which in the end contained no index at all, only an apology from the publisher for its absence. For Tolkien had abandoned work on it after indexing volumes one and two, believing its size and therefore its cost to be ruinous.

Volume three, *The Return of the King*, finally appeared in England on 20 October 1955 and in the United States on 5 January 1956. With the appearance of the third volume, *The Lord of the Rings* was published in its entirety, and its first edition text remained virtually

unchanged for a decade. Tolkien had made a few small corrections, but further errors entered *The Fellowship of the Ring* in its December 1954 second impression when the printer, having distributed the type after the first printing, reset the book without informing the author or publisher. These include misrepresentations of the original printed text – that is, words and phrases that read acceptably in context, but which depart from Tolkien's wording as originally written and published.

In 1965, stemming from what then appeared to be copyright problems in the United States, an American paperback firm published an unauthorized and non-royalty-paying edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. For this new edition by Ace Books the text of the narrative was reset, thus introducing new typographical errors; the appendices, however, were reproduced photographically from the hardcover edition, and remain consistent with it.

Tolkien set to work on his first revision of the text so that a newly revised and authorized edition could successfully compete on the American market. This first revision of the text was published in America in paperback by Ballantine Books, under licence from Houghton Mifflin, in October 1965. In addition to revisions within the text itself, Tolkien replaced his original foreword with a new one. He was pleased to remove the original foreword; in his check copy, he wrote of it: 'confusing (as it does) real personal matters with the "machinery" of the Tale, is a serious mistake'. Tolkien also added an extension to the prologue and an index – not the detailed index of names promised in the first edition, but, rather, a bald index with only names and page references. Additionally, at this time the appendices were greatly revised.

Tolkien received his copies of the Ballantine edition in late January 1966, and in early February he recorded in his diary that he had 'worked for some hours on the Appendices in Ballantine version & found more errors than I at first expected'. Soon after this he sent a small number of further revisions to Ballantine for the appendices, including the now well-known addition of 'Estella Bolger' as wife of Meriadoc in the family trees in Appendix C. Most of these revisions, which entered variously in the third and fourth impressions (June and August 1966) of volume three, and which were not always inserted correctly (thereby causing further confusion in the text), somehow never made it into the main sequence of revision in the three-volume British

Since 1974, Christopher Tolkien has sent additional corrections, as errors have been discovered, to the British publishers of *The Lord of the Rings* (Allen & Unwin, later Unwin Hyman, and now HarperCollins), who have tried to be conscientious in the impossible task of maintaining a textual integrity in whichever editions of *The Lord of the Rings* they have published. However, every time the text has been reset for publication in a new format (e.g. the various paperback editions published in England in the 1970s and 1980s), huge numbers of new misprints have crept in, though at times some of these errors have been observed and corrected in later printings. Still, throughout these years the three-volume British hardcover edition has retained the highest textual integrity.

In the United States, the text of the Ballantine paperback has remained unchanged for more than three decades after Tolkien added his few revisions in 1966. The text in all of the Houghton Mifflin editions remained unchanged from 1967 until 1987, when Houghton Mifflin photo-offset the then current three-volume British hardcover edition in order to update the text used in their editions. In those new reprintings a number of further corrections (overseen by Christopher Tolkien) were added, and the errant Ballantine branch of revision (including the 'Estella Bolger' addition) was integrated into the main branch of textual descent. This method of correction involved a cut-and-paste process with printed versions of the text. Beginning with the 1987 Houghton Mifflin edition, an earlier version of this 'Note on the Text' (dated October 1986) was added to *The Lord of the Rings*. This 'Note' has been reworked three times since then – the version dated April 1993 first appeared in 1994, and the version dated April 2002 came out later that year. The present 'Note' replaces and supersedes all previous versions.

For the 1994 British edition published by HarperCollins, the text of *The Lord of the Rings* was entered into word-processing files. This next stage of textual evolution came about to allow for a greater uniformity of the text in all future editions, but with it, inevitably, came new wrinkles. Some new misreadings entered into the text, while at the same time others were fixed. In the worst instance, one line of the ring inscription in the chapter 'The Shadow of the Past' of *The Fellowship of the Ring* was simply dropped. Unforeseeable glitches arose in other editions when the base computerized text was transferred into page-making or typesetting programs – e.g., in one edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the closing two sentences of 'The Council of Elrond' simply and inexplicably disappeared. Such glitches have been very much the exception, not the rule, and the text has otherwise

The textual history of *The Lord of the Rings*, merely in its published form, is a vast and complex web. In this brief note I have given only a glimpse of the overall sequence and structure. Further details on the revisions and corrections made over the years to the published text of *The Lord of the Rings*, and a fuller account of its publishing history, may be found in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*, by Wayne G. Hammond, with the assistance of Douglas A. Anderson (1993).

For those interested in observing the gradual evolving of *The Lord of the Rings* from its earliest drafts to its published form, I highly recommend Christopher Tolkien's account, which appears within five volumes of his twelve-volume series *The History of Middle-earth*. Volumes six through nine contain the major part of his study pertaining to *The Lord of the Rings*: *The Return of the Shadow* (1988); *The Treason of Isengard* (1989); *The War of the Ring* (1990); and *Sauron Defeated* (1992). Also, the final book of the series, *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (1996), covers the evolution of the prologue and appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*. These volumes contain an engrossing over-the-shoulder account of the growth and writing of Tolkien's masterpiece.

The process of studying Tolkien's manuscripts of *The Lord of the Rings* involved the deciphering of versions where Tolkien wrote first in pencil and then in ink atop the pencilled draft. Christopher Tolkien has decribed his father's method of composition in *The Return of the Shadow*: 'In the handwriting that he used for rapid drafts and sketches, not intended to endure long before he turned to them again and gave them a more workable form, letters are so loosely formed that a word which cannot be deduced or guessed at from the context or from later versions can prove perfectly opaque after long examination; and if, as he often did, he used a soft pencil much has now become blurred and faint.' The true difficulty of reading such double-drafts can be observed in the frontispiece to *The War of the Ring*, which reproduces in colour Tolkien's illustration of 'Shelob's Lair' from a page of Tolkien's manuscript. Looking very closely at the hasty ink draft alongside the illustration, one can see underneath it the earlier, hastier, pencilled draft. Also in *The War of the Ring*,

That difficulty aside, just what do these books signify to ordinary readers and to Tolkien scholars? And what is 'the history of the writing' of a book? Simply, these volumes show in great detail the development of the story of *The Lord of the Rings* from its very earliest drafts and hasty projections through its completion. We see in the earliest materials what is very much a children's book, a sequel to *The Hobbit*, and as the story grows through various 'phases', there is an increase in seriousness and depth. We see alternate branches of development, the gradual blending and merging of certain characters, and the slow emergence of the nature of the rings and of the motivations of other characters. Some of these various ideas are abandoned altogether, while others are reworked into some variant form that may or may not survive into the final version.

One could make a whole catalogue of interesting tidbits from Christopher Tolkien's study – such as the fact that Strider was called Trotter until a very late stage in the writing of the book; that Trotter was at one time a hobbit, so named because he wore wooden shoes; that Tolkien at one point considered a romance between Aragorn and Éowyn; that Tolkien wrote an epilogue to the book, tying up loose ends, but it was dropped before publication (and now appears in *Sauron Defeated*); and so on. But these developments are best appreciated when read within the context of Christopher Tolkien's commentary rather than discussed separately.

The most significant achievement of these volumes is that they show us how Tolkien wrote and thought. Nowhere else do we see the authorial process itself at work in such detail. Tolkien's hastiest comments about where the story might proceed, or why it can or can't go such and such a way – these queries to himself were written out: Tolkien is literally thinking on paper. This gives an added dimension of understanding to Tolkien's comment to Stanley Unwin in a 1963 letter that, when suffering from trouble with his shoulder and right arm, 'I found not being able to use a pen or pencil as defeating as the loss of her beak would be to a hen.' And we, as readers of these volumes, can share with Tolkien himself the wonder and bewilderment of new characters appearing as if from nowhere, or of some other sudden change or development, at the very moment of their emergence into the story.

I know of no other instance in literature where we have such a 'history of the writing' of a book, told mostly by the author himself, with all the hesitations and false paths laid out before us, sorted out,

EDITION

In this edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, prepared for the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, between three and four hundred emendations have been made following an exhaustive review of past editions and printings. The present text is based on the setting of the HarperCollins three-volume hardcover edition of 2002, which in turn was a revision of the HarperCollins reset edition of 1994. As Douglas A. Anderson comments in the preceding 'Note on the Text', each of those editions was itself corrected, and each also introduced new errors. At the same time, other errors survived undetected, among them some five dozen which entered as long ago as 1954, in the resetting of *The Fellowship of the Ring* published as its 'second impression'.

That the printer had quietly reset *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and that copies had been issued without proof having been read by the author, never became known to Tolkien; while his publisher, Rayner Unwin, learned of it only thirty-eight years after the fact. Tolkien found a few of the unauthorized changes introduced in the second printing when (probably while preparing the second edition in 1965) he read a copy of the twelfth impression (1962), but thought the errors newly made. These, among others, were corrected in the course of the reprinting. Then in 1992 Eric Thompson, a reader with a keen eye for typographic detail, noticed small differences between the first and second impressions of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and called them to the attention of the present editors. About one-sixth of the errors that entered in the second printing quickly came to light. Many more were revealed only recently, when Steven M. Frisby used ingenious optical aids to make a comparison of copies of *The Lord of the Rings* in greater detail than was previously accomplished. We have gladly made full use of Mr Frisby's results, which he has generously shared and discussed.

In the course of its fifty-year history *The Lord of the Rings* has had many such readers who have recorded changes made between its various appearances in print, both to document what has gone before and to aid in the achievement of an authoritative text. Errors or possible errors were reported to the author himself or to his publishers, and information on the textual history of the work circulated among Tolkien enthusiasts at least as early as 1966, when Banks

Lord of the Rings (and of *The Hobbit*); Christina Scull has published 'A Preliminary Study of Variations in Editions of *The Lord of the Rings*' in *Beyond Bree* (April and August 1985); Wayne G. Hammond has compiled extensive lists of textual changes in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1993); and David Bratman has published an important article, 'A Corrigenda to *The Lord of the Rings*', in the March 1994 number of *The Tolkien Collector*. The observations of Dainis Bisenieks, Yuval Kfir, Charles Noad, and other readers, sent to us directly or posted in public forums, have also been of service.

Efforts such as these follow the example of the author of *The Lord of the Rings* during his lifetime. His concern for the textual accuracy and coherence of his work is evident from the many emendations he made in later printings, and from notes he made for other emendations which for one reason or another have not previously (or have only partly) been put into effect. Even late in life, when such labours wearied him, his feelings were clear. On 30 October 1967 he wrote to Joy Hill at George Allen & Unwin, concerning a reader's query he had received about points in the Appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*: 'Personally I have ceased to bother about these minor "discrepancies", since if the genealogies and calendars etc. lack verisimilitude it is in their general excessive accuracy: as compared with real annals or genealogies! Anyway the slips were few, have now mostly been removed, and the discovery of what remain seems an amusing pastime! *But errors in the text are another matter*' (italics ours). In fact Tolkien had not 'ceased to bother', and 'slips' were dealt with as opportunities arose. These, and the indulgence of his publisher, allowed Tolkien a luxury few authors enjoy: multiple chances not only to correct his text but to improve it, and to further develop the languages, geography, and peoples of Middle-earth.

The fiftieth anniversary of *The Lord of the Rings* seemed an ideal opportunity to consider the latest (2002) text in light of information we had gathered in the course of decades of work in Tolkien studies, with Steve Frisby's research at hand, and with an electronic copy of *The Lord of the Rings* (supplied by HarperCollins) searchable by keyword or phrase. The latter especially allowed us to develop lists of words that varied from one instance to another, and investigate variations in usage, as they stood in the copy-text and relative to earlier editions and printings. Of course Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* over so long a period of time, some eighteen years, that inconsistencies in its text were almost inevitable. Christopher Tolkien even observed to us that some apparent inconsistencies of form in his

Many of the emendations in the present text are to marks of punctuation, either to correct recent typographical errors or to repair surviving alterations introduced in the second printing of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In the latter respect and in every case, Tolkien's original punctuation is always more felicitous – subtle points, when one is comparing commas and semi-colons, but no less a part of the author's intended expression. Distinctive words such as *chill* rather than *cold*, and *glistered* rather than *glistened*, changed by typesetters long ago without authorization, likewise have been restored. A controlled amount of regularization also seemed called for, such as *naught* rather than *nought*, a change instituted by Tolkien but not carried through in all instances; *Dark Power* rather than *dark power* when the reference is obviously to Sauron (or Morgoth); *Barrowdowns* by Tolkien's preference rather than *Barrowdowns*; likewise *Bree-hill* rather than *Bree Hill*; accented and more common *Drúadan* rather than *Druadan*; capitalized names of seasons when used as personification or metaphor, according to Tolkien's predominant practice and the internal logic of the text; and *Elvish* rather than *elvish* when used as a separate adjective, following a preference Tolkien marked in his copy of the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. In addition, we have added a second accent to *Númenórean(s)*, as Tolkien often wrote the name in manuscript and as it appears in *The Silmarillion* and other posthumous publications.

The result, nonetheless, still includes many variations in capitalization, punctuation, and other points of style. Not all of these are erroneous: they include words such as *Sun*, *Moon*, *Hobbit*, and *Man* (or *sun*, *moon*, *hobbit*, *man*), which may change form according to meaning or application, in relation to adjacent adjectives, or whether Tolkien intended personification, poetry, or emphasis. His intent cannot be divined with confidence in every case. But it is possible to discern Tolkien's preferences in many instances, from statements he wrote in his check copies of *The Lord of the Rings* or from a

close analysis of its text in manuscript, typescript, proof, and print. Whenever there has been any doubt whatsoever as to the author's intentions, the text has been allowed to stand.

Most of the demonstrable errors noted by Christopher Tolkien in *The History of Middle-earth* also have been corrected, such as the distance from the Brandywine Bridge to the Ferry (*ten* miles rather than *twenty*) and the number of Merry's ponies (*five* rather than *six*), shadows of earlier drafts. But those inconsistencies of content, such as Gimli's famous (and erroneous) statement in Book III, Chapter 7, 'Till now I have hewn naught but wood since I left Moria', which would require rewriting to emend rather than simple correction, remain unchanged.

So many new emendations to *The Lord of the Rings*, and such an extensive review of its text, deserve to be fully documented. Although most readers will be content with the text alone, many will want to know more about the problems encountered in preparing this new edition, and their solutions (where solutions have been possible), especially where the text has been emended, but also where it has not. To this end, and to illuminate the work in other respects, we are preparing a volume of annotations to *The Lord of the Rings* for publication in 2005. This will allow us to discuss, at a length impossible in a prefatory note, the various textual cruces of *The Lord of the Rings*, to identify changes that have been made to the present text, and to remark on significant alterations to the published work throughout its history. We will also explain archaic or unusual words and names in *The Lord of the Rings*, explore literary and historical influences, note connections with Tolkien's other writings, and comment on differences between its drafts and published form, on questions of language, and on much else that we hope will interest readers and enhance their enjoyment of Tolkien's masterpiece.

Wayne G. Hammond & Christina Scull
May 2004

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues.

When those whose advice and opinion I sought corrected *little hope* to *no hope*, I went back to the sequel, encouraged by requests from readers for more information concerning hobbits and their adventures. But the story was drawn irresistibly towards the older world, and became an account, as it were, of its end and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told. The process had begun in the writing of *The Hobbit*, in which there were already some references to the older matter: Elrond, Gondolin, the High-elves, and the orcs, as well as glimpses that had arisen unbidden of things higher or deeper or darker than its surface: Durin, Moria, Gandalf, the Necromancer, the Ring. The discovery of the significance of these glimpses and of their relation to the ancient histories revealed the Third Age and its culmination in the War of the Ring.

Those who had asked for more information about hobbits eventually got it, but they had to wait a long time; for the composition of *The Lord of the Rings* went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949, a period in which I had many duties that I did not neglect, and many other interests as a learner and teacher that often absorbed me. The delay was, of course, also increased by the outbreak of war in 1939, by the end of which year the tale had not yet reached the end of Book One. In spite of the darkness of the next five years I found that the story could not now be wholly abandoned, and I plodded on, mostly by night, till I stood by Balin's tomb in Moria. There I halted for a long while. It was almost a year later when I went on and so came to Lothlórien and the Great River late in 1941.

It was during 1944 that, leaving the loose ends and perplexities of a war which it was my task to conduct, or at least to report, I forced myself to tackle the journey of Frodo to Mordor. These chapters, eventually to become Book Four, were written and sent out as a serial to my son, Christopher, then in South Africa with the RAF. Nonetheless it took another five years before the tale was brought to its present end; in that time I changed my house, my chair, and my college, and the days though less dark were no less laborious. Then when the 'end' had at last been reached the whole story had to be revised, and indeed largely re-written backwards. And it had to be typed, and re-typed: by me; the cost of professional typing by the ten-fingered was beyond my means.

The Lord of the Rings has been read by many people since it finally appeared in print; and I should like to say something here with reference to the many opinions or guesses that I have received or have read concerning the motives and meaning of the tale. The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. As a guide I had only my own feelings for what is appealing or moving, and for many the guide was inevitably often at fault. Some who have read the book, or at any rate have reviewed it, have found it boring, absurd, or contemptible; and I have no cause to complain, since I have similar opinions of their works, or of the kinds of writing that they evidently prefer. But even from the points of view of many who have enjoyed my story there is much that fails to please. It is perhaps not possible in a long tale to please everybody at all points, nor to displease everybody at the same points; for I find from the letters that I have received that the passages or chapters that are to some a blemish are all by others specially approved. The most critical reader of all, myself, now finds many defects, minor and major, but being fortunately under no obligation either to review the book or to write it again, he will pass over these in silence, except one that has been noted by others: the book is too short.

As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical. As the story grew it put down roots (into the past) and threw out unexpected branches: but its main theme was settled from the outset by the inevitable choice of the Ring as the link between it and *The Hobbit*.

The crucial chapter, 'The Shadow of the Past', is one of the oldest parts of the tale. It was written long before the foreshadow of 1939 had yet become a threat of inevitable disaster, and from that point the story would have developed along essentially the same lines, if that disaster had been averted. Its sources are things long before in mind, or in some cases already written, and little or nothing in it was modified by the war that began in 1939 or its sequels.

The real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its conclusion. If it had inspired or directed the development of the legend, then certainly the Ring would have been seized and used against Sauron; he would not have been annihilated but enslaved, and Barad-dûr would not have been destroyed but occupied. Saruman, failing to get possession of the Ring, would in the confusion and treacheries of the time have found in Mordor the missing links in his own researches into Ring-lore, and before long he would have made a Great Ring of his own with which to challenge the self-styled Ruler of Middle-earth. In that conflict both sides would have held hobbits in hatred and contempt: they would not long have survived even as slaves.

Other arrangements could be devised according to the tastes or views of those who like allegory or topical reference. But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.

An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous. It is also false, though naturally attractive, when the lives of an author and critic have overlapped, to suppose that the movements of thought or the events of times common to both were necessarily the most powerful influences. One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now often forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead. Or to take a less grievous matter: it has been supposed by some that 'The Scouring of the Shire' reflects the situation in England at the time when I was finishing my tale. It does not. It is an essential part of the plot,

This book is largely concerned with Hobbits, and from its pages a reader may discover much of their character and a little of their history. Further information will also be found in the selection from the Red Book of Westmarch that has already been published, under the title of *The Hobbit*. That story was derived from the earlier chapters of the Red Book, composed by Bilbo himself, the first Hobbit to become famous in the world at large, and called by him *There and Back Again*, since they told of his journey into the East and his return: an adventure which later involved all the Hobbits in the great events of that Age that are here related.

Many, however, may wish to know more about this remarkable people from the outset, while some may not possess the earlier book. For such readers a few notes on the more important points are here collected from Hobbit-lore, and the first adventure is briefly recalled.

Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools. Even in ancient days they were, as a rule, shy of 'the Big Folk', as they call us, and now they avoid us with dismay and are becoming hard to find. They are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and though they are inclined to be fat and do not hurry unnecessarily, they are nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements. They possessed from the first the art of disappearing swiftly and silently, when large folk whom they do not wish to meet come blundering by; and this art they have developed until to Men it may seem magical. But Hobbits have never, in fact, studied magic of any kind, and their elusiveness is due solely to a professional skill that heredity and practice, and a close friendship with the earth, have rendered inimitable by bigger and clumsier races.

For they are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is, even when they are not actually much shorter. Their height is variable, ranging between two and four feet of our measure.

They seldom now reach three feet; but they have dwindled, they say, and in ancient days they were taller. According to the Red Book, Bandobras Took (Bullroarer), son of Isumbras the Third, was four foot five and able to ride a horse. He was surpassed in all Hobbit records only by two famous characters of old; but that curious matter is dealt with in this book.

As for the Hobbits of the Shire, with whom these tales are concerned, in the days of their peace and prosperity they were a merry folk. They dressed in bright colours, being notably fond of yellow and green; but they seldom wore shoes, since their feet had tough leathery soles and were clad in a thick curling hair, much like the hair of their heads, which was commonly brown. Thus, the only craft little practised among them was shoe-making; but they had long and skilful fingers and could make many other useful and comely things. Their faces were as a rule good-natured rather than beautiful, broad, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with mouths apt to laughter, and to eating and drinking. And laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted.

It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves. Of old they spoke the languages of Men, after their own fashion, and liked and disliked much the same things as Men did. But what exactly our relationship is can no longer be discovered. The beginning of Hobbits lies far back in the Elder Days that are now lost and forgotten. Only the Elves still preserve any records of that vanished time, and their traditions are concerned almost entirely with their own history, in which Men appear seldom and Hobbits are not mentioned at all. Yet it is clear that Hobbits had, in fact, lived quietly in Middle-earth for many long years before other folk became even aware of them. And the world being after all full of strange creatures beyond count, these little people seemed of very little importance. But in the days of Bilbo, and of Frodo his heir, they suddenly became, by no wish of their own, both important and renowned, and troubled the counsels of the Wise and the Great.

began only after the settlement of the Shire, and their most ancient legends hardly looked further back than their Wandering Days. It is clear, nonetheless, from these legends, and from the evidence of their peculiar words and customs, that like many other folk Hobbits had in the distant past moved westward. Their earliest tales seem to glimpse a time when they dwelt in the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the Misty Mountains. Why they later undertook the hard and perilous crossing of the mountains into Eriador is no longer certain. Their own accounts speak of the multiplying of Men in the land, and of a shadow that fell on the forest, so that it became darkened and its new name was Mirkwood.

Before the crossing of the mountains the Hobbits had already become divided into three somewhat different breeds: Harfoots, Stoors, and Fallohides. The Harfoots were browner of skin, smaller, and shorter, and they were beardless and bootless; their hands and feet were neat and nimble; and they preferred highlands and hillsides. The Stoors were broader, heavier in build; their feet and hands were larger; and they preferred flat lands and riversides. The Fallohides were fairer of skin and also of hair, and they were taller and slimmer than the others; they were lovers of trees and of woodlands.

The Harfoots had much to do with Dwarves in ancient times, and long lived in the foothills of the mountains. They moved westward early, and roamed over Eriador as far as Weathertop while the others were still in Wilderland. They were the most normal and representative variety of Hobbit, and far the most numerous. They were the most inclined to settle in one place, and longest preserved their ancestral habit of living in tunnels and holes.

The Stoors lingered long by the banks of the Great River Anduin, and were less shy of Men. They came west after the Harfoots and followed the course of the Loudwater southwards; and there many of them long dwelt between Tharbad and the borders of Dunland before they moved north again.

The Fallohides, the least numerous, were a northerly branch. They were more friendly with Elves than the other Hobbits were, and had more skill in language and song than in handicrafts; and of old they preferred hunting to tilling. They crossed the mountains north of Rivendell and came down the River Hoarwell. In Eriador they soon mingled with the other kinds that had preceded them, but being somewhat bolder and more adventurous, they were often found as leaders or chieftains among clans of Harfoots or Stoors. Even in Bilbo's time the strong Fallohidish strain could still be noted among

In the westlands of Eriador, between the Misty Mountains and the Mountains of Lune, the Hobbits found both Men and Elves. Indeed, a remnant still dwelt there of the Dúnedain, the kings of Men that came over the Sea out of Westernesse; but they were dwindling fast and the lands of their North Kingdom were falling far and wide into waste. There was room and to spare for incomers, and ere long the Hobbits began to settle in ordered communities. Most of their earlier settlements had long disappeared and been forgotten in Bilbo's time; but one of the first to become important still endured, though reduced in size; this was at Bree and in the Chetwood that lay round about, some forty miles east of the Shire.

It was in these early days, doubtless, that the Hobbits learned their letters and began to write after the manner of the Dúnedain, who had in their turn long before learned the art from the Elves. And in those days also they forgot whatever languages they had used before, and spoke ever after the Common Speech, the Westron as it was named, that was current through all the lands of the kings from Arnor to Gondor, and about all the coasts of the Sea from Belfalas to Lune. Yet they kept a few words of their own, as well as their own names of months and days, and a great store of personal names out of the past.

About this time legend among the Hobbits first becomes history with a reckoning of years. For it was in the one thousand six hundred and first year of the Third Age that the Fallohide brothers, Marcho and Blanco, set out from Bree; and having obtained permission from the high king at Fornost,* they crossed the brown river Baranduin with a great following of Hobbits. They passed over the Bridge of Stonebows, that had been built in the days of the power of the North Kingdom, and they took all the land beyond to dwell in, between the river and the Far Downs. All that was demanded of them was that they should keep the Great Bridge in repair, and all other bridges and roads, speed the king's messengers, and acknowledge his lordship.

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.† At once the western Hobbits fell in love with their new land, and they remained there, and soon passed once more out of the history of Men and of Elves. While there was still a king they were in name his subjects,

but they were, in fact, ruled by their own chieftains and meddled not at all with events in the world outside. To the last battle at Fornost with the Witch-lord of Angmar they sent some bowmen to the aid of the king, or so they maintained, though no tales of Men record it. But in that war the North Kingdom ended; and then the Hobbits took the land for their own, and they chose from their own chiefs a Thain to hold the authority of the king that was gone. There for a thousand years they were little troubled by wars, and they prospered and multiplied after the Dark Plague (S.R. 37) until the disaster of the Long Winter and the famine that followed it. Many thousands then perished, but the Days of Dearth (1158–60) were at the time of this tale long past and the Hobbits had again become accustomed to plenty. The land was rich and kindly, and though it had long been deserted when they entered it, it had before been well tilled, and there the king had once had many farms, cornlands, vineyards, and woods.

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, as the region of the authority of their Thain, and a district of well-ordered business; and there in that pleasant corner of the world they plied their well-ordered business of living, and they heeded less and less the world outside where dark things moved, until they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk. They forgot or ignored what little they had ever known of the Guardians, and of the labours of those that made possible the long peace of the Shire. They were, in fact, sheltered, but they had ceased to remember it.

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. The last battle, before this story opens, and indeed the only one that had ever been fought within the borders of the Shire, was beyond living memory: the Battle of Greenfields, S.R. 1147, in which Bandobras Took routed an invasion of Orcs. Even the weathers had grown milder, and the wolves that had once come ravening out of the North in bitter white winters were now only a grandfather's tale. So, though there was still some store of weapons in the Shire, these were used mostly as trophies, hanging above hearths or on walls, or gathered into the museum at Michel Delving. The Mathom-house it was called; for anything that Hobbits had no immediate use for, but were unwilling

survive rough handling by grief, foe, or weather in a way that astonished those who did not know them well and looked no further than their bellies and their well-fed faces. Though slow to quarrel, and for sport killing nothing that lived, they were doughty at bay, and at need could still handle arms. They shot well with the bow, for they were keen-eyed and sure at the mark. Not only with bows and arrows. If any Hobbit stooped for a stone, it was well to get quickly under cover, as all trespassing beasts knew very well.

All Hobbits had originally lived in holes in the ground, or so they believed, and in such dwellings they still felt most at home; but in the course of time they had been obliged to adopt other forms of abode. Actually in the Shire in Bilbo's days it was, as a rule, only the richest and the poorest Hobbits that maintained the old custom. The poorest went on living in burrows of the most primitive kind, mere holes indeed, with only one window or none; while the well-to-do still constructed more luxurious versions of the simple diggings of old. But suitable sites for these large and ramifying tunnels (or *smials* as they called them) were not everywhere to be found; and in the flats and the low-lying districts the Hobbits, as they multiplied, began to build above ground. Indeed, even in the hilly regions and the older villages, such as Hobbiton or Tuckborough, or in the chief township of the Shire, Michel Delving on the White Downs, there were now many houses of wood, brick, or stone. These were specially favoured by millers, smiths, ropers, and cartwrights, and others of that sort; for even when they had holes to live in, Hobbits had long been accustomed to build sheds and workshops.

The habit of building farmhouses and barns was said to have begun among the inhabitants of the Marish down by the Brandywine. The Hobbits of that quarter, the Eastfarthing, were rather large and heavy-legged, and they wore dwarf-boots in muddy weather. But they were well known to be Stoors in a large part of their blood, as indeed was shown by the down that many grew on their chins. No Harfoot or Fallohide had any trace of a beard. Indeed, the folk of the Marish, and of Buckland, east of the River, which they afterwards occupied, came for the most part later into the Shire up from south-away; and they still had many peculiar names and strange words not found elsewhere in the Shire.

It is probable that the craft of building, as many other crafts beside, was derived from the Dúnedain. But the Hobbits may have learned it direct from the Elves, the teachers of Men in their youth. For the

3

Of the Ordering of the Shire

The Shire was divided into four quarters, the Farthings already referred to, North, South, East, and West; and these again each into a number of folklands, which still bore the names of some of the old leading families, although by the time of this history these names were no longer found only in their proper folklands. Nearly all Tooks still lived in the Tookland, but that was not true of many other families, such as the Bagginses or the Boffins. Outside the Farthings were the East and West Marches: the Buckland (p. 98); and the Westmarch added to the Shire in S.R. 1452.

The Shire at this time had hardly any 'government'. Families for the most part managed their own affairs. Growing food and eating it occupied most of their time. In other matters they were, as a rule, generous and not greedy, but contented and moderate, so that estates, farms, workshops, and small trades tended to remain unchanged for generations.

There remained, of course, the ancient tradition concerning the high king at Fornost, or Norbury as they called it, away north of the Shire. But there had been no king for nearly a thousand years, and even the ruins of Kings' Norbury were covered with grass. Yet the Hobbits still said of wild folk and wicked things (such as trolls) that they had not heard of the king. For they attributed to the king of old all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules (as they said), both ancient and just.

It is true that the Took family had long been pre-eminent; for the office of Thain had passed to them (from the Oldbucks) some centuries before, and the chief Took had borne that title ever since. The Thain was the master of the Shire-moot, and captain of the Shire-muster and the Hobbitry-in-arms; but as muster and moot were only held in times of emergency, which no longer occurred, the Thainship had ceased to be more than a nominal dignity. The Took family was still, indeed, accorded a special respect, for it remained