

OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role-Playing Magazine for J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

OTHER MINDS

Magazine

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CONTENTS

MAIN FEATURES

- 2 **Editorial: Back on track!**
by Thomas Morwinsky
- 4 **Clad in Mail**
by Oliver Hauss 
- 8 **White Hand Rising**
by Lev Lafayette 
- 10 **Númenórean Longevity**
by Thomas Morwinsky 
- 23 **The Eöldrim**
by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa 
- 28 **Tharbad Name Changes**
by Chris Seeman 
- 30 **Banks of the Northern Anduin**
by Johannes Lomborg 
- 58 **Born of Hope—An Overview**
by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa 
- 60 **Book Review—“Isildur”**
by Thomas Morwinsky 

OTHER FEATURES

- 66 **Fine Print and Disclaimers**
- 67 **Creative Commons License**
- 70 **Appendix A**
Tables for “Númenórean Longevity”
- 74 **Appendix B**
Dúnadan Longevity
by Chris Seeman

Editorial: Back on track!

Preface

It’s a pleasure to present you with another Issue of *Other Minds*. It might be an exaggeration of feeling to describe this “rising like a phoenix”, but the past troubles of a long hiatus and a quick Issue #5 have contributed to a feeling of relief to be back on regular schedule again. In fact we are very happy about this; hence the headline. Due to missing one issue, #6 comes only one and half months after #5. This short interval (about half our regular schedule) dominated all considerations for this issue, but despite all this we hope to serve you a product that lives up to your expectations.

Other Minds, Issue #6 is much bigger in volume than the last one, and in fact the biggest so far. We have eight great contributions, ranging from the very scholarly to the pure gaming, thus spanning the whole width of our intended range. Before I go into more detail about the contributions themselves, let me speak a bit of our “unsung heroes” (or better “little sung”). Such are not only encountered in the secondary world we all love so much, but also in the real one that makes this great *suspension of disbelief* happen. We as the editors are naturally omnipresent in every issue (even if only for an Editorial like this). After that, the authors of our contributions are of course the primary heroes of these tales. But all the people that work “behind the scenes” are no less essential. I want to point your attention to one such a group – our proofreaders. When I think how often I have sent out contributions on the last minute or with at least a tight deadline to them and got their corrections back in very short time, I can only wonder how things might have gone without this kind of dedication. If you ever had the opportunity to read through a text with the task of proofreading, you know what I mean. It’s not only the grammar, style and orthography that our “proofers” have to worry about; they also regularly point out content-related issues or potential problems that have not been noticed before. Without their diligent – and to

the public, silent, work – the magazine would not be possible in its present form. For this, I especially thank all of you. For the present issue these are – in alphabetical order – **Katy Koenen, Neville “Osric” Percy and Chris Seeman.**

Content

Concerning content we are – as already mentioned – this time well endowed. In contrast to past issues, this time we have a stronger bias towards gaming-oriented material. This is all the more enjoyable as we call ourselves also a magazine for “gaming in Tolkien’s Middle-earth”. May this trend become a good sign concerning the balance of “gaming” and “academic” – oriented content.

Now, what do we have specifically this time?

First comes **Clad in Mail**, Oliver Hauss’ extensive and precise thoughts about the types of weaponry and especially armour that are likely to represent typical “Middle-earth” war gear. He bases his conclusions always very closely on Tolkien’s own writings; primarily *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*. Those of you proficient in German may recognize this essay, as it has already been published in a similar version in the *Flammifer von Westernis*, the periodical of the German Tolkien society (Deutsche Tolkien Gesellschaft; DTG).

The second contribution of this issue is an intriguing “what if” speculation set in the late Third and early Fourth Age. Though being academic, **White Hand Rising** by Lev Lafayette does not analyze Tolkien’s works in the “usual” way, but pinpoints events or decisions that are capable of giving the history of Middle-earth an entirely new spin, if only some small details turned out different from how the Professor had them happen. In this respect we are given a fascinating view of quite different events in the early Fourth Age. I am sure that both gamers and the academic-minded will find this useful for their purposes.

Third comes a contribution from the writer of these lines himself. It is named

Númenórean Longevity and deals with the peculiar longevity enjoyed by the Númenóreans. First we find a comprehensive overview of the available sources on this subject, then the second part deals with the conclusions derived therefrom. Thus it aims both at an academic approach in showing the complex situation, and at the same time offering solutions that are useful in a game as well as for a better general understanding of the subject. It is inspired by and based on the essay *Dúnadan longevity*, published by Chris Seeman in *Other Hands Magazine*, Issue #26. This essay is provided in the Appendices as well.

Next in line is a fascinating campaign hook from first-time contributor José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa. His idea revolves around the **Eöldrim**, a group of Elves that derive their name from their first and greatest lord – Eöl the Dark Elf; prominent in the legends of the Elder Days. José now develops an intriguing plot of the further fortunes of this group, right until the Third Age; the time of most Middle-earth campaigns. If you ever plan to introduce parts of the Elder Days into your game, this is an excellent hook for that.

Our fifth contribution continues a tradition started in the last issue of *Other Minds*. In **Tharbad Map Name Changes** Chris Seeman provides us re-worked and linguistically sound names for ICE's *Thieves of Tharbad* and *Annor: The Land* modules. May this support your gaming by providing a more Tolkienian base to this otherwise very dense and good module. In addition Chris also provides some other, non-linguistic snippets that need a fix too, so that his thoughts provide some all-round advice to improve this product.

Banks of the Northern Anduin is a full-fledged adventure by another first-time contributor; Johannes Lomborg from Denmark. His plot centers upon the events within and near a Hobbit community of the mid-Third Age in the Anduin vales (e.g. compatible with the standard 1640-timeframe of ICE's MERP) and some undead peril. I hope that this will not be Johannes' last contribution to *Other Minds*.

Leaving the gaming sector, but staying with creative rather than analytical work, the next text, again by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa, deals with **Born of Hope**, a film project by Tolkien fans. It is slated for internet publication and deals with the events in the years and decades prior to Aragorn's birth and his childhood. It is based on events reported in the Appendix A of *The Lord of the*

Rings, revolving around the story of Arathorn and Gilraen, Aragorn's parents.

Finally, I provide the closing part of this issue with a **Book review – Isildur**; this being the second installment of a fan-fiction novel first published on the net in 1997. Depending on the further development on both the literary development about Middle-earth department or the gaming market, such reviews might become an occasional feature. In any case, we try to stick to those publications that have at least some benefit or connection to the gaming genre.

Closing thoughts

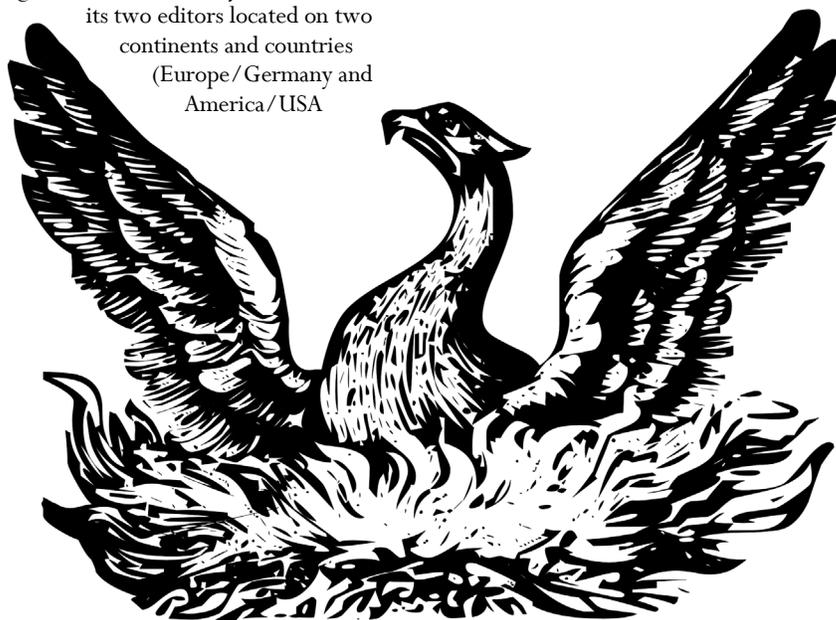
There is some Middle-earth related news that might be worth telling here as well. You might have heard that on April 17, the makers of the upcoming *The Hobbit* movie announced that the plot of the book will be split into two films. This makes an end on the speculations and previous announcements that one film would deal with the *Hobbit* content, while the second would act as a "bridge" between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Now all elements that were alluded to and originally planned for the second "bridge" movie, like the White Council attacking Dol Guldur, will be put in the two-part *The Hobbit*.

While thinking about the magazine in general and this issue in particular, I noticed that we truly are an international project, and not only a limited national project made for international availability. Of course our very existence as a web-based magazine make this somewhat matter-of-fact, but nonetheless even such projects are often heavily rooted in a specific region or at least country. *Other Minds* has its two editors located on two continents and countries (Europe/Germany and America/USA

respectively). The proofreaders are from the US, and the UK (quite natural, since we prefer native speakers for this). The current contributors (text and artwork) range from Germany, the US, Spain, Poland, Australia and Denmark. Past (and hopefully future again) contributors originated from Italy and France. This truly **is** an international magazine!

Finally returning back to *Other Minds*, I am very happy about two things: First, you might notice a number of excellent illustrations. This makes me optimistic that we get more original art in the future as well to illustrate *Other Minds*. We are especially indebted to **Catherine Karina Chmiel "Kasiopeia"**, who offered us high-resolution files of her superb illustrations. You can find her other great works on Tolkien's world on the web at <http://kasiopeia.art.pl>. Second, this time five out of the eight contributions are by "first-timers" rather than the seasoned veterans. I take it as a promising sign that more and more people see *Other Minds* as a means of publishing their Middle-earth-related ideas. I encourage all of our "new" contributors as well as those who still lurk in the shadows to keep up the good (though sometimes unknown) work and encourage others in offering us their ideas and making them available to a broader audience. It is exactly this kind of community participation and diversity that we hoped to achieve with *Other Minds* in the first place.

For the *Other Minds* team
Thomas Morwinsky
May 2009



Clad in Mail

by Oliver Hauss

(ohauss@arcor.de) © 2009

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The question of armour and military equipment is a very familiar one when talking about Tolkien's world. Within this discussion, the most hotly debated issue probably is the question about the usage or even existence of plate armour; examples of which can be seen in many museums around Europe. Especially when it comes to the advanced races in Middle-earth (and especially the warlike ones like the Dwarves or later Númenóreans), it is often heard (and enhanced by the movie trilogy), that some kind of such armour surely must have existed.

Oliver Hauss' thoughts and diligent work on the sources on this theme will surely be a great help in building a solid base to answer these questions with a great faithfulness to Tolkien.



The movies have left all of us with a strong visual impression of Middle-Earth, its protagonists and their armaments. But what did Tolkien actually have in mind when writing about Narsil, Imrahil and Boromir, of the last Alliance, and of the Ride of the Rohirrim? Of course, no one can retroactively determine the thoughts of the good professor. Nonetheless, I think that his choice of words and the combinations of equipment in the books and parallels therein to texts he used as a base: Texts which were surely known to Tolkien – such as with Beowulf – or those which were probably known to him because they were accessible in his lifetime and covered his area of interest. In addition there are parallels to actual historical items preserved through the ages that can give us hints what might have been on his mind by comparison with his descriptions. For this issue, I want to focus, not the least for space reasons, on the tradition of the Edain, the Númenóreans and their successor states.

One piece of description which Tolkien describes in particular detail is a famous helm. While not originally made by and for humans, it is in their use and as one of their heirlooms that it becomes known: The Dragon-Helm of Dor-lómin.

*“That helm was wrought of grey steel, adorned with gold, and on it were graven runes of victory. ... It had a visor (after the manner of those the Dwarves used in their forges for the shielding of the eyes), and the face of one that wore it struck fear into the hearts of all beholders ... Upon its crest was set in defiance a gilded image of Glaurung the dragon.” **Unfinished Tales, Narn I Chîn Húrin***

First of all, this description reminds us of the other helmets of the dwarves, said to have “battle-masks” as well. Such battle-masks, however, are also found repeatedly and explicitly in Beowulf, where they –like many helms in Germanic and Celtic tradition- have additionally been adorned with the likeness of boars. Not the least, however, we find such a helmet also in the treasure of the ship-grave of Sutton Hoo, excavated in 1939, and as an archaeological sensation surely known to Tolkien, an aficionado of Anglo-Saxon history.

Let us turn to Húrin next, of whom we read:

*“Last of all Húrin stood alone. Then he cast aside his shield and wielded an axe two-handed;...” **Silmarillion: Chapter 20: Of the Fifth Battle: Nirnaeth Arnoediad***

This suggests two things: Firstly, that Húrin had previously used a combination of a single-handed weapon and a shield, and secondly, that he abandoned these in favour of a two-handed axe. In this fashion, Tolkien describes a combat style fitting extremely well into the Anglo-Saxon/Scandinavian axis. In fact, on the Bayeux tapestry, a figure can be found, a shield at his feet, a sword-sheath at his side, wielding the infamous two-handed “Danish axe” in battle. The elite troops of King Harold Godwinson, the “*huscarls*” (an Old Norse name; the anglicized term is “*housecarl*” - household troops), originated from the time when Cnut the Great ruled England (plus other lands around the North Sea). While the housecarls were known for the use of this “Danish Axe”, Cnut had decreed that only those could become housecarls who could already bring a sword of their own.

Incidentally, a similarity to writings set in much later a time is remarkable: The men of Lossarnach, found in *Return of the King*: Here, too, we seem to see the long, two-handed axe. Has so little changed in all those years?

*“Leading the line there came walking a big thick-limbed horse, and on it sat a man of wide shoulders and huge girth, but old and grey-bearded, yet mail-clad and black-helmed and bearing a long heavy spear. Behind him marched proudly a dusty line of men, well-armed and bearing great battle-axes; grim-faced they were, and shorter and somewhat swarthier than any men that Pippin had yet seen in Gondor” **RotK: Chapter 1: Minas Tirith***

Let us look at another comparison: Andúril and Boromir's sword. Of the latter, it is said:

"Boromir had a long sword, in fashion like Andúril but of lesser lineage and he bore also a shield and his war-horn". **FoTR: Chapter 3: The Ring goes South**

While Andúril isn't Narsil proper, it still seems that Narsil, too, was meant to be used in combination with a shield, just like Boromir's. But Narsil had already been used by Elendil, thousands of years earlier, but in fact already thousands of years after the First Age, when it had allegedly been made by Telchar of Nogrod. In key points, warfare thus seems to be described in *The Lord of the Rings* just like in the First Age almost seven millennia ago. But we need not be surprised at this: In the reproduction of legends, sagas and fairytales, we often find a retro-dated technological level known to the illustrator or author from daily life and which he uses to allow his contemporaries to better relate to the events. Thus, in medieval Psalters and Bibles, we find illustrations depicting Romans or Israelites as medieval knights, and even in Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the author clads his characters in the armour of his own time. Tolkien, as someone claiming to be reproducing third-party material, might be imitating this stylistic device by using not his own time, but one that he finds artistically fitting for the stories. While this would make information on the First and Second Age questionable for a realistic level of technological advancement, given that the texts found in *The Silmarillion* and related stories would be but back-projections, it gives us all the more information on what technology level Tolkien saw fitting for his stories and give us an end point for the technological development within Tolkien's universe.

On a related note, time and again Tolkien explicitly describes swords worn by some characters as "long swords". Such swords are used in combination with shields. It should be noted on the one hand, that historically, the term "long" was often used in context with swords as a synonym for "mighty" or "fell". William Appulus, for example, described the swords of German mercenaries at Civitate in 1053 also as "long swords", but we know that at the time, only one-handed weapons were used. Conversely, what has historically been known as "longsword" used in the movies for Glamdring, Andúril and others, is a weapon from the high to late middle-ages. This type of

weapon, like that of the Witch King—which on Weathertop was used in combination with the Morgul-knife—was traditionally used almost exclusively as a two-handed weapon. The only reason that one hand would leave the elongated grip was to address the need for certain wrestling or disarmament techniques. We know this as from that time, unlike the early middle-ages, several manuals survive and serve as a theoretical basis for learning to fence with the longsword. They also show us that in those days, the term "long sword" was merely a description of length. It was a sword, and longer than what had until then been the usual length.

Thus we have two possible reasons to call a sword "long": An actual comparison in length or a metaphorical use. Which of these was on Tolkien's mind? To solve this riddle, I want to look at two pieces of text. First, let us look at Pippin presenting Denethor with the blade he got from the barrow-grave. For example, while in the published text of *The Lord of the Rings*, indeed only uses the word "blade" is, in contrast, in the *History of Middle-earth*, we find a different description:

Now, the description of the barrow-blades as leaf-shaped definitely doesn't match that of the *seax* or *sax*, blade of the Saxons, which traditionally was asymmetrical and one-edged. But it is interesting to see that, at least at one point, this was what Tolkien had in mind.

"Denethor says of Pippin's sword: 'Surely it is a sax wrought by our own folk in the North in the deep past?', where RotK has 'blade' and 'kindred'. The word sax (Old English seax, dagger, short sword) was the final choice in the draft after rejection of 'blade', 'knife' and 'dagger'." HoME Vol. 8: The War of the Ring: Part Three: III. Minas Tirith Note 16

Let us look now at the second piece of text, which we will look at in more detail in a moment. Here, it is said of a blade that Isildur had still with him during his doomed escape:

"This was of a kind called eket: a short stabbing sword with a broad blade, pointed and two-edged, from a foot to one and a half feet long." Unfinished Tales, The Disaster of the Gladden Fields

Here, too, we clearly are not dealing with a *seax*. I would assume, though, that we are in fact dealing with the same kind of blade we were talking about just before, the one which Pippin presented to Denethor. But the true

question is: Why did Isildur have this kind of sword with him to begin with? Why, if, as we read in the very same text, the Númenóreans had long swords, longer than those of the orcs, which they used in battle. It is useful to note in this context that historically, short stabbing blades were often used for the combat in tight infantry formations, as they were used by not only the Romans, but also by some of the successor realms of the Roman Empire. These short blades, such as the famous *gladius*, stand in contrast of the *spatha* which the Romans used originally as a cavalry weapon, but later became used by the infantry as well.



Do we here find precedents for the texts by Tolkien? I can think of two: On the one hand, we can find such combinations with the Carolingians. While these again reduced the *spatha* to cavalry use (thus making it the ancestor of the weapon of the medieval knight) and used shorter blades for infantry combat, they also required their mounted warriors to be ready to dismount and fight on foot in formation should this become tactically necessary. Thus, it was demanded of knights:

"Ita ut unusquisque cabalarius habeat scutum et lanceam et spatam et semispatum"
Letter by Charlemagne to the abbot Fulrad, "Karoli ad Fulradum abbatem epistola", April 806

That is, aside from lance and shield, these warriors were required to be equipped both with *spatha* and *semispatum*, literally: a half-sword. We know that, for the Carolingians, the shorter blade was generally either a *seax* or a *gladius*. The *spatha* thus was the long blade, and both were worn simultaneously, and used depending on the situation.

Does this mean that the Númenóreans fought like Carolingians? Most definitely not. The military history of the Carolingians has only been under closer scrutiny in the past few decades and differs drastically from what people had assumed of the so-called "Dark Ages". As is told in *The Disaster of the Gladden Fields*, the Númenóreans were largely an infantry

army which used mounted warriors mostly as auxiliary troops, scouts and couriers, recruited—much like Roman auxiliaries—from subjugated or allied people. They also were infamous for a massive use of archers. Not only did they use shield walls, much like any people using a shield in organised battle, but they actually used aggressive wedge formations for breaking opposing shield walls and formations. This, for example, is also known from the Vikings, where such a formation was called *svinfylka*, or “the pig formation.” The Carolingians, on the other hand, had a successful combined-arms approach, using cavalry and infantry as mutual reinforcement. On the other hand, they rarely used archers, focussing more on thrown missiles instead.

Continuing to look for parallels in the Roman Empire, we find yet more: While there, at first, the *gladius* was used in combination with a dagger, the *pugio*, the actual length of these weapons varied significantly: In the first century AD, these blades were 52 and 23 cm in length respectively. In the second century, only the longer blade remained. In the third century, both blades were back – but now measured 75 and 30 cm! In the fourth century, finally, another type of blade appears in the records—called *semispatha*—of 30-40 cm in length. So here, too, we have in later days, the use of a longer and a shorter blade whose length matches the minimum length Tolkien describes for the Númenórean *eket*. Much like in Europe, the Númenóreans used two blades. The longer one (*spatha*), finally prevailed in the “real” world.

One remark, though, is also necessary: Let’s not forget that LotR is told from the perspective of the Hobbits, and thus we have to keep in mind that any reference to size and length might just be the personal impression of a small fellow from under a hill who found a relatively short blade in a barrow-mound.

Nonetheless, let’s look at some more historical parallels: Although the Númenóreans did not use cavalry, we know that Gondor did so at the time of *The Lord of the Rings*. When did that start? An obvious choice would be the time of Rómendacil II. In the tale of Cirion and Eorl, it is said that during his reign, some of the Rhovanic Northmen (related to the ancestors of the Rohirrim), were integrated into the armies of Gondor, rising even to high positions. It is quite conceivable that these important officers initiated a slow paradigm shift within the style of Númenórean warfare in Gondor.

Having talked about weapons now for quite some time, I’d like to close by taking a look at armour. The title of this text alludes to a statement by Gandalf that among the people he was talking to were names worth more than a thousand knights clad in mail. The word “mail” comes from French “maille”, indicating a mesh. In contrast to quite common mistakes of translation and interpretation, “mail” thus historically refers only to chain armour. Gandalf uses the reference here as an indication of extreme power in battle. He would hardly use it, if “clad in mail” could easily be trumped by “clad in plate”. “Mail” as armour is quite consistently used by Tolkien all over, often as a “coat of mail”. These are found quite obviously in pictures all the way up to the first crusade, being mostly covered by other clothing or armour at later dates. Most famous, of course, is their depiction on the Bayeux tapestry, which Tolkien also uses as an indication of the Rohirrim equipment in one of his *Letters*. On the other hand, many like to point to Imrahil’s vambraces as an indication for a rather late medieval level form of armament. This, however, is mistaken. Metallurgically advanced people, especially those with extra-European influences, like the Khazars and their vassals, the Magyars, knew of such armour prior to the turn of the first millennium AD. And right where they lived, on the plains of the Dnieper river, lived Goths and Huns, separated by an area called “Mirkwood” in the Hervarar saga or Heidreks, which Christopher Tolkien translated into English and wrote his bachelor thesis on. It is beyond the scope of this text to elaborate the many parallels between the relationship of the historical Ostrogoths, Huns, Northmen, and the Easterlings, and doing so would only lead us astray here. It is more productive to turn our attention back to the vambraces.

Vambraces were mostly used with short-sleeved chain or lamellar armour, to deny the enemy an unarmoured target. From the text of *The Lord of the Rings* it might be guessed that the Haradrim, for example, used some form of lamellar armour. This being the case, we should not be surprised by seeing vambraces in Gondor. While historically, we also find armour for the lower arms described in Carolingian records, none survived, and so we cannot tell what they looked like. It is safe to assume that at the least, the type of splint armour seen in Sutton Hoo was known.

In a way, even the title *Lord of the Rings* seems to indicate we’re looking at the age of chain armour: In Beowulf, “lord of the rings”,

hringa thengel, is used to describe Beowulf as the bearer of a coat of mail. Where Tolkien wants to describe advanced technology, he usually does not describe anything significantly more modern than the legends he draws from, from *Beowulf* to the *Edda* and the *Chanson de Roland*, but moves within the time frame set by these and their contemporary sources. Instead, he uses the levels within that time frame, and occasionally uses more advanced materials for items that were not, historically, used. For example, Tolkien sometimes describes blades as damascened steel to accentuate their superiority, while their real historical counterpart was of inferior material. Similarly, in *The Hobbit*, he describes how the Dwarves expanded the concept of mail armour to hose, another development which occurred much later than the introduction of coats of mail.

Thus, I believe that while Tolkien did not plant people 1:1 from our world to Middle-earth, he mixed even the very Anglo-Saxon-like Rohirrim with Ostrogoths and consequentially put them on horseback. He used material from within the framework of his sources, and additionally described weapons and armour from a time frame that spans from the mythical time of Beowulf in the 5th or 6th century to the Bayeux tapestry and the first crusade in the late 11th or 12th century. This is the end of the historical scope of his sources though; barring any plate-equipped knights in a true-to-Tolkien scenario in Middle-earth.

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THE TOLKIEN EMAIL LIST

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(Elena Rossi, 1/2 Listowner)

White Hand Rising

by Lev Lafayette

(lev@rpgreview.net) © 2009

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“The Elder Days are gone. The Middle Days are passing. The Younger Days are beginning. The time of the Elves is over, but our time is at hand: the world of Men, which we must rule. But we must have power, power to order all things as we will, for that good which only the Wise can see...”

Saruman in The Fellowship of the Ring

“What if” scenarios are very popular for almost all set in a world based on a novel. The ability to stay in the well-known and beloved world is here combined with the wish (and ability) to free oneself from the constraints posed by the literary work.

Lev developed a fascinating scenario for an alternative ending to the War of the Ring and the events that would follow.



Thematic Differences

The standard plot trajectory of the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* is very well known: an alliance of Gondor and Rohan fight against Sauron’s forces whilst Frodo destroys the One Ring. With the destruction of the One Ring, the power of Sauron is lost, the Ringwraiths vanish and his leaderless armies are scattered or destroyed. Aragorn is crowned King of Gondor and becomes King Elessar, marries Arwen, reunites the Kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor under the imaginative name “The Re-united Kingdom” (somehow Rohan remains independent) and, apart from a mopping up scenario of Sharkey née Saruman, everyone lives happily ever after.

Many Fourth Age roleplaying stories are based on this standard plot, whereby characters are involved in a theme of recovering civilisation after a period of great evil, investigating and destroying remaining pockets of fell beings as a standard scenario. A story that involves the Dwarves repopulating Khazad-dûm is an obvious example. Such proposals have some validity with Tolkien himself. Michael Martinez, for example makes reference to the beginning of a story by Tolkien entitled “The New Shadow”, a thriller based one hundred years after the War of the Ring, involves a cult plotting to overthrow Eldarion [2]; reference in this context can also be made to the *Total War* computer game module of the same name.

The Fourth Age setting and narrative presented for *White Hand Rising* is significantly different from this standard. Thematically, it is very different to Tolkien, who largely emphasised a traditional moral battle between good and evil, but also a superiority of romanticised magical naturalism over the pragmatic realism of industrial modernism of which the second-to-last chapter of *The Lord of the Rings*, “The Scouring of the Shire”, serves as a potent metaphor. Here, the first theme is neutralised and the second is reversed. The eternal battle between traditionalist good and evil is fought to an exhausting standstill and arguably because neither side understands the “new power” which has arisen in the West, the power of modernism, the power of industry the power of Curunír, the man of skill, the man of craft, the one of cunning devices.

The Premise of Failure

The first premise of *White Hand Rising* is that Frodo does not manage to destroy the One Ring. There are various ways this could occur; perhaps Frodo is corrupted by its power, becoming like Gollum, or alternatively Gollum succeeds in wresting it from him and perhaps kills Frodo in the process. What is essential, however, is that the power of Sauron remains intact, but not increased; in other words, the status quo expressed throughout the entire *Lord of the Rings* is, to an extent, retained.

The Battle of the Morannon is theoretically a particular challenge in this scenario. According to the chapter, “The Last Debate”[3] the forces of Gondor and the Rohan number approximately 6,000 foot soldiers and 1,000 cavalry at the outset, left some at the crossroads and arrived at the battle with less than 6,000 in total. The forces facing Aragorn’s army were “ten times and more than ten times their match”, including a number of Olog-hai. The presence of Ringwraiths also made matters difficult for the forces of Good, even if there were giant eagles present, although as soon as Sauron realised the presence of the One Ring in Mordor they left the combat. This presents a plot opportunity for the Ring-Bearer whoever it is escaping the clutches of the Nazgûl, whilst at the same allowing for a reprieve for the forces of Rohan and Gondor an eleventh hour rescue by those at those stationed at the Crossroads or an escape by ‘hidden paths and ways’ by Faramir’s Rangers of Ithilien.

These circumstances set the scene for exposition of the theme of exhaustion between the traditional armies of good and evil. Whilst Mordor commands overwhelming superiority in numbers, the bulk of their forces are ill-trained Orcs and mercenaries from the south and east. The forces of Rohan and Gondor, whilst never having the numbers to engage in a strategic advance, can defend and counter-attack effectively against any salient established by Sauron’s troops; an endless cycle of attack, defense and counter-attack establishes itself, exhausting and with ultimately minimal changes to the front line, much like the situation in western Europe in the First World

War. Perhaps, as in that war, the ultimate victor will be disease.

The New Setting and Potential Plots

“... there was a whole line of ugly new houses all along Pool Side, where the Hobbiton Road ran close to the bank. An avenue of trees had stood there. They were all gone. And looking with dismay up the road towards Bag End they saw a tall chimney of brick in the distance. It was pouring out black smoke into the evening air.” *The Lord of the Rings, The Scouring of The Shire*

Unlike Peter Jackson’s famous movies, where the problem of Saruman is quickly dispensed with, in *White Hand Rising* he becomes central to the plot. Forced out of Isengard and Orthanc by the Ents, Saruman and Gríma establish a new base in the Shire, having financed a real estate success of Lotho Sackville-Baggins. In this environment ‘Sharkey’ begins what can only be described as the beginnings of an industrial revolution in Middle-earth. The Shire itself becomes a “magic suppressed” zone (with the initial exception of the Old Forest of course) as new power establishes a work ethic, encourages the “disenchantment” of the world, and develops technological innovations in the textiles, steam power, iron foundries and perhaps even gunpowder industries, all in addition to the “vat-grown” Uruk-hai and the breeding experiments of the half-orcs. With these new social conditions, new conflicts appear; both Dwarves and Hobbits may approve of the increased productivity but support the establishment of a guild democracy instead of the supposed autocratic *Republic of the White Hand*.

In relative isolation and with the attention of the world’s powers turned to the ongoing struggle between the forces of the Gondor-Rohan alliances against those of Sauron, the new republic of the Shire will have the opportunity to amass a significant force of weapons and soldiers. Initial and rapid expansions taking Bree, Fornost and Tharbad will be trivial. The Republic will also make appeals to the Dwarven peoples on the basis of craftwork, friendship with Hobbits, antipathy against Sauron, and alternatively Elves, and with the possibility of re-establishing the Kingdom of Khazad-dûm. Imagine if you will a party of Dúndlings, Half-Orcs and Dwarves with the technology of the Republic reclaiming Moria against the forces of Sauron.

When the extent of the Republic’s influ-

ence becomes evident in the north, and faced with the increasing threat from Sauron, it is entirely probable that Aragorn and Éowyn will be wed to cement the alliance between those two Kingdoms (and their child will, of course, be ruler of both). This allows for romantic tension between Aragorn, Éowyn and Faramir. Éowyn initially desires Aragorn, but he only marries her out of interests of state; she rejects Faramir’s advances but over time he becomes less of a Steward and more of the Ranger-type that she respects. Éowyn herself will be torn between stereotypical domestic duties and her desires and abilities as a shieldmaiden.

The situation of the Elves is a difficult one, at least for those in Lindon and Rivendell. Too weak and few in number to launch an attack themselves, they have to adopt defensive positions. Pressured on all sides, with pro-Sauron forces remaining in Angmar and the Misty Mountains and with the forces of the White Hand to the west and south, it is entirely possible that Elrond may decide to desert Rivendell (despite the fact that it will be safe “until all else is conquered” [5]) and establish a base at the Grey Havens where the combined forces of two of the three rings (Narya, held by Círdan in Lindon) and (Vilya, held by Elrond) will be sufficient to ensure the magical axioms remain dominant and cause any technological devices brought by forces of the White Hand to malfunction.

“In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!” *The Fellowship of the Ring, The Mirror of Galadriel*

With the ring *Nenya* wielded by Galadriel of Lothlórien, and with the Ents of Fangorn achieving a military victory against Isengard, it is entirely reasonable that under the circumstances they would seek an defensive alliance given their proximity. This alliance could be expanded with the support of Radagast the Brown, protector of nature, the Beornings and the Silvan Elves of northern Greenwood. In doing so Galadriel could organise the expansion of her realm to East Lothlórien and Southern Greenwood, thus creating a great defensive Elven Queendom which would encompass an enormous forested region. How this Elvish power reacts to the possibility of a new Dwarf

kingdom re-establishing itself on its borders via Khazad-dûm is a matter of some interest.

Conclusion

Without a doubt the scenario presented here is radically different from Tolkien’s intent and overriding thematic considerations and this will not necessarily appeal to the imagination of many as to what the Fourth Age should look like. However it remains within the boundaries of plausibility and also has a consistent theme in its own right and is arguably stronger; for Middle-earth, as much as it claims that the Fourth Age is the age of man, presents a type of man who is still existing in an idyllic world of magic and elves. True, this anti-modernist romanticism is part of the great appeal of the series but it is not necessarily the only way to present the age. A new power, and new world of conflict may provide role-players in the Fourth Age of Middle-earth an unusual set of moral and aesthetic challenges which hitherto have gone quite unnoticed.

Sources

- [1] *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Harper Collins edition, 2002, p260
- [2] Michael Martinez, *Exploring Tolkien's Fourth Age*, merp.com, 2000
- [3] *The Return of the King*, Houghton Mifflin edition, 2001, pp854-865
- [4] *The Return of the King*, Harper Collins edition, 2002, p1016
- [5] *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Harper Collins edition, 2002, p222
- [6] *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Harper Collins edition, 2002, p368

Númenórean Longevity

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This essay aims to address all the problems and tricky issues inherent in the unnatural longevity of the Númenóreans within Tolkien's legendarium. Chris Seeman has already tackled this theme admirably in the issue 33/34 of Other Hands, but some aspects are still worth discussing in more depth. Thus, this essay is partly based on Chris' excellent article, as well as a continuation and further development of his work. I also make notes and references of my own on Chris' work where appropriate. You can find the original article in the Appendices of this issue, so that you are able to review its content and compare it to the present work.

Specifically, it is my goal to demonstrate the interdependence of various factors that finally determine the most likely life expectancy of a Númenórean. In addition, Gamemasters are given workable tables/formulas how to determine this expectancy with precision and thus draw a benefit for their game.

This essay is divided into two major parts: First is a comprehensive analysis of the textual evidence and a discussion of the most likely "canonical" solution to the various questions raised. The second deals with extrapolations and calculations based upon the results of Part One.

One should always be aware that I worked to elaborate the underlying basic trends in the lifespans rather than the exceptions. Because of this, anomalies have largely been ignored for the purpose of this analysis.



Part One – The Basics

The "Dúnadan life-span problem" as developed by Tolkien

As already pointed out by Chris, the biggest problem for the easy assessment of Númenórean life expectancy over the course of the Second and Third Ages¹ is its changing nature. Until ca. SA 2000 it seemed to be more or less stable, whereas afterwards it dropped drastically more or less continuously until the dawn of the Fourth Age. Throughout the whole period of the development of the story of Númenor and its people, Tolkien had decided that they were especially long-lived, which distinguished them from "lesser" men. This central point never changed. What was not as clearly defined was the **extent** of this special longevity and its distribution among the Númenóreans.

Over the course of this process, Tolkien developed several concepts about the longevity of the Númenóreans. The idea of a special longevity was present right from the beginning though, when this part of the mythology was still extremely sketchy and in its infancy in the *Lost Road* (pre-1937):

*But the Gods will not allow them to land in Valinor - and though they become long-lived because many have been bathed in the radiance of Valinor from Tol-eressea - they are mortal and their span brief. **HoMe 5: The Lost Road (The Fall of Númenor)***

*Thus though the people were long-lived, since their land was more nigh than other lands to Valinor, and many had looked long on the radiance of the Gods that came faintly to Tol-eressea, they remained mortal, even their kings, and their span brief in the eyes of the Eldar. **HoMe 5: The Lost Road (The Fall of Númenor)***

This is then further developed in the early 1940s, when Tolkien developed the tale in the *Drowning of Anadúne*. It is already here that this extraordinary lifespan of the Númenóreans is contrived by a grace of the Valar for their deeds against Morgoth:

But to men of the three faithful houses rich reward was given. Fionwe son of Manwe came among them and taught them; and he gave them wisdom, and power, and life stronger than any others have of mortal race. [Added: and the span of their years, being unassailed by sickness, was thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, and to the descendants of Hurin the Steadfast even longer years were granted, I even to three hundreds [> as is later told].](1)

1. On the threefold span of the Numenoreans see p. 378, §13. - The descendants of Hurin the Steadfast: presumably an inadvertence, for Huor, father of Tuor, father of Earendil; Hurin is repeated in the addition to §2. Cf. the note given in VII.6, 'Trotter is a man of Elrond's race descendant of Túrin', where Túrin is presumably a slip for Tuor.

HoMe 9: Sauron Defeated (The Drowning of Anadúne)

*But even the Eruhildi of Numenor were mortal. For the Powers were not allowed to abrogate that decree of God after the fall (that Men should die and should leave the world not at their own will but by fate and unwilling); but they were permitted to grant the Numenoreans a threefold span (over 200 years). **HoMe 9: Sauron Defeated (The Drowning of Anadúne)***

This multiplier of a threefold span runs all the way through the later stages of development. It is modified this way or that, but the basic assumption of a threefold span compared to other men is maintained throughout at least for the "ordinary" Númenóreans not of the royal line.

*But to Elros, who chose to be a king of men, still a great span of years was granted, seven times that of mortal men; and all his line, the kings and lords of the royal house of Numenor, [added: being descended from Hurin,] had long life even according to the span of the Numenoreans, for some of the kings that sat at Numenos lived four hundred years. **HoMe 9: Sauron Defeated (The Drowning of Anadúne)***

Its is already here that Tolkien sets Elros apart with a span of almost 500 years (“seven times that of mortal men”) if we take the 70 years as the mortal span, which is so often quoted by Tolkien himself (see the quotes below). It is already the first instance where the “400 years” for the earlier kings appears.

Yet it is said that the span of their lives, which had of old been thrice that of lesser men, dwindled slowly; and they achieved only the art of preserving incorrupt the dead flesh of men. HoMe 9: Sauron Defeated (The Drowning of Anadúne)

Already here we encounter the “thrice the span of lesser” man that is everafter so prominent in Tolkien’s writings.

Most of the Fathers of Men departed and dwelt in Numenor and there became great and powerful; and they were fair of face and tall, and masters of craft and lore only less than the Eldar, and the span of their lives was thrice that of men in Middle-earth, though they remained mortal nonetheless, and were not permitted to set foot upon the shores of the deathless land of Valinor. HoMe12: The Peoples of Middle-earth (The Languages at the end of the Third Age)

Finally, when developing the Tale of Years of the Second Age for the Appendix in the early 1950s, Tolkien refined this system of **multipliers** even further. Here we see at first a distinction between the span of the royal line and that of the common Númenóreans:

Average life of a Númenórean 210 years (3 x 70) ... Average life of royal house 350 years (5 x 70) ... Average life of a Númenórean before the fall was about 210 years (3 x 70). ‘Average life of the royal house of the line of Earendel’ was about 350 years (5 x 70). HoMe12: The Peoples of Middle-earth (The Tale of Years of the Second Age)

This basic theme is even further developed in *Unfinished Tales* and the *Akallabêth* (in *The Silmarillion*), where Tolkien details the dates of birth and death of the Kings of Númenor together with a basic description of each king’s (or queen’s) reign. Here we learn the approximate longevity of both the ordinary Númenóreans as well as those of Elros’ Line:

Later, however, Tolkien seemed to have changed his mind and he leveled the life expectancy of the royal house to about the level of all Númenóreans:

Thus in Akallabêth (The Silmarillion p. 261) it is said that all the line of Elros “had long life even according to the measure of the Númenóreans”; and in an isolated note the difference in longevity is given a precise range: the “end of vigour” for the descendants of Elros came (before the waning of their life-span set in) about the four hundredth year, or somewhat earlier, whereas for those not of that line it came towards the two hundredth year, or somewhat later. ...

But in the latest writing on this subject (which derives, however, from about the same time as the latest work on the tale of Aldarion and Erendis) the distinction in longevity is greatly diminished. To the Númenórean people as a whole is ascribed a life-span some five times the length of that of other Men (although this is in contradiction to the statement in The Lord of the Rings Appendix A (I, i) that the Númenóreans were granted a span “in the beginning thrice that of lesser Men,” a statement made again in the preface to the present text); and the difference of the Line of Elros from others in this respect is less a distinct mark and attribute than a mere tendency to live to a greater age.

Unfinished Tales: The Line of Elros (Note 1)

As we see, this is already in conflict with *The Lord of the Rings*, where the (older) threefold span for the Númenóreans is retained. Thus I deem it justified to adhere to this version and dismiss the idea of roughly the same longevity for all Númenóreans. The most comprehensive version that is also most in accordance with *The Lord of the Rings*, is the one in *Unfinished Tales*. From here it is that I draw my basic assumption about the lifespan of the original Númenóreans before their Downfall.

We have to note that the ca. 400 years of the royal line and the 200+ years for the common Númenóreans are not their whole life-span, but only the end of vigour, e.g. the time before senility and/or decrepitude set in.

This span “three times that of lesser men” can also be found in the *Letters*.

They were given a triple span of life – but not elvish ‘immortality’ (which is not eternal, but measured by the duration in time of Earth);... Letters.#156

From all this we see, that this threefold span was very deeply rooted in Tolkien’s mind when it came to the lifespan of the Númenóreans.

To complicate matters further, Appendix A of the LotR states that the Númenóreans in the beginning had a life-span “thrice that of lesser men”:

Elros chose to be of Man-kind and remain with the Edain; but a great life-span was granted to him many times that of lesser men. ...

For though a long span of life had been granted to them [the Númenóreans], in the beginning thrice that of lesser Men, they must remain mortal, since the Valar were not permitted to take from them the Gift of Men (or the Doom of Men, as it was afterwards called). LotR. Appendix A (The Númenórean Kings, part I)

Please note the ambiguous statement concerning Elros’ lifespan (“many times that of lesser men”). Concerning the threefold life-span of the (non-royal original Númenóreans) compare Aragorn’s claim:

Nay, lady, I am the last of the Númenóreans and the latest King of the Elder Days; and to me has been given not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift. Now, therefore, I will sleep. LotR. Appendix A (The Númenórean Kings, part V)

Now this may seem problematic with the above mentioned sources and the longevity of the royal line (350 or 400 years). If we take Aragorn’s words literally, he only claims to be the last Númenórean (with no hinting of a royal line set apart), which might indicate at the people as a whole. In this case, his span of 210 vigorous years is indeed 100% compatible with the vast bulk of the Númenórean population before their fall from grace.

The essence of all these considerations in chronological order as Tolkien developed it thus is:

1. Originally, all Númenóreans are long-lived at about thrice the span of other men. The Line of Elros has a lifespan of up to 400 years.
2. Then the Line of Elros is assigned an original life-span of 350 (5 x 70) years while the ordinary Númenóreans live

210 (3 x 70) years. This is not part of the discussion in UT, but referenced above.² This version is compatible with *The Lord of the Rings* at least with respect to the 210 years.

3. Thereafter the difference in life-span between the Line of Elros and the ordinary Númenóreans is set different from this elegant scheme. For the former the “end of vigour” (before the decline began with Tar-Ancalimon) came at about 400 years while for the latter this took place at ca. 200+ years of age. This is also a version compatible with *The Lord of the Rings*.
4. The latest writings on the subject state that the Númenórean people as whole had ca. five times the life-span of “lesser men” and that the Line of Elros only had a slight tendency towards an even greater life-span. Due to this vastly increased span for **all** Númenóreans and a decrease from the previous phase (ca. 400 years) for the royal line, this is unfortunately largely incompatible with *The Lord of the Rings*.

Now, when all is said in this matter, I deem it best to use the version from *The Line of Elros* as a base, since is the most detailed by far and compatible with *The Lord of the Rings*.

The nature of Númenórean longevity

The nature of this special longevity also underwent a development within the cosmogony. In the very early versions, Tolkien seemed to had an increased period of “growth” in mind, with adulthood setting in at about 50 years of age:

... it can only be concluded therefore that at this time the longevity of the Numenoreans implied that they grew and aged at a different rate from other men, and were not fully adult until about fifty years old. Cf. *Unfinished Tales* pp. 224 - 5. **HoMe 5: The Númenórean Chapters, note 10**

This was dropped however, and later he developed a version in which both the time of “growth” early in life and that of “decline” towards life’s end were identical to normal humans, and only the time of “vigour” in between lengthened:

Thus (as the Eldar) they [the Númenóreans] grew at much the same rate as other Men, but when they had achieved “full-growth” they then aged, or “wore out,” very much more slowly. The first approach of “world-weariness” was indeed for them a sign that their period of vigour was nearing its end. When it came to an end, if they persisted in living, then decay would proceed, as growth had done, no more slowly than among other Men. Thus a Númenórean would pass quickly, in ten years maybe, from health and vigour of mind to decrepitude and senility.
Unfinished Tales. The Line of Elros (Note 1)

Tolkien did not only elaborate on the span itself, but also the background to it. As he noted several times in the *Letters*, there have been two “Falls of Men” in his mythology: The first is not explicitly stated or described (though it must have occurred long ago when man was still young), while the second has gotten much attention in his writings. This latter is the fall of the Númenóreans from grace, and the subsequent destruction of their home and the establishment of the Realms-in-Exile by Elendil and his sons. In *The Silmarillion* or the *Letters* the first fall of man was for a long time only alluded to:

The Downfall of Númenor, the Second Fall of Man (or Man rehabilitated but still mortal), brings on the catastrophic end, not only of the Second Age, but of the Old World, the primeval world of legend ... The Downfall is partly the result of an inner weakness in Men – consequent, if you will, upon the first Fall (unrecorded in these tales), repented but not finally healed. **Letters, #131 (1951)**

In later writings Tolkien gets a bit clearer on this. First we have the *Tale of Adanel* in which a mannish legend is recounted about this first fall of man.³ In addition to this, a text related to the *Shibboleth of Fëanor* from 1968 or later⁴ sheds some light on this first Fall. In our context, the most interesting part is about the longevity.

This strengthens the position that could already be suspected before. As has already been alluded to in the *Athrabeth*, the original lifespan of man was shortened when they took Melkor as God, thereby denying Eru:

The life of the Númenóreans before their fall (the 2nd fall of Man?) was thus not so much a special gift as a restoration of what should have been the common inheritance of Men, for 200-300 years.²⁰ Aragorn claimed to be the last of the Númenóreans.²¹ The “disaster” the Elves thus suspected was some rebellion against Eru taking [the] form of accepting Melkor as God.²²

Editorial Notes

20. That is, the original and intended lifespan of all Men was thought to have been that enjoyed by the Númenóreans before their fall, ranging from 200 to 300 years.

21. Cf. LR:1037; Aragorn further states there that he had been given “a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth”. According to Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn was born on March 1st, 2931 (=1331 in the Shire Reckoning; LR:io63) and died on March 1st, 1541 (S. R.), his 210th birthday (LR:1072), precisely three times the Biblical allotment of threescore years and ten (cf. Psalm 90:10).

22. Cf. “*The Tale of Adanel*” X:345-49; also X:351 and 354-56. As first written, the manuscript read “a god”; “god” was then altered to “God”. The indefinite article was not deleted, but presumably should have been, and so has been removed here editorially.

**Vinyar Tengwar, Issue 41:
Notes on Óre**

The Númenóreans as the descendants of the most noble men who had finally abjured Melkor and repented of their fathers’ decision, were given a “second chance” with respect to their duration of life in the physical world. Probably because the essence of Melkor/Morgoth was so interwoven with the mortal world,⁵ they finally failed (again) and the story went on as sufficiently well-known.

The first Voice we never heard again, save once. In the stillness of the night It spoke, saying: 'Ye have abjured Me, but ye remain Mine. I gave you life. Now it shall be shortened, and each of you in a little while shall come to Me, to learn who is your Lord: the one ye worship, or I who made him.'
HoMe10: Morgoth's Ring (Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth; The Tale of Adanel)

The above mentioned text is the only-source that explicitly states that the Númenórean lifespan was a restoration of the original span of man before Melkor’s malevolent influence led to man’s fall from grace.

The normal lifespan

Any calculation of the Númenórean lifespan depends on the “natural” lifespan of the men of Middle-earth, whose average life expectancy is the base for further extrapolations. Thus it is imperative to delve into Tolkien’s thoughts on this matter. This seems easy, as he uses the base of “70 years” for his various multipliers. We have to decide, however, which age is meant here.

Taking Aragorn as an example, he lived 210 years. This is exactly the 3x70 years that Tolkien often uses as the span allocated to the (original) ordinary Númenóreans. We have to note however, that Aragorn laid down his life while still healthy and fit and **did not use** up his **whole** theoretical lifespan. As he stated himself, he might have lived some more years until age and senility would force him to go (=die). This fact favors the interpretation that Tolkien’s “70 years” represent not the whole theoretical lifespan of the men of Middle-earth, but their healthy span before senility and decay make themselves felt.

“...and they [Theodred and Éomer] did all that they could to thwart the influence over him that Grima gained when the King’s health began to fail. This occurred early in the year 3014, when Théoden was sixty-six; his malady may thus have been due to natural causes, though the Rohirrim commonly lived till near or beyond their eightieth year.”
UT. The Battles at the Fords of Isen

Paired with the following passage, we get a good picture of the regular span at least among the Rohirrim.

“When Théoden became, as it seemed, prematurely old, this situation [the armed forces of Edoras being commanded by one of the rank of Marshal of the Mark] continued and there was no effective central command:...”
UT. The Battles of the Fords of Isen (Appendix)

This offers a small glimpse what Tolkien had in mind when speaking of the usual age until one was not “old” in the senile sense. Théoden was 66 when his mental health began to fail, and the fact that this was deemed “prematurely” points out that such dotage was not normally expected yet. When we have a look at Tolkien’s calculations of the

Númenórean span, we see that his base for these calculations was always 70. It seems he used this age as the “standard” threshold for the beginning of “old age”. A look at the birth and death dates of the Rohiric kings shows that they lived to an average natural age (discounting unnatural causes leading to early death) of indeed around 80 or 81 years.

In this context we should observe a fine but important point. According to Tolkien, Aragorn was given a span thrice that of lesser men, but he did not live to its full end. He gave back the remainder of the gift (the years of aging with physical and especially mental decay). Thus his 210 years are not the whole span (three times x; e.g. 3 x 70 years), but a part of it. If we add another 10-20 years of decay, we would end up with a span of somewhere between 220 to 230 years of total life expectancy for Aragorn. This in turn would set the whole ‘normal’ span of lesser men at 80 (or a bit more) years. This is also in accordance with the above mentioned quote that the Rohirrim – as examples of “lesser men” – generally lived about 80 years. Of course the final 10 or so years would be marked by increasing mental decline.

When we speak of all these thresholds we shall always be aware that these represent averages that make the whole thing tangible. It is clear that there will always be individual variation where some people will live considerably longer (sometimes even in good health), while others will die or decay much earlier than the average.

Basic premises

- “Lesser” men normally live about 70 years in relative mental fitness, after that decay sets in that may last up to 20 or in rare cases 30 years until death.
- Death mostly occurs at about 10 to 15 years after the onset of “old age”. This would be equivalent to 80 or 85 years in “lesser” men.
- The thresholds (210 and 400 years) given for the Númenóreans only represent their “fit” years (e.g. comparable to the 70 years limit in “lesser” men).
- Númenóreans will live about the same time as “lesser men” after decay sets in; e.g. something between 10 to 20 years.

The 3/5 problem

The relation of the lifespan of the royal and non-royal Númenóreans seems to be easy. In those passages on the subject that are the most detailed (see quotes above), we have a nice 3/5 (60%) ratio of non-royals to royals. This is later modified towards the 210/400 version (52,5%) seen in *Unfinished Tales*.

From a literary point of view, these above mentioned differing and contradicting versions of Númenórean life expectancy are of minor importance,⁶ but for roleplaying purposes it is devastating, since we have to choose one version as the base for our further calculations, thereby violating the other ones which have good arguments in their favor too. Essentially, the final choice is not an easy one and unfortunately is always debatable. As already outlined above, I chose the following data in determining the life expectancy of the general populace, which is the most recent one in accordance with *The Lord of the Rings* (and which differs a bit from Chris Seeman’s thoughts):

- The Line of Elros originally lived about 400 years in full vigour (e.g. the detailed list of rulers in *Unfinished Tales* is kept for the purposes of these calculations)
- The ordinary Númenóreans had a lifespan of 52.5% of the royal life-span, thus granting them on average 210 “healthy” years originally. This consciously abandons the older – and more elegant – 3/5 version which is problematic with respect to the lifespan of the Kings of Númenor. This version has in my opinion the greatest concordance with the LotR for two reasons:
 1. First we see that the early kings of both Arnor and Gondor had a very high life-span even in this late period of Dúadan culture (superior even to the kings of Númenor in the late-3rd millennium of the Second Age). Choosing Tolkien’s final view would conflict too much with the *Line of Elros* in UT.
 2. Second the life-span of noble and “pure” Dúadan dynasties with no or only distant relations to the royal house, such as the Princes of Dol Amroth and the *Húrinionath* (the Stewards) had a distinctively shorter life expectancy than the kings of their day, indicating at a markedly higher life-span of the

latter. When we apply the ratio above (60%) to the life expectancy of the last Gondorian kings of direct descent we end up roughly at the life-span for the Line of Imrazôr (“common” Dúnedain for **calculating** life expectancy) as detailed by Tolkien.

Chris opined in his article that Tolkien envisioned an average human lifespan of ca. 80 years. This is fine due to the evidence brought forth in the above mentioned quotes about the Rohirrim as examples of “Lesser Men”. The 70 years in “health” apply to them as well, so that the last 10 years or so must be considered as the onset and presence of mental decline and dotage.

What is in my opinion no longer possible, is to keep this ratio of 52.5% of the royal lifespan for normal Dúnedain through the ages. For the original Númenóreans before their fall from grace this is OK. Afterwards we have to be careful with this percentage. As can be seen from the tables in Appendix A, the drop in lifespan is at first quite sharp and more or less linear. The more it approaches the normal human span, the rate of the loss of lifespan decreases significantly.

Returning to the ratio of lifespan that the non-royals enjoyed compared to the royals, I deem it right to slightly increase this percentage so that the non-royals still live longer than “lesser men” in the Third Age (as shown by the Line of Dol Amroth or the Stewards) but closer to the royals than in previous centuries. A thorough and practical-minded formula for determining the percentage of common to royal total lifespan can be found below.

The diminishing longevity

The single most defining feature of the longevity of the Númenóreans is its waning. It remained stable only in Númenor as long as the Númenóreans remained faithful. After that, their span began to wane. This development continued in Middle-earth as well. Tolkien gives some thoughts on this as well:

This mingling [with Northmen from Rhovanion] did not at first hasten the waning of the Dúnedain, as had been feared; but the waning still proceeded, little by little, as it had before. For no doubt it was due above all to Middle-earth itself, and to the slow withdrawing of the gifts of the Númenóreans after the downfall of the Land of the Star. LotR.

It also gives an important hint for the chief cause of the waning: For one, ancestry is important (e.g. the “purity” of your Númenórean blood), but your “moral outlook” as well: The integration of a significant number of “lesser men” – of a “faithful” outlook – into Gondor’s population did not affect the waning negatively. It was rather the loss of their original home that served as the main cause.

Notes on ‘Dúnadan longevity’

The following notes to Dúnadan monarchs and Stewards should be applied when calculating life expectancy. I disagree with Chris, that the Arnorian Dúnedain reached a “natural” longevity around TA 1200/1400 or TA 2200, since this implies a “natural” life expectancy of around 90-100 years, while the above mentioned note of Tolkien shows that he assumes 70 years as the human average for the period “in health”. The only real evidence for Endorians are the Rohirrim, who are said to live generally about 80 years in total. Thus, it is more likely, that this age (about 80) was what Tolkien had in mind when he spoke of “normal” mannish lifespan and the Dúnedain did not decline to this level in the Third Age (though in the Fourth it will surely happen).

Of course, taking modern biological research, ca. 120 years is the theoretical maximum life expectancy for a human under optimal conditions. But this includes a period of ca. 50 years of old age with ever decreasing fitness. It seems more that the Dúnedain who reached this age even in Aragorn’s time (about 100 seems to be the norm here) were not that unfit for this extended period of time but that they enjoyed a above-human span of fitness and began to grow **real** old (physically and mentally) ca. 10-20 years before their death. This would mean relative fitness until their 80th or 90th year and an extended period of vitality⁷ even in the late Third Age.

The following individuals should be excluded from calculations of average lifespans, as they are rather unique phenomena:

- **Elros**: he is an unique individual and an exception even among the Númenórean royals and therefore should be omitted for calculating life expectancy.
- **Tar-Aldarion** lived to an age of 398 years, and not to 375 as printed in *Dúnadan longevity*.
- **Tar-Atanamir** is an anomaly since he lived to the maximum span of the original royal line, rather than laying down his life while still mentally fit. Either his life expectancy should be reduced to 400 years (for calculating purposes, and because this behavior was the norm even for the ordinary Dúnedain at this time) or the life expectancy of the kings before him should be raised by 10 to 20 years or so too (his “extra” years) since they gave up their life while still healthy and fit. The 400 years of the kings before him are not their real life expectancy, but only the end of their vigour. They could have “clung to life” for an extra 10 or 20 years as Tar-Atanamir did.
- **Castamir**: Due to his relative remoteness from the original royal line, he is likely to have had already a decreased lifespan as well. See below for a possible calculation.
- **Eärnil II**: The life expectancy of the kings before Ondoher waned at an average of ca. 5 years per generation. So, Ondoher probably would have had a lifespan of around 195 years. In contrast, the 160 years of Eärnil II (in the same generation as Ondoher’s son Artamir) are a sharp incision; probably due to his relative distance from the direct royal line. It seems that the lifespan of cadet branches dwindled more rapidly than in the direct descent. This is likely to have become more pronounced the longer this line is removed from the royal ancestor. Therefore Eärnil is not a good representative for calculating theoretical life expectancy.
- **Hador**: The Ruling Steward of the 2200’s is an exception because his predecessors as well as successors lived significantly shorter. Therefore he might be regarded as an unique flashback rather than the average and therefore deleted from the calculations (or reduced to the contemporary average for this purpose). See also the following chapter for a discussion in more depth on this individual.

Flashbacks

'He [Denethor II] is not as other men of this time, Pippin, and whatever be his descent from father to son, by some chance the blood of Westerness runs nearly true in him; as it does in his other son, Faramir, and yet did not in Boromir whom he loved best.'

LotR. Book V – Minas Tirith

For all regulatory and rules connected to the declining development of the Númenórean lifespan, there are still some (even if not much) irregular events that significantly resist the general trend (minor variation being normal). These special individuals are (in chronological order of living):

Elendil. He is of course the ultimate example of an individual in a later time given the same gifts (here in terms of lifespan) as the original kings. Due to the calculations shown later, it is reasonable to assume that he had about the same lifespan as the original kings; e.g. 400 “healthy” years before decline would have set in.

Isildur. As the son of Elendil, a good deal of the latter’s gifts in terms of lifespan probably had been present as well. He is, however, described as a man of great pride (in contrast to his father and eldest son) and therefore a less “ideal” character as well. In my opinion, a potential lifespan of about 350 “healthy” years would be reasonable for Isildur.

Anárion. Much of what has been said for Isildur also holds true for Anárion, the second son of Elendil. A “vital” lifespan of about 340 years seems not unreasonable.

Hador (Steward). This individual is only prominent in the histories for his unusual lifespan among the Gondorian nobility of his time. Tolkien often uses the element of unusual gifts of an individual when he also has an important part to play in his time. Thus here might lie a chance for game designers or authors to devise something in the “untold” or “lost” histories of Gondor that is pivotal enough to warrant such a lifespan. On the other hand, this lifespan might be an odd flashback with no further implications.

Aragorn II Everyone knows this one and so little explanation is needed. His extended lifespan (both compared to regular Dúnedain of the day and even his predecessors as Chieftains) is one aspect of his elevated status.

Denethor II & Faramir. Gandalf mentioned that both of them were of the “true blood of Númenor” (see quote above), as far as this was possible in this late stage. This is also an example that they were destined for a great rôle in history – regardless which path they chose. It is also an example that whilst lifespan is largely a product of inheritance, destiny could bypass the regularities of the usual Númenórean life expectancy to some extent.

The Genealogies

All my later extrapolations are based on the analysis of the genealogies provided by Tolkien. The Appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* already provided some information.

Unfinished Tales told us the detailed dates of birth and death for the Line of Elros, but it was not until *HoMe12* in 1996 that

we got a really detailed look at how Tolkien designed the lifespans of the Númenórean kings. In this latter publication, we find the dates for the kings of Arnor, Gondor, the Stewards and the House of Dol Amroth.

All these tables together with a few short explanations on terms can be found in the Appendix.



Part Two – Conclusions

Cadet branches

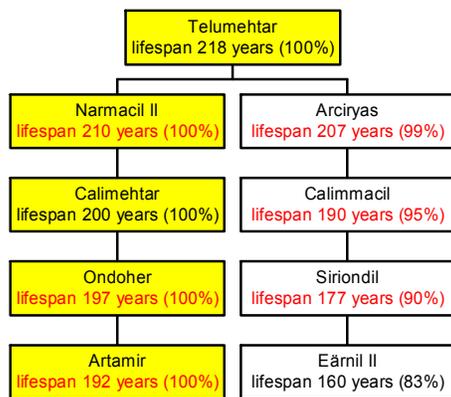
As is normal for royal or noble lines of descent, there is a main line which inherits the primary title (e.g. the king). But since in many cases a given king has other sons (and daughters), this progeny is increasingly distanced from the line of succession. These cadet branches belong of course to the higher nobility in Gondor, but eventually will blend into the general Dúnadan population, which will be reflected in their lifespan as well. It is a real stroke of luck that Tolkien provided us with an example of such a cadet branch throughout four generations.

This case is Eärnil II, the second last king of Gondor. In Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings* we read:

He [Eärnil II] was the son of Siriondil, son of Calimmacil, son of Arciryas brother of Narmacil II. LotR. Appendix A

So we see two separate branches of the family: the direct ruling line which ended with Ondohér, and the cadet branch which led to Eärnil. The direct royal descent is in yellow boxes.

Anárioni (late)



The hypothetical and estimated lifespans are in red. The percentages given indicate the lifespans of Eärnil’s line as a proportion of that of the royal line in each generation. Note the drastically reduced lifespan of Eärnil II in contrast to the extrapolated one for Artamir in the same generation (but in direct descent).

As you can see, we are in the fortunate situation of having the royal line with lifespans. The spans of Narmacil II and Ondohér were unnaturally cut short unfortunately, but the

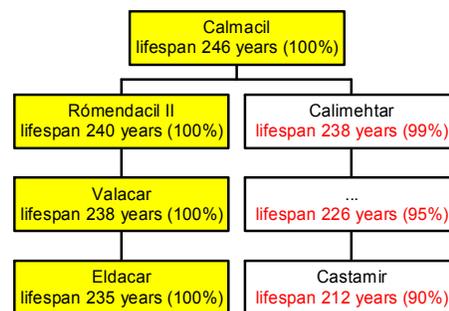
line allows us a reasonable good estimate for them. Artamir as Ondohér’s designated heir is included as well (although he did not reign due to his death in battle). For Eärnil’s ancestry the situation is even better, as we know his full age as well as that of Telumehtar (where his family branched off from the royal house). This makes a good framework that can be filled. Thus we can deduce with quite a good degree of certainty the development in a cadet branch up to four generations when it split off the main line.

This percentage guideline is now of advantage when we want to deduce the second important case of a cadet branch taking over the throne: Castamir in the Kin-strife. Fortunately, Castamir’s generation is within the range shown above. He is one less number of generations removed from the throne compared to Eärnil, thus giving us a great opportunity to transfer the percentages seen in the case of Eärnil II to his ancestry as well. This allows us to deduce the most likely lifespan for Castamir based on the experience from Eärnil’s case.

This was Castamir, grandson of Calimehtar, younger brother of Rómendacil II. LotR. Appendix A

We do not know the name of Castamir’s father, but this is not important for this purpose. The following table shows the two branches. The text in red shows the extrapolated lifespan of the line of Calimehtar based on the percentages as developed above. The yellow boxes denote the line of direct royal descent.

Anárioni (early)



The last column “percentage” gives the lifespan of Calimehtar’s line as a percentage from that of the royal line. So Castamir’s lifespan (3rd generation non-royal) is deduced from Eldacar’s by the appropriate percentage

as taken from the example of Eärnil’s line above.

From all these considerations, we could conclude that the average total lifespan within a cadet branch declines by about 4% per generation (in relation to the royal 100% of a generation) until the level of the common Dúnedain is reached. See below for a detailed listing how this lifespan of the common Númenóreans might have compared to that of the royal line over time.

Another interesting topic regarding the cadet branches is their number. As seen above, it is highly likely that there existed a fairly large number of them. Perhaps Tolkien was aware of this problem (rivalries of branches), when he wrote the following passage in the Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*. It may be that it is coincidence of course, but at least it gives a revealing view on the Gondorian royalty and nobility.

Now the descendants of the kings had become few. Their numbers had been greatly diminished in the Kin-strife; whereas since that time the kings had become jealous and watchful of those near akin. Often those on whom suspicion fell had fled to Umbar and there joined the rebels; while others had renounced their lineage and taken wives not of Númenorean blood. LotR. Appendix A

Following these thoughts, the time after the Kin-strife seems to have been one of suspicion and envy among the Gondorian royalty. Such a climate of – possible – denunciation, intrigue and increasing paranoia is certainly unworthy of a people who call themselves “Faithful”. At least it led to a serious narrowing of numbers in the immediate kin of the king. Thus the Dúnedain might have abetted their own decline by artificially reducing the numbers of their royal house.

It is a telling sign that the only universally acceptable claimant to the throne after Ondohér’s and his sons’ death was already quite distantly related to the ruling line.

Physical Age equivalent

In view of the quotes above it is clear that the Númenóreans grew up and declined as fast as other men. Only the period in between (the “healthy” years) were stretched; as Tolkien put it “they wore out [physically] slower”. From the raw numbers, it is hard to judge which age of a Númenórean might be best reflected by ordinary human age as we know it. The table below solves this problem.

The first 20 years are the same for everyone. Thereafter the Númenóreans age slower. After the equivalent of 70 years the Númenóreans again age as quickly as other men. The first column (normal human) is the reference age for all the others. The yellow lines depict the part where aging is the same for all. The range in between varies according to the varying Númenórean lifespan over time.

Please note that this table uses the “healthy” Númenórean span as the defining point (e.g. the time when a Númenórean feels old age approaching and may lay down his life while still mentally fit) and not the total span until death occurs inevitably.

The first two columns (original kings and original normal Númenóreans) are included for completeness, because they play an important part over much of the Second Age.

With the table below, you can easily interpolate any “healthy” lifespan you wish and thus get the “physical age” of a Númenórean. Since in many cases you will only have the **total** lifespan, you have to estimate the years spent in decline (mostly between 10 and 20) and subtract these from the total lifespan. With the resulting “healthy” lifespan you can then use the table.

Examples:

- **Elendil** was at his death 322 years old. Assuming 400 “healthy” years for him, this would make him “physically” about 60 at the time of his death.
- **Isildur** who died at 232 and might have lived about 350 “healthy” years (see above) would be about 55 physically when he died.
- **Aragorn II** with his “healthy” lifespan of 210 is 87 years old when he encounters the Hobbits in Bree. In “physical years” he is then about 37.
- **Denethor II** who is said to be of “pure blood” (similar to his son Faramir), might have had a total lifespan of about 115 years (and 100 “healthy” years). Born in T.A. 2930, he is 89 at the siege of Minas Tirith. This corresponds to ca. 63 years in physi-

cal age. He is, however, said to have aged prematurely due to his struggle with Sauron via the *palantir*. The latter might have caused him to appear in his early 70s physically.

- **Boromir II** is 41 when the Fellowship sets out on its journey. Judging his potential total lifespan at about 100 (the average for Gondor’s Dúnedain of his day; and ca. 80 “healthy” years), this sets him about in his mid-30s in physical appearance.
- **Faramir** is 36 when he encounters Frodo in Ithilien and participates in the Battle of Pelennor Fields. This equates to about 30 “physical years” with his “healthy” lifespan of ca. 105 years.
- **Imrahil** was 64 at the Battle of Pelennor Fields. With about 85 “healthy” years (he lived to an age of 99), he is about 55 in “physical years” when we first encounter him in *The Lord of the Rings*.

“Physical Age equivalent” Table

normal man	Númenóreans		“Healthy” Númenórean lifespan in years																
	kings (original)	ordinary (original)	400	380	360	340	320	300	280	260	240	220	200	180	160	140	120	100	80
20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
25	58	39	58	56	54	52	50	48	46	44	42	40	38	36	34	32	30	28	26
30	96	58	96	92	88	84	80	76	72	68	64	60	56	52	48	44	40	36	32
35	134	77	134	128	122	116	110	104	98	92	86	80	74	68	62	56	50	44	38
40	172	96	172	164	156	148	140	132	124	116	108	100	92	84	76	68	60	52	44
45	210	115	210	200	190	180	170	160	150	140	130	120	110	100	90	80	70	60	50
50	248	134	248	236	224	212	200	188	176	164	152	140	128	116	104	92	80	68	56
55	286	153	286	272	258	244	230	216	202	188	174	160	146	132	118	104	90	76	62
60	324	172	324	308	292	276	260	244	228	212	196	180	164	148	132	116	100	84	68
65	362	191	362	344	326	308	290	272	254	236	218	200	182	164	146	128	110	92	74
70	400	210	400	380	360	340	320	300	280	260	240	220	200	180	160	140	120	100	80
75	405	215	405	385	365	345	325	305	285	265	245	225	205	185	165	145	125	105	85
80	410	220	410	390	370	350	330	310	290	270	250	230	210	190	170	150	130	110	90
85	415	225	415	395	375	355	335	315	295	275	255	235	215	195	175	155	135	115	95
90	420	230	420	400	380	360	340	320	300	280	260	240	220	200	180	160	140	120	100

Relation of royal to common lifespan

From all sources we can deduce that the decrease of the lifespan of the direct royal line and that of the “common” Númenóreans did not decrease at the same rate. For the first two millennia of the Second Age the numbers are clear: 400 and 210 “healthy” or 415/225 total years, respectively. The second point is defined by the time both lines meet and blend into the lifespan of other humans at about 80 years. Thus it is assumed that the waning in both the royal and common lifespan is such that both lines reach the lifespan of other humans at about the same time and finally lose their special status in this respect.

These two points define a linear regression for the waning of the lifespan. Please note the point where the royal lifespan is 120 years and the common about 100.⁸ The average lifespan of the late Stewards was about 100 years. Both Denethor II and Faramir are said to have been unusual and of “true descent” (see above) and Faramir lived to 120 years. It is tempting to view this 120 years’ lifespan as the one that the kings of Gondor would have had at this time – had they survived. Thus both Denethor and Faramir would have had a “royal” span, explaining their “true” Númenórean nature as reported by Gandalf.

The table below and the diagram below right show both **total** lifespans, independent of the actual rate of decline over the course of time. It simply shows the correlation between

Númenórean lifespan over time

royal life-span	common lifespan	percentage
420	230	54,76%
400	221	55,25%
380	212	55,79%
360	204	56,67%
340	195	57,35%
320	186	58,13%
300	177	59,00%
280	168	60,00%
260	159	61,15%
240	151	62,92%
220	142	64,55%
200	133	66,50%
180	124	68,89%
160	115	71,88%
140	106	75,71%
120	98	81,67%
100	89	89,00%
80	80	100,00%

a given “royal” age and the corresponding “common” age. To get the average common lifespan you simply look at the royal span for the given birthdate and cross-reference this on the chart with the common lifespan.

Extrapolated lifespans

Based on all the data above it is reasonably easy to develop a generalized trend for all the royal lines (Elros’, Isildur’s and Anárion’s), and the common Faithful Númenóreans both in the Second and Third Ages. A suggestion for the *Ârúwanâi* (Ad. “King’s Men”) of the Second and Third Ages is provided as well. As Chris already pointed out, the lifespan is highly dependent on the time you’re looking at.

For every group (Elrosians, Isildurionia etc.) I did a regression using all the known dates of birth and death – partially corrected where necessary – and used the formula of the resulting regression (either linear or cubic) to represent the average lifespan for the given birthdate. You can find all these formulas assembled at the end of this chapter.

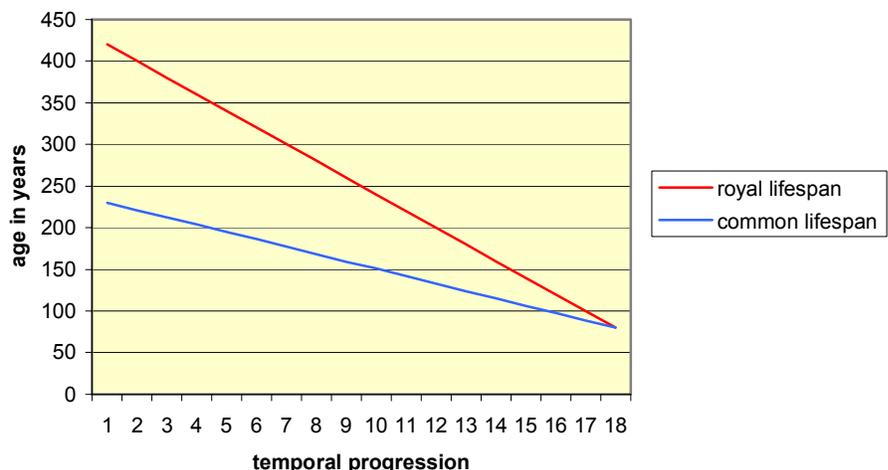
This regression also meant that all the following calculations show the average total lifespan of the Númenóreans. It is absolutely clear that there is a certain variation for both longer or shorter lifespans than the average. For those times when the lifespans of the Númenóreans were still high, a variation of up to **2 to 5%** (e.g. with a lifespan of well over 200 years) is sufficient, while in the late Third Age this may be better around **10 to 20%**. This is understandable, as the more the Númenórean span is lowered towards the regular human one, the more influence a slight difference of 5 or 10 years has on the total span (expressed as a percentage).

The Line of Elros is the basis for the Second Age and provides easy extrapolation of the associated lifespans of the *Ârúwanâi*. The case of the Elendili who appear to have lived longer than the majority party of the King’s Men is a tricky issue. As seen in the case of Tar-Palantír, who died probably a bit prematurely due to grief and sorrows, even one of the already fallen line of the Kings could recover some of the lost span if he returned to the old ideals. Of course the decline could not be totally reversed, but a noticeable effect is nonetheless recognizable. In addition we have the cases of Elendil and his sons who seem to show a lifespan reminiscent of the original kings or at least close to that. Even if the latter ones are surely exceptions even among the Elendili, it is in my opinion justified to grant them a longer lifespan than both the royal line and the majority of the *Ârúwanâi*. If we take the lifespans of Valandil and Meneldil – as members of royal Faithful but not so exalted as their fathers, uncles or grandfather – as an indicator for the average lifespan of the Lords of Andunië, the estimation above is quite good. From this, we can easily deduce the lifespan of the “normal” Faithful as well.

For the first two thirds of the Second Age, the calculation is easy: The common Dúnedain had a “healthy” lifespan of about 210 years, while the royal line enjoyed about 400 such years. With the beginning of the waning under Tar-Ancalimon, things become more difficult. It this era that is depicted in the table and graphics on the following page.

The lifespans for the common Dúnedain are extrapolated on the basis of the corresponding royal line and the relation to it as outlined below. Therefore, these are not calculated based on a formula derived from given dates.

Royal and Common lifespans for Númenóreans



Lifespans of the *Ârûwanâi* in the Second Age

The table in the Appendix (p. 72) has the probable lifespans of the Númenóreans in the Second Age, *Ârûwanâi* and Faithful alike. Data is provided for both the royal line as well as the common *Dúnedain*.

The diagram on p. 20 shows this dependency graphically. Please note the levelling off for the lifespan toward the end of the Second Age.

The *Ârûwanâi* in Middle-earth in the Third Age

Of great interest is the potential longevity of the *Ârûwanâi* after the loss of Númenor. For the Second Age this is not very difficult, as shown above. For the Third Age, it becomes much trickier, as the royal base is no longer present. Chris' argument, that their lifespan blended more or less into the normal mannish one at about the end of the first millennium of the Third Age is in my opinion partly justified; depending on the level of mingling with lesser men:

If we assume the same degree of waning as for the *Dúnedain* of Gondor after the end of the Kings,⁹ the *Ârûwanâi* will reach a natural total lifespan (ca. 80 years) in the 22nd century of the Third Age. At the time of Gondor's successful war that brought it to the apogee of its might under Hyarmendacil I. until the end of the reign of Atanatar Alcarin they had a span of about 100 years.¹⁰

This relative long time of distinction (even if only marginal since about the 13th century of the Third Age) would of course apply only to cases where the *Ârûwanâi* were able to keep their descent pure. More frequent mingling with normal men would hasten this process. For such cases – which is in my opinion more likely in almost all places – a blending in with the local population might indeed take place around the mid-13th century T.A.; e.g. when Gondor enjoyed the apogee of its might.

The table in the Appendix A (page 73) as well as the diagram on p. 21 illustrate both of these possibilities.

The Faithful (S. Elendili) in the Second Age

It is only after the division of Númenor's people in Tar-Ancalimon's days that we can distinguish the Faithful (Elendili) party from the King's Men. Though remaining true to the old ideals, they were not unaffected by the troubles of their brethren:

*"Nonetheless even they, who named themselves the Faithful, did not wholly escape from the affliction of their people, and they were troubled by the thought of death."
Silmarillion. Akallabêth*

For this reason, I deem it likely that their lifespan began to wane as well, albeit more slowly than for the *Ârûwanâi*.

The "royal" entry in the table of Appendix A (p. 72) and the diagram on page 20 is here substituted by the Lords of Andúnië who were the leaders of this party and the ancestors of the kings of the Realms in Exile. As they were not of the royal line, a certain loss of total lifespan prior to the time when they inherited the "true" ancient ideals of Númenor from the royal line, is likely. After that, it is probable that their waning was slower due to their preservation of the original ideals of Númenor. Because of this, I deem a total lifespan of about 350 years (Tolkien's earlier vision for the kings; see above) at the beginning of the separation process around S.A. 2000 justified.

As the common Númenóreans are likely to be not affected by the loss of lifespan until Tar-Ancalimon's time, there is a steeper decline for the waning for the common folk than for the Lords of Andúnië. The normal dependency of the common people's lifespan from that of the leading line is not wholly possible here because the Lords of Andúnië had probably already lost lifespan (compared to the original royal line) due to their nature as a cadet branch. For this reason, the usual dependency as outlined above is not universally applicable here.

The waning of the lifespan of the Lords of Andúnië has been estimated based on their supposed "starting age" (350) and the corresponding "end age" (280) and thus not been extrapolated from real dates of birth and death.

The diagram on page 20 and the table in the appendix A (p. 72) provide numbers for calculating lifespans and show the connection between birthdate and lifespan.

Lifespan of the *Dúnedain* of Amor

The tables in the Appendix A (p. 73) give the average full lifespan from a member of the line of Isildur in correlation to the birth date. It should be no problem to interpolate dates in between. The lifespans for the common Númenóreans have been extrapolated according to the method outlined on the previous pages.

The diagram on p. 21 contains the tables' data in graphic form.

Lifespan of the *Dúnedain* of Gondor

In the same manner as for the northern *Dúnedain*, the Númenóreans of Gondor had a peculiar lifespan.

The table on p. 73 lists the average lifespan of both the royal line as well as those of the common *Dúnedain*. Birthdates in between and their accompanying lifespan can be easily interpolated.

After the end of the kings in Gondor, we no longer have a reliable base for calculating the common lifespan. Fortunately however, Tolkien provided us with a good surrogate in the form of the lifespans for the Houses of Dol Amroth and the Hurinionath (the Stewards). Here we encounter a striking phenomenon: While the waning of the lifespan of the royal lines followed a fairly even and regular pattern, the variance in these two houses is much greater, though a general trend is clearly recognizable as well.

The table on p. 73 lists the average lifespans for the southern *Dúnedain* after the end of the kings as well, based on the two lines mentioned above. Please note that the span for T.A. 1900 is not identical with that given in the table to the left, but is quite close and sufficient for our purposes here. The diagram on p. 21 visualize these numbers.

Notes

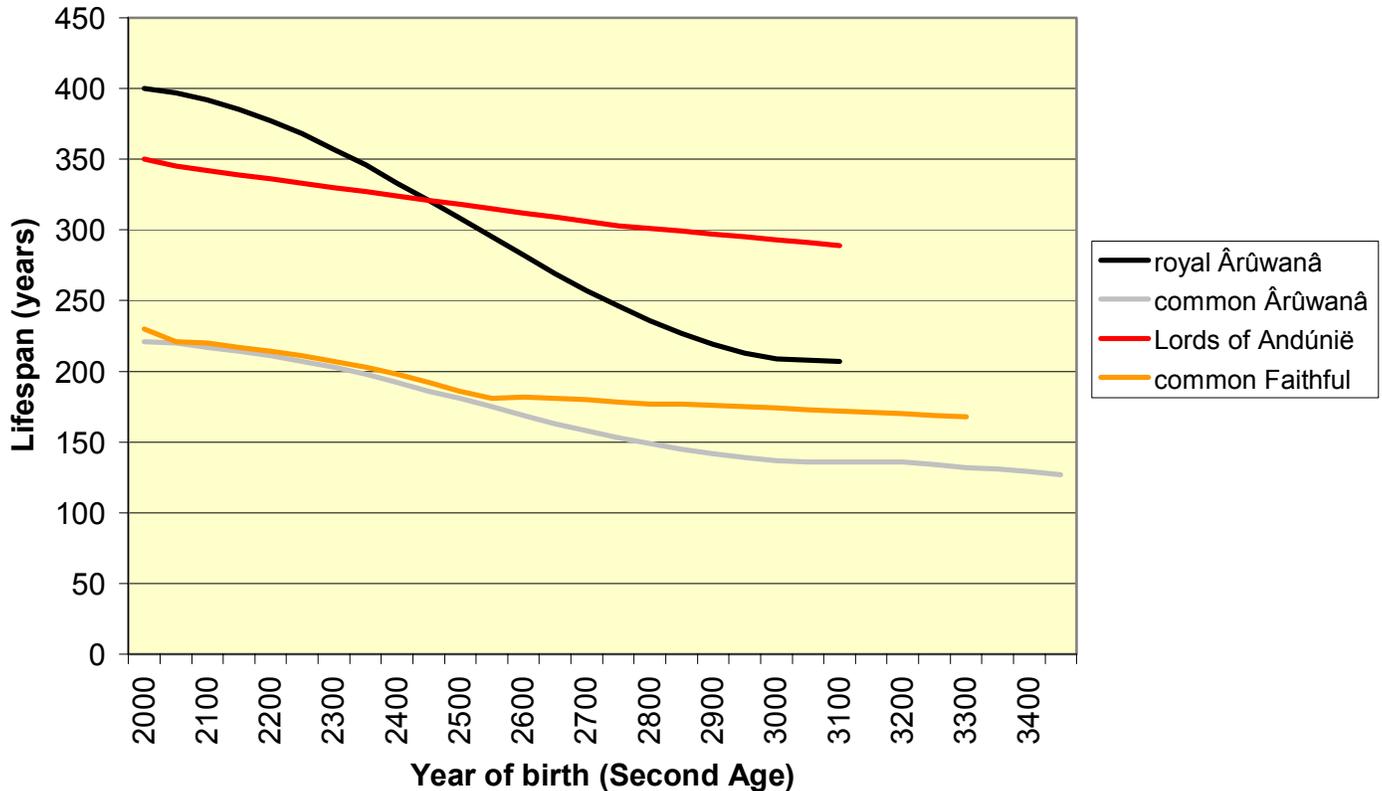
1. For the Third Age it gets much easier though.
2. See Note 9.
3. See the HoMe10: See the *Tale of Adanel* within the *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth* from about the late 1950s to perhaps 1960.
4. See the HoMe11 and *Vinyar Tengwar* #41.
5. See HoMe10: Myths Transformed
6. Or even interesting to illustrate the development of Tolkien's ideas.
7. Compared to native Endorians of course.
8. 98 to be precise
9. Which seems a fair estimate, given Tolkien's statement that the waning hastened in Gondor after the line of the kings ended.
10. About the same lifespan that the Faithful of Gondor would only reach almost 2000 years later.

Formulas for calculating life expectancy

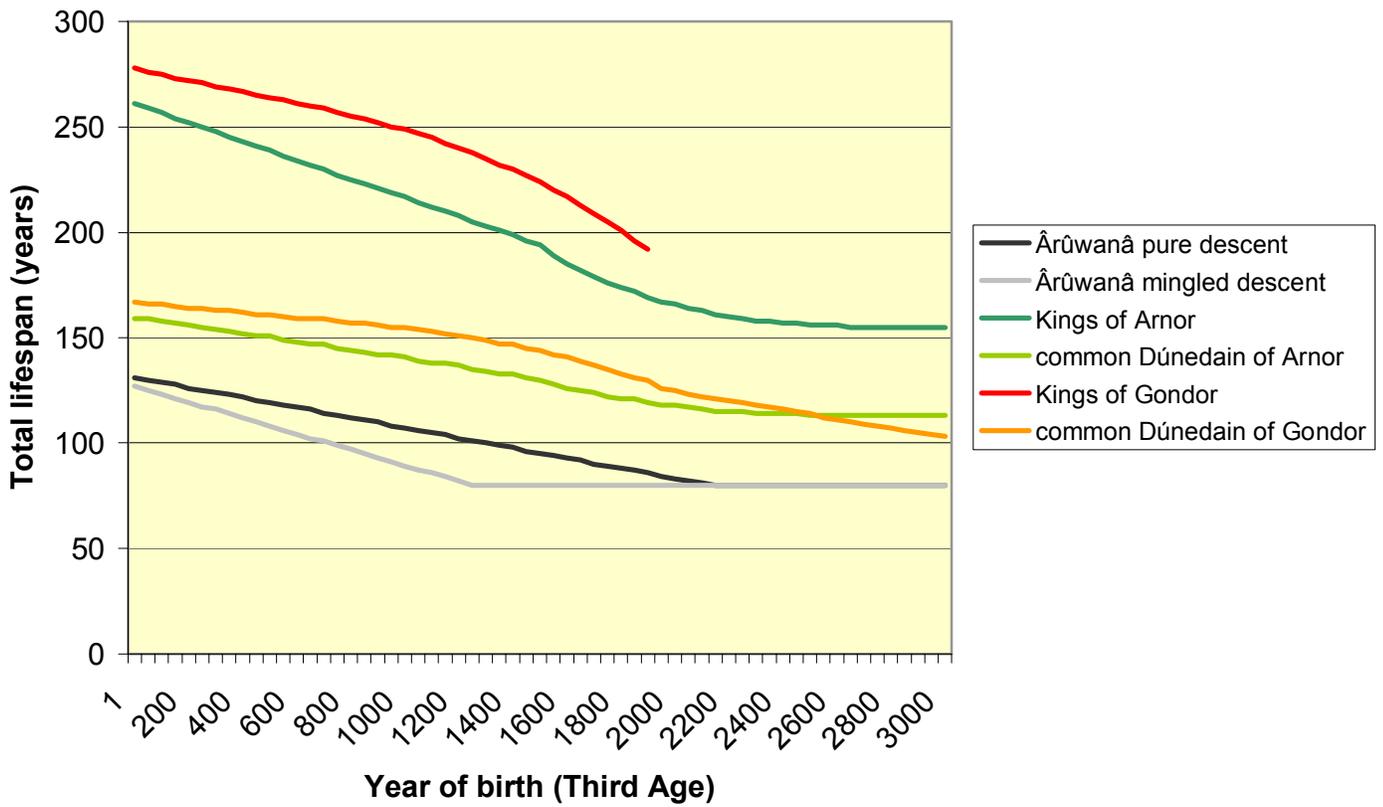
All formulas follow the basic principle: $y = a*x^3 + b*x^2 + c*x + d$, where y is the lifespan in years and x the year of birth.

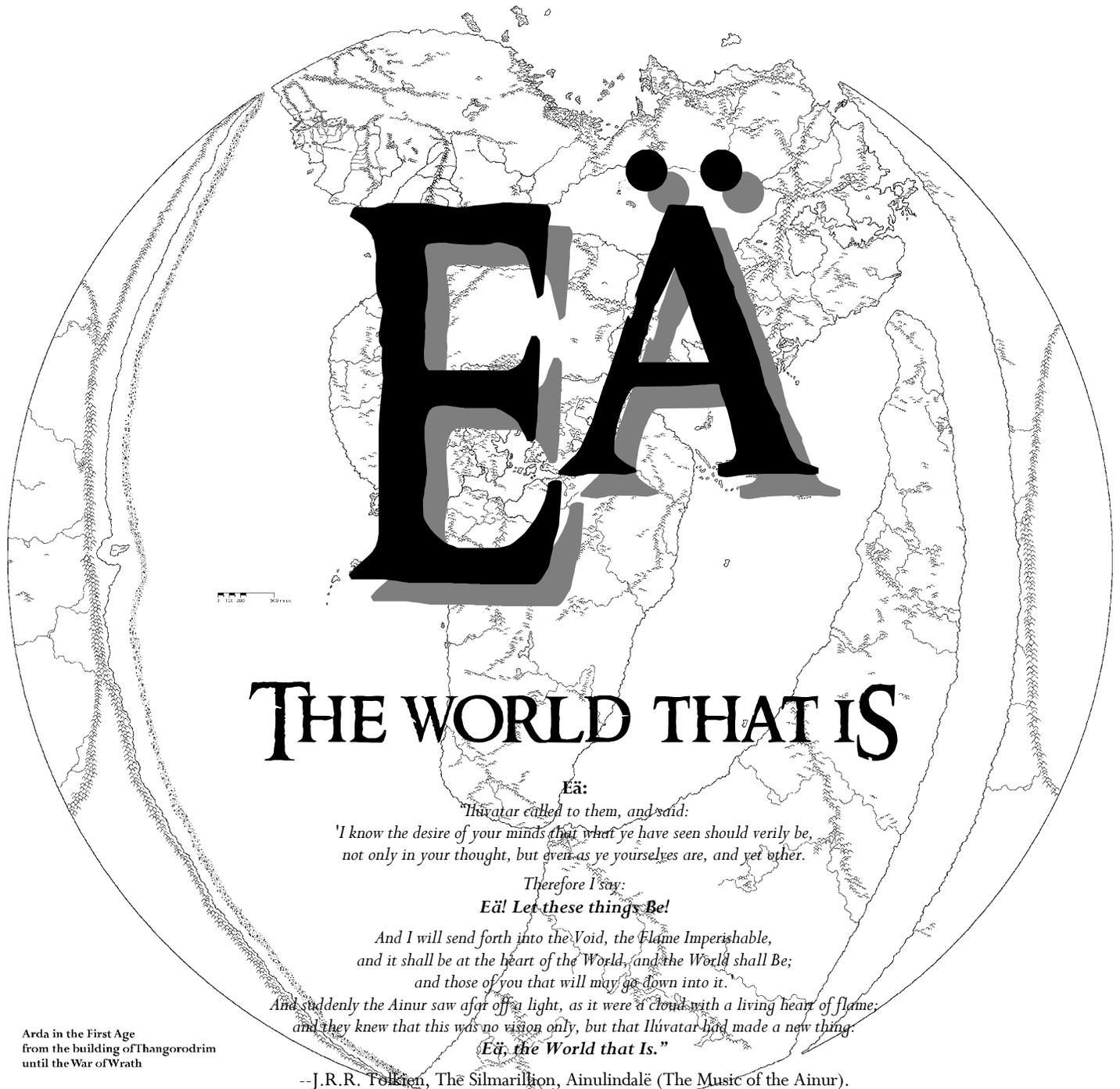
Group	x^3	x^2	x	d	notes
Âruwanâ kings	$2,8*10^{-7}$	$-6*10^{-4}$	0,1677	388,27	1800 must be subtracted from year of birth before using formula
Isildurioni (pre-T.A. 1500)	$-2*10^{-9}$	$-4*10^{-6}$	-0,0465	194,015	
Isildurioni (post-T.A. 1500)	$-1,25*10^{-3}$	0,1225	-3,76	192,309	1500 must be subtracted from year of birth before using formula
Anârioni	$-1*10^{-8}$	$1,1*10^{-5}$	-0,0301	277,657	
Stewards and House of Dol Amroth			-0,0220	168,590	applies to all common Gondorian Dúnedain post T.A. 1900

Númenórean lifespans in the Second Age



Total lifespans of Númenóreans in the Third Age





THE WORLD THAT IS

Eä:

Ilúvatar called to them, and said:

'I know the desire of your minds that what ye have seen should verily be, not only in your thought, but even as ye yourselves are, and yet other.

Therefore I say:

Eä! Let these things Be!

And I will send forth into the Void, the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be; and those of you that will may go down into it.

And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame; and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing.

Eä, the World that Is.

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

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

The Eä RPG system is dedicated to role playing gaming in J.R.R. Tolkien's universe.

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Tomes of lore include:

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Find details and downloads at: www.earp.com

The Eöldrim

by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa

(arthadan@gmail.com) © 2009

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Tolkien's Middle-earth is full of lacunae that wait to be filled by other minds. Other Minds author José Enrique took one of these and developed a separate people from a few remarks of the professor in the Silmarillion.

It refers to Eöl the Dark-Elf, husband to Aredhel (sister of Turgon) and father of the ill-fated Maeglin. José now builds upon this and develops a story for the folk of Eöl from the First to Third Age. It not only deals with the history and the persons, but also provides game stats for both the CODA system as well as MERP.



The First Age

Within the Avari from the big branch of Elves called Tatyar (the Second Clan of the Elves) who arrived in Beleriand during the Age of the Stars in the First Age, there was a small group of Elves who followed a different path than their kin. They were those belonging to the House of Eöl, the Eöldrim, followers of the Lord of the sinister wood of Nan Elmoth, related to Elu Thingol, King of Doriath, since Eöl's father had married a Sinda lady related to the king himself.

Eöl loved the night and the stars, and among all the Firstborn of his time he was the one closest in friendship with Dwarves, who instructed him in smithcraft and who were in turn later taught by him in techniques of his own. His greatest creation as master smith was the so-called *galvorn*, a black metal harder than steel but light in weight and supple, whose most special component was iron from a meteorite. He forged two swords with this metal, Anglachel and Anguirel, and they were powerful weapons indeed. But when he had used all his stock of meteorite iron, he became obsessed with finding a way to make an alloy of

earth-delved metals that could resemble the properties of his prized *galvorn*. He spent long years trying more and more complicated processes, and visiting the Dwarves to exchange knowledge and find a way to achieve his goal. Finally, he discovered the way to create an alloy better than steel for forging weapons and armor, which he called *morglân*, but this was still insignificant when compared with the mighty *galvorn*. However, he found it useful because he could produce it in much greater quantity than *galvorn*, despite the process needing several years to be completed. He shared his secret only with his younger brother, Dúhir.

The further sad tale of Eöl and his kin can be found in the pages of the *Quenta Silmarillion*. With their lord's death, the path of his people took a new course as well.

All these fateful events of the First Age marked the end of the Eöldrim as a separate people. When their lord left them to seek Gondolin, he put in charge his younger brother, Dúhir, and for many years he took the place of Eöl believing him to have disappeared but still alive.



"And Eöl mistrusted him" © Catherine Karina Chmiel

When the muster of the League of Maedhros was preparing for the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, Mablung and Beleg Strongbow, vassals of King Thingol who were about to join the battle under Fingon's standard, came to Dúhir to ask for help, in the name of their kinship. They asked for his help against Morgoth with the fabulous armor and weapons made of *morglân*. But since there were no love between his people and the other Elves of Beleriand, Dúhir mocked them, calling them lackeys of the Noldor and he denied them any support. When Beleg and Mablung reported to Fingon of their fruitless mission, the other Elven people began to call Dúhir, almost in mockery, Fuinhir. Thus, his people began to be known as the Fuindrim, though they called themselves Eöldrim.

Following the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, Dúhir finally learnt of the evil fate Eöl had met in Gondolin. To him, the exact circumstances and Eöl's guilt mattered little. Only the death of his brother at the hands of the Noldor was important.

Now, with him dead, the foremost secrets and skills of the Eöldrim had died as well. The Eöldrim believed that a master smith placed part of his inner strength in his greatest works, and so after Eöl's death those works were kept with special care and reverence. But even this preservation of past craft was not complete since Eöl's masterpieces, the two powerful swords from *galvorn*, had been lost. Anglachel had been gifted to Thingol, king of Doriath, as tithe, so that the Eöldrim were allowed to settle in Nan Elmoth long ago. The other, Angurriel, had been stolen by the accursed Maeglin, and the sword was with him in the fall of Gondolin and was presumably lost. All this made Dúhir's heart harden, and his contempt became hate. In this time Nan Elmoth became a dangerous place for Elves, since Morgoth's Orcs and all the other minions of the Black Enemy increased in numbers and roamed almost over almost all of Beleriand except for the woods of Doriath, still protected by the Girdle of Melian.

At this time Dúhir led his people out of Nan Elmoth, blaming again the Noldor for all the evils that had befallen the land. They were a group of barely one hundred Elves, seeking a safe place in the lands of the Naugrim in Ered Luin, where they enjoyed a warm welcome due to the long friendship of Eöl and Dúhir with the Lords of Belegost and Nogrod. Just beyond the northern border of the Dwarven Realm they founded a small dwelling under the mountain, whose doors were surrounded

by a forest of high trees with writhing roots, grown from the seeds and saplings they had brought from their home in Nan Elmoth. They called that place Gathrod im-Erynath, and for many years they enjoyed good relations with their Dwarven neighbours until the doom of the Silmarils interfered: Dwarves of Nogrod fought against Doriath for the possession of the Nauglamír in which had been set the Silmaril which Beren retrieved from the Iron Crown of Morgoth. For the Nauglamír, the Dwarves killed Dúhir's relative, Elu Thingol, and many Elves died in the battle to avenge the king's death. Both facts caused the Eöldrim to renounce their alliance with the Naugrim and close their doors to them all, even if only the Dwarves of Nogrod had made war on the Elves. The Dwarves of Belegost had no part in the ruin of Doriath, but the Eöldrim trusted the Naugrim no more, fearing they could be betrayed as well – due to dwarven greed for their elven treasures.

However, the only son of the lord Dúhir, Curugond, did not agree since he thought the Eöldrim would need allies to survive in the future and that isolation would lead them inexorably to their doom. So he left his father's house with thirty companions and they went towards Khazad-dûm, whose folk were not related at all with the events of Beleriand. Despite the two peoples having been friends of old, Curugond could not convince the king of Durin's Folk to let the Eöldrim live within his realm. However, an agreement was made and they were allowed to settle near the border of the Dwarven Realm in the southern Misty Mountains, but in exchange for this grant the smiths of the Eöldrim had to share their knowledge with the Khazâd – save the secret of *morglân*. But the bargain proved not so fruitful as Durin's Folk had thought at first, since the Eöldrim's forging techniques were complex indeed and those which were of the greatest interest to the Dwarven smiths were difficult to master. Despite this, the Longbeards were an honorable people and kept their promise. Their new home Ivordath was built in a rocky crystal cavern in the mountainside near the ancient forest of Fangorn, and Nan Angren, the valley where Isengard would later stand.

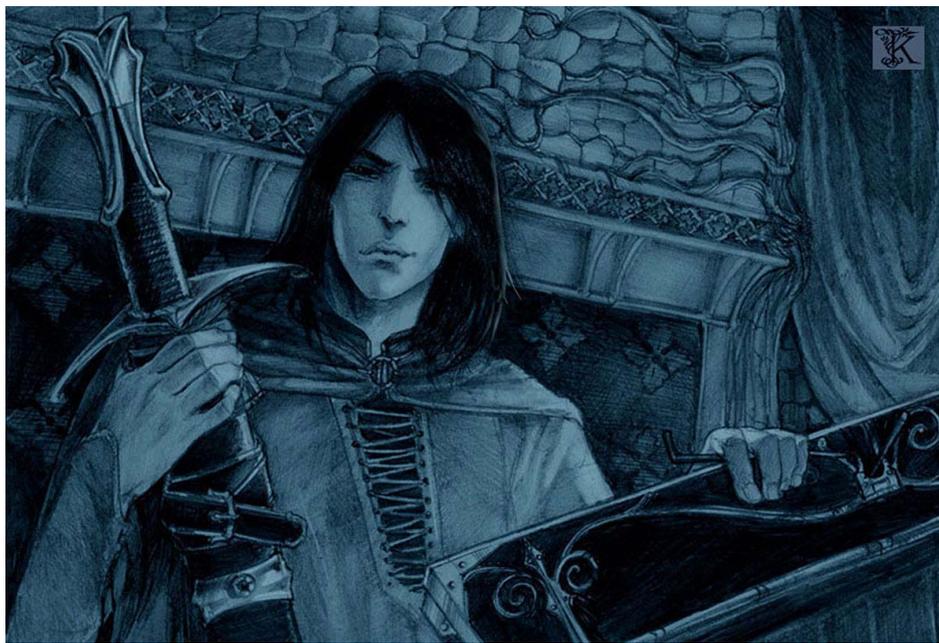
The Second Age

More than five hundred years passed and the Eöldrim of Ivordath became a well-established community and increased to about double its original population and so they thrived in their crystal caverns. They mined

their caves for iron and they traded with the Dwarves for other metals, then they sold their crafted items to the Dwarves and to their cousins of Lórinand. In those times Curugond had a premonition of war in the years to come and his heart grew heavy with concern. Despite life being quiet and peaceful and his foresight seemingly without reason, he decided that his people should be able to defend their home if the need should ever come. Accordingly he ordered the forging of great doors for the cavern entrance and they were strengthened by the arts of the Elves. Even some *morglân* weaponry was crafted and, strange as it seemed, warriors were trained in peaceful times. Many held him to be a fool at the time, but years later he was proven right.

When the exiled Noldor built Eregion, Curugond met Celebrimbor in Khazad-dûm, as both of them had business with the Dwarves of that realm. Though the atmosphere was taut, they agreed on a number of common interests. This meeting was to be not the last. The two lords discovered their interests in crafting and forging were quite similar and slowly they began to put aside their differences. Finally, Curugond renounced his father's oath of hate and began to deal openly with the Noldor of Eregion, and his knowledge was highly appreciated by Celebrimbor. Thanks to this interchange of knowledge, both people became more skilled and the Gwaith-i-Fuin, a brotherhood of Eöldrim smiths, was founded in Ivordath following the model of the Jewelsmiths in Eregion. It is told that the two lords developed such a close friendship that only to Celebrimbor did Curugond reveal the secret of *morglân*. However, good relations between these two Elves did not last long after Celebrimbor welcomed Annatar to Eregion. Curugond began to mistrust Annatar, since he also wanted to obtain the secret of Eöl's alloy with sweet words and gifts. Curugond advised Celebrimbor as Círdan and Gil-galad had done not to lend his ear to Annatar, but Eregion's master-smith did not listen to them. So the Gwaith-i-Fuin went back to their subterranean city. Curugond's beautiful daughter Ivriel had married Tar-Gildor, Captain of Eregion's Guard and she stayed with him.

Much later, when Sauron's armies surrounded Eregion, Curugond's worst nightmares came true. It is told in the crystal caverns of Ivordath her people heard princess Ivriel crying for her husband, slain during the siege. The Captain of Ivordath's warriors, her brother Calnor, disobeyed his father who had forbidden to bring any help to the Gwaith-i-



"Maeglin steals Anguirel" © Catherine Karina Chmiel

Mírdain and chose to leave for Eregion. He summoned all the brave warriors who wanted to follow him to rescue his sister. Many followed him, and none returned. This spelled the end of Ivordath, since most of the warriors that Curugond wanted to protect the caves in dark times were gone and he felt the cold hand of fate upon him. Believing Calnor and his company – in addition to Ivriel – dead, Curugond brooded in the dark.

It was however not so. A few of Calnor's company survived the war; these were Calnor, his sister Ivriel and twelve valiant warriors. The others fell by fire or Orcish steel or were captured and sent to Barad-dûr to be interrogated about the secret of *morglân*. The captives were tortured for months, but none said a single word.

Calnor and his few survivors returned to Ivordath, but they found the doors closed and signs of battle. No secret word they knew opened them and with an ill feeling they went to Khazad-dûm, but the Dwarves did not allow anyone to enter. So they went on to Rivendell, where they – like so many other elven refugees of the war – were gladly received by Elrond Half-Elven who was a distant relative. There they found some of their people, Elves from Ivordath who had escaped to Rivendell fearing an attack when the Crystal Caverns were found by the Orcs of Sauron. Then Calnor realised the price of his rashness and pride and great was his despair. However, even greater was the old hate against the Noldor which grew again in the hearts of the remain-

ing Eöldrim, since many blamed them for the war and the loss of Ivordath. Calnor was not so level-headed as his father Curugond and he refused to see the disaster as Sauron's work alone. As soon as they healed their wounds, they left Rivendell and some other elven refugees from Eriador joined them. They crossed the Misty Mountains, as far as possible from lands ruled by the Noldor, and they went to Greenwood the Great, where their cousins lived amongst the Sindar. They found tall trees which shielded them from the sun and the forest was to their liking, so they settled there, accepting Oropher as king. Here they were granted a place in the deepest part of the forest where they founded the small settlement of Baer Haeron in exchange for a mighty sword for Oropher, forged of *morglân*. So they lived in peace for many years until Sauron was taken captive by the Númenóreans and Middle-earth was finally free of evil – or so it seemed.

Then the great cataclysm sank Númenor and the world changed. Dúhir's settlement of Gathrod im-Erynath, in the northern region of the Blue Mountains, at the source of the river Lhûn, was ruined beyond recovery. Círdan of Mithlond sent help for the survivors and generously invited them to live among his people by the sea. Dúhir's heart had grown weary and heavy with hate but still he saw wisdom in Círdan's offer and the Eöldrim went to live with the Teleri, who welcomed them as long lost brothers. There they made forge works for the Swan-ships and they found the peace they had sought for so long. Regarding the

other Eöldrim settlements, the main entrance to Ivordath collapsed and only Baer Haeron was mainly unaffected.

When Isildur and Anárion founded Gondor and the fortress which would protect the eastern border of their realms was built, a scouting party went to the southern Misty Mountains. While the tower of Orthanc was being shaped, they reported some "hidden crystal caverns where silence rules in the wooded mountainside of mysterious Fangorn". Ivordath was ostensibly uninhabited or its few inhabitants sought a safer place delving even deeper.

The Third Age

After many long years, when the Necromancer founded his realm of unseen fear and horror in Greenwood in the Third Age, king Thranduil's Elves lost contact with the Eöldrim of Baer Haeron, and they held them to have escaped or died under the growing evil shadow in the forest. Some even said a dragon had settled there, sleeping on the treasures of the last Gwaith-i-fuin. However, after the withdrawal of the Necromancer, it was discovered this last rumor had been spread by his agents among the superstitious Northmen since he wanted to prevent prying eyes in the surroundings of Dol Guldur. Most of the Eöldrim of Baer Haeron were killed by Sauron's minions, and a few survivors were enslaved. When Dol Guldur was stormed by the White Council in T.A. 2941, these prisoners were freed.

Calnor was among them but after he was set free, he refused to go to Mithlond with them and he went alone to the east. During his imprisonment the Dark Lord tried to obtain through torture the secret of *morglân*, but when he realized Calnor's spirit was hard to break, he offered to reveal the location of Anguriel, one of the two master swords Eöl forged himself in exchange of the secret, but Calnor could not be persuaded. Sauron had told him that the sword had been captured in the Elder Days by a lieutenant of Morgoth after the fall of Gondolin. This ancient demon was now in the east, ruling a kingdom of terror. He decided to recover the mighty blade for redeeming himself, taking revenge against the Shadow and asking Dúhir's forgiveness for his father's madness as well as his own. Little is known of his fate in the lands of the East.

In late Third Age only the Lossoth still spoke about the *kuuhenget*, dark spirits which wandered the frozen forest and mountains of the north in full moon nights, since some of

the former inhabitants of Gathrod im-Erynth sometimes visited the ruins of their lost home and sang gloomy songs of sorrow throughout the night.

Society and Culture

Demeanour: their aspect has changed only little over the millennia because of their conservative and sometimes isolationist lifestyle: they are paler than the rest of the Quendi, and their dark eyes seem to be bigger. They wear dark clothes and chosen elite warriors wield *morglân*-made weapons while high rank or noble ones may wear *morglân* armour also. In any case, to possess an object made of *morglân* is a sign of wealth and status, even a small decorative one such as a pendant, and these are most treasured.

Language: Their tongue is a mix of their original Avarin language and Sindarin, called Elmothrin, and the Gwaith-i-fuin have developed a secret written language for their alloys and complex forging processes.

Society: They live in realms ruled by a lord who is the supreme master of that place. They mistrust all and every outsider so their communities are as self-sufficient as possible. Hunting, fishing in nearby rivers and lakes and collecting fruits from the wood are their main food sources and they have a deep knowledge of their dark woods but they also trade with Dwarves. They have strong ties with the community and specially with those of their own blood. They favour deep forests or caverns where they feel safe in a hostile world and because they dislike the Sun, although they love the starlight. Because their allies are at best few in number, all of them, men and women, are skilled in the use of spear and sword and all of them must have their own equipment for war. When they are forced to fight, they prefer hit-and-run attacks and ambushes, since they are usually outnumbered and unlike most Elves they have no qualms using poisoned weapons in times of war. They are disciplined and ferocious warriors.

The greatest and best kept secret of the Eöldrim is the composition and forging process of *morglân*, usually known only to one master-smith, who is also usually the ruler of the community. To prevent the loss of this lore in times of peril, the master-smiths maintain the tradition of sharing

secret with one chosen smith in the same way as Eöl first revealed it to Dúhir before his departure.

Personality: They are a quiet people, even rude in their manners and drastic in their decisions – which very seldom change. They like solitude and beholding the stars. They do not like the Sun, questions or intruders.

They have an innate skill for music and songs and it is usual to hear them singing their own grim songs when they are at work in their forges, but seldom outside of them.

They all mistrust the Noldor, whom they blame for causing all the calamities of Middle-earth because of their pride. Also, they do not like Men, because they think they are lesser beings, weak of mind and heart and easily corrupted. However, they have good relations with Dwarves, since they both share a deep love for forging and crafting and they respect their mutual skills. They hate the creatures of darkness and they fight them to death to protect and defend their homes.

Morglân: This secret alloy of dark color and almost without any metallic gleam has some properties similar to the enhanced Dwarven Steel, and it can be made from normal metals and some secret components following a complicated process. This alloy never rusts and is harder, more difficult to break and lighter than normal steel, although is far heavier than mithril. It can be used for crafting spear and arrow heads, the thin and deadly blades the Elves favored and resistant scale coats. *Morglân* is not so unbreakable as the famous Dwarven Steel but it is lighter and so more treasured by the Elves. Elven warriors prefer to wear light armour which does not hinder them rather than heavy Dwarven mail coats even if they provide better protection and a sharp thin blade is deadly indeed in their skilled hands. Only Elven master-smiths can ever try to make it since its making is said to last more than a Mannish life and is one of the most complex ever created.

The Eöldrim smiths have seldom gifted objects or weapons made with this alloy to other peoples, and only those can be trusted, since the Eöldrim usually curse the ones which are taken from them (or their rightful owner) against their will.

Game Stats for CODA system

Eöldrim Elves

Attributes: +1 Bearing, +1 Nimbleness and +2 Perception.

Lands (in late Third Age): Mithlond, however a small number of them have become wanderers and may be found in Mirkwood or any other Elven haven not ruled by Noldor.

Language: Elmothrin and Sindarin.

Racial Abilities: As all Elves, except *beast-skill*, because they have lost their innate empathy with animals if they ever have it (they are far more interested in metals and stones than in *kelvar* or *olvar*). Also, they do not get *farsightedness* because their sight is not so keen as the rest of their kind as a consequence of working in dark caverns for centuries. On the other hand, they get the *craftmanship racial ability* (as Dwarves) and *night-eyed II*.

Skills: As all Elves, however they favor *smith-craft* unlike most Avari.

Traits: As all Elves, however common *flaws* are *hatred (Noldor)*, *proud* and *fealty*, and those of noble blood may know the secret of *morglân* which becomes an *oath flaw* (never reveal the secret of *morglân*). Also, those with *Hoard II edge* may have a *morglân* weapon and with *Hoard III* they may get a *morglân* scale mail (see below).

Morglân

This secret alloy is the pride of the Eöldrim and their best kept secret. It can be used to make thin and fast blades or light and deadly arrow heads, but its properties make it specially suitable for scale mails. The Eöldrim seldom offer a *morglân* item as a present to other peoples and only these can be trusted, because they treasure them more than their own lives and they place terrible curses the ones stolen or taken by force.

The procedure of its making will not be greatly detailed as it would take such a long time (more than one century) that it cannot be created in game unless your Narrator allows really long gaps between adventures. That said, it requires a *Craftsman (Smith)* with the *masterwork order* ability. Material costs and time needed are detailed below.

Chronology

- 400 FA Eöl is slain in Gondolin.
- 471 FA Nirnaeth Arnoediad. Dúhir becomes Lord of the Eöldrim. The Eöldrim leave Nan Elmoth.
- 473 FA Dúhir founds Gathrod im-Erynath in the Blue Mountains.
- 502 FA Thingol is slain by the Dwarves. Dúhir decides to beak any relation with outsiders, including Dwarves. Curugond leaves Gathrod im-Erynath with a handful of followers, including his young son Calnor.
- 605 SA Curugond founds Ivordath in southern Misty Mountains near Fangorn.
- 750 SA Celebrimbor founds Eregion
- 813–1021 SA Friendship between Eregion and Ivordath. The *Gwaith-i-fuin* is formed.
- 1696 SA Calnor leaves Ivordath to rescue his sister.
- 1697 SA Eregion is destroyed
- 1703 SA Battle of Ivordath. Its doors are closed, it is uncertain if there are survivors in the city.
- 1704 SA Calnor, his sister and 12 of his warriors arrives at Rivendell. Calnor and his people arrive in Greenwood the Great and settle there.
- 3262 SA Sauron is taken captive to Númenor. Calnor founds Baer Haeron in Greenwood the Great.
- 3319 SA Gathrod im-Erynath is ruined by the cataclysm. Dúhir's people move to Mithlond.
- c.1100 TA The Necromancer settles in Dol Guldur.
- 1120 TA Contact with Baer Haeron is lost.

Type	Cost
Spear head / 20 arrow heads /shield	1D6 x 500 pp
One-handed sword / helmet	1D6 x 1000 pp
Scale mail	1D6 x 5000 pp

Time
13 – (<i>smithcraft</i> skill levels) x 100 years
13 – (<i>smithcraft</i> skill levels) x 100 years
13 – (<i>smithcraft</i> skill levels) x 200 years

All *morglân* weapons have a +2 bonus to damage (*masterwork* bonus included). Usually only one-handed blades can be crafted with *morglân*, because its best property is its lightness but this makes it unsuitable for forging axes, maces and massive two-handed blades as metal weight is an important factor to cause damage in these kinds of weapons (although it can be used for piercing weapons such as spears). *Morglân* blades are thin and sharp ones, better used to pierce rather than to cut. Due to their lightness, they have a -1 to Initiative. However, sometimes is used for arrow heads for elite archers, which have a range 20% greater than normal ones.



Type	Damage	Special
Spear	+2	Nothing
One-handed blade	+2	-1 to Initiative
Arrow	+2	Range +20%

Regarding armour, the most famous is the scale mail of the Eöldrim but there are also shields (usually of strong wood with a thick *morglân* layer) and helmets. Both of them have a +2 bonus and a weight reduced to a 60% of normal weight.

	Weight	Damage absorbed	Price
Scale mail	12 lbs (6 kg)	8*	Priceless

*As usually this is for a corslet, a hauberk absorbs one more point and gives a -1 penalty for all Nimbleness-based tests.

MERP stats

Eöldrim

In terms of stat bonuses you can treat them as Silvan Elves. Concerning education and culture, the aforementioned details for the CODA rules should be easily adaptable to MERP as well.

Morglân

The MERP (and Rolemaster) system is ill-suited to represent such a special metal, as almost everything is handled with one bonus to the offensive or defensive value. In addition, both systems represent a certain abundance of such special and magical things, more akin to AD&D.

However, a bonus of +20 (equal to the established *mithril*) seems apt. In (notional) monetary value it might be comparable as well.

The weight advantages from the CODA rules above can be retained as well.

Tharbad Map Name Changes

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As already mentioned in a similar article in *Other Minds*, Issue 5 names are an integral part of Tolkien's world – if not the core one. Our resident linguistic expert Chris Seeman in conjunction with renowned Tolkien linguist David Salo strikes again with a thorough linguistic analysis of a MERP module. As already mentioned in our last issue, the treatment of genuine “tolkienistic” names was something of a stepchild in the MERP series. Though looking good superficially, a closer look reveals many shortcomings; especially in the 1st ed. publications. Some of these issues were fixed in later 2nd ed. modules (namely *Arnor: The Land* and *Arnor: The People*), but the scope of these did not always allow for a complete revision. It is the aim of this contribution to rectify this by providing properly researched names.



In the last issue MERP's *Minas Ithil* was the subject of linguistic scrutiny. Now we move to the northern realm of Arnor and examine the great and ancient port-city of Tharbad. We encounter this great and vibrant city first in ICE's *Thieves of Tharbad* by Lisa J. Evans, Walter H. Hunt, Evan Jamieson, Richard Meyer and Robert G. Traynor (authors) and Terry K. Amthor (editor/designer). It was published in 1985; thus belonging to the first generation of MERP adventure modules. A vivid description of the city and a great map make this module a must for anyone planning an adventure or campaign in this corner of Middle-earth. The city map re-appeared in the 2nd ed. *Arnor: The Land* (1997), but not in the preceding *Arnor* (1994).

Due to a number of reasons already detailed in the contribution dealing with *Minas Ithil*, the linguistic part of the venture unfortunately did not match the quality and atmosphere of the content itself. Fortunately, names are among the most easy things to change in a module – compared to content or plot changes. This following text aims to provide map names based on solid research.

We provide an alphabetical index of all non-English words (and a few English ones; these are marked in quotes) that appear in *Thieves of Tharbad* and *Arnor: The Land*, providing the most meaningful translations and amending forms where necessary. The first word in each entry represents the form of the name as it actually appears on the map. A ‘>’ symbol indicates an alteration we have made. If there is no such ‘>’, the form as it appears is correct, but an accurate translation is provided anyway.

This is an alphabetical list of name changes to be applied to the color insert map of Tharbad in *Arnor: The Land* (or *Thieves of Tharbad*). In each instance, I provide the extant form of the name as it appears on the existing map, followed by the form it needs to be changed into and an English gloss of the term's meaning (which you may or may not wish to include on the map itself). Following this list is a revised “Translation Key” to replace the one on the current map, and finally a list of final changes or deletions that should be made to the map.

A

Aelin Harn (“South Pool”)
 Annon Amrun > Annon Amrûn (“Sunrise Gate”)
 Annon Cair (“Ship Gate”)
 Annon Forn (“North Gate”)
 Annon Gwathlo > Annon Gwathló (“Greyflood Gate”)
 Annon Harn (“South Gate”)
 Annon Lindamel > Annon Dúlin (“Nightsinger Gate”)
 Annon Rhûn > Annon Rhúnen (“Eastern Gate”)
 Annon Roch (“Horse Gate”)
 Annon Sîr (“River Gate”)
 Annon Vîn > Annon Gwain (“New Gate”)
 Augon Curhyth > Pann Círdain (“Shipwrights’ Court”)
 Augon Hues > Pann Hobas (“Harbor Court”)
 Augon Vîn > Pann Gwain (“New Court”)
 Bar Aran (“King’s House”)

C

Caras Gwanoth > Gwanwobel (“Shantytown”)
 Cherant Aran > Celf Aran (“King’s Canal”)
 Cherant Echor > Celf Echor (“Canal of the Outer Ring”)
 Cheber Enedrant > Celf Enedh (“Middle Canal”)
 Cherant Harn > Celf Harn (“South Canal”)
 Cherant Ostinen > Celf Nenost (“Waterfort Canal”)
 Cherant Rammas > Celf Rammas (“Canal of the Great Wall”)
 Cherant Rynd > Celf Rynd (“Canal of the Halls”)

D

Drill Field > Parth Negyth (“Dwarf-field”)

E

Eithel Cherant > Celf Aelin (“Canal of the Pool”)

I

Iant Caramaid > Iant Caramaidh: caran +
maidh (“Caramaidh Bridge”)
Iant Formen > Iant Forn (“North Bridge”)
Iant Harnen > Iant Harn (“South Bridge”)

M

Man Ened > Sad Enedh (“Middle Place”)
Man Lindamel > Sad Dúlin (“Nightsingers’
Place”)
Menetar > Men Daer (“Great Way”)

N

Nen Echor (“Water of the outer circle”)

O

Ostinen Turambar > Nenost Turamarth
 (“Turambar’s Fortress”). This entry does
not appear on the map itself, but is re-
ferred to in the text. Therefore it is in-
cluded for completeness as well. It is al-
ready fixed in the text of *Amor: The Land*,
though not in the previous publications.

P

Pheig Heled > Sad Heledain (“Glasswrights’
Place”)

R

Rammas Nín > Rammas Nín (“Wall of the
Waterlands”)
Rath Amon > Tië Forostar (“Forostar Street”)
Rath Amrún > Tê Amrún (“Sunrise Street”)
Rath Annún > Tië Eldanna (“Eldanna Street”)
Rath Aran > Othrad Aran (“King’s Street”)
Rath Celerdain > Tê Celerdain
 (“Lampwrights’ Street”)
Rath Dador > Tê Dador (“Battle Street”)
Rath Dúnadan > Tië Andúnië (“Andúnië
Street”)
Rath Echor > Othrad Echor (“Street of the
Outer Circle”)
Rath Ened > Tê Enedh (“Middle Street”)
Rath Firmedain > Tê Firm (“Street of the
Dead”)
Rath Galen > Tê Galen (“Green Street”)
Rath Glorin > Tê Laur (“Gold Street”)
Rath Forn > Tê Forn (“North Street”)
Rath Heled > Râd Heledain (“Glasswrights’
Street”)
Rath Iril > Tië Orrostar (“Orrostar Street”)
Rath Iuldain > Tê Yldain (“Brewers’ Street”)

Rath Lammen > Tië Andustar (“Andustar
Street”)
Rath Lindamel > Othrad Dúlin (“Nightsingers’
Street”)
Rath Lymin > Râd Lúin (“Street of the
Hours”)
Rath Ohtari > Râd Othryn (“Warriors’
Street”)
Rath Rais > Tê Rais (“Street of Horns”)
Rath Rammas > Othrad Rammas (“Street of
the Great Wall”)
Rath Roch > Tê Roch (“Horse Street”)
Rath Romen > Tê Rhúnen (“Eastern Street”)
Rath Tincociri > Tê Engdain (“Smiths’ Street”)
Rath Vín > Râd Gwain (“New Street”)
“Victuallers’ Street” > Othlon Aethryn
Ryncaras Tharbad > Rondost Tharbad
 (“Fortress-hall of the Crossway”)

S

Sír Gwathlo > SíR Gwathló
SíR Caramaid > SíR Caramaidh (“Red-pale
River”)
“Street of the Hours” [See Rath Lymin]

T

Thraden Forn > Tharad Forn (“North Cross-
ing”)
Thraden Harn > Tharad Harn (“South Cross-
ing”)
Tien Alag > Lasbad (“Herb Alley”)
Tien Dolen > Tië Eldalondë (“Eldalondë
Street”)
Tien Hael > Saelbad (“Alley of the Wise”)
“To Talsír” > “To Talhir” (“Foot of the
Stream”)
“To Fennas Drumin” > “To Fennas Drúmin”
“To the Gap of Rohan” > “To the Gap of
Calenardhon”

TRANSLATION KEY (replace old key on the
map with this)

Aelin = Pool
Annon = Gate
Bad (Bâd) = Alleyway
Bar = Dwelling, House
Celf = Canal
Echor = Outer Circle
Iant = Bridge
Men = Way
Nen = Water
Nín = Wetlands

Ost = Fortress
Othlon = Way
Othrad = Street
Pann = Courtyard
Parth = Field
Râd = Lane
Rammas = Great Wall
Rond = Hall
Sad = Place
SíR = River
Tharad = Crossing
Tê = Road (Sindarin)
Tië = Road (Quenya)

Final remarks

The population number below the
“Tharbad” title is problematic. Population var-
ies over time. If you want to keep it, I recom-
mend to alter it from 21,345 (an impossibly
exact figure!) to 17,000 (the population level
ascribed to it in the module for TA 1643).
Population figures for other times will vary as
well.

Under “Feature Legend” in the top, right-
hand corner, the term “Wharf” should not be
used, but “Quay”. This is the word Tolkien
always uses in *The Lord of the Rings* for this kind
of structures).

Banks of the Northern Anduin

by Johannes Lomborg
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In a quiet, isolated part of Middle-earth, the peace is about to be broken. As the shadow of Dol Guldur spreads in Mirkwood and the Witch-king of Angmar extends his influence across the Misty Mountains, the Anduin Vale is caught in the middle. Soon, as evil infests the land, all the peoples of this fertile valley will feel the terror of the Dark Lord encroach. Banks of the Northern Anduin embarks on this infestation with a covert attack upon a small, stout Hobbit community of the Anduin Vale.



Banks of the Northern Anduin was originally conceived as part of a campaign in North-western Middle-earth, set in the well-known time of the Great Plague, used by most ICE MERP-modules. As the heroes, in pursuit of a crafty thief, chose to attempt a shortcut by crossing the mid section of the Misty Mountains, instead of following the villain south around the mountains, I started pondering what this direction of travel would bring to the heroes, in terms of challenges, encounters and new experiences. Lórien, Moria and Rivendell were well known, both as prominent areas in *The Lord of the Rings* and as thoroughly described locales from modules of the MERP product line. At these places, the commonly used passes across the mountains lay. However, as the heroes were planning on spending as little time in Mirkwood as possible, and were camped in the East Bight, their journey would most likely have them cross the Narrows of the Forest and end at another, less prominent and less described location; the Gladden Fields. This encouraged some research into the area and into what sources were available to illuminate it. *The Lord of the Rings* itself gave some superficial background on the one event that clearly set this wetland apart, making it more than simply another marsh: Isildur's death, and the loss of the One Ring. Another detail, mentioned in passing later in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, offered the perfect opportunity for the heroes: a less known pass across the mountains existed right at the top of the river Gladden:

...while others [scouts of Elrond] had climbed the pass at the source of the Gladden River, and had come down into Wilderland and over the Gladden Fields. LotR. The Ring Goes South

Having the heroes hear of a tracker, living by the Gladden Fields, who knew the hidden path across the mountains, was uncomplicated.

The heroes' motivation for going was established, but what would they find at the Gladden Fields? *The Fellowship of the Ring* offered one final morsel: a Hobbit people once

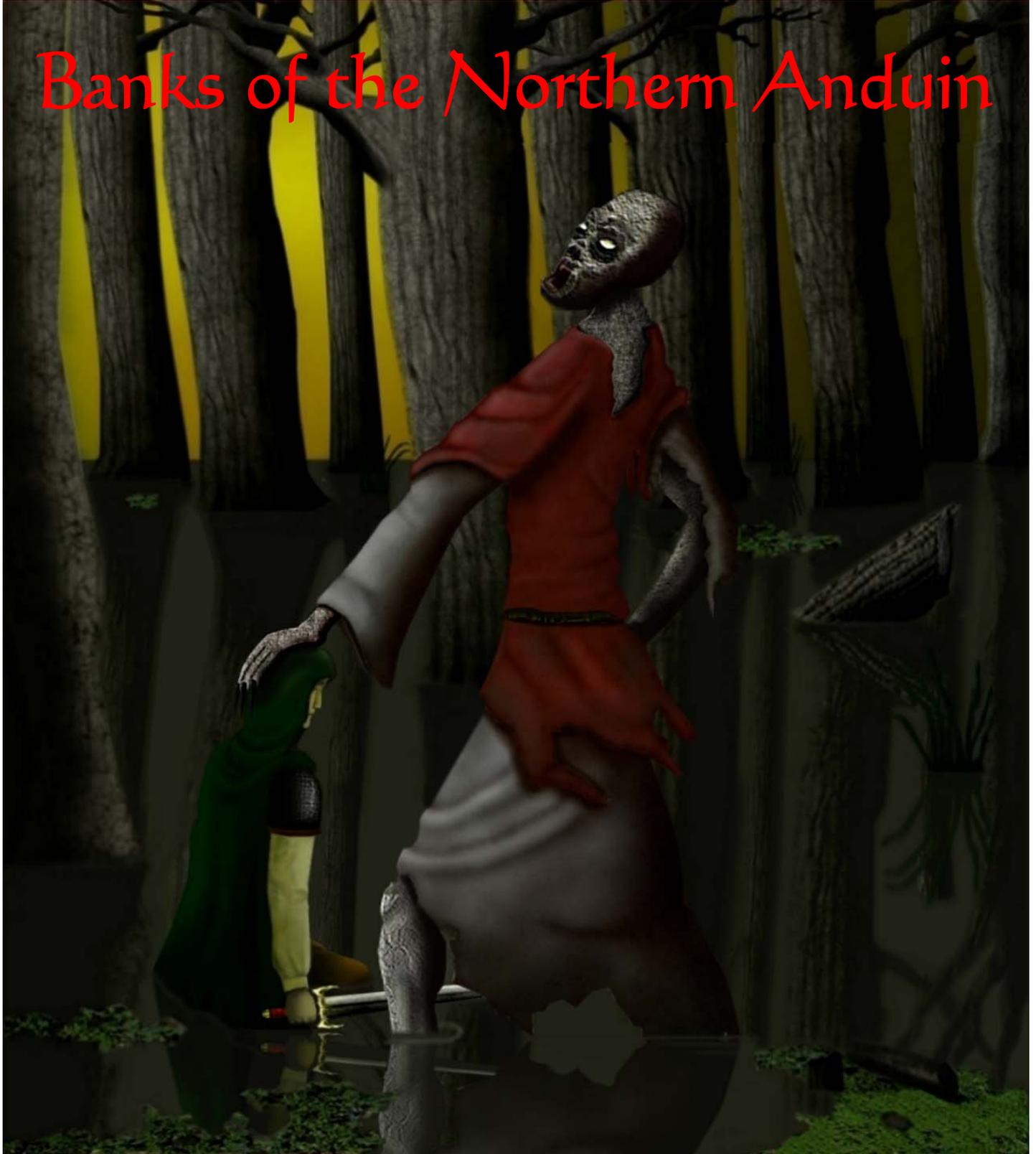
inhabited these lowlands, the people of Sméagol and Déagol. Delving into the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* revealed that at the time of our heroes' passing, Stoor Hobbits (both native and some who returned from Eriador) lived where the River Gladden met the Anduin. These Hobbits coexisted with the early Northmen clans of the Anduin Vale, but likely did not mix with them. The Northmen of that time are hardly mentioned by Tolkien, and whilst ICE fleshed out some of the cultures, the Éothéod (the later people of Eorl) only appear on the scene at a later time (probably around the Wainrider invasion of Rhovanion in 1851 T.A.). Having often found a lack of Hobbits in the MERP material, contrasting the leading parts these little folks have in Tolkien's works, my focus was immediately set upon the *periannath*. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* presented several references to the migrations, culture and language of the Anduin Hobbits and a note to 'Disaster at the Gladden Fields' in *Unfinished Tales* gave some information of the nature of their land, which I have tried to incorporate into the text.

As for the antagonists, the upper Anduin Vale lies dangerously but conveniently (from a storyline perspective) wedged between hammer and anvil: Mirkwood, the domain of the Necromancer to the east, and Angmar, land of the Witch-king to the north west. The only thing keeping the vale from being laid waste is the lack of importance this land has to the forces of darkness. If only they had known...

The machinations of the Witch-king or Dol Guldur are not explicit in Banks of the Northern Anduin, though. These forces could be working behind the scenes, but are not close enough to the actual story to figure in the credit titles. Rather, the connection is left to the individual GM to create, as he sees fit in his particular campaign.

The instrument of whoever is behind event, though, is clearly a force of darkness in itself: the mewlips. These creatures are not part of the core Middle-earth mythology, but are mentioned in the verses of another work by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and other Verses from the Red Book*. ICE took

Banks of the Northern Anduin



This module is meant to provide a short and easy-to-play scenario for the Middle Earth Role-Playing game, set in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's imagination. The adventure itself is meant for a group of players of about 3rd to 5th level, depending on the experience of the players and the number of players in the group. Modifications to the power and abilities of the opposition can easily be made to adapt it to other levels of play. A short introduction and synopsis (section 2.0) and general information of the area and its inhabitants (sections 3.0, 4.0 and 5.0) precede the actual adventure (section 6.0). Following this are reference tables (7.0) and a section of possible handouts for the players (8.0).

1.1 Abbreviations

Literature references

- MERP..... Middle Earth Role Playing 2nd U.S. edition, Iron Crown Enterprises, 1993
- Creatures..... Creatures of Middle Earth™, 2nd edition, Pitt, O'Hare & Fenlon, Iron Crown Enterprises, 1995, © Tolkien Enterprises
- Spell Law..... Spell Law 3rd edition (for Rolemaster RPG), Iron Crown Enterprises, 1995, © Tolkien Enterprises.
- UT..... Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth, J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by C. Tolkien, Harper-Collins Publishers, 1998.
- Letters..... The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Carpenter (ed.), Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000
- LotR..... The Lord of the Rings, seven volume millennium edition, J.R.R. Tolkien, HarperCollins Publishers, 1999.
- Reader..... The Tolkien Reader, J.R.R. Tolkien, Ballantine Books, 1966

General text abbreviations

- (S. x)..... The word preceding the parenthesis is Sindarin, x is the translation into the common speech
- (Q. x)..... The word preceding the parenthesis is Quenya, x is the translation into the common speech

2.0 Introduction

The main part of this module is an adventure set in and around a small village near the banks of the northern Anduin, shortly after the time of the Great Plague, i.e. the standard MERP year 1640 T.A. The village is populated by Hobbits, who returned from the Angle across the Misty Mountains around the middle of the Third Age. If desired, the Game Master may of course change the location and time to fit her campaign for gaming purposes, but the chosen setting is attempted to fit within the history of Middle Earth as set forth by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The village is as mentioned no ordinary village of men, but is in fact a secluded and somewhat primitive Stoor hobbit village. The village is unfortunately deemed a target by a group of Mewlips, who infiltrated it by possessing the bodies of two hobbit children several months ago. These children disappeared mysteriously from the village, but were found unharmed, albeit shocked, and apparently without memory, a few days after their disappearance. They no longer appear to be able to speak, but the villagers explain this by the shock of the experience. The two 'children', who have stopped growing (a bad sign which, however, has not yet been noticed as it has only been a few months since the abduction) are now, by the clever use of their will o' the wisp summoning ability, luring other children of the village into the arms of waiting mewlips. Also, and this was the original primary goal of the possessions, the two are spying on the hobbit society, in preparation for a future attack on the village, if this is deemed possible and not too risky.

Until the day the players arrive in the village, only a single child has fallen prey to the mewlips, three days ago, but one more will be abducted a short while after their arrival, giving the group an opportunity for chasing prey and predators alike if they have managed to discover the clues to point them in the general right direction first.

The adventure should particularly give the opportunity for some role-playing, suggesting interaction with villagers and other core NPCs, to unearth clues to unravel the mystery, such as the two children's odd behavior, smell of gall/bile, lack of growth and speech, and rumors, both true and false, of strange noises and smells from the swamp, lurking strangers, orcs, dragons, witches and much more.

3.0 The Land and the People

Nestled between the sheltering peaks of the Misty Mountains and the dark boughs of the trees of Mirkwood, the great river Anduin flows gently south from its origin in the northern mountains, until it departs this cradle south of Lórien, and enters the northern reaches of Gondor. The valley adjoining the Great River on this northern stretch is often entitled the Anduin Vale, and is the focus of this module. This protected location has become home to several cultures seeking peace and security, away from the open areas of the larger civilized regions of Middle-earth. But all is not idle happiness in the vales of Anduin.

The hobbit community of the Anduin vale is the center of attention of this module. The Northman communities settled around the Anduin Vale are only superficially covered here. For more information on these, see for instance ICE module #4002 'Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer'.

3.1 The Anduin Vale

The Free Peoples of the Anduin Vale have for periods of time profited by a sheltered environment, as a result of the immense barrier of the Misty Mountains to the west and Greenwood the Great (later Mirkwood) to the east. When hobbits and men first settled the Vale is not known, but it was most likely from the east. They remained present even when large groups set out to cross west over the mountains, as the shadow of Dol Guldur grew within Mirkwood. When the Witch-king of Angmar founded his realm of terror to the north east of Arnor, the Anduin Vale received a resurgence of hobbit refugees. Several tribes of men inhabited the vale, including the Beornings and displaced Wood folk, and new ones appeared. This did not, however, amount to larger urban centers, but mainly scattered hamlets and homesteads throughout the valley. This, coupled with the distance from Gondor, was a significant factor in lessening the effects felt from the Great Plague, which struck Gondor in 1636 and especially ravished Rhovanion.

With the fall of Rhovanion to the Wainriders, Northmen from the eastern eaves of Mirkwood also moved west to the Anduin. For a time, these Éothéod horsemen made their home between the Carrock and the Gladden Fields.

What all these immigrants found here was a secluded spot, too far from the major political centers of the world to attract significant attention from the greater powers, much to the liking of the settlers. Communication with the surrounding regions was sparse, but no news was most often good news.

The climate also favored the settlers. The Misty Mountains took the brunt of the force of downpours floating in from the western seas. Instead the valley was fed water from a multitude of streams from the mountains. The strong forces of the steep streams eroded the rock of the great mountains heavily. The sediment load of these streams was deposited along the course of the river, creating an alluvial river valley, with winter flooding depositing their fertile loads to enrich the grassy meadows, perfect for grazing cattle and horses.

The heavy water influx from streams and rivers also produced areas suffering from more permanent water logging, i.e. lakes, bogs and swamps in lower lying sections, especially around the confluence of Sir Ninglor (S. Gladden River) and Anduin, at the Gladden Fields. These bodies of water did not offer much sustenance for cattle, but both cover and a supplemental fish diet for those able to traverse their waters.

Progressively, the fertility of the land caused population increases among the northern tribes. This caused emigrations, such as the hobbit migrations at the beginning of the second millennium of the Third Age. Later, in 1777 T.A., the Éothéod followed their lord Frumgar further north, to the very sources of the Anduin, as their population had increased, creating the need for more land and resources. Here, they founded their first capital, Framsburg. From this people, the Eorlingas emerged, half a millennium later.

3.2 The Stoor of the Anduin

“With the remigration of the Stoor back to Wilderland in TA 1356, all contact between the retrograde group and the ancestors of the Shirefolk was broken. ... All Hobbits were slow to change, but the remigrant Stoor were going back to a wilder and more primitive life of small and dwindling communities;...*

** Between 2463 and the beginning of Gandalf's special enquiries concerning the Ring (nearly 500 years later) they appear indeed to have died out altogether (except, of course, for Sméagol); or to have fled from the shadow of Dol Guldur”
Letters p.290*

The part of the Anduin Vale between the mighty Misty Mountains and the wide forest of Mirkwood (as it is called in our time) is, unknown to most people, partly inhabited by scattered groups of Stoor hobbits in their small and somewhat primitive societies. As far back as hobbits have been known by any literate historian to exist, they have consisted of the tribes: Harfoots, Stoor and Fallohides. At some point in history the original hobbits emerged from the foliage of Greenwood the Great and proceeded towards the banks of the Anduin.

Since this period, approx. 1050-1150 T.A., large branches of the hobbit population chose to make the journey across the Misty Mountains to Eriador. What caused this migration is not certain, but hobbit folklore points towards a massive growth of the human population combined with a shadow that seemed to encroach upon Greenwood, which from then on would be called Mirkwood.

Around 1356 T.A., though, groups of Stoor hobbits set out from their dwellings in the Angle, to journey back across the Misty Mountains, as a consequence of the advance of Angmar towards their homes. Returned to the east, they mingled with the few remaining hobbits along the Anduin.

Thus, the hobbits residing east of the Misty Mountains are now a mixture of the hobbits originally arriving here from Mirkwood, who did not cross the mountains, and Stoor hobbits returned from Eriador beyond the mountains. This is for instance reflected in their language. Hobbits have historically assimilated languages from their surroundings, and they no longer have their own unique language, but merely

use different dialects of Westron. This is also the case for their language along the Anduin, which is a peculiar mixture of dialects, but somewhat understandable by most foreigners, as long as the hobbits speak slowly.

NOTE: *The local Hobbit dialect (as well as the Northman speech it has been affected by) is based on Old English (Anglo-Saxon), and names should preferably reflect this, see p. 381 of Letters (# 297). The names used in this module have generally, but not entirely (reflecting the dialect development), been attempted to follow this rule.*

Hobbits have, as far back as has been recorded, lived in their holes and tunnels beneath the ground, called *smials*. These *smials* were also seen in their settlements along the Anduin, dug into the banks and hillocks of the area.

From these scattered societies came one of the major antagonists of the Third Age, Sméagol, who in 2463 T.A. stole the One Ring from the lifeless hand of Déagol after the latter had retrieved it from the waters of the Anduin.

3.3 The Tale of Years

The Second Age

- c. 1200 Sauron begins to seduce the Noldor of Eregion.
- c. 1590 The Three Elven Rings are forged.
- c. 1600 The One Ring is forged in Orodruin.
- 1695-97 Eregion is attacked and sacked by Sauron's forces.
- 1699 Sauron devastates Eriador.
- 1701 Sauron is driven out of Eriador by the Númenoreans. Peace in the West.
- 3319 Ar-Pharazôn attacks Valinor. Númenor falls, but Elendil and his sons escape the destruction.
- 3320 Arnor and Gondor are founded.
- 3429 Sauron attacks Gondor and takes Minas Tirith. Isildur escapes along the Anduin and joins Elendil in the north.
- 3434 The Army of the Last Alliance crosses the Misty Mountains. Sauron beaten at Dagorlad. Barad-dûr besieged.
- 3441 Sauron defeated by Isildur and Gil-galad, who die. Isildur claims the One Ring. End of the Second Age.

The Third Age

- 2 Disaster at the Gladden Fields. Isildur and his three eldest sons die.
- 1050 Gondor reaches the peak of its power. Meanwhile, a shadow falls upon Greenwood, which is from now mostly called Mirkwood. *Periannath* (*S. Hobbits*) are first mentioned in the tales with arrival of the Harfoots in Eriador.
- c.1100 The Wise (*Istari* and the highest Eldar) learn of an evil power at Dol Guldur, believed to be a Nazgûl.
- c. 1150 The Fallohides enter Eriador, the Stoors cross the Redhorn Pass and advance to the Angle and Dunland.
- c. 1300 Evil increases. More orcs appear in the Misty Mountains, and they attack the dwarves. The Nazgûl reappear and the Witch King go north to Angmar. The *Periannath* move further west; many settle in Bree.
- 1356 King Argeleb I falls in battle against Rhudaur. Around this time the Stoors leave the Angle, and some of them return to Wilderland.
- 1409 The Witch King of Angmar invades Arnor. King Arveleg I falls. The tower of Amon Sûl is destroyed.
- 1601 Many *Periannath* leave Bree and are granted land beyond the Baranduin by Argeleb II.
- c.1630 They are joined by the Stoors coming from Dunland.
- 1636 The Great Plague. Gondor is left desolate and from there the plague moves north and west, leaving many parts of Eriador depopulated. Beyond the Baranduin the *Periannath* survive, but suffer greatly.
- 1851 The Wainriders initiate their attack on Gondor.
- 1856 Gondor loses its eastern territories and its king, Narmacil II.
- 1974 The Northern Kingdom ceases to be. The Witch-king invades Arthedain and captures Fornost.
- 1977 Frumgar leads the Éothéod into the north of the Anduin Valley.
- 1979 Bucca of the Marish becomes the first Thain of the Shire.
- 1980 A Balrog appears in Moria and kills Durin VI.
- 1981 Náin I is killed, and the dwarves flee from Moria. Many elves flee Lórien. Amroth and Nimrodel disappear.
- 2060 The power of Dol Guldur grows. The wise fear that it is Sauron reshaping.
- 2063 Gandalf goes to Dol Guldur. Sauron flees and hides in the east. The Watchful Peace begins.
- 2340 Isumbras I becomes the 13th Thain, and the first thain of the Took line. The Oldbucks cross the Baranduin and occupy Buckland.
- 2460 The Watchful Peace ends. Sauron returns in power to Dol Guldur.
- 2463 The White Council is created. Around this time Déagol the Stoor finds the One Ring and is killed by Sméagol.
- 2470 Sméagol-Gollum hides in the Misty Mountains.
- c. 2480 The orcs begin erecting secret fortifications in the Misty Mountains to block all entrances to Eriador. Sauron populates Moria with his creatures.
- 2510 Orcs and Easterlings overrun Calenardhon. Eorl the Young wins the victory of the Field of Celebrant. The Rohirrim settle in Calenardhon.
- 2670 Tobold plants 'Pipeweed' in the South Farthing
- 2683 Isengrim II becomes the 22nd Thain (10th of the Took line) and begins excavating the Great Smials.
- 2740 The orcs renew the attack into Eriador.
- 2747 Bandobras Took defeats an orc band in the North Farthing
- 2759 The Long Winter. Great suffering and loss of lives in Eriador.
- 2790 Thrór is killed by orcs in Moria. Dwarves gather for a war of revenge.
- 2793 The war between orcs and dwarves begins.
- 2799 The battle of Nanduhirion at the east gate of Moria.
- 2850 Gandalf again enters Dol Guldur and discovers Sauron. He finds the captured Thráin who gives him the key to Erebor.
- 2851 Saruman begins searching the Gladden Fields for the One Ring
- 2911 The Fell Winter. Baranduin and other rivers freeze over. White wolves enter Eriador from the north.

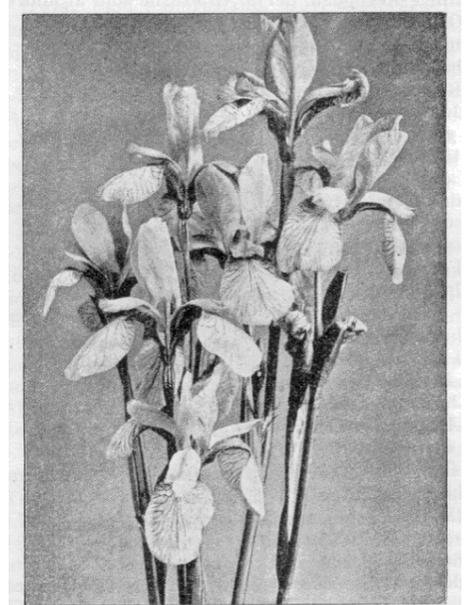
- 2912 Flooding leave Enedwaith and Minhiriath barren. Tharbad is destroyed and left.
- 2939 Saruman discovers that servants of Sauron are searching the Anduin around Gladden Fields, and that Sauron therefore has learnt of the death of Isildur. Frightened, he tells the council nothing.
- 2941 The White Council attacks Dol Guldur to prevent Sauron from searching the river. Sauron leaves Dol Guldur.

4.0 Flora and Fauna

Besides the intelligent races inhabiting the Anduin Vale, a multitude of plants and animals have settled the valley. A complete coverage of these is impossible, and even a study of the more dominant species seems daunting. Therefore, only a few species will be mentioned here, for supplying bits of setting background. For further suggestions for habitation of the Anduin Vale, see ICE #2012 *Creatures of Middle-Earth* (animals) and ICE #2026 *Hands of the Healer* (herbs and other plants)

Plants

Yellow Iris: Called Gladden in the tongue of the Northmen living here, this beautiful flower has given the area its name. It especially favors the slowly flowing waters of wetlands, such as those found in the Gladden Fields. Here, it has been known to achieve heights equaling those of a grown man (UT p. 363) during the peak season in late spring, where the area explodes in yellow.



Iris.

Source: Salmonsens Konversations Leksikon, 2nd edition, vol. XII, J.H. Schultz Forlagsboghandel 1922

Beasts

Black Bears: The smaller cousin of the cave bear, this nocturnal hunter is rarely a threat to the Free Peoples, as its diet consists of fish, small mammals, insects and carrion. Only when frightened or threatened do black bears pose a danger, and they will defend their cubs with their lives.

Cave bear: Also known as the Great Bear, and weighing up to fourteen hundred pounds, this huge beast can rip apart a man as easily as it can an orc. Fortunately, they rarely hunt such prey, preferring tuber, berries, fish, smaller game and honey. Once in a while, however, when persuaded by their Beijabar (Beorning) friends, they find great sport in bashing the heads of orcs with swipes of their huge paws.

Grey Wolf: These canines do not share the viciousness of their larger and unnatural counterparts, the wargs. Hunting for food only, they have however often attacked vulnerable men and hobbits, especially in times of cold and famine. When hunting in a pack, following a lead wolf, they can be a formidable and frightening foe. They stay away from most water bodies, however.

Birds

Kingfisher: This well known representative of fishing birds is frequently seen darting in and out of vegetation along the banks of rivers and streams, always on the hunt for a quick morsel of fish. Its brightly colored blue and orange plumage makes it one of the easiest birds to identify in flight, despite its great speed.

Osprey: Hunting for larger fish, this magnificent bird of prey has a wingspan of up to 6 feet, giving it enough force of lift to take all but the largest fish into the air, a sight few can help but be in awe at.

Fish

A great many fishes live in and near the Anduin, often reaching large sizes in their secluded habitats. Several varieties of trout, salmon and bass are found in the open flowing waters of the river. The more quiet and stagnant waters are home to eel, carps and huge pikes.

Reptiles & Amphibians

Plains Snake: Nethairin (S. Plains snake) may be up to six feet long, and prefer to hunt

in grassy habitats. Rodents, birds and small lizard are the main diet. Due to their stealth, larger creatures may be surprised by their fast and very deadly (level 6 venom) bite. The snake can be identified by a cream-colored body with dark diamond shapes.

Nethraich: These water-dwelling snakes favor stagnant pools and marshes and lakes, but are rarely a danger to large creatures. Only during their 'runs' on dry land do these snakes pose a serious threat, as they are highly likely to bite during this period.

Insects

Hummerhorns: Often counted among the monsters of Middle-earth, this oversized wasp is quite rare, but when found, it is often in wetlands. Once a swarm of these vicious insects have stung a victim to death they settle down to devour the prey. If their loud buzzing is heard, hide!

5.0 Monsters

Mewlips

Climate: Hot/humid, hot/average, warm/humid, mild, semi-arid, cool/average, temperate.

Habitat: Freshwater coasts & banks, marsh/swamp, coniferous forest/taiga, deciduous/coniferous/mixed forest, heath/scrub, jungle/rain forest, plains/grassland, enchanted/magical places, burial areas, ruins, battlefields/shipwrecks.

Frequency of encounter: Sheer folly.

Size: 6-11 ft.

Mewlips are an evil, semi-legendary race of exceedingly rare, cannibalistic spirits, possibly Maia or undead creatures, although this is shrouded in mystery. Some myths claim that they were once followers of Mandos (Námo), corrupted by Morgoth, and now seeking to wrest the souls of men and elves from this world. Other tales tell of elven souls who were turned to evil in life, and could not bear to leave Middle-earth upon the death of their bodies. By sheer will these spirits reincarnated here and continued a cursed existence in undeath. These shadowy spirits exist to drink blood or life-energy and wreak havoc among mortals. Denizens of graveyards, ruins, and other pleasant sites, they are often found surprisingly near inhabited areas, especially if they have not found much sustenance farther afield lately.

Mewlips are rare indeed. Fond of the most noisome and darkest swamps and marshes, they have a silent tread and strangling hands, although they typically use jagged weapons of rusty steel or stone. They are deceptively human in appearance; however, their backs are horribly hunched and their skin shines with a clammy, greenish-brown pallor, but on closer inspection this outer layer of skin is quite translucent, making muscles and blood veins visible as through a thin veil. What little ragged clothing they might wear from earlier life is moist and foul.

Mewlips feed on most anything and they covet shiny objects, especially things of gold. It is said that such items remind them of un-cursed life, of the nature of beings not in the thrall of Darkness.

The mewlips of this scenario differ from the original mewlips as presented in *Creatures of Middle-earth*, having various abilities and limitations.

They have the ability to summon a will o' the wisp (a glowing sphere floating around in the air) once a day, for 10 minutes. The will o' the wisp obeys the mental commands of the mewlip without hesitation, and can be used to lure and ensnare victims. A person seeing the will o' the wisp must make a successful level 4 RR vs. essence, or be inexorably lured towards the will o' the wisp, without even a second thought.

Mewlips have an original body, which is the physical representation of their 'natural' state. Alternatively, mewlips can possess another living body by relocating their own spirit to the other body through a special ritual. Mewlips are somewhat able to speak in this body, but do it rarely, as they at most can utter hoarse whispers and guttural, moaning sounds, and really have no desire to speak with living creatures. Besides this limited speech, they have almost normal control of the body, the limbs etc., and they still have their innate ability to summon will o' the wisps. They do not gain the mental abilities, memories, skills etc. of the host. Masquerading as a living person is therefore difficult, unless the person is not expected to take much initiative, communicate or accomplish difficult feats. This could be the case for children or senile elders. Besides movement and activity, the possessed body also shows normal life signs, such as pulse and breathing, but both these are very slow, approximately at half rate. A possessed

body does not age, but will in time pale, as if stretched thin, as has been known to happen to mortal bodies living beyond their normal span. The mewlip's original body is left as if dead, but is in fact only in a state of 'hibernation'.

The spirit can only possess a host body through a certain ritual, wherein the spirit must initially reside in its original body before it can possess a host body. This means that it is not possible for the spirit to flee from a killed host body directly to a new host body. The ritual involves and requires physical contact between the mewlip and the victim, as well as spilling of the victim's blood leaving a nasty, purple scar on the chest of the host body. This scar is one of the few ways of confirming the possession of a body.

In their true original bodies, mewlips exude a sense of something sinister and perverted, desecrating all that feels right and natural, as if their mere presence defies the true order of the world as upheld by the Valar. The cause of this is that mewlips are in fact elven spirits unable or unwilling to leave the mortal world. This radiance of violation is clouded when the mewlip spirit resides within a living body, although they instead emit a sour and moldy odor, as if of gall/bile, and always will seem clumsy and awkward in their movements and behavior.

If the body of a mewlip (either its own or a host body) is killed, or the mewlip spirit is otherwise forced from a host body, the spirit itself may actually be seen, appearing as a dense black mist or smoke. If the original body has not been destroyed (killed), the spirit will start drifting back towards this body. If the original body has been killed (either earlier while the spirit was in possession of a living host, or just now with the spirit present within it), the visible spirit will slowly seep from its former vessel, hovering in the air and slowly drifting back and forth, as if searching for something, before it finally dissolves and a fine ash powder falls to the ground. Any living witness to this spectacle of the spirit seeping from the body and becoming visible, must make a RR vs. fear (lvl. 4 essence) or flee in terror, feeling that the smoke is searching for a new host, and that it is stalking her... This is merely a figment of the imagination, but the players need not know this! In truth, a mewlip cannot possess a new body except its own without the preceding ritual.

The true form of the mewlip must be killed in order for the mewlip to remain dead. If a possessed body is killed, the spirit will just repossess its original body if it is unharmed, while the poor host's soul is on its way to the Halls of Mandos. If the original body is killed while the spirit possesses another living body the spirit will in time (about one month) develop a new natural shape from the body of its host, and the original host's soul will be lost. Only killing the host body or forcing the mewlip spirit out will prevent this.

A spirit can be forced from a possessed body in various ways, with various degrees of danger to the host. Certain magical or ritual ceremonies are told to be capable of expelling spirits of this kind, but even if this may be true, these ceremonies are all but forgotten. Fire, which these beings fear above all else, may shock the spirit enough to make it release its hold on the body, but of course the fire may hurt the host in the process. Besides this physical danger, another less obvious danger exists. If a mewlip spirit is forced from a possessed body, the host body will most often die, along with the spirit of the original owner. This is not simply caused by the impact on the body, but in fact because the mewlip spirit in wrath will take along the life force and spirit of the host, as it is forced from the parasitised body. This host spirit will be seen as a white glimmer within the black mist that is the spirit of the mewlip. The loss of the soul may be prevented, but only through a heroic deed of another living being willing to risk a great sacrifice. This person has to enter the cloud, and act as an anchor to the innocent soul, pulling it from the mewlip's grasp before both spirits disappear. The risk is that the savior's own spirit will be pulled away along with, or perhaps into the other body of the host, allowing it to live on in this body. This risk is evident from the poem on mewlips (appendix, modified after original), and the danger should be made clear to the players, but the exact game mechanics of the danger should not be revealed! The heroic deed, however, should generate great rewards at the discretion of the GM. Suggestions could be Enlightenment Points (or similar 'hero points' if used in your campaign), removal of acquired Corruption Points (as per MERP rules), ability score increases, a free roll of a background option etc. The chance of success in this battle of spirit and soul depends on willpower. Below is a suggested method of resolving it, but the GM

is free to use her own. Willpower is measured primarily by Presence and secondarily by Intuition and Intelligence. A Will Roll (d100) is made and modified by + PR-bonus + ½IT-bonus + ½IG-bonus, and looked up on the Moving Maneuver Table (MT-1). The result is compared to a similar roll by the mewlip, who has a total bonus of +10. Highest result wins the battle, whereas draws are rerolled but now giving the hero an extra +5 bonus to the roll (not the mewlip), as she is now more prepared to this experience. Should the hero lose the contest, the poor victim's soul is gone, and the hero herself must make a RR vs. essence (attack level is the level of the mewlip). If this succeeds, nothing more happens. If it fails by less than 25, her soul will survive but be transported to the former host body. Should it fail by more than 25, the soul passes along on its journey either to the halls of Mandos or beyond...

If an attempt to save a host succeeds, the savior should feel exhausted but righteously filled with a sense of victory, having saved an innocent soul from an unnatural and cruel fate. Let the player roll for his reward (if applicable), without telling him what she rolls for. Remember that if the rescue fails, but the character survives within the host body, she still gets the reward for her heroic (yet futile) act, but without the exhilarating sense of victory. The quest for restoring the hero's original body should be an adventure of great magnitude in itself, not simply done by a visit to the local healer.

Should the mewlip spirit possessing a host body instead be tricked or convinced to leave the host willingly, the host body and spirit are left intact, albeit traumatized. This might be done e.g. by threatening the mewlip's own original body, by making it clear that the mewlip stands a better chance of victory from its own body etc.

6.0 The Scourge Of Thistledow

6.1 The Tale

It has been more than 300 years since Stoor hobbits began their return migrations across the Redhorn Pass to the Anduin Vale. In this fertile but rugged area they settled in scattered groups and the contact between them is today (1640 T.A.) very limited. One small group went north after crossing the Misty

Mountains and settled on the eastern bank of the great river, just south of the confluence of the Gladden River. At their settlement a smaller creek flowed in from Mirkwood in the east and merged with Anduin.

The area was ideally suited to the hobbits, as it was over grown with dense shrubbery and low groves along the river, where a hobbit could easily disappear. At the same time, the abundance of thistles (hence the name), mosquitoes and leeches has been a deterrent to many undesirables to the hobbits. Despite this, the hobbit community has not avoided adversity and evil. Orcs pass through the area from time to time, which has on occasion brought clashes threatening the existence of the village. In response to this threat, the hobbits in time have developed an ingenious system of traps around the periphery of the village, in addition to a small fortification of sharpened poles around the heart of the village itself. The traps are mainly aimed to hit creatures of man size, which, combined with the hobbits' own natural agility and knowledge of the traps, has made it possible for them to avoid accidents. By means of these precautions the village has survived 300 years in the shadows of the Misty Mountains and Dol Guldur.

Part of the story of their survival also involves the development of a rather (by hobbit standards) martial culture, where the best warriors and strategists have been appointed Thains of the village. Hereby practice with sword and sling has become an integral part of their culture, and, by hobbit standards, the village has been able to defend itself well. This may, however, turn out not to be enough in the future.

Besides orcs, other dangers lurk around, and one of these has recently nested itself in the neighborhood. A group of mewlips, evil undead spirits, has been driven off their former hunting ground to the north some months ago, where they were terrorizing a woodman village. The woodmen managed to drive off the mewlips, but not to destroy them. Looking for easy prey, but this time determined not to underestimate it or risk more of their numbers, the mewlips have begun a careful scouting of the hobbit society. Some months ago they succeeded in capturing two children of the village. Rather than devouring them, despite the hunger for mortal flesh, they had their bodies possessed by two of their own spirits, as children are easier to possess, and

because they are easier to impersonate (mewlips possessing bodies do not gain the skills and abilities of the host, and therefore seem clumsy and untrained at everything). Returning to the village, they began to spy on the hobbits to lure more of them into their grasp.

Three days prior to the heroes' arrival in the village, the mewlips took their next victim, Erengol, a small boy. The hunters of the village soon went looking for the boy, but all returned empty handed except for Aesk, who stubbornly kept scouring the area. Eventually he found and followed some mysterious tracks into the swamp to the south, unfortunately without informing the village of his findings.

On top of these lethal threats to the hamlet, there are other powerful forces at play around it, and one of the points of the scenario is to introduce the heroes to these without things necessarily coming to violence (especially since these forces may be too large a mouthful for the heroes).

6.2 The NPCs

6.2.1 Residents of Thistledow

Some of these characters may have a direct impact on the story, others are simply supplied in case a quick NPC name is needed for flavor or to help advance the story. Stats, abilities etc. are only supplied where too extensive for the NPC-table (7.3) alone.

Kenric Suresling

The thain of the village is a heavyset and relatively (to the rest of the tribe) well-fed hobbit. This is not because he takes advantage of his position of thain, but merely because he is a skilled hunter and fisherman. He acts as the formal head of the 67 tough and careful, yet ultimately friendly, hobbits of the village. This is reflected in his outwardly cool reception of strangers, from whom he suspects the worst. If necessary, he is well capable of defending himself and the village, having considerable battle experience from a long life of being squeezed between Dol Guldur and the Misty Mountains.

Motivation: to find the missing hobbits. Secondly to keep Thistledow stable, secure and unnoticed by the outside world.

Aesk Mistbank

Aesk the trapper is on the trail of the mewlips and Erengol throughout the scenario. He can be found near or within the lair of the

mewlips, and is available as a tool to the game master in case the heroes need a helping hand. Otherwise, he will reveal himself when the heroes have gotten through the mewlip opposition.

Motivation: Aesk is a very independent soul, and is bent on returning the kid safely, or at least tracking down the abductors. He is stubborn and independent, bordering on crazy. He's not stupid, however, and will for the moment content himself with spying on the mewlips and their lair.

Old Hrodwyn

Sitting quietly and cackling on a bench in the middle of the hamlet, this old hobbit lady has earned a peaceful old age, and can calmly enjoy having her descendants taking care of her needs. Old Hrodwyn is really old, toothless and quite astute. She still has the full use of her common sense, although the other senses are somewhat lacking. One still senses a spark in the eyes when talking to her.

Old Hrodwyn knows of Agatha and her grove, although if asked she asks whether the questioner really wants to know the location of it, and whether he really wants to drop in on Agatha. I.e. she suggests that the heroes should not venture there, without directly saying so, or why.

Beagol Riverfoam

Beagol is a fisherman, just like his parents, on the Great River and on the small confluence where the village is situated. A happy fellow, with a somewhat peculiar visage, bulging eyes and a wide mouth with big lips and crooked teeth.



Aesk Mistbank

Hengist Willoweed

Hengist is the father of Frida and Einil. He lost his wife two years ago. He doesn't know what to do about Frida and Einil; he's aware something is somehow wrong, but not exactly what or why.

Frida and Einil Willoweed

The two children, Frida and Einil, will only be noticed if the heroes ask directly about them. If the heroes start enquiring about the disappearances, the children and their story might come up, alerting the heroes to their presence. Otherwise, Agatha and her poem may put the heroes on the trail.

The children do not speak, and when first met they are quietly at play, stacking wooden bricks until they tumble, whereupon they simply start over again. The children will look up when spoken to, but seem not to understand or otherwise react. The mewlips which inhabit these two bodies do in fact understand, but pretend to be uninterested, and unwilling to respond. They have learned to mimic the activities of other children to avoid unwanted attention, but will seem somewhat clumsy and apathetic compared to other children.

The original goal of the two mewlips was to infiltrate the village and learn more about it and the defenses around it. Since then, the advantage of simply luring villagers outside instead, thereby avoiding disclosure and other risks (such as traps) has changed the plan.

The two have learned the location and function of most of the traps from the other hobbits, but may err on some of them, particularly to the north where they have no reason to venture. They can bypass the fortification of sharpened poles and traps to the south without any trouble, in part due to their small size. They are therefore now beginning the second stage of their plan, slowly luring villagers out of the protection of the village, beginning with children, who are easier to control by will o' wisps.

Their first victim, a boy called Eregol, they lured into the swamp by a combination of his fascination with Agatha and a will o' the wisp. Once away from the village the other mewlips captured him. This approach was very effective as children have very poor resistance to the abilities of the mewlips, and the next victim will be entrapped in a similar fashion (at the discretion of the GM, of course, depending on circumstances).

Eregol Burrbrush

Eregol is the boy that Frida and Einil ensnared three days ago. If the heroes ask about the boy and search his home, the only extraordinary find is his apparent fascination by the story of Agatha. He had made several drawings of 'an entity, most likely a woman with long hair, beside some smaller persons and animals' on pieces of wood and the underside of the bed above his own bunk bed.

Eadwig and Hilda Burrbrush

The father and mother of Eregol. Will assist the heroes in any way possible, if the thain tells that the heroes will try to track down Eregol.

Magan the Boatwright

A boatwright presently found hollowing out a log for a canoe.

Cerdic Sunflower

A hunter standing guard at the perimeter of the village when the heroes arrive. Can at other times be found tanning and curing hides of various animals.

Heorot Sunflower

Heorot is an older boy and the son of Cerdic, presently at work scrubbing some kitchen utensils.

Hrothgar Bellybutton

Without himself realizing why, he has received his nickname because his shirts and vests do not enclose his stomach entirely, leaving a charming little opening at the belly button. He's a drunkard who may have some words of wisdom (or deception) for our heroes. Can at least tell long tales of how the village invented a fermented broth by brewing some herbs found at the banks of the great river.

6.22 Other Personalities**Agatha the Hag**

Agatha was originally a Maia of Nienna, the Vala of guilt, suffering, conscience and grief, and she was sent to Endor to bring forgiveness to the mortal world. But Agatha, whose true name has disappeared in the mists, first despaired and was later enraged by the complete lack of guilt and conscience in mortals, especially in humans. Only in very few did she find innocence and the will to do better, but more than anywhere she found this in the hobbits.

She currently (the last century or so) lives here, near a small community of hobbits, whom she checks in on from time to time. She resides in her small hut in the grove north of Thistledow, alone except for her two familiars, a black cat she calls *Tinduath* (S. Shadow of night) and a starling called *Hûr* (S. Fiery Spirit). She can speak with them, and even see through their eyes when desired. *Hûr* will keep track of the heroes if they enter the grove, letting Agatha know of their approach and making surprise unlikely. Depending on their actions when they arrive, Agatha will try to flatter and charm the heroes to lower their guard and wariness, and then slowly subdue and pacify them. The encounter with Agatha is most effectual if the players are kept in confusion regarding her role in the story. Be sure not to let them in on her true character until the end.

Should the heroes ask her of the disappeared boy, she will answer with a degree of concern (not entirely assumed) in her voice, that she has not seen any hobbits in her grove for some time. She explains that she tries to trouble the hobbits as little as possible, just as they seem to avoid bothering her, although she harbors a certain sympathy towards 'the little ones', as she dearly calls them. She might also mention that there are other dangers in the area, but suggests that they enter her hut to discuss it over a cup of tea. Being on the far side of lunacy, she will try to subdue the heroes "before they spring their trap on her", believing the heroes use the missing hobbits as a simple excuse to spy on and harass her. Before starting on the tea, she 'notices' (already being informed of these through *Hûr*) any wounds the heroes might have and offers to heal these, using this as an excuse to covertly pacify the wounded (see below).

Should the heroes insist on questioning her about herself first, she will answer with the following cover story, supplied here to make Agatha more genuine:

She arrived from a wonderful forest to the south (Lothlórien), from where she and her beloved, Andrath, journeyed in search of new experiences and sights. After having seen and experienced much, they eventually returned to the Anduin valley, and settled north of their former forest home. Their future seemed bright, until darkness struck. One day, her beloved received news that his sister Essian had disappeared in a pass of the Misty Moun-

tains. Loving his sister dearly, and fearing her cruel capture and torture by orcs, Andrath immediately prepared to search for her. Agatha begged him to let her join him, but he refused, deeming it too dangerous. And he may have been right, for he never returned. Decades have passed, and Agatha has heard no news from Andrath.

Agatha had this story from a traveler passing through her grove many years ago. The story as such is true, but it is not her story. It may be a starting point for future adventures, but is mainly supplied to relieve mistrust of Agatha.

As mentioned, Agatha will actively try to gain the trust of the group, e.g. by healing small wounds with her true healing skills. To facilitate this, let the group have a small violent encounter just prior to reaching Agatha. Furthermore, during this encounter, let each player roll an open-ended d100 and record these, without letting the players know why, to use as RR during Agatha's later covert spell casting. This way, the players need not roll RR when Agatha secretly tries to subdue them, which would ruin the surprise.

The true healing skills of Agatha feel a little different than that of ordinary channeling spells. The wounds will start prickling and itching, and the tissue really seems to become alive, starting to 'crawl' around while knitting up. If anyone is more seriously hurt, she will say that such a wound requires much more, but agree to help, using this as an opportunity to put the patient to sleep. Pretending to help the patient, laying him on a bed, she will cast Sleep V secretly (Spirit Mastery lvl 1, use pre-rolled RR). She then claims to require a hot herb broth, asking one of the other heroes to fetch a pot of water from a creek. Choosing the apparently mentally least capable of the group for this task, she will accompany this request with a Suggestion spell (Spirit Mastery lvl 5), again cast secretly. If the spell succeeds, but the player refuses to follow her request, take the player aside and explain that she has to comply, feeling herself unable to resist. She cannot tell the others of this. Alternatively, an appropriate NPC may be chosen for the request. This sequence of event is of course only one possible sequence. The GM should be prepared to improvise heavily, having carefully researched Agatha's skills and the players' required RR targets. Note that all of her spells act as channeling spells with regards to RR

bonus, armor type etc., although she can access both channeling and essence spell lists. However, some of her spells work a little differently from the standard rules.

A few minutes prior to the heroes' arrival at the hut, she has used Change of Kind (Living Change lvl 5), making herself appear as an elf. Her shadow, however, does not match her assumed shape, giving an inquisitive player a clue that Agatha is not whom she pretends to be. This mismatch of the shadow is yet another distinction to her magic.

If Agatha has used up her magical powers, but senses that victory is not far off, she might revert to her normal shape, where she can use her claws for close combat. Her OB with these is 50 (two attacks each round). Anyone hit with at least an A critical must make a RR vs. poison (lvl 4) or be paralyzed by muscle cramps after 1-2 rounds. The poison is not otherwise dangerous or lethal.

Agatha is not evil as such; she simply is quite insane and has no scruples of laying low warriors entering her domain, who mistrust her merely because she is a witch, and because of her monstrous appearance (her true shape, which she irrationally believes the outside world is aware of). She is in fact also a seer, and is aware of their goal being to recover the lost hobbits, but her insanity makes her focus on her paranoia, disregarding their quest as an excuse to attack her. What she will do if she succeeds in overcoming the heroes is not predetermined, but some questioning (quite harshly) may be appropriate, to determine whether the captives are innocent or not. She is unlikely to execute anyone outright or seriously harm them.

If the encounter proceeds with parlay and the heroes manage to talk themselves out of trouble and convince Agatha of their innocence, she may likely help them in their hunt with information of the disappearances and the mewlips, but only with a cryptic clue: "The boy is not the first to disappear. The others can lead you to the mewlips! Find the *Neth Dolthaew...*" (S. Cuckoo hatchlings, derived from *neth* = young, *doltha* = hidden, *aew* = bird, not original Tolkien Sindarin). This outcome should be rewarded well with experience points. Further, Agatha will offer a thin silver necklace with a single teardrop-shaped pendant, made from milky white glass, accompanied by a blessing: "This is the Tear of Nienna. Wear it safely, with her blessing."

Finally (very important) she will silently hand one of the heroes a scroll containing the poem on mewlips found in the appendix (handout). The encounter ends abruptly and dramatically, when Agatha exclaims "Go now, and hurry, before the mist closes!" and refuses to say any more. The return will be safe and without incident, but the fog will in fact close behind and around the group. Feel free to improve on the drama, e.g. by letting Agatha and her home dissolve in thin air as the mist rolls in.

Should Agatha instead see herself physically defeated, and the heroes threaten her life, she will at first attempt to talk to them, and convince them not to attack her further. As she is aware of their quest, and knows of the disappearances partly through her visions, she will try to bargain with a cryptic lead: "The boy is not the first to disappear. The others can lead you to the mewlips! Find the *Neth Dolthaew...*" (S. Cuckoo hatchlings, derived from *neth* = young, *doltha* = hidden, *aew* = bird, not original Tolkien Sindarin). She will not offer the Tear of Nienna, only the scroll with the mewlip poem. Once she has their attention and has them distracted from the battle, she will attempt to escape. She will secretly cast Speed III (Living Change lvl 7) and throw herself through the window faster than the wind, after which she will disappear into the closest pond. From somewhere a shrill voice is heard whispering "Nienna curse you!" This is indeed a potent curse, with the effect that in future, when any of the heroes make a successful skill check, attack roll, spell roll etc. there is a 3% risk (rolled in secret by the GM) that it fails anyway. The failure may be explained by a sudden seizure, shaking hands, moral doubts or something else. This effect continues until the heroes discover the curse and find a cure to it. Due to Agatha's high level, a counter spell will be difficult, but other cures may be to acquire 'hero points', do penance to Agatha, receive the blessing of another Maia or Vala etc. The curse is permanent until removed, unless of course the GM wishes it to expire by itself.

If the heroes refuse flatly to parlay but simply keep attacking, when Agatha finds herself defeated she will try to escape immediately. Whether she is successful or not, all the heroes will get (through a search of her home) is the poem of the mewlips, tucked away in a hidden compartment. From here, they will have to rely on other NPC sources for information of the location of the mewlips.

Motivation: Agatha is evidently obsessed with the guilt and sins of the world, and her main objective therefore is to evaluate and judge the Children of Ilúvatar. If they are found sinful, punishment is swift but normally not lethal. Secondly, she is interested in helping the hobbits, without risking herself, as they have seemed relatively innocent, especially the children.

Appearance: Agatha will greet the heroes appearing as a tall (175 cm) and very beautiful female. Whether she is human or elven cannot be determined for certain (unless the GM uses a version of Middle-earth where there is a clear physical difference between these, such as pointy eared elves), but she exudes a certain aura of strength and force of will commonly found only in elves. Long dark hair cascades freely down her back, and calm grey eyes recall the descriptions of the Noldor of an age long past. She dresses in simple and solid clothes, though they reflect skilled craftsmanship. Her true shape returns about one and a half hours after the heroes' arrival at the latest, and is quite monstrous to say the least. Her skin is a dark green, cold and rather moist. Discolorations (lighter and darker spots) of the skin are abundant. Her hair is black, and possibly quite nice, if only it were groomed a bit. As it is, it's a bird's nest of knots and tufts. Her height is hard to determine because of her hunched back. Her clothes have seen better days, although she seems to take better care of them than her hair. Surprisingly, she does not smell bad, it is apparently only the visage that stands out.

Lvl: 10. Race: Maia. Profession: - Home:
Endor

MERP-stats: St-90; Ag-99; Co-90; Ig-100; It-103; Pr-97; *Appearance: 23 (95 when in elf form)*

Receives criticals as a Large creature

Agatha's principal items:

Tear of Nienna – This tiny necklace consists of a thin golden chain with a delicate crystal pendant shaped like a teardrop. Within the crystal a white haze drifts around like smoke obscuring the interior of the stone. When worn around the neck, the teardrop will grow warm in the presence (100') of either undead or otherworldly spirits (the last only when in possessing a foreign body, thus Maiar in their own self-defined

shape, e.g. Agatha, will not trigger the item). The undead or spirit receives a RR vs. lvl. 10 to avoid triggering the item. Very powerful beings may actually destroy the item, a RR succeeding by 50 or more making the teardrop shatter with a sharp, audible 'pop'.

Agatha's special powers:

Spells – Agatha has strong magical gifts of persuasion, as well as more special abilities. She uses these abilities as a level 10 channeling spell-user, and has a x3 PP Multiplier for a total of 60 PP.

Available spell lists (spell list type form MERP-rules is indicated in parenthesis although all are treated as channeling spells with regard to PP, RR, armor type bonuses etc.): favored spells on a list are given after the colon, with spell level in parenthesis:

- *Illusions* (Open Essence list): Illusion II+III(6+9), Phantasm I+II(7+10)
- *Spirit Mastery* (Open Essence list): Sleep V(1)+VII(3)+X(6), Charm Kind(2), Confusion(4), Suggestion(5), Master of Kind(8)
- *Essence Perceptions* (Open Essence list): Telepathy(10)
- *Living Change* (Mage list): Change of Kind(5), Speed III*(7)
- *Calm Spirits* (Open Channeling spell list): Calm I-V(1-9)
- *Surface Ways* (Open Channeling spell list): Stun Relief I+III(3+9), Heal 50(7)
- *Reverse Surface Ways*: Harm 10(1)+50(7)
- Evil spells with harmful effects are equally possible. Feel free to improvise, such as spells paralyzing an opponent with intense pain but no damage.

Spell-like abilities: These innate abilities do not require power points to use, and are permanent until death (always active, even when unconscious):

- Regeneration I (1 hit/round) (permanent). As the 4th level spell from Surface Ways Open Channeling spell list, but does not require concentration.

- Underwater Breathing (permanent). As 6th level spell from Protections Open Channeling spell list.

Oboron

This woodman is quite wild-looking. A bushy mane of light brown hair, scruffy leather clothes and his eyes have looked in different directions since birth. He is one of the Woodmen of Mirkwood, having gone westward into exile from the dread of the Necromancer's schemes. Oboron wanders the groves and bushes along the Anduin, traveling up and down the northern end of the great river, as far south as Lothlórien. Oboron is knowledgeable about a great many things of the area, and can for instance point the heroes towards Agatha, or tell the tale of the strange wolf pack roaming the region. He also stumbled across two children walking north from the swamp south of Thistledow, but when he tried to ask to their condition, they simply ignored him and kept going. This was some months ago.

Brêgo

"My name is Brêgo" (spoken with a deep, growling voice). Brêgo is a Maia of Oromë, who long ago, along with other Maiar, volunteered to go to Endor to herd and guard the wildlife as well as guard the children of Ilúvatar from the wildlife. In his time here, he has not exactly strayed from this course, but he has withdrawn more and more from the lands of men and elves. He speaks both Quenya and Sindarin, but somewhat slurredly, due to his current form.

His form shapes after his surroundings, taking his appearance from the beasts he interacts with, but retaining a somewhat humanoid twist to the form. He has for many years run with a wolf pack which recently has moved south in search of food. They have taken a few sheep from a farmer, but are otherwise unrelated to the disappearances. Brêgo's current form is consequently that of a wolf-like creature, running hunched on its rear legs.

If the players desire to encounter Brêgo and the wolves, most likely because they hear rumors of the strange wolf from the hobbits, let them do so almost however they plan to achieve it. What they do when they encounter him is what is important. If they surprise and try to parlay, he will answer them in elven language. If they attack without provocation before they ask questions, let them, but be sure to let them suffer the consequences.

Brêgo knows nothing of the disappearances of the hobbits, as he cares little for the affairs of the Periannath, but is aware that something unnatural and evil resides in the swamp south of the village. Brêgo knows Agatha well, but shuns her, as she avoids confrontation with him. Has the players been unable to get information from Agatha, Brêgo might also mention that something similarly unnatural and evil has taken residence within the village, although he cannot say anything more specific.

Motivation: Brêgo does not care for politics or society of men or elves (or hobbits). All he cares for is the *Kelvar* (Q. Animals), and to a lesser degree their relations to the children of Illúvatar. However, he does care about the stain of evil and undeath that affects the swamp and drives away the animals of the area. Any means of removing the stain will be welcomed and perhaps helped, though not directly.

The Mewlip Mage

This mewlip is far more powerful than normal mewlips, and capable of casting spells as an essence spell user.

Motivation: to create chaos and drink the life energy of living creatures.

Appearance: as a normal mewlip, but wearing the tatters of an old dark purple robe on his body and a steel band around his head as a crown. He also wears prominent jewelry.

Lvl: 10. Race: Mewlip. Profession: (mage)

Home: Swamps and marshes.

MERP-stats: St-90; Ag-95; Co-90; Ig-100; It-80; Pr-97; Appearance: 15

Skills: directed spells OB: 80; Base spell OB: 20

Mewlip Mage's principal items:

Circlet of Protection – The crown of steel adorning the mewlip's head is more than mere jewelry. An ancient protective device of elven make, this circlet will protect the wearer as well as a metal helmet, but still allows the wearer to cast essence spells and without hindering the wearer's perception. It radiates strong essence magic, if examined magically. Note that it does not allow the casting of channeling spells.

Bone of Power – This item appears to be a bone, but close scrutiny will reveal that it is rock hard, obviously made of stone. Per-

haps a petrified bone of some ancient devilry? Wherever it originates from, it magnifies the power of any essence spell user, doubling her total number of power points (x2 essence spell multiplier). Whether it has any long term side effects is not known...

Mewlip Mage's special powers:

Defense – as all mewlips, the mage takes only half damage from non-magical weapons and attacks.

Spells – The mage is adept at essence magic as a level 10 essence spell-user, and has a total of 60 PP (including bonus from spell multiplier).

Available spell lists (spell list type from MERP-rules is indicated in parenthesis) include, but are not limited to:

- *Essence's Ways* (Open Essence list)
- *Spell Ways* (Open Essence list)
- *Ice Law* (Mage list)
- *Water Law* (Mage list)
- *Wind law* (Mage list)
- *Spirit Mastery* (Open Essence list)
- Any evil spell list the GM desires (e.g. from *Spell Law*)

6.3 The Area/Setting

6.3.1 The Village

The village of Thistledow (originally derived from Thistle and Meadow) lies near a small confluence to Anduin, not far from its emergence into the great river. The area is filled with small groves, copses of trees and low-lying wetlands. Not far south of the hamlet lies a regular swamp, the current home of the mewlips.

The village sustains itself by hunting and particularly fishing, supplemented by what fruits and vegetables the hobbits can grow within the safety of the palisades. In the autumn, trees with ripe apples and pears appear around the village, and herb gardens grow close between berry-laden bushes and the huts. The local hobbits have the same 'green touch' that the hobbits of the Shire will come to be known for. Therefore, the hamlet is far better tended than comparable human villages. There is, however, not the same sense of orderliness and cleanliness as in the later Shire. The villagers are more concerned with survival and daily chores than personal hygiene. Most

look like they haven't bathed lately, and many are downright dirty. The filth is only soil, mud etc. however. Real sanitary problems are not present, making the actual risk of infection and disease quite small.

Gold, other precious metals and the King's currency are of little or no interest to the hobbits. The community operates a barter economy; and trade, particularly food items, for whatever they need from the outside world. This is the case, for instance, with a bit of iron now and then from Northman society along the northern Anduin, with whom they have casual contact, often through trusted Northman agents. Mostly, however, they are self-sufficient. If the heroes need goods from a hobbit, they must either offer other items in trade, or perhaps their services and labor. Perhaps one hobbit needs leather skins, but not labor, while another needs help with some wild animals in the wilderness, offering leather skins in return. Then a trade may be arranged.

The village is governed partly by a Thain elected from among the adult hobbits, and partly by a council of elder hobbits, giving advice to the Thain and having power to demand the election of a new Thain. In this way, a Thain may go against the council in a matter, but should not do so often or without reason. It all is administered informally without written rules, during village meetings where issues are addressed. Serious feuds (e.g. actual crime) are extremely rare, most often disputes concern arguments within or between families concerning rights of ownership etc.

The inhabitants

During their stay the heroes should encounter and interact with many different hobbits, from children approaching to ask 'the big people' what they are, through friendly old hobbits enjoying the day on a bench in the village square, to adult hobbits arguing and fighting over the possible causes of the disappearances.

There should be ample opportunity for role-playing, and gathering leads regarding the abductions (also, see the 'Rumors' box below for possible clues). Try to mix accurate leads with confusing distractions to add to the story.

For further inspiration and background knowledge on hobbits, refer to e.g. letter number 214 in *Letters*, where birthday celebrations among hobbits are detailed. A birthday party or a gratitude party at the end of the sce-



Map A: The Village

nario could be quite appropriate for a role-playing opportunity.

Sites in the village

If the heroes desire to, they will be allowed to search the home of Erengol. His parents have five children, Erengol being in the middle. Erengol slept in a small bed beneath his brother's, and he has drawn extensively on the underside of the bed above. Among others there are pictures of a tall woman in the company of smaller humanoids in a forest. His parents can tell that Erengol was captivated by stories and fairy tales, for instance stories of Agatha the Witch, who allegedly lived in this area. If questioned further on the subject, they will claim it to be old children's stories and nothing else, but maybe old Hrodwyn can tell more of them. They know nothing more for sure about Agatha or where she might live.

Around the Village

Traps, meant to be a deterrent to potential enemies and predators, surround Thistledow. Not all traps are set at any given time, while some are constantly set. These are of course easily avoided by the villagers who know them well, and anyone being led by a villager is safe. If the heroes (by themselves) follow a route to or from the village by memory, which a villager has formerly led them by, there is only a 10% risk per person of stepping the wrong place and activating a trap. Just walking through, disregarding the risk, a 60% risk applies per person. Walking about just outside the village (not just to or from the village) without a local guide, an 80% risk per person per 15 minutes applies. No matter the mode of walking, characters stating that they are looking out for traps receive a Perception roll (Very Hard) if they activate a trap. A success indicates a last minute spotting of the trap,

allowing a Moving Maneuver roll (table MT-1) to avoid it (a secondary skill such as Acrobatics may be applied to the roll). Compare the roll to a Moving Maneuver roll made for the trap, giving the trap a +30 bonus. If the character rolls the higher result, he just evades the trap.

Below are some examples of traps to use. Others may be invented and used, of course.

1. **Drop-Tree:** a wooden log hung from a tree, swinging down on the unfortunate. Apply a +50 OB 1-H Concussion attack with a chance of primary Crush (max E) and secondary Impact (max B) criticals. The victim is surprised (no Agility bonus to DB) except if the victim has spotted the trap but failed to evade it.
2. **Pit Trap:** a cunningly covered hole in the ground, with finely sharpened wooden pegs at the bottom. Apply a +70 OB 1-H Slashing attack with a possible puncture critical.
3. **Snare Trap:** a snare activated by a small trip wire. The snare whips across the ground, catching the victim's foot, pulling it upwards. Apply a +70 Grapple attack with a possible Grapple critical. Surprise applies as in trap number 1. If the trap hits, the victim is further caught in the snare, suddenly hanging upside down from a tree.
4. **Net trap:** the same as the snare trap, except that a net hidden on the forest floor is suddenly pulled up, trapping the unfortunate (same attack and effect as 3.)
5. **Hidden Spike Board:** the character steps in a small hole in the ground. Her weight activates a set board that springs from its hiding place on the ground. Nasty spikes attached to the board try to turn the poor soul into a pin cushion. Apply a +60 Missile attack and, if relevant, a Puncture critical. Alas, surprise applies again.

6.32 The Grove of Agatha

Further upstream the Anduin from the small creek coming from Thistledow, another little creek leads east towards the distant Mirkwood. Before it reaches this larger forest, it passes what a few of the hobbits know as Agatha's Grove, approximately north east of Thistledow as the crow flies. Walking there from the village would take an afternoon. 'Agatha's Wetland' might be more descriptive, as large parts of it are often flooded, and

many ponds and sluggish creeks are scattered through the area. The grove itself consists of a mixture of smaller trees like birch, poplar etc. (or corresponding Middle-earth species). Most of the growth is more akin to bushes, and most places very dense and hard to move through. If one follows the creek to the east from Anduin, a small animal trail appears at the border of the grove, later turning southeast towards Agatha's home. A Medium Tracking skill check is enough to find this animal trail and follow it away from the creek towards the center of the grove. The track winds around rocks, ponds and dense shrubbery, and it crosses a few slow moving brooks. Nowhere, however, are travelers (yet!) in serious danger of getting stuck or falling in, as most areas have solid ground, and wet areas are rather obvious. The dense shrubbery, though, reduces visibility, making ambushes a distinct possibility.

After a couple of hours wandering through the grove (about 5 km as a bird flies, but at least twice that for a walker) one reaches the home of Agatha, a small wooden hut. Around the hut Agatha has made a lovely clearing, where she tends a herb and vegetable garden, and at the rear a large waterhole reaches from near the hut far into the grove. The hut is solid and cozy (Agatha once charmed a pair of woodmen into building it for her), but not very large. Firewood, dried food and edible herbs fill most of the single room. A loose sheet of hide hangs across a window opening, while a fireplace is left cold at the rear of the room. A small table and a few chairs make it possible for a couple of visitors to sit. The rest would have to stand around.

Once the heroes have to leave the grove, after the events mentioned in the description of Agatha herself, they might experience quite a different environment than going in. This entirely depends on how the encounter with Agatha was resolved. If the party leaves Agatha without incurring her enmity or anger, the return trip will be as gentle as the outward journey. Should the heroes have incurred Agatha's wrath and anger, and if she is still alive, the grove itself will seem hostile and inhospitable. Use the following hazard encounters, as well as any desired encounter rolls on the encounter table:

- Ponds will now be hidden and dangerous. The risk of the leading member of the party ending up in one of these ponds is 30%, rolled three times on the journey. A

Hard MM roll will allow the hero not to fall over, (in which case they just get soaked feet). Falling over means that everything they are carrying gets wet. The GM has full discretion on what can stand getting wet, and what cannot (e.g. paper, herbs, food etc.). Further, 2-20 leeches attach themselves to the poor sucker (possibly underneath his clothes, making them difficult to spot), and should be removed. Otherwise, they will let go by themselves after an hour, having sucked enough blood. This will drain 1 point of Constitution per leech, including any loss of Con bonus. Constitution points are regained by a rate of 1 point per hour of rest.

- The brooks are suddenly deeper and have a muddier bottom. Each of the two brooks the heroes have to cross requires a Medium M&M check for each person. The same result as above, for ponds, applies.
- Mosquitoes gather in large swarms around the group, making it difficult to concentrate (-5 to all rolls) and look around (part of the reason for the more frequent accident from other encounters.
- A group of ten hummerhorns are heard buzzing in the nearby foliage, just 10 seconds before they emerge and descend on the group as it is crossing one of the brooks above. They will flee if half of them are killed.

6.33 The Mewlip Swamp

By understanding the true story behind the disappearances with the help of Agatha or Brêgo, the heroes have a few options for locating the mewlips and their lair. One may be to confront Frida and Einil, hoping to gain information on the other mewlips in this way. This is a tricky course of action, and may end in an attempt to evict one or both of the mewlip spirits from their host bodies, with all the inherent dangers of this if the heroes have misunderstood part of the mewlip clues. The result of this approach is in no way certain. Only one thing is for sure: the mewlips will tell nothing of themselves or their brethren. Perhaps, however, one of the possessed may escape, making a Tracking to the mewlip lair possible.

Another more prudent course may be to covertly keep the children under surveillance. The heroes will then, if they keep their vigil during night, see the two children lure yet

another child out of the village and south towards the swamp. They accomplish this by following the victim during his nightly visit to the outdoor lavatory, and then conjuring up a mesmerizing will o' the wisp. Frida and Einil will not follow the victim further than the border of the village, unless they somehow sense that someone is onto them. The will o' the wisp and the victim will continue south for a couple of kilometers. Here, the will o' the wisp will abruptly disappear, and a squeal is heard before being sharply interrupted. The sound of stomping feet and breaking branches follows, which will be that of a mewlip escaping with the victim. A search of the area will reveal a set of tracks from large, bare feet with long, sharp nails or claws, leading south away from the village. If the track fails, common sense may lead the heroes to continue in the original direction, south, which will allow them another track check during the next kilometer traveled south.

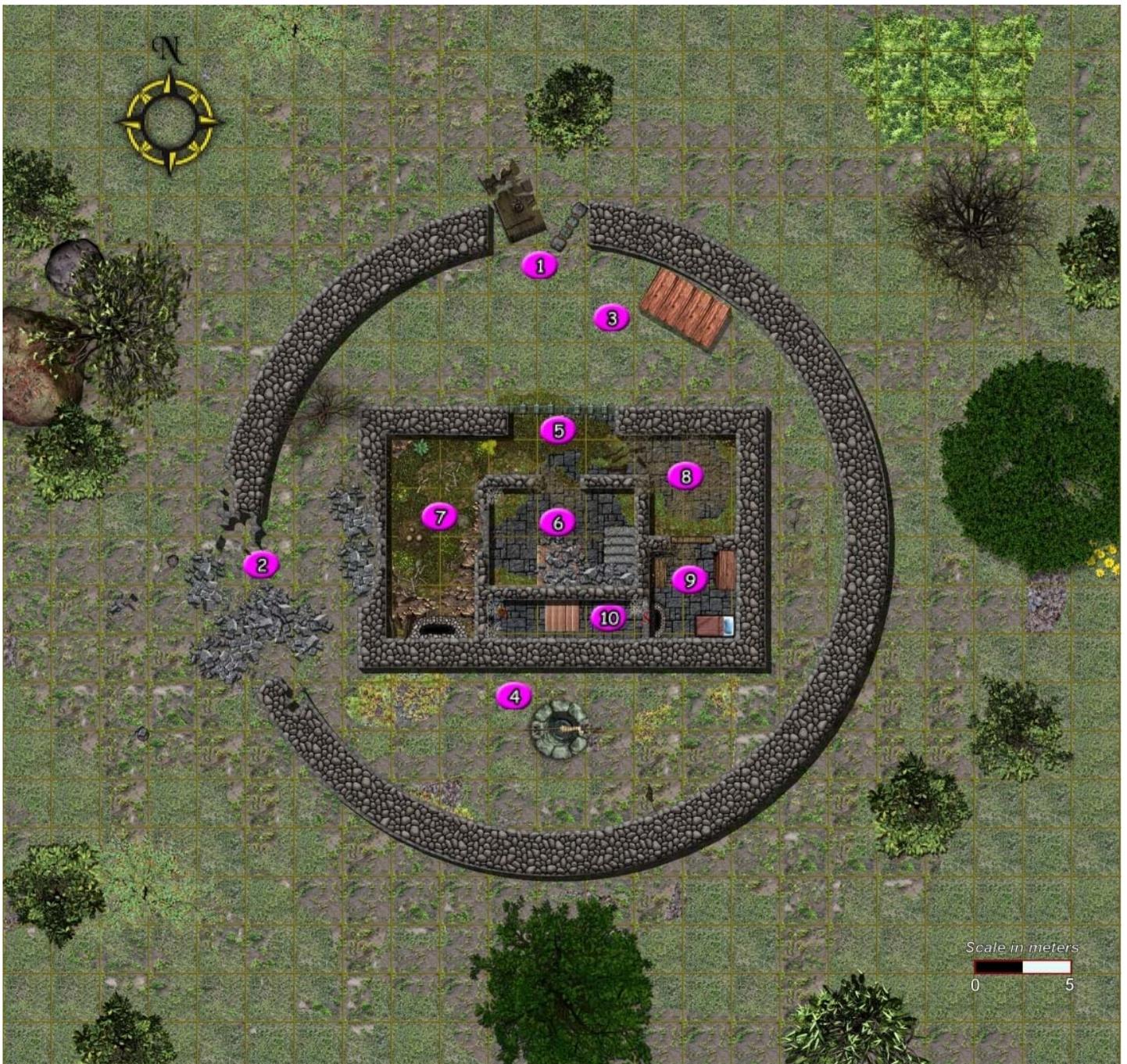
Alternatively, the heroes may opt to stop the victim before it reaches the mewlip waiting on the outside. The will o' the wisp then stops, and fades away after a while, but the same escaping sounds will be heard further to the south, directing the heroes to the tracks left by the mewlip.

If the tracks are followed to the south, they lead directly into a swamp area about 10 km south of Thistledow. If desired, encounter rolls may be made on the way. Otherwise the swamp is simply an unpleasant place to be, with stagnant and foul smelling water, leeches, mosquitoes and bottomless quagmires.

The Outpost

About at the center of the swamp lies an old, decrepit outpost. The knowledge of who once built and inhabited these buildings has been lost in time, but clues within may give an indication. Refer to the map depicting the area and the interior of the outpost (map B) for an overall view of the layout, throughout the following description.

What was once a central tower has partly collapsed (not visible on map). Most of the outer ring wall is still whole, albeit overgrown by trees and vines, but a large gap is evident in the western part of the wall (map B - 2). The gate (map B - 1) of the ring wall has toppled into a courtyard that is also broadly overgrown. Within the yard is found an old ruin of a stable building (map B - 3) as well as the



Map B: The Oupost at ground level

main building at the center. South of this main building, a wrecked well can be found (map B – 4), partly covered by debris. If the GM wishes, this well may contain a secret tunnel entrance to the basement complex. The tunnel, however, will most likely be flooded due to the high ground water level in the area. Still, if the tunnel is near the water surface, leaving parts of it with breathable air above water, it could supply a possible, if dangerous entrance to the basement complex. If used,

such a tunnel should connect to the southern part of the basement.

Suggestion for reading out or paraphrasing at the first glance of the courtyard:

Along the inside of the circular wall stand the crumbling remains of a small auxiliary building, while at the center of the courtyard the primary building still has most of its wall standing. On top of this main building, however, the watchtower that once allowed a view of the surrounding terrain has long since collapsed. The cobbled courtyard is quite wet, with puddles in many places.

You get the distinct feeling of something being out of the ordinary here, but you can't perceive what. It just makes you shiver.

Main building

The front door of the main building (a double door with just the one half left hanging, map A – 5) hangs crookedly on one hinge. The water has not really made its way inside, and generally this floor has not been flooded (the basement is another matter). It is also quite empty (but not entirely).

Read out or paraphrase when entering the main building:

As you step through the empty door opening, the temperature drops noticeably. There are no windows, leaving only light to enter through the door behind you, making it hard to discern details of the interior further in.

Just inside the door is a small foyer. From here, empty doorways lead left, right and straight ahead. The central room (map B – 6) straight ahead has some stairs going up, likely to the tower. The stairs are blocked by rubble from the collapsed tower above. Hidden behind the stairs, a trapdoor in the floor covers an entrance to the basement below. A search will reveal the trapdoor on a Routine Perception skill check, as well as the knowledge that it has been used recently. The tracks left are too indecipherable to tell who or what used it, though.

The doorway to the right opens into an oblong room (map C – 7), apparently empty, with an old fireplace at the far end. Debris of dead plant material, small bones etc. litter the floor. Maybe it hides a thing or two of interest? (GM discretion.)

The opening to the left leads into a smaller square room (map B – 8), empty as well except for dirt, leaves, twigs etc. An opening to the right lets you continue further in.

Through this door the last room (map B – 9) appears to be the end of the journey. It has a few fragments of what was once furniture (a bed, table, closet and chairs) as well as an intact fireplace in the wall to the right, but all has long since been razed and emptied. If the walls are searched, however (Hard Perception skill check) there is a small chance of finding the secret entrance at the back of the fireplace to a hidden chamber (map B – 10).

If found and entered, this room will seem extremely dark, not even allowing elves to see without an artificial light source. It is, however, almost empty and quite harmless. The only item left in here is a small pocket book,

which lies closed at the back of the room. It is an old diary (the exact age may be determined through scrutiny of the text at the GM's discretion), threadbare, damp and tattered because of time. The book is in Adûnaic, requiring reading skills in this language to decipher. Much of the book is gone or illegible, but the following can be made out:

- The author is apparently a man, Hûrator of the House of Arboth in Gondor (according to the inside cover). He was likely not a local resident of this outpost but merely passing by.
- Within the book is found a single gold coin. On its face is stamped a branched tree with seven stars above its crown.
- The last paragraph is still readable, and can be translated to roughly the following, after which the diary ends:

"...We will be off now, towards the Spire at the heart of the Misty Mountains. I am convinced that we will find it! If the dwarves could, so can we. And if we can wrest away its riches, I can finally return..."

Should I not return from this expedition to retrieve this diary, I ask you, its finder, to bring it to my father as described earlier. Fair journey, wanderer, and travel with luck."



Coin found with the diary

This diary refers to 'The Spire' described in the adventure of the same name, by E.J. Womble (available at the Yahoo Fan-modules mailing list) and is simply meant as a lead to further adventure. Further, and just as importantly, this room also has hidden trapdoor (Medium Perception) in the floor. This has not been set with an alarm by the mewlip mage, unlike the more obvious trapdoor behind the tower stairs, and therefore allows for unde-

tected entrance to the basement. It simply opens into the ceiling of the first room of the basement, just in front of the stone and iron door.

Besides this, nothing much can really be found on this floor, and the tower is impossible to gain access to. Only the basement remains, until the secret trapdoor beneath the stairs has been found. Refer to map C through the following description of the basement.

Basement

The trapdoor is not locked or barred. Basically it is impossible to make anything out from above because of the darkness below, but stone stairs can be seen disappearing into the murk. The mewlip mage has set a magical alarm that will make a hardly discernible bell sound as soon as the trapdoor is opened, alerting the mewlip to any intruder. A successful Very Hard Perception skill roll will allow any hero to hear this as an extremely faint, ominous bell toll in the far distance. Note that the trapdoor behind the secret door in the fireplace is not rigged with this alarm, which is how Aesk managed to enter undetected.

Read or paraphrase to the first person to step onto the stairs:

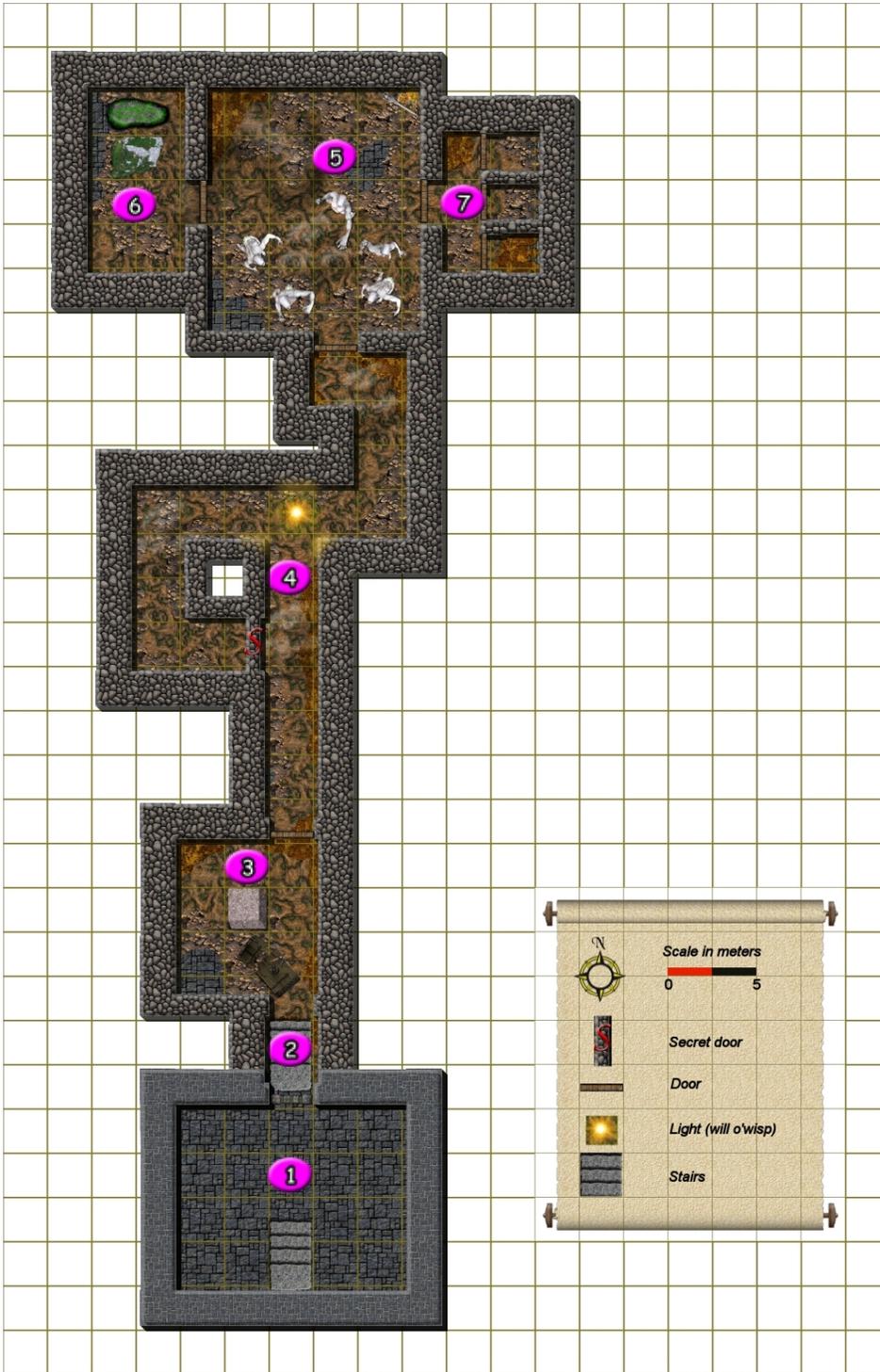
As you set your foot on the first step, you are struck by the realization of how cold it is down here. You feel a numbing chill penetrating your boot, spreading a prickly feeling through your foot.

If you otherwise continue downwards, you can dimly see your breath condensing to mist, and you start to shiver all over.

Although you believe the temperature to be far below freezing, you discover that the puddles on the floor underfoot are not frozen over!

The first room of the basement (map C – 1) appears empty except for the entrance stairs. During a search of the room, the cold is felt seeping through clothes, skin and marrow, until only a subduing numbness of the body is left.

The walls of this room are smooth and finely chiseled stone. In the middle of the northern wall is a heavy stone and metal door. It is just in front of this door that the trapdoor from the secret room above opens down from the ceiling. It is well hidden from below too, requiring a successful Medium Perception skill check to be discovered. The great stone door



Map C: The Oupost at basement level

opens only with difficulty (but not requiring any ability/skill check), revealing yet more stone steps leading further below ground (map C – 2).

Walking down these stairs, one may notice that the walls are longer smooth and fine, but from now on uneven and haphazardly ar-

ranged. Characters with some stone working skill will realize that this is due to the harsher treatment of the stone from the increased water flow, not from careless masonry work.

After a short descent of just a few meters, a door suddenly blocks the stairs. This door is smaller and frail, most of the wood being quite

rotten. It is still entirely dark, but the door appears unlocked.

Read or paraphrase on opening the door (map C – 3).

As you open the door a foul stench of rot and garbage is emitted from the opening. After regaining your senses you are able to continue, but you realize that you will have to endure further discomfort. In the feeble torchlight you see that the entire floor is covered in dark, muddy water, making the floor completely indiscernible. Here and there various bits of debris poke from the water.

In the center of the room lies a large square slab of rock. It might once have been pale or white, but at present it is soiled with dirt and grime, and worse...

Dirt and blood (which some of it is) cover one of the few remaining clues to the original makers of this refuge. If this is wiped off from one of the longer vertical faces, smudged, chiseled elven letters can be discerned, spelling out ‘Durin the Deathless’. This tribute to the father of dwarves points towards the dwarves as the makers of this outpost to their citadel of Khazad-dûm. When or why they made it remains a mystery, even if the letters are discovered. Luckily for any human or elven heroes, the dwarves have hewn these halls in their normal grandiose style, leaving just enough room for these races to stand upright.

Remains of prey (animals and people) litter the floor below the water surface, including any hobbits that may have been devoured so far (depending on the progression of events, at least the grisly remains of Erengol may be found here, at the GM’s discretion). All bones obviously have been gnawed at. This is the place where the mewlips have carried out both feeding and possession rituals.

After having searched the room and found its foul contents, the heroes may be quite eager to move on through the only exit, a simple door in the far right corner, finding themselves at the beginning of a long, straight tunnel.

This puts the heroes close to their first encounter with the mewlips in their lair. At first only in a short glimpse, but shortly after in very close detail, as they are (perhaps) lured into an ambush. One mewlip walks across the end of the tunnel (map C – 4) that the heroes have just entered, baiting them to sneak after it, perhaps forgetting caution for the moment.

Let the front runner of the heroes roll a

Perception skill check (Easy). If it succeeds, a faint light is detected at the far end of the tunnel accompanied by sound of splashing water, as soon as the tunnel is entered, allowing for a hasty retreat if desired. If it fails, the heroes will have walked a third of the distance towards the end before the light and sound become impossible not to detect, leaving them no option but to remain still and extinguish any light if they want to avoid detection.

Read and paraphrase the following to any heroes with an unobstructed view of the end of the tunnel, if they remain still:

Far down the tunnel you see a faint shimmer of light, slowly growing brighter. It seems to be originating from a side entrance to this tunnel. Then – suddenly – the light source appears: a small glowing ball of pure light, floating in mid air and wobbling as it goes. It drifts from an opening in the left side of the tunnel to an opening in the right. And then, just behind it, a huge monstrous figure lumbers through the water. It has two arms, but they are grotesquely long, nearly reaching the water surface from its total height of well over two meters. They terminate in a pair of strong hands equipped with long, sharp claws. The skin is pale and glistening, and you become aware that you can actually see through the skin, making veins and sinew clearly visible beneath. Beneath a mat of tattered hair a violent face stands out, torn in an expression of hate, or this may simply be the result of the many long and pointy teeth, thrusting from the maw without any order.

It seems to be continuing across the tunnel without having seen you.

Another mewlip is waiting behind a hidden door in the left wall, halfway down the tunnel. Once the heroes have reached the hidden door, the mewlip emerges by pushing open the heavy stone portal, possibly trying to separate the heroes. The stone portal will become stuck once opened fully, but due to the deteriorated state of the stonework, it can be broken down rather easily. This requires a cumulative (i.e. from consecutive attempts, one each round, if needed) Hard Demolish skill check of 100 or more, before the stone has been removed enough to allow unhindered passage. A result of less than 100 means that this % of the wall has been broken off, allowing passage if an appropriate Movement & Maneuver check is made, at the discretion of the GM. Otherwise a new attempt may be rolled each round to break off the rest. The Demolish skill roll is an open-ended roll modified by ST and any skill rank (-25 if not learned), on table MT-I Mov-

ing Maneuver. Stoneworking skill may also be applied, adding any bonus in this skill to the Demolish bonus. This does not negate any penalty from not having skill ranks in Demolish, however. Two (max) persons may combine their skill bonuses by cooperating. The third mewlip (the one baiting the heroes) will reappear from around a bend in the tunnel two rounds after the ambush is sprung, joining battle immediately.

After this encounter, if the heroes press on, a search of the tunnel to the left will simply reveal the ambush hideout, whereas the right tunnel winds around a bit (see map), right and left, before ending in a door. This door is fairly tight and intact, and what little cracks there may be in it only reveal darkness.

On the other side (map C – 5) four simple mewlips and the mewlip mage await their arrival. They remain still, knowing the heroes are nearby. If the heroes want to make clever preparations (successfully anticipating the final showdown here), allow them this. A search of the corridor close to the door may reveal that the wall to its right is a bit wobbly, and may in fact be toppled over, allowing a nice surprise for the mewlip standing beneath it. The wall requires a Hard Demolish skill check of 100 (less means part of the wall has toppled). A maximum of three people can attempt this together, but only one roll is made (a new roll can be made each round); otherwise the at-

tempt is made as mentioned above for the stuck stone portal. One mewlip crouched on the inside of the wall will receive an attack the equivalent of a 10' fall (see MERP p. 234), i.e. a small Tooth & Claw attack with a potential Crush critical. The OB of this attack is 10 + the result of the Demolish roll - 100.

At the moment the heroes enter the room, the mewlip mage will summon a will o' the wisp, illuminating the room in a pale, flickering light. There is one mewlip standing against each of the two walls to either side of the door. Two additional mewlips are standing a couple of meters further into the room, and the mewlip mage is beyond them all. The mage will immediately start gesturing and speaking obscure words of sorcery, casting his first spell the round after summoning the will o' the wisp. He is standing in the middle of the room, about a meter from the edge of a deep well which has no raised rim and is therefore quite invisible, being entirely submerged in the dark water. Obviously, the mewlips will try to trick a hero into going between the two mewlips on either side, going for the 'unprotected' mage. A hero specifically surveying the layout of the room and the water will on a successful Extremely Hard Perception skill check realize that the darkness is slightly darker in the well, which is the only lead to something out of the ordinary beneath the water surface. The mewlips are aware of



Mewlip attacking

the well and will stay clear of it, but pretend to try and stop a hero going for the mage. If anyone moves across the area of the well, they will fall in. Depending on their reactions, they may get a chance at catching hold of the edge of the well by making a successful Extremely Hard Movement & Maneuver skill check (Acrobatics may be applied as well at GM discretion). Otherwise, the hero will plunge deep. A Swimming skill check (depending on armor and equipment, see MERP p. 33) will then be required to stay afloat and get to safety in two rounds. If, however, this scenario is not challenging enough for the heroes, the GM might want to add more resistance. One obvious way to do this would be to have one more mewlip waiting beneath the surface, in the well!

If anyone takes a thorough look around the room he may

- a. spot Aesk hiding, peeking out of a doorway to the left (Extremely Hard Perception)
 - b. catch a glimpse of something glittering in the far corner: the mewlip's treasure
- The treasure consists of
- A very old broad sword (the thing that glitters), forged by Dúnadan smiths of old at the end of the Second Age. It pokes up just a bit from the water line. The blade is inconceivably sharp, and no dirt seems to be able to cling to it, hence the glittering, hinting at the inherent magic of the weapon. One single word in Quenya has been etched into the blade: 'Heca' (*Q. Be Gone*). The sword is obviously well fashioned, and has in itself a +5 OB bonus, but it has an additional +5 OB bonus vs. undead creatures (for a total of +10 OB vs. undead). Furthermore, undead creatures struck by the sword must make a successful RR vs. channelling or be forced back, in effect stunning the undead 1 round for each 5 point the RR failed. This effect includes undead normally not affected by stun results. The mewlips sense the power in the sword, but cannot touch it. The mage is hoping to corrupt it in time, though.
 - A small leather sheath with small instruments of various metals: tin, copper, bronze, iron, silver and gold. Strangely, the sheath has room for seven, but there are only six...? The seventh is made from

mithril, but is not to be found here... The tools are a set of specially crafted lock picks, crafted by an elven smith of Ere-gion. The better and more advanced the lock to be opened, the more precious a metal lock pick should be used for it. To choose the best lock pick make a Use Item check. Failure means that the picks work as ordinary picks, granting +5 to the Pick Lock roll. A partial success increases it to a +10 bonus to the Pick Lock roll, while a complete success grants a +20 bonus.

- The headband and spell multiplier of the mewlip mage (see his details in section 6.22)
- The mage also carried a key on a leather string around his wrist, which opens the rusty gate to the prison cells.
- The mewlip mage wore a golden necklace and a silver bracelet of exquisite craftsmanship. Another mewlip wore two fine rings set with precious stones (the total worth depends on where and to whom the items are sold, but anything less than 50 gp would be ridiculous).
- A fair amount of coins lie at the floor beneath water, and need some fishing to gain: 5 gp, 110 sp and 145 bp. A single interesting gem (a garnet worth 5 gp) is even harder to find. A single Very Hard Perception roll for the entire group searching (modified by the highest Perception +10 per extra person searching) is made to determine the amounts found. A partial success means only half the coins are found, and not the gem. Near success means all coins are found, but still not the gem. A full success means all valuables are found.

These cells are found through the door in the right wall (map C – 7). In there, a few cells are used to hold prey of the mewlips until they are devoured. If the mewlips managed to kidnap another child with the heroes chasing them, this child will be held in one of these cells, still alive. Further, Aesk has managed to hide out in another of the cells (unlocked). If any child is held captive here, Aesk will defend this child with his life, should a mewlip come after the child. In fact, Frida or Einil may be held here if their possessors have returned them here to inhabit their original bodies instead.

From the main room another door sits in the left wall. This leads into the 'sleeping

room' (map C – 6). This is where the mewlips lay the true forms of their brethren when they are in possession of a living body. Depending on the development of the story, up to two mewlips may be lying here on simple piles of rock, just above the waterline. Finishing off any such mewlips requires no skill roll, but should bring some sinister satisfaction to the heroes.

6.4 The Task

The prime purpose of the scenario is to save the village from being slowly corrupted and devoured by the deadly presence of the mewlips. On top of this, the heroes may complete other quests on the way, which may prove rewarding.

6.4.1 Starting the Players

Getting There

The heroes may get to Thistledow in a variety of ways. One reason to search out this secluded village could be that a hero or NPC knows one of the inhabitants, and that this villager possesses some crucial knowledge, e.g. of some specific, seldom used pass (Gladden Pass) across the Misty Mountains, old ruins etc. Else, the heroes may stumble across and through the village by chance, on the way to somewhere else, e.g. across the Misty Mountains. The players may even be hobbit villagers from Thistledow, but the power of the antagonist may have to be adjusted in that case.

Whatever reason they have for going there, they should also have reason to help the unfortunate villagers. If the thought of helping innocent little hobbits is not enough, more practical reasons may be served. If the reason to going to Thistledow is the knowledge of one of the residents, this resident may be one of the missing hobbits (particularly Aesk), giving incentive to solve the mystery. Material rewards, however, are unlikely to be an issue, as the hobbits are quite poor as regards to monetary wealth.

Entering the Village

As the area around the village is littered with traps, the safest way of going there is with a guide. The most obvious guide would be one of the hobbit inhabitants, met during earlier adventures. Other guides may be some of the human trackers, merchants, rangers etc. of western Rhovanion, who may have connec-

tions in the village. If the heroes come by the village by chance, a guide is unlikely. In this case, a meeting (non-lethal) with one of the traps may be witnessed by some hobbit scouts, who take pity in the poor group (if they are likable and not too scary), and lead them into the village for healing or rest. If the hobbits have some doubts as to the motives of the group, they may require them to wear blindfolds during the trip, to conceal the way through the traps.

The Mystery Unfolds

Around the time when the group arrives, a heated debate has started in the village. Already at the outskirts of the village, a mix of chattering and talking can be heard. They are allowed to remove any blindfolds here, and can then both see and hear the gathering of hobbits in the central square, in front of a large hilltop with a door in it (the Thain's *smial*). If the heroes observe this spectacle for a while from outside, they will see a crowd of very small but human-like creatures chattering incessantly. They may overhear bits of the discussion, which is rather quick-spoken and in a strange dialect of Westron, though. The only information the heroes might extract is that the discussion partly concerns some missing child. Most of the hobbits are turned towards a relatively large hobbit in front of the round door.

If the group moves towards the crowd, some of the hobbits will notice the 'tall ones', and grow silent. As the group reaches the crowd, most hobbits will have hushed, and anyone near the heroes will try to get out of their way. Only the thain remains unmoving.

The thain will greet the strangers, and ask to their business in the village. He will realize the opportunity for help from this group, and will eventually ask the heroes regarding this. He will tell the story, that first the child Eren-gol and then the tracker Aesk have 'gone missing'. If the group does not appear to be too much against the idea of helping, the thain will address the crowd again, asking if such help from outside is an acceptable solution. This just sparks another heated discussion, no longer suppressed by the presence of the strangers. During this there is ample opportunity for the heroes to gather intelligence and pick up a few rumors from nearby hobbits they may question.

After some time the debate will subside, and the inhabitants will drift off in small

groups, still chattering. At this time the thain will return to the heroes, and repeat his request. He admits that they really do not have any monetary means of rewarding the heroes for their help. If they insist on compensation, he may suggest a reward of some furs and skins (the village will be able to supply furs worth 5 gp in an area that supports a monetary economy), but this should not be necessary if the heroes are true. If they agree to help, the thain will offer his full support in any investigation, escorting the group around town, and he will suggest the heroes to rest and spend the night at Aesk's (empty) *smial*. If they can fit in there.

6.42 Aids

Various persons and leads can point the group in the direction of what is going on.

Frida and Einil

These two children are in fact the key to finding the mewlip lair in the swamp, once the condition of the children has been recognized for what it is, through Agatha or others. The children will attempt to lure another victim into the swamp the same night that the group returns after their investigation (not the first night after the group arrives, but the second), hoping to discredit the heroes. That will actually be one of the best opportunities for the heroes to track down the monsters.

Agatha the Hag

Agatha is a gifted seer, and therefore knows some of what has occurred in the village. Making her tell the heroes about it is quite the task, however. It is up to the players to convince her to aid them. If they succeed, she will give them a cryptic lead that the boy who disappeared three days ago was not the first child to disappear. This could lead the group to ask around the village about other disappearances, pointing them towards Frida and Einil. This in turn presents the problem of determining their part in this mystery, but a talk with their father may reveal their nightly excursions.

Additionally, Agatha should refer to the mewlips, and hand the heroes the very important clue that is the poem of the mewlips. From this, they should be able to deduce much of what is going on beneath the surface.

Should the heroes fail in convincing Agatha; their yield of clues will be a little thinner. They may or may not be told about the children, and they may have to search the

premises to get hold of the (vital) scroll containing the poem of the mewlips.

Oboron

If Oboron meets the group, he will generally be a friendly chap and answer their questions to the best of his abilities. He does not, however, know anything about the disappearances and can only help regarding what he is asked. He can tell of where and how to find Agatha. He has also recently spotted Brêgo and his wolf pack, since their arrival in the area, and may point to where about they may be found.

Aesk Mistbank

Towards the end of the scenario, Aesk can be used as an extra aid against the mewlips. He has been scouting the area south of the village, and caught the trail of the mewlips. He has then managed to infiltrate the lair, hoping to covertly rescue the victims, but found himself stuck inside, as the mewlips have not given him a chance to escape since. He will show up if things get too tight during the last battle with the mewlips, if the GM so desires.

Brêgo

Brêgo can give the heroes clues to the secret of the swamp, if they have not managed to get these elsewhere (especially Agatha). This should, however, be a last resort if the players are otherwise failing grievously, and they should not then be rewarded with an xp-bonus.

Finally, the various rumors in the village can give clues to what is behind the disappearances, but may equally lead the heroes astray. The rumors tell of several other events in the area, and may therefore also act as future adventure hooks. The risk of false rumors is present, too, which the players should realize by themselves. See the box 'Rumors' for suggestions of tall tales and stories which can be heard in the village, or make up more to fit into the current campaign.

The rumors box also contains a few suggestions for sub-quests which can be included in the scenario. These offer extra objectives, which can get the heroes into the story in an indirect way, and add some flavor to the main story line.

6.43 Obstacles

As should be obvious from the previous description, finding out what is really going on should be the hard part of this scenario. Once this has been determined, tracking down and eliminating the threat (the mewlips) should be the easy part. One complication, however, is rescuing the possessed children. This may very well fail, resulting in the loss of the innocent victim. This doesn't prevent the heroes from solving the mystery and eliminating the villains.

6.44 Rewards

The rewards from for success in this scenario can be several, of which the least is the monetary, as the villagers don't use or possess coins. As mentioned, particularly greedy characters may bargain for a reward of some furs, but otherwise the rewards come mostly in terms of personal development.

Besides the experience gained from encounters, spell use, traveling etc., accomplish-

ing certain goals, such as gaining Agatha's trust, and figuring out the true nature of Frida and Einil, should gain the characters substantial amounts of experience points. Should the group manage to rescue the very souls of the children, a further reward should be awarded. This particular goal also has a more personal reward for any character risking their own soul to save the children if a mewlip spirit is forced from the host body. The reward for this is ultimately up to the GM, but suggestions are given in the mewlip monster description (enlightenment points, ability score increases etc.).

Finally, if the heroes succeed in rescuing some or all of the hobbits, the gratitude of the village should be felt. A large feast to honor the heroes could be held, or perhaps they might be asked to join the festivities as the thain celebrates his birthday with a party (after delaying it for some days due to the circumstances), as suggested under 'The Inhabitants' in section 6.3. Here, each of the heroes will be presented with a personal gift, crafted or pro-

cured by the hobbits. These gifts should not be of great monetary value, but rather carefully selected gifts of particular significance to the receiver. Suggestions could be small leather sheaths to keep a wizard's rune paper or a healer's herbs dry underwater, high quality tools for various craft skills of use to the hero, or finely crafted fur cloaks for traveling through the cold mountains.

6.5 Encounters

The scenario has some fixed encounters with characters essential to the story line, such as the populace of Thistledow, Agatha, Frida and Einil and the mewlips. In addition, some encounters should be presented as options to the heroes throughout the story, such as Oboron and Brêgo and his wolves. Finally, further encounters may be added if so desired. To aid in this, the encounter tables provided in section 7 provide a means for generating random encounters, or simply suggestions to pick a specific encounter from. More creatures and encounters may be included from other sources, such as *Creatures of Middle Earth*.



7.0 Tables

7.1 Rumors and Quests

Rumors and hearsay in Thistledow:

Rumors may be heard around the village if the heroes spend time there, but should only be presented if the heroes actively engage in conversation with the inhabitants or try to eavesdrop on their conversations. Either simply select which rumor(s) to present to the heroes, or roll 1d8 to determine randomly which are heard.

1. "Last week, Tamis the Farmer lost two sheep, but no idea to what."
(True, but not relevant)
2. "Something evil lurks in the swamps to the south of the village, mark my words."
(True)
3. "The forest folks are not to be trusted, especially that fellow Oboron."
(False, caused by prejudice)
4. "Orcs have begun troubling the area again. I hear a group of tradesmen were attacked down south."
(True, but they have never really stopped)
5. "Agatha the Witch hasn't been heard from for some time. Good riddance I say."
(True, but unrelated)
6. "I swear, I saw that wolf running on its hind legs. And it was holding a wooden staff in its front paws."
(True, it was Brêgo, but unrelated to the disappearances)
7. "I did see a dragon, flying low over the mountains. It was a dreadful thing to behold!"
(False, probably just one of the large eagles of the Misty Mountains)
8. "Deep, deep within the Mountains of Mist there is a lake. And within that lake lies a stony island. Beware of this island, and let not the rumours of ancient treasures of gold and magic lure you there, for it is the Giant's Isle! Here the Giants of Stone reign, and none will they allow to disturb their peace."
(True, see the adventure 'The Giant's Isle' in ICE #8070 'Goblin-gate and Eagle's Eyrie')

Suggestions for sub-quests:

- a. A hobbit of Thistledow (a tracker, hunter, merchant or similar) was surprised by something large and noisome while traveling the woods some way from the village. He fled the place, but left his pack, which he now wants back. He will approach the heroes regarding this, if they seem able and willing to help people out .
- b. The heroes get wind of a special herb with powerful healing abilities, from one of the inhabitants of Thistledow. They can get an approximate description of where to find this herb, but no more than that. The villagers are not interested in selling what herbs they may have, as they don't have a coin based economy, and generally don't stock these herbs anyway. As with everything else that the group may want to acquire here, they will have to trade with what other goods they possess.

7.2 Encounter Tables

Encounter	Thistledow by day	Thistledow by night	General wilderness	Agatha's Grove	Mewlip swamp
Chance	80%	5%	25%	20%	20%
Distance (miles)	0.2	0.2	4	0.5	0.5
Time (Hours)	0.25	0.25	2	1	1
Inanimate objects					
Artificial Hazard †	-	-	1-5	1-5	-
Terrain Hazard ‡	-	-	6-10	6-10	1-8
Natural Event ††	-	1-10	11-15	11-15	9-15
People					
Kenric	1-10	11-20	15-17	-	-
Old Hrodwyn	11-15	21-24	-	-	-
Beagol Riverfoam	16-20	25-30	-	-	-
Hengist Willoweed	21-25	31-40	18	-	-
Frida and Einil Willoweed	26-30	41-60	19-20	-	18-25
Magan the Boatwright	31-40	-	-	-	-
Cerdic Sunflower	41-45	61-65	21-22	-	-
Heorot Sunflower	46-50	-	-	-	-
Hrothgar Bellybutton	51-60	66-70	-	-	-
Children at play	61-70	-	-	-	-
Hobbit carrying food	71-80	-	-	-	-
Traveling merchant	-	-	23-27	19-20	27
Other traveler	-	-	28-32	21-22	28
Oboron	-	-	33-35	23-30	29
Brêgo	-	-	36-37	31	30
Agatha	-	-	38	32-45	-
Animals					
Domestic dog/cat	81-90	71-90	-	-	-
Domestic pony/goat	91-98	-	-	-	-
Gnats/mosquitoes, swarm	99-100	91-96	39-47	46-59	31-50
Leeches	-	-	48-53	60-68	51-60
Osprey	-	-	54	69-71	-
Black Bears	-	-	55-59	72-74	-
Cave Bear	-	-	60-64	-	-
Nethraich	-	-	65-71	75-84	61-75
Grey Wolves	-	-	72-73	85	76
Kingfisher	-	-	74-78	86-88	77-79
Plains snake	-	-	79-81	89	80
Monsters					
Mewlips	-	-	82-85	-	81-86
Orcs	-	-	86-90	90-94	87-95
Hummerhorns	-	97-100	91-100	95-100	96-100

† = traps, surface ruins & debris, etc.

‡ = bog, quicksand, streams, rapids, undergrowth, etc.

†† = flood, storm, unusual noises, strange discoveries (herbs, corpses, lost items, etc.), found food, etc.

NOTE: Reroll event if appropriate (e.g., fish are encountered in a dry field). See Sections 4.0-5.0 for animals and monsters.

Use of the encounter table and codes:

The GM should determine the appropriate column for the group's location and then roll for a possible encounter. The period of time covered by an encounter roll is either the **time** given on the table **or** the time it takes the group to cover the **distance** given on the table, whichever is shorter. If an encounter roll is less than or equal to the **chance** of encounter given on the table, a second roll of 1-100 is made to determine the nature of the encounter.

An encounter does not always required fight or other direct interaction; a group can avoid or placate some of the above dangers/meetings with proper action or good maneuver rolls. This table only gives the GM a guide for encounters with unusual or potentially dangerous sites or creatures.

7.3 NPC's

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	2ndary/ Missile OB	MM	Notes
NPCS FOR "THE SCOURGE OF THISTLEDOW"										
Hobbits of This- tledow										
Kenric	5	55	RL	30	no	Yes	65ss	59sl	15	Hobbit warrior
Old Hrodwyn ‡	1	20	no	10	no	no	10da	10sl	20	Hobbit
Aesk Mistbank	4	49	RL	35	no	Yes	62ss	55sl	20	Hobbit ranger
Beagol Riverfoam	1	27	no	20	no	no	15da	25sl	30	Hobbit
Hengist Willoweed	4	35	no	25	no	no	34da	50sl	35	Hobbit
Frida Willoweed ‡	1	18	no	15	no	no	15da	20sl	25	Hobbit
Einil Willoweed	1	20	no	15	no	no	15da	20sl	25	Hobbit
Magan the Boatwright	2	29	no	20	no	no	25da	30sl	30	Hobbit
Cerdic Sunflower	3	36	no	25	no	no	37da	40sl	35	Hobbit scout
Heorot Sunflower	1	22	no	20	no	no	15da	20sl	30	Hobbit
Hrothgar Belly- button	1	28	no	10	no	no	15da	20sl	20	Hobbit
Children at play	1	17	no	15	no	no	10da	20sl	25	Hobbit
Hobbit carrying food	1	23	no	15	no	no	15da	20sl	25	Hobbit
General male hobbit	1	25	no	15	no	no	15da	20sl	25	Hobbit
General female hobbit ‡	1	22	no	15	no	no	15da	20sl	25	Hobbit
People of the wilderness										
Oboron	4	50	SL	20	no	no	60ss	70/sl	35	Renegade woodsman
Agatha ‡	10	80	No	15	no	no	50Cl	20BS/ 80DS	25	Maia. Spell-user (8+ lists), 55 PP left, regenerates 1 hit/ rnd, underwater breathing. Takes crits as Large Creature. Poisonous claws (RR vs. lvl 4 or paralyzed)
Brëgo	10	180	RL	50	no	yes	150Lbi	100MCl	50	Maia in Werewolf shape. Takes crits as Large Creature.
Traveling mer- chant	3	39	SL	10	no	yes	45ss	30sb	15	Male Northman warrior
Other traveler	2	32	SL	10	no	Yes	32ss	25sb	15	Male woodman ranger
‡ = female NPC										
Codes: The statistics given describe each NPC; a more detailed description of some of the more important NPCs can be found in the mail text. Some of the codes are self-explanatory; Lvl=level, Hits, Sh=shield, MM=moving and maneuver bonus. The more complex codes are listed below.										
AT (Armour type): The two letter code gives the being's MERP armor type. No=no armor, SL=soft leather, RL=rigid leather, Ch=chain, Pl=plate.										
DB (Defensive bonus): note that defensive bonuses include stats and shield. Shield references include quality bonuses (e.g. "Y5" indicates "Yes, a +5 shield")										
Gr (Greaves): "A" and "L" are used to indicate arm and leg greaves respectively.										
OBs (Offensive bonuses): Weapon abbreviations follow the OBs; fa=falchion, ss=short sword, bs=broad sword, sc=scimitar, th=two-handed sword, ma=mace, ha=hand axe, wh=war hammer, ba=battle axe, wm=war mattock, cl=club, qs=quarter staff, da=dagger, sp=spear, ml=mounted lance, ja=javelin, pa=pole arm, sl=sling, cb=composite bow, sb=short bow, lb=long bow, lcb=light crossbow, hcb=heavy crossbow, hb=halberd, BS=Base Spell, DS=directed spell. Melee and missile offensive bonuses include the bonus for the combatant's best weapon in that category. Abbreviations for natural weapons from beast and monster table may also be used; note that these always starts with a capital letter followed by a lower case letter, whereas weapons are all in lower case and spell OBs are in capital letters only, for easy reference.										

7.4 Beasts and Monsters

Type	Lvl	#/Enc	Size	Speed	Hits	AT	DB	Attacks	Notes
Normal animals									
Black Bears	5	1-5	L	MF(75')/MF(20)	150	SL	20	65LGr/60LCI/ 40Mbi/70MBa	Nocturnal hunters
Cave Bear	12	1-5	L	MF(75')/FA(30)	300	SL	40	95Hba/90LCI/ 85LGr/90Lbi	Huge retiring creatures
Grey Wolves	3	2-12	M	FA(100')/FA(30)	80	SL	30	65Mbi/50MCI	Aggressive, attack in cooperative groups, social, do not fear men.
Kingfisher	1	1-2	T	VF(125')/FA(30)	10	No	60	20TPi	Small blue bird at rivers, eat small fish.
Nethraich	1	1-2	S	MD(50')/BF(50)	25	No	25	35SSst/poison lvl 2	Aquatic snake, protective
Osprey	1	1-2	S	FA(100')/FA(30)	30	No	25	45MCI/40SPi	Bird of prey, eat fish
Plains snake	1	1-2	S	SL(25')/VF(40)	30	No	20	40SSst/poison lvl 6	Venomous snake, aggressive
Monsters									
Hummerhorns	3	1-20	M	VF(125')/FA(30)	35	No	50	50SSst	Aggressive, resemble giant wasps
Mewlips	4	2-20	M	FA(100')/M(10)	60	No	35*	50We – 50LCI/70LGr/75Lbi	Semi-aquatic undead. *Takes half damage from non-magic weapons. Summon will o' the wisp.
Mewlip mage	10	1	M	FA(100')/M(10)	90	No	45*	80DS - 20BS - 50LCI/50LGr/75Lbi	Spell-using semi-aquatic undead. Otherwise as normal mewlips.
Orcs	3	2-10	M	FA(100')/M(10)	65	RL	30	50We/40We	Evil sadistic creatures

Codes: The statistics given describe a typical creature of that type. Most of the codes are self-explanatory:

Lvl=level, **#/Enc**=number encountered, **Size**=tiny (T), small(S), medium (M), large (L) or huge (H), **DB**=defensive bonus. The more complex statistics are described below.

Speed: speed is given in terms of Movement Speed (followed by base movement in yards)/Attack Quickness (followed by the MM bonus); C=creeping, VS=very slow, S=slow, M=medium, MF=moderately fast, F=fast, VF=very fast and BF=blindingly fast.

AT(armor type): the two letter code gives the creature's MERP armor type (No= No Armor, SL=Soft Leather, RL=Rigid Leather, Ch=Chain, PI=Plate)

Attack: Each attack code starts with the attacker's Offensive Bonus. The first letter indicates the size of the attack (except for weapons): T=tiny, S=small, M=medium, L=large and H=huge. The last two letters indicate the type of attack: Ti=tiny, Pi=pincers/beak, Ba=bash, Bi=bite, Cl=claw, Cr=crush, Gr=grapple, Ho=horn, TS=trample/stomp, St=stinger and We=weapon. These codes may differ slightly from other MERP and Rolemaster codes.

(Primary/Secondary/Tertiary): Each creature usually initiates combat using its Primary attack. Depending on the situation or success of the Primary attack, it may later use its Secondary or Tertiary attack. Attacks separated by a dash, '-' are mutually exclusive, i.e. they cannot be used in the same round.

8.0 Appendix

Handout: Rhyme

(Modified after The Tolkien Reader © p. 45-46. Several verses (4-6, 10-13 and the comment verse on the right) are not original Tolkien works.

THE MEWLIPS

The shadows where the Mewlips dwell
Are dark and wet as ink,
And slow and softly rings their bell,
As in the slime you sink.

You sink into the slime, who dare
To knock upon their door,
While down the grinning gargoyles stare
And noisome waters pour.

Beside the rotting river-strand
The drooping willows weep,
And gloomily the gorcrows stand
Croaking in their sleep.

Are you prepared to meet the doom
For Void you have decided
So they instead will fill your room,
Where once your soul resided

Lest fire sweeps away their stain
And one your soul will hold
Your hope of freedom to regain
In dreary gloom is told

With silence and a purple scar
To kin return you may
For you the town gate is ajar
To pry and prey you stay

Over the Merlock Mountains a long and
weary way,
In a mouldy valley where the trees are grey,
By a dark pool's borders without wind or
tide,
Moonless and sunless, the Mewlips hide.

The cellars where the Mewlips sit
Are deep and dank and cold
With single sickly candle lit;
And there they count their gold.

Their walls are wet, their ceilings drip;
Their feet upon the floor
Go softly with a squish-flap-flip,
As they sidle to the door.

They welcome you, their smelly spy
To them possessed by rite
For help or death you cannot cry
Their souls you cannot fight

Upon that twisted fate of men
Of being house to bile
These starving ghouls will also then
A grisly habit pile

Within their faces slim and grim
Are maws devised to eat
Yet longer still their arms will swim
To grab or claw your meat

A sickly yellow, palest glow,
The brooding eyes emit
At thought, for sure, of what they now
Will have to put on spit

They peep out slyly; through a crack
Their feeling fingers creep,
And when they've finished, in a sack
Your bones they take to keep.

Beyond the Merlock Mountains, a long and
lonely road.
Through the spider-shadows and the marsh
of Tode,
And through the wood of hanging trees and
the gallows-weed,
You go to find the Mewlips — and the
Mewlips feed.

*Extremely hazardous; plunge
into the combined evil spirit and
the victim's soul; a contest of
wills with the spirit ensues. Ir-
revocably and Forever.....!
Failure will cost your own soul.*

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Born of Hope—An Overview

by José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa
(arthadan@gmail.com) © 2009
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I think the reason why I love Professor Tolkien's works is that they offer a incredibly detailed fantasy world where individuals can change history and accomplish great deeds. Everything is possible: a lost king can rise again, little Hobbits can destroy the Dark Lord, and a young shield maiden can defeat the Witch king, as long as they have courage, faith, and perseverance.



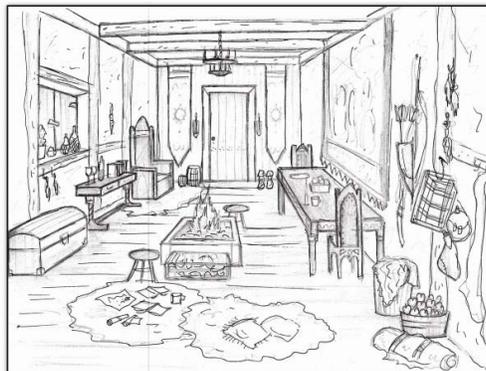
"Arathorn speaking to the Rangers" © Born of Hope

In Peter Jackson's trilogy I, for one, did miss the feeling of Professor Tolkien's writings. Then I learnt by chance about a fan film and it drew my attention immediately. A promising new take on a Middle-earth story, made not for profit but out of love for our beloved fantasy world. I see in the whole project not only a professional quality film, but a reflection of Tolkien's values of such generosity, hope, and courage against adversity and that is why I'm writing this short article.

The fan film is about people like you and me, people who love and enjoy Tolkien's books. And, as most Middle-earth role players, they wanted to tell their own unwritten tales. Role players do it in their games, but some people write their tales or even film them.

I do admire people who feel the need to tell new tales set in Tolkien's world of wonder. Not only do these people create such tales, but they also manage make them available to us, despite the many difficulties they

meet. First they will need to find a good story, epic and respectful, with the rich (and vast!) tapestry Professor Tolkien left us. Second, they must follow the spirit of his works, which is a challenging task indeed. Once they have the story in mind, and know how to keep true to the spirit of Tolkien's work, they must actually do the writing. Writing a book requires that the person creating the tale be a better than average writer, because the book,



Interior Sketch of Ranger Cabin.
(i.e. could be Dithael & Iroveren's)

- Features:
- Weathered banners and tapestries on wall showing family crests etc
 - Dry herbs, small cages, leather water bottles and weapons hanging off hooks from walls
 - Thick heavy furniture, weathered beams but still regal looking/ well carved/well made
 - Trunks, stools and chairs, practical furniture, similar in all cabins
 - Firewood stacked near fire, heavy rugs laid on the floor
 - Maps, books and scrolls lay out as if rangers are studying/ researching.
 - Ceramic jugs, pewter goblets to be scattered around. Stones of wine, apples and other fruits to be in barrels. Ranger accommodation should feel as if they are always prepared to relocate but showcase certain elements/ relics of their history, things that have travelled with them

"Interior Design of Ranger cabin" © Born of Hope

inevitably, will be compared with the Professor's. But filming your tale is even a harder venture because you will need a lot of people, from actors and cameramen to FX technicians.

As things are now on the legal side, such a film cannot be used to earn profit with it and so all the money needed to make it must come from donations. Not a big deal if you plan to film a modest tale, but then someone has dared to imagine an epic story and it is called "Born of Hope".

This tale is about the Dúnedain, the Rangers of the North, the descendants of storied sea kings of the ancient West, struggling to survive in a lonely wilderness as a dark force relentlessly bends its will toward their destruction. Yet amidst these valiant, desperate people, hope remains. The royal house endures unbroken from Isildur himself to Arathorn and his little child Aragorn. This hour-long original drama is set in the time before the War of the Ring and tells the story of the Dúnedain, before the return of the King. Inspired by only a couple of paragraphs written by Professor Tolkien in the appendices of the Lord of the Rings we follow Arathorn and Gilraen, the parents of Aragorn, from their first meeting through a turbulent time in their people's history. We will meet many well-known characters, such the son of Elrond that Peter Jackson omitted in his films, Arathorn, Gilraen, Arador



"Arathorn and Rangers facing Orcs" © Born of Hope

and young Halbarad and some new and interesting characters in a tale truly faithful to the spirit of the Professor's works.

"Great!", you may think, but it may never come to us. This promising film made by fans for fans may never be finished. They are in dire need of sponsors so they can give us this amazing tale. Paraphrasing Eowyn, we can say

"where a will wants, a way opens" and they are doing the best to make their dream true. Visit their website in www.bornofhope.com/ and judge yourself if they deserve some help. I sincerely believe they do because theirs is a labor of love. They are sacrificing their own resources and devoting their time to film a story that we, Professor Tolkien fans, will enjoy.

BORN OF HOPE

[HTTP://WWW.BORNOFHOPE.COM](http://www.bornofhope.com)

Book Review—"Isildur"

by Thomas Morwinsky

(tolwen@gmx.de) © 2009

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When you first have a look at this book, you are awed by its sheer size. A stunning 417 pages wait to immerse the avid reader in a story set in Middle-earth. As is the case with every imaginative tale, there are strengths and weaknesses. As Professor Tolkien himself said, the main weakness of The Lord of the Rings was its being too short. I guess this could also be said of this fan-fiction novel set in the closing years of the Second Age. This review shall be a detailed analysis of Isildur.



Cover art of "Isildur" © David Criado Ortiz

"Isildur" © 1997-2009 by Brian Crawford

When you begin to read the book, you see from the Preface and various comments that this is a labor of love from a real fan of Tolkien's world. Otherwise it wouldn't have been possible to fill more than 400 pages with your imagination. The book begins with credits and a fictional introduction of how its presumed original early-Fourth Age original came to us. In this it emulates Tolkien's own style to some extent, by presenting itself as a translation of an old manuscript, translated by the author. These introductory parts are followed by a preface to this Second Edition, the story itself and an index. Before going into detail, a brief synopsis of the book is in order.

Synopsis

The book starts in the closing weeks of the War of the Last Alliance with Isildur trying to recruit the Men of the Mountains (here called "Eredrim")¹ to his cause. He fails when an ambassador from Umbar preempts him, convincing the Eredrim to stay neutral in the conflict. Isildur leaves, cursing the Eredrim to their unnatural fate. Thereafter he travels through Southern Gondor, finally arriving at

Pelargir. Here he learns that the city is under constant threat from Corsairs of Umbar,² with raiding parties coming frequently right beneath the walls. Since Pelargir is unable to contribute its full strength to the war effort in Gorgoroth, Isildur discloses that the "White Fleet of Lindon" will come to assist in the maritime defense, freeing the Pelargirean troops. At these tidings, the bulk of the troops depart the city. Before the Elves arrive, however, a great fleet of the Corsairs invests Pelargir and threatens to overpower the weakened garrison.

The Fleet of Lindon finally arrives and smashes the Corsair fleet in a great naval battle. Meanwhile a council of war is held at Osgiliath. It is here that the reader first learns of the big picture: Minas Ithil is once more in the hands of the Enemy (the Ringwraiths), while the siege of the Dark Tower is about to collapse due to exhaustion of the troops there and with no apparent progress in the siege efforts. It is planned to re-take Minas Ithil and lure Sauron into the open where he can be defeated. It is this attack on Minas Ithil for which the troops of Pelargir (and the Eredrim as well) are so desperately needed.

The attack on Minas Ithil does not go fully as planned, as the Ringwraiths are able to retreat into the Citadel. It is in this combat that the Three Rings are used as means of "fear-repellent" magic against the Nazgûl. This also serves (as we learn later) to draw Sauron's attention towards the Rings and lure him out of Barad-dûr. It is hoped that he will try to capture the Three in the process.

After the partial success at Minas Ithil, Isildur leaves for Gorgoroth. It is here that, after some time, Sauron breaks the siege lines and marches towards Orodruin. The army of the Alliance follows him, and the final decisive combat on the slopes of Orodruin ensues. It is also reported that the Ringwraiths have escaped from Minas Ithil, overpowering Galadriel with their terrible presence. She alone of the bearers of the Three stayed behind and tried to contain their terror with the help of Nenyia.

The following chapters deal with the cleansing of Mordor and the re-ordering of the

realm of Gondor after the victory. The final chapter is devoted to the Disaster of the Gladden Fields where Isildur loses his life together with the One Ring.

Review

To do this book full justice, I think one has to view (or read) it with two important points in mind. First, there is the story itself as written. It is a good story in itself, with a dramatic arc that keeps the reader occupied, even though he knows the general course of events. In this respect I deem *Isildur* to be well-above average fan-fiction. The following passage from the final conflict highlights this quite well.

Gil-galad saw all this through a red haze of agony. He had slain Sauron, but he knew that the task was not yet completed. With the last of his strength, he dragged himself to Sauron's smoldering body. One black hand remained unburned, and on it shone yet the One. Gil-galad raised himself on one elbow and reached to take the Ring from Sauron's hand, but the instant he touched it he screamed. Sauron's body burned still with the heat of his evil and his malice, and it seared Gil-galad's hand to the bone.

Isildur p. 340

To go even further, I'd argue that with *The Lord of the Rings* alone, this book would have been mostly a really great "filling of the gaps" (apart from a few details) that were tentatively left untold by the Professor in his *opus magnum*.

This leads to the second point I deem necessary to judge this book, and this is its incongruence with **all of the corpus** of Tolkien's work. To quote the author, "*Together in San Diego in 1976 we developed the plot outline and sketched out the major characters.*" (p.1). This phase of laying the foundations is clearly recognizable in the present story as well. Key elements of the plot outline do not fit very well with what subsequently became available from *The Silmarillion* (1977), *Unfinished Tales* (1980), *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (1981) and *The History of Middle-earth* series (1983-1996). Some open and extremely obvious contradictions were present already in the First Edition, published in 1997. This was all the more astonishing, as all the above mentioned sources were available at the time (some key ones for more than 15 years).

In any case, this Second Edition is presumed to have at last amended such shortcomings as:

- The duration of Isildur's stay in Gondor after the end of the War of the Last Alliance and his death on the Gladden Fields.
- The existence (or better non-existence) of the city of Dol Amroth in Isildur's time (at least under this name)
- The nature and rôle of Amroth (the Elf)
- The history of Galadriel and Celeborn, their rôle in Lórien during the Second Age; especially at the end of the Age.
- Some details of the combat upon Orodruin that finally defeated Sauron
- The course of events at the Disaster of the Gladden Fields
- The whereabouts of Isildur's three elder sons during the War of the Last Alliance.
- A vast amount of small details, from the right color of Isildur's standard to the appearance, of Orcs, removing from them animal traits like snake or bird features.

All this seems a bit strange, as I would expect that these issues were already rectified in the First Edition, due to its publication date in relation to the publication of the relevant sources. But even with these alterations, the story arc is defective in terms of adherence to Tolkien's work. It is less the small the details, but some very basic assumptions of the plot-line. Some examples for this are:

- The "White Fleet of Lindon" (**minor to medium** issue)
- Usage of the Three as part of the war effort (**major** issue)
- The character of Isildur (**minor** issue)
- The background of the Mouth of Sauron (**medium** issue)
- The recruitment of the Oathbreakers almost at the end of the War of the Last Alliance (**medium** issue)
- The Last Alliance is on the verge of collapse because of their inability to reach Sauron in Barad-dûr (**pivotal** issue)

I'll make some short comments to illustrate my point of view.

The "White Fleet of Lindon" as a crucial element in saving Pelargir from the Corsairs of Umbar is in my opinion problematic for several reasons. The first objection concerns the "feeling" or style of the passage; the idea of a hostile fleet threatening the southern provinces and thwarted in a moment unlooked-for seems like it has been largely copied from *The Lord of the Rings*, apart from plot details. In addition I have two points that aim at "internal" problems of the concept:

1. It assumes that Lindon had a "fleet" in the sense of a navy and
2. This fleet is said to have fought "pitched battles" already (p.156)

Now, from all what we know from Tolkien, the White Ships were purely vessels to travel to Eressëa. Due to Lindon's remote location and a lack of naval power for the enemies of Lindon, there never was a need for a navy. The description of these ships from Tolkien are basically more of the open Norse (e.g. *knorr* or *drakkar*) design (cf. *J.R.R. Tolkien – Artist and Illustrator*) rather than the holk, cog or even galleon-like types that *Isildur* suggests (p. 150, 152, 155/56). That this supposed fleet already fought pitched battles is an interesting speculation, but in my opinion nowhere substantiated (or even hinted at) by Tolkien, which makes the whole idea even less likely. Thus, in my opinion, both the concept of the fleet as such as well as its design of it seem flawed.

The use of the Three as a tool to lure Sauron to action is problematic as well. Tolkien stated quite clearly that the Three remained hidden as long as Sauron held the One. Every use of the Three during this period would lay bare their deeds and the intentions of their wielders to Sauron (even if he would not be able to control them outright upon first use).³ The use of the Three is not a convincing plot device to **lure** Sauron out of his fortress.

He would have penetrated the ruse immediately.

In the scenario as laid out by the author, there would absolutely be no advantage to Sauron in leaving his fortress. If he would just sit in his tower until the Alliance breaks down by itself, he will win the war without any risk. Then the Three would come under his control

anyway within a short time. Thus, even when he perceives their presence, he has – under Brian’s assumption of the impregnable fortress – absolutely no reason to leave its safety. Time works for him, and a premature sally can only worsen his position and jeopardize the otherwise safe victory. Simply waiting will get him a secure victory. Since we know that Sauron was a very methodical and careful planner and no gambler, this whole construction is flawed.

The character of Isildur is an interesting issue too, because it offers quite some room for interpretation. We have, however, an original note of Tolkien where he stresses Isildur’s less noble character:

*There he [Isildur] assumed the Elendilmir as King of Arnor, and proclaimed his sovereign lordship over all the Dúnedain in the North and in the South; for he was a man of great pride and vigour. **Unfinished Tales. The Disaster of the Gladden Fields***

In contrast, characters like Elendur or (later) Cirion or Aragorn are described as being noble, gentle-minded, modest and of little pride; stressing especially the latter as a positive character trait. In the case of Isildur, we could conclude that he was a very wilful man, used to being obeyed without question by his retainers, and because of this generally getting his way. At least this is a likely extrapolation for a “proud” king. Please also compare the character of Ar-Pharazôn, who is also described as being extremely proud. Returning to Isildur, this less than admirable trait need not detract from his exploits and merits. In a time of such peril, strong and firm leadership was pivotal to the survival of the realm of Gondor. Thus a man like Isildur was obviously really needed, as he was also very likely an able military leader. A novel with his name as title should take this into account and stress the image of a proud king, who is used to get his will. This would also make a dramatic impact, when at the Gladden Fields, this great pride has been finally broken and humiliated. All this is present in the book, though I would have wished for a stronger emphasis on it. This would have made Isildur a more controversial and less sympathetic – and therefore more interesting – character.

Brian introduces an interesting idea regarding the Mouth of Sauron, who is so prominently described in *The Lord of the Rings*. He makes him the ambassador from Umbar that also serves as some kind of nemesis for Isildur within the book:

*“You will never be an emperor — you will always be his lackey. I lay a doom upon you. You shall live long in the service of Sauron, but you shall ever diminish until you are naught but his mindless tool. All shall forget your name — even yourself. You think yourself yet a Man, but you are only the Mouth of Sauron!” **Isildur, p.333***

This interpretation probably makes use of the following passage in *The Lord of the Rings*:

The rider was robed all in black, and black was his lofty helm; yet this was no Ringwraith but a living man. The Lieutenant of the Tower of Barad-dûr he was, and his name is remembered in no tale; for he himself had forgotten it, and he said: ‘I am the Mouth of Sauron.’ But it is told that he was a renegade, who came of the race of those that are named the Black Númenóreans; for they established their dwellings in Middle-earth during the years of Sauron’s domination, and they worshipped him, being enamoured of evil knowledge. And he entered the service of the Dark Tower when it first rose again,...
The Return of the King. The Black Gate Opens

Beside the fact that “emperor” is a very atypical term for Middle-earth⁴, the idea is not convincing. It is a nice and entertaining thought that Isildur not only cursed the Oathbreakers to their earthly hell, but that he also (in one go, so to say) cursed this renegade Númenórean to a millennial existence. This interpretation is most likely based on the quote above where it is said that he (the Mouth) entered Sauron’s service “when the Dark Tower first rose again”. Here Brian clearly means this figurative as “when the **power** of the Dark Tower first rose again”. This has far-flung consequences, as with this he topples everything that Tolkien ever wrote and developed concerning the fate of man in Arda: It is possible to cheat natural fate and achieve serial longevity, but this is **not** possible as a normal living man.

The following two passages from *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* illustrate his thoughts quite well:

*Longevity or counterfeit ‘immortality’ (true immortality is beyond Ea) is the chief bait of Sauron — it leads the small to a Gollum, and the great to a Ringwraith. **Letters, #212 (1958)***

Please note that “the Great” are cheated into Ringwraith-status. It may be thought that a two-part “mechanism” could achieve this: Isildur’s curse containing his spirit in Arda while Sauron conserved the bodily form. Now, this might be easy in a “standard” fantasy setting, but Middle-earth is less standardized. The following passage highlights quite nicely the limitations even of the greater Ainur in Arda to whom, in comparison, Sauron was far weaker:

*The Valar had neither the power nor the right to confer ‘immortality’ upon them [mortals]. **Letters, #325 (1971)***

Of course Sauron would not care about the right, but with the Valar lacking the power, it is out of question he could do so. Additionally, in this special case a granting of an “immortal” body would not be possible, because at this stage (when Isildur uttered his curse) Sauron was occupied with preparing his combat against the Alliance leaders. And afterwards he was defeated for a millennium and unable to provide his underling any “magical” assistance (unless something is construed to make this happen of course).

When a man is made unnaturally longeval, he either becomes a creature like the Oathbreakers or Nazgûl. If you interpret the passage above literally (e.g. “Dark Tower” meaning the actual re-building of the fortress-complex in the late Third Age), it suddenly becomes fully compatible, as this would make the Mouth about 80-90 years old, which is absolutely in order for a human. In addition, this also is in accordance with the remainder of Tolkien’s *corpus* regarding the matter of manish longevity. Thus the first interpretation is a good example for a point of view with only *The Lord of the Rings* available⁵ and coming fully into conflict with all further writings published thereafter.

Part of the plot relies on the – failed – recruitment of the later Oathbreakers by Isildur at this crucial time. For the story arc, it provides a good start to illustrate the desperate situation of the Last Alliance, when they have to recruit some reserves that had not yet been tapped. This is, however, in contrast already to *The Lord of the Rings*:

[Aragorn speaking]: For at Erech there stands yet a black stone that was brought, it was said, from Númenor by Isildur; and it was set upon a hill, and upon it the King of the Mountains swore allegiance to him in the beginning of the realm of Gondor. But when Sauron returned and grew in might again, Isildur summoned the Men of the Mountains to fulfil their oath, and they wouldnot: for they had worshipped Sauron in the Dark Years. "Then Isildur said to their king: "Thou shalt be the last king. And if the West prove mightier thanthy Black Master, this curse I lay upon thee and thy folk: to rest never until your oath is fulfilled. For this war will last through years uncounted, and you shall be summoned once again ere the end." **RotK. The Passing of the Grey Company (my emphasis)**

The return of Sauron is clearly defined as the time when the Númenóreans noticed his renewed presence in Mordor. As the War of the Last Alliance began several decades after this event, it is obvious that Sauron used the intervening years to re-build his empire that had been shattered in the wake of his humiliation by Ar-Pharazôn. Thus the last moment in this period after Sauron's return – when he **grew** in might again – was before the battle of Dagorlad where his ability of effective power-projection was utterly shattered and he had to use his fortress to compensate for his crippled armies. Additionally, the wording of the passage strongly connects the return of Sauron, his subsequent rise in power and the oath. Through this grammatical connection, Tolkien makes clear that all these events stand in close temporal connection. A summons at the end of the War, when Sauron is almost defeated, is quite far away from all these events.

One may say that Sauron was several times on the rise during these 110 years (122 if you go up to the story's year) and thus the quote does not say that much. But this disregards the connection of several events as mentioned in the paragraph above. In addition, it supposes (without any textual evidence) something and

then in turn uses this assumption of proof that the theory is correct. Such circularity is hardly convincing.

My final point is related to the previous and also the most important, as it touches the very foundation of the whole work. This is the assumption presented by Brian that the Last Alliance was on the verge of collapse and that Sauron was sitting very comfortably in his secure tower while the besieging forces were having a rough time with the unbeatable fortifications of the Barad-dûr. Pivotal to my criticism is the following passage found in *The Silmarillion*:

But at the last the siege was so strait that Sauron himself came forth;...
The Silmarillion. Akallabêth

This small passage is, in my opinion, clear evidence that Sauron did not emerge from his comfortable and secure fortress (or was lured out by the Three) at a time of his own choosing, but that he was **forced** to due to his rapidly deteriorating military position.⁶ That the "siege was so strait" is beyond doubt the expression of extraordinary military pressure (e.g. by breaching vital defenses or exhausted supplies in the fortress) that made it impossible to hold the fortress significantly longer in the face of the besieging forces.

This is of course an important point, as it would render moot one of the basic premises of the book; namely the desperate situation of the Last Alliance trying to lure Sauron out as a last chance of victory; and this compared to the relative comfort of Sauron's position. *The Akallabêth* proves the reverse.

Against this, one could treat this passage as a victor's historiography, where the events are bent so that those who won the war are shown in a positive light (as was and is so often the case in the real world). The quote above simply was a lie or at least palliation of the real events and, in reality, Sauron was not really threatened. This line of argumentation is a very dangerous path that I deem unjustified and somewhat dishonest (though understandable in this case). In my opinion the most basic stipulation in all serious Middle-earth-related discussions must be that Tolkien's texts represent the (historical) truth (unless he explicitly says it might not be so). If you allow for a relativization, it becomes possible to bend every event in every direction that is wished for. Following this logic, it is possible to argue that all the events told in *The Lord of the Rings* are

heavily biased (and sometimes outright forged) victor's propaganda as well. Then the "Free Peoples" were nothing more than a bunch of reactionary monarchists holding on to their old and outdated privileges and suppressing a reform-orientated republican and democratic movement led by Sauron, who was demonized as a "Dark Lord" by Númenórean propaganda. And since the reactionaries won, they also wrote the histories that Professor Tolkien re-discovered and translated... As you see, it is always possible to find a very logical explanation and convincing arguments that it was exactly as **I want** it to be.

For this reason, there is no room for relativizing Tolkien's stories as not reporting the true events.

Conclusions

Isildur is a good novel from the fan-fiction genre, well written in itself. It must also be stated that it was not written with a very close look on Tolkien's thoughts on the matter in mind. This is probably to a great degree because of the story's conception even before the *Silmarillion* was published. Thus *Isildur* clearly retains its pre-*Silmarillion* basis. In its core the book is still a mid-1970s fan-fiction with all the accompanying deficits in terms of current Tolkien-lore. All alterations until now were necessary but remain largely cosmetic. For these reasons, it cannot be said to be based on "extensive Tolkien research", but better on "extensive *The Lord of the Rings* research plus a bit further Tolkien research". Because of these very roots in *the Lord of the Rings* alone, a couple of interpretations do not sit very well with post-*Lord of the Rings* publications. Since some of the major points I mentioned above would invalidate almost the whole foundation of the plot, it is understandable that an alteration in this area is highly unlikely. It is not really necessary though. I do not want to slam the book. It – and Brian – have received flames in the past and such behaviour is always unacceptable. Serious and well-mannered criticism on the other hand is both necessary and always acceptable. *Isildur* is without doubt a labor of love from someone really enthusiastic about *The Lord of the Rings*.

What I **do** advise is reading it from the right angle. It should not be seen as a very close interpretation of Tolkien's world, as it isn't one. If you don't see it as fan-fiction with the claim to be based on heavy scrutiny of all

available sources and a very close interpretation of these, but more as a “liberal” vision (e.g. like “based on motifs of J.R.R. Tolkien’s world”), I can heartily recommend it. In this case you are likely to really enjoy its dense atmosphere.

Where to buy *Isildur*

English version:

<http://www.lulu.com/content/2464632>
(hardcover)

<http://www.lulu.com/content/2537661>
(paperback)

<http://www.lulu.com/commerce/index.php?fbuyProduct=3856465> (Download)

Spanish translation:

<http://www.lulu.com/content/libro-de-tapa-dura/isildur/6513557> (hardcover)

<http://www.lulu.com/content/libro-tapa-blanda/isildur/6513710> (paperback)

Reviewer: Thomas Morwinsky

Notes

1. The term is derived from 1st edition MERP. It was corrected to *Orodbedhrim* in Southern Gondor and other 2nd edition publications.
2. An anachronistic term; it was not coined until Castamir’s party occupied Umbar after their defeat in the Kin-strife.
3. See my article on the Rings of Power in *Other Minds, Issue 3* for more information on these items. As he would become aware of the actions and intentions of the wearers. This ability of Sauron to read the thoughts of the other ring-wearers while wearing the One is clearly documented. Additionally, he sees everything that is done with the help of the Nine, Seven and Three:

“And while he [Sauron] wore the One Ring he could perceive all the things that were done by means of the lesser rings, and he could see and govern the very thoughts of those that wore them.” *Silmarillion. Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age*

4. To my knowledge Tolkien never uses it anywhere. In addition it implies another authority beyond that of a king (e.g. the Pope in the real world). Tolkien is very careful to avoid the word “emperor” — both for his “good” and “bad” guys.
5. And even this is debatable, as the dates of (re-) building of the Barad-dûr were already provided in the Appendix B of *The Lord of the Rings*.
6. It is only be logical that the Alliance was losing fighting strength as well, but not as fast and serious as Sauron.



"Then Ilúvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.'"

- Ainulindalë (The Music of the Ainur)

The Silmarillion

by J.R.R. Tolkien

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Appendix A:

Tables for “Númenórean Longevity”

Legend

- The numbers in red in all tables are extrapolated based on the arguments given in the text. These extrapolated numbers were developed to even the out the dates given by Tolkien when they were skewed by unnatural causes of death. These hypothetical lifespans in red are extrapolated by using the spans of their father and son (or nearest other kin) to find a workable and plausible lifespan for them.
- An “†” marks an unnatural death of the person in question in all tables.
- For the *House of Dol Amroth*: Please note that the half-elven Galador had a shorter lifespan than both his father and five of his six successors (all fully “mannish”). For later calculations, both the Line of the Stewards and those of Dol Amroth are grouped together, since they represent (lifespan-wise) the same group (pure “common” Númenóreans)
- The “full” lifespan of some of the Rohiric kings has been estimated as above, so that the average full span is about 81 years and thus in accordance with Tolkien’s statement quoted above.

The Line of Elros – The Kings of Númenor
(from *Unfinished Tales*)

#	King	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Elros	-58	442	500	515
2	Vardamir	61	471	410	425
3	Tar-Amandil	192	603	411	426
4	Tar-Elendil	350	751	401	416
5	Tar-Meneldur	543	942	399	414
6	Tar-Aldarion	700	1098	398	413
7	Tar-Ancalime	873	1285	412	427
8	Tar-Anárion	1003	1404	401	416
9	Tar-Súríon	1174	1574	400	415
10	Tar-Telperien	1320	1731	411	426
11	Tar-Minastir	1474	1873	399	414
12	Tar-Ciryatan	1634	2035	401	416
13	Tar-Atanamir	1800	2221	421	421
14	Tar-Ancalimon	1986	2386	400	400
15	Tar-Telemmaite	2136	2526	390	390
16	Tar-Vanimelde	2277	2637	360	360
17	Tar-Alcarin	2406	2737	331	331
18	Tar-Calmacil	2516	2825	309	309
19	Tar-Ardamin	2618	2899	281	281
20	Ar-Adûnakhôr	2709	2962	253	253
21	Ar-Zimrathôn	2798	3033	235	235
22	Ar-Sakalthôr	2876	3102	226	226
23	Ar-Gimilzôr	2960	3177	217	217
24	Tar-Palantir	3033	3255	222	222
25	Ar-Pharazôn †	3118	3319	201	209

The Isildurioni – Kings of Arnor, Arthedain
and the Chieftain of the Dúnedain
(from *The Peoples of Middle-earth*)

#	King	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Elendil †	3119*	3441*	322	415
2	Isildur †	3209*	2	232	350
3	Valandil	-11	249	260	260
4	Eldacar	87	339	252	252
5	Arantar	185	435	250	250
6	Tarkil	280	515	235	235
7	Tarondor	372	602	230	230
8	Valandur †	462	652	190	228
9	Elendur	552	777	225	225
10	Eärendur	640	861	221	221
11	Amlaith	726	946	220	220
12	Beleg	811	1029	218	218
13	Mallor	895	1110	215	215
14	Celepharn	979	1191	212	212
15	Celebrindor	1062	1272	210	210
16	Malvegil	1144	1349	205	205
17	Argeleb I †	1226	1356	130	203
18	Arveleg I †	1309	1409	100	201
19	Araphor	1391	1589	198	198
20	Argeleb II	1473	1670	197	197
21	Arvegil	1553	1743	190	190
22	Arveleg II	1633	1813	180	180
23	Araval	1711	1891	180	180
24	Araphant	1789	1964	175	175
25	Arvedui †	1864	1974	110	172
26	Aranarth	1938	2106	168	168
27	Arahail	2012	2177	165	165
28	Aranuir	2084	2247	163	163
29	Aravir	2156	2319	163	163
30	Aragorn I †	2227	2327	100	161
31	Araglas	2296	2455	159	159
32	Arahad I	2365	2523	158	158
33	Aragost	2431	2588	157	157
34	Aravorn	2497	2654	157	157
35	Arahad II	2563	2719	156	156
36	Arassuil	2628	2784	156	156
37	Arathorn I	2693	2848	155	155
38	Argonui	2757	2912	155	155
39	Arador †	2820	2930	110	154
40	Arathorn II †	2873	2933	60	154
41	Aragorn II	2931	120‡	210	225

All dates are Third Age unless noted otherwise:

* - denotes Second Age

‡ - denotes Fourth Age

**The Anárioni – The Kings of Gondor (from
The Peoples of Middle-earth)**

#	King	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Elendil †	3119*	3441*	322	415
2	Anárion †	3219*	3440*	221	340
3	Meneldil	3319*	158	280	280
4	Cemendur	-42	238	279	279
5	Eärendil	48	324	276	276
6	Anardil	136	411	275	275
7	Ostoher	222	492	270	270
8	Rómendacil I †	310	541	231	270
9	Turambar	397	667	270	270
10	Atanatar I	480	748	268	268
11	Siriondil	570	830	260	260
12	Falastur	654	913	259	259
13	Eárnil I †	736	936	200	257
14	Ciryandil †	820	1015	195	254
15	Hyarmendacil I	899	1149	250	250
16	Atanatar II	977	1226	249	249
17	Narmacil I	1049	1294	245	245
18	Calmacil	1058	1304	246	246
19	Rómendacil II	1126	1366	240	240
20	Valacar	1194	1432	238	238
21	Eldacar	1255	1490	235	235
22	Castamir †	1259	1447	188	200
23	Aldamir †	1330	1540	210	232
24	Vinyarion	1391	1621	230	230
25	Minardil †	1454	1634	180	228
26	Telemnar †	1516	1636	120	225
27	Tarondor	1577	1798	221	221
28	Telumehtar	1632	1850	218	218
29	Narmacil II †	1684	1856	172	210
30	Calimehtar	1736	1936	200	200
31	Ondoher †	1787	1944	157	197
32	Eárnil II	1883	2043	160	160
33	Eárnur †	1928	2050	122	157

All dates are Third Age unless noted otherwise:
* - denotes Second Age

**The Hurinionath -
The Stewards of Gondor
(from The Peoples of Middle-earth)**

#	Steward	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Pelendur	1879	1998	119	119
2	Vorondil	1919	2029	110	110
3	Mardil	1960	2080	120	120
4	Eradan	1999	2116	117	117
5	Herion	2037	2148	111	111
6	Belegorn	2074	2204	130	130
7	Húrin I	2124	2244	120	120
8	Túrin I	2165	2278	113	113
9	Hador	2245	2395	150	150
10	Barahir	2290	2412	122	122
11	Dior	2328	2435	107	107
12	Denethor I	2375	2477	102	102
13	Boromir †	2410	2489	79	115
14	Cirion	2449	2567	118	118
15	Hallas	2480	2605	125	125
16	Húrin II	2515	2628	113	113
17	Belecthor I	2545	2655	110	110
18	Orodreth	2576	2685	109	109
19	Ecthelion I	2600	2698	98	98
20	Egalmoth	2626	2743	117	117
21	Beren	2655	2763	108	108
22	Beregond	2700	2811	111	111
23	Belecthor II	2752	2872	120	120
24	Thorondir	2782	2882	100	100
25	Túrin II	2815	2914	99	99
26	Turgon	2855	2953	98	98
27	Ecthelion II	2886	2984	98	98
28	Denethor II †	2930	3019	89	115
29	Faramir	2983	82*	120	120

All dates are Third Age unless noted otherwise:
* - denotes Fourth Age

**The House of Dol Amroth
(from The Peoples of Middle-earth)**

#	Lord	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Imrazór	1950	2076	126	126
2	Galador	2004	2129	125	125
3	...	2060	2203	143	143
4	...	2120	2254	134	134
5	...	2172	2299	127	127
6	...	2225	2348	123	123
7	...	2274	2400	126	126
8	...	2324	2458	134	134
9	...	2373	2498	125	125
10	...	2418	2540	122	122
11	...	2463	2582	119	119
12	...	2505	2623	118	118
13	...	2546	2660	114	114
14	...	2588	2701	113	113
15	...	2627	2733	106	106
16	... †	2671	2746	75	110
17	... †	2709	2799	90	112
18	...	2746	2859	113	113
19	...	2785	2899	114	114
20	Aglahad	2827	2932	105	105
21	Angelimir	2866	2977	111	111
22	Adrahil	2917	3010	93	93
23	Imrahil	2955	33*	99	99
24	Elphir	2987	66*	100	100
25	Alphros	3017	94*	98	98

All dates Third Age unless noted otherwise:
* - denotes Fourth Age

**Kings of the Mark
(from The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A)**

#	King	Year of		lifespan	
		Birth	Death	real	full
1	Eorl †	2485	2545	60	84
2	Brego †	2512	2570	58	73
3	Aldor the Old	2544	2645	101	101
4	Freä	2570	2659	89	89
5	Freäwine	2594	2680	86	86
6	Goldwine	2619	2699	80	80
7	Déor	2644	2718	74	74
8	Gram	2668	2741	73	73
9	Helm †	2691	2759	68	79
10	Freáláf	2726	2798	72	72
11	Brytta	2752	2842	90	90
12	Walda †	2780	2851	71	79
13	Folca †	2804	2864	60	80
14	Folcwine	2830	2903	73	73
15	Fengel	2870	2953	83	83
16	Thengel	2905	2980	75	75
17	Théoden †	2948	3019	71	79
18	Éomer	2991	63*	93	93

All dates are Third Age unless noted otherwise:
* - denotes Fourth Age

Númenórean lifespans in the Second Age

Year of birth	Ârúwanâi		Faithful	
	royal	common	Lords of Andúnië	common
2000	400	221	350	230
2050	397	220	345	221
2100	392	217	342	220
2150	385	214	339	217
2200	377	211	336	214
2250	368	207	333	211
2300	357	203	330	207
2350	346	198	327	203
2400	333	192	324	198
2450	321	186	321	192
2500	308	181	318	186
2550	295	175	315	181
2600	282	169	312	182
2650	269	163	309	181
2700	257	158	306	180
2750	246	153	303	178
2800	236	149	301	177
2850	227	145	299	177
2900	219	142	297	176
2950	213	139	295	175
3000	209	137	293	174
3050	208	136	291	173
3100	207	136	289	172
3150		136		171
3200		136		170
3250		134		169
3300		132		168
3350		131		
3400		129		
3450		127		

Númenórean lifespans in the Third Age

Year of birth	Ārûwanâi		Arnorian Dúnedain		Gondorian Dúnedain	
	pure descent	mingled descent	kings	common	kings	common
1	131	127	261	159	278	167
50	130	125	259	159	276	166
100	129	123	257	158	275	166
150	128	121	254	157	273	165
200	126	119	252	156	272	164
250	125	117	250	155	271	164
300	124	116	248	154	269	163
350	123	114	245	153	268	163
400	122	112	243	152	267	162
450	120	110	241	151	265	161
500	119	108	239	151	264	161
550	118	106	236	149	263	160
600	117	104	234	148	261	159
650	116	102	232	147	260	159
700	114	101	230	147	259	159
750	113	99	227	145	257	158
800	112	97	225	144	255	157
850	111	95	223	143	254	157
900	110	93	221	142	252	156
950	108	91	219	142	250	155
1000	107	89	217	141	249	155
1050	106	87	214	139	247	154
1100	105	86	212	138	245	153
1150	104	84	210	138	242	152
1200	102	82	208	137	240	151
1250	101	80	205	135	238	150
1300	100	80	203	134	235	149
1350	99	80	201	133	232	147
1400	98	80	199	133	230	147
1450	96	80	196	131	227	145
1500	95	80	194	130	224	144
1550	94	80	189	128	220	142
1600	93	80	185	126	217	141
1650	92	80	182	125	213	139
1700	90	80	179	124	209	137
1750	89	80	176	122	205	135
1800	88	80	174	121	201	133
1850	87	80	172	121	196	131
1900	86	80	169	119	192	130
1950	84	80	167	118		126
2000	83	80	166	118		125
2050	82	80	164	117		123
2100	81	80	163	116		122
2150	80	80	161	115		121
2200	80	80	160	115		120
2250	80	80	159	115		119
2300	80	80	158	114		118
2350	80	80	158	114		117
2400	80	80	157	114		116
2450	80	80	157	114		115
2500	80	80	156	113		114
2550	80	80	156	113		112
2600	80	80	156	113		111
2650	80	80	155	113		110
2700	80	80	155	113		109
2750	80	80	155	113		108
2800	80	80	155	113		107
2850	80	80	155	113		106
2900	80	80	155	113		105
2950	80	80	155	113		104
3000	80	80	155	113		103

Appendix B: “Dúnadan Longevity”

DÚNADAN LONGEVITY

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The superhuman lifespan of the Dúnedain is (or should be) a matter of concern to both gamers and game designers. Players who have Dúnadan characters will naturally be interested in knowing how long those characters can expect to live. As for game designers, imagine the profound social, cultural and political consequences of a gene-pool which produces families in which multiple generations mature and coexist for decades or even centuries.

The MERP rulebook states that Dúnedain live 100-300 years. Though technically correct as an abstract figure, this range can be wildly misleading when applied to most Dúnedain living in the temporal settings traditionally favored by MERP. The aim of this brief article is to provide a set of guidelines for achieving greater precision and appropriateness in assigning lifespan limits to Dúnadan characters or societies.

The main difficulty in using a range as broad as 100-300 is that it is ahistorical. It ignores or sidesteps one of the most important features of Dúnadan longevity: its decline over the course of history. Tolkien used the theme of declining longevity to signify the gradual withdrawal of grace originally given to the Númenóreans. As they became preoccupied with the fear of Death and fell into wicked ways in their efforts to escape it, their lifespan lessened.

This element of Tolkien’s mythology is well-known. What has not been clear in the past to students of the *legendarium* is the **rate** at which this decline advanced. Tolkien’s annualistic “Line of Elros,” published in 1980 in *Unfinished Tales*, provided royal birth and death dates for the Second Age rulers of Númenor, but the corresponding ruler lists for the realms of the Third Age in Appendix A of RotK give only death dates, not birth dates. Consequently, with few exceptions, we were in near total ignorance of *royal* (to say nothing of aristocratic or popular) Dúnadan longevity for the Third Age. This dearth of data necessarily hampered attempts to predict Dúnadan life expectancy for the principal MERP time settings.

It was not until 1996, with the publication of *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (HoMe XII), that it was discovered that Tolkien had, in fact, gone to great lengths to calculate royal longevity for the entire Third Age, including the lifespans of the Ruling Stewards and the Princes of Belfalas. Now, at last, we have enough information to postulate the life expectancy for Dúnedain for any time period.

But how are royal and non-royal longevity to be related, and what is the basis of this distinction? In the “Akallabêth,” it is stated that the royal Line of Elros “had long life even according to the measure of the Númenóreans (Sil.261).” Christopher Tolkien records a note of his father which quantified this gap [continues next column]:

The ‘end of vigour’ for the descendants of Elros came (before the waning of their life-span set in) about the four hundredth year, or somewhat earlier, whereas for those not of that line it came towards the two hundredth year, or somewhat later. (UT.224 n.1)

This non-royal limit of 200+ may be seen to correspond with Tolkien’s statement in Appendix A that the Númenórean lifespan was “in the beginning thrice that of lesser Men (RotK.315)” if we assume that Tolkien conceived of ca. 80 as an average “natural” lifespan for humans.

If we represent the above-quoted passage by positing that non-royals have, on the average, 0.6 times the longevity of the Line of Elros, and if we assume that the longevity rate for non-royals declined more or less proportionally to that of the Elrosians, we can then use the royal lifespans detailed by Tolkien to extrapolate plausible life expectancy for Dúnedain at any period in history.

A related demographic matter that can be explored through knowledge of birth dates is the average marriage (or at least child-bearing) age for Dúnadan royals. Tolkien does not always provide complete data on this (since he is concerned mainly with the *succession* of rulers, not a list of *all* the children they engendered). Nevertheless, he tells us enough to make some informed observations. (This information appears on the insert sheets.)

The insert pages provide the complete data on which my calculations are based. The table that follows is a rough and ready summary, based on 100-year periods. To determine the life expectancy of a given non-royal, refer to the century in which that individual was born. Note that it is impossible to determine with certainty whether these figures should be treated as average or maximum life expectancies. This is up to the GM to decide.

One further note. It is often assumed that Elven blood boosts longevity. (The MERP rulebook suggests that “mortal” Half-elves should live 250-500 years.) An examination of the longevity table for the Line of Galador (the single reported instance of an Elf-Human union in Tolkien apart from the “big three”) refutes this, because Galador (whose mortal fa-

ther, Imrazôr, took to wife the Silvan Elf Mithrellas) actually lived one year *less* than his father. Moreover, Galador's son, grandson and great-grandson all lived *longer* than him, though their Elven heritage was necessarily more diluted. As a whole, Galador's descendants evince no greater longevity than the House of Hador (the Ruling Stewards), which had no Elven blood.

Notes on the Insert Tables

† = lifespan unnaturally cut short, and is therefore an unsuitable basis for extrapolating non-royal longevity

Children—indicates years in which the person is known to have begotten a child (not necessarily for the first time). This gives us an idea of how old Dúnedain could be and yet still be able to engender children (though there is no way of knowing whether this approximates a *terminus ad quem*; also, all of the data tells us about males only) We don't know whether the women were substantially younger. However, the regularity of this age in many periods suggests rather strongly that it indicates the year of (or immediately after) marriage.

Non-royals—an abstract calculation based on the formula age of ruler x .6, rounded to the nearest five-year value. This may not always be a reliable indicator of Dúnedain lifespan. It does, however, give a reasonably plausible picture of the *rate* at which the blessing of supernatural longevity *declined* to "normal" human levels. A look at the lifespans of the two non-royal houses known (of Húrin and Galador respectively) shows quite clearly that at some point the mathematical consistency of gradual withdrawal of longevity breaks down, subsiding into "random" natural longevity. On this model, the Dúnedain of Arthedain reached "normal" human lifespans by either TA 1200-1400 or TA 2200 (depending on whether you interpret the non-royal figures as averages or maximums). In Gondor the decline to normalcy was reached by TA 1700-1800. Note, though, that Hador, ruling steward of the 2200s, was the last man of Gondor recorded to have lived to the age of 150 (still unnaturally longeval).

Note on Faithful and Black Númenórean Longevity—Even though he died before his time, Elendil (a royal) lived

more than a century longer than Tar-Palantir of Númenor, and if the .6 formula is applied to the Dúnedain of Gondor and Arnor, they would be living (initially) 20-50 years longer than the average Númenórean of the last centuries of the Second Age. Although the imprecision of my method has probably skewed reality somewhat, the conclusion nevertheless remains that the Faithful lived longer (or, more likely, declined slower) than the rest of the Númenóreans. At any rate, I would recommend calculating Black Númenórean longevity based on the Line of Elros rather than those of Isildur or Anárion. This means that by the time of Númenor's downfall, most pure-blooded Númenóreans did not live past 130 years. By the early centuries of the Third Age they probably (as with Umbar) declined to completely "natural" levels (i.e., living no more than a century).

Second Age King's Men/Faithful

1-100	245 years
101-200	245 years
201-300	245 years
301-400	240 years
401-500	240 years
501-600	240 years
601-700	240 years
701-800	240 years
801-900	240 years
901-1000	240 years
1001-1100	240 years
1101-1200	240 years
1201-1300	240 years
1301-1400	240 years
1401-1500	240 years
1501-1600	240 years
1601-1700	240 years
1701-1800	240 years
1801-1900	240 years
1901-2000	240 years
2001-2100	240 years
2101-2200	235/235 years
2201-2300	220/225* years
2301-2400	210/220* years
2401-2500	200/210* years
2501-2600	185/205* years
2610-2700	170/195* years
2701-2800	145/190* years
2801-2900	135/180* years
2901-3000	130/175* years
3001-3100	130/165* years
3101-3200	120*/160* years
3201-3300	110*/160* years
3301-3400	100*/155* years

*=hypothetical

Third Age	Arnor/Gondor
1-100	150/160 years
101-200	150/160 years
201-300	140/160 years
301-400	140/160 years
401-500	115/160 years
501-600	135/155 years
601-700	130/155 years
701-800	130/150 years
801-900	130/150 years
901-1000	125/150 years
1001-1100	125/150 years
1101-1200	125/145 years
1201-1300	120/140 years
1301-1400	120/140 years
1401-1500	120/130 years
1501-1600	115/130 years
1601-1700	110/130 years
1701-1800	110/120 years
1801-1900	105/95 years
1901-2000	100/? years
2001-2100	100/? years
2101-2200	100/? years
2201-2300	95/>150 years
2301-2400	95/? years
2401-2500	95/? years
2501-2600	95/? years
2610-2700	95/? years
2701-2800	95/? years
2801-2900	?/? years
2901-3000	?/? years
3001[-3100]	?/? years

Line of Elros			
Ruler	Lifespan	Children	Non-royals
Elros	500	119	300
Vardamir	410	131	245
Tar-Amandil	411	158	245
Tar-Elendil	401	171	240
Tar-Meneldur	399	157	240
Tar-Aldarion	375	173	225
Tar-Ancalimë	412	130	250
Tar-Anárion	401	171	240
Tar-Súrion	400	146	240
Tar-Telperien	411	154	245
Tar-Minastir	399	160	240
Tar-Ciryatan	401	166	240
Tar-Atanamir	421	186	250
Tar-Ancalimon	400	150	240
Tar-Telemmaitë	390	141	235
Tar-Vanimeldë	360	129	215
Tar-Anducal	371	120	220
Tar-Alcarin	331	110	200
Tar-Calmacil	309	102	185
Tar-Ardamin	281	91	170
Ar-Adúnakhôr	253	89	150
Ar-Zimrathôn	235	78	140
Ar-Sakalthôr	226	84	135
Ar-Gimilzôr	217	75	130
Tar-Palantir	220	82	130
Tar-Miriel	202†		
Ar-Pharazôn	201†		

Line of Isildur			
Ruler	Lifespan	Children	Non-royals
Elendil	322†	87, 100	
Isildur	232†	[...] 221	
Valandil	260	98	155
Eldacar	252	98	150
Arantar	250	95	150
Tarkil	235	92	140
Tarondor	230	90	140
Valandur	190	90	115
Elendur	225	88	135
Eärendur	221	86	130
Amlaith	220	85	130
Beleg	218	84	130
Mallor	215	84	130
Celepharn	212	83	130
Celebrindor	210	82	125
Malvegil	205	82	125
Argeleb I	130†	83	
Arveleg I	100†	82	
Araphor	198	82	120
Argeleb II	197	80	120
Arvegil	190	80	115
Arveleg II	180	78	110
Araval	180	78	110
Araphant	175	75	105
Arvedui	110†	74	
Aranarth	168	74	100
Arahael	165	72	100
Aranuir	163	72	100
Aravir	163	71	100
Aragorn I	100†	69	
Araglas	159	69	95
Arahad I	158	66	95
Aragost	157	66	95
Aravorn	157	66	95
Arahad II	156	65	95
Arassuil	156	65	95
Arathorn I	155	64	95
Argonui	155	63	95
Arador	110†	53	
Arathorn II	60†	58	
Aragorn	190*	88	

Line of Anárion			
Ruler	Lifespan	Children	Non-royals
Elendil	322†	87, 100	
Anárion	221†	99	
Meneldil	280	81	170
Cemendur	279	90	170
Eärendil	267	88	160
Anardil	275	86	165
Ostoher	270	88	160
Rómendacil I	231†	87	
Turambar	270	83	160
Atanatar I	268	90	160
Siriondil	260	84	155
Falastur	259		155
Eärnil I	200†	84	
Ciryandil	195†	79	
Hyarmendacil I	250	78	150
Atanatar II	249	72	150
Narmacil I	245		150
Calmacil	246	68	150
Rómendacil II	240	68	145
Valacar	238	61	140
Eldacar	235	[...] 75	140
Castamir	188†		
Aldamir	210†	61	
Vinyarion	230	63	140
Minardil	180†	62	
Telemnar	120†		
Tarondor	221	55	130
Telumehtar	218	52	130
Narmacil II	172†	52	
Calimehtar	200	51	120
Ondoher	157†		
Eärnil II	160	45	95
Eärnur	122†		

The House of Húrin (Ruling Stewards)		
Steward	Lifespan	Children
Pelendur	119	40
Vorondil	110	41
Mardil	120	39
Eradan	117	38
Herion	111	37
Belegorn	130	50
Húrin I	120	[...] 41
Túrin I	113	[...] 80
Hador	150** (2200s)	45
Barahir	122	38
Dior	107	
Denethor I	102	[...] 35
Boromir	79†	39
Cirion	118	31
Hallas	125	35
Húrin II	113	30
Belecthor I	110	31
Orodreth	109	24
Ecthelion I	98	
Egalmoth	117	29
Beren	108	45
Beregond	111	52
Belecthor II	120	30
Thorondir	100	33
Túrin II	99	40
Turgon	98	31
Ecthelion II	98	44
Denethor II	89†	53
Faramir	120	37

**Last man in Gondor to live to the age of 150.

House of Galador (Dol Amroth)		
Prince	Lifespan	Children
Imrazôr	126	54
Galador	125	56
2	131	60
3	134	52
4	127	53
5	123	49
6	126	50
7	134	49
8	125	45
9	122	45
10	119	42
11	118	41
12	114	42
13	113	39
14	106	44
15	75†	38
16	90†	37
17	113	39
18	114	42
Aglahad	105	39
Angelimir	111	51
Ardrahil	93	38
Imrahil	99	32
Elphir	100	30
Alphros	98	