

WORMSKIN

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Wormskin — Issue Three

This issue delves into the lore of the Dolmenwood campaign setting, giving an overview of the history of the wood, since prehistoric times, and describing the most important languages which have seen currency over this period. An exposition of the ley lines of the wood is also begun; in this issue, you will find details on the most unusual of Dolmenwood's leys: the artificial, circular line which girdles a large portion of the forest's western reaches and is known by the simple, rustic folk of the wood as the "witching ring".

Additionally, a cluster of hexes to the east of the great Lake Longmere are expounded. In this region can be found one of the most significant historical sites of the wood: the ruins of the former Abbey of St Clewd. An in-depth revelation of the secrets which this location holds, the treasures which still lie there unclaimed, and the odd beings who now make their lairs there, is begun. This is a location ripe for plunder and adventure.

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OF MEN, GOATS, AND FAIRIES IN DOLMENWOOD



What follows is a brief telling of the history of the forest known as Dolmenwood since ancient times, beyond the memory of all but the most old. This information is invaluable to the referee in understanding the historical interactions of the various factions which inhabit the wood, but it is not to be taken as common knowledge — the everyday folk of the wood have their heads filled with such reams of myth and superstition that any scraps of half-truth are concealed with great efficacy. Knowledge of anything much beyond the concerns of the previous generation is possessed by very few who now live in the forest. As such, this historical summary represents what may be known by those learned few who have studied the lore of Dolmenwood in depth.

All dates are specified relative to the present day. What exactly the present date is must be decided by the referee.

- **BEFORE 2,000 YEARS AGO:** The ultimate origins of culture in Dolmenwood are fundamentally of fairy origin. Prior to mankind's arrival, the Wood was completely under the sway of a fairy lord known only as "the Cold Prince" and was considered an extension, in the mortal world, of his domain. In these primaeval days, Goatmen dwelt in the forest (which was already ancient beyond measure) and served the fairy prince. Certain men, inhabitants of neighbouring lands, would traffic with the Prince's people, bringing them various oddments in exchange for fairy objects and knowledge.

- **2,000 YEARS AGO:** The commerce between humans and the fairy dominion in Dolmenwood eventually attracted cunning men — the occult cabal known as the Drune — who ventured into the forest and began to build dwellings there. These sorcerers came to discover that Dolmenwood was located on a powerful confluence of Ley Lines, which they learned to harness for their own ends. With the Drune came Drune-wives, and with the Drune-wives came the beginnings of witchcraft in Dolmenwood.

• **1,800 YEARS AGO:** The second Drune lodge¹ was established in the forest around Droun Loch. In this intermediate era, the Drune and the Cold Prince worked together, calling up many of the ley stones from the earth. The Drune ventured to the great lake in the heart of the wood, where they discovered an ancient and potent magical energy in the waters. The exact nature of this force — referred to by the name of Gheillough, at the time — has been lost to history; sources only refer to it in vague metaphor and obscure occult attributions. A small number of other men and women — not affiliated with the Drune, though perhaps of the same racial stock — began to settle in Dolmenwood during this era, founding hamlets in the south-western corner of the forest, eking out a living as woodcutters and hunters, and worshipping the spirits and fairies of the forest. The fate of these people has largely been lost to history. It is likely that they were enslaved by the Drune² or simply assimilated into the culture of the folk who followed them.

• **1,200 YEARS AGO:** A second, more organised wave of human settlers entered south-eastern Dolmenwood, bringing their strict, monotheistic religion (what is now called the Church of the One True God) with them. They rapidly settled the area and appropriated the small number of extant settlements as their own, forcing the wood-folk to convert (if, initially, in appearance only) to their faith. The Drune themselves withdrew to the deep woods and became ever more obscure.

• **1,100 YEARS AGO:** The Kingdom of Brackenwold was established by the invaders, culminating in the construction of Castle Brackenwold. A frosty truce was made with the Cold Prince and his people. Many shrines and churches to the One True God were constructed in and around the forest at this time.

• **1,000 YEARS AGO:** A capstone of sorts to the Church, the great Abbey of St Clewd was constructed at the site of the saint's death, in the heart of the wood.

• **900 YEARS AGO:** The influence of the Cold Prince waned at this time, his attention being drawn away from the wood into his kingdom in Fairy, Frigia. In the south, the gradually disappearing fairy aristocracy was replaced by the goatmen who had served as their aides. The goatman lordship over the High Wold was thus established. The northern goatmen became wild and unruly.



- **800 YEARS AGO:** Seeing an opportunity to monopolise the occult energies of the forest, the power-hungry Drune initiated an unlikely alliance with the Brackenwolders and the Church, colluding to divert the energy of the ley line Ywyr into a great ring encircling the western region of the wood, where the gates to the fey kingdom of Frigia lay. The Cold Prince was thus banished from Dolmenwood, forced into exile in Frigia. Since that time, a creed of nonviolence has existed between the Drune and the Brackenwolders.