



THE NORTH BANK

the ghost pit

GREYFLOOD

OUTER DISTRICTS

CAUSEWAY - TO SONDOR

- 1 - new gatehouse
- 2 - THE RED PALACE
(captain's mansion)
- 3 - town market
- 4 - the bridge inn
- 5 - toll gate
- 6 - HELCAR TOWER
- 7 - GARTH TAURON
- 8 - home of amelia kern
- 9 - house without windows
- 10 - RINGIL TOWER
- 11 - the road-house
- 12 - stone of two kingdoms
- 13 - old library

scale ~ 1 furlong

Sample file



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1



2



3



FOG OVER ERIADOR

5

THE CITY OF THARBAD	7
Old Lore	7
A Guide to Tharbad	10
Tharbad's Environs	17
SWANFLEET	18
A Secret Folk	18
Medcaute and Swantown	19
LOND DAER	21
Decline and Resurgence	21
The Western Haven	22
Lond Daer of Old	22
THE DWARF-HALLS OF HARMELT	24
Visiting the Halls	24
RUINS OF CARDOLAN	27
Towers and Strongholds	27
Wyncross	28
ERYN VORN	28
The Tree Men	29
The Barrow of Eryn Vorn	29
THE LONE-LANDS OF MINHIRIATH	29
Hynda's House at Wormhill	30
The Fisher-folk of the Shore	30
THE MEN OF ERIADOR	31

A GATHERING STORM

33

THE BLACK NÚMENÓREANS	35
The Mission to Eriador	36
The Ship Kathuphazgân	36
Key Foes	37
Dark Designs of the Black Númenóreans	41
THE WHITE HAND OF SARUMAN	43
The Hunt for Ring-lore	43
Agents of Saruman	44
Dark Designs of Isengard	46
RAIDERS FROM DUNLAND	47
The Years of the Raids	47
The Chieftains of Dunland	47
Dark Designs of the Dunlendings	51
OTHER SHADOWS	52
The Beast of the Greyflood	52
The Walker in the Darkness	52
The Dream of Moria	53
The Long Defeat	53

LANDMARKS

55

THE OLD DWARF-MINES	56
Background	56
Locations	57
Schemes and Trouble	61
THE WHITE TOWERS	62
Background	62
Locations	62
Schemes and Trouble	67
THE TREE OF SORROW	68
Background	68
Locations	70
Schemes and Trouble	73
THE SHROUDED ISLETS	74
Background	74
Locations	75
Schemes and Trouble	76
TINDAILIN — AN ELVEN REFUGE	78
Background	78
Locations	79
Schemes and Trouble	83
THE QUEEN'S HALL	84
Background	84
Locations	85
Allies and Adversaries	87
Schemes and Trouble	90
THE FIELDS OF SLAUGHTER	91
Background	92
Locations	92
Schemes and Trouble	95
WEATHERTOP	96
Background	96
Locations	97
Schemes and Trouble	99
THE HILL OF THE SLEEPER	100
Background	100
Locations	102
Schemes and Trouble	106
MOUNT GRAM	107
Background	107
Locations	108
The Haunted Dungeons	112
Schemes and Trouble	114
FORT ARLAS	115
Background	115
Locations	115
Schemes and Trouble	118
THE RANGER-HAVEN	120
Background	120
Locations	120
Schemes and Trouble	123

INTRODUCTION

*After Arvedui the North-kingdom ended,
for the Dúnedain were now few
and all the peoples of Eriador diminished.*



What you hold in your hands is a guide to the peoples inhabiting the Lone-lands of Southern Eriador, the places they dwell in and the hopes they hold for their future in the Twilight of the Third Age. It is intended primarily for Loremasters, who can find among these pages the inspiration they require to bring Middle-earth to life as the Player-heroes

explore it. Players should refrain from reading this, with the exception of those parts detailing areas their characters might reasonably be knowledgeable about.

The material presented in *Ruins of Eriador* assumes that the date is the same as the one in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying* — the year 2965.

OVERVIEW

Ruins of Eriador complements the setting information presented in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Core Rules*, in particular the material found in *Chapter 9: The World*, and in the Appendix.

Chapter 1: Fog Over Eriador expands the possibilities for adventure, including regions of Southern Eriador once part of the kingdom of Arnor. The city of Tharbad and its troubled history is given special attention, as it may serve as the starting point for the adventures of a Company of Player-heroes focused on exploring the surrounding Lone-lands.

Chapter 2: A Gathering Storm provides the Loremaster with a set of narrative elements that can be used to determine the fate of Eriador. What is contained in this chapter is the product of speculation and can be employed as presented,

or altered as the Loremaster sees fit, to better tailor the setting to the players' choices. In a few words, it constitutes a possible future for the land of Eriador as a whole, offering the description of many looming threats, complete with Loremaster characters and their agendas.

Chapter 3: Landmarks adds 12 sites of interest to the one presented in the core volume. These locations depict both 'historical' sites mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*, and others that have been invented specifically for the game. They all conform to the format of presentation outlined on page 220 of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying*, and are meant to be used in conjunction with the guidelines presented there, and the information contained in *Chapter 2* of the present volume.

THIS EMPTY LAND

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

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



CHAPTER 1

~ FOG OVER ERIADOR ~

*But the Northern Lands had long been desolate,
and the North Road was now seldom used...*



Today's travel outside Bree lie the Lone-lands — deserted lands, ruins of the old kingdom. Once, these lands were tame and plentiful. Today, they have grown wild. To the south of Bree was the Kingdom of Cardolan. Elves called the region Minhiriath, the land between the rivers, bounded by the Brandywine to the north and the Greyflood to the south. What is now the Shire of the Hobbits was once the vineyard of

the kings of old. But there are dozens of other stretches of once-fruitful territory in the Lone-lands, and no one dwells there now. War and plague and the eternal hatred of the Enemy destroyed the folk who lived here. Everywhere there are ruins of the old kingdom — a bridge of stone, a patch of paved road, a lonely watch-tower — but one must travel for much longer than a single day between such glimpses of the past.



The slow-moving waters of the Greyflood mark the region's southern border. Beyond it, the land becomes even more desolate: treeless moors, dusty plains, sucking marshes. This is Enedwaith, the Middle-land between the kingdoms. A traveller might be forgiven for thinking that the Enemy brought ruin to this place, but the worst evils here were done by Men, and the land has not forgotten their cruelty. Enedwaith is a bitter land, a region of old battlefields and new ambushes, a harsh land for the harsh folk who dwell here in hidden places. In the south, it rolls into Dunland, and on to the banks of the Isen river that flows from the Gap of Rohan.

Turn west. Follow the river to the sea. The west coast of Middle-earth is steep and stony, with few good places to land — for twice the world has been utterly changed, westerly lands drowned by the wrath of the Valar, and now waves crash against rocks that once stood far inland. The few harbours at the river-mouths are prized, and the remnants of ancient fortifications can be seen in such places. The western coast is as far as anyone can flee the growing darkness in the East, for the seas are now bent and only the Elves can escape.

If the Shadow rises, then Eriador is where the Free Folk will make their final stand.

THE CITY OF THARBAD

"I lost my horse at Tharbad, at the fording of the Greyflood."

These are the dying days of Tharbad. Everyone knows it, especially those who have witnessed the city's slow decline over the years. They know that Tharbad has always shambled on from crisis to crisis: the city is an immense wounded beast, a heavy creature wallowing in the muddy water, too stubborn and hungry to ever give up. But Tharbad has suffered a mortal injury, and soon it will fall. It will be one more ruin of the old kingdom, silent and abandoned.

That is an astounding thing, if you think about it. Tharbad is ancient. If these are indeed the last days of the old city, then great changes are in the air, and the turning of an Age is at hand!

OLD LORE

There has been a settlement at the crossing of the Greyflood since Men first came to this part of the world. But time grinds hard stones to meal, slays kings, and ruins towns, and the Tharbad of today is very different from that of old.

THE FIRST TWO AGES OF THE WORLD

In the First Age, Men dwelt in the woods and marshes along the river; for the most part, they were a simple forest-dwelling people, unwelcoming to outsiders and fearful of the wider world. Some traded with the Dwarves of Moria, and learned a little of their craft and ways, becoming kings in their little kingdoms and raising towns and castles that have long since crumbled into dust and been forgotten. Most, though, clung to their own customs, surviving as best

they could in the dark woods, hiding from the nameless darkness in the North.

Later, the Sea-kings came from the West. Wood-hungry, they cut down the forests to build their ships, and floated the trees downriver to their haven at the mouth of the river. In time, they cut such a wound in the forests that they needed a port further upriver, and they chose the crossing-point that would become Tharbad. A town grew up around the port, a crossroads where the Sea-kings of Númenor traded with the Dwarves of Moria and the Elves of Hollin. The Men of the West were peerless craftsmen, and the city of Tharbad was glorious indeed.

But that was long ago, and little of that first city remains. Who remembers the banners fluttering in the wind atop hundreds of masts, numerous as trees in a forest? Who remembers that Sauron the Terrible suffered defeat not far from Tharbad, in the forgotten first war between the Elves and the Enemy? Only the Elves, and they are gone from this land.

Tharbad was many things as the Second Age wore on — a fortress in the midst of hostile lands, a river-port and centre of trade, a place where the Sea-kings demanded tribute from their subjects, a declining outpost on the edge of empire. Númenor fell into darkness, then ruin — but out of that ruin came the Faithful of Elendil and his sons. They founded the North-kingdom of Arnor and the South-kingdom of Gondor, and built great cities at Annúminas in the north and Osgiliath in the south. To bind their two far-flung kingdoms together, the Faithful built a great Road across Middle-earth, and at Tharbad they raised a new bridge across the wide and sullen Greyflood.



THE THIRD AGE

The Bridge of Tharbad — oh, to look upon it one more time! It leapt in three great stone arches from the south bank to a central pillar rising in the middle island, and then with three more arches reached the northern shore. Two mighty towers guard it, their foundations made of the same imperishable stone as the tower of Orthanc. The bridge is broken now, but sometimes the fog that rises on the river seems to settle atop the remains of the mutilated pillars, and the city remembers.

For a time, Tharbad stood at the crossroads of the world. It was part of neither Arnor nor Gondor, but shared between the two crowns. The Captain of the Haven of Tharbad was a title of special magnificence and renown. Even when the North Kingdom broke into the successor realms of Arthedain,

Cardolan and Rhudaur, Tharbad maintained considerable independence — which rankled with the kings of Cardolan. But traffic between the kingdoms diminished as war and plague took their toll, and grass grew between the flagstones of the Road of Kings.

When the last prince of Cardolan perished and his kingdom faded, Tharbad endured, ruled by a long line of officers, each in turn holding the honorary title of Captain of the Haven. For a time, there was trade with the wealthy Dwarves of Moria, but they too fell victim to the treacheries of the Enemy. Kingdom by kingdom, city by city, town by town, the North fell into darkness. Tharbad faded, too — its population never recovered after the Great Plague, and much of the city fell into disrepair.



DAYS OF DECLINE

All that, though, is ancient history. Moria and the plague were a thousand years ago — and the folk of Tharbad are short-lived mortal Men, not hardy Dúnedain or immortal Elves. For many years, the singers kept telling tales of kings of old who came over the sea to lay down in the barrows to die, and sometimes travellers came up the Road with news of the south. But for the most part, Tharbad was no longer a crossroads, and no ships were seen sailing up the river. The surrounding area began to be troubled by bandits and thieves, and only the mighty fortifications of old kept Tharbad safe. The ruined city became an isolated fastness amid the wilds of Minhiriath, where honest folk could take refuge from brigands or Dunlending raiders.

Then, fifty years ago came the Fell Winter. Those days were bad, indeed — the crops died, and the land froze, and Wargs came west of the Misty Mountains to hunt. What followed, though, was worse. In spring, all the snow heaped on the hills and peaks melted, and the rivers swelled and burst their banks. Well-named was the Greyflood that awful summer, for the usually-quiet river grew dark and terrible, and floodwaters poured through the town, washing away hundreds among the surviving inhabitants of Tharbad. The river in its wrath could not destroy the ancient piers that supported the bridge, but many arches crumbled, and their mighty stones fell into the raging currents.

Tharbad had suffered many disasters in the past, and the bridge had already fallen into disuse, so perhaps the city could have weathered this calamity, if it were not for the weakness and folly of Men. The succession of Captains of the Haven after the floods of 2912 were among the worst elected in Tharbad in all its long history, leading up to the disastrous reign of Master Heatherton, who was the first to drop the honorary title of Captain and who imposed an unpopular tax to repair the bridge — only to flee along with several of his cronies and the contents of the town coffers. When even the following Master abandoned his post, taking with him his chain of office, many citizens feared Tharbad was doomed, and fled the decaying city. Some headed north to the Bree-land or down the river towards the sea; others, fearing a perilous journey, took refuge amidst the reeds in Swanfleet.

THE PRESENT DAY

When it seemed as if the city would soon be utterly abandoned, the arrival of the new Master arrested the stream of people leaving the city. Master Gurnow reclaimed for himself the title of Captain of the Haven and forbade anyone else from leaving Tharbad, compelling everyone to remain unless they paid a steep gate-tax.

It is a little... indelicate to mention such a thing, but you should know that Captain Gurnow was, until recently, an outlaw and a bandit. He commanded a host of thieves who dwelt in the wilderness north of town. These former thieves have been appointed as the city watch, tax collectors, bailiffs and other officials. Gurnow married Lady Stock, a woman of good family and royal blood, and so is clearly set on being an upstanding and law-abiding steward of Tharbad's ancient office of Captain.

Be of good cheer! Captain Gurnow is a strong leader, like a king of old! He has sworn to keep the Road safe, and to repair the bridge, and protect the city from those who would do it harm. He has many friends in other lands, too, and will bring new trade and opportunities to old Tharbad. The tale of the city may not be finished yet...