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CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE HEDGEROW 7

How to Pass Through the Hedgerow 8

The Briar Company of Sky and Furrow 9

Abbreviations and Terminology 10

THE LIGHT CALLS FOR HEROES 12

Character Creation 14

Quality Dice 15

A Lantern of Buggebers 17

A Wurzel of Flaybogkins 23

A Grove of Heathen Clerks 27

A Sorrow of Hodkins 31

A Madcap of Motleys 35

An Ascension of Ouzels 41

A Loom of Tomnoddins 47

A Flotsam of Waifs 53

An Oddity of Warlockes 57

Heroic Traits 60

Virtues 62

Arcane Virtues 62

Craft Virtues 63

Martial Virtues 64

Renown Virtues 64

Subtle Virtues 65

The Doom 66

Consolation 68

OF ANCIENT WAYS 69

Checks and Challenges 71

Resolve (RSV) 71

Outcome Checks 71

Challenges 72

Resolving a Challenge 76

Drama and Challenges 78

Challenges or Checks? 79

Combat Challenges 80

Multiple Enemies 81

Disengagement and Escape 82

Success and Defeat 83

Defeat 85

Rests 86

Breather 86

Respite 87

Interlude 87

NPC Allies 89

NPC Example 90

BY PATHS FORGOTTEN 91

Starting the Adventure 93

Equipment 94

Weapons and Armour 94

Quality 95

Tea and Tiffin 95

Foraging for Herbs 99

Schemes 100

Casting Spells 101

Hexes 102



<i>Dweomers</i>	102
<i>Dark Sorcery</i>	103
<i>Rules of Magic</i>	103
<i>The Suit of Cups</i>	104
<i>The Suit of Pentacles</i>	108
<i>The Suit of Swords</i>	111
<i>The Suit of Wands</i>	114
<i>Elder Lore and GleeS</i>	117
<i>Performing GleeS</i>	118
<i>Mythic Sites</i>	119
<i>Mythic Virtues</i>	119
<i>Treasures of the Light</i>	120
<i>The Riddle Game</i>	122
<i>Oaths</i>	123
<i>The Glamour</i>	126
<i>Glamour Checks</i>	126
<i>The Dread</i>	128
<i>The Sight</i>	128
<i>Cold Iron</i>	129
<i>The Laws of the Light</i>	130
<i>The Law of Flint and Flame</i>	130
<i>The Law of Innocence InviolatE</i>	131
<i>The Light's Bans</i>	131

**THE DARKNESS
REPLIES**

132

<i>Enemies</i>	134
<i>Proud Fay</i>	134
<i>Undead</i>	139
<i>The Nemesis</i>	142
<i>The Cailleach</i>	144
<i>The Feral Squires</i>	149
<i>The Raven Margrave</i>	155
<i>The Witch-Harrow</i>	162

**MAPPING THE
OLD SHIRES**

165

<i>The Age of Swords</i>	167
<i>Mortals in the Age of Swords</i>	167
<i>Supernaturals in the Age of Swords</i>	171
<i>Age of Swords Plot Hooks</i>	171
<i>Traits for the Age of Swords</i>	173
<i>The Age of Plagues</i>	176
<i>Mortals in the Age of Plagues</i>	176
<i>Supernaturals in the Age of Plagues</i>	178
<i>Age of Plagues Plot Hooks</i>	178
<i>Traits for the Age of Plagues</i>	180
<i>The Age of Steel</i>	181
<i>Mortals in the Age of Steel</i>	181
<i>Supernaturals in the Age of Steel</i>	185
<i>Age of Steel Plot Hooks</i>	185
<i>Traits for the Age of Steel</i>	187
<i>The Age of Thunder</i>	190
<i>Mortals in the Age of Thunder</i>	190
<i>Supernaturals in the Age of Thunder</i>	192
<i>Age of Thunder Plot Hooks</i>	193
<i>Traits for the Age of Thunder</i>	195
<i>The Old Gods</i>	195
<i>The Fire Drake</i>	196
<i>The Fisher King</i>	197
<i>Grimm</i>	197
<i>Herne the Hunter</i>	198
<i>King Rat</i>	198
<i>Morgan Le Fay</i>	198
<i>Oberon and Titania</i>	199
<i>Robin Hood and Maid Marian</i>	199
<i>Taliesin</i>	200
<i>Wayland Smith</i>	200



ANCIENT AND REBORN 201

The Light and the Dark.....203

- What Are the Light and the Dark?* 203
- What is the Briar Company of Sky and Furrow?* 203
- What is the Otherworld?* 204
- What is the Hedgerow?* 204
- What about the High Magic?* 205
- Where are the Old Shires?* 205
- Future Adventures:*
- Familiar Faces and Places* 205
- Further Adventures:*
- Issues with Time Travel* 207

The Conundrum207

- 1. *The Call of the Light* 208
- 2. *Treading the Hedgerow* 208
- 3. *The Ley of the Land* 209
- 4. *Oath Taking* 209
- 5. *Naming the Armiger* 209
- 6. *The Sacred Space* 209
- 7. *Sinister Conflict* 210
- 8. *Solving the Rebus* 210
- Visions of the Conundrum* 210
- Nine More Conundrums and Adventures* 218

Ending the Adventure223

Prizes.....227

- The Reward Die* 227

Adventuring Across the Ages228

- The Age of Heroes* 228
- The Age of Ruin* 228
- The Age of Outlaws* 229
- The Age of Glory* 229
- The Age of Ashes* 229
- Different Shires in Other Lands* 229

Inspirations for these Stories.....230

THE ADVENTURE IS YOURS 231

The Vault of Evil.....233

APPENDIX 1: TAROC CARDS 252

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE HEROES 253

APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF PLAY 262

CHARACTER SHEET 268

CHALLENGE CHECKLIST 270

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS 271



THE OLD SHIRES ARE IN PERIL

The Dances advance, burning thatch and bushel

The cry goes up, 'Death to the Witch!'

The iron rails of industry smash through leaf and lane

The air raid signal shatters the night

Darkness spreads across the land

But you are here, armed by the Light, to defend the oldest
places and forgotten ways



WELAND GAVE THE SWORD! THE

Sword gave the Treasure, and the Treasure
gave the Law. It's as natural as an oak
growing.

Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*





WELCOME TO THE HEDGEROW



WHEN YOU STEP OUT THROUGH THE branches and leaves, you find yourself in a new world and a different time. The big factory outside Thornyford is gone, replaced by open fields, crisscrossed with stone walls and hedgerows. Thornyford is only a village, but you can see the village green and the church beside it.

There's quite a crowd there, men in steeple hats and women in dark dresses and shawls. A minister is speaking and the crowd cheers. His words drift over on the breeze: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live..."

Someone has built rickety gallows on the patch of land where the railway station will one day stand. There are prisoners in a line with nooses round their necks. Three prisoners, all of them women. One of them painfully familiar to you.

"Come on," your companion says, "we have to put a stop to this - now!"





HOW *to* PASS THROUGH *the* HEDGEROW



Through the Hedgerow is a fantasy roleplaying game (RPG) in which you take on the role of magical adventurers who travel through time, visiting the woodlands, fields, villages, and towns of the Old Shires to oppose evil forces at work in history.

A roleplaying game is a type of shared storytelling carried out around a table or online. One player takes on the responsibility of being the Judge, creating the adventure, acting out the parts of the inhabitants of the Old Shires (the Non-Player Characters or NPCs) and imposing challenges. The other players (normally two to four, but sometimes more) each create a fantastic persona - a Player Character (PC) - who inhabits this world, reacts to its challenges, and makes dramatic decisions.

These PCs might be ordinary humans caught up in a magical adventure. They might be wizards or immortal warriors. Others might be magical Fays who protect humanity: headless trolls, shape-changing birds, and multi-armed spider-people.

The Old Shires are an imagined piece of the British countryside in the Dark Ages where King Alfred battles the Vikings, the 17th century with its Civil Wars and witch trials, the 19th century of industry and revolution, and the early 1940s with evacuee children escaping the bombs falling on wartime cities. However, this is your game, and you are welcome to choose other settings to suit your taste - the backwoods of Vermont, the mountains of Provence, or the Sayama Hills outside Tokyo - anywhere steeped in folklore but bypassed by modernity, where the old legends await down any unexpected trail.

Roleplaying games resolve conflict and uncertainty using dice. *Through the Hedgerow* uses dice that are four-sided (d4), six-sided (d6), eight-sided (d8), twelve-sided (d12), and twenty-sided (d20). You will also need pencils and paper to keep track of what's happening, and you might (optionally) use a pack of cards (page 252) if you want to bring a bit of atmosphere to dramatic moments.

Through the Hedgerow uses an innovative **Check & Challenge system** (page 71) that encourages players to contribute to the Drama - the unfolding narrative - and that makes wits, charm, imagination, and mysticism as important to overcoming problems as the combat and imagined violence that dominate most RPGs.





THE BRIAR COMPANY *of* SKY *and* FURROW



For ages, perhaps forever, two great forces have battled each other – the **Light** and the **Dark**. The Light claims to stand for the highest hopes of humanity and civilisation, whereas the Dark tears down those hopes and promotes misery instead. In some centuries, the Light is in the ascendant and humanity flourishes, while in other the Dark destroys everything that people have created.

There are four time periods that make up the major ‘fronts’ in this war. These are the Mortal Ages, known as the Age of Swords (or Age I, the 9th century), the Age of Plagues (Age II, the 17th century), the Age of Steel (Age III, the early Victorian era), and the Age of Thunder (Age IV, the Second World War).

Into these Ages, the Light sends its champions, known as the **Briar Company** or the **Briar Knights**. Some of these are **Fays** or Otherworldly sorcerers pledged to defend the Mortal Ages, whereas others are ordinary Mortals caught up in a destiny that they do not understand. All possess the **Sight** – the power to see the supernatural among the everyday.

Briar Knights wander a hedgerow maze, witnessing visions that hint at the mission awaiting them and emerging into one of the Mortal Ages where their help is needed. Perhaps they must rescue a helpless victim or put a stop to a vile plot, uncover a magical treasure or prevent one from falling into the wrong hands. Along the way, they can swear **Oaths** to help the people they meet, performing little acts of kindness (or mischief) alongside their grand mission.

Things are rarely as they seem, for the countryside is home to older and stranger creatures. The **Proud Fay** are magical beings loyal to neither Light nor Dark; the **Undead** hide from the sunlight in barrows and crypts; and the **Old Gods**, forgotten but still fearsome, maintain their ancient fanes in the whispering woods.

The Dark has its agents too and one faction, known as the **Nemesis**, quickly becomes aware of the Briar Knights wherever they appear in the Mortal Ages and despatches its forces to hunt them down. The Nemesis is represented by a Nemesis Die that starts small (a d4) but gets larger as the adventure continues, creating more opposition and danger for the Briar Knights. Taking long rests allows the Nemesis Die to grow, so Briar Knights must weigh up the risks of delay or haste.





While Briar Knights can be aggressive trolls or brooding warrior-knights, violence is not the focus of the game. The Check & Challenge system encourages you to use wits and charm to resolve conflicts as an alternative to brawn, pistols, and swords. To succeed in their mission, Briar Knights will need to triumph at Riddle Contests, harvest mystic Herbs, learn ancient Lore, and discover Mythic Sites



ABBREVIATIONS and TERMINOLOGY



A PC is a Player Character (one of the heroes) and an NPC is a Non-Player Character (one of the villains, allies, or 'extras' controlled by the Judge).

You have different dice for different abilities. A small four-sided die (d4) means you are quite ineffective. A six-sided die (d6) is an average sort of ability. An eight-sided die (d8), ten-sided die (d10), or twelve-sided die (d12) are elite abilities. On rare occasions, a superhuman level of ability might be a twenty-sided die (d20).

Initial letters remind you of the identity of the die being rolled and the number is its size: Pd4 is a four-sided Peril Die and DQd6 is a six-sided Doom Quality Die.

<u>ABBREVIATION</u>	<u>DIE</u>	<u>ABBREVIATION</u>	<u>DIE</u>
CQd	Charm Quality Die	Pd	Peril Die
DQd	Doom Quality Die	RSVd	Resolve Die
GQd	Gramayre Quality Die	WQd	Wits Quality Die
MQd	Might Quality Die	VQd	Virtue Quality Die





Dice and powers become **Exhausted**, which means you can't use them again. Later, they are **Restored**, making them available to be used once more.

Burning a Die means it gets a size smaller. You can **Refresh** a Die that has previously been Burned, growing it back one size. **Fully Refreshing** a Burned Die returns it to its starting size.


If a Die **Shrinks**, it gets smaller, but only for a single roll. After the roll, the Die goes back to its previous size. If a Die is **Boosted**, it gets a size bigger for one roll only.

Retreating a Die means permanently Shrinking it by one size - you cannot Refresh a Retreated Die back to its previous size. **Advancing** a Die means permanently increasing it by one size.

If a Die Retreats/Burns/Shrinks below a d4 it becomes a d0 - if a roll is required, it is considered to produce a result of '1'. If a Die Advances or Boosts past d12, it produces a Complete Success - however, the Judge might decide to roll a d20.

There are two mechanics used in *Through the Hedgerow* to resolve uncertainty. An **Outcome Check** (or simply a 'Check,' see page 71) involves rolling one Die with the aim of matching or exceeding the score on another Die in order to avoid some unpleasantness. A **Challenge** (page 72) involves rolling one or more Dice and picking the highest score; this reduces the Resolve (RSV) you lose in the attempt; if you still have RSV left at the end of a Challenge, you have achieved some measure of Success.





CHAPTER
THE FIRST

THE LIGHT CALLS FOR HEROES

IN WHICH IS INTRODUCED
A CAST OF HEROES OF
DEMEANOUR STRANGE YET
PURPOSE BRAVE, SOME OF
HUMAN AND SOME OF
OTHERWORLDLY
ORIGIN

