

The Seagate Times



Issue 50 - Spring 805

Dark Circle Invades Ranke - Carzala Surrounded!

The Dark Circle's First Northern Army has invaded Southern Ranke and cut Carzala off completely by land. Their supply lines run as far east as the foothills of Tuscana before heading south. All overland trade has ceased, or been diverted to ports in Ranke and Aladar. Essential supplies are getting through.

Their Second Northern Army received a vicious bloody nose early in the season as they lost much of their vanguard at Carlson's Switch, but reinforcements have slowly pushed the lines of battle back to the Sweet Riding and enemy forces can be seen from the very top of the fortifications at Regar's Keep.

The Church Forces troops assembling in Mordeaux over winter need not march to Brastor to find battle - the southern border of Mordeaux is already being threatened by the First Northern Army. It is estimated that around two thousand goblins and barbarians have made their way through the wild forests north of the Sweetwater, and backed up by at least a thousand undead, have swept through the under-populated hamlets of Southern Ranke. The seaport of Southgate is still standing, as is Castle Silverstream, with the Silverwater River as its primary defence. Villages within the Baronry of Silverstream are being evacuated, though the destination of the refugees is unclear at this time. Guild sources comment that Silverstream may be a tougher nut to crack than seems on the surface, and could receive aid from an unexpected direction. Recent reports say that Dark Circle troops are massing on the far side of the Silverwater, readying for another push.

Ranke has finally acted on the Dark Circle threat. Most of the major provinces have held early musters, and sent their militia south, even before ground is broken for the spring planting. It appears that Ranke would rather be engaged in warfare on its doorstep than inside its parlour. Military commentators expect that the local troops, being ill-equipped and untrained, will shortly make good shock troops for the Dark Circle as it masses for an assault on Mordeaux in the Summer.

Mordeaux is a much harder nut to crack. It is dotted with consecrated keeps filled with disciplined and well-armed knights and men-at-arms, as well as holy men dedicated to violence. They are being led by the Urielite Abbess of Montbelliard, who is known by all as Sister Grace. The Times looks forward to seeing if Sir Gaius (may Michael care for his soul) represents

all Church military strategy, or if Sister Grace believes in such heresy as planning and strategic withdrawals.

With the delay in the invasion of Carzala due to our glorious victory at the Battle of Carlson's Switch, the remnants of the Michaeline Chapter Houses defending Carzala have turned to the north to help open a passage for their brethren. If our pincer movement works before theirs does, one of the Dark Circle's largest armies will be cut off from reinforcements. If not, then hope for Seagate runs low indeed.

Keeping the Watchfires Burning

Residents of Cazala and those who have been in Seagate for the past few weeks will have certainly heard the criers' announcements of a dusk until dawn curfew being placed on all civilians and off-duty troops in the Duchy. While largely redundant, as those without military duties are unlikely to be venturing after dark after in any case, the restriction has been made official to strengthen the powers of those guarding the populace and assist them in identifying potential spies and scouts for Rashak's forces.

It has been requested by both the Duke's Office and the Guild Council that Adventurers, both on missions and remaining in Carzala, respect the efforts of the Militia and Town Watch to maintain calm and order during this trying time, and cooperate with them in these matters. While your gold pins identify you as Guild members, avoiding conflict will serve the greater good. There has also been talk of the issuing of travel papers and such documents, but these plans have yet to be finalised due to the costs and complexity of such schemes. Put simply, if you are out of your neck of the woods; be polite to the guards and try not to skulk too much.



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and more...

Bumper 50th Issue!

Sister Grace

Dark Army Threatens Carzala!

The Alliance high command has confirmed the rumours that the largest concentration of Dark Circle forces they have seen is plodding slowly but relentlessly towards the line of walls around Carzala. This army is the one that was given a 'bloody nose' in the battle of Carlston's Switch and has subsequently moved at a slow pace since the Eltrandorian forces withdrew after the refugees escaped and the Seagate Adventurers' Guild departed.

This army consolidated around the pass for over two months until they had gained sufficient cohesion, their support troops had reached the front, and destroyed any non allied creatures in the Brastor area. The army then advanced no more than two miles per day across the Sweet Riding after managing to push out of the Ildrisholm hills in the face of valiant Alliance opposition.

They forced back the well entrenched Alliance troops whilst consolidating their hold on the lands taken and ensuring the only creatures in the area were members of what has been dubbed 'The Dark Army'.

As of today, the Dark Army is fifty miles from the 'walls around Carzala' which are the line of fortifications from Regars Keep northeast to Arns Ferry. They are expected to reach the walls by the end of Thaw.

The army is noted to include the troops and undead thus far observed in the battles and also some new 'Wight Wolves', giant lizards with riders, several thousand mounted human mercenary troops, and a number of dark indistinct shapes we have yet to identify.

The Dark Army can be seen carrying various standards, some of which are recognisable as defeated Brastor troops and also a number of new standards that emanate pure evil in the area and troops are warned to avoid. The remnants of the Aquilan Heavy Cavalry and a number of former church knights have been sighted in the front ranks and a substantial number of the undead foot troops looked familiar to some observers.

The actions of members of the Seagate Adventurers' Guild at Carlston's Switch not only had the visible effect of enabling the refugees to evacuate from Brastor and flee to Carzala, but also caused the great delay in this huge army's advance. A secondary benefit, but of no less importance, was that their victory enabled the engineers and artilleryists left behind in Carzala to strengthen and fortify the line of defence around Carzala.

The line of walls, trenches and canals have been reinforced with additional fortifications and a number of new siege weapons over the last three months and will no doubt hold the Dark Circle forces yet again.

Art Attack - Uplifting or distracting?

More War Profiteers Swing!

A cartel of unscrupulous Merchants and a junior Quartermaster from the Regar's Keep have been tried and sentenced for the crime of War Profiteering on Duesday past. Accused of colluding to conceal Alliance military supplies, and attempting to resell essentials such as flour and salt at almost six times the going rate (which is already easily twice what Seagate locals have been used to) the knaves offered no defence and were summarily executed at a new scaffold outside Castle Gate, as warning to other that might attempt to leverage advantage from the suffering of refugees and brave soldiers risking their lives to ensure that Cazarla and the Western Kingdom remains free from Rashak's clutches.

Church Condemns Vandalism, Optimism?

Francis de Sales, noted church spokesperson, has identified a new insidious threat to peoples of the Alliance. While Seagate has never been short of people just literate enough to scrawl comments and obscenities on available flat surfaces, the recent influx of refugees and troops appears to have elevated it to a competitive sport and, strangely enough, an art form. Amid the usual taunts and doggerel, entire walls have been given over to childishly rendered but colourful and basically optimistic murals, often depicting bucolic scenes and celebrations.

de Sales has decried these as "a waste of materiel clearly intended for emblazonry and military signalers, which have probably been stolen" and "a dangerous example of complacency and unpreparedness in the face of the most dire threat of our times". He also appears to be concerned since that no-one has come forward to claim responsibility, or to have even witnessed these rather large paintings being made, that they have been the product of insurgents or dark magics. But in this time of unexpected night-time trips to Mordeaux in tumbrel of alleged "gossips", who would that surprise?



Thaeuss to Guild Security (while holding a gagged, blindfolded, hog-tied and manacled puppet):

“I need zomething to store ze spirit of an ancient evil... and I need it quickly!”

Father Broc to ghostly monk: “Do you remember a time long before you were born?”

Obituary

5th Frost 805

Sir Gaius de Malvallet, Chapter Master of the "Knights of the Wrath of Michael", Lord Lieutenant of the Michaeline Order, and "Sword of Michael" was slain in a desperate rearguard action yesterday during the evacuation by Guild members of 1000 troops and over 3000 civilian refugees from encircled Brastor.



Sir Gaius, 73, had been appointed Knight-Marshall of the Orders of Light by Archbishop Mordeaux in summer this year and charged with the destruction of the Dark Circle. Although seen as rash, abrasive, and politically naive by his many critics, the furious counter-charge into the enemy's command area by Sir Gaius and his personal guard undoubtedly typifies the true Michaeline warrior spirit.

Calamar Offer "Help" with Dark Circle

The Times has received report from a reliable anonymous source that in past few weeks that Guild Security has been approached by a individual who had recently arrived on-plane from the Sword Worlds, a Calamar stronghold. Naturally they were brought in for questioning at which time they apparently made this remarkable offer.

"We'd noticed that some on this plane have been experimenting with dropping stars, balrogs, and other large objects on various parts of the plane. My masters wish to offer a completely obligation-free demonstration of this art, which they feel they have raised to a most sophisticated level. This device, when activated in the prescribed fashion, will direct the flagship "Abbreviated Terms of Surrender" to the approximate vicinity, from which it will rain Strange Metal-jacketed Seraphi onto the area. We have found this to be most effective method for dealing with widespread Undead infestations and disposing of extraneous minions of deities that have fallen to us."

When asked what would occur if Alusia was freed from the Dark Circle without the Calamar's assistance, they apparently stated they "the inhabitants of this plane will have again proved they were worthy to serve the Empire, and that they deserve a more lofty role than a simple messenger could dream of." The subject apparently spontaneously incinerated during divination, but not before it was determined that they been on the plane

several weeks and had been drained, but not noticeably harmed, by Greater Undead on several occasions in that time. Is it possible that this "service" has also been offered to Rashak? Where is the device mentioned, and why isn't the Guild saying something about this?

Seraphi



Brastor Survivors Tell Their Stories

"The nights were the worst while we hid from the evil ones; we could hear the screams of other unlucky citizens but could not help for fear of revealing ourselves. I spent five nights hiding at the bottom of a well with my children hearing the hordes feeding on the villagers including my husband after they attacked us from the rear using those huge bats. I'll never get the sound of them eating their fresh meat out of my mind"

"We tried the best we could but there were so many of them and they were hideous creatures from the pits of hell itself. I saw a huge three-headed bear swipe its paw and four men lost their heads in a spray of blood. It was all we could do to move backwards slowly as we knew if we broke we died"

"Our Pike Regiment fought bravely but there was just so many Orcs and wolves forcing them backwards. Every time someone died on either side we saw dark shapes come up and take the bodies away to where several mages stood. The next days we found ourselves fighting our previous friends who caused many to break and we routed after that!"

Sir Gaius kept leading his troops well and keeping them at bay while we fled back towards Tobintown. At one point Marius the Innkeeper was pushing his wagon loaded with goods along with sixteen other men hired to push and Gaius came up then whipped Marius until he bled. He then yelled "Your life is more than your possessions; flee now for we can't hold them much longer".

Marius and the men each grabbed a sack full off the cart and raced away leaving most of his worldly possessions. I saw Marius just the other day in Seagate and he had converted to the Michaeline faith and pledged to work on Michaels behalf in memory of his saint 'Gaius' who made him see the error of his ways. His new pub "The Holy Whip of Saint Gaius" provides free beer to Church Knights.



The family of Lieutenant Simon Forres of 1st Seacroft Hussars (3rd Troop) wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to the brave adventurers that lead the valiant action to free those trapped in Brastor by the forces of the Dark Circle and the Guild Healers who spared no effort to free him from the foul touch of the Undead. While he has only a semblance of life left to him, both priest and Wiccan have assured us that his soul is at rest.

In memory of his name, all from the Guild who visit Seacroft have a place at the hearth of Forres home.

Keesha:
"Standing next to Engalton is the worst thing I ever did!"

Engalton: "The only legitimate use of the Calamar is for disposal of uncontrolled Balrogs and gods ... that doesn't include me."

Guild Reports

Where the Wind Blows

A Michaeline knight turned up at the guild with a strange history (for a Michaeline Knight) and we were commissioned to find out what happened to him before a bunch of church knights. We left the guild by flight and visited the locale he was last in and found a huge number of deaths there as well as some unexpected allies.

The allies were being killed so they asked us to help find the killer. We applied our skills and found him but he escaped through nefarious means but we followed. He led us to an ancient place of evil where we confronted the ancient evil from before the War of Tears and our Binder came away with the evil, unsurprisingly!

(It turned out the evil had been imprisoned beneath the forests north of Brastor until Rashaks minions dug it up, a bunch of Michaelines stumbled across it and caused a psuedopod of the evil to start its killing spree.)

We then took the evil beings to the guild which we found strangely empty of all guild members but full of more Guild Security than I thought we had who were stuffing their faces with the best of the guilds food! They were unhelpful as usual when we stated that we had an ancient evil with us and we wanted a suitable containment device.

We then moved quickly from the guild to D'Arbres via the aid of a friendly lady and there we met an old dragon who said he could help us destroy the evil if we protect him from Rashak's minions. We agreed and fought off the minions with the loss of one of our own. In the end the evil was destroyed, the cause of good advanced and we returned to Carzala for a pint.

The Emmitsburg Bubble Survives?

Are you going into Brastor; seeking survivors, intelligence on the enemy, or retribution? If you are in the east of the region there is a potential opportunity for all three, just eight miles north from the ruins of what was once the bustling town of Emmitsburg. Discovered by a resourceful group of new adventurers lead by Shiraz Pomona in the Autumn, the ruined Osgood homestead concealed an ancient underground shrine capable of shielding the inhabitants from the notice of the first wave of the Dark Circle and aided in the restoration of those debilitated by it's effects. Unfortunately relief came too late for the first group to shelter there as it appears hunger drove them out before the Undead were beaten back, but there could well be up to two hundred survivors from the surrounding area sheltering there. For further information, contact Bertram Tallfellow, Assistant Guild Cartographer, at the Guild Library.

Lost - One small bag containing a number of pickled ears, mostly Orcish in origin. Of sentimental value to owner. Reward offered. Genuine enquiries only please. Contact Roderigo at the Guild.

Brewery Back in Production - Village Stops Doing TimeWarp

During the last season (Winter 805) the party I was in was charged with investigating why shipments had not been received from one of the breweries belonging to the Flugelheim and Artzdorf Royal Brewers. An auditor had already been sent but he had not returned either. So we travelled to the site, the village of Little East Farthing in Artzdorf, to investigate.

We discovered that the entire village was under the effects of a time ritual that caused them to be repeating the same day over and over again. The villagers had no idea that this was going on but we discovered that the local dryads had set up the ritual on the request of the nyads in the local river. The reason for this was that there was something poisonous in the river and it was getting worse. If this was allowed to continue, all the fish life and nyads would have died.

Investigations told us that the poison going into the river was waste products from the distillery process. So we inspected the distillery waste pit and discovered it was cracked. Since the walls were lined with Bound Earth, this had been thought to be an impossible occurrence. So the contents of the waste pit was extracted and carried away for disposal. Following that, with the help of the dryads, the walls were repaired.

A further subterranean pool of concentrated contaminant was also located and removed. Once that was done, the rate of contaminant that was leeching into the river slowed to a more manageable rate, allowing the ritual to cease and the village to return to a normal flow of time.

It was finally discovered that the walls of the pit had been cracked by a magical reaction, between the magical residuals used in the distillery process, the addition of some blackberry waste which had been also been magically affected and a lightning strike from a very severe storm that had occurred a week before. Steps have now been taken to prevent a repetition of this incident and the brewery and distillery are now in full production.



The Brewery at Little East Farthing

Seren (to a palace flunky):

“Please tell the Lady Isil Eth that Serendipity, the Burgrave of Burgalfen, is here on business.”

Tussock (to no one in particular):

“Namedropper.”

Dirk:

“A sort of an a la carte driver.”



Regency Crisis Resolved?

The teams of scholars sent by Herzog Albrecht of Aquila, and Dulciena, Marquessa de Bowcourt to the College of Heralds in Mittelmarkhauptstadt to research the regency laws of the Old Kingdom both left MMHS over a month ago to report success to their respective employers.

From what information has been released, the relevant laws appear unusually clear, having been laid down around 100 WK and applied in the early reign of Otto the Gentle (who ruled from 163 to 209 WK). The laws state that if the King of the West, is incapacitated or under age (sede plena), then Royal authority is held jointly by two Royal Vicars (Reichsvikarien), and exercised in the name of the King.

It is understood that negotiations began almost immediately between the Marquessa and her step-son Herzog Albrecht, and there seems little doubt as to who the two Reichsvikarien are likely to be. Reactions from Aladar have been less than completely favourable, with fears that this arrangement will leave them as the "poor cousins", with reduced access to Royal authority.

Even with the apparent thawing of relations between the Herzog and the Marquessa, and with the weather also warming, no immediate moves are being planned for the Royal court and it seems likely that the Summer court will remain in Bowcourt, further Dark Circle advances notwithstanding.

Rumours abound of another discovery by the scholars in the MMHS archives, that of a hitherto unrevealed prophecy concerning the imminent return of King Sigismund (the last King of the Old Kingdom who vanished on crusade over 300 years ago). Neither party is making any announcements regarding the prophecy and yet the rumours persist. One source, quoted on assurance of anonymity, said that the prophecy was "startling", and that if true was likely to cause "significant political upset".

The Assault on Carlson's Switch

At the Guild, on W'nsday 2nd Frost, 805, Breagon briefed the volunteers, having assessed each one's capabilities and discussed what each could contribute. It had been determined that our best hope was to thwart the assault of the Dark Circle armies at the pass known as Carlston's Switch. This would be carried out by Eltradorian forces consisting of four units of fifty Hobilaris armed with crossbows, and three units of two hundred heavy cavalry, supported by the Guild strike force. The Guild volunteers were initially divided into three groups as follows:

Group 1 "Hammer" - Mobile Strike Force (highly experienced and able to fight and fly in combat): Sabrina (Mil Sci), Lysander, Mary-Em, Kilroy

Group 2 "Sword" - Front Line Fighters: Mordrin (Mil Sci), Darius Jedburgh, Sir Wojer, Gok, Starflower

Group 3 "Shield" - Combat Support, Healing, Anti-Troop && Blast Magics, and Bodyguards: Engalton (Mil Sci), Axis, Bleyze, Flamis, Shemin-ah, Phaeton, Valery, Wordsmith, Sooty.

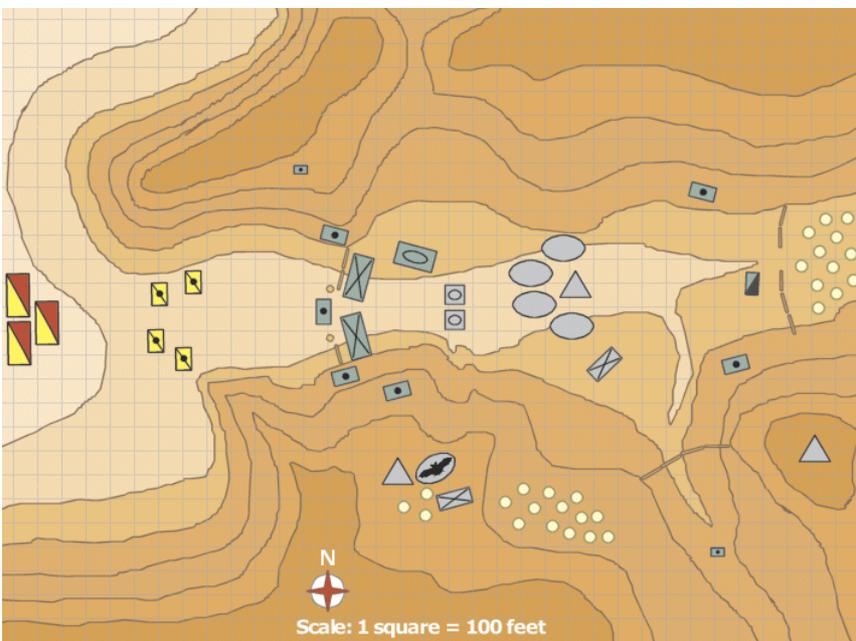
Just before noon, the group assembled and rode out of the guild gates. Led to the outskirts of Seagate by trumpeters and a detachment of the Duke's personal guard in full dress uniform, were the Guild volunteers in full and magnificent panoply. Banners are unfurled and as the procession wended its way out of Seagate people gathered at the sides of the road to watch, cheer, and sometimes just gape in awe. The braver amongst them shouted out "Go the Guild!" "Bring back the Light!" "Destruction to the Dark Circle!"...

The crowds thinned out as the party got further from Seagate and the ride, or flight (for those that insisted) to Regars Keep was pleasant on that clear winter day. Those that wore parade finery changed into their standard adventuring kit and settled in for the night. It seemed odd that certain other Guild members who were rumoured to be involved appeared to be missing, these being Dramus, Faith, Roke, and Seredipity.

On 4th Frost the volunteered woke early in the morning to find themselves magically armoured, protected, and enhanced. Braegon had left early on other business. Many of the group appeared much as they did the day before, although there are rather more weapons in view. Others exchanged their civilian wear for very obvious

Sam: "What's a sexist?"
Dirk: "A philanthropist but with sex."

"It's a giant conspiracy theory" - Falco after Grizelda's paranoid suggestions.



Key	
Eltrador Heavy Cavalry (200)	
Eltrador Hobilaris (50)	
Guild	
Dark Circle	
Hobgoblin/Orc Infantry (200)	
Goblin Archers (100)	
Goblin Patrol (6-10)	
Orges (100)	
Goblin Wolf Riders (50)	
Skeleton / Zombie Infantry (100)	
Undead Shambling Mob (200)	
Undead Mammoths (5)	
Undead Vampire Bats (?)	
Dark Circle Command	
Earth Elemental	
Fortifications	
Tents	

Sam: "Air mages are good at being subtle."

combat gear. Mary-M was carrying a pole (which looks a bit light for a quarterstaff) and a tightly wrapped suspicious package. Just over two hours after sunrise the last of the medium term magics are cast and using their various means of transportation (and with extras provided by the Duke's mages) the group set off east for the 97 mile flight to Carlson's Switch.

Nearing noon the group approached the pass. Below them, the Eltrandorians have manoeuvred into support positions as arranged. Laid out before them in the mouth of the pass are the assembled forces of the Dark Circle defenders. The Eltrandorians saw the guild assault force fly over and began their advance. The Guild military scientists seeing the Dark Circle deployment decided to deploy in two groups instead of three, initially aiming to take down the bats seen as a threat to any using magical flight, and then aiming to assault the command group on the south-west hill.

Group 2 approached from the south-west and were spotted first, the bat cloud moving to intercept and spreading out, apparently intent on their standard tactic of envelop and pull down. In the meantime Group 1 popped up over the northwest hill and swooped down past the northern goblin position, dropping a TK grenado which blew the goblins, clumped by the steep terrain, in every direction, some raining down to do damage to the hobgoblins below. The first visible earth elemental fell to one of the four namers in Group 1, as the Eltrandorian Hobliars begun firing at the gobbins in the centre of the pass mouth. In response, the Dark Circle commander took to the air, heading north to challenge Group 1, followed by his lackeys. This consisted of a score of dark figures on star wings, a half dozen figures mounted on giant bats, one ornate figure mounted on a big, black, flying horse with firey hooves, and a dragon of a pale reddish hue.

Continuing across the Pass mouth the second elemental was banished by Group 1 and then more damage was

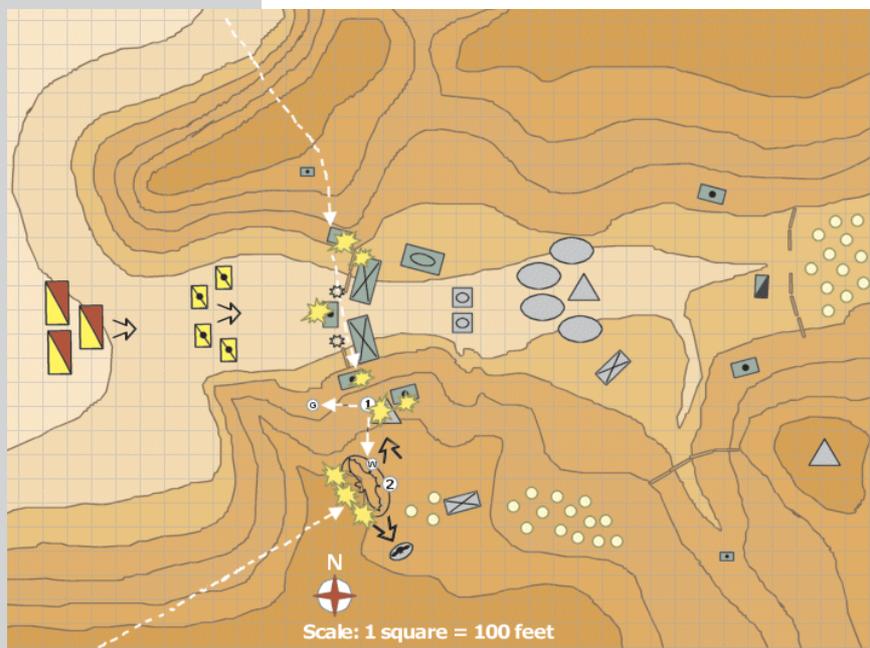
inflicted, this time on the southern goblin archers, where the drake-formed Starflower's "Mind Scream" had a suitable panic inducing effect, along with some rank twenty Light to force redeployment. Away to the southwest, Mary-M discarded the wrappings around the suspicious bundle she'd been carrying, and brandished forth (attached to a halfling scaled banner pole) the Holy Standard of Saint Jeremiah. The noonday sun flashed on its golden surface, and for most of Group 2 the oppressive feeling of the area lifted somewhat. The bat cloud as a whole hesitated, but by then Group 2 were in range and magical firey destruction (as well as Sunrays, and not a few arrows) swamped the cloud. In less than thirty seconds most of the bats were incinerated, crisped, desiccated, shot, or otherwise dealt with. A small number of normal bats fled southwards, and showed no signs of stopping anytime soon. The few bigger bats that made it through the firestorm and still keen to attack were dealt with at closer range.

While Group 2 dealt with the bats, the command unit closed with Group 1, who lacked the massed magical firepower, but even so some energy bolts, ice magics, and other attack spells struck the enemy, and are met by Whitefires and Blackfires, which seemed to have little effect, and no-one succumbed to fear. The dragon swooped in, looking to close with Kilroy, but pulled back at the last second before making contact. Some of the cloaked figures swooped in with swords drawn against Borghoff, Engalton, Wordsmith, Shemin-ah, and Jedburgh, and there were hideous shrieks as several of the undead turn to ash, while others recoiled.

The dragon shrieked, a terrible sound that started in the sub-sonic and rose up beyond hearing. Several of the group looked momentarily hesitant, and even Engalton was seen to blanch. The dragon breathed out great gouts of fire, smoke and black ash that engulfed Group 1, blinding, choking and burning away their Fire Armour. The Namers got off Dispel Magics on some wings and some of the cloaked figures fell, but others stayed floating, becoming easy targets for Starflower, Kilroy and his giant raven Karreyhun, and for Gok's holy sword and other melee attacks.

The ornate figure on the Nightmare dove into close combat with Kilroy and his raven. The combat is inconclusive, and the Skeletal Lord finally pulled back, filling the air around him with ash and smoke, largely concealing himself before moving towards the edge of the combat, giving Kilroy time to recover. To add to the confusion, the goblin archer unit that was almost directly below the fight fired arrows into the fray. Most missed wildly, but a few lucky shots got through. Starflower in turn strafed them with her "Mind Scream" sending many running in confusion, rather less interested in taking part.

With half of the cloaked figures down, the combat turned into a confused dog-fight with webbed adventurers struggling to break out, or having them dispelled, trading attacks spells, and trying to close with the cloaked figures (now identified as a mix of Wights and Wraiths) who kept their distance and threw spells, and the Skeletal Knights on the Giant bats, who appear to be doing little, though it is safe to assume that they created the phantasms and mental attacks, one of which struck Gok, whose wings began to carry his unconscious form westwards. The dragon



continued to twist away from close combat and filled the air with blasts of fire, burning off more and more Fire Armour but so far inflicting no injuries.

As Group 2 headed to the assistance of Group 1, Borghoff, charged at the Skeleton Lord followed by Engalton The Skeleton Lord gained height and his Nightmare blew out more smoke and ash. Borghoff and the Skeleton Lord traded a flurry of blows in passing; the Lord's cloak shed more rats and a moment later Borghoff's wings disappeared, and he plummeted; his feather fall also gone - that is until he triggered a flight spell on his armour, and headed back for more. Kilroy took stock of his injuries, beat his chest, cried "Kilroy!!!" and charged after the nearest bat-mounted Knight. Starflower dived again at the archers below, her Mind Scream driving the goblins to panic and flee. All discipline gone the unit broke and ran. Off to the west Gok recovered his senses and turned back to rejoin the aerial melee.

Sabrina considered tactics, and sensing the desperation which the undead would likely feel in the presence of the Standard, ordered Sir Wojer and Mordrin to stay close to Mary-M as she took the artifact into the thick of the fight with Valery following close behind. Mordrin and Sabrina rallied Wordsmith as he flew towards them, and he joined them as they plunged into the fray. As they charged, Sabrina's voice rang out, crystal clear for hundreds of feet, even across the noise of battle: "Foul dragon, your doom approaches! Sabrina the Valkyrie is upon you! Come now and feel the full force of my wrath!"

Sabrina couched her lance and she and Ajax leapt ahead of the group to charge straight at the dragon. Dragonfire washed over the pair, and then her dragonbone lance slammed through the dragon's chest. The lance was torn from her hand and she switched to her war axe while Ajax struck at the dragon with his mighty shod hooves. As the dragon shrieked in pain and rage, several of the newcomers to the dogfight paused momentarily, but all fought down their panic and remained steadfast.

Several of the undead are in turn unnerved by Lysander's arrival and the one Wraith who halted in mid-cast before her was quickly dispatched. As the Holy Standard drew near, those already in the fight could see the Wights and Wraiths lose some of their substance, and the bats of the Skeleton Knights began to keel. With the arrival of the blast mages, purifying flames and fiery sunlight joined icy blasts in falling amongst the undead. More Wights and Wraiths were struck down as they desperately attempted to avoid the fires.

Seeing the combat going against them the Skeleton knights were spurred to attack directly while the Namers were kept busy dispelling phantasms generated by the bats. Several Knights converged on Mary-M and the Standard and were intercepted by Sir Wojer, who took a nasty blow to his shoulder as he decapitated it, followed by its bat. The second Knight, attacking Mordrin, shrieked and turned to ash, but its bat fastened its teeth into Mordrin's neck, who, with her wings dissipated by the Knight's blow, is feather falling. Valery raced to the rescue, and her silver glaive reduced the bat to ash. A third Knight went for Lysander, opening a wicked gash along her left arm as she ashed it, followed by its bat.

Tingling with energy after destroying the Knight, Lysander charged and cut down another Wraith, and engaged a Wight. Kilroy, still in combat with his Knight, took a nasty blow to the

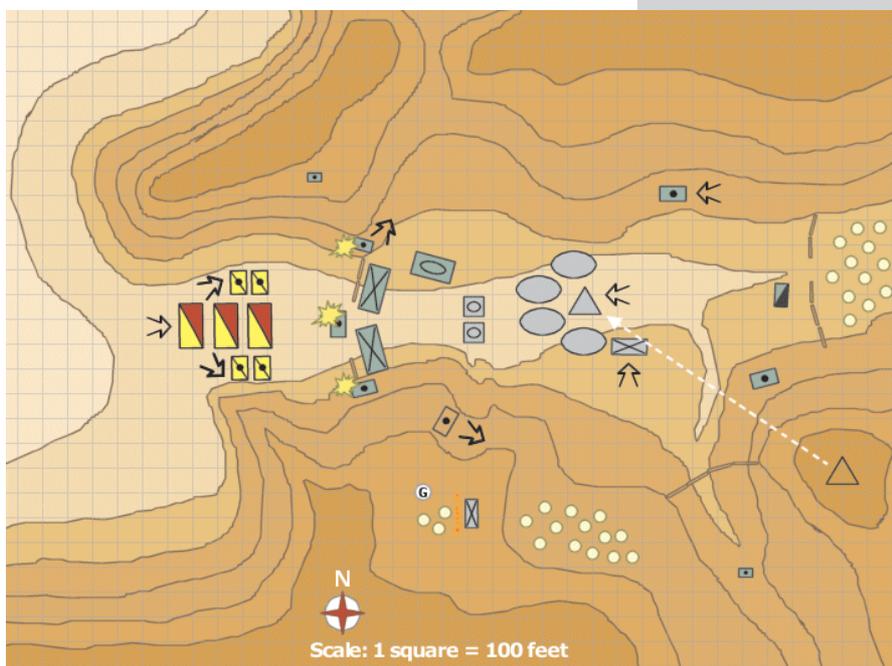
leg, even as he smashed his mace through the Knight's antique helmet and then through its skull, and Karreyhun bit off the head of its bat. Another bat mounted Knight went for Axis and his cloud of larks and traded blows until Axis, to the considerable surprise of the Skeleton Knight, changed into a silver dragon and scoured him with Flames of Anor, followed up with viscous clawing and biting, until the bat and knight turned to dust. The final Knight also charged towards Mary-M and the Standard, and was met by Wordsmith and the badly injured Sir Wojer. On the first pass the Knight's bat managed to grasp Wordsmith, interfering with his wings, and fasten vampiric teeth into his left knee. The now heavily encumbered bat manoeuvred slowly and made an easier target for Sir Wojer who dealt the Knight a savage blow.

Meanwhile, below the fight, a couple of wights attempted Falling Stars against Mary-M and the Standard, missing and striking instead the last Knight, along with Sir Wojer and Wordsmith, causing the injured Knight and bat to dissipate in a cloud of noxious vapours, and release the badly injured Wordsmith. Borghoff flew back into combat with the Skeleton Lord and traded blows with him. On the fourth pass Borghoff's sword evaded the Lord's defences and slammed down on his left shoulder, the sound of bones breaking quite audible. On the next pass however, one of the Nightmare's hooves smashed into Borghoff's chest and he felt a rib break. The Lord's cloak continued to shed rat skins, and was now in mere tatters as they continue to battle. Sabrina and the dragon went for it hard. The dragon delivered a bruising blow to Sabrina's back with its tail, and opened a ragged wound down Ajax's left flank; his left front leg lamed. Sabrina hacked great gashes in the dragon, deep wounds that spurted black blood that burnt without fire, and caused great pain. Gok arrived back at the outskirts of the fight just as, in the midst of the melee, and in the presence of so many unholy beings, the Standard of Saint Jeremiah begins to glow, shining and sparkling, a glorious radiance, and then there was only light; a moment of brilliance and calm, gone as quickly as it appeared. When the blinding light is gone, the party are unharmed by the Banner's blast, save for Sooty who suffered an excruciating sunburn.

Dirk: "And no leaf jokes."

Aurora: "As if I wood oops."

Falco about Sam: "Not only is he deaf and dumb, he caught mime."



Alchemist:
“Most people have heard of Mortimer.”

Sam: *“Most of the Baronies have heard his explosions.”*

Against the undead however, the Standard had a dramatic effect. The wraiths were turned to oily smoke and the wights on fire, and are quickly dispatched. All of the Knights and their bats have been dispatched. The great undead dragon appeared to be scorched and blackened, and Borghoff, still engaged with the apparently unharmed Skeleton Lord, saw a ring of jet crumble and fall from his hand. The blast mages now concentrated their magical fury on the dragon. Twisting vainly to evade the spells the dragon offered Sabrina an opening and she slammed her Vodagh war axe through the side of its neck. A moment later, the great body became a vast falling ash cloud, and a dragonbone spear, which she recovered with a quick dive. As Borghoff traded blows with the weakening Skeleton Lord, a heavy necklace with a large glowing ruby suddenly appeared upon his breast. Spurring his nightmare, the Lord's tombstone voice reached the ears of Borghoff and Engalton: "Another time, mortals!" The Lord and his mount turned translucent, transparent, and then disappeared, leaving only a dissipating cloud of fumes.

The Guild forces landed on the abandoned command post, to staunch their wounds and regroup. Axis and Starflower in their draconic forms went to accompany the flyers of Hammer, while Mary-M and the Standard joined Sword, where Sir Wojer and Mordrin could continue their invaluable body-guarding. Wings were seen to the east... yet there was no attack. Some of the adventurers checked out the tents - the largest was commander's pavilion. Upon seeing the adventurers enter, two goblinoid dark-robed figures were found attempting to open an ornate wooden box. They were quickly dispatched, and an Ignite Flammables trap removed. The disarmed box contained a number of maps and several documents that appeared to be in cipher, all of which were taken for later examination. The other two tents proved to be more corrals with roofs. Each contained about a dozen unhealthy looking humans. All appear docile as a result of draining, and suffered from malnutrition and bite marks. Shemin-ah threw up some walls of ice to provide temporary shelter until they could be evacuated later.

Meanwhile, Axis took the opportunity to have a quick scry down into the valley and up to the southeast hilltop. Looking into the valley, winged figures circled, numbering some dozen or so Wights and Wraiths. On the ground were several bat-riders. The hundreds of shambling troops appeared something like zombies, but rather less decayed, unarmoured and unarmed, and in tattered clothing. Above the southeast hilltop, scrying revealed a dozen more robed figures in the air and a few figures still on the ground. The grounded figures were difficult to scry clearly, the vision blurring around them, the worst being one who appeared to be carrying something. Axis could make out tall and gaunt figures in baroque armour, much like "spectral warriors". The area on the hilltop showed the signs of a ritual working, recently abandoned. As Axis watched, the figures on the ground took to the air then the entire group quickly headed for the valley command post.

[Just before the intrepid adventurers began their run down into the valley and its hordes of undead the following events unfolded off to the north, where an agitated Ogre chieftain was berating his two orc shamans (dialogue translated liberally from the Ogrish).

Chief Grundark Skullcrusher: Where are those new Earth Elementals, you scabby useless sons of goblins?!

Shaman Grog: They're gone! I've called two now and they've both bogged off an' vanished.

Shaman Borag: Yeah, me too Chief.

Chief Grundark: [untranslatable], well, are the collapsing areas in front of those spineless hobgoblins ready?

Shaman Borag: Yeah, they've been ready for hours - slurp - Hey, where'd Grog go?

There is a sucking sound as Shaman Borag also vanishes into the ground.]

Airborne once more the Guild party headed northeast, planning to hook around then strafe the command unit with all of their available offensive magic before creating a landing zone slightly to the east of the command unit's position. The flight in took a quarter of a minute as everyone readied again for battle. Beneath them, on the ground, Flamis's fire elemental, Freda, kept pace, blazing a fiery trail down from the hilltop. Flying over the shambling hordes they identified them as plague ghouls. The Fire Elemental raced into the nearest group and began to immolate them on its way through.

Approaching the command unit, there were clearly a dozen dark robed figures on a mix of Star and Shadow wings circling, joined in the air by four Skeletal Knights on giant bats. A similar number of robed figures were on the ground, accompanied by a couple of Vampires and the three tall figures in the ornate armour, now known to be Liches. One of the Vampires was mounted on a dark horse and bore a red banner attached to a lance; a banner the colour of blood and bearing dark glyphs, the other, on foot, carried an enormous two-handed sword with a pitted blade and unpleasant greenish tinge.

As the Holy Standard neared, the Wights and Wraiths lost some of their substance, and then the mages struck, engulfing the command unit in radiant flame, cleansing light and solar flare - felling five wraiths and two wights.

Swinging around just to the east of the command unit and into the open, Engalton and other namers prepared landing sites for Sword and Shield with counterspells and healing areas dropped on the ground. Shield landed while Sword and Hammer wheeled back into the commanders. Hammer slammed into the undead in the air and Sword landed on their pre-prepared site to engage ground targets.

In the air, several of the undead lost their composure in the face of Lysander's fear effect, one Knight shying away to engage Axis, while a wight and wraith both fled. Lysander engaged another Knight, trading serious blows until the Knight and its bat fell, and she was forced to staunch her wounds. Axis clawed and bit, while breathing the Flames of Arnor at the Knight who attacked him as it hacked back. A mind scream from Starflower rendered the Knight's bat insensible and falling, and Axis clawed the falling Knight apart, tearing its chest open before it turned to dust and ash. Two Knights charged at Kilroy and Karreyhun. Kilroy bellowed his war cry and smashed his mace into a Knight's chest, crushing it, while Karreyhun clawed and bit at its bat, tearing off a wing. The other Knight landed a slashing blow to Karreyhun's throat, causing the great raven and its rider to plunge to the ground. A moment later, Sabrina's couched lance caught the Knight from behind, smashing through its

Penni to Thaeuss:
“Gosh you're big!”



armour to emerge from its chest. The Knight disintegrated as a blow from Ajax's hoof broke its bat's wing.

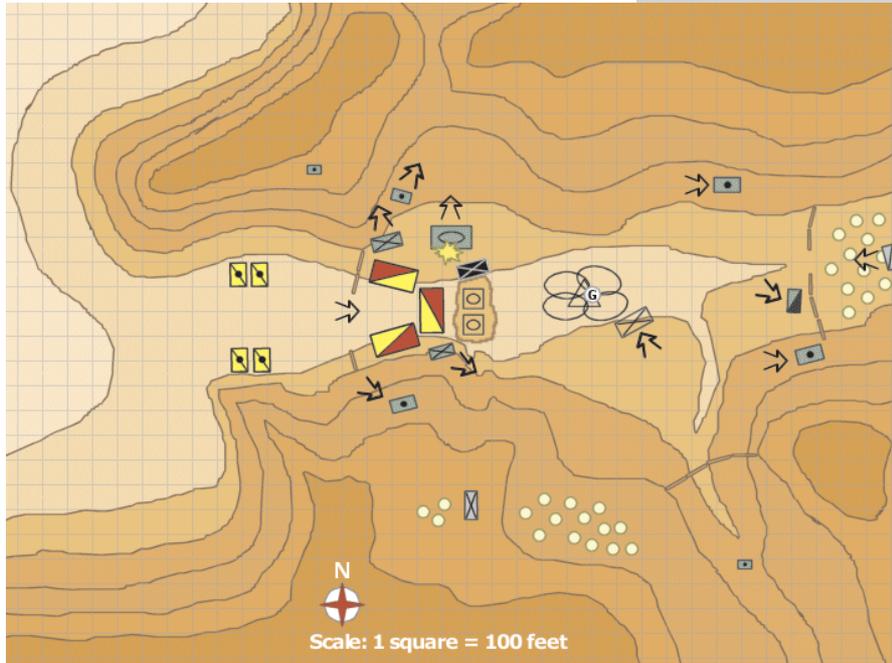
On the ground, the Namers were busy countering phantasms created by the bats and Spectral Warriors from the Liches. Necrosis and Streams of Corruption flew towards Sword from the Liches, but the counterspelled area and the healing effects kept the fighters standing. The wraiths hung back and cast blackfire across Sword without much effect, save that Sir Wojer berserkly charged amongst them slashing wildly with his two-handed sword, reducing the unfortunate wraith who had feared him to dust, and hewing another apart. Despite a slashing blow from a wight that reopened his shoulder wound, Sir Wojer continued to slash his way through the undead.

Both vampires and three wights engaged Sword. The Vampire with sword struck at Borghoff, while the Vampire with lance charged at Mary-M and the Standard. Mordrin intercepted the mounted vampire, smashing her hand and a half across its mounts front legs. The undead mount turned to dust tumbling the vampire to the ground but the vampire stood, still holding the lance and drew a wicked, jagged sword. Borghoff and the other vampire traded blows, each looking for openings in the others defence, while Gok vapourised a wight with his holy sword, before going to the aid of the limping Jedburgh. The final wight attacked Mary-M with a jarring blow that cracked her right wing. Dropping her short-sword, Mary-M brought the Standard down hard on the wight who shrieked and vanished in a brief burst of white light.

With people on the ground, the demeanour of the ghoulish mobs changed. Hundreds of ghouls swung their hungry gaze towards Sword and Shield and then ran towards them. No shambling mob or orderly charge this, but a headlong rush; rapid and eerily silent. As they neared Sword the ghouls halted or flowed around the group, the presence of the Standard preventing their close approach, and concentrated their attention on Shield.

Away to the west, at the mouth of the Pass, the Eltrandorians heavy cavalry has begun to gain speed, moving from a walk, to a canter, to a gallop. The remaining goblin archers in the enemy's centre scrambled aside and the hobgoblins steady their lines. The cavalry lowered lances and selected their targets. The hobgoblins in the centre appeared smug and sly, as though they expected any moment, a calamity to befall the cavalry. On the knights charged and the hobgoblins began to lose their composure as the ground steadfastly refused to swallow the horsemen. The Eltrandorians struck the goblinoids lines with a sound that could be heard by the Guild over the noise of their own battles; a great resounding boom that echoed through the mouth of the pass.

The Shield group erected walls of fire and light, attempted Forbiddings against "ghouls", and began blanketing the incoming undead with enhanced blast magics. Flamis's fire elemental joined the group, seizing and incinerating the undead. Burning ghouls charged out of the fire, charring as they leapt into close quarters, clawing and biting, heedless of their terrible injuries. Shield's "bodyguard" fighters attempted to keep the ghouls away from the casting mages with varying degrees of success, Valery's silver glaive managed to keep an area open around her and Phaeton, but ghouls dragged Bleyze and Sooty down, greedily stuffing torn flesh into their ravenous maws. Trusting to their Fire Armour, Flamis and her elemental



created a firestorm over the two mages, broiling their undead attackers.

Suddenly, siege munitions came catapulting out of the west, fired from the backs of undead mammoths and passing over the horde of undead; targeted beyond the valley command unit to where Shield were making their stand. Dozens of grapefruit sized globes fell amidst Shield and the ghouls, shattering to splash alchemical fire indiscriminately. Enchanted skulls also landed in the melee, skulls that exploded as they struck the ground, sending razor sharp bone shrapnel lancing through living and undead alike, inflicting serious wounds on Flamis, Shemin-ah, Phaeton and Wordsmith. Fire drenched ghouls attempted to pile on top of fighters and mages alike; continuing to attack even with limbs hewed off, dragging themselves up blades that impaled them until they suddenly disappeared into ash from the undead protections. Slightly ahead of the confused melee, the Standard of Saint Jeremiah began to glow, shining and sparkling with an eye burning radiance. Ready this time, Mary-M was able to call a warning and then there was only light; a moment of nothing but the utmost brilliance, which was then gone, leaving the noon-day sun seeming dimmed. Warned as the Guild party were, their blindness was at worst momentary, and almost immediately the effects were seen. The ghouls were devastated, the nearest reduced to no more than drifting dust and ash, others charred and blackened. Many still remained however, too distant to have been affected, and advanced towards the party. Another hail of fire globes fell onto Shield, and then the siege artillery stopped and did not fire again. Those on the ground felt a slight shudder underfoot, while those in the air saw, glancing westwards, that where the mammoths were, there were gaping pits, and within the pits, black armoured warriors destroying the beasts.





**Axis
Dragonmage:
"My wife isn't
known as Fynn
DragonRider for
nothing."**



Amongst the command unit though, the effect of the Standard were far less. In the moment of the Standard's flash the light seemed to bend around the commanders; a hemisphere of darkness that appeared centred on one of the Liches and protected most of the other undead. Observing the centre of the effect, Sabrina steadied her lance and charged into a Liche, impaling it through the chest, while Kilroy picked himself up off the ground and yelling "Kilroy!" charged another of the ornate trio. Axis and Starflower bore down

upon the third - which was carrying a black chalice filled with smoking red liquid. Still engaged with a vampire Borgoff hammered his sword into its abdomen. The vampire brought its greatsword smashing down across Borghoff's chest, and previously broken ribs, staggering him. Jedburgh and Gok, having destroyed their wight, attacked the vampire. Gok's holy sword caught the vampire on the side of its neck, above its gorget, and the creature dissolved into misty vapours. The vampire with the lance pointed its sword at Mordrin and, speaking an unholy word, released a chain of lighting bolts from its banner at both her and Mary-M. The bolts struck the two, damaging and stunning. Mordrin reeled back, clutching her sword, and the vampire stalked towards Mary-M who was dazedly clinging to the Standard.

With her lance jammed in the Liche, Sabrina switched to her axe, and the creature disappeared under a flurry of axe blows and a storm of hooves. Kilroy's mace jarred his target's shoulder, while its black scepter in turn shattered Kilroy's left collarbone. Kilroy began to back away defensively. Axis breathed flames over the third Liche while Starflower clawed, smashing the bones in his left arm so that the black chalice fell to the ground and overturned, spilling smoking blood out onto the earth. A moment later, the remaining vampire was on fire, the noon sun's rays igniting his flesh as the unholy artifact's power was dissipated and the Standard of Saint Jeremiah suppressed the Dark Circle effects fully for the first time. For the third time today the Standard of Saint Jeremiah began to glow, shine and sparkle before light blanketed everything in a moment of calm. Mary-M felt the Standard become quiescent, its power temporarily drained. As people's vision cleared they could see that the party stood in an area devastated and cleared of unlife. To the west the mammoths have been destroyed, black armoured dwarves have emerged from their pits and fire upon the orges, and the hobgoblins, who have found themselves caught between charging cavalry and pits to their rear, have broken were fleeing. The battle was over.

Once again the party rested and healed. Starflower headed west to panic more goblinoids and ogres, most of whom were already fleeing into the hills. Most of the damage was repaired with potions, healing counters and the like, but very few people did not bear some injuries that would require the attention of the Healers for full recovery. The few nasty looking and evil items lying around were checked, bagged and taken. In the pass mouth the Eltrandorian cavalry came to a halt before the gaping pits; the surviving hobgoblins and goblins all fleeing. The ogres retreated before the black armoured dwarves who came out

of the pits. The dwarves numbered perhaps two hundred and were armed with odd crossbows; sharp cracks and reports can be heard as they fired.

As the party recovered, a delegation of dwarves approached, a commander and some bodyguards, along with a banner bearer carrying a black standard. They all had strange and twisted bodies: one had goat legs, another a tentacle arm, a third large curving horns, and so on. The leader of the group appeared normal to the waist, but his lower body was scorpionoid; six legs and a sting-tipped tail. They sought out the military leaders and addressed them. He introduced himself as Captain Turok of the Black Regiment, and complimented the party on their fighting prowess. He explained that his spies reported Dark Circle relief forces approaching this end of the pass and wished to know the party's intentions. After considerable discussion between the Party's military leaders, Captain Turok, and Eltrandorian Officers it was decided to withdraw from the pass in good order, keeping together as a "force in being" to continue the threat to the Dark Circle in this area, and force them to commit their reserves and fresh troops here rather than elsewhere in Brastor. This was felt to minimize risk to the troops here, while giving the evacuation plan in swing northwest of Tobintown the best chance of success. We learned afterwards that the audacious plan to use earth elementals to create a new pass and thus get the refugees out by a totally unexpected path while the Dark Circle forces were occupied here had been a total success.

With that settled the groups headed out. The Guild mages created walls to block the pass; the few remaining skeletons proving to be no great danger and flamed from range. The other camps were quickly surveyed were plainly goblin and hobgoblin tents and no more captives were located. By the time the Guild Forces reached the Eltrandorian camp, bringing the former captives with them, the first of their soldiers had arrived back, and the first fortifications went

Guild Members Respond:

Valery: It just goes to show that you can't trust Braegon to mean what he says. When he first asked for volunteers to rescue civilians caught behind enemy lines, I thought it was going to mean help flying people away and healing those too hurt to move. I didn't realise we were going to be directly fighting hundreds and hundreds of undead and their commanders. Stauch work done by those Braegon left to lead us, while he bugged off elsewhere ... lucky Mary M had the standard. Must admit I hadn't realised we had so many dragons and angels in the Guild.

Wordsmith: It was great fighting with great adventurers, many of them only names to me. I'm glad I was able to banish elementals and Spectral Warriors and defend the Standard. For Novadom!

Phaeton: Exhilarating. Dealing to those undead .. I had forgotten how much of a thrill it can be. And it was an honour to work with some of the Guild elite. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a lot of work to do.

Starflower: Exhausting... You have no idea how many of those gods-forsaken gobbos there were out there! And undead flesh STILL leaves a foul taste. Pttt!

up, built by strangely dark coloured elementals under the supervision of more black armoured dwarves. Over the next few hours the elementals and mechanics of the Black Regiment turned the camp into a considerable redoubt with long-range attack - the dwarves managed to scavenge some nasty siege engines from somewhere. When dusk came, the Eltrandorian commander thanked the Guild party for their efforts, saying that it was a pleasure to operate with such professional troops and that he hoped they might work together in future. After nightfall, the party headed back to Regar's Keep (by flight or other means), and by late evening all that chose to be, returned to the Guild, or their homes nearby. The battle was done, but the war continues.

Water College Potions for Sale

Waters of Healing Rk 12 - 500 sp
Waters of Strength Rk 10 - 1000 sp



Please contact Aqualina at the Guild.

The Adventurer's Guide

Tips for success

All we wanted was a nice little blizzard to use as cover, the plan was to blind and pin down 150+ mercenaries so we could sneak past them and destroy the weapon of mass destruction, any plans for said weapon, and capture of kill its creator. What we got was a blizzard with extremely heavy snow, winds so strong you couldn't have stood up, and cold so intense high ranked resist colds were needed to stop us freezing to death in seconds. This was not the first extreme weather effect we'd witnessed, unseasonable thaws can cause a lot of damage; you'd think the stupid humanoids would learn to be more careful when altering the weather on a high mana world but no...

Never let an Air mage Mess with the weather, particularly in a High Mana Zone, which means anywhere on Rifts.

Always check that the party employer REALLY knows where he is going...

Be nice to fae folk, and they will be nice to you... That means putting down the big crossbow, if you please.

Making your own path has its advantages, in terms of avoiding the enemy. Of course making your own *pass* isn't an option for most of us.

Saydar's Bone Armour



Armour as strong as iron, as light as bone and you can cast while wearing it! Any armour up to 10 point plate available. Special offer this guild meeting only. Get it while you can! Raising money for an assault on Rashak.

See Saydar at the Guild Meeting.

Rumour Mill

You heard it here first...

We always thought that the followers of the Knob God were open to anything, but they've gone positively rural! A nanny goat has been 'gifted' to the local Church of the One-horned God. The benefactor claims that Heidi provides magical ale for religious use. Magic indeed! I'm no prude - we all know what happens in Knobby's 'services' - but really!

Sabrina has returned to active adventuring at the guild. Lady Sabrina, one of the guilds more illustrious members, has reportly spent the last three years in eastern Aladar. Welcome back to our favourite Valkyrie!

After breaking his previous record of 1½ miles, Braegon lays claim to a new distance record for the spell of Tunnelling - 14 Miles in 7 Hours. "I could have gone further, but we needed to go straight down and the switchbacks slowed things down." stated Braegon during a brief break from therapy for his Restorative addiction.

Guild member Morgan has recently clinched this seasons crown for live rat eating. In the recent competitions held at the Orc establishment the "Skull Tavern", Morgan managed to consume 22 1/2 rats within one minute. Morgan told us "bad breath is the secret, you breathe on them and they stop wriggling - much easier to stuff them in.". Our reporter assured us that Morgans breath, attributed to rotten horse flesh, has the power to stun rats, having passed out three times while talking to her.

We're told that Halden Barthrone of the guild library is becoming exasperated at the lack of scribe notes being submitted following adventures. "They are bound by the guild contract to complete the notes, and we offer a healing potion as a reward - surely that is enough?" Halden tell us. Consequently she is currently in negotiation with the guild council to impose a quarterly tax of 100sp per session per set of outstanding scribe notes in addition to naming and shaming them in the Seagate Times.

Books, Tomes & Scrolls



All these wanted for addition to library. Almost any subject considered.

Good prices paid. If on adventure then pick some up and bring em back for my collection. Apply to Father Broc.

Father Rowan's Holy Water

Get your Holy Water here. Free to a good home, provided you can prove you're good.

Note: Purity testing for necromancers involves Ordeal by Hellfire.



Curse Removal

Get your serious curses removed. Up to MA 42 Curses removed! Those on Good terms with Sier get a 25% Discount! See Dramus at the Guild.



Logan: "I've backfired five times today, I think that proves something!"

Thaessus: "That humans are not meant to use magic."

Starflower's Cookbook

Or How to Pack a Picnic

Following my description of a recent adventure as a "succession of picnics" I thought Guild members might be interested in some suggestions as to how to make your next foray more pleasant from the culinary point of view.

The first and most important recommendation is to ensure that at least one member of your party knows the basics of hunting, fishing and gathering provender. You also need someone who can turn the ingredients provided into something edible. I am told that even giant chaos snail can be rendered edible if sautéed properly with garlic and onion. And it helps if you can tell which mushrooms are poisonous, which taste of stale parchment, and which are actually good to eat. In short you need a ranger, herbalist and cook. It doesn't hurt to carry a good recipe book.

The second requirement is the culinary toolkit, and by this I mean rather more than your mug, knife, bowl and spoon. Each party member should of course carry those items. If you wish to be truly civilised you will need far more than that... picnic cloths, napkins, goblets, forks, serving spoons and platters and that's just at serving time. A basic party toolkit for the wilderness should also include a grill rack, skillet, a billy pot, skewers, fish slice and tongs. Oh, and a fishing net and traps for small game.

Thirdly, you need some staples. You should always carry salt, pepper, garlic and spices. I'd recommend chilli, nutmeg, ginger, and saffron just as starters. Dried herbs such as bay leaves, thyme and sage are helpful for when fresh herbs are out of season or the terrain is unsuitable. Basic dry ingredients, which are relatively light and easy to carry, include flour, dried beans and lentils, rolled oats, and dried fruits. Cheeses, onions, dry sausages, and jerked meats are also convenient. If you like your gruel sweet don't forget a sealed pot of honey. If you have the space, a crock of olive oil or butter and one of vinegar will be useful.

So, how do you go about finding your picnic in the wilderness? Most adventurers seem to think in terms of deer, wild boar and other big game. The fact of the matter is that most of the time it just isn't worth the effort. A large beast requires you to actually go and hunt it, which is time-consuming and hard work. Unless you cheat by using magic to summon the beast to you, a tactic frowned on by most earth mages of my acquaintance. Then you have to skin the thing, remove and dispose of the entrails, and somehow deal

with all that meat. Which needs hanging by the way... for several days, by preference. Only the liver, kidneys, heart and other offal are immediately edible. Your only options for preservation are generally to smoke or dry what you can't eat immediately, a process that will take all night.

So let us consider less onerous alternatives. Setting up game traps around the camp at night has the dual function of helping to defend the campsite and to also provide breakfast, or lunch by preference. You will most likely catch rabbit, but there are numerous other small mammals and birds to be caught... squirrels, hares, quail, partridge and so on. Snake is also good eating once any poison sacs are carefully removed. Fish traps are a quick way to a tasty lunch, and don't ignore crustaceans and molluscs, especially if you happen to be near the sea. Freshwater fowl are generally good eating – duck, goose, even swan... (if you find any black swans by the way, be so kind as to keep the feathers, I am prepared to pay good silver for them). You will need archers to shoot waterfowl, or the *careful* use of magic... Flash-fried duck is not at its best.

As long as you're not too fussy or specific, rangers can find a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, nuts, eggs and fungi in a wilderness environment. If you're not skilled take a book and detect aura on everything you plan to eat for generic true name – that should at least reduce the number of poisonings. By fungi I'm not just talking just mushrooms of course, but also morels, ceps and chanterelles. Delicious fried with eggs in a little duck fat. If you're lucky you might find wild onions, or roots like turnips and carrots.

So what are you going to do with all this provender? Breakfast is usually going to be gruel, mainly because any culinary novice can usually get it right, including the person stuck with the last watch before dawn. If you can put your cook on the dawn watch that doesn't hurt. Gruel basically involves rolled oats, a pinch of salt, fresh water, that billy pot and a low fire, along with a bit of stirring. Meta-magical theory it isn't. You can add dried fruits, nuts, and a little honey if you like. Make the dough for flat breads at breakfast time, and it will be ready by lunch... then bake the breads on the grill, and fill them with strips of fried fish or meats, skewered vegetables and herb salad. Or make an omelette. At dinner the easiest thing is to pull out the billy pot and produce a stew, a savoury slow cooked mess of chopped meats, onions, beans and roots. Fish stews work just as well, especially if you caught some fresh-water crabs or crawdads. Or you can spit-roast rabbits over your fire as the vegetables bake in the ashes. Or skewer meats and vegetables and barbecue them over the coals. Just don't forget to clean the cooking kit right away! Using clean cantrips to remove baked on grime doesn't work too well in my experience.

There are a few items of magical kit that come in very handy for the adventurous cook, and I recommend you look out for on future missions. First there is the so-called bag of holding or portable hole. Aside from the obvious utility of these items in carrying your spare weaponry, they make it much easier to carry a variety of pots, pans and other kit as well as more dried ingredients. As well as the wine and ale. Secondly there are pouches of preservation for keeping your supply of herbs fresh. There are self-heating grillplates and cookpots which are great when fuel is scarce. I myself own a magical self-heating teapot that I nearly always take on adventure. Everlasting pots of honey and other basic ingredients are useful, although it has to be said that the eternal supply of cream buns must surely get a bit boring after a while. But then, I'm not a halfling.

While in a fae mist, Kelestra rescued a "hurt rabbit" which she popped into a sack to keep it safe. Any time one of the other party opened the sack, nothing was there, but when Kelstra did, there was a rabbit.

Talon: "Bloody bunny witches and their bunnies."

Sarah (party leader):

"Never trust party leaders."



The Puzzle Column

Altergate Taverns

There are five public taverns in the city of Altergate, each offering its patrons a different form of entertainment. Can you match each tavern to its location, its host and the entertainments presented there?

- Neither Terrens nor Jeremiah is the landlord of the Dizzy Dragon - where either cocks or bears can be viewed.
- The Vulgar Vampire features either skittles or darts; its address is neither Market Road nor Pudding Lane, and its host is neither Harrison nor Terrens.
- Lara's pub is in either Market Road or Dukes' Court. Its name is either the Axe and Anvil or the Vulgar Vampire.
- The tavern in Duke's Court, which is either the Silly Sheep or the Merry Mermaid, provides either mud-wrestling or bear-baiting for its patrons.
- The Merry Mermaid is neither the tavern in Pudding Lane nor the one where bears are baited; which is owned by either Harrison or Lara.
- Barty's tavern features neither darts nor mud-wrestling; whilst Jeremiah offers either skittles or bear-baiting.
- The cockfighting takes place in neither High Street nor Pudding Lane.
- The landlord of the Silly Sheep is either Barty or Harrison.

Inns: *Axe and Anvil, Dizzy Dragon, Merry Mermaid, Silly Sheep, Vulgar Vampire*

Landlords: *Barty, Harrison, Jeremiah, Lara, Terrens*

Locations: *Duke's Court, Gallowsgate, High Street, Market Road, Pudding Lane*

Activities: *Bear-baiting, Cock-fighting, Darts, Mud-wrestling, Skittles*



Riddles

I am always hungry,
I must always be fed,
The finger I lick
Will soon turn red.

Bright as diamonds,
Loud as thunder,
Never still,
A thing of wonder.

Sier ITN

Guild Namers
wishing to learn
Sier's ITN please
contact Engalton.

Get the Power of Fire and Light!

Fire College Invested Items:
Dragonflames Rk 10
Weapon of Flames Rk 10
Also Rank 8 Weaponry.

Now with added Radiance for
Positive effect on Dark Creatures.

Prices negotiable. Please contact
Flamis at the Guild.



Neroli the dwarf:

**"You can cut off
the nuts but not
the beard."**

Answers to Last Issue's Puzzles:

Off the Shelf:

- 1 Caledonian whisky
- 2 Pasifikan white rum
- 3 Gnomish Brandy
- 4 Orkish Stout
- 5 Hill Giant Hooch
- 6 Dwarven Ale
- 7 Faerie Mead
- 8 Troll Rotgut
- 9 Mermaid's Milk Liqueur
- 10 Elven Wine

Riddles:

First: The letter "O"

Second: Your nose

Third: The horse was walking in a circle (turning a mill).

Ode to Akuji

"Why do birds suddenly appear
Every time you are feared?
Just like me, they long to be
In Close with you."

-anon

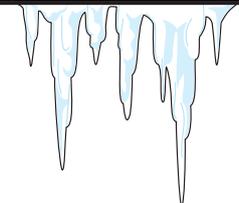
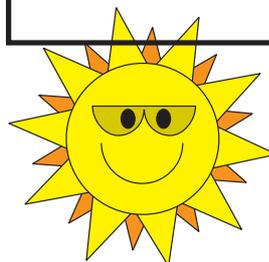


What's Hot

Going to the Circus.
Erotic dances from
Ithilmor.
Anyone worth more than
0.9 of an E
Holy Artifacts
The Assault on Carlson's
Pass
Ice magics

What's Not

Motley Spellcasting
Erotic dances from Bart
Undead Dragons
Unholy Artifacts
Air magics
Mind-sucking monsters



Letter to the Editor

SGT Editors Pawns of Rashak?

It has long been believed that Rashak has pawns and spies in the guild. Could it be that they are hiding in plain sight, could it be that the editors of the SGT are in league with Rashak?

Rashak launched an assault on the guild last season that was completely foiled by a group of guild members. Several concerning events were explained by their debriefing. An explanation was submitted to the SGT and then not printed. Why did Rashak want this news suppressed? What was so important about it? I include it here so you can make your own judgement.

Fire in the Sky

Those looking south from the Brastor region on the night of Tuesday 8th Fruit who saw fire in the southern skies were not observing Dragons battling, but the birth of a new volcano at the northern end of the Filgiso forest. After its initial spectacular birth, the volcano quickly settled to a dull glow but not before burning the surrounding area of the Filgiso. The new mountain has been named Mt Aliliel in honour of the Fire Spirit that stood guard over the Shape of Fire these past millennia.

The Sky was Falling

Astrologers who rely on the night skies were found to have many inaccuracies in their readings for the Autumn season. Several even included references to the sky falling. It has since been confirmed that part of the sky was falling, but it is fixed now. Except for three stars which seem a little diminished by their excursion towards Seagate, Newhaven, and the Lunar Empire.

Skinless Dragon Sighted

Concern over sightings of a flayed and presumably undead dragon in early Autumn have been allayed. Engalton and companions have put the dragon to a permanent death.

If the SGT editorial staff suppress this news again then we know they are servants of Rashak. But if they print it unaltered are they demonstrating their innocence or protecting their cover?

The editors reply:

We tender our sincere apologies to anyone who was inconvenienced by the above material not appearing in our previous issue. As far as we are able to deduce from our investigations, the report was submitted to the Times, but never reached our editorial offices. Instead it was filed with previously used copy. None of our staff have an explanation. Was this the result of nefarious forces? Your guess is as good as ours.

The Last Word

Fifty issues... it's been quite a ride hasn't it for the Guild over the last twenty or so years and, during much of that time, the SGT has been right there to report the activities.

The first issue of the Seagate Times was published for the Spring 92 Guild meeting by its very first editor, Bleyse. He was helped from issue 6 (Summer 94) by the addition of Engalton as Chief Reporter.

During this time the Seagate Times came out every quarter except one. Just before Issue 12 was to be printed in Spring 95, the publishing house of the SGT was attacked by raiders whom it was believed was from the Tac Adventurers Guild. There was no known motive for the attack, which left a quarter of the staff completely incapacitated, and the premises completely gutted by fire. All the attackers died in the blaze. Tac, of course, denied all knowledge and the true identity of the raiders is, to this day, still unknown.

Issue 14 (Summer 96) saw the editorial staff changed with Sebastian Silverfoot and Jedburg taking over the publication. It was also just before then that Duke Leto ordered a raid against the premises claiming that it was a hotbed of treason and it was time to be stamped out. The SGT had to go underground for a while and a disclaimer was added to the banner. The press was moved from Caulder to Seacroft for issue 15 and 16 saw the return of the Bleyse/Engalton team for that issue.

Sebastian returned as editor for Issue 17, this time with Chief Reporter Ishamael. Issue 17 was also the first issue under the new calendar. They continued until Issue 21 (Winter 98) when the current staff of Silverwind and Stargazer took over with a completely new look and the introduction of colour printing, although greyscale printing is still favoured for a faster print run. That was a difficult time for the Guild as that was the issue that reported the attack by Dark Circle forces which resulted in the destruction of many of the main Guild buildings, the kidnapping of the Council and the loss of the Healing Potion cauldron.

Since then, the Times has been produced without too many hiccups thanks to the dedicated staff. We thank the Guild Adventurers, especially our regular contributors, who have supported us over the years with material. Let us go forward together for the next fifty issues.

T'ana Silverwind,
Editor in Chief, Seagate Times
Ariel Glitterwing Stargazer,
Chief Reporter and Astrologer



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Bainbridge:
"We should go back to the Guild for supplies and more firepower." (meaning his Griffin Fluffy)

Sarah replies:
"We are NOT going back to the Guild unless someone is dead!"

Bainbridge:
"We could arrange that."

Sarah to the hoard of goblins chucking debris at the party:

"Sticks and stones may break your bones, but the namer's got a two-handed sword."