

Lake Cartography

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Greg Graydon

01/10/92 - 02/12/92

Player Characters

Jhiselle deBarnard	Fire	Human	Female	
Kynn	E&E	Erelhein	Female	
Corel	Air	Elf	Male	Leader
T.D.P. Roberts	E&E	Human	Male	
T'ana Starflower	Mind	Elf	Female	Mil Sci
Mortimer	Wicca	Hobbit	Male	
Basalic	Earth	Human	Male	

Plane

Elushia

Places visited

Lake Clarke in the Barony of Clarkesville

Clarkesville Village

Elvenburg

Graft

Barovia

Alfheim

Employer

Brian the Forester

Major NPCs encountered

Marcus & Andrew - Brian's assistants

Marion - Queen of the pixies

Sylvana - cat person

Myra - nixie

Queen Morolev - mere-elf

Baron Orville Clarke

Marion - Baroness

Peter, Paul, John, Wendy - the Baron's children

Steel - Earth elemental

Sapphire - Air elemental

Velanof - Captive water mage

Mission

To survey the area around Lake Clarke

Lake Cartography

Adventure Summary

30/09/92

Guild meeting time. Cartographer wanted an escort party to protect his team from 'minor irritants' as they surveyed Lake Clark in the Barony of Clarkesville. Clarkesville is a tiny out of the way barony, located 1600 miles away in a NNE direction. The nearest well-known place is Middlemark Hvaltstach which is 200 miles south of Clarkesville. According to Brian, the job should take about two months.

We were told that Clarkesville is a small barony with 3.5 thousand people in it. Principle imports and exports - none. A rather self sufficient place. No well known mages live there. A few tinkers go through occasionally and the merchant's mule train used to, until two years ago.

02/10/92

After preparing, left the Guild. After a while reached a field with a large spinny in it. Runeportal in the spinny. Arrived at shores of narrow lake, about 4 miles long. Met the other two cartographers. Reached area where first marker stone is.

03/10/92

Starflower and I went hunting and managed to get ourselves trapped in magical bubble. Saw visions of impending Armageddon somehow involving TDP. Darkness was used to get us out. That night saw a glow under the surface of the lake.

04/10/92

Couldn't find clearing but suspect trees had been moved to fill it in. Moved off to a nearby tor which had a three sided pyramid on top. Told that two identical ones are on islands in the middle of the lake. Mortimer said that one face had the elven symbol for the Bel-Tan clan on it. Found a tunnel running from the inside of the tor to the lake. Inside the tor was a room containing a big quartz, open casket containing something blue and amorphous - like a frozen pond. It was incredibly cold. He also spotted three wavy lines on the wall which was the elven sign for water.

After a divination we discovered that the 'ice' was a Water Elemental under the effects of a Rank 20 Air College Hibernation spell of indefinite duration - probably permanent. It had been there for nearly 48,000 years.

When we got back to the campsite, one of the tents had caught on fire. Caught some pixies. Was an accident. Ended up having a party with the pixies, including their queen, Marion. As the party progressed we were told that even 1,500 years ago there weren't many elves around here. The pyramids were remnants from when the Seven - a powerful group of human mages were around. One, Velanef, a female water mage, had a disagreement with the others and the air mage, Valug, froze her water elemental. Mortimer added that an earlier Guild party had managed to wake up the Seven and had dealt to some of them. Marion also mentioned that there had been some disagreement between the elves and the humans and part of the land, near the lake, where the elves were living, had sunk. The elves retreated east to Alfheim.

12/10/92

Another glow was spotted in the lake. Kin investigated and found some caves 50' under the

surface of the lake. Some of the party went to have a look and encountered aquatic elves. They were surprised to learn that the humans had forgotten them so decided to re-establish contact with the present Baron.

14/10/92

A catperson, Sylvana arrived at the campsite.

15/10/92

Started getting closer to the swamp.

20/10/92

Getting much closer. Brian told us they had a boathouse at the edge for a base. Occasionally they heard singing and someone would disappear. Also marker poles were being interfered with.

Reached the boatshed by nightfall. Tried planting a marker pole surrounded by Hands of Earth. Some sort of sentience detected that was frightening Starflower.

21/10/92

Went back out into the swamp. Noticed that the Hands of Earth looked odd. Instead of Earth they looked more like compost. They had been affected by a non-college decay effect which wasn't a spell, ritual or talent. The age of the Hands were 240 years and the decay had started soon after the Hands were put up. Also a finger on one of the Hands was missing and there were some deep scratch marks in it, like claws.

Starflower had determined the source of the fear so we punted over to the island that she was looking at. The island had another elvish tor on. What we found was a cavity, 25ft down, similar to the one under the other tor. The quartz box contained some sort of dark substance. There was an astrological glyph or chart on one wall. Looked like a picture of the Alusian solar system with an extra planet outside the others. But for some reason the sun was in the middle.

Some of the dark stuff was retrieved. According to the aura it was Elemental Darkness. Had to destroy it with light as the sample attacked with intense cold.

Mortimer went to get more information from the Guild. According to the Guild Astrologer, the conjunction had to do with the Time of Darkness which appeared every 20,000 years. Also he had found out more about the Seven. As well as Air, Water, Fire and Earth, there was one of Life, one of Death, and one of Time. Only the Water Mage had survived and she was kept under confinement in Alfheim.

That night heard singing. Starflower wandered off. Followed. Found a bunch of nixies and a kraken. Kraken killed, nixies captured.

After a while some aquatic elves turned up. Nixies wanted by the Lord of the Lake for causing trouble. Turned them over.

22/10/92

Surveyors started work in the swamp. That evening large kraken arrived with mere-elves and Queen Morolev. She rewarded us.

After dinner, Morolev told us the story of Dorian. A long time ago he had amassed a large army and went west to deal with an unknown threat. He had arranged with the human outpost to oversee the lands, including the elven city until he returned for a full accounting. It was not a popular decision but it was upheld. After he left, that was the last that was seen of him and his army.

The elves that remained argued that the humans should not be allowed to continue administering the lands. The Seven interfered and one of them flooded the city. Whoever it was then disappeared without reversing the incantation so the remaining elves left.

Presumably Clarkesville was all that was left of the original human settlement of several thousand. Also a curse had been placed on the land consisting of some sort of dark malevolent presence.

25/10/92

Finished the survey today.

26/10/92

Headed across the lake towards Clarkesville.

27/10/92

Reached Clarkesville. Met the Baron and his family. That night some elves turned up wanting to take TDP for questioning about some visions.

28/10/92

Went to cave to deliver survey results. Placed results on stone cube and figures transmitted to Alfheim. Saw an elemental transfer the taxes from one pile of money to another. Mortimer sent further messages. We were told to report to the Western Marshes Border area for debriefing. Escorted by two elementals, Sapphire (Air) and Steel (Earth). Portalled to Seagate, then to Elvenburg, and Graft. Headed to Alfheim border, fifty miles away at Barovia. Travelled into bordering mountain range.

Reached western edge of Alfheim. Told by regal looking elf that we had stumbled into a sensitive area of elven security. Had to stay in Alfheim until cache moved.

29/10/92

Stayed in isolated chateau surrounded by forest. TDP joined us later.

29/11/92

Finally the cache had been moved so we could leave. The request to meet with the captured Water Mage had been approved. Went through elven security designed so we didn't know where we were. Ended up in limestone cavern. Found Water Mage in large gilded cage in very hot cavern surrounded by lava. Would only help us drain the Clarkesville swamp if we released her elemental. No dice.

Finally get taken back to where we started. Escorted through mountains and out of Alfheim.

01/12/92

Arrived back at the Guild. Got a Namer to banish the Dark Elemental.

02/12/92

Back at the Guild. Mission over.

Lake Cartography

(Inchworm, Inchworm - Measuring the Marigolds)

- Basalic

30/09/92

There were a few interesting adventures announced at the last Guild meeting, including one of the Guild Solar Mages requesting a rescue party for Spandex and Dramus. The entire assembly thought that was a HUGE joke.

However the adventure I finally ended up on was a request by a couple of cartographers for an escort while they measured a lake. Apparently they wanted protection from 'minor irritants'. Once they had been cajoled into defining just what a 'minor irritant' was I was glad we weren't dealing with any major ones. Also they weren't paying very much i.e. ten silver pennies a day but Herkum managed to get them up to 20sp per day. They also added a combat bonus of 100 sp/day.

My fellow adventurers on this trip were:

Jhiselle de Bernard. She's a firemage, 5'3" in height with fiery burgundy hair. She was dressed in black, soft, leathers and carried a short sabre. On her head was a rather outlandish hat sporting several feathers.

Kin - An E&E mage who was also on my last adventure. She's an Erelhein (a type of elf) who is 6'4" tall wearing dark dragonskin armour. Her skin is dark and she also has long, dark, hair - when it's not under a helm. She told us she's a specialist E&E mage in Enchant Armours and Greater Enchantments.

Corel - I had also adventured with this elf who had been nicknamed 'Lightning Bolt' for very good reasons, namely because he kept using them to the detriment of the party. He's an Air Mage

T.D.P. Roberts - He introduced himself as a sailor and a boat builder as well as an E&E mage. He was a portly gentleman in a scarlet jacket, green boots, and wearing a scimitar.

Starflower - Another one of this party I had adventured with before. She's an elven Mind mage, rather tall, with long auburn hair and wearing black armour. She also offered her services as a military scientist

Mortimer - Finally I get to meet this guy that Flamis thinks so highly of. He's the top ranked mechanic in the Guild. He's also a 3'10" 70 pound halfling who is a Wicca Mage. As well as being a mechanic he has several other skills such as alchemist, healer, philosophy (mainly in magic and engineering) as the major ones. He also introduced us to his pet toad, called Flytrap.

As for me, I'm Basalic, 5'10" human Earth mage. I was wearing mostly greens and browns and carrying a broadsword and a crossbow. Mainly I'm a ranger and geologist.

The gentleman who hired us was called Brian the Forester and we were to protect him and his two assistants as they surveyed Lake Clark in the Barony of Clarkesville. Clarkesville is a tiny out of the way barony, located 1600 miles away in a NNE direction. The nearest well-known place is Middlemark Hvaltstach which is 200 miles south of Clarkesville. A rune portal was available for transport. According to Brian, the job should take about two months. They would provide

dried meat, sweetmeats, and dried fruit. Plans were immediately made to live off the land when possible. Yes, there are wild animals in the area mainly rabbit, some deer and boar. Mortimer muttered something about apricots and cheese when boar was mentioned while Jhiselle started expressing longings for a steak.

We were told that Clarkesville is a small barony with 3.5 thousand people in it. Principle imports and exports - none. A rather self sufficient place. No well known mages live there. A few tinkers go through occasionally and the merchant's mule train used to, until two years ago. Guess the route was unprofitable.

We then elected our party leader, military scientist and scribe. Corel put his name forward which prompted lots of discussion. So we put it to the vote and Corel won. Starflower became Military Scientist while I became scribe. We then signed the Guild contract.

01/10/92

Most of the day was spent preparing. Since we were going by rune-portal I decided to leave my horse, Sod, in Flamis's tender care. Earlier, when the subject of horses had come up, I had mentioned I had one called Sod and Mortimer had wondered about the odd choice of name. I told him I had spoken to the animal and Sod was the closest translation from the original equine. That lead Mortimer to comment that maybe I had misunderstood what the reply had meant when I had asked the horses name and what in fact was said was 'Sod Off'. Hmmmm...

During the day, I paid out 1000sp to Kin for a Rank 17 Greater Enchantment which would last until the next Guild meeting, found a fresh sprig of mistletoe, and paid the Earth College 600sp for a Lesser Enchantment which would also last three months. TDP also cast a Contingency spell on me which would activate my Trollskin spell if I was stunned, or took serious damage.

02/10/92

We met our employer in the courtyard, then made our way out of town. Starflower had bought a mule so Kin tossed a saddlebag on it. She also cast Enchant Armour all around. Mortimer also evicted a rather wet Flytrap from his pocket.

The portal was located a short distance out of town in a large field that had a spinney in the middle. The rune stick was in the middle of the spinney. After going through it we appeared on the shores of a rather large, narrow, lake - about 4 miles long. I noticed some pumice stone on the shore and picked some up. We could see some islands on the lake.

Two other people were waiting and were introduced as Marcus and Andrew. They were Brian's assistants. Both of them were wearing necklaces with sextant/pole symbol on them. Brian had one as well. It was explained that this is the symbol of the Cartographers Guild of Clarkesville. When asked how big the Guild was and how many members it had, Brian looked slightly embarrassed and mumbled 'Three'.

There was a small jetty with a longboat at the shore which was our transport to the first marker stone. The mule looked like it was going to be stubborn but Kin said something to it (she can talk to the animals) and it obeyed everything she said.

Brian explained some more about the job. The idea is to measure the area to see if it had changed

from the last time it was done. This is so the landowners knew exactly how much land they had and could be taxed fairly. To do this they had a measuring chain that was 50 feet long. Brian also told us that much of the area we'd be covering was deciduous forest but there was some marshy areas.

Brian mentioned that none of the islands were inhabited so there was no need to measure those. However he did mention the Lord of the Lake. He was rather evasive when pressed on the subject but he did say that a while ago, the Lord of the Lake owned everything in the area but an agreement had been reached that the Barony owned everything out of the water while the Lord had everything underwater. Brian also reckoned that the story of the Lord was a legend and may not be true.

We reached the site on the lake shore where the first marker stone should be. We put up a camp near the lake shore then fanned out to find the first stone. It was a flat rock with markings scratched into it. The cartographers then pulled out the measuring chain and set to work. We all stared at it in amazement. No wonder they wanted protection. The chain was made out of dwarven silver. It had been a gift from a dwarven community a long time back.

While the cartographers measured, we had a look about. Starflower went herb hunting while I went rock hunting. I managed to find lots of interesting rhyolites but little else. Also I was getting bothered by a pesky sparrow. Turned out to be Jhiselle, who had the talent to take on bird form.

Kin went hunting and brought back a deer for dinner. We reckoned there was enough meat on it to last three days. Finally we set watches for the night. I took the first hour watch with Jhiselle overlapping for the last half hour.

.2.

03/10/92

Today was a very odd day. Kin put Enhance Armours on us that needed it. Mainly we watched as the cartographers painstakingly measured the lakeshore. At this rate we would be moving at about 300 yards a day. Starflower got bored and decided to go blackberry hunting. Kin was thinking of going for a swim in the lake but changed her mind when she discovered how cold the water was. Mortimer reckoned the Baron could get more taxes by draining the lake. Somehow I don't think the Lord of the Lake, if he exists, would approve. I decided to go with Starflower and keep an eye on her.

Shortly we found a clearing with a stump of a larch tree in the centre. The tree had been chopped down eighty years ago and, by counting rings, it had been growing for 260 years. Meanwhile Starflower had found some edible mushrooms. She also found some stones with carvings, seven of them spaced equally around the tree. So she uncovered some to look at the carvings more closely. According to her they could be some sort of elven script. The rocks also had a magical aura.

As I attempted to step past the rock I hit something invisible and fell over backwards. Starflower soon discovered that we were in some sort of dome shaped invisible barrier, centred on the stump, running from stone to stone. She yelled for help.

It didn't take long before Mortimer, Jhiselle and Kin arrived. Kin and Mortimer were able to fly so they attempted to find a top to the dome. No luck. We were totally enclosed. Starflower stuck her Bound Air sword through the barrier which produced a blue sparking effect as the invisible blade went through. Cutting a hole with it had no effect. I tried digging a hole but the barrier went

underground as well.

We soon found out that non-magical items could pass through the barrier but magical ones and entities couldn't. I tried pushing my Amulet of Luck through but failed. By experimenting they discovered that the barrier moves to join up uncovered rocks as other rocks are covered.

Mortimer's first suggestion was for me to stand near a rock while he covered it up. Would the barrier reform behind me or would it push me? We tried it and I ended up flying twenty feet backwards. So much for that idea.

Meanwhile Kin and Jhiselle had searched the rest of the clearing and discovered two more circles of rocks so the whole thing was three concentric circles around the stump. They wisely left them covered.

Mortimer's next scheme was to cover all the rocks at once. Either the barrier would go down or, if someone wasn't fast enough, the barrier would contract to a single stone and we would get crushed. The only way we could determine what would happen was for Starflower to do a Limited Precog. As she prepared the spell, she noticed that the area in the circle was a High Mana zone.

While doing the precog her face took on a very odd expression. According to the precog, covering all the rocks would cause an invasion of Alusia by Terra Novan drow. Now that was strange. Meanwhile I was able to determine that the runes in the rocks had been there for 54,000 years.

While we pondered on that, I tried my own plan i.e. using a Tunnelling spell to punch a hole in the barrier. Instead of going through, the resulting trench followed the curve of the barrier. Also I had to quickly scramble out of the trench before it closed up. One thing we did notice though. The rocks were actually the tops of stone pillars. So much for using a Strength of Stone to pick one up and carry it away.

Starflower tried another precog of us doing nothing, on Mortimer's suggestion. Again she got images of large drow armies and massive destruction. Added to that were wanted posters of TDP. The last image was of TDP playing a fiddle while a castle burned.

She tried more precogs. More images of destruction. Massive armies all over the place. Drow invasion by ship helped by large kraken. Dwarven armies, elven armies, giants etc all locked in combat. Mages throwing spells. Even one army containing most of the Guild members including Mortimer riding a huge steam powered siege engine. A few Guild members were on the other side. Four horsemen riding. A rift opening up and seven balrogs stepping through followed by three huge figures, one of light, one of fire and one of shadow. These figures were strolling through the battle. The final vision was that of TDP seated at a table counting a chest full of money. The vision shrank back to reveal that TDP was surrounded by darkness. All was gone save the table and the one spot of light. So this is how the world ends. Not with a bang or a whimper, but the clink of coin against coin.

Mortimer pondered on it for a bit and reckoned that what Starflower was getting were visions of the future and of the final battle between the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness i.e. Good and Evil, marking the end of everything. He identified the three beings of being the

powerful demon emperors of legend. Fleeing to another plane wouldn't help as Armageddon, Ragnarok, or the Apocalypse, would occur on all planes at once. Also according the description that she gave us of TDP, it was only a few years away.

Mortimer started a divination of the area using Tarot cards while the rest of us speculated what it all meant and what TDP had been doing when he was over in Terra Nova. Starflower had been on that mission but all she knew that he had stayed behind for three months to teach the drow there shipbuilding. Could his actions had been enough to tip the balance of power in their favour? We resolved to have a few words with him.

After an hour or so, Mortimer had determined that the area was used to enhance ritual magic and the shield was there to protect the spellcaster from outside distractions. The shield was powered by natural sunlight or moonlight. All we had to do was to wait till nightfall. Either that or try covering up the area with a Darkness. He did so and we were able to crawl out.

Once we got back to camp TDP was getting some very odd looks from us. He wanted to know why. We wanted to know what he had been up to with the drow on Terra Nova. As far as he was aware all he had done was to help bring forward their ship building program a few months. All the drow wanted to do was to trade peacefully with us.

We told him about the precogs. He didn't look very happy, so we decided to go back and see if we could get some more information. First we had to wait for Jhiselle. She was in the circle doing ritual purification.

Once Mortimer let her out, Starflower went in and did another precog, attempting to determine where TDP had got the money from. She saw visions of a drow ship launch, followed by trading at Seagate. Then more scenes of mass destruction, the three beings wandering around, an hourglass with the sands running out, the armies aging rapidly and dying and being replaced by forest. The three beings giving TDP a chest of gold and leaving him alone in the room. At the end nothing left but TDP counting the gold, surrounded by nothing.

Not much else happened that day as we watched the cartographers making very slow progress.

That night, while on watch, Jhiselle and I saw a glow under the surface of the lake water, like something had risen then sunk down again.

04/10/92

Next morning we went back to the clearing and discovered it full of trees. I tried questioning a few trees but they weren't very helpful. It was rather suspicious that some of them had the moss on the wrong side. Mortimer reckoned he had heard pixies during the night. When he went to investigate the trees were moving.

After a while I came to the conclusion that yesterday had been a dream. There was no clearing, and much to my relief, there was no impending Armageddon. Jhiselle agreed with me. However Mortimer and Starflower didn't. Starflower theorised that we had been infected by some sort of faerie fungal poison. She had detected traces of it through her Healer empathy. So she started to neutralise poison. She didn't have time to do us all as the cartographers wanted to move on to a nearby tor. Oh good. More rocks to examine.

On the way Starflower got bored and started singing to herself

Chainmen, chainmen,
Measuring the lakeshore
You and your cartography
You'll probably go far

Chainmen, chainmen
Measuring the lakeshore
But do you have any idea
Just what you're in for

Elven rings and faerie things
Hidden lord down in the deep
Dum de dumm da dee dee dum

.3.

By midmorning we were on our way to the tor. I was wanting an opportunity to try out mountain climbing, but it turned out to be a small hill, 400' high, 100' of which was above the treeline. When we reached the top, we discovered, as well as the excellent view of the lake, that there was a three sided pyramid there, made out of polished granite - a rock not native to this region. There was a magical aura on it, some sort of preservation magic. On one face was a curious symbol. Mortimer reckoned it was an elven symbol, some sort of clan or tribe marker. He remembered later on that it was the symbol for the Bel-tan clan.

While the cartographers set up their equipment and began measuring, using the pyramid as a marker, TDP cast a Wizards Eye and attempted to penetrate the hill and the pyramid to see if there was anything inside. Meanwhile Mortimer wanted to dig around the pyramid or try and move it. Brian did not think that was a good idea at all. He didn't want it disturbed. He did say however that there were two more of them on two little islands in the lake (one each).

All TDP could see was darkness so Mortimer used some sort of cats eye spell. However that didn't help much. He did think he caught a glimpse of something, about 300' down but he wasn't sure what it was.

So Starflower tried a telepathy and suddenly felt very cold in her head. So she counterspelled it - or attempted to. Suddenly all her long auburn hair fell off her head. Her next attempt at the counterspell was more successful then she cast a cantrip on herself in order to start her hair regrowing. As she started to pick up the fallen locks (maybe she's going to see a wigmaker) Mortimer asked her how much she wanted for the hair. Apparently faerie hair (which elves are) is used for making pixie dust, and is rather hard to get hold of. She considered it, wanting to know how much he was prepared to pay.

While Starflower recovered her elven dignity, Kin and Mortimer took off to investigate the other two pyramids. Instead of using shadow-wings or Fireflight, they just stepped off into space and flew off. Curious. Meanwhile Corel, Jhiselle, and I went down the tor looking for any openings. I soon found a diagonal crack that looked like natural soil slippage but was rather deep. So I

called TDP down.

It was rather dark in there so Jhiselle put a firelight on a small rock and TDP telekinesed it in, then followed up with a Wizard's Eye, What he discovered was the crack widened as it went deeper then penetrated the side of a tunnel. The tunnel ran at right angles to the crack and had the profile of a peanut. It was 4' wide and 2' high, a very tight squeeze.

TDP pushed some more firelit rocks down the tunnel to the extreme range of his telekinesis in both directions then explored it with the Eye. In one direction it ran down towards the lake, 20' below ground. The other end spiralled upwards towards the centre of the hill. The walls of the tunnel looked like they had been washed. Obviously water had been flowing here. Could the elves had been using it to regulate the lake level?

Mortimer was the shortest of us all so he volunteered to go exploring the tunnel. Even for a hobbit it was going to be a bit of a squeeze. So Kin provided him with a necklace to allow him to breath water and a cloth to filter out any bad air. Starflower cast a Mind Speech on us all while I created a tunnel so Mortimer could enter the tube.

He soon reported that the tunnel looked like a lava tube. It seemed an odd place for one I thought as the tor didn't appear to be an active volcano. However the tunnel was going through igneous rock so I asked Mortimer to take some samples.

Mortimer travelled up the tunnel which spiralled up, and into, the centre of the tor. Presently it opened up into a small room. In the middle was a big quartz, open casket containing something blue and amorphous - like a frozen pond. Mortimer reckoned it was incredibly cold. He also spotted three wavy lines on the wall which Kin reckoned was the elven sign for water.

Flytrap detected elemental water (he's actually a Half-Devil disguised as a Greater Cane Toad - note: never call him common) which turned out to be the ice in the quartz pool. Frozen elemental water? Does that make it Elemental Ice? Mortimer started a divination. When he had finished he had discovered that the 'ice' was a Water Elemental under the effects of a Rank 20 Air College Hibernation spell of indefinite duration - probably permanent. It had been there for nearly 48,000 years.

He then explored down the other direction. The tunnel spiralled then levelled out. We followed it's direction towards the lake to keep pace with Mortimer. After a while, as it neared the lake, it slowly began to descend into water. By now the firelight rock he was carrying had run out so Jhiselle created another one and I used a Tunnelling spell to drop it to him. He then continued on, into the water, and emerged on a shelf, 20ft underwater, and flew up, landing near us on the shore.

Mortimer wanted to know whether we wanted to remove the elemental by using a skinchange to transform it into a frog or something but TDP was concerned that the elemental was holding back elemental water. To resolve this problem, Starflower cast a Limited Precognition. According to that nothing would happen. Also she didn't get any more armageddon visions either. So we finally decided to leave it there and maybe get it later as it didn't seem to be going anywhere.

When we got back to the campsite, one of the tents was on fire - one of the cartographer's tents. While Jhiselle extinguished the fire, Starflower, Corel and TDP ran off towards the forest. It then

appeared that something invisible was grabbed and brought back. Mortimer explained that it was an invisible pixie and TDP had slept another one. He fed the captured pixie which became visible.

The pixie explained that he, and his companions had been playing in one of the tents when they discovered some sticks that caught on fire. They hadn't started it. According to Kin, they were telling the truth. The pixie also told us that they had standing instructions from the 'big faeries' (elves) to hide the glade if anyone found it. Elves hadn't been around these parts for several hundred years though.

The conversation then turned to the Lord of the Lake. The pixie said that he was a large faerie with a tail. There were other inhabitants in the lake as well that looked like the Lord but not as grand. A colony of merfolk I think. Also, according to the pixie, the nearby marsh has lots of scary things in it i.e. monsters with big sharp teeth.

Kin arranged the sleeping pixie in a standing position then TDP cancelled the sleep. To show no hard feelings we decided to throw a party for the pixies. Also they offered to give repatriation for the destroyed tent. So Kin flew off to the runeportal to get appropriate party stuff from Alphonses. I asked her to deliver a note for Flamis and also to bring back six bottles of Bugman's beer.

At 8pm, well after Kin got back, we saw little lights dancing among the trees. Soon thirty figures flitted into the camp. To my non-witchsighted eyes they appeared to appear briefly then disappear. One of them was a cute female pixie wearing a gold circlet. She was introduced as Marion, queen of the pixies. She gave a small bag to the cartographers containing some gold pieces as payment for the damaged tent.

As the party progressed we were told that even 1,500 years ago there weren't many elves around here. The pyramids were remnants from when the Seven - a powerful group of human mages were around. One, Velanef, a female water mage, had a disagreement with the others and the air mage, Valug, froze her water elemental. When questioned about the other two pyramids, Marion didn't think there was anything under them. Mortimer added that an earlier Guild party had managed to wake up the Seven and had dealt to some of them. Marion also mentioned that there had been some disagreement between the elves and the humans and part of the land, near the lake, where the elves were living, had sunk. The elves retreated east to Alfheim.

The night progressed and we had a merry time before the pixies finally left.

05/10/92

For the next two days nothing much happened. Some of the pixies turned up to 'help' the cartographers and to amuse us with their play.

.4.

07/10/92

After observing and studying the rocks around the lake shore more I came to the conclusion that the lake may have been a volcanic caldera at some point even though it looked more glacial now. Also some of the mountains in the distance looked like old volcanos. At this rate it was going to take us about 40 days to get to the swamp. Corel told us that he saw a big trout in the lake but no one else was able to verify his story, so we classed it as 'the one that got away'. Someone else remarked that pixies had the eating habits of hobbits but, according to Mortimer, the two species

are not related. Apart from that nothing else happened.

08/10/92

Kin started teaching Starflower some unarmed combat. First lesson - how to fall. I just leaned against a tree and watched as it was rather entertaining. Later on I joined in - as it helped pass the time.

12/10/92

Four more days later, and I'm missing Flamis heaps. That night, during Corel's and Starflower's watch, a luminous glow was spotted out on the lake, which rose then sank again - rather like the one Jhiselle and myself saw a while back. It looked like a big ball. So we all got woken up.

Kin flew out over the lake and managed to see a tiny sphere of light moving away so she put a Locate on it. Meanwhile Starflower tried her telepathy but there was nothing within range.

13/10/92

Next morning I came up with the suggestion that if the glow came, we should create our own glow. It might be curious and investigate. However it turned out that Mortimer's light spell wasn't adequate for the job as it didn't radiate beyond it's bounds. Also Jhiselle's Firelight wasn't very bright. So I suggested a pattern of floating pumice stones, each with a firelight on. Mortimer didn't believe pumice floated until I demonstrated, then he didn't believe it was a rock as rocks don't float on water. He finally came to the conclusion that pumice rock contained more 'levity' than normal which opposed gravity. That led to the conclusion that a flying spell causes gravity to be exchanged with levity thus enabling a mage to fly.

During the discussion Kin went for a swim to see if she could discover what the glow was caused by. When she came back she said she saw tracks like buffalo wallow tracks but they abruptly ceased for no apparent reason. Also Mortimer had been right about the road connecting the pyramids. There was one down there but it was badly water eroded. She also saw some underwater caves that could be inhabited by lake elves. When the cartographers were asked they reckoned that they had never seen any such thing.

Suddenly Mortimer was hit by a Waterbreathing spell. It was Flytrap. He wanted to visit the marsh and wanted us to go with him. He hopped into a small, dry, ditch a few hundred feet away., then started jumping up and down. Suddenly we heard a rumbling sound and a torrent of water rushed down the ditch and swept him into the lake. The flood nearly swamped the campsite as well. Soon we spotted Flytrap on the crest of a wave - bodysurfing. Maybe even toads (or half-devils) get bored.

Kin had spotted the caves fifty feet under the water in an island 7 miles away. So TDP decided to extract his boat from the bottle. What emerged turned out to be a rather large and ornate vessel which had a crew of golems under the command of a captain. Once they emerged, they began singing sea shanties while bailing out the boat and re-tarring it. This took a couple of hours.

Once the boat was ready the other adventurers got on board. Jhiselle and I stayed behind to look after the cartographers. Soon the boat sailed off with the Jolly Roberts flying from the mast and Kin sitting on top of it.

After a while they stopped and I saw a few figures jump over the side. About twenty minutes later

they got back on board and the boat sailed around the other side of the island. We settled down to wait. Jhiselle was having fun playing with the pixies.

It was nearly a couple of hours later when we saw them sail back, and another half hour before they arrived on shore. They had encountered aquatic elves which, according to Starflower, were a different species than the ones at Terra Novae. These ones had been magically evolved to survive under the water when the land sank. Also they had the ability to change their legs to a tail and back again.

The party had a rather lukewarm reception, especially when they found out Mortimer was a Wicca. Their sense of time was like an elf. The last time they had contact with the humans was over 90 years ago and they were rather surprised when told that the human lifespan was so short as to make that time a distant memory and almost forgotten whereas to the sea-elves, it was almost yesterday. They agreed to contact the present Baron and re-establish relationships via the pixies.

The sea-elves also warned the party not to go near the marsh as it was dangerous and full of the walking dead. Somehow we were going to have to convince the cartographers. To stave off the Undead threat Mortimer offered to sell us some amulets so I spent 6000sp in an Amulet of Chacedony which stops Undead from approaching voluntarily within ten feet - still within spell range.

.5.

14/10/92

I was woken up early by a wet tongue in my ear. It was Flytrap - much to my disgust. The others were woken up in a more civilised manner by Kin who told us there was a cat person, called Sylvana, offering doughnuts in a clearing not too far away. Mortimer was still there, which means we may have to rescue the doughnuts. When we got there, there was no sign of Mortimer or the cat person. All that we found was a picnic basket on a chequered cloth, with a doughnut lying nearby. Soup had also been spilled on the cloth. TDP reckoned the soup and the doughnut was magical.

At that point in time, Mortimer flew into the clearing. Apparently he had spilled soup on her and had somehow managed to frighten her. She also felt mana impact before she disappeared. According to his aura he was hit by a Wicca Wellbeing spell at Rank 8. Suddenly we all realised that no-one was watching the cartographers. Since it was Mortimer's watch, he went back.

The doughnuts and the soup also had wellbeing magic in them. The basket had heating and preservation on it. Starflower checked the doughnut for poison but couldn't find anything. Kin had a locate on Sylvana so we followed it, in order to try and explain that we were friendly as well - just rather paranoid.

The tracks led into a dense thicket and, according to Kin, Sylvana was under it. All we could hear were cat like growls. Suddenly I had a strong feeling that she was incredibly dangerous. Next thing I knew I was back at camp and hiding in a tent.

When I came out I suggested to Mortimer that he went back there while I stayed and prepared breakfast. Flytrap offered to help.

When Mortimer got there, he discovered Corel was blasting away at the thicket with lightning bolts. Starflower used a mental attack to knock Corel out. When they finally got Sylvana calmed down, she explained she was terrified of elves and humans as they hunted her kind as animals. She's a were-creature with three forms, cat, human female, and something in between. Mortimer convinced her we knew about shapeshifters by getting Jhiselle to change into a sparrow. She also thought Mortimer was some kind of half dwarf but Kin explained he was a giant mud-wiggle. They also discovered that she was a Wicca mage (otherwise known as a witch) so she asked Mortimer who he belonged to. Mortimer replied he belonged to his wife which led to her coming to the conclusion that Mortimer was married to a demon.

It turned out she's travelling, looking for a mate, as they can only breed with humans so she started asking all these questions about the marital status of each one of the party and whether or not they wanted children. Apparently she's very interested in human mating habits.

Meanwhile I had just finished making breakfast - porridge with extra fruit - and trying to stop Flytrap from adding extra protein i.e. insects, when the others came back with a strange woman wrapped in a cloak. Logically that had to be Sylvana. Also Corel had obtained snowy-white hair. Sylvana had retrieved her picnic basket and offered to share the bread within it. For some reason the others refused the porridge probably as Flytrap had the audacity to swim in it.

When Sylvana said that she was looking for a mate for a few years, I told her I was already intended for someone else.

The cartographers mentioned that there had been occurrences of someone singing in the woods and people disappearing when investigating. Don't think that's related though.

After breakfast, Sylvana managed to fix Corel's white hair with the use of one of his chest hairs. She also ran her hand down his chest and reckoned that any future bondings he would have would be most bountiful. She then dived into the lake and, after a short while, came back with a couple of fish.

While that was going on I kept an eye on the cartographers as they continued measuring. I also found some excellent specimens of Ilmenites. By the time they stopped for lunch they reckoned that the lake had risen by two inches.

It had seemed odd that we hadn't seen any human habitation around and we said so. They admitted that there wasn't anyone actually living here but still taxes were being paid. They were very cagey about exactly who was paying them. According to Starflower, the thought on his mind was 'Bloody Trusts'. It seemed to be that the original taxpayers were all dead, or gone away, and some bunch of lawyers were handling the estates. This mission is definitely getting more and more peculiar.

.6.

We do find out that the population of Clarkesville itself is 26, half of which work for the Baron. There is the odd farmer and his family occupying 2 square miles of farmland around the village, which is located in the southeast, across the lake. There's also another of those tors in the swamp.

That afternoon we amused ourselves in various ways. Jhiselle is dancing with the pixies.

Meanwhile Starflower is still getting unarmed combat lessons from Kin - lessons which involve a lot of paranoia. Starflower wasn't sure when Kin was going to sneak up and attack her next. Meanwhile I went looking for magnetite rocks, or lodestones as this area looked right for them but didn't find any. However I did find some uncut garnets. Flamis would like those.

By the time I got back, Jhiselle was taking lessons in speaking pixie. Also Sylvana reckoned she would stay with us for a while as we were 'interesting'.

15/10/92

As we got closer to the swamp we began to smell traces of marsh gas. Also the ground was getting muddier. Swamp mists were encroaching more on the camp clearing only between 11am and 3pm.

20/10/92

Getting much closer to the swamp now. The weeds are becoming more prevalent with little outcroppings of bulrushes. TDP caught some eels and Jhiselle managed to overcook one.

Brian told us that last time he was here, as an apprentice ten years ago, there was a boatshed at the edge of the marsh. They had been using it as a base. One night, one person had disappeared after hearing singing. So the next night two people were put on watch. That night they heard screaming, and something thrashing about. The next morning they discovered one of the punts was missing. It had taken them six days to do the swamp, especially since equipment and marker poles were being interfered with during the night. In an attempt to obtain further detail, Starflower hypnotised Brian. However he didn't add much more.

Someone suggested using Hands of Earth for markers and maybe using Tunnellings to drain the swamp. What would happen if a magical tunnel was full of water and the spell expired. Would the water all spurt out or would the earth re-form around it. Mortimer was wondering if there was another way of doing the measuring - something involving triangles. Kin reckoned the whole thing is nothing more than some sort of elaborate ritual. Mortimer was soon getting frustrated with the cartographers as they seemed resistant to new ideas.

As night drew closer we arrived at an old boatshed. It was protected by a magical aura of preservation. Brian produced a key and opened the padlock on the door. Inside were three punts with a rack for the fourth. They were magically preserved as well. Even the punt poles were magical. According to the aura they had been preserved for 160 years.

It was decided to punt over to a nearby island and plant a marker pole then surround it with a ring of Hands to see if anything tries to take it. Kin put a Locate on the pole then TDP, Starflower, Corel and I punted off. TDP was punting until him and the punt pole managed to get left behind. So he triggered an Invested Walk on Water and pushed us instead. Corel commented we now had an outboard TDP.

Finally we found an island with two small trees on it. Much of the island appeared to compose of creeper and the remains of stone buildings. As we stuck the pole in there was some bubbling in the water around the island. With TDP enhancing the duration, I cast the Hands of Earth, which succeeded, and there was a LOT of bubbling. We decided to clear off fast as there may be something rather annoyed under the island. Also Starflower was detecting some sort of sentience trying to make her frightened. Corel ordered 'Punt Factor 9 Mr TDP' as we rapidly made our

getaway.

On the way back Starflower spotted an orchid and decided she wanted it for her herb collection. Orchidis Swampis according to my DA. She punted over, got the plant, then made our way back to the boathouse.

Just after we got back Starflower collapsed. Corel reckoned that she was under the influence of an hallucinogenic. The orchid? Suddenly she went berserk and started attacking us. While the others subdued her I found the orchid and checked it. It wasn't poisonous. Meanwhile Kin had managed to come up with an antidote and administered it. It worked.

We made camp. Early that night we heard a whistling sound but there was no wind. It sounded like a set of harmonious voices. TDP started wandering in the direction of the voices but was knocked out by Kin. Also Starflower's hair was standing up on end again like it was when she said something was trying to 'get her' in the swamp. We decided to retreat out of the swamp for the night.

.7.

21/10/92

We arrived back at the boathouse and everything looked ok. Jhiselle climbed on the roof but couldn't see much in the thick fog.

It had already been decided to secure Starflower in case whatever it was caused her to go crazy again. So she sat in the middle of the punt and Kin secured her to the seat. All Starflower could do was wriggle.

Corel muttered a spell and soon a wind came up and partially dispersed the fog. We split into three punts, a cartographer on each punting. I went with Starflower and Corel. On the way Starflower's hair started to stand on end again. She reckoned she could detect something.

Finally our armada of punts reached the island. I immediately noticed that the Hands of Earth looked odd. Instead of Earth they looked more like compost. So I stepped on the island and DAed each one. They had been affected by a non-college decay effect which wasn't a spell, ritual or talent. The age of the Hands were 240 years and the decay had started soon after the Hands were put up. Also a finger on one of the Hands was missing and there were some deep scratch marks in it, like claws.

Suddenly I realised that my feet were getting wet. Holes had formed in my boots. Hurriedly I jumped back in the punt and carried out an emergency repair. I'll have to get them fixed when we get back to Seagate. As far as we could figure out they were aging at a rate of 20 years an hour. Jhiselle had a preservation talent and put it on one boot. It didn't age any more so I asked her to put one on the other.

After several experiments with invisible apples and caterpillars we had determined that the decay only affected items and entities that had active spells on them but preservation neutralised it. The next island over showed no effects. Mortimer postulated that it was the effects of 'decay' gas and the act of casting the spell had released it. Jhiselle reckoned that most of the islands had a dim magical effect but this one had a strong aura.

Meanwhile Starflower had managed to determine the source of the fear so we punted over to the island that she was looking at. This was also the island with the elvish tor on. Once we landed TDP used a Wizards Eye and I used one of my invested Witchsights on it.

What he found was a cavity, 25ft down, similar to the one under the other tor. The quartz box contained some sort of dark substance. There was an astrological glyph or chart on one wall. Looked like a picture of the Alusian solar system with an extra planet outside the others. But for some reason the sun was in the middle. I had a feeling it was some sort of special conjunction.

The next wall was a drawing of a circle within a circle. Mortimer said it was a doughnut. The third wall had a doorway in it while the fourth had a diagram that looked like a stylised pine tree.

TDP dipped the Wizards Eye into the dark substance and everything went black. He brought the Eye to the surface. What we could see was a small dark globe with black stuff dripping off it. According to the aura it was Elemental Darkness. Soon all of it had drained out of the Eye.

Afterwards we punted over to a nearby island and tried the Tunnelling experiment. As soon as we cast the spell, a mass of bubbles appeared and Jhiselle reported that the island now had a strong magical aura. It turned out to be the decay effect again. The tunnel soon closed spurting the water back out.

We went back to the island with the tor. Suddenly Starflower screamed as she saw a shadowy form slide from under the seat. I went to attack it. The next thing I knew it had got under my trousers and was sliding up my leg. Also it was extremely COLD. I was in the process of removing my trousers to get at it when it moved to my chest. Meanwhile Starflower was yelling at me to get my clothes off while frantically trying to get free, with little success. Marcus started to untie her.

While I was struggling with my jacket, I managed to overbalance and fall in the swamp. Suddenly I felt a hand grab the back of my collar and haul me up. It was Kin. As we hovered in the air the black substance, obviously what had come out of the Eye, dropped off me and fell in the bottom of the punt that Mortimer was in. Mortimer fried it with a Light spell.

By now Starflower was free and checked me over. I was suffering from no ill effects except for coldness. Meanwhile Mortimer had flown off to the portal to get information from the Guild.

As we passed the first island, the Hands had disappeared. According to Jhiselle the aura of that island had returned to normal.

Evening came and the fog rolled in. We waited for Mortimer. Jhiselle was up on the roof. She wasn't surprised when Mortimer tried to sneak up behind her.

According to the Guild Astrologer, the conjunction had to do with the Time of Darkness which appeared every 20,000 years. Also he had found out more about the Seven. As well as Air, Water, Fire and Earth, there was one of Life, one of Death, and one of Time. Only the Water Mage had survived and she was kept under confinement in Alfheim. Maybe what we were experiencing was an effect of Time.

It was decided to stay in the boathouse that night. During the night, the 'singing' started up again.

Kin and Mortimer were affected and flew off. So was Starflower and one of the cartographers. The cartographer got knocked out but TDP was unable to send Starflower to sleep. Finally he triggered a Walk on Water so she could continue going. Meanwhile Jhiselle had cast Fireflight on herself, Corel, TDP, and me and we took off after Kin and Mortimer.

.8.

Once we arrived, at a small island, the others immediately landed while I triggered one of my Witchsights, (so I could see) and circled the island to see what was going on. What I saw was Mortimer hovering off to one side, Kin attacking a female entity - a siren and three other forms diving into the water. Also there was a mass of tentacles in a lagoon.

Suddenly one of the tentacles lashed out at Kin. She knocked out her opponent and attacked it. Meanwhile I remembered the present I got from Flamis before leaving - one of her first batch of Invested Dragonflames. So I triggered it and blasted the mass before landing. Jhiselle followed up with Bolts of Fire. Corel and TDP were busy fighting off another couple of sirens.

I decided to land and help Kin out, but I didn't want to cast any spells on the island in case it triggered the decay gas. However, just as I closed in, a tentacle lashed out at me. For some reason it reminded me a lot of Audreus Duplex (which had nearly eaten me on my first adventure) so I backed off and took off.

Maybe it was just as well. Steam geysers started playing under Corel and TDP. Or was it? I got clipped by one of the jets and was sent spiralling off.

The tentacled mass, which was now revealed to be a kraken, crawled out after Kin, who immediately burst into flames, courtesy of Jhiselle. As I started spiralling back Jhiselle was caught in a geyser stream and flipped into the water. She used her fireflight to take off and ended up quite a way off. Corel started firing lightning bolts at the kraken.

The kraken (fortunately a small one) decided to retreat into the water and swim off. Kin went after it. I was intending to land on the kraken's back and attack it but it submerged before I got there. Bigger! So I decided to try and find Starflower. On the way back to the boathouse I spotted something flash past me at about 130 mph, heading towards the island. I started turning around.

Soon I had caught up with Starflower, who was using shadow-wings. We both landed and I briefed her on the situation. We then took off.

By the time we got back it was nearly all over. Kin had succeeded in turning the kraken into calamari while one siren was amnesiac (Mortimer) and two were asleep (TDP). Starflower used her telepathy to detect two other minds underwater, who were really annoyed. She mental attacked one but the other created a maelstrom and hid in it. Mortimer flew over the top of it while TDP retrieved the unconscious one and we roped them all together. Mortimer managed to amnesiac the siren in the vortex. Once the vortex died we retrieved them. Some of them had been levitated by TDP so we had siren balloons. Kin also went looking for Flytrap and found a sulky toad which she handed to Mortimer. A piece of the kraken had a generic true name of Krakinus Freshus.

TDP also went searching for treasure under where the kraken was and found a lute, flute, ring, and two coins. The lute and flute were magical with a musical effect. The coins had locations and the ring had something to do with weather. Finally we all flew back towing the securely bound nixies back to the boathouse.

Once there the sirens, aka nixies, were suspended (in some cases floating) from the ceiling. A cursory search revealed two rings on the nixies, one had water magic, the other had a spell called Water Will. The two coins had an elven face on them. According to Mortimer the elves name was Dorian and he had been the last leader of the Bel-tan elves 48,000 years ago.

Starflower started questioning one and found out her name was Myra. Meanwhile I was in the process of lighting a fire for a rather tired Jhiselle when we were suddenly blasted by a burst of noise. Jhiselle was the only one unaffected so she stuffed a rag in the nixie's mouth.

I was just on my way out when one of the nixies tried to trigger something. Jhiselle distracted it by throwing a pot at it then TDP put them all to sleep.

Corel came out and said they had some medallions they wanted checked. They had pictures of krakens on them and there was one per nixie. I was able to determine that they were for summoning 20 pike which would arrive in 1-5 minutes over a range of 150 miles. By now the nixies were tied up and gagged. Starflower was using telepathy to question them. All she discovered that they considered their purpose to feed the kraken and they were treating it like a god. They also reckoned that they were going to get avenged.

Just then a large kraken arrived with two guys with fish tails. One of them turned his tail into legs and came on the land. We slid off the roof. It turned out that the kraken was a renegade and the nixie sisters were wanted by the Lord of the Lake for causing trouble. He appreciated having the lake cleaned up. There was even the possibility of a reward which made Corel's ears perk up. So we handed over the still bound nixies. Mortimer was talking to the kraken, which wrapped a tentacle around him. Jhiselle wanted to pet it. The kraken didn't object so she ended up with a tentacle coiled around her and stroking it. She wanted the event recorded for posterity as she reckoned no one would believe her. So I attempted to draw the scene but I'm no artist.

Finally the mere-elves took the nixies away and we settled down - at last.

.9.

22/10/92

I volunteered to take the first watch as I was still feeling rather fresh, unlike some of the others.

After a while Sylvana came back with a couple of skinned rabbits which we set aside for breakfast. I didn't have the heart to wake Jhiselle for her watch so I kept at it with Sylvana's help. After another half hour Jhiselle emerged followed by Kin and Starflower. Starflower started preparing the rabbits for breakfast while I had a nap.

It wasn't until midday when we headed out into the swamp. It seemed more peaceful today. Starflower reported that the fear effect seemed to be localised to the island where the elemental was. The island with the marker on didn't have any decay effects on it and the marker itself hadn't been disturbed. So the surveyors got to work. Nothing interesting happened all day. When we got back Sylvana had returned with a haunch of pork and two more rabbits.

23/10/92

Jhiselle spent part of the morning learning to punt. When we got back into the swamp, the elemental was attempting to have another go at Starflower but it wasn't having any effect. She also reckoned it appeared to be more diffuse and she was getting impressions of fear, darkness, and solitude. Had it woken up? TDP had a look with a Wizard's Eye but he reckoned it was still in there. Starflower probed it and received an impression of a great distance and a cold prickly feeling. Again the day passed uneventfully.

When we got back to the boathouse there was a very large kraken there and Sylvana was eyeing it warily. The water rippled and another two kraken and five mere-elves arrived. As we got closer we spotted an elven female in fishscale armour and wearing a reflective cloak standing there with another male mere-elf.

She introduced herself as Queen Morolev and she had come to reward us. The mere-elves laid out a picnic and fed us with raw trout and watercress.

After dinner, Morolev told us the story of Dorian. A long time ago he had amassed a large army and went west to deal with an unknown threat. He had arranged with the human outpost to oversee the lands, including the elven city until he returned for a full accounting. It was not a popular decision but it was upheld. After he left, that was the last that was seen of him and his army.

The elves that remained argued that the humans should not be allowed to continue administering the lands. The Seven interfered and one of them flooded the city. Whoever it was then disappeared without reversing the incantation so the remaining elves left.

There was somehow a connection between the original humans and the surveyors. Presumably Clarkesville was all that was left of the original human settlement of several thousand. Also a curse had been placed on the land consisting of some sort of dark malevolent presence. The nixies had also discouraged exploration of this region.

The Queen then offered her cloak as a reward. It gave protection while underwater and makes the wearer difficult to see on land. It looked like shimmering water. She laid the cloak out of the mat then some crystal goblets were passed around. Another mere-elf opened a box containing three bottles. One was opened and the contents distributed around the glasses. I don't think I had ever seen such a look of pure delight on Kin's face when we were told it was 40,000 year old brandy. It wasn't bad either. Somehow Kin managed to appropriate the other two bottles.

After they left Mortimer started discussing a plan of going to Alfheim and getting the water mage from the elves to raise the city.

24/10/92

The next morning it was revealed that Jhiselle, Mortimer, and Corel had dreamt about a stern elf in armour leading an army through the swamp. Guess that's Dorian. The only thing that happened today was Starflower collapsing owing to the elemental fear attack and waking up with a sore head and a squashed ego. (Corel was responsible for the sore head, and the elemental had just shown Starflower's relationship to the Universe)

25/10/92

The cartographers reckoned they would finish the survey today. Again nothing unusual happened. Starflower reckoned the elemental was all tucked in. Jhiselle was doing some of the punting and managed to end up dangling off the pole. Mortimer flew her back.

Once we got back to the boathouse, the cartographers broke out a barrel of Clarkeville beer and we set into it. A bit sweeter than the Seagate stuff but not bad.

26/10/92

Corel woke up the next morning complaining of a sore back. It turned out there were scratches on it so Starflower healed them. We left the swamp then headed off to Clarkesville in TDP's boat. The pixies accompanied us until we were halfway across. Night fell as we headed east up the lake.

27/10/92

Dawn saw us heading upstream in a river. Soon the river widened into a pool area. We could see a jetty with some fishing boats. After disembarking we followed a trail into a valley where we could see lots of foundation work covered in grass. The remains of what was fields was covered in blackberries. Over in one corner we could see a small patchwork of cultivation with a collection of houses in the middle near a two story stone tower - the westernmost of four surrounding the foundation work.

We were led to a door in the tower and Brian knocked. An old man answered the door then led us up a small flight of stairs to the top of the tower. He then pointed out the Baron and his family (wife and three kids) working in the fields. He called out to the Baron telling him that the cartographers were back with visitors.

Soon the Baron joined us and we were taken into the main room.

.10.

He introduced himself as Baron Orville Clarke. His wife was Marion and they had four children: Peter, Paul, John & Wendy. After a brief discussion our reward was worked out to 670sp each. While the butler went to get it, the cook came out and offered us lunch. It turned out to be leek and potato soup.

The Baron told us that the results are taken to a cave in the east. Some goblin tribes live in the area but they pose no threat. Apparently the Baron's grandfather had stumbled on the cave around a hundred years ago, and he had been persuaded to set up the survey as it hadn't been done for several hundred years. The first few had revealed that back taxes were required but, after that, it had been easy. Starflower used her ESP on the Baron, while he was talking and got the impression that there were some lit areas in the cave and a store of wealth. All the Baron would tell us is that the tenants were away on business.

Soon the money was brought up and it turned out to be a collection of assorted silver pennies from various places and times. Still, at least it's still all negotiable. Later on I went exploring in the ruins of the fort, that had stood here, (the Baron's home was in the surviving tower) and discovered a buried stairwell under one of the other towers. I decided to tell Corel about it instead of exploring on my own. He wasn't too keen on the idea of caving however mountain climbing was more his thing. I pointed out there was nothing like the thrill of climbing a sheer cliff with only a rope between yourself and a long drop to certain death - with a shadow-wings as backup.

We also discovered there was some sort of blessing on the area.

That night I was writing up the diary while Kin was playing the lute we had found. She was very good at it. Mortimer joined in with a trumpet. He had picked up some very odd styles of music from various places - something called jazz.

Halfway through the night we were woken up by a very excited Jhiselle. According to her a chariot, towed by two pegasi had landed in the courtyard and these two elves, dressed in silver, had stepped out and asked for TDP. The entire area was bathed with light. Mortimer reckoned Jhiselle had been sniffing pixie dust.

But when we stepped outside we discovered that Jhiselle was right. The elves told us they were from the Imperial Court in Alfheim and the High Chancellor wished to speak with TDP about certain visions that their astrologers had experienced a few weeks ago. They were very similar to the visions that Starflower had a few weeks ago. In fact it was possible they had picked them up from her. Now they wanted to question TDP about what he had been up to in Terra Nova with the drow.

While this was going on Jhiselle was patting the pegasi then dashed off to the kitchen for some apples to feed them with.

The elves also told us they had been in contact with the Guild and had spoken to Hadley, the head of the E&E college. They produced a crystal which would allow us to talk to him. Kin did so. The Guild, had not wished to annoy Alfheim so had agreed to the elves questioning TDP but after our task here was complete. He also mentioned that none of the Guild astrologers had received similar visions.

TDP agreed to go, in order to sort the whole thing out. Meanwhile Starflower wrote an affidavit, describing the visions she had received. The elves produced a bottle and uncorked it. Suddenly TDP turned to vapour and disappeared into the bottle. We then arranged with the elves to take the rest of TDP's equipment and his earnings before they left. Once that was done they climbed on the chariot and one elf threw a mallet into the air. The pegasi took off, following it.

28/10/92

The next morning we were woken up by Mortimer playing reveille on the trumpet. I threw a sock at him.

A little later on one of the local women arrived. Apparently she was having trouble having children and Mortimer had offered to take a look. He had already made up a couple of fertility potions for her. However we discovered (through DA and divination) that she had an infertility curse on her and it appeared to be tied in to the area. On a hunch Mortimer checked Jhiselle and she had it too. I didn't have it, neither did Starflower. We came to the conclusion that a population control mechanism had been set up in the area to prevent the humans from overrunning the place. They were allowed a certain number of children in the area but no more.

Later on that morning we headed on up to the cave, arriving there a few hours later. The rocks around the cave were basaltic and the cave itself was a triangular fissure. It looked like it had been caused by a faulting action. The Baron stood at the entrance, held up his staff, and announced his

presence. We followed him in.

After passing a kink in the passage we passed through a band of white light going around the tunnel edges. A little later on was a band of red light which we also passed through. Finally the tunnel opened up and dead ended. There was a stone cube in the middle of the area. According to my DA it had some sort of communication magic on it.

Starflower attempted to use her ESP to establish whether or not there was something on the other side of the wall. Suddenly she was encased in a pillar of stone. The only way I could think of getting her out in a hurry was to use a Tunnelling spell to punch a hole in the rock. So I tried it. Unfortunately the tunnel appeared under our feet and most of the party (except Kin, Mortimer & Corel) dropped in it. The other three started ferrying out party members, starting with the Baron. I was one of the last to go and the tunnel was going to close any second, so I started thinking of casting a Hand of Earth to lift me out of the tunnel. Suddenly I found I was grabbed by one. I frantically struggled to escape. Then I felt something hit me on the back of the head.

When I regained consciousness I was tired, sore, and extremely angry. I even muttered some dwarven swear words I had heard Flamis use. Kin later remarked that swearing in elvish is more eloquent as the language has more scope for inventive curses. Also Starflower was out of the pillar. Mortimer had discovered that the whole thing had been an elaborate illusion - including the Hand I was in - with taste being the only missing component.

Once we were all sorted out the Baron stepped up to the cube, and placed the scroll containing the survey results face down on the stone. A bar of bright green light appeared on the surface of the stone and moved across, scanning the document. Once it had completed it's traverse, the Baron picked it up. At the same time an opening appeared in the wall.

We stepped through. The walls of this room were lined with obsidian and the Bel-tan symbol was present. However the main thing that caught our eyes were two piles of gold coinage, all with the face of Dolran on them. One pile was large, the other much smaller. As we watched a golden elemental appeared out of the ground. According to my DA it was an Earth Elemental. It moved to the large pile of coins, counted some out and moved them to the second pile. It then counted out some more coins, put them in a small chest, and handed it to the Baron. Guess that takes care of the taxes for another year.

Corel attempted to pick up one of the coins from a pile but it rapidly grew too hot to handle and he had to drop it. The coins the Baron had were safe.

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We left the cave and bade farewell to the Baron. Corel and Mortimer went back inside to divinate the cube. A short time later we heard a voice from inside the cave saying "Go Back!" Starflower had a Mind Speech running and reckoned that, when they passed through the white band of light they had triggered an audible illusion. So Mortimer started his divination from the other side of the band.

Meanwhile Jhiselle reckoned that the plants around here were growing faster than normal. I DAed the area and came to the conclusion that it was a similar effect to the blessing in Clarkesville.

By now Mortimer had concluded that the cube was a communications device that transmitted an image of what was on top of it to wherever the taxes were handled. Finally he decided to write his own messages and send them. It turned out he was communicating with the Second Adjutant of the High Chancellor of the ExChequer in Alfheim, who told him to report to the Western Marshes Border Area for debriefing. We were going to be met by Sapphire and Steel who would escort us.

Starflower was eyeing up the blackberries nearby with a view of making blackberry pie but Jhiselle reckoned she was too blackberried out. She had seen, and eaten, enough this adventure to last her a lifetime.

Once Mortimer and Corel returned it was decided that the quickest way to get to Alfheim was to portal back to Seagate, then to take two more portals to the Alfheim border. So, after I put a Strength of Stone on Jhiselle, she put Fireflights on all those who needed it and we rocketed back to the portal. We landed on the lakeshore then blinked through to Seagate.

Once there I went back home to drop off my boots for repair and to borrow Flamis's horse, Flamefoot, for Jhiselle to use. I then headed to the Guild Hall where the others were waiting.

When I got there, I discovered we had been followed by two elementals, a dull grey Earth elemental called Steel and a bright blue air elemental called Sapphire. Mortimer had to explain to them why we were taking a roundabout route. Apparently their presence had alerted Guild Security.

Jhiselle was making the acquaintance of Mortimer's steed - a nightmare named Jet, when Kin turned up on her horse. She told us it was actually a demigod called Marshall who had assumed horse form and liked nothing better than having his riders die in the midst of combat.

We took a portal to Elvenburg from the Merchant's Guild and ended up in a plush hotel lobby. We then trotted through town and went through a mirror portal to Graft. Once there we're only fifty miles from the Alfheim border.

Suddenly I felt stronger and I soon realised that we had been all turned into horses - except Kin. It had to be Marshall. Guess he thought we could all travel faster this way. There was an ugly Shetland pony among the herd, which was a very disgruntled Flytrap.

We finally reached Barovia. Nearby was a portal to Kinlu where we could see some Erelain entering it. Also nearby was a castle coated in silver. Apparently it belongs to an ex-Guild adventurer called Silverfoam who had a quite a reputation. But, according to Starflower, Silverfoam was still at the Guild, but under a different name.

Now, back in human form, we travelled into the mountain range bordering Alfheim. Sapphire and Steel turned into elves but I couldn't get a Generic True Name from their aura. Most curious.

We reached a river with a dock, where a barge was parked. We boarded, then travelled along it into a tunnel. It was a long trip. By the time we reached the other end, at the western edge of Alfheim, it was night. There was a new looking settlement there. At the dock waiting for us was a regal looking elf and six guardsmen. The regal person introduced himself as being from the Treasury and, after taking us to private quarters and offering us elven wine, told us we had

stumbled on a sensitive area of elven security. Apparently the elves have set up reserves to reestablish elven civilisation in case of collapse. The location of each reserve is a closely guarded secret so he wants to have our memories altered so we can't find it again. They don't want to take any chances of anyone else finding out. Mortimer objected strongly. Finally it was decided that the reserve would be moved but it would take a month, during which we would have to stay in Alfheim.

He also told us that it was just after such a recovery that Dorian had set off to conquer more lands and had left the lands in trust to the elven crown who had been collecting revenue from it since. Humans were used to look after the lands because of their short lives and short memories.

Mortimer asked for an audience with the captured Water Mage. We were told our request would be passed on to the Warder of the Northern Marshes.

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So our stay in Alfheim commenced. We stayed in an isolated chateau, surrounded by forest. That was about all of Alfheim we were allowed to see. Jhiselle started learning Wall of Fire. Meanwhile I was able to learn a spell that the Guild Pacifistic Earth Mage doesn't teach. It cost me 100 seleniums (800 silver pennies) - less than what the Druidic Earth Mage charges. That took me 4 weeks to get it to a Rank 0 rating. At the same time I picked up Earth Hammer so I could have a long range offensive spell (emergencies only). That cost another 2000sp. I also started picking up a few words of elvish.

After the first week TDP joined us, looking none the worse. He told us that they had concluded that the visions were only 5 to 10% probable. I had sent a letter to Flamis telling her what was going on. Mortimer had also sent a letter to his wife, Petal, inviting her to bring the family and joined us. They did, a week and a half in. We were infested with hobbit anklebiters - literally knee-high to a human.

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Word finally reached us that the cache had been moved so we were permitted to leave. Also that our request to meet with the Water Mage had been approved. So we were led to a canal boat.

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The canal boat, or barge, had the merchant's guild symbol on it. It was an overcast day as we glided down the stream. Three hours later we pulled into the bank where a group of elves were waiting with a bunch of horses. We were to ride them. They also requested that we be blindfolded for security reasons.

For the first half hour it felt like we were riding in a circle - at least according to my direction sense. Then it suddenly flipped 180 degrees even though I was sure the horse didn't turn. I suspected portal transport.

Finally we were allowed to remove the blindfolds. To my delight, and Corel's disgust, we were in a large limestone cavern. We hitched the horses to a large rail then continued down the passage. This was a dry cave and was well travelled. All the stalagmites were gone (but there were some in the side caverns. A few stalactites were still hanging from the ceiling.

After a while the ceiling height dropped from 20' to 10'. It was getting darker. Most of the light was coming from a phosphorescent mould growing on the rocks. We reached a door blocking the entrance. Our elven guide knocked on it then exchanged some words with whoever was on the other side. I caught the word 'password'.

We went through the door which closed behind us. It was hotter here and the heat seemed to be emanating from further down the corridor. A bit further on was an elf seated in a desk in an alcove, with a door behind him. We were conducted through that door where we encountered a brightly lit room with carpets on the floor and hanging around the walls. An impressive elf, in ornate silver partial plate, was sitting behind an equally ornate wooden desk. He told us that he had reluctantly allowed us to interview the water mage and told us not to take any liquids with us and not to approach any closer than ten feet as she had a talent that allowed her to draw water from any liquid source - even entities. She is only allowed just enough water to sustain life and wears iron to cancel her spell and ritual magic. Also she appeared to be aging here. We were warned to be careful as she was extremely cunning.

The elf also told us that they knew of the dark and water elemental and reckoned it was to their advantage that the swamp remained cursed as to keep other people out of the area. Kin pointed out that the lake elves would prefer that the swamp area was 'de-cursed'.

Finally we were conducted to see the water mage. We were led down the tunnel where the heat was coming from finally emerging in a cavern. There was an island in the middle of the cavern, ringed by lava. The heat was nearly unbearable. A thin causeway bridged the gap from the tunnel to the island. On the island was placed a large gilded cage. Most of the interior was obscured by diaphanous white curtains.

As we crossed the causeway a voice behind us shouted out 'Visitors!'. At that, a figure peered out from behind a curtain. It was a woman, 5' 10", dressed in blue. She would have looked rather striking in her younger years, but now looked haggard and drawn. Even so, she still looked beautiful. Her dark hair had grey streaks in it.

First she asked us where we were from. We told her we were travellers from various places. She hoped that we weren't part of 'that Seagate bunch' whose activities had led to her imprisonment in this place. I guess I could see her point of view. I'm not keen on being cut off from my element either.

The conversation turned to the Clarkeville swamp. The water mage told us she had blessed the area with water. Well I suppose that's one way of looking at it. Removing it could be possible and she would gladly help if we released her water elemental. No dice. That was definitely something we were told not to do.

Suddenly she collapsed and her skin started turning grey and wrinkly. Even her aura started to fade. I just managed to restrain myself from going forward to help her. Instead we went back to summon help. Soon a dwarf with a long white beard and white robes came out and started releasing a bit of water vapour into the air. Instantly she came awake, regained her looks - even down to some of the grey disappearing from her hair and disappeared back into the cage.

After that we went back to the elf. Kin suggested that she be 'parroted' - i.e. turned into a non-intelligent parrot. Her soul would be gone but, apparently, any demon she's bound to, still

thinks she's alive. Apparently the Guild aviary is full of 'parrots'.

Finally we get taken back, blindfolded again, to the barge then go back to where we left our horses. We are then escorted through the mountains and out of Alfheim. On the way back, Kin led us all in rousing choruses of battle songs - after convincing Marshall we were not in a hurry this time.

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After an uneventful journey we arrived at the Guild. It was decided that we should try and find a Namer to banish the dark elemental. Starflower suggested Baron Von Schornhausen. It turned out he was keen to do it as he likes ridding such menaces from Alusia. So that night the Baron and I went to see the Lord of the Bats, Vance, to be equipped with long range shadow wings. My job was to create a tunnel for the Baron to enter the chamber and do the banishment. He already had a waterbreathing so he could survive in the water filled chamber.

So that was what we did. A quick flight to find the island, using my ranger skills to find it, a quick Tunnel (two actually - for some reason I felt pain when attempting the first time). He dropped in it and did the Banishment. I heard the sound of something breaking below. I then created another Tunnel so he could climb out. Mission accomplished he reported.

Once that was done we flew, then portaled back to the Guild arriving back early the next day. I hope the mere-elves appreciate the gesture.

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Rest then split the treasure, followed by training.