

A SETTING SUPPLEMENT

COMPATIBLE WITH THE

Delving Deeper

RULES AND ALL EDITIONS BASED ON
THE ORIGINAL 1974 ROLEPLAYING GAME



Blackmarsh

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Written by Robert S. Conley

Cartography by Robert S. Conley

Layout by Robert S. Conley

Edited by Tim Shorts, and Ken Harrison

Inspiration and Design, Dwayne Gillingham

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Thanks to John Adams and his team for putting together the Delving Deeper Rules

Introduction

At the dawn of roleplaying, the campaign and its setting were already established. One could say it preceded the RPG itself, as Dave Arneson adapted the ideas of Major David Wesely's Braustein game for his Blackmoor campaign. Slightly later, Gary Gygax created Greyhawk. From the experience gained with these campaigns, the first roleplaying game was written. In all the years since, the campaign has been the centerpiece. Yet few roleplaying games included a fully useable campaign setting with their rules.

The limits of roleplaying games are only bound by the collective imagination of the referee and his players. But first time referees are often daunted not only by the effort needed to master the game rules, but also having to create a campaign setting. Many have given the advice to start out small, to detail a town or village near a dungeon as the initial focus of the campaign. As the referee gains experience, he can later expand into the surrounding wilderness, fleshing out the campaign setting with as much detail as he wishes.

As good as that advice is, it would help to have examples of what a fleshed out campaign would look like. That is why Blackmarsh has been included in the Delving Deeper Box Set. It is not meant to define the limits of the Delving Deeper world, but rather show its possibilities to show referees a way of organizing their own campaigns and finally, as a source of inspiration.

Blackmarsh was designed to evoke the earliest campaigns of the world's most popular roleplaying game. It takes place amid a wilderness full of danger and the possibility of great treasure. It is organized as a numbered hex grid with locales keyed to specific hexes. Locales are described briefly in a paragraph or two. Most locales are meant to serve as a springboard for the referee to create his own details. In addition, geographical entities, organizations, and realms that span multiple hexes are described as well.

The Hex Map

A grid of hexes, arranged in columns, make up the map. The hex numbers are given in a four-digit format (1213, 0114, etc). For example, 0211 means that it is in the "02" column (the 2nd column of the map) and is 11 hexes down. Sometimes the hex number will not be clear because of the terrain in the hex. In this case, you will need to count the hexes. Each map hex is 5 miles.

This system of using hex numbers allows a referee to quickly find the locales on the map and what is near a location. This helps keep the map uncluttered and easy to read. Geographical features are composed of multiple hexes and are labeled directly on the map. They are listed alphabetically in that map's chapter.

Adventuring Advice

This format is designed to make it easy to referee players as they explore the world. With a list of locales, it is easy for the referee to determine what is over the next hill and what possible challenges the players might face. In addition, since the players can largely be left to their own devices, this format allows the referee more time to focus on the core adventures in his campaign.

Not every hex location has a description, and the background information is only meant to be a loose framework. Referees are encouraged to add material and make the setting unique to their campaigns.

It is suggested that to get maximum use of this setting that the referee look over the locales, then chose the ones that best suit the campaign. Note the NPCs and their circumstances. Develop a timeline of events if the characters are not involved. Detail important locales and add new ones of your own design. Do the same for the NPCs, and make notes on their motivations and personalities.

After each session of the campaign, review what the players did. Look at your original timeline of events, see what impact their actions had, and make the needed changes. Sometimes the players' actions will lead to a new and unexpected chain of events.

The creativity of the referee comes by not forcing his players to follow a predetermined story, but to develop new and interesting consequences based on the players' actions. Use the NPC's motivations and personalities to decide which consequences are the most likely and pick the most interesting.

The result is a campaign where the players feel they are forging their character's destiny within a living, breathing world. It will not only be fun and adventurous, but also filled with surprises. Consequences will accumulate and spin the campaign into unexpected directions.

Overview

Blackmarsh lies on the fringe of civilization, located around a large bay on the western edge of the Grey Sea. For a brief time, the frontiers of the great empires encompassed the region, but they retreated centuries ago. Only a few outposts of civilization remain amid the dangers of the encroaching wilderness.

The bay that dominates Blackmarsh was created two millennia ago by the disaster known as The Mountain That Fell. After The Mountain That Fell, strange and terrible monsters appeared in the surrounding wasteland. The elves arrived in Blackmarsh, drove the fell creatures into hiding, and healed the land. However, after two and a half millennia, their power is waning and the monsters have crept back into the dark corners of the wilderness.



A thousand years ago, the Bright Empire settled Castle Blackmarsh and for a brief time the races were united in an alliance and pushed back the monsters. Then eight hundred years ago, the Bright Empire collapsed after being defeated by the barbarians in the cataclysmic battle known as The Shattering. Blackmarsh was one of the first regions to be abandoned. Left in the wake of the empire's retreat was a patchwork of realms ruled by petty kings and tyrants.

Since the Shattering, the frontier has slowly retreated. In place of the ordered safety of the Bright Empire, monsters, barbarians, and other increasingly roamed without restraint. In the present day, those who come to Blackmarsh are more interested in viz, killing monsters, or the strange artifacts left by The Mountain That Fell than establishing new settlements. The only force that stands against the wilderness is the Blackmarsh Rangers. Anyone who is willing to defend the land and its people are welcomed into their ranks.

The Mountain That Fell

In the days when man knew only the working of stone and fought for their existence against the orc and the goblin, the sky turned to ash and down fell the fiery mountain onto the land. The world tore open and the grey waters rushed in. Those who survived the impact were lost as boiling clouds rushed out in all directions leaving a wasteland in its wake.

The Mountain That Fell left a gift; magic. Near and far, those of learning and strong of heart discovered new powers to shape the world. In the desolation around the Smoking Bay the adventurous found viz, magic in physical form. And there was more, scattered amid the landscape were strange artifacts and stranger creatures that survived The Mountain That Fell. For a time men, dwarves, orc, goblins, and other races braved the dangers and fought each other in the wastelands. Then the elves came into Blackmarsh expelled the feuding races, drove the monsters out, and healed the land.

Viz

Viz is a magical substance that takes many forms. It could be a flask of pure spring water, a newly bloomed flower, or an iridescent rock. What all these items have in common is they are infused with pure magic. Viz can be used in the casting of spells or the creation of magic items.

Viz allows a magic user to cast spells without losing it from memory. The viz is consumed in the process. One viz for a first level spell, two viz for a second level spell, three for a 3rd level spell and so on. One viz is worth 100 GP towards the creation of a magic item. The referee can use viz as treasure usable towards the creation of a magic item in place of giving out more gold pieces.

The Wild North

To the north of Blackmarsh lies the Wild North, a cold land of dark fir and taiga. The mighty Belaya River runs through the heart of the land. Scattered through the Wild North are the human Rurasin city-states.

Southland

Bordering Blackmarsh to the south is the region known as Southland. It lies on the frontier of the Vasa Province of the Grand Kingdom and was recently opened for settlement. The Kingdom of Bolzak in the White Mountains is the birthplace of many dwarves in Blackmarsh.

Adaption Notes

The map for Blackmarsh is designed to work with the Lands of Adventure, a series of settings. For those with the Lands of Adventure product (or the earlier Points of Light products from Goodman Games) Blackmarsh adjoins along the northern edge of Southland and lies a hundred miles to the west of Wildlands. It is set during the time period depicted in Southland, the era of the Grand Kingdom.

There are several possibilities to place Blackmarsh in your existing campaign. The first, it's located on the frontier of the "known world". A once wide spread empire, that encompassed Blackmarsh, has since retreated or collapsed. Another possibility, Blackmarsh is located in an out of the way corner of the world where the land is marginal for farming and mining. In times of decline, it is one of the first places to be abandoned, or at best ignored.

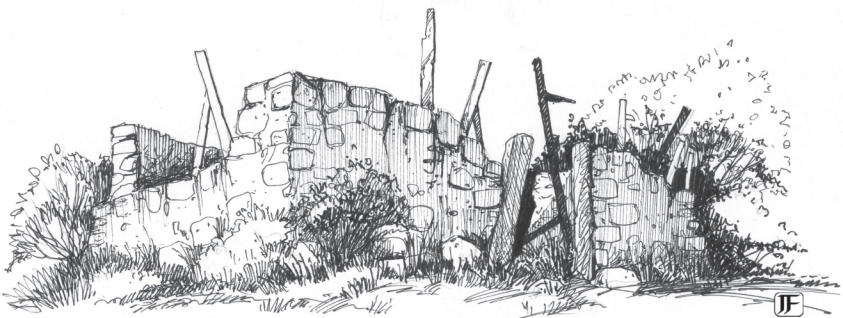
The settlements of the four races (man, elves, dwarves, halflings) are distant colonies of racial homelands. The remoteness of Blackmarsh means that these settlements are effectively independent.

There are four distinct areas of men in Blackmarsh. The Ostrobards are new to civilization, having shed their barbarian ways in the last century. There are the men along the southern shore of the Smoking Bay running from Castle Blackmarsh in the west to Jorvik in the east. They are a surviving remnant of the Bright Empire. The Vasan Vikings have four settlements along the eastern edge of Blackmarsh. They arrived here after they lost much of their homeland to the Grand Kingdom. Finally, there is the Grand Kingdom which is starting to expand into Blackmarsh.

Several references are made to the dwarven kingdom of Bolzak which is found in Southland. This can be ignored or replaced with a suitable dwarven kingdom of your choosing. Olden Hold is a base for the dwarves to explore Blackmarsh so it is not critical to have a kingdom immediately to the south.

The Blackmarsh Rangers are designed as an organization indigenous to the area. If a referee wants to incorporate the Ranger class this would be a natural starting point.

For the House of the Raven, a referee could use the dark elves from other fantasy roleplaying games. As presented in Blackmarsh, they are a group who believe that the elves should rule and enslave other races. This is considered abhorrent to the cultures of Blackmarsh.



Geography

The aftermath of The Mountain That Fell has had a major impact on the region's geography. The impact caused many cracks and shifts in the land, forming the numerous swamps and estuaries of the region. Even after two thousand years, and the best efforts of the elves, much of the shoreline is a confusing maze of waterways.

Alhert Island

This long barrier island has little of note other than scrub and sand. The unique *Pyrocantha* bush grows in abundance here. Its berries can be harvested in the fall and used to create a salve that when rubbed on armor gives a +1 bonus. Unfortunately, the salve lasts only a single battle, but additional doses can be applied. Multiple applications of the salve do not have an accumulative effect.

Dragonbone Peaks

The western slopes of these high mountains took the brunt of the debris ejected from the crash of The Mountain That Fell. The debris covers most of the valleys of western slopes. In the centuries since, an extensive cavern system has formed. It is believed the network extends for miles along the western edge of the mountain range.

Driftwood Isle

The currents of the Grey Sea caused this island to accumulate a large amount of driftwood as well as other objects from the wind and tide. Along the southeast peninsula, the scattered remains of a ship can be found. Beneath a pile of seaweed is a body of a young man dressed in the style of a high noble of the Grand Kingdom. His hand clutches a necklace with the royal seal.

Lanis River

The Lanis River flows north from Southland and is three miles wide when it enters Blackmarsh. The current is deep and slow and easily allows ships and barges to travel in both directions. Merchants travel between Castle Blackmarsh, Westguard and the dwarven kingdom of Bolzak. Sometimes the occasional Vasan longship will try their luck raiding farther south.

Pendar Mountains

A spur of the White Mountains they connect a hundred miles to the northwest. They are known for the numerous goblin tribes that inhabit the little explored mountain valleys.

Rednut River

This river gets its name from the number of Rednut groves growing along its banks. The Rednut is considered a tasty delicacy by the inhabitants and animals of Blackmarsh. Every fall, the river surface is covered with floating rednuts as they drop from the trees. This has the unfortunate effect of attracting hippogriffs and griffons who swoop down and scoop them off the water. They are not above trying to take a more meaty bite from an unwary traveler on the river.

Sandstone Island

The leeward side (facing Sheltered Bay) is a mass of sandstone that was heavily cracked from the crash of The Mountain That Fell. There are numerous ravines, gullies, and chasms throughout the length of the island. This is a favorite haunt for vikings and pirates to hide their treasure. Windward, it gradually fills in with sand until the beach dunes are reached.

Sheltered Bay

A chain of islands absorbs the brunt of any storm sweeping in from the Grey Sea. It is also the only entrance into the Smoking Bay and the rest of Blackmarsh. There is a 1 in 3 chance per day of encountering a ship entering or leaving the Smoking Bay.

Smoking Bay

The Mountain That Fell created the Smoking Bay and for a century afterwards, pillars of steam rose from the waters and were seen for hundreds of miles away. The pillars of steam have since subsided, but the name remains. The sea bottom is a confusing maze of rubble with many areas unexplored. Many sea creatures have moved in to take advantage of the chaotic terrain to hide.

The Black Marshes

The impact of The Mountain That Fell fractured this region forming the marshes that give the area its name. The marshes are fifteen miles north-south and over fifty miles east-west. The impact left several large lakes connected by a confusing maze of waterways and bogs. It offers a convenient place to hide for those who want keep their activities away from prying eyes. The water is black in color caused by the minerals leeching from the surrounding soil and vegetation.

The Crimson Hills

Over the centuries, numerous orc tribes conquered and were conquered among these hills. Their continual conflict has caused this region to be known as the Crimson Hills. The two main tribes are the Bateaters (1911) and the Bloodcrushers (2207), but there are several smaller orc clans and families hiding and hunting in the hills.



The Grey Sea

The Grey Sea is known for its storms, strong currents, treacherous reefs, and superb fishing grounds. After the collapse of the Bright Empire reavers, vikings and pirates dominated the waters, but the rise of the Grand Kingdom has largely brought peace to the Grey Sea. Only the Vasan Vikings and a few pirate ships remain to challenge the might of the Grand Kingdom's navy.

The Greywoods

Over a thousand elves make their home in this forest. The forest gets its name from the Grey Ash trees, whose seeds in the fall, dry into a grey ash like color. The seeds littering the forest floor remind the elves of the wasteland that once existed here in the aftermath of The Mountain That Fell. The ash seeds are also a potent source of viz, jealously guarded by the elves for their own use.

The Tave Marshes

Unlike the Black Marshes there are not many lakes in the Tave Marshes. Instead, there is a network of estuaries connected by small streams and bogs. The region is largely avoided by the surrounding races due to the evil reputation of the weretigers that dwell within the swamp.

The White Mountains

These majestic, snowcapped mountains stretch far to the northwest, and are the highest known in the regions. The dwarven kingdom of Bolzak lies to the south and Olden Hold is the northernmost outpost.

The White Mountains teem with game, and great predators, such as griffons and hippogriffs, making their home in the high aeries. Stone giants are known to roam to the edge of the mountains, and although they don't often attack, they will attack small parties of travelers.

Thornbrush Island

The leeward side of this island is choked with groves of thorny bushes and hedges. Numerous game trails form an extensive maze that wild boars (2 HD) and other creatures use.

The Westwall

Farther south, the Westwall forms the western boundary of the Vasa Province of the Grand Kingdom. The northern terminus ends in Blackmarsh and is home to several clans of hill giants.

Locales

0105 These are the ruins of Daur Anthar, the hold of the famed Dwarven Ironmaster, Gamli Norreshield. It is here that he found a vein of metal rich in viz and researched its use in the forging of arms and armor. When the hold was abandoned several hundred years ago, an earth elemental (HD 12) remained to guard the ruins.

0107 A band of brigands are bent on vengeance against the Rangers of Blackmarsh and are marching on Blackoak Castle. Sigrun the Boneless (Ftr9), two captains (Ftr6,5), and three lieutenants (Ftr4) lead 115 brigands.

0211 Viewing the Halflings of Newcombe as easy prey, King Graptar the Stupendous (treat as a hobgoblin and wielding a +1 warhammer) moved 150 goblins into the Pendar Mountains where they established their new base. Surrounding the king are twelve guards (treat as hobgoblins) who protect Graptar against any usurpers.

0214 A mother black dragon (old, HD 8) and her child (young, HD 7) have slaughtered a herd of deer and are in a meadow consuming the carcasses.

Rumors

1	In Strangelholm, the halflings have uncovered a powerful sword of law (F)
2	Goblins roam the Pendar Mountains (T)
3	Be careful wandering the Greywoods, the boundary between worlds is weak there (T)
4	The elves have wild parties of debauchery in Castle Blackmarsh(F)
5	The Duke of the Ostrobards is noted for his wild parties (T)
6	The Wizard of the Isle will allow any who tells him a riddle he can't solve to stay on The Mountain That Fell (F)
7	Lord Mazardan of Olden Hold is offering 1,000 GP for any viz brought to him (partially False, he will offer 200 GP)
8	King Ragnar's grip on the throne of Castle Taldane is weak. Civil war is about to ensue (T)
9	The Blackmarsh Rangers are recruiting new members (T)
10	Sir Causari of Inuacus Keep is gathering forces to overthrow the elves (F)
11	Three beautiful maidens dwell in the westernmost lake of the Blackmarshes, they will bestow their treasure on those who please them (F)
12	Beware of those who march underneath the Raven's wings (T)
13	Actayl Oathbinder survived the clearing of the lighthouse and is now in Jorvik raising an army (F)
14	A strange maelstrom appears in the western portion of the Smoking Bay. One can see treasure at the bottom (T)
15	The Ostrobards are having trouble with attacks by hippogriffs (T)
16	Lord Mazardan hosts a lavish banquet at Olden Hold every year. Only the most successful of explorers are invited. (T)
17	Myrmidons of Sarrath are leading an invasion force into Blackmarsh (F)
18	So many orcs have died in the Crimson Hills that the hills are haunted by their spectres (F)
19	Most of the magic-users from the time of the Bright Empire lived in conclaves south of the Black Marshes. Their ruined homes are dangerous but many are remain untouched (T)
20	The Duke of the Ostrobards is going to hold a grand tourney the first in the Blackmarsh region (F)

0217 Oldan Hold, Pop: 342, Dwarf; Align L; Ruler: Lord Mazardan, Ftr6, L, Dwarf; Resource: Market.

Oldan Hold is the northernmost outpost of the Dwarven Kingdom of Bolzak. It was founded as a base for the search of viz by the Ironmasters of Bolzak. It's become an entrepôt where merchants all over Blackmarsh come and trade with the dwarves. There are 5d10 foreign merchants (human, elf, halflings) with their guards present.

Lord Mazardan was one of the most successful explorers and appointed as Lord of Oldan Hold two decades ago. He is also High Captain of the Northern Company of Adventurers. An association of explorers looking for sources of viz. Every year he hosts a grand banquet in the company hall where members and their friends eat and tell tales of their discoveries.

0302 The inside of this bend on the Rednut River is riddled with giant snake dens. Every 100 yards there is a 3 in 6 chance of encountering either a hole to a den (1-4) or a giant snake (HD 2)(5-6).

0309 This crumbling wizard's keep dates back a thousand years to the time of the Bright Empire. An experiment gone awry left the keep infested with numerous ochre jellies (HD 5), including one very large black pudding (HD 10, 60 hp) in the old great hall.

0318 A herd of mean tempered wild boars (HD 3) roam the slopes of the White Mountains here. Even hunters from Olden Hold (see 0217) avoid this valley. There is a 1 in 4 chance of encountering 4d4 boars per hour while in the region.

0407 **Blackoak Castle;** Sinerian, Ftr4/Mu6 L, Elf; 50 elves, 60 men, 40 dwarves, 20 halflings.

This castle is the headquarters of the Blackmarsh Rangers, an organization dedicated to preserving peace between the races and keeping Blackmarsh free from the depredations of monsters. They consider the Brotherhood of the Raven their mortal enemy (see 1807). The Temple of Thor at Castle Blackmarsh is an ally especially when monsters are involved.

The Blackmarsh Rangers were founded by the legendary Geran Blackoak fifteen centuries ago during the invasion of the Ostrobard barbarians. Geran Blackoak was instrumental in restoring the peace. While he failed to unite them politically, a tradition of mutual assistance took hold among the races.

The castle serves as the primary training ground for new rangers recruits as well as a meeting place for the biannual gathering of the captains. It contains workshops and stores to supply the various ranger circles wandering throughout Blackmarsh. Clerics of Silvanus, the Forest Lord, are traditionally stationed at the castle to provide aid and support. Thanks to the elves, one of the finest schools of magic in the Blackmarsh region is found here. The school tends to study the practical rather than theoretical aspects of magic.

High Captain Sinerian has been the leader for over a century and expects to serve for several decades more. Her greatest challenges have been dealing with the raids of the Vasan Vikings from across the Grey Sea, and the rising power of the Grand Kingdom to the southeast. If the Rurasin city-states to the north unite, it may prove another threat to the peace.

0409 **Strangelolms,** Pop: 292, Halfling; Align L; Ruler: Mayor Holbein Redleaf, O-lvl, L; Resource: Farm.

Strangelolms is a halfling village that surrounds a large hill south of the Holms Water. The region around the village has rich soil for farming and the halflings supply much of the food needed by Castle Blackoak (see 0407).

Mayor Holbein, along with his constable, keeps the peace, but struggles when the occasional monster emerges from the ruined wizard keep (see 0309) to the northwest. In addition to being mayor, Holbein is a skilled painter and has had his work commissioned several times by the wealthy and nobles of Blackmarsh.

0413 A tribe of 190 kobolds dominate the forest north of the lake. High Chief Cruk rules the kobolds with the assistance of six other chiefs of the tribe (treat as goblins). He also leads the kobolds in the worship of a strange glowing sword of law in an open grove at the center of the forest. When the kobolds first arrived, a century ago, they tried to take the sword, but it killed any who touched it.

0415 These islands are known as the three sisters. Each island is the home of a nixie (HD 1, charm) and the three of them are rival sisters. They use their Charm Person ability to compete among themselves for the most handsome captives. They are not above conspiring with outsiders if it means that one sister is denied her prize.

0515 This is the dwelling place of the Lake King (HD 5, charm) and his court of 80 nixies (HD 1, charm). He will release anybody captured if they will kidnap his quarreling daughters and bring them home to him. (see 0515)

0605 A weak wall exists between this world and other planes of existence in the elven forest. Here the fabric of reality has been torn, 48 elves are fighting a 12 flame demons (treat as 8 HD Fire Elementals). Several dozen more elves surround the conflict trying to contain the blaze started by the fight.

0608 Ashdown, Pop: 121, Mixed; Align L; Ruler: Councilor Neera Dane, Ftr 6, L; Resource: Market.

Ashdown is home to many retired rangers as well as the spouses and children of rangers currently on duty. Neera Dane, a retired ranger captain leads the village council and operates under the authority of the high captain of the rangers. She and the villagers will gladly aid any friend and ally of the rangers. Halflings, men, dwarves, and elves can be found living here.

0610 Greenton, Pop: 642, Halfling; Align L; Ruler: Ealdorman Paddock Ryburn, L; Resource: Farm.

Greenton is the chief settlement of the Newcombe Halflings and an important market for the surrounding farms. Here merchants from across Blackmarsh flock to purchase grain and other produce to export back to their home regions. When in residence, the merchants stay in a hamlet just outside of Greenton known as Sack. So named from the stuffed woosacks the merchants sit on while bidding or negotiating prices. Ealdorman Paddock maintains a large contingent of 20 constables led by Sherriff Barris Ironoak to keep the merchants in their place.

0616 Ruchill Burn runs through a 50' deep gorge for over a half mile. During the Bright Empire, magic-users established a conclave here to harvest the viz found within the cliffs of the gorge. Two centuries after the empire's fall, the conclave was abandoned. The cliffs are honeycombed with several levels of the conclave. Many of the levels span both sides of the gorge with bridges connecting them. Not all of them are safe.

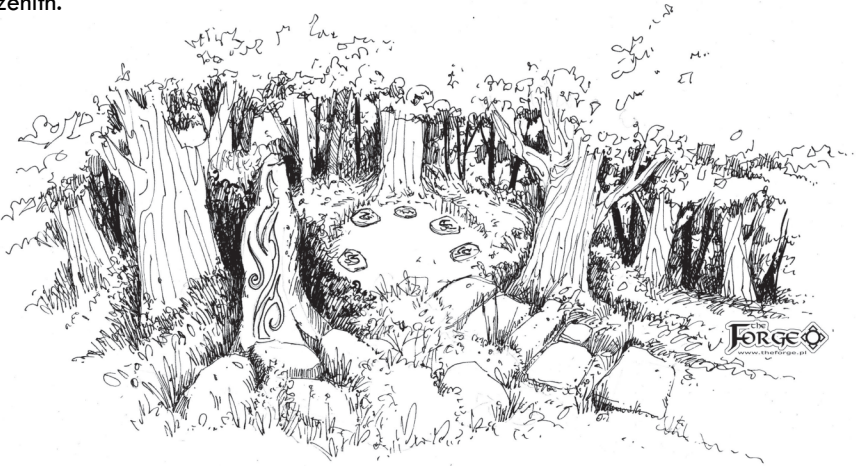
0702 Six trolls (HD 6, Regen) feast on corpses from a slain merchant caravan from Englafeld (see 1305). The smoke from their cooking fire can be seen from two miles away.

0712 This ruined tower was once used as a lighthouse. It guided ships to the mouth of the Lanis River. Built during the Bright Empire it was abandoned several centuries ago. Since then, a succession of leaders of chaos expanded the complex beneath the tower to create a base to be used against Castle Blackmarsh (see 0913). Currently, it's believed to be empty having been cleared by adventurers over forty years ago after the killing of Atacyl Oathbinder, an undead vampire magic-user.

0804 Stardell Falls, Pop: 503, Elf; Align L; Ruler: King Nilal, Ftr4/Mu8, L; Resource: Magic.

Stardell Falls is the heart of the Greywoods. The village consists of individual steadings arrayed in a series of semi-circles around a 40-foot waterfall. On either side of the falls are two towers made of a shimmering grey stone, and a bridge connects the two. The west tower is the King's Tower and the east tower is the Queen's tower. Here King Nilal resides with his queen, the Lady Aerindel (Ftr4/Mu8).

The waterfall is a rich source of viz. Elven magic-users inhabit the steadings surrounding the lynn. At the base, behind the falls, is a magnificent temple to Silvanus the Forest Lord. The temple is carved out of the rock. The falls provide a spectacular backdrop to the services especially when the moon or sun is at its zenith.



0814 Scattered throughout the bogs are several small buildings that were once the homes of magic-users researching the plants and herbs of the region. Stone was sunk into the bogs and dry pathways were built to connect the scattered residences. It was abandoned in the century after the fall of the Bright Empire and time has taken its toll. Sections of the pathways have worn away and various creatures have moved into the abandoned dwellings. Some have reported that the wizards left unfinished experiments and strange forms of plant life live in the ruins.

0909 A large water elemental (16 HD) inhabits this area of the Smoking Bay. It preys on unwary ships sucking them down into a giant maelstrom. At the sea bottom there is a half-mile wide shallow basin littered with the remains of the ships and treasures that the water elemental dragged down.

0912 This island is home to 100 men who fish the surrounding island. They were granted this island by the lords of Castle Blackmarsh in exchange for standing watch against any raiders, particularly Vasan Vikings. At the south end of the island is a 20' wooden tower that can be seen from the main land. At the sign of danger a fire will be lit and relayed along a series of signal towers to Castle Blackmarsh.

0913 Castle Blackmarsh, Pop: 1,294, Men; Align N; Ruler: Governor Tyrilas, Elf, Ftr4/Mu2, L; Resource: Market.

Castle Blackmarsh is the largest settlement in the Blackmarsh region. It was originally founded by the Bright Empire over a thousand years ago and served as the main port for various settlements and conclaves of magic-users. It was ruled by a governor appointed by the emperor and advised by a council of magic-users and merchants.

It survived the fall of the Bright Empire and became an independent city-state dominating the settlements along the southern shore of the Smoking Bay. The economic decline caused most of the outlying settlements to be abandoned a century after the empire's collapse. The mages established themselves in Castle Blackmarsh, forming a conclave in the castle.

They dominated the city-state for several centuries occasionally allying with the other races to defeat common threats. In that time the population of the town stabilized and found a small amount of prosperity as adventurers entered Blackmarsh searching for viz.

A century ago, an ambitious magic-user named Atacyl Oathbinder maneuvered his way into control of the council. He seized absolute control of Castle Blackmarsh and ruled as a tyrant for several decades. It is rumored that he accomplished this through a strange helmet capable of mind control. His attempt at empire building was thwarted. The rangers retook Castle Blackmarsh with a combined force of different races and Blackmarsh exiles.

The elves took control of the settlement and appointed a governor at the head of the reformed council. Castle Blackmarsh, the home of the wizard's conclave, was the site of many Atacyl's experiments and magical researches. Even after a century of rule, not all of the levels that Atacyl created have been explored.

Forty years ago, Atacyl reappeared as a vampire magic-user and attempted to retake Castle Blackmarsh. He was destroyed, supposedly, by a band of adventurers and his base at the old Lanis Lighthouse (see 0712) was purged.

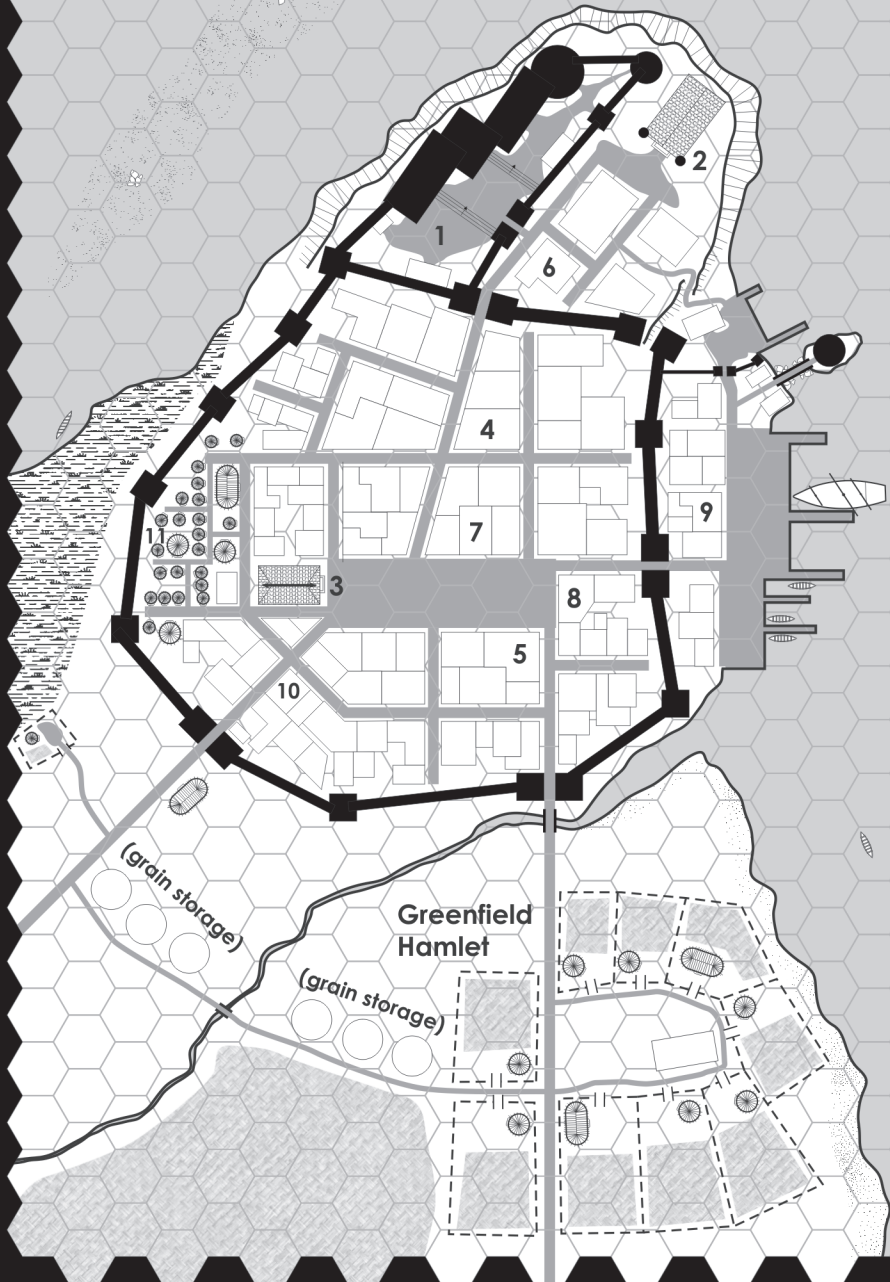


Castle Blackmarsh

⬡ = 40 ft

RSC

Misery Bay



Castle Blackmarsh Establishments

1) Blackmarsh Castle

The castle is currently under occupation by the Greywood Elves. They maintain sole control to prevent former allies of Actacyl Oathbinder from gaining access to the lower levels. They do not have the manpower to clear the dungeons. They will allow adventuring parties who have the recommendation of the Blackmarsh Rangers or the Temple of Thor to enter. The elves have an arrangement with the Temple of Thor to provide healing at good rates for those that require it.

2) Temple of Thoth

This once glorious temple to the God of Knowledge has fallen into decay. The near destruction of the society of magic-users and scholars by Actacyl has left little for donations to maintain the grounds and buildings. Much of their income comes from charging for access to their extensive library of magic, legend, and lore.

3) Temple of Thor

This temple was established soon after the fall of Actacyl. With their allies, the Blackmarsh Rangers, they rid the town of the many magical traps, devices, and creatures left behind. Since then they have been the most popular temple with the hall packed on holy days. They actively seek out newcomers and encourage them to form adventuring parties. They will either send them to the elves to explore Castle Blackmarsh or into the surrounding countryside to respond to the many requests for aid.

4) Merry Legs Banquet Hall

This is the largest banquet hall in Castle Blackmarsh. Unlike the Viz Club it is not exclusive and any adventuring party that is willing to pay its fees may make use of the main hall and the many private dining rooms. It also makes suites of 3 to 4 rooms available to rent for parties needing a place to stay. During the evening hours, merchants, caravan masters, and ship captains dine and drink in the main hall seeking business opportunities. Starting an hour after sunset the floor show starts, it features singing bards, dancing wenches, and juggling dwarves.

5) The Scholar's Inn

This is the largest inn in town. It has an extensive library that is open to patrons. It doesn't have the depth of the library at the Temple of Thoth, but it has more current material. Nearly half of the rooms are rented to what remains of the Blackmarsh Guild of Wizards. Survivors of Actacyl's reign and the elven takeover have congregated here to restart the guild. However, the town's mistrust has hindered their recovery.

6) The Viz Club

This is a banquet hall open to members only. Only elite explorers and adventurers are invited and the yearly fees are said to be ruinous. However, membership gives access to information and lore found nowhere else. The few that are invited gladly pay.

7) Dax Brothers Outfitters

Founded by two brothers five decades ago, this is the premier shop to buy equipment in the Blackmarsh region. They import the best from the Grand Kingdom and beyond. Their prices are 20% higher than normal, but the equipment's quality gives a +1 or +5% bonus to dice rolls involving their use. The Dax Brothers long passed away long ago and currently a large group of cousins are involved in running the store. Many of them are overseas or scattered throughout the Blackmarsh region looking for the latest goods to bring back to the shop.

8) Emporium of the Strange and Arcane

Not all magic-users in Blackmarsh struggled after the fall of Actacyl and the takeover by the Elves. Thil the Cowled proved himself an ally of the elves and the Blackmarsh Rangers and became one of the first adventurers to become rich from exploring the dungeons beneath the castle. After retiring from adventuring, he established the emporium to buy and trade magic items. Now 102 years old, he leaves the day-to-day operation to his apprentices, but will still participate in negotiations for high value items.

Adventurers will find that there is an 80% chance that magic items worth 1,000 GP or lower can be found in stock. For items up to 5,000 GP value there is a 20% chance of being in stock. For more valuable items, these are auctioned off every quarter at the Viz Club. For non-members there is a 1,000 GP entrance fee.

9) The Abrams Company

John Abrams is the most successful ship magnate in the Blackmarsh region and one of the leading trading companies on the Grey Sea. He owns over two dozen ships of various sizes, ranging from one-mast coasters to caravels capable of crossing the vast distances to the Golden Shore beyond the Sunrise Sea. With a recommendation, he will let an adventuring party charter one of his ships.

10) The Blackmarsh Company of Adventurers

The Company of Adventurers is largest company of caravanmasters in the Blackmarsh region. They organize overland caravans to Greywood, the Duchy of the Ostrobarbs, Newcombe Shire, and into Southland. Matthew Thanos is the latest Captain General to lead the company and is always on the lookout for new members to join as merchants, scouts, or guards.

11) The Company of Honorable Men

Actacyl's reign dispossessed many wealthy and noble inhabitants of Blackmarsh. Driven into hiding, they attempted to strike back at the Oathbinder's tyranny. In subsequent decades their descendents became little better than a group of organized thugs. Today, they gladly aid those who are discontented with the rule of the elves while running their illicit operation for financial gain.

Locales (cont)

0918 On a bluff, overlooking the lake, is the remains of a wizards' conclave founded a thousand years ago during the Bright Empire. Like the others, it was abandoned shortly after the empire's fall and remained unoccupied for several centuries. After the collapse of Atacyl's attempt to regain control of Castle Blackmarsh, one of his lieutenants, Sir Autse Darkheart (Ftr12), now occupies the ruins. Sir Autse was transformed into a wraith and was made Atacyl's second in command. The ruins are now crawling with skeletons, zombies, wights, and lesser wraiths under Darkheart's command.

1002 **Wedmor**, Pop: 255, Man(Ostrobard); Align L; Ruler: Lord Octa, Ftr5, L; Resource: Cattle.

Wedmor was settled by the Ostrobards several centuries ago and has become a center for cattle herding. Every fall, the herds are rounded up and most of the bulls and old are slaughtered. The meat is salted and shipped down the Rednut River to Muncaester and distributed throughout the Blackmarsh region. Lord Octa is looking for additional hands to aid with the roundup and guard against raiders and monsters.

1014 This large island, in the midst of the Black Marshes, is a nesting ground for a herd of chimerae. (HD 9)

1103 Sixteen centaurs (HD 4) are running down a herd of cattle they are planning to rustle. A mile away two herders (Ftr1) are riding at full gallop back to Wedmor (see 1002) for help.

1107 This grotto is home to 86 merman (HD 1). They are ruled by King Neptar (Ftr4). They are holding a funeral for Neptar's son who was slain by a water elemental. (see 0909)

1112 On the sea bottom, are the sunken remains of the last treasure ships to sail from Blackmarsh before the fall of the Bright Empire. Gold, adamant, and sealed crates with viz lie in the hulls of a dozen galleys and scattered across the seabed. Taking residence amid the crumbling ships is a school of several dozen sharks (2 HD) along with a giant sea serpent. (12 HD)



1113 **Inuacus Keep**; Sir Causari, Ftr10, L; 50 men.

This keep is an outpost of Castle Blackmarsh and protects the surrounding farms from monsters moving north from the Black Marshes, as well as Atacyl loyalists located in Jorvik. Sir Causari is the leader of a faction that wants to see the elves leave Castle Blackmarsh and restore human rule.

1213 Located on Witch Hill are the foundations of Ramat, an old ruined Thothian monastery from the time of the Bright Empire. It was home to a potent holy artifact known as the Spear of Ramat. All records on the monastery were lost after the empire's retreat.

In the present, the young daughter of Governor Causari of Incanus Keep lost her favorite pet dog while on a picnic near the ruins. The governor will gladly pay an adventuring party to search the ruins for the dog. (see the Ruins of Ramat, from Brave Halfling Publishing.)

1214 This island is home to a coven of warlocks. This coven was established a century ago after the fall of Castle Blackmarsh. A few surviving magic-users fled here with Atacyl's body and oversaw his resurrection as a vampire. In the transformation process, Atacyl slaughtered half of the coven before fleeing into the bogs. Since then the coven has struggled to survive and only a few aging members remain.

1217 In the foothills north of the last peaks of the Westwall is the steading of 8 hill giants (HD 8). They enjoy raiding the farms around Jorvik and Norbury Castle.

1302 Camden, Pop: 214, Man(Ostrobard); Align L; Ruler: Lord Varxis, Ftr8, L; Resource: Iron.

Several iron mines dot the hills to the west. Lord Varxis has his hands full trying to keep enough forces in the field to protect the mines.

1305 Muncaester, Pop: 895, Man(Ostrobard); Align L; Ruler: Duke Caedwine, Ftr4, L; Resource: Market.

Muncaester is the largest settlement of the Ostrobards, and the seat of their dukes. It is located on an island in the midst of a bay formed by the confluence of the Rednut River and the River Eamont. A thriving market in farm produce, furs, and exotic herbs attracts merchants from all over the Grey Sea.

Duke Caedwin is known for his great girth and wild banquets. He has agents throughout the town on the lookout for new arrivals to provide a banquet with tales of their exploits. The duke will not take no for an answer.

1306 A small group of five islands stretches southwest from Muncaester (see 1305). They are home to dozens of fishing clans harvesting the bounty of the Grey Sea. Several of the fishermen are members of smuggler clans that specialize in moving goods in and out of Muncaester, evading the duke's taxmen.

1307 This forested island lies unspoiled in the middle of the Smoking Bay. The sorceress Naomi (Mu9) ensures that it stays that way. She relies on several dryads (HD 2, charm) for aid. She was once the lover of the Wizard of the Isle, (see 1309) but he spurned her several centuries ago. Because of this any male interlopers will stay as the guest of the dryads for a long, long time. Females will just experience memory loss and put adrift to sea.

1309 The larger island is all that remains of The Mountain That Fell. It is incredibly rich in viz although the lack of any beach and the steep slopes make it difficult to get around. Any who managed to brave the island not only has to contend with the ire of the Wizard of the Isle but the numerous flyers dwelling around the slopes. There have been reports of gargoyles, wyverns, griffons, hippogriffs, pegasi, chimerae, manticores, and even rocs nesting near the summit.

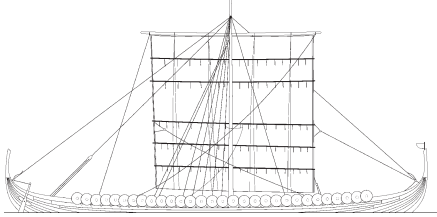
The smaller island off the southwest shore is home to the mysterious Wizard of the Isle (Mu18). His presence goes back centuries and all anybody knows of him is that he is the self-appointed guardian of what remains of The Mountain That Fell.

Anybody surviving landfall and subsequent attacks by the local creatures will be apprehended by the Wizard of the Isle, and warned not to return. They will be escorted back to their ship by the wizard's golden mechanical servant Cee-Three. He will calmly explain that they need to seek their viz elsewhere and that The Mountain That Fell is very dangerous to meddle with.

1316 Jorvik, Pop: 481, Man; Align N; Ruler: Lord Maracan, Ftr 11, C; Resource: Market.

Jorvik was once one of the small villages allied with Castle Blackmarsh until a century ago. When Atacyl rule was overthrown, several of his supporters fled to Jorvik and fortified the village. They attempted several plots to retake Castle Blackmarsh, but failed. Their aid of Atacyl's last failed attempt (see 0712) nearly ruined them and they were forced to pay tribute to Castle Blackmarsh.

Lord Maracan is the current leader and his plans revolve around posing as experts on the region to newly arrived scouts of the Grand Kingdom. He is also attempting to enflame resentment towards the elves and their ranger lackeys.



1406 Two Vasan longships drift in the current, resting after a several days of hard sailing. Each ship has 75 warriors on board. Their chief, Egil Longhair (Ftr 8), plans to raid at sunrise.

1503 A flock of 9 hippogriffs (HD 3) landed on Egbert's farm two miles from the river. The locals have gathered to watch. Egbert weeps as his pigs and chickens are devoured by the hippogriffs.

1506 Eihanfeld, Pop: 145, Man (Ostrobard); Align L; Ruler: Lord Ingwold, Ftr 6, L; Resource: Fish.

This village gains much of its livelihood from fishing, but also enjoys some trade outfitting adventurers heading east to the Dragonbone Peaks. Lord Ingwold leads 20 men known as the Dragonbane Company. They keep the valley up river clear of monsters.

1515 A shrine to the sea god, Mannann, is maintained on the island by Tavis (Clr 8). His holy duty is to aid any shipwreck survivors. He has a small single mast sailing boat he uses to search the surrounding waters.

1518 Norbury Castle; Sir Dennis Langre, Ftr 9, L; 120 men.

This is the northernmost outpost of the Vasa Province of the Grand Kingdom. Completed only five years ago, it is hoped that the castle will serve as a gateway for merchants and explorers from the Grand Kingdom into Blackmarsh.

Sir Dennis Langre served on the frontier with Grand Kingdom's rival the Ochre Empire and in some of the New World colonies. While he appreciates the aid that Lord Maracan of Jorvik has given in learning about Blackmarsh, he is beginning to suspect an ulterior agenda.

1602 Wessex Keep; Bedewald the Atheling, Ftr6, L; 50 men.

This is the easternmost outpost of the Ostrobards. It shields the farms and villages to the west from the creatures who dwell in the Dragonbone Peaks. Duke Caedwin eldest son, Bedewald, is in command. He is the opposite of his libertine father in almost every way. He was given Wessex Keep to so that the duke wouldn't have to hear his nagging.

1609 The land between the coast and the swamp is occupied by 325 Kobolds (HD ½) of the Shelleater Tribe. They are divided into six feuding clans who continually fight among themselves. They will only unite when outsiders invade. They use their superior knowledge of the terrain to make life miserable for the invaders.



1701 In a cave beneath a rocky outcropping, an eight-headed hydra (8 HD) has taken residence. Bedewald the Atheling (see 1602) has a patrol periodically check to make sure it hasn't moved farther south.

1706 Four rocs (6 HD) from The Mountain That Fell (see 1309) have landed and are feasting on the remains of a sub-adult red dragon (see 2105). Three hundred yards to the east is the charred remains of a fifth Roc.

1709 On this island, in the midst of the swamp, there is strange black monolith on top of a rocky outcropping. Every full moon weretigers emerge from the surrounding bogs to perform strange rites. If the ritual is watched for any length the players will discovered all races are among the weretigers; elves, men, halflings, and dwarves. And even orcs, goblins, and kobolds! Those who visited The Mountain That Fell (see 1309) will see that the monolith is made of the same type of stone.

1807 In the middle of this forest is a confusing network of ravines and hills. This is the current base of the Brotherhood of the Raven. They are a group who believe in the supremacy of the elves. They have operated against the rangers and other races of Blackmarsh for nearly two thousand years.

Currently there are 158 Elves in residence along with 200 slaves, mostly orcs. They are nominally led by the Autarch Elana (Ftr4/Mu8) who has minimal authority over the various commanders and their troops. To get anything done Elana has to continually negotiate compromises between the different factions.

1816 At the bottom of the lagoon are the remains of a ship that was sent by the Grand Kingdom's rival, the Ochre Empire to scout Blackmarsh. It contains several treasure chests of gold for bribery and valuable supplies to outfit expeditions.

1902 This was a settlement of the Ostrobards that was burned out several decades ago by the dragon Scytheback (see 2015). It was the hub for several abandoned silver mines nearby.

1905 This is an encampment for 15 elves from the Brotherhood of the Ravens. They are led by Rinisar Anothil (Ftr 2/Mu 2). They plan to rouse the hydra (see 1701) and drive it to the southwest to ravage the lands of the Ostrobards.

1911 This network of caves is home to 105 orcs (1 HD) of the Bateater Tribe. They pay an annual tribute to the Brotherhood of the Raven (see 1807).

1914 A sleeping dragon turtle (11 HD) has drifted into the Sheltered Bay.

2015 Ten Vasan Vikings (HD 1) stand guard over supplies for the return voyage of Egil Longhair's fleet (see 1406).

2105 This is the lair of Scytheback, a very old red dragon (11 HD). She participated in the fall of the Bright Empire over a thousand years ago and hordes the treasures she looted here. She made an alliance with the Brotherhood of the Raven (see 1807) and considers them useful pawns in keeping unwanted visitors away from her lair.

Over the centuries, she has had a succession of mates to breed her young. Her current mate is Dakack, an adult red dragon (10 HD), whom with she mated with twenty years ago. They are currently raising three young that are now sub-adults (10 HD). One of them is missing (see 1706).

2109 The Tribute Place: Kinkaris, Ftr6, L, Orc; 20 orcs.

This crude heap of stones serves as a keep for Kinkaris (Ftr7, Orc, C) and his guards (Ftr 3, Orc). He has been placed in charge of collecting the annual tribute for the Brotherhood of the Raven from the Bateaters (see 1911) and Bloodcrusher tribes (see 2207).

2114 On this idyllic island five mermaids (HD 1, charm) frolic in the streams, collecting seashells, and gently placing them in a crystal clear pool of water in the center of the island. Then on the night of the full moon they collect the ones that turn into viz (4d6) and journey to the Azure Lord's hall. (see 2416)

2201 Within the ruined castle, made of black stone, are twisted skeletal remains. It is obvious that they came to some horrific end. Several attempts over the last several centuries have been made to reoccupy the castle. Nevertheless, after the full moon the new inhabitants are slain in the same manner. The last attempt was made a hundred years ago by the Brotherhood of the Raven.

2203 In this corner of the forest, 85 pixies make their home. Their miniature village is spread out among the trees built on small wooden platforms. They gleefully torment anyone who intrudes.

2207 This network of caves is the home of 243 Orcs of the Bloodcrusher Tribe. They are ruled by King Suduk (Ftr 8) assisted by his shaman G'mung (Mu6). King Suduk resents paying tribute to the Brotherhood of the Raven and especially hates Kinkaris (see 2109).

2306 The hills and ravines echo with the sound of battle as 15 berserkers (Ftr 1) from Castle Taldane battles 30 orcs (HD 1) from the Bloodcrusher Tribe. The berserkers are surrounded on a ridge between two ravines and are hard pressed by the orcs.

2401 Along the side of a half-mile stretch of the river valley are the warrens for 300 giant ants (2 HD). The queen's chamber is built around a long buried cubical artifact 10' by 10' by 10'. There is a door on one side of the artifact, but the giant ants have not opened it. One in twenty ant eggs can be used as a single viz.

2410 Six 20' tall black pillars with strange carvings can be seen through the water on the top of a shallow bank. On further examination, there are compartments on the ends of the pillars where viz can be inserted.

2411 **Ysby**, Pop: 80, Man (Vasan); Align N; Ruler: Chief Bjarni, Ftr5, N; Resource: Fish.

This fishing village of Vasan Vikings was established two hundred years ago by an improvised clan from Vasa. They kept contact with their relatives, and when much of Vasa fell to the Grand Kingdom Ysby proved to be an important way station for the refugees. Since the establishment of Castle Taldene, it has returned to being a sleepy fishing hamlet.

2416 A sea mount rises from the ocean floor to 15 feet beneath the surface. Around the peak and down 80 feet are the grottos and caves of the Azure King (Ftr12), a powerful merman lord. He rules over a tribe of 300 mermen. The Sapphire Enchantress (Mu12, Merman) is his advisor and the current lover of the Wizard of the Isle.

2505 **Castle Taldene**: King Ragnar the Ringless, Ftr9, N, Men (Vasan); 200 men (Vasan).

King Ragnar's grandfather was dispossessed by the conquest of Vasa by the Grand Kingdom. He fled with what goods he could carry on his longships and brought with him as many of his own and allied clans as he could. In the decades since the petty kings of Taldene dreamt of reconquering their home, but it has been a struggle to survive in Blackmarsh let alone rebuild enough troops to mount a major military expedition.

King Ragnar is known as the ringless after losing his royal signet ring when his finger was cut off in a raid on Castle Blackmarsh. It brought him great shame and now he spends his days in a drunken stupor beating his dogs. Rumor has it that it is sitting in a jeweler's shop in Castle Blackmarsh.

2508 Gamla, Pop: 405, Man (Vasan); Align N; Ruler: Chief Yngvar, Ftr12, N; Resource: Farm.

Protected by the swamp to the west, Gamla has seen a small measure of prosperity due to the fertile land. Chief Yngvar criticizes King Ragnar (see 2505) at every turn. Yngvar is considering whether to challenge him or whether to raise a rebellion to overthrow him.

2618 A ship from the Ochre Empire is sailing toward Blackmarsh searching for the lost expedition sent here five years ago. It is commanded by Lord Travvarn (Ftr7, L), a powerful myrmidon in the Church of Sarrath, the Dragon God. He is assisted by Archon Devers (Clr5, L) who enforces a strict discipline among the ship's crew and warriors.

2704 Daretop, Pop: 415, Man (Vasan); Align N; Ruler: Chief Kalfvald, Ftr8, N; Resource: Farm.

Daretop supplies much of the food for Castle Taldene. Chief Kalfvald is an aging warrior past his prime. The chief is fiercely loyal to King Ragnar and will come to his aid in any fight with Chief Yngvar (see 2508). However, his son Hamdir (Ftr7) does not share his father's loyalties. The death of Kalfvald will drastically alter the balance of power for King Ragnar.

2706 This island is crawling with giant crabs (3 HD). Longships from Daretop (2704), Castle Taldane (2505), Gamla (2509), and Ysby(2411) come here to hunt the crabs. It is dangerous, but great sport among the vikings.

2707 This island is deserted except for a single driftwood hut. Here dwells Kostbera, a Vasan seeress. In exchange for food and supplies, she will build a fire out of driftwood and seaweed to read the omens for the giver.

2714 Those who pass this spot report strange bubbles foaming the surface. The few that have ventured down 100 feet have reported pieces of a strange, giant, crystalline skeleton at the bottom. Even more disturbing is that in the more recent reports, the skeleton is more complete.



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