

THE
LORD OF THE RINGS
ROLEPLAYING GAME™



REALM:
THE OLD FOREST
AND
BARROW DOWNS

OVERVIEW

Few places in Eriador create as much fear as the Old Forest and the Barrow Downs. There are ancient Powers in both places, for good and ill.

The Old Forest is a large woodland that stands just to the east of the Shire. It is rumored to be a place filled with dangers of all sorts, and there are few Hobbits willing to travel there during the day, much less at night. The Hobbits of Buckland were known to go hunting there from time to time, but they never stayed there long, and certainly never after dark.

East of the Old Forest lies the Barrow Downs. Long before the Shire was even a dream in the heads of the Fallohide brothers, the people of Eriador buried their noble dead in great mounds. Notably, they did this in the region known as Tyrn Gorthad. The kings of the ancestors of the Edain—an ancient race of Men—were buried here, along with the leaders of their descendants, who became the Dunedain in later years.

The dead rested here peacefully for many centuries, until the Great Plague in the 1600's of the Third Age. At that time, the Witch-king of Angmar—the leader of the Nine Nazgul—sent evil Wights to take over the mounds and live within them. They did so, transforming the land into a terrifying place into which few dared venture.

This entire region, the Old Forest and Barrow Downs, strikes fear into the hearts of the Peoples of Eriador. Only the very brave, or foolish, enter.

THE OLD FOREST

The Old Forest once stretched across much of Eriador, but it has greatly diminished by the Third Age. By the time of the War of the Ring, it runs only from the eastern border of Buckland—as defined by the High Hay—to the western edge of the Barrow Downs. It stops well shy of the southern side of the Great East Road, and it reaches not too far to the south as well.



The River Withywindle runs down out of the Barrow Downs and through the length of the Old Forest before it empties into the Brandywine at the south end of the High Hay. This is the major waterway in the Old Forest, and it is personified by the River-woman, a nature spirit that lives in a deep pool in the heart of the Withywindle. The River-woman is the mother of Goldberry, who is also called the River-daughter by her husband, Tom Bombadil.

THE EVIL TREES

The Old Forest is home to all sorts of wild creatures, but the most amazing are the trees. The Old Forest is home to some of the last Huorns in Eriador. They are ageless, having been part of

the forest since time immemorial. They are like the first trees in the first forest, before Elves, Men, or other races ever came to Middle-earth. Age, however, has twisted their hearts as much as it has gnarled their branches. They are angry and bitter about the way their domain has shrunk over the years, impinged upon by those who freely walk the earth, unlike their long-rooted selves.

When possible, these jealous trees trick travelers. By gathering closer together or leaning across good paths and leaving the way clear to bad courses, they manage to shunt unwary

travelers further and further into the heart of the forest, making it nearly impossible for anyone to get out. In game terms, this is due to the Huorns casting a *Misdirection* spell upon the heroes, causing the

travelers to come ever closer to Old Man Willow's home by the banks of the Withywindle.

OLD MAN WILLOW

Old Man Willow is a Huorn, and the heart of evil in the Old Forest. Once the heroes find themselves under Old Man Willow's canopy, the black hearted trees cast *Slumber* upon them, hoping to cause them to sleep against his trunk. When the heroes are all asleep—or at least unwary—Old Man Willow attacks. He uses his branches to try to swallow any victims who might be leaning up against him. Those who are a bit farther out, he grabs and tries to drown in the Withywindle instead.

If Old Man Willow manages to swallow a victim into his

hollow core, he is loathe to give up his prey. If the victim's fellows try to harm the tree, Old Man Willow uses his *Spoken Thoughts* ability to tell the victim that he will kill his hostage if the tree is not left alone.

Despite his bitterness, Old Man Willow respects the power of Tom Bombadil, which is absolute in the Old Forest. If Tom orders the mean old tree to release a victim, Old Man Willow complies, although grudgingly.

THE HOUSE OF TOM BOMBADIL

The protector of the Old Forest is Tom Bombadil. Tom is a mysterious being, known as Iarwain Ben-adar to the Elves, Orald to the Men of the North, and Forn to the Dwarves. Tom Bombadil and his wife Goldberry live in a stone house situated high up near the headwaters of the River Withywindle. Still inside the Old Forest, it offers a spectacular view of the rest of the forest, as it faces west, looking out over the leafy canopy beyond. A path that runs upstream along the northern bank of the Withywindle leads right to the place's front door.

Tom and Goldberry live here alone, rarely disturbed by visitors of any kind, for there are few foolhardy enough to brave the Old Forest these days. Despite this, the two make excellent hosts. They offer visitors plenty of food and drink, as well as a place to wash up before meals and to lay their heads at night.

Goldberry is happy to entertain any guest, but she is not terribly interested in the world beyond the borders of the Old Forest. Tom, on the other hand, is ready and willing to chat about many different

matters, into the wee hours of the night.

The house itself is two stories tall. The bulk of the first floor is occupied by a large main room, which includes a dining table, a hearth, and plenty of chairs for sitting and talking. There is a large kitchen as well. The kitchen features a back door that lets out into a flat area that looks up at the downs above. There is a kitchen garden out here, as well as a stable that has room for several mounts, including Tom's pony, Fatty Lumpkin.

The bedchamber of Tom and Goldberry takes up most of the top floor. Tom also has a small workshop here, in which he spends many hours putting away at one project or another. There's also a cozy, private sitting room for smoking a pipe and having a think.

There is a penthouse attached to the northern side of the house. This was added on after the rest of the house was built, as a guest room. There are four beds here, and a bench along the opposite wall. The room's western windows look out over a beautiful flower garden and a spectacular view of the Old Forest beyond.

THE BARROW DOWNS

The Barrow Downs are a series of grassy, treeless lands punctuated by rolling hills dotted with many ancient burial mounds. Some of these mounds date back to the First Age, and were built by the Edain.

The Edain were the progenitors of the Dunedain, and lived both in Minhiriath (later Cardolan) and between the River Lune and the Weather Hills. The Edain's custom was to bury their great lords in tombs, with their wealth. When the Numenoreans began to settle in Eriador, in the Second Age, they soon adopted the Edainic traditions. This tradition stopped when Elendil founded Arnor, but soon started again after the split of that country.

Although the mounds are reputed to be filled with the golden treasures with which these ancient rulers were buried, there are few foolhardy enough to brave the barrow-mounds to rob these graves. The barrows are filled with Wights: evil, undead creatures who chill their victims with their touch and who wish only to gather others to join them in death.



Although the Barrow-Wights are evil spirits, they possess physical remains and can cast a number of different spells. They hide within their barrows during the day, only venturing forth at night, as the light of the sun burns their flesh. They like to catch their prey unawares, binding them with spells. They drag their victims back to their barrow where they place them upon biers and dress them in burial clothes. They then slay the victims with a Dunedain blade and consume his life force.

The ruins in the barrow Downs came in a number of different shapes. Besides just the barrows themselves—hollow mounds in which the remains of nobles and some of the treasures of their houses lay buried—there are also a number of ring-shaped depressions atop the hills. The reasons these ancient markers were once erected is long since lost to time—perhaps the Elves may know—but now they stand as silent monuments to the civilization that once thrived here.

During the time of the Great Plague (TA1635), when Cardolan lay wasted and Arthedain was still strong, the Witch-king of Angmar sent fell spirits to inhabit the barrows in the Tynn Gorthad. These Wights made passage south on the Greenway difficult and frightening. The presence of the Wights prevented Arthedain from spreading south, into Cardolan.

OLD MAN WILLOW

'Poor old Willow-man, you tuck your roots away!'

—Tom Bombadil, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 12 (+3), Nimbleness 4 (+0), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 15 (+4), Vitality 12 (+3), Wits 7 (+0)

REACTIONS: Stamina +3, Swiftiness +1, Willpower +3, Wisdom +3

SIZE: Mammoth (3 levels Healthy)

HEALTH: 15

SKILLS: Intimidate (Fear) +8, Observe (Spot) +5, Stealth (Hide) +8, Unarmed Combat: Wrestling +6,

EDGES: Hardy, Woodcrafty

FLAWS: Hatred (two-legged creatures), Proud

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Barkskin: Old Man Willow's bark is tough and absorbs 2 points of damage per attack.

Spells: Old Man Willow can cast the spells *Bladeshattering*, *Dumbness*, *Fog-weaving*, *Misdirection*, *Slumber*, and *Spellbinding*, all without words or movements. He also has *Spoken Thoughts* and *Mind-Speech* as abilities.

Swallow: If Old Man Willow manages to get an extraordinary success on a grab attack, he swallows the target whole within his hollow core. Any victims therein are trapped tight and cannot move. They suffer a -10 penalty to any attempts to break free, and he can squeeze them for damage normally. Old Man Willow can hold up to one Man- or Elf-sized victim or two Hobbit- or Dwarf-sized victims this way. Anyone trapped within Old Man Willow's core can communicate with him by way of his ability, whether they have this power themselves or not.

Old Man Willow is technically a Huorn, an intelligent and animate tree. As old as he is, there is little chance that he would ever wish to move from his spot by the River Withywindle. Should that someday happen, he would find that his roots by the river run too deep for him to uproot himself. He is trapped there for all time.

How Old Man Willow came to be is impossible to know, but it's possible that Tom Bombadil himself awakened the creature, as well as the rest of the trees of the Old Forest. Or it could have been the Elves when the first arrived in the land in ages past. In any case, the trees of the Old Forest are not a happy group, and most of them have thrown in their lot with the bitter Old Man Willow.

