Hex 16.24
Forests of Plenty

Todd Leback

Hex 16.24 - Forests of Plenty

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Populated Hexes

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Introduction to Populated Hexes

Welcome to Populated Hexes, the series of 6-mile hexes in the world of Absalom! The goal is to provide a number of individual 6-mile hexes, fully populated with lairs and features, that can either be dropped into an existing campaign as a point of interest, the destination of a treasure map found in the bowels of a dark dungeon, or as a stand-alone mini-sandbox.

These supplements use the Old School Essentials rules published by Necrotic Gnome, but like many OSR products, pretty much any system can be easily adapted.

> **Maps & Scale**
> Each hex will be presented with two hex maps: a smaller map with locations and features noted, and a larger map with only major features noted that can be printed and used as a player handout.
>
> The scale represented on the maps included in these products are as follows:
> ❖ Large hex = 6 miles, face to face.
> ❖ Subhex = 1.2 miles, face to face.

Hexcrawling Rules

Thirdkingdom Games produces supplements that are used throughout these releases. Two of them – *Domain Rules* and *Hexcrawling Basics* – are free to download and are designed to work in conjunction with this series. You can find out where to pick up these and other supplements in the **Populated Hexes** line at patreon.com/Populatedhexes.

The following books will be useful to have access to throughout the series. Many of them are free!

❖ *Old School Essentials Classic Fantasy Rules Tome*
❖ *Old School Essentials Advanced Fantasy Genre Rules*
❖ *Labyrinth Lord Basic and Advanced Edition Companion*
❖ *OSRIC*
❖ A variety of other OSR resources

Absalom

The world of Absalom is one of constant change, where Law and Chaos are more than abstract philosophical ideas but are instead metaphysical realities that shape the very world itself.

Absalom is dominated by Cycles, each lasting between two to four hundred years. Each Cycle is divided into an Apex – when Law holds sway – and a Nadir – when Chaos sweeps over the lands, driving back the light of Civilization.

Cycles are marked in the beginning by the Apex and ascent of Law, and the end by the Nadir. During each Apex the civilizations of Man do their best to expand their domains and bring law to the land; these civilizations often shrink, or even crumble, during the Nadirs as barbarians, beastmen, and worse fall upon the kingdoms of Man.

Campaign Setting
The following assumptions are made in this setting:

Starting Date
This series is set at the beginning of the Sixteenth Cycle of recorded history. There have been many civilizations that have risen and fallen, some of Men, some of others.

Humanocentric
The adventurers will be human, setting out to explore the new world with the ebbing of the forces of Chaos. Non-human classes are certainly allowed – and indeed, these supplements present rules for many non-human classes – but the base assumption is that most PCs will be human.

Chaos Storms
During Nadirs – and occasionally in an Apex – events called Chaos storms can spontaneously occur, changing the very landscape, distorting distances, and wreaking havoc upon the nature of reality. Maps from the previous Cycle may prove unreliable.

The Gods

Gods are real but are local. They are the Small Gods of Terry Pratchett or the hearth deities of ancient Rome. Belief gives strength and power to spirits of the world.

Using Populated Hexes

As stated above, each 6-mile hex can be used as a mini-setting, a drop-in adventure location that is encountered during travel, or as part of a greater hexcrawl. Elements can be added or abandoned as needed, as is true of all supplements.

These hexes are released one at a time, seven in a series. Each series is a cluster of seven hexes: a central hex and the six surrounding it.
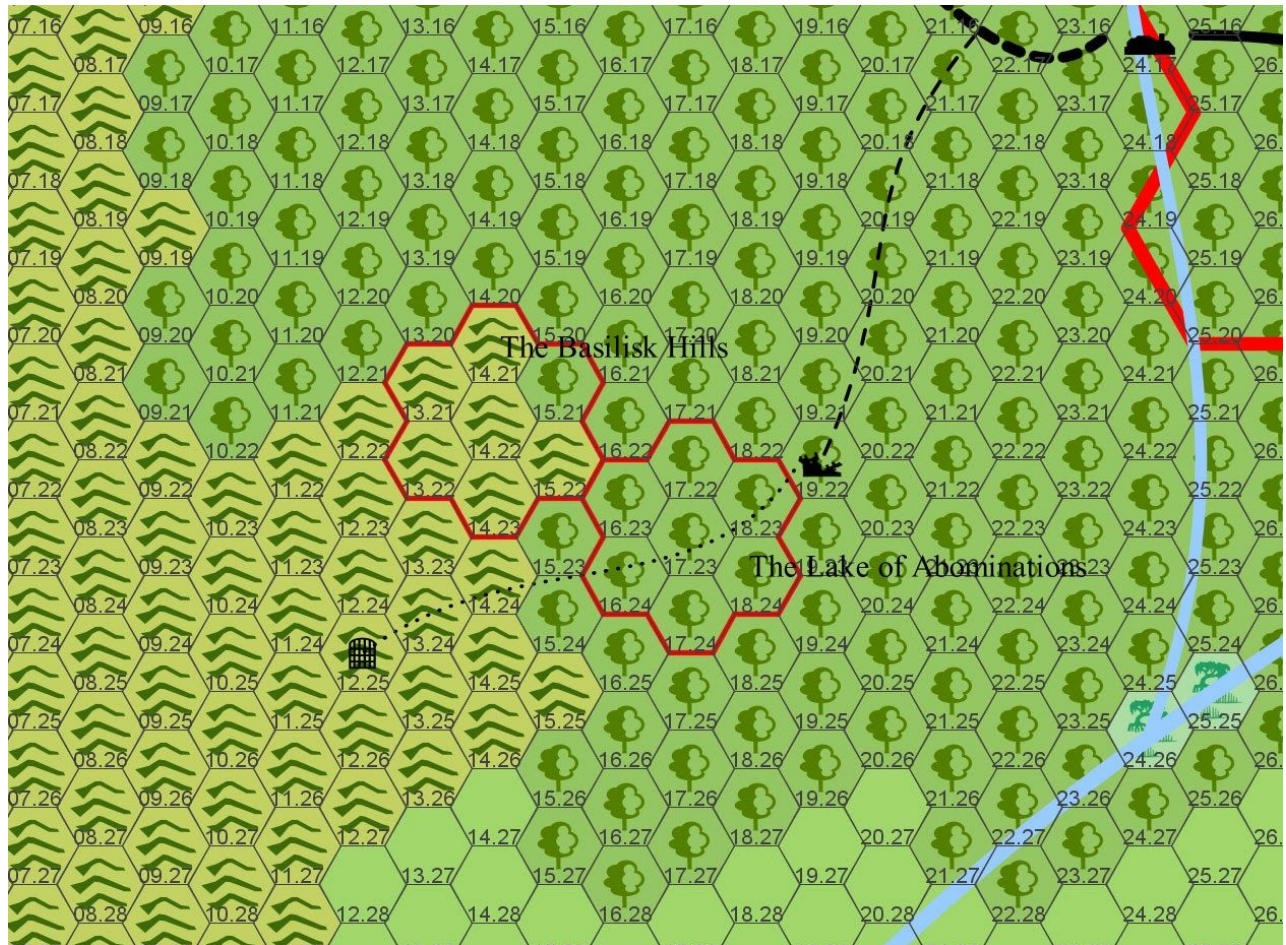
Each release will be divided into two sections: the hex itself, with keyed encounter locations, and an

Appendix, which builds on encounters and concepts in the hex. Populated Hexes offers some expanded alternatives to the basic rules found in Old School Essentials, and these will be introduced as needed in each hex. Broadly speaking, the intention is to introduce character options – to bring some of D&D 5e into B/X. These rules can be used or abandoned, as desired.
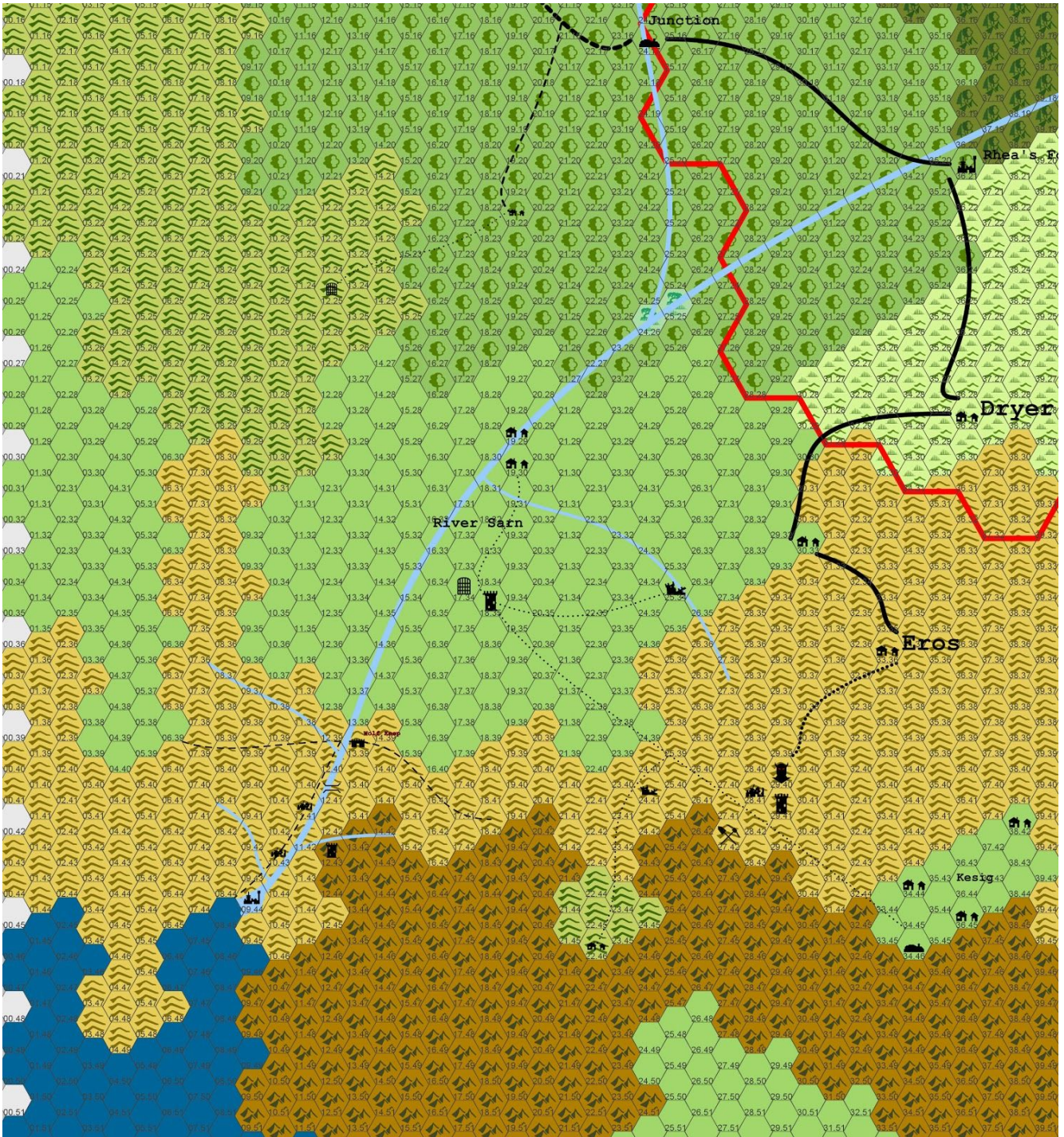
This Release

This hex is largely wooded, with the Lake of Abominations in Hex 17.23 just entering the northeast section. The ancient road, submerged under the southern portion of the lake, re-emerges here and leads roughly westward.

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Hex 16.24 - Forests of Plenty

Resources: The following resources are found in this hex.

❖ Vegetable, industrial (Timber, 4)
❖ Vegetable, agricultural (Nuts, 2)

This hex is largely wooded, with the Lake of Abominations in Hex 17.23 just entering the northeast section. The ancient road, submerged under the southern portion of the lake, re-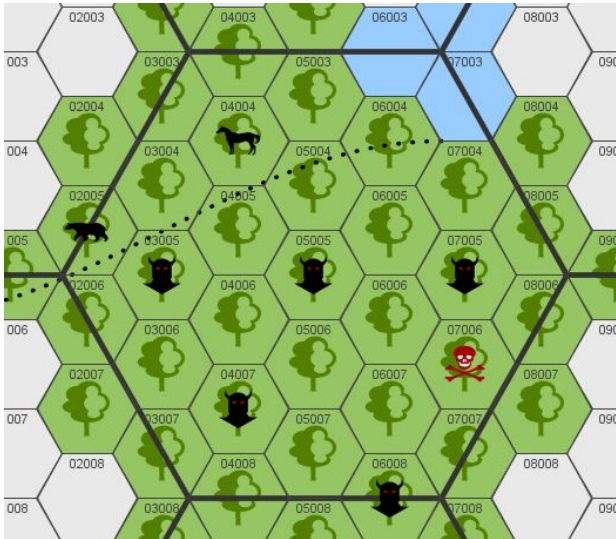emerges here and leads roughly westward. It's an extremely rich hex in terms of resources, with both timber and nuts being in great abundance. Wilderness Survival skill checks to find food are made with a +5 bonus.

0206. Chestnut Grove

There's an exceptionally fine stand of ancient chestnut trees in this subhex, occupying roughly the entire area. The stand has a Land Value of 5 and a base value of 22,700 gp.

A sounder of boars, led by a giant boar with maximum hit points, are currently residing in the hex, gorging themselves on the plentiful chestnuts and aggressively defending their territory. The giant boar has grown tired of eating nuts and would welcome the chance to feast on man-flesh! As such, a −2 penalty is applied to all reaction rolls involving the giant boar. Unfortunately, the ancient road leads right through the center of this subhex,

making it likely the giant boar will get a chance to feast on something a little more to her liking.

There's a 1 in 6 chance that 1d4 boars will be in an adjacent subhex, returning in 1d6 hours. Otherwise, the entire sounder will be found in this subhex.

Boars (5)
AC 7 [13], **HD** 3 (11, 13, 16, 17, 19 hp), **Att** 1 x tusk (2d4), **THAC0** 17 [+2], **MV** 150' (50'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F2), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 35, **NA** 1d6 (1d6), **TT** None

Boar, Giant (1)
Full stats on p. 66 of LL Basic
AC 6 [13], **HD** 5 (30 hp), **Att** 1 x tusk (3d4), **THAC0** 15 [+4], **MV** 120'(40'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B12 S14 (F5), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 175, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

This boar is roughly the size of a cow. If slain, its tusks can potentially be used as a principle for a charm or fetish, or as a special component for magical items. If used as a special component for potions of heroism or invulnerability increase the potions' value by 30%. For more details, see the Magical Item Components section in *Hex 17.23 — The Lake of Abominations*.

0305. Pegasi

A mated pair of pegasi nest here, in a clearing atop a slight rise. They are skittish and not used to being around Men.

There's a 1-3 in 6 chance that when this subhex is entered 1d2 pegasi will be elsewhere, returning in 1d12 hours.

Pegasus (2)
AC 6 [13], **HD** 2+2 (hp 11, 11), **Att** 2 x hoof (1d6), **THAC0** 17 [+2], **MV** 240' (80')/ 480' (160') flying, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F2), **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **XP** 25, **NA** 0 (1d12), **TT** None
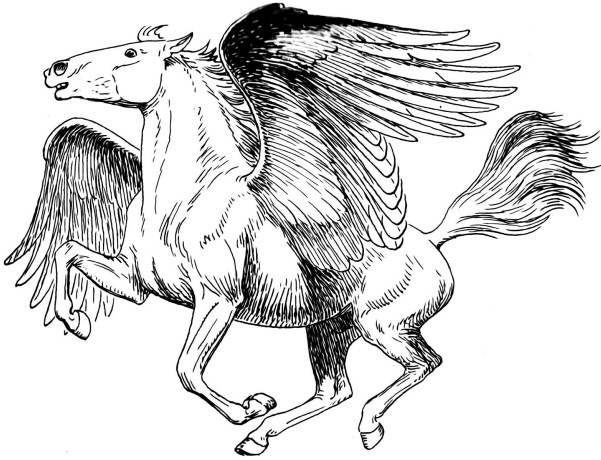
The pegasi are on good terms with the sprites in subhex 0407 and the strigi dwelling in Hex 17.24.

0404. Deer

A herd of two dozen deer dwell within this subhex, led by two adult males with 12 and 10 hp. The deer don't actually lair in this hex. 1d4 weeks after the hex is first entered the deer will migrate south 1d12 subhexes.

> **Deer (24)**
> **AC** 7 [12], **HD** 2 (Avg 9 hp), **Att** 1 x butt (1d4),
> **THAC0** 18 [+1], **MV** 240' (80'), **SV** D12 W13 P14
> B15 S16 (F1), **XP** 20, **NA** 0 (3d10), **TT** None

In the spring and summer there will be an additional 1d6 fawns. Each deer will yield 40+2d20 pounds of meat. If the herd fails a morale check they will stampede. Determine which direction they flee in at random. Any adventurers in their path must Save v. Breath Attacks or take 1d20 points of damage.

A thorough search of the subhex will reveal signs of a long-ruined city here. Slight ridges in the ground form a grid-like pattern, and here and there traces of an ancient culture have worked their way up through the soil. Whatever city once stood here has been ruined for thousands of years, likely since the beginning of the history of Man.

For every full day spent digging here there is a 1 in 10 chance per laborer of unearthing a treasure hoard of Type U; a positive result of coins, gems or jewelry has a 1-3 in 6 chance of being random artifacts instead of coins, gems or jewelry (magical items are still magical and not converted to trade goods). It will take approximately 5,000 worker-days to uncover the whole city and discover all there is to find. Artifacts are a new trade good discussed in the Chapter 5.

0407. Faerie Grove

A clan of a dozen sprites have made their home here among ancient oak trees. Their lair is carved into the trunk of one of these trees, accessible via small burled doors that hinge open. They call themselves the Silverhairs, for obvious reasons, and are part of a clan that is loosely affiliated with the Pallescent Duke, a minor noble of Faery. Their Duke is a member of the Winter Court, and as such it is always ten degrees colder in this subhex than the surrounding areas; trees lose their leaves a month earlier and gain them a month later than the surrounding subhexes.

The leader of the Silverhairs is a matronly sprite named Old Coney. The clan is generally harmless, if prone to pranks, but have a serious dislike of clerics. The sprites are on friendly terms with the giant hawks in Hex 17.23, which on occasion bring them news of the surrounding lands. The sprites can speak with all manner of woodland creatures. They appreciate gifts of mint, which when dried and smoked is a mild soporific.

There's a 1-2 in 6 chance that 1d6 sprites will be away from their lair, returning in 1d6 hours.

> **Sprites (11)**
> **AC** 5 [14], **HD** ½ (avg. 2 hp), **Att** 1 x spell (curse),
> **THAC0** 19 [0], **MV** 60' (20')/ 180' (60') flying, **SV**
> D12 W13 P13 B15 S15 (E1), **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **XP**
> 6, **NA** 3d6 (5d8), **TT** U
> - ➢ Vulnerable to bronze (bronze weapons provide +1 to hit and damage against the sprites).
> - ➢ Five sprites may cooperate to curse a target (no attack roll, although the target may Save v. Spells). This curse has a comical effect, determined by the Referee.

Old Coney is a 1 HD sprite with maximum hp (8) and the following abilities:

❖ Once per day she may cast *charm person*.
❖ Once per month she may *commune* (as per the clerical spell) with Neluthien, the Pallescent Duke. The Duke is not omniscient, having only a 10% accuracy with most subjects. However, topics related to Faery, winter or cold are answered with 55% certitude, as are questions that deal with the events, history or residents of the land within 30 miles of Old Coney's home. Asking him questions almost always requires a favor, so Old Coney is hesitant to do so on another's behalf unless offered appropriate recompense.
❖ Once per year, on the Twentyeighthday of the Twelfthmonth, Old Coney can open a passage to her Duke's demesne, the Pallid Fields.

They have the following treasure: 3 Man-sized bottles of *Iloer*, or moonwine (see Chapter 5), worth 500 gold apiece, and three small moonstones, each worth 50 gold.

0505. Bats!

This subhex is dense with trees, creating a canopy of leaves that blocks out most sunlight. Within this area lives a swarm of bats. There's a 1-4 in 6 chance they panic when this hex is entered by humanoids, flapping and flying around in confusion, triggering the *confusion* effect (see *Old School Essentials Classic Fantasy: Monsters*). Otherwise they will sleep through the day.

Bats (73)
AC 6 [13], **HD** 1 hp, **Att** 1 x swarm (confusion), **THAC0** 20 [-1], **MV** 9' (3')/ 120' (40'), **SV** D14 W15 P16 B17, S18 (NH), **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 5, **NA** 1d100 (1d100), **TT** None

0608. Vale of Statues

There is a small, bowl-shaped clearing featuring several extremely lifelike crystalline statues of animals: two wolves, a deer, a badger, three boars. The clearing is the lair of a quartet of cockatrices. Unfortunately, their lair is remote enough that they have yet to petrify any intelligent – read: treasure-bearing – creatures.

There's a 1-2 in 6 chance 1d4 cockatrices will be away from their lair, returning in 2d4 hours.

Cockatrices (4)
AC 6 [13], **HD** 5** (18, 22, 23, 25 hp), **Att** 1 x beak (1d6 + petrification), **THAC0** 15 [+4], **MV** 90' (30')/ 180' (60') **SV** D10 W 11 P12 B 12 S14, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 425, **NA** 1d4 (1d8), **TT** D

These cockatrices are a rare subspecies that, instead of turning their victims into stone, petrify them into a smoky white quartz. The statues themselves are valuable, worth 75 gp per HD of the creature petrified to a collector, but weighing 50 pounds per HD.

0705. Wood Drake

This subhex is densely wooded with little to no undergrowth hindering travel. A wood drake – a dragon-like creature about fifteen feet long – lairs here in an abandoned hermit's hut. The dwelling has been long deserted and is shaped somewhat like a lopsided mushroom, with a wooden shake roof covered in a thick layer of vibrant green moss.

The wood drake hunts during the day. Like many reptilian creatures it needs to feed only intermittently, and when not hunting spends much of its time drowsing on the small hoard it has amassed.

There's only a 1 in 8 chance the wood drake is away from its lair, returning in 1d12 hours.

Wood Drake (1)
AC 2 [17], **HD** 6* (21 hp), **Att** 2 x claw (1d4), 1x bite (1d8 + venom), **THAC0** 14 [+5], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P11 B11 S13, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d4), **TT** C

The wood drake drowses atop a pile of 8,000 ancient copper coins. See Chapter 5 for more on the wood drake.

0706. Wolves

The first time the adventurers enter this hex a tree will fall across their path, hitting 1d4−1 random members of the party unless they make a Save v. Breath Attacks, inflicting 3d6 damage on a failed save and no damage on a successful save. Any mercenaries, henchmen, hirelings, etc. should also be potential targets. Note that if an adventurer hit by the falling tree is mounted, their horse will be targeted as well and will get its own save.

Lairing within this hex, in a shallow cave, are a pack of ten wolves, led by a grizzled she-wolf with tan fur streaked with gray. They recently tangled with the boars in subhex 206 after entering the chestnut grove and many of the wolves are nursing wounds as a result.
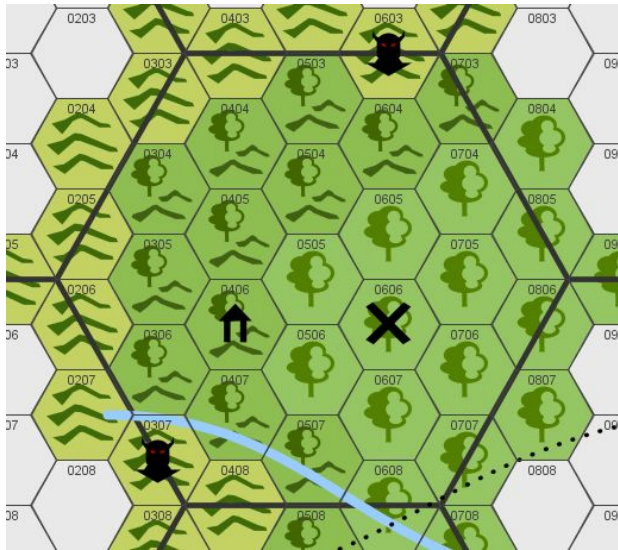
There's a 1-4 in 6 chance that 1d10 of the wolves are off hunting when this subhex is entered, returning in 1d4 hours.

Wolves (10)
AC 7 [12], **HD** 2+2 (4, 7, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 hp), **Att** 1 x bite (1d6), **THAC0** 17 [+2], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1), **ML** 6 (8 in pack of 4 or more; reduced to 6 if 50% of pack is lost), **AL** Neutral, **XP** 25, **NA** 2d6 (3d6), **TT** None

Hex 15.23 - The Statue Garden

Resources: Animal, game (2)

This hex is adjacent to the northwest face of Hex 16.24 and is transitional from woods to hills. A small river flows from the western hills through the bottom of this hex, then takes a sharp jag south, skirting the western edge of 16.24. This river is called the Alcar by the strigi that dwell in Hex 17.24, and is barely larger than a creek, perhaps ten to fifteen feet wide.

The primary inhabitants of this hex are twofold; a medusa and her brood dwell in an ancient, abandoned temple in the wooded foothills, and a sad, lone zombie is trapped in the northern hills.

0307. Scorpion Nest

A nest of five giant scorpions can be found dwelling in a shallow cave in this subhex. They hunt in the surrounding hills and are never encountered in the woods.

Scorpion, giant (5)
AC 2 [17], **HD** 4* (11, 14, 22, and 23 hp), **Att** 2 x claw (1d10), 1 x sting (1d4 + poison), **THAC0** 16 [+3], **MV** 150' (50'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F2), **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 125, **NA** 1d6 (1d6), **TT** V

➢ Giant scorpions are aggressive, normally attacking on sight. Apply a −4 penalty to reaction rolls.
➢ Their poison causes death in 1 round on a failed save.
➢ If at least one claw attack hits, the scorpion gains a +2 bonus on the sting attack that round, assuming they attack the grabbed target.

At the back of the scorpions' cave a chunk of amber worth 100 gold can be found.

0406. The Garden of Statues

Long have Hargcarath and her brood dwelled in the ruins of an ancient shrine to Law, and just as long have they spent artfully decorating the hills surrounding the shrine with the statues of their victims.

Upon entering this subhex the adventurers notice a bewildering number of statues placed seemingly at random; most are animals, but a fair number are human or humanoid. There are a total of 443 statues in this subhex, of which 327 are animals: deer and rabbits, squirrels, birds, the occasional wolf, two black bears, and many more. The remainder are humans, orcs, bugbears, goblins, two elves, a dwarf, three centaurs, an ogre, and various other unique creatures. Most of the sentient creatures were captured, stripped of treasures, and then petrified at the medusae's leisure, but 1 in 6 were not, and will have the equivalent of TT V on them if unpetrified. Short of magic there is no way to determine which statues have treasure.

The placement of the statues, while apparently arbitrary, actually serves a deep and blasphemous purpose; they are placed in an esoteric geomantic design, the purpose of which is to eventually open a portal to a pocket dimension and free Malorkahudfen, an obscure and ancient god of Chaos that the medusae worship. The meaning of the arrangement is only apparent when viewed from above, and only if the viewer rolls equal to or under their Intelligence on 4d6 or succeeds on a Magical Engineering or Religion skill check. Hargcarath needs but 71 more statues of sentient beings to complete the pattern. Unfortunately for her, and Malorkahudfen, it seems as though she requires specific sentient beings, a requirement that has drastically slowed the ritual. There's a 1-4 in 6 chance that she recognizes 1d4 adventurers as being suitable for her arrangement.

The medusae dwell in a cavern partially concealed by underbrush; it was once a temple to Mirayah, a goddess of Law. Mirayah was the one responsible for Malorkahudfen's imprisonment, and indeed, the temple is the focal point of the spell binding it, as well as the center of the pattern of statues. The cavern itself is clean and dry, about thirty feet wide and sixty deep, narrowing the further back it goes. At one time the natural limestone walls were carved with intricate reliefs and illustrations of Mirayah's

teachings and parables, but since it has become a sanctuary of Chaos the carvings have all been defaced, chiseled nearly flat and covered over by blasphemous images and words.

Hargcarath and her children – Dadil, Leeli, Raisa, Midla, and Zazia – dwell in the back half of the cave and have stretched a curtain of skins across the middle, separating the cave into two sections. Hargcarath is to be found within the cave on a roll of 1-5 in 6; her daughters will be present on a roll of 1-3 in 6 (roll independently for each). Daughters that are not present when the cave is encountered are out hunting and will return within 1d8 hours.

The cavern itself has become a focal point of Chaos. Lawful creatures that enter the cave must Save v. Death or become nauseated, taking a −2 penalty to attack and damage rolls for as long as they remain inside. Further, all divine spells cast by Lawful spellcasters that have a variable effect do so at disadvantage; roll twice and take the lower of the two results.

The Chaotic influences that permeate the temple last for 3d6 days after the medusae have been slain and the temple walls cleaned of their blasphemy.

The medusae are on cordial terms with the naga and her orcish slaves in Hex 16.23, although they are not allies by any means, especially since Hargcarath has petrified several of Cthedrak's servants to add to her garden.

Hargcarath and her daughters are all priestesses of Malorkahudfen; Hargcarath a 5th-level cleric, Dadil, Leeli, and Raisa 2nd-level clerics, and Midla and Zazia 1st-level clerics.

Midla and Zazia
AC 8 (11), **HD** 5** (13, 21 hp), **Att** 1 x snake-bites (1d6 + poison), **THAC0** 15 (+4), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 425, **NA** 1d3 (1d4), **TT** F

Each sister wears 1d4x100 gp in jewelry.

Dadil, Leeli, Raisa
AC 8 (11), **HD** 6*** (11, 18, 19 hp), **Att** 1x snake-bites (1d6 + poison), **THAC0** 14 (+5), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 950, **NA** 1d3 (1d4), **TT** F
> ➢ The trio typically have the spell *fear* memorized.

Each sister wears 1d6x100 gp in jewelry.

Hargcarath
AC 8 (11), **HD** 9*** (46 hp), **Att** 1 x snake-bites (1d6 + poison), **THAC0** 11 (+8), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 3000, **NA** 1d3 (1d4), **TT** F
> ➢ Hargcarath typically has the following spells memorized: *cure light wounds*, *detect magic*, *bless*, *hold person*.

She wears 3d4x100 gp worth of jewelry.

The medusae have a truly impressive hoard they have collected over the years:

❖ 3,500 cp
❖ 7,200 sp
❖ 3,150 gp
❖ 2,500 pp
❖ Eleven gems, worth 10 gp (x3), 50 gp (x2), 100 gp (x2), and 500 gp (x4).

Their treasure is located in their sleeping quarters, almost as an afterthought — all except the jewelry, which they wear.

0603. Zombie

A single zombie can be found in this subhex. It has fallen into a narrow cleft and cannot work its way out. The zombie is mostly quiescent during the day, as sunlight causes it pain but no damage, but when darkness falls it begins to scrabble feebly at the rocks that pin it in place. There is a good chance that when first encountered the adventurers will mistake the zombie for a corpse; it will, of course, attempt to brain and devour any creature foolish enough to approach within striking distance.

The zombie has no treasure.

Zombie (1)
AC 8 [11], **HD** 2 (9 hp), **Att** 1 x fist (1d8), **THAC0** 18 [+1], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1), **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 20, **NA** 2d4 (4d6), **TT** None

0606. Sinkhole

The first time the adventurers enter this hex a sinkhole opens up, dropping 1d4 adventurers at random into a hole. If they are mounted, their mounts fall in as well. Those that fall in take 2d6 points of falling damage, which can be halved by rolling equal to or less than their Dexterity on 3d6. Horses automatically take the damage, and if they survive they must Save v. Death or break a leg. Horses that break a leg are lame and must be healed magically.

The sinkhole is about twenty feet deep in the center and forty feet in diameter.

Random Encounter Tables

Hex 16.24 - Wandering Monsters

1d8	Encounter
1	Sprites (1d6)
2	Wolves (1d10)
3	Boars (1d4)
4	Boar, giant (1-3 in 6 chance of being accompanied by 1d4 normal boars)
5	Pegasus (1d2)
6	Deer (1d12)
7	Cockatrice (1d3)
8	Roll on Secondary Table

Secondary Table

1d6	Encounter
1	Drake, wood (1)
2	Hawk, giant (1d2)
3	Strigi (1d4), see Hex 17.24
4	Owlbears (1d2), see Hex 17.23
5	Goblins (2d4), see Hex 17.24
6	Gnolls (1d6), see Hex 18.23

Hex 15.23 - Wandering Monsters

1d8	Encounter
1	Medusa (1d4)
2	Medusa (Hargcarath plus 1d4−1 daughters)
3	Scorpions, giant (1d5, hills only; roll again in other locations)
4	Boars (1d3), from Hex 16.24
5	Wolves (1d10), from Hex 16.24
6	Pegasus (1d2), from Hex 16.24
7	Cockatrice (1d2), from Hex 16.24
8	Roll on Secondary Table

Secondary Table

1d6	Encounter
1	Basilisk (1d4), from Hex 15.22
2	Orcs (2d4), from Hex 16.23
3	Autrak, dragon, from Hex 16.22
4	Roc, small (1d2), from hills to the west
5	Owlbear (1d4), from hills to the west
6	Bulette (1), from Hex 15.22

New Monsters & Treasure

New Monster: Wood Drake

Distant relatives of dragons, wood drakes dwell in forests, where they hunt for prey and collect shiny objects to hoard. They resemble long snakes with four short legs and a greenish crest upon their heads, and are slightly more intelligent than most animals.

Wood Drake

AC 2 [17], **HD** 6* (27 hp), **Att** 2 x claw (1d4), 1 x bite (1d8 + venom), **THAC0** 14 [+5], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P11 B11 S13 (F4), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d4), **TT** C

- ➢ Wood drakes have an innate ability to camouflage themselves in the environment, gaining a +1 to surprise rolls, and are almost never surprised themselves, being taken by surprise only on a roll of 1 on 1d8.
- ➢ When hunting they have a habit of lurking above the ground in trees and dropping down upon their prey, gaining a +2 bonus to attack if their target is unaware.
- ➢ If a target is hit by both claw attacks the wood drake will automatically coil its sinuous body around them, immobilizing and choking its prey for an automatic 2d4 damage per round thereafter. The immobilized target may not attack or cast spells, but can attempt to free themself by rolling their Strength or lower on a roll of 4d6. This may be attempted once per round.
- ➢ The bite of a wood drake also carries a mild toxin that causes an intense burning sensation for a short period of time. Targets bitten must make a Save v. Poison or suffer a −2 penalty to all rolls due to the pain. Spellcasting is an impossibility while the victim is poisoned. The effects last for 1d6 rounds.

Wood drake venom may be collected to synthesize poison, as discussed on p. 10 of *The Lake of Abominations*. It may only be used to produce Type I poisons, although more potent than normal, permitting only a +4 bonus to the saving throw (see p. 47 of the *OSE Advanced Fantasy: Genre Rules*).

New Items

Artifacts

The detritus of ancient civilization, artifacts are largely of value to collectors, historians and sages. When adventurers plunder a long-lost tomb, artifacts are the mundane items found within: the non-magical armor of the guards interred there, the rotted tapestries on the wall that depict ancient customs, the utensils, pottery and trinkets of the past.

One unit of artifacts weighs 20 pounds and is worth a base of 100 gold. Every unit found will be (roll 1d6): 1 of immense historical value or in pristine condition and gain a +1d4 modifier to the 2d6+1 roll to determine the % price modifier (see p. 40 of *Populated Hexcrawl Series: Domain Building*), 2-3 relatively insignificant or badly damaged, reducing the 2d6+1 roll by 1d6, or 4-6 of average quality, with no modifiers.

Artifacts are also fragile and easily broken. If targeted by spells such as *fireball*, *lightning bolt* or similar, or subjected to rough handling each unit must make a Save v. Breath Attacks as a 0-level human or be broken and rendered valueless.

Lloer (Moonwine)

A potent liquor fermented in Faery with distilled moonbeams, *lloer* has a smooth, subtle taste that belies its potency. A single cup has as much alcohol in it as a bottle of wine. A mere sip is more than enough to send warm tingles throughout one's body, from head to toe, and impart great vigor; one may engage in physical activity for a full twelve hours, instead of eight, without penalty.

Any more than a sip is dangerous for Men; drinking a full glass requires one to make a Save v. Poison. Failure indicates that the drinker falls into a deep sleep for 1d6 days. Each subsequent glass drunk imposes a −4 penalty to the Save and increases the time spent insensible by another 1d8 days.

Those who fall asleep from excessive consumption have a tendency to experience vivid, prophetic dreams. On a roll of 1-2 in 1d6 the sleeper has a vision, equivalent to the *divination* spell, but with 85% accuracy. One does not need to eat or drink in a *lloer*-induced slumber.

Faeries are totally unaffected by the negative side effects of moonwine and can drink as much of it as desired without difficulty. In the mortal world *lloer* is worth 500 gold a bottle.

Monsters & Class Levels

Old School Essentials presents monsters in a simplified form, using Hit Dice rather than class levels as a means of gauging toughness and abilities. It is possible, however, to further customize unique monsters by giving them levels in one or more classes. Abilities granted by the class are in addition to any natural abilities the monster might already possess; an efreeti with class levels as a magic-user would still retain the use of their innate spell-like abilities in addition.

General Rules

The following rules are used when applying class levels to monsters:

❖ Only intelligent monsters can have class levels. Animals, unintelligent constructs, oozes, etc. cannot.

❖ The class level is added to the monster's base HD to determine the overall HD of the monster. An ogre with 3 levels of magic-user would have 7+1 HD.

❖ Calculate the monster's hit points as normal for their base Hit Dice, then use the class hit points for class levels. The above ogre would have a hit point total equal to 4d8+1 plus 3d4.

❖ Adding a spellcasting class gives the monster an additional asterisk for purposes of determining XP.

❖ Fighter is the class used to increase a monster's Hit Dice without granting any special abilities.

❖ Only human-based classes are used, not race-as-class (such as dwarves and elves).

❖ Use the total Hit Dice in the chosen class to determine Saving Throws.

❖ Use the monster's total Hit Dice to determine attack tables.

❖ Assume that the creature has the minimum stats required for the chosen class.

Spellcasters

The *Old School Essentials Core Rules* do not provide guidelines for humanoid spellcasters, but *Labyrinth Lord Advanced Edition Companion* does (p. 144), providing spellcasting maximums for the common humanoid races and level limits for clerics, druids, and magic-users. Humanoids that can cast spells are typically severely limited (goblins can, at most, cast spells as 4th-level magic-users), however, and there are no guidelines provided for how taking spellcaster levels affects monster HD. What is the Hit Die of a 4th-level goblin magic-user, or a 5th-level bugbear cleric? The text provides no guidance.

Level Limits

The following rules are a suggestion for determining level limits, if desired, to various humanoid races. It is recommended that no humanoid spellcaster exceed level 9 in ability; it is the humans' ability to advance to 14th level that makes them unique, after all.

❖ Assign a rank to each of the four base classes – cleric, fighter, magic-user, and thief – based upon the suitability of each class for a given race. Some examples might be as follows:
  ➢ Goblin: Thief 1, Cleric 2, Magic-user 3, Fighter 4
  ➢ Ogre: Fighter 1, Cleric 2, Magic-user 3, Thief 4
  ➢ Dryad: Cleric 1, Magic-user 2, Thief 3, Fighter 4

❖ 1st-rank classes are limited to level 9, 2nd-rank to level 7, 3rd-rank to level 5, and 4th-rank to level 3.
❖ Subclasses are governed by their main classes; barbarians are a fighter subclass, druids a cleric subclass, etc.
❖ If a creature has an equal aptitude for two or more classes, place them in the same rank but reduce the level limit by the number of classes at that rank.
  ➢ If all four classes are on an equal footing the maximum class level is 5 (9-4).
  ➢ If a creature has two classes tied for 1st rank, their level maximum in each is 7 (9-2).

The above options are for adding class levels to monsters on the fly. A more involved option would be to create an actual racial class for a given monster. This method will be discussed in *Hex 17.24*.

Cost of Living

Cost of Living (CoL) is a way of abstracting a character's basic purchases and expenses at a given level so incidental costs don't have to be tracked: meals at an inn, fees to enter a city, taxes paid on goods bought or sold, money-changing fees, etc. All of these costs get handwaved into a monthly Cost of Living.

The Cost of Living figures can also be extrapolated out to determine costs of virtually any items or the hiring of individuals.

Cost of Living is paid at the beginning of each game month (it is recommended that play begins with the first month already paid) and is based upon the character's level at that time. As a general rule, the higher a character's level is the less they have to track for basic expenditures, as follows:

Levels 1-3. All fees, lodging at standard inns, basic food, etc. are covered, as are any fees or taxes associated with adventuring.

Levels 4-6. As above, but CoL assumes the adventurers will be staying at a higher quality of inn when possible. Also, basic adventuring gear can be assumed to be purchased when in an appropriate market, if the market is large enough to support such goods. Don't worry about spending silver for torches and rope.

Levels 7-9. As above, but the assumption is made that any standard adventuring gear is covered, as is maintenance and feed for any normal mounts. If the adventurer has a home base, assume the CoL covers monthly rent on a suite of rooms or apartment, as well as stabling fees for a mount, a groom to care for it, and basic support staff. This does not cover associated stronghold or domain fees, but if the character has purchased a dwelling CoL will cover general maintenance costs.

Levels 10+. At these levels the adventurers shouldn't have to track any purchases totaling less than 100 gold or so. It's assumed they own a dwelling of some sort, and the CoL covers all basic maintenance, the support staff needed to run the house, etc.

Cost of Living Per Level

A chart showing the Cost of Living per level is below. The Cost of Living can be extrapolated to calculate the minimum cost of retaining an NPC of a given level; hiring a 4th-level magic-user will cost at least the CoL of a 4th-level character. The range is provided as a general guideline; NPCs of a given level may charge anywhere within the range.

Cost of Living per month (gp)

Level	Cost	CoL for PCs
0	1-10	10
1	11-20	20
2	21-40	40
3	41-80	80
4	81-160	160
5	161-300	300
6	301-600	600
7	601-1,200	1,200
8	1,201-2,500	2,500
9	2,401-5,000	5,000
+1	+5,000	+5,000

Cost of Living for NPCs

The Cost of Living for NPCs is presented as a range. This range is meant to represent the:

1. **Skill level of the NPC**. Rowers and sailors are both 0-level, but rowers make much less than sailors.
2. **The basic equipment or materials needed for the job**. Light and heavy infantry are both the same level, but the heavy infantry has more expensive gear.
3. **The amount of risk involved in a job**. Hiring a 5th-level mage to do research in a lab is less dangerous than hiring the same 5th-level mage to explore a dungeon.

The Cost of Doing Business, or How Long Does it Take to Commission a Wagon?

The lowest Cost of Living, 1 gp/month, is assumed to be the baseline for a peasant living a hand-to-mouth existence. Unskilled laborers likely make 3-5 gp per month, skilled laborers 10-12 gp a month. The document *Populated Hexcrawl Series: Wealth by NPC Level*, available from **Third Kingdom Games**, breaks down the wealth of NPCs based upon their skill levels and equates these estimates with class levels. Referring to the skill system presented in *Hex 17.23*, there are four levels of skill:

1. **Unskilled**. Equivalent to a 0-level human. Has a CoL of 5 gp per month.
2. **Proficient**. Equivalent to a 1st-level character. Has a CoL of 15 gp per month.
3. **Skilled**. Equivalent to a 2nd-level character. Has a CoL of 30 gp per month.
4. **Expert**. Equivalent to a 3rd-level character. Has a CoL of 60 gp per month.

Note that the Cost of Living given above is the average. A given craftsman might charge more or less, dependent upon the rarity of their craft, the availability of goods, etc.

Why does all of this matter? The Cost of Living table can be extrapolated to determine how long it takes to commission goods or services. One can simply determine the skill level of a craftsman, divide their CoL by the number of days in a month, and thus generate a gold-piece value quantifying their daily productivity. An armorer that is Skilled, for instance, produces 1 gp worth of work per day.

As a general rule it is safe to assume that the cost of any good consists of two variables: labor and material. Labor is easy enough – our blacksmith above produces 1 gp worth of work per day – but how to determine the cost of materials?

For purposes of abstraction, assume that the total cost of any good comprises 50% labor value and 50% cost in material. A suit of plate mail costs 60 gold; it, therefore, costs 30 gp in labor and 30 gp in material. Our armorer, above, working by themself can make a single suit of plate mail per month. An Expert-level armorer could make a suit of plate in half the time.

For big jobs, or those that need to get finished in a hurry, more than one person can contribute labor. If a person possesses a skill in the proper craft they can oversee up to three lower-skilled people. These three, in turn, could each oversee three more, provided they are less skilled as well. For instance, an Expert armorer is skilled in Profession (Armorer). They can oversee three Skilled armorers, each of whom can oversee three Proficient armorers. Each of those Proficient armorers can oversee three Unskilled workers.

Overseeing help is hard work, though, and decreases the master's efficiency by 10%. Therefore, an Expert craftsperson overseeing help has their own output reduced by 10%, or 6 gp per month on average. This entire system is referred to as a "Craft Tree" and looks like this:
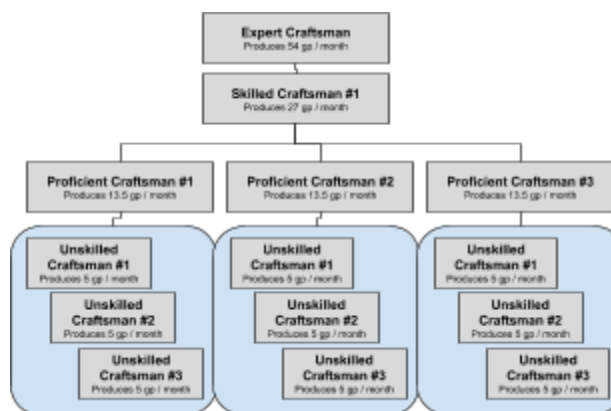
Or, shown another way:

Expert Craftsman (54 gp/mo.)

- ❖ **Skilled Craftsman #1** (27 gp/mo.)
  - ➢ **Proficient Craftsman #1** (13.5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
  - ➢ **Proficient Craftsman #2** (13.5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
  - ➢ **Proficient Craftsman #3** (13.5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)
    - ■ **Unskilled** (5 gp/mo.)

Note that the above is just an example of a Craft Tree in an ideal situation: an Expert craftsman could, in theory, oversee just Unskilled workers. The above Tree would generate 166.5 gp worth of labor

per month, or a total of 333 gp worth of goods: roughly 5½ suits of plate mail.

Availability of Labor

The workers available in a settlement are determined by the population of the settlement. The numbers generated below represent the total number of workers of a given type in a community. Most of them will not be available for immediate hire, however. For each craftsperson that is present roll 1d20−5, the result being the number of days before they become available to take on additional work. If the result is 0 or lower they are immediately available. On a result of natural 20 the tradesperson is not available for 1d6 months.

Obviously, different communities have different needs; there's always a chance that a remote or small community would have residents that specialize in more esoteric crafts, and a settlement that makes its living mining ore would have more miners than normal.

Craftspeople are divided into categories:

Common. Present in almost every community, this grouping includes tailors, blacksmiths, weavers, furriers, and rough carpenters. For each type there will be 1 for every 100 residents. If there are between 50-75 residents there's a 75% chance one will be present, and just a 25% chance if there are fewer than 50.

Uncommon. Specialized trades that are still commonplace: carpenters, masons, cobblers, armorers, butchers, loggers, potters and so forth. These craftspeople create goods that smaller communities still need, but relatively infrequently. There will be roughly one of each for every 250 residents. If there are between 125-250 residents there's a 75% chance of a single craftsperson practicing a given trade; if fewer than 125 there's a 25% chance.

Rare. Wagonwrights, miners, quarrymen, furniture makers, jewelers, boatbuilders, weaponsmiths, etc. These craftsfolk produce goods that are either luxury (such as jewelers) or expensive and specialized. There will be roughly 1 of each profession for every 1000 residents. If there are between 750 and 1000 residents there's a 75% chance of one such professional per trade; if fewer than 750 there's a 25% chance.

Very Rare. Extremely specialized craftspeople. Gold and silversmiths, sculptors, painters, etc. Typically, only luxury goods or those that require the patronage of wealthy families. There will be roughly 1 of each specialist for every 2500 residents. If there are between 1500 and 2500 residents there's a 75% chance of a single artisan practicing any such craft; if fewer than 1500 there's a 25% chance.

Demographics

The demographics of professionals break down as follows: 1-3 in 6 are Proficient, 1-2 in 6 are Skilled, and 1 in 6 is Expert. For small populations these can be rolled for each craftsperson, assigning 1-3 to Proficient, 4-5 to Skilled, and 6 to Expert.

In urban centers where multiple tradespeople practice a given trade, roll 1d6: this is the number of businesses that exist for that trade. Divide the tradespeople among the total number of businesses, ignoring results that make no sense (having 6 businesses in a town with only four tradesmen, for example). Any leftover individuals are assumed to be working by themselves. When rolling for availability for commissions treat each business as its own entity.

Therefore, an urban settlement with 1000 individuals is considered a small Class 5 market. There will be roughly 10 blacksmiths, 10 tailors, etc. Of these, 5 will be merely Proficient, 3 will be Skilled, and 2 will be Expert.

There are approximately four tradespeople in each of the Uncommon trades: carpenters, masons, etc. Of these, two will be Proficient, one will be Skilled, and one will be Expert.

There are approximately one each of the Rare trades (jewelers, wagonwrights, etc), and for each Very Rare trade there's a 25% chance that one will be present.

These rules very purposefully simulate a slower style of play than some may be used to. If desired, rate of production can be doubled or even trebled, but it is recommended that the general demographic guidelines be kept in place as an easy way to estimate what trades and services can be found in any community.

Randomizing the Results

To add some randomness to the results, one can roll 1d4−2 for each trade, adding the result to the number of craftspeople found. Additionally, when determining the rates of a given professional for hire roll 1d6 and adjust their wages by the following:

1d6	Wage Adjustment
1	-15%
2	-10%
3	-5%
4	+5%
5	+10%
6	+15%

Importing Workers

If a settlement does not have enough tradespeople in a specific field, the adventurer can attempt to import workers from other locations. They can either do this actively, by traveling to other settlements and directly hiring them, or passively through advertising and word of mouth.

Active. If done actively this will be played out. The Referee will determine the number of tradespeople in a community and the number that are currently available. For each of those looking for work make a reaction roll. The hiring attempt assumes the adventurer will pay for moving costs plus a month's salary as enticement. If less than this is offered apply a −1 penalty to the roll. If more, add a +1 bonus.

Passive. If done passively the adventurer puts out word that they are looking to hire tradespeople. The Referee determines the number of tradespeople in a community, rolls to see when they become available for hire, and makes the reaction rolls based upon pay inducements (as above). Since the adventurer is not present to make the offer, their Charisma modifier is not applied to the reaction roll.

Hiring Spellcasters

Spellcasters are treated differently than normal professionals. The *Populated Hexcrawl Series: Domain Building* supplement has guidelines for determining the number of characters of a given class in a settlement, so the Referee should have an idea of the number of clerics and magic-users that are present.

Determine the spellcaster's availability by rolling 1d10−2. If the result is 0 or less they can cast the spell that day; if not, the total is the number of days until they will be available to do so. On a result of a natural 10 the spellcaster will not be available for 1d4 weeks.

If the spellcaster is a magic-user the Referee either chooses what spells the mage has, or must randomly determine whether the mage has access to a given spell. Spells are divided into two groups: Basic and Advanced. Basic spells are those provided in the Core Rules (*OSE Core* or *Advanced Fantasy*). Advanced spells are those from other sources (such as *LL AEC*). A magic-user has a 1-3 in 6 chance of possessing a Basic spell of a level they can cast and a 1 in 6 chance of having an Advanced spell of a level they can cast.

If the magic-user has the spell the adventurers are looking for, roll 1d8 minus the spell's level. If the result is 1 or higher the magic-user has the spell memorized; if 0 or lower they do not and must memorize it the subsequent day. If the magic-user is not available immediately the assumption can be made that they will have memorized the needed spell by the time they are.

If the spellcaster is a cleric roll 1d10 minus the spell's level. If the result is 1 or higher they have the spell memorized. If 0 or lower they do not and must wait to pray for it.

Spells cost the same to cast per level regardless of whether they are arcane or divine, as follows:

Level	Cost
1st level	30 gp
2nd level	60 gp
3rd level	125 gp
4th level	250 gp
5th level	500 gp
6th level	1,000 gp

Unless otherwise stated this cost covers all incidentals associated with the spell, although rare and/or powerful spells may require material components which add to the cost.
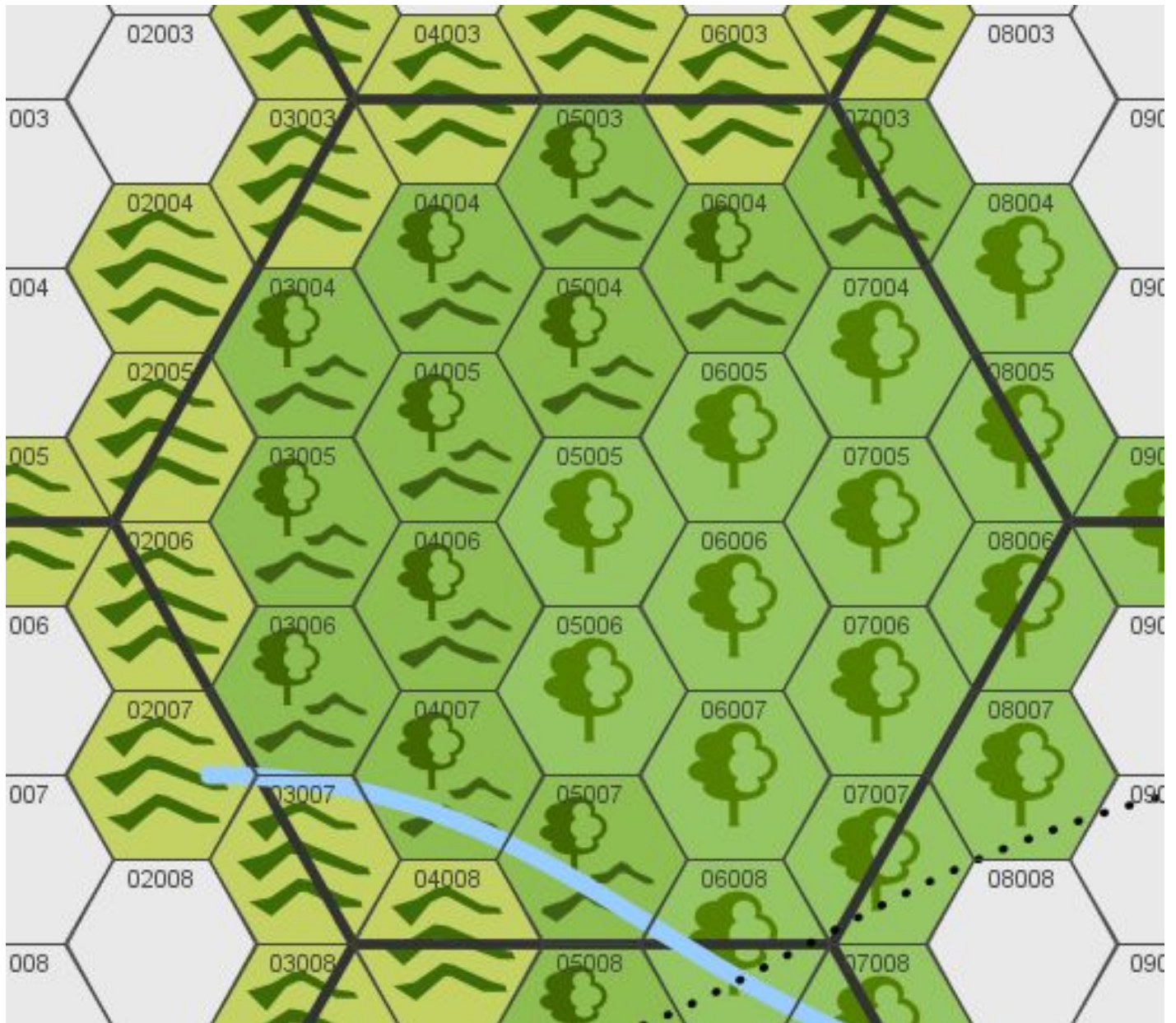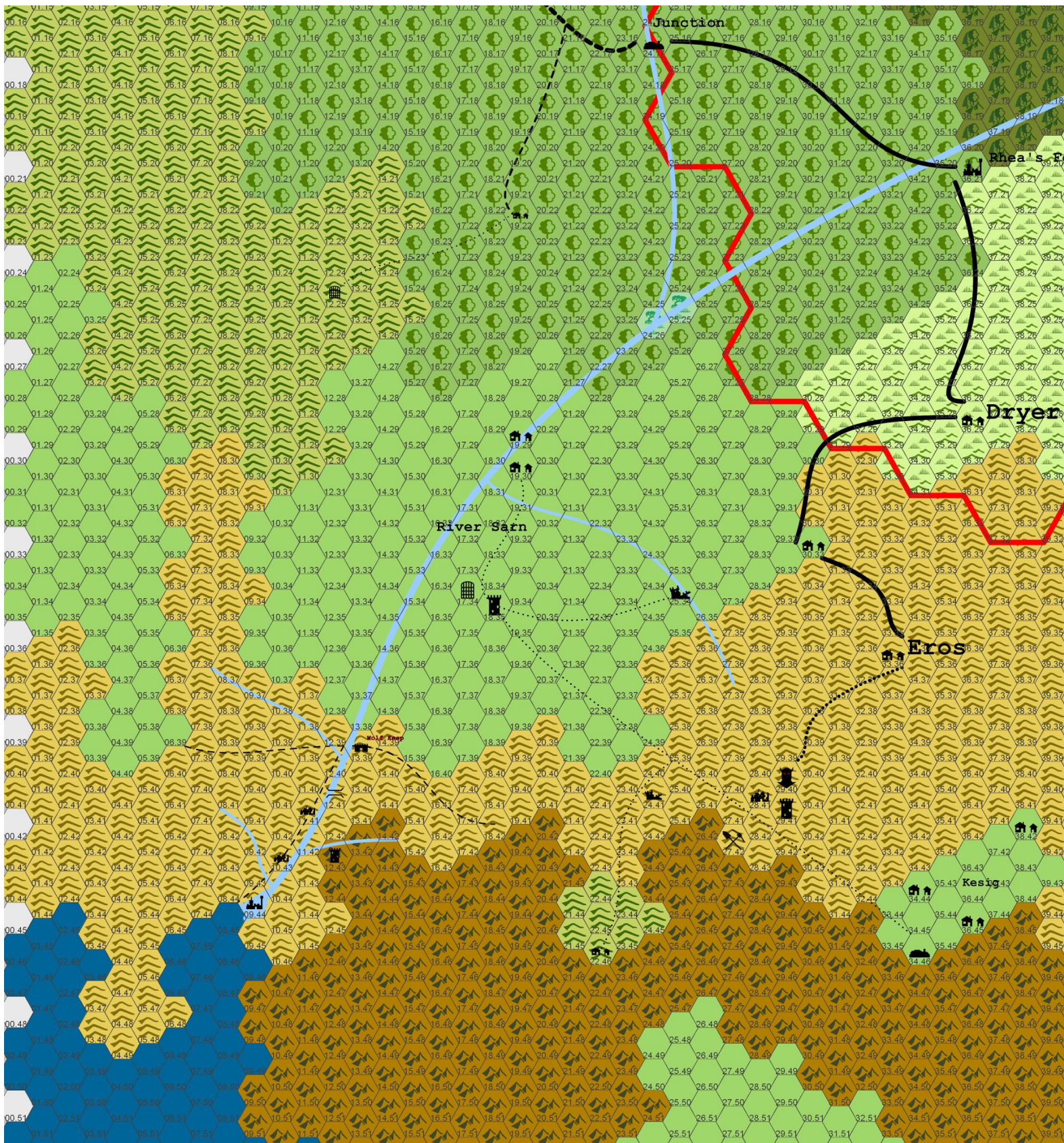
Hex 16.24
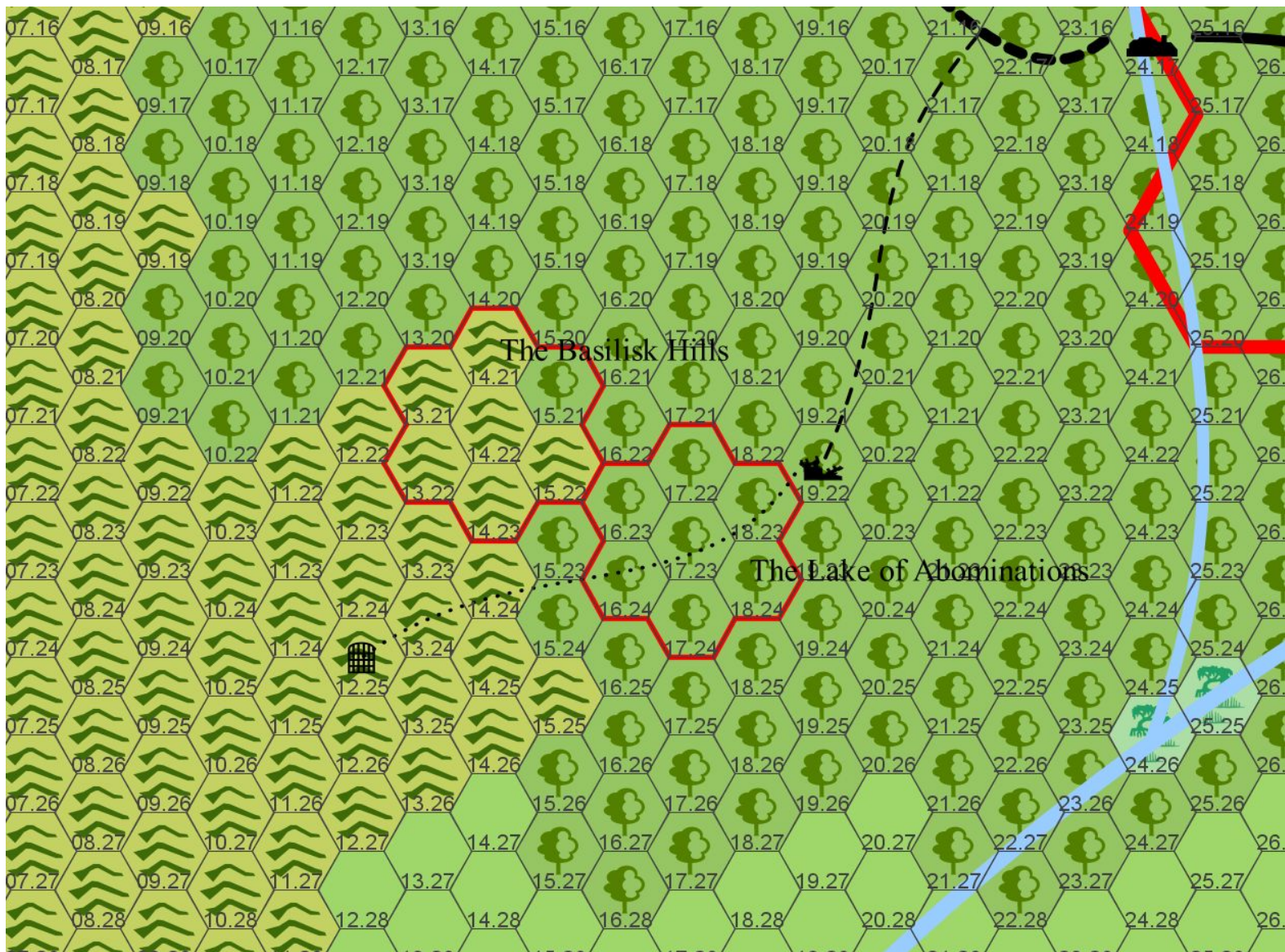Referee's Map

Hex 16.24
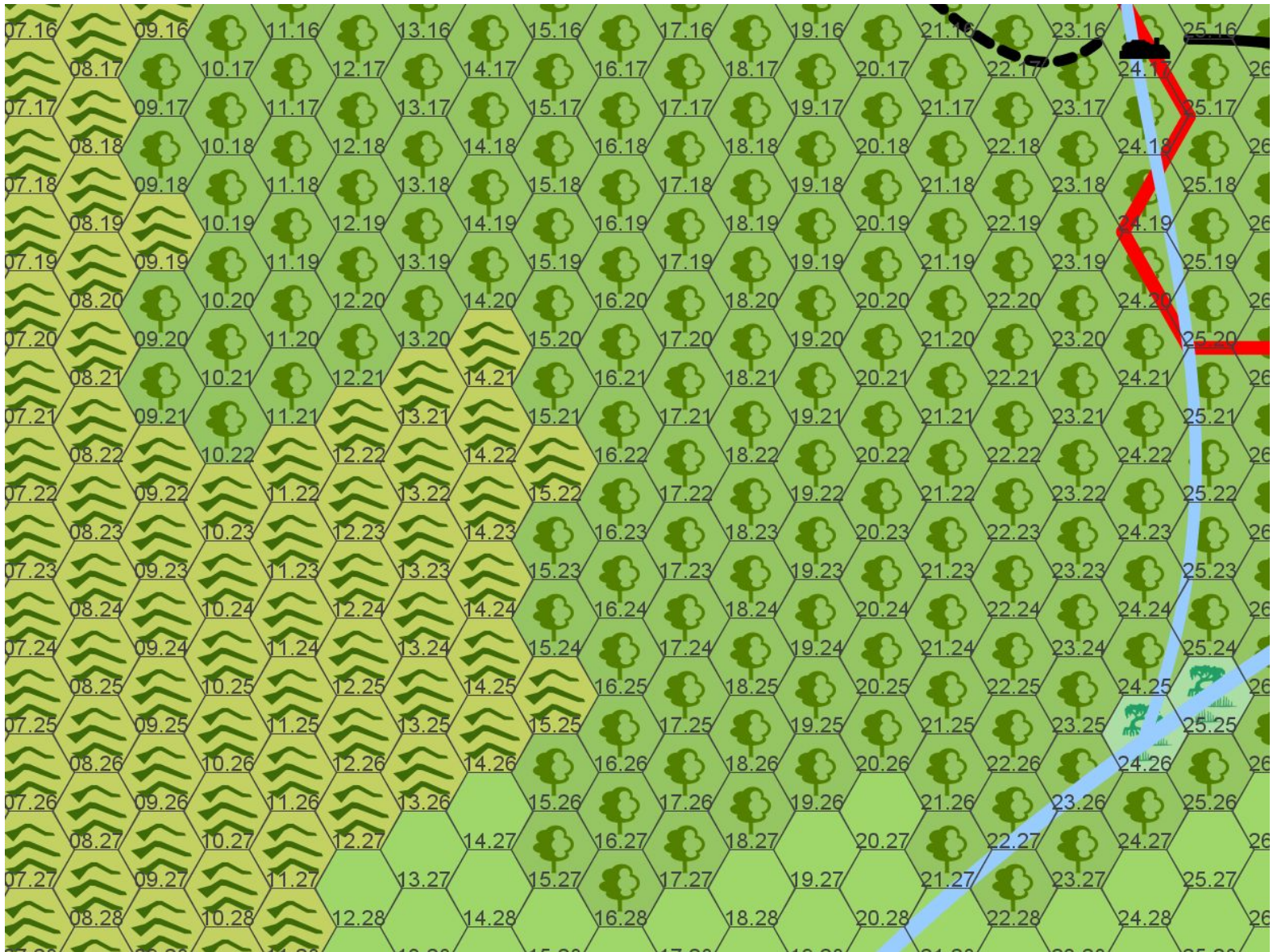Players' Map

HEX 15.23
REFEREE'S MAP

Hex 15.23
Referee's Map

Absalom Overview

Regional Referee Map

Regional Player Map