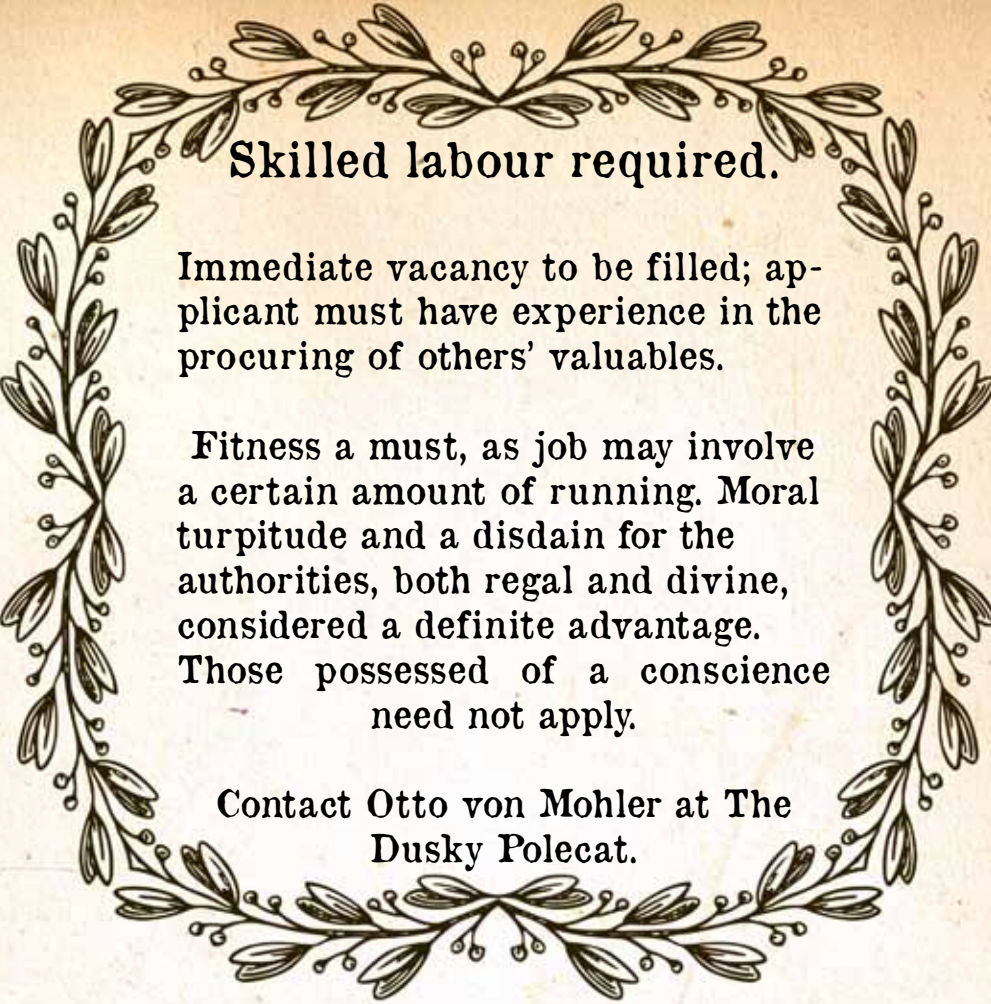


A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns surrounds the text.

STERNPAW'S ALMANACK

24th Haligmonath
to
16th Aerrayulla

3p



Skilled labour required.

Immediate vacancy to be filled; applicant must have experience in the procuring of others' valuables.

Fitness a must, as job may involve a certain amount of running. Moral turpitude and a disdain for the authorities, both regal and divine, considered a definite advantage. Those possessed of a conscience need not apply.

Contact Otto von Mohler at The Dusky Polecat.

WANTED

The Dormouse known as
Gromley Softpaw
For theft, burglary and also the
desecration of holy ground.
100 pennies for information
leading to an arrest.

**Further Developments among the
Alchemists**

As we reported in our last issue, divisions continue to rock the august body that is the Royal Guild of Alchemists. For years, the Alchemists have presented a united front, seeming to avoid taking sides in the Kingdom's politics, and have appeared to be one of the more stable institutions of Northymbra.

But alchemy has ever been a diverse calling, and although the classic alchemical recipes are long-standing and rigidly followed by most, there are always beasts who allow their curiosity to lead them in new and unexpected directions. In recent years, two particular beasts have come to the fore.

Forsine Longpaw, the enigmatic and highly secretive cat, has made waves in the Guild with her focus on using alchemical ingredients and principles in the field of magic. Of course, the Alchemist's Guild has long avoided any involvement with magic, viewing the use of spells and enchantments as a completely separate discipline, focusing purely on potions, tinctures and compounds. Previous attempts by Guild members to get involved in magic have been ruthlessly crushed by those in charge; but Forsine Longpaw seems un-crushable. In many ways, she appears to lead a charmed life, and her rise in the Guild continues unabated.

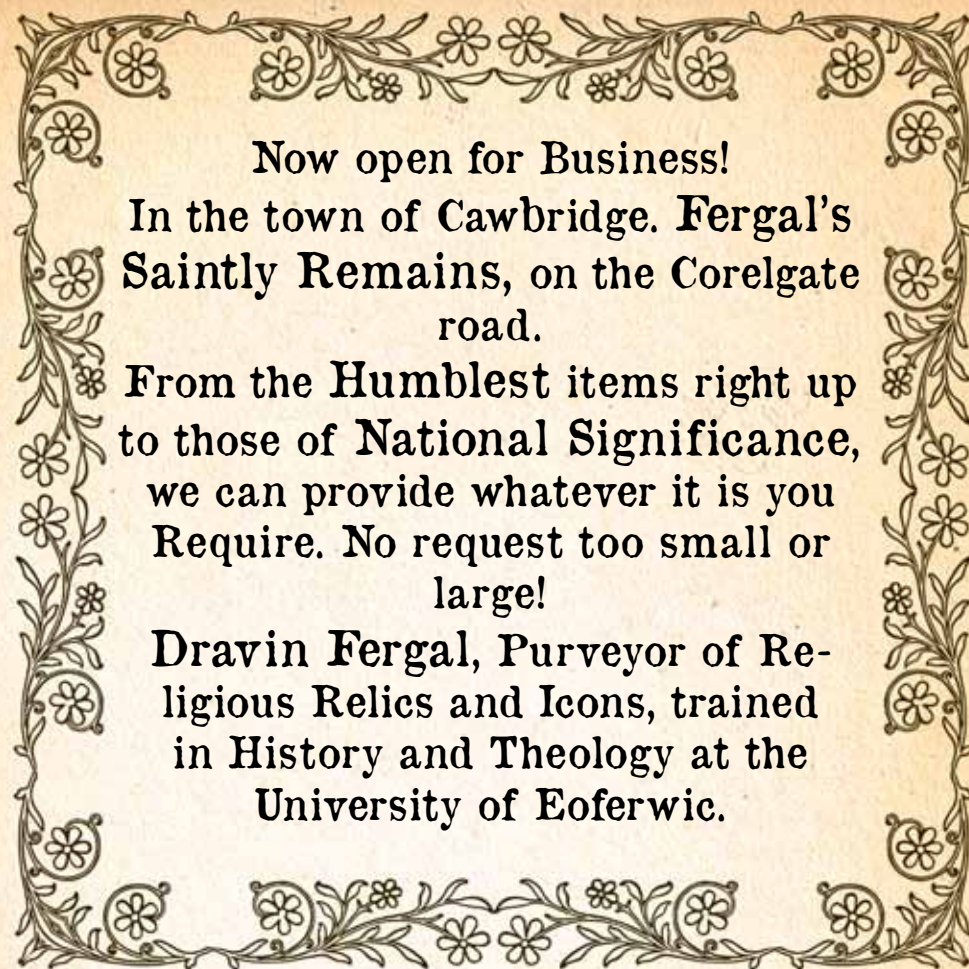
Almost the polar opposite to Longpaw is the practical, technically minded mole Tarrin Crum, with his recent development of the highly controversial Black Powder. Despite lacking much in the way of political ability or indeed social skills of any kind, his discoveries have given him unusual levels of influence within the Guild. But his focus on the mechanical application of alchemy has also made him many enemies, too.

All of these developments have resulted in serious splits within the Guild; splits that are leading to the possible formation of entirely new organisations.

Forsine Longpaw has already announced her plan to establish the Guild of Esoteric and Thaumaturgic Alchemy. Whether this will be part of the existing Guild or an entirely separate organisation remains to be seen.

Definitely a separate organisation, however, is the proposed Noble Fellowship of Scientifical Artisans. Tarrin Crum has already announced his resignation from the Guild of Alchemists, and it appears that a contract to further develop the new technology of gunnes has already been offered by the Royal Army.

Quite where these developments will leave the Royal Guild of Alchemists, only time will tell. One thing is for sure; the Guild's long history of peace and stability has finally ended.



Now open for Business!

In the town of Cawbridge. **Fergal's Saintly Remains**, on the Corelgate road.

From the **Humblest** items right up to those of **National Significance**, we can provide whatever it is you Require. No request too small or large!

Dravin Fergal, Purveyor of Religious Relics and Icons, trained in History and Theology at the University of Eoferwic.



**24th to 30th
Halignmonath**

Temperatures to plummet suddenly; storm surges to be expected across the Raven's Tongue. The wise seek a safe harbour early on the East coast.

Dark Rumours on the Moors

We are not usually given to printing sailor's gossip overheard in the coastal dens and ale-houses; but this particular tale may shed some light on recent events.

Garrock Jones is First Mate on the 'Wave Tamer', a vessel recently returned from several months' trading around the Continent. He picked up several interesting anecdotes and stories, which he shared with our reporter. One of those stories is, we feel, worth bringing to our readers' attention.

In First Mate Jones's own words:

'We'd been caught in a storm, one of those nasty squalls you run into in the channel sometimes, and we had to put in for repairs at Landreger. We'd lost a sailor or two overboard during the storm, and one who'd got injured and died the next day, so's we still had his body onboard. So while the ship was docked, I took a party into the citadel with the body, to find the Temple of the Gate Keeper, give him a proper seeing off, blessed and the like, by a priest of Mortay.

But when we got there, the place was sealed up tight as a drum. We banged and hollered, but we got no reply, not even an angry shout nor nothing. So we left the poor lad's body outside the Temple with a note pinned to it, and we headed off to get some ale; it's mighty thirsty

work, hauling a corpse round those hilly streets.

Anyways, we's talking to the barkeep, and he asks what brings us to those parts, just making conversation like, but when he hears we've been up to the Temple of Mortay, he gets this queer look in his eye, and he goes quiet for a bit. So we coax him, gentle like, and slowly he starts to tell us about how they've been having some trouble; one of the Brothers there, a black rat apparently, only he looks white not black, with those pinky eyes you sometimes see, anyway, this rat, he says, name of Kremmel or Krummel or some such, has been overstepping the mark. See, this rat reckons death's not the end of the road, like, and he's been trying spells and magic, and all manner of hoodoo weirdness, and trying to get the souls of the departed back into this world. Now, the rest of the monks, they don't like this, not one little bit, what with it being right against all that the Mortans stand for, see. So, they take this Kremm fellow unawares and knock him out, lock him up, and send out messages to the bosses of their Order for advice, like.

But that rat don't take kindly to being treated that way, and he's got powers the rest of them don't know about, and no sooner has he woken up but there's strange lights being seen around the Temple, and odd howls, and screams and gurgles and stuff. Since then, there's been nothing, no noises, and no-one coming or going neither.

Anyway, after the barkeep finishes his story, we decide it's time to get back to the Wave Tamer. When we get there, the repairs have all been finished, and the Cap'n, he ain't happy, as he's been waiting on us coming back. He's found a paying passenger, see, and is keen to get under way with the tide. So we haul anchor and head out to sea.

We're well out into the channel, heading back home, when I finally catch a glimpse of this passenger. He's got a hood on, so's at first I can't see much but a white snout poking out, and a gleam of pink eyes. But those eyes have a strange staring look to them, like he's looking right through you, or maybe seeing a different world to the one we're seeing. So, I asks him his name, and he focuses right on me, and just stands there, looking, silent like, and I'm getting more and more uncomfortable. Finally he says 'I am called Henlo Kremmel.'

I didn't ask no more questions after that. He left the ship after we docked at Whitbye; no-one's seen snout nor tail of him since'

A fanciful tale perhaps, thought up under the influence of alcohol. But some facts can be ascertained with certainty; the Temple of Mortans in Landreger has been officially 'Closed for refurbishment' and is not expected to re-open for some time. The Queen's Privy Council in Domnonea has begun drafting new laws regarding the practice of necromantic magic.

And a full 'Circle' (composed of thirteen members) of DeBouan Witch Hunters from the Office of Heresy in Roma have recently landed in Whitbye, much to the consternation of the local authorities.

Is it possible that this 'Henlo Kremmel' is a practitioner of the dark arts of necromancy? Might his relocation to the Moors area of Northymbra be related in some way to the rumours of ghostly activity in recent weeks? Perhaps the innumerable unquiet souls of those lost in the War of Storms might be the perfect raw material one interested in necromancy might be seeking.

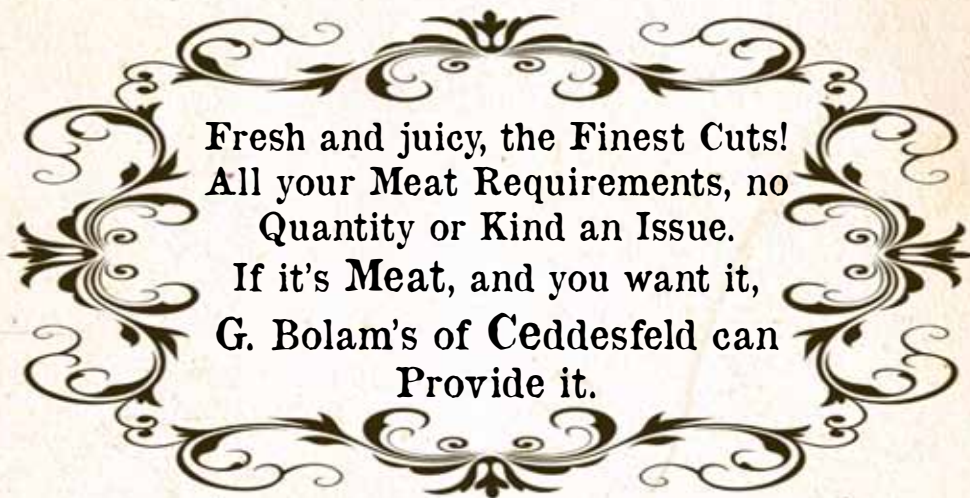
Whether there is any truth to these tales only time will tell. But this reporter fears that the darkness Northymbra has suffered under of recent years may not be behind us yet.

**Wanted; beasts of enterprise
and vision.** A technical mind is a requirement, and all applicants must be happy to get their paws dirty. Own tools and experience of precision work an advantage. Apply to T. Crum, Noble Fellowship of Scientifical Artisans.

Urgently sought; raptorial birds.

Job involves security work, watching over a site, possibly occasional trespasser repulsion. Stamina and vigilance a must.

If interested, leave contact details for H. Briarthorn or A. Snook, at the Three Bells.



Fresh and juicy, the Finest Cuts!
All your Meat Requirements, no
Quantity or Kind an Issue.

If it's Meat, and you want it,
G. Bolam's of Ceddesfeld can
Provide it.



1st to 7th
Winterfylleth

Weather continues fine; although Balmore suggests rains of fish possible just east of the Pennines. Unusual late growth; sprouts and shoots show abundant.

Bear-faced lies?

Although it is a fact that the bones of long-dead bears have been recovered many times from ancient caves and dens, most sensible beasts acknowledge that those terrifying giants died out aeons ago, and are thankful for it! So when we receive reports from northern Myrce, like the one related below, we find little credibility to them.

Apparently, a party of Moritasgan monks were travelling to Wyck along the Brockspath road. The road is mostly open, but passes briefly through woods just south of Twittering. One of their number left the road to answer a call of nature, but did not return. The rest of the monks waited, then began to search the local area, but found no sign of their colleague. However, all the monks claim to have heard deep rumbling growls, as if from the throat of some enormous beast, and to have seen huge scratch marks, high up on the tree trunks. They all swear that their story is true; but without any form of evidence, who can say what really happened to the missing monk?

There are those who claim bears still live in the Deepwoods; and that as we push the frontiers of civilisation further into those woods, we will find ourselves in conflict with those legendary monsters. Whatever the truth, it makes a good Samhain night story to scare the cubs, kits and pups!

Lady Jayne's Society news

Although the recent 'Clearance' of Warren Percy village was completely legal and quite frankly, no-one's business but that of Baron Grimjaw, it has lead to a number of complaints. Initially, the inhabitants (who, it should be pointed out, had received compensation for their inconvenience in accord with the law) were angry, but few in number and of no social standing, so their voices were largely ignored by right-thinking beasts. But recently they have secured the legal support of Mayburys and Company, the well known firm of Solicitors based in Eoferwic.

Of course, Melbor Maybury has a long standing grudge against Baron Grimjaw following the infamous 'Danston Affair'. Despite Maybury's acknowledged genius in matters legal, it seems there is little that could be done on behalf of the Warren Percy families; as stated, the matter was handle in full accord with the law. But clearly Melbor Maybury hopes to use the situation to cause as much public embarrassment to the Baron as is possible. It'll certainly be entertaining to watch!

Rumour has it that the engagement of Lady Salare Reynard to Lord Beaumaris has recently been broken off. Will this affect the future of the Dillendorf Agreement, as both families are key signatories?

The planned visit of Princess Lutrea of Britany to the court of the Othyrs has been postponed a second time, sources inform us. Originally planned for early 793, the first visit was stopped suddenly by the outbreak of the War of Storms.

Now, it seems the current difficulties surrounding the whereabouts of King Redwulf and the question of the succession have once again put a halt on any notion of the visit proceeding. With Princess Lutrea already rumoured to have expressed an interest in a meeting with Prince Dolemide of Aquitania it seems the prospect of both a Royal Wedding and the long hoped for Union of the Kingdoms are looking increasingly unlikely.

Still, looking on the sunny side, Prince Reinert is back on the market, ladies!

Barnaby Moorcroft has been seen taking several crates of books from his library to the Latimer house on Dunnidge Street. Perhaps there is substance to the whispers of insolvency surrounding the Moorcroft family?

It seems the planned development work at Ropemoor and Acle has been cancelled, although the reasons are unclear. Lord Dolan's land agent seems to have disappeared too; although whether the two events are related is as yet unclear.

The Foxhole Players

Just returned from their Tour of the South Country, where they performed before Barons and Nobles, earning Great Praise and Applause with their Incredible Dramatic Portrayals, both Comedic and Trajick, of the History of Our Great Nation, the Foxhole Players Announce to All that they will be Performing, for One Week Only, their New Play – The Lupines and the Othyrs; at the Civic Playhouse, Eastgate, The New Castle. Tickets available from the Box Office.



8th to 14th
Winterfylleth

Rain. Lots and lots of rain. Avoid low lying burrows, and steer clear of the Fens.

Wanted: Information leading to the whereabouts, capture, or execution of the notorious 'knights errant' known as 'Nate the Wanderer' and 'Grimnir One-eye' following their infamous interference in the recent events near Acle.

Trial of Strength

Garslom the Strong challenges all comers to a Trail of Strength! Lifting, throwing, wrestling and more. If you think you're strong, show the world! Entry forms available from the Almanack Office in Westgate Road.

Public Notice

The families of Ropemoor and Acle wish to offer their fond thanks and good wishes to those most noble Sirs, Nate the Wanderer and Grimnir One-eye, for their most wondrous assistance in the recent 'Acorn Affair'.

Public notice – Executions

Lawrence Shortpaw, beheaded for crimes too numerous to list.

Sworby Beck, hanged for Robbery on the King's Highways.

Corbyn Swift, beheaded for Treason.

A Visit to the College of Applied Hermetics and Wizardry

Bonita Brokentail

Magic; whether you see it as a blessing or a curse, there are few in Northymbra whose lives have not been touched by it in some way. It is often wild and dangerous, used with reckless abandon by those with little control or restraint, and the results can be deadly. Like any aspect of modern life, however, there are thankfully those in our enlightened society who make it their business to tame magic and make it into a tool for the benefit of all beasts.

I've been visiting the College of Applied Hermetics and Wizardry, here in the New Castle, to learn more about the mages who labour to increase our understanding and control of the elemental forces of magic.

I was met at the gates of the College by Drusby Longhop, a rabbit mage who was to serve as my guide for the day. Once we were inside Mage Longhop's office, I asked her to tell me exactly what it is that the College does.

'Magic is a natural force; like weather, or gravity. It follows predictable, regular laws, like any other natural force. It only becomes dangerous when beasts try to channel it through their

messy, complicated minds, and force it to work the way they want it to. Here at the College of Applied Hermetics and Wizardry, we regard that as confining magic, or binding it. So, instead, we seek to set magic free, to allow it to work according to its natural laws; magic unbound.'

As we spoke, Longhop laid various texts and diagrams on the desk between us, showing many complicated looking mathematical equations and charts. Apparently, these were meant to help me understand the magical process, but frankly did little to enlighten me. Seeing my confusion, Mage Longhop began to explain. 'All natural forces follow Laws; as a result, they can be understood through application of the greatest of the sciences; mathematics!'

The light of a true believer shining in her eyes, she continued 'Once you see the ways magic interacts with the world around it, and with the other natural forces, you can build a mathematical model which allows you predict and even direct its flow.'

There was a lot more of this, with reference to Burgess Numbers, and the Raith Equation, and other concepts of which I was equally ignorant. But Drusby Longhop was clearly enjoying herself, so I let her talk, uninterrupted, for the next hour and a half. The life of a roving reporter is one of great sacrifice.

As Mage Longhop finally paused to draw breath, I hurriedly interjected, asking if we could perhaps meet some of the Research Faculty. To my well-concealed relief, this request was happily granted. We left her office, and headed down the corridor to the research laboratories; the first door we came to was marked 'J. Bletchley, Dean of Auditory and Visual Manipulation.'

Longhop knocked, and we went through the door, into what appeared to be an empty room. With an exaggerated sigh, Longhop spoke; 'Jareth, for goodness' sake, it's only me!', and with a delicate popping noise, a small mouse became visible in the centre of the room.

I was introduced to Dean Jareth Bletchley, the mouse in question. 'I specialise in the field of manipulating people's perceptions, particularly with regards to illusion and concealment. My most stable magical manipulation is known as the Cloak of Concealment; it is now in wide use throughout Northymbra. The world is a dangerous place, and the ability to remain completely hidden is very valuable. It can be the only way to survive; or at least, the only way to ensure one's privacy.' And with that, the Dean vanished again.

We moved on down the corridor, and as we did so, there was a sudden rush of wind as a robed and cloaked fox swept past us at high speed.

I barely caught a rapid, high-pitched 'Sorryno-timetochat!' and she was gone. After an inquisitive glance at Mage Longhop, the rabbit said 'That was Jemima Van Rubel, our Professor of Chronomancy. She's of the opinion that life is too short, and there's always so much to do, so she developed her Acceleration spell a couple of years back. It's possible she's come up with some new magic since then, but none of us have been able to catch her long enough to ask.'

We soon reached another doorway, and through the open door, I could see a tall, thin badger of advanced years. The sign on the door read 'Morglum, Professor of Elementalism.'

The badger glanced up as we entered. 'This is the reporter, then? Damned waste of everybody's time, but as you're here, might as well get on with it I suppose. Very well, very well. I expect you want to know about Elementalism. Powerful stuff, the elements; sea water smashing at cliffs, winds tearing down trees, fires consuming all around. And there's magic flowing right along with all those things; it's there all the time.

All I do is find ways to let that power get to work. For example, my Fiery Blast spell. Fire energy always wants to burn, it's only things like lack of fuel or oxygen that stop it. My spell simply provides the right combination of factors to allow it to happen. The scientific application of magic, you see. Of course, it can be dangerous stuff to play around with.

That's why I was made Professor of Elementalism; they needed somebeast with years of experience, and a wise head. He glanced over at Mage Longhop, and gave an embarrassed cough. 'And because I like blowing things up, of course. Very well, that's all the time I can spare. Be off with you!'

And with that, we left.

As we walked on, Mage Longhop said 'I have a feeling that the others will be in the Training Room at the moment; it's where you generally find the three of them. They're unusually... physical, for mages.'

The Training Room turned out to be a large open chamber, with several tunnels running off it, and areas marked out with what appeared to be military training dummies, in various states of damage and disrepair.



15th to 21st Winterfylleth

Higher than normal rain fall levels will cause the low-lying marshes to expand well beyond their usual margins. Toads and frogs will be happy; farmers less so.

There were several students, with wands in one paw and thaumaturgical texts in the other; there was also a powerful looking female hare, slashing at the training dummies with a glowing blue blade, while a male cat lounged nearby, tail twitching playfully. As Drusby Longhop lead me over the pair, a kestrel flew down from the rafters and joined us.

Mage Longhop introduced the group to me; 'Gelwyn Mangarr, Dean of Harmonious Magic,' indicating the hare, 'Skreet Sangram, Professor of Applied Field Theories,' nodding to the kestrel, who was now engaged in preening her feathers, 'and finally Lokin Burramor, Dean of... actually, I'm not sure. What exactly is it you do around here, Burramor?'

The cat stretched lazily, yawned, and replied 'I have a very open brief. I do whatever I feel like doing. You wouldn't understand; it's a cat thing.'

Having explained why I was there, Mage Longhop asked the trio to give me examples of their work.

Burramor began: 'Perhaps my best known spell is my Distant Fracturing; it allows a mage to break an item from some distance away. This has many benefits.

For instance, if a friend was caught in a trap, Burramor could break that trap and free them, even if he could not physically reach them.'

Sangram interrupted drily, 'Or, if you wished to break the branch someone was perched on while they slept, but stay hidden around the corner to avoid... repercussions, that would be another use, wouldn't it, Burramor?'

'Burramor cannot imagine why such an example would occur to you, but yes, it would work in that situation too,' the cat replied.

Sangram continued, 'My work principally focuses on forming and re-shaping energy. I'm particularly proud of my Portable Protector; when I fly, I used to be vulnerable to attacks by arrows and slingshot. My Portable Protector spell means I don't have that worry any more.'

At this point, the hare finally stopped hacking away at the now sadly reduced training dummy and turned to me. 'My area of expertise is Harmonious Magic. Most magical practitioners struggle to cast spells while wearing any kind of armour; the leather, wood or metal components somehow affecting the clean flow of magical energy. I believe the problem is with the mage, not the magic. I design spells to work for the more combat orientated kind of mage.'

My most wide-spread spell is my Mystical Blade; it's a sword formed from pure magical energy, and it is far more potent than a regular blade.'

She paused to glance over at Burramor, then continued 'I developed the spell after my swords kept breaking unexpectedly at inopportune moments. I have no idea why this kept happening, but the Mystical Blade spell gives me an unbreakable weapon.'

Burramor seemed to have found something intensely interesting about his fingernails at this point.

And with that, my visit to the College of Applied Hermetics and Wizardry had come to its end. It was time to leave those noble, heroic beasts to labour on, bringing the light of scientific magic to our great Kingdom.



22nd to 28th Winterfylleth

Electrical storm, with a sudden downpour around the sixth bell. A good time to feast on earthworms.

By the third day, Moon shows full, but behind thick cloud. An auspicious time to plant the more esoteric herbs.

The Question of King Redwulf

We're still trying to track down the source of last quarter's rumours regarding the alleged 'abduction' of noble King Redwulf. As you may remember, the claim was made that he was taken from Bebbanburg castle, and is being held at a secret location in Northymbra.

The Royal Correspondent in Bebbanburg assures us that His Majesty is simply on pilgrimage, and any stories to the contrary are false, and indeed treasonous.

Of course, locating the origin of the rumour and what it is based on will be all the more difficult with threats of treason in the air. But we'll keep investigating!



29th Winterfylleth
to 5th Blotmonath

Freezing fog. Thick, cold, wet; deadening sound, clouding vision. All are recommended to stay at home by a nice fire, unless you have nefarious business to attend to, in which case, this weather will suit perfectly.

Getting to know Northymbra. Part four, Symbols and insignia.

Contributed by Jerzey Spaydtail.

Editor's note - this piece is contributed by a freelance journalist, and any comments and views expressed within are not those of Sternpaw's Almanack, and are not endorsed by the publishers.

Any legal claims arising from this article should be addressed to Rupert Grole Esq, Bole House, Dunholm.

Northymbra is a Kingdom riven by factions; the Royal family of the Othyrs, backed by the Barons, claim sovereignty over the land, which the Freebeasts dispute. All the while, the large numbers of beasts living wild and the many bands of rogues and vagabonds offer allegiance to neither party.

But Northymbra's divisions run deeper still. Within the ranks of the Royal Army, many differing Orders of Knighthood compete for standing and royal favour, and the Barons are always seeking greater power and authority; among the coalitions of the Freebeasts, there are many different families and groups with competing interests, some taking a stand openly in the Council halls, others working in the shadows, using blackmail, betrayal and a

poisoned blade. The many wild-living beasts too have their own clans and allegiances, from tribal groups to cult affiliations. Religion plays a role as well; there are many holy orders, and in addition to their priests, they often send agents out into the world to carry out the work of their deity, as they interpret it.

Many of these different Orders, groups and families have their own symbols and insignia, to help members identify one another. We will examine a few of these below, as part of our ongoing 'Getting to know Northymbra' series.

Clerical Orders

The Moritasguns

Serving Moritasgus, the Great Badger, this holy Order is focused on healing, both physically and spiritually. The Order famously offers healing to all, regardless of the race, religion or political leaning of the beast in need. As a result of this, the Order's temple are considered sacrosanct by all the major groups of Northymbra, and there are few beasts who will harm a Moritasgun Brother, for fear of losing access to their healing abilities.



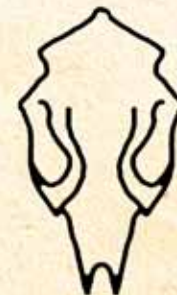
The Servants of the Horned God

This mysterious group serve the Horned God, a deity from the distant past of Northymbra, scarcely remembered by most, but spoken of with a touch of fear by the few. What exactly their goals are, no-one is sure, but it seems unlikely that plans made in the shadows could ever have good intentions. Few beasts have tried to learn more of the Servants; fewer still have survived to tell of it...



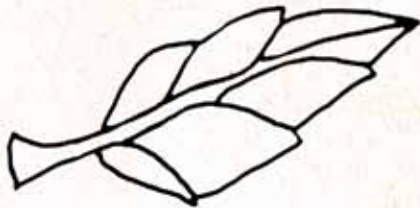
The Mortans

Dedicated to Mortay, the Keeper of The Gates, this Order presides over funeral rites, and are frequently seen on battlefields. Good or evil are irrelevant concepts to the Mortans; death is the one constant, and how you get there seems unimportant in the face of eternity. Many beasts will seek to have a dead loved one blessed by the Mortans prior to internment, regardless of what beliefs the deceased may have held in life.



Children of the Green Mother

The natural world, whether riotous Spring and Summer growth, or the fall and dying back of Autumn and Winter, is all are celebrated by the followers of the Green Mother. The Children believe sanctity is achieved through living in harmony with the natural world; they dislike technology, and would not use advanced equipment like the new guns, or indeed the printing press this booklet was created by, for example. Many of the Children even avoid towns and cities, with their large, 'unnatural' buildings.



6th to 12th Blotmonath

Strong winds from the East will cause low temperatures; birds of all kinds would be advised to fly carefully, as gusts may change direction unexpectedly. Night flyers should watch for possible wing-icing, as wind-chill and precipitation combine to cause treacherous conditions.

The Bounteous Harvest

This Order serves and worships the embodiment of fertility. A good harvest is vital to the survival of so many in Northymbra, and the Bounteous Harvest are dedicated to ensuring that, through their worship, and through practical works in the fields. They provide charitable relief in times of poor growth, and their Priests are often called upon to bless crops by devout farmers.

Despite being highly visible and well regarded in Northymbra, their actual beliefs and rituals are closely guarded secrets. Some believe they worship the sun, others an aspect of the Green Mother; what the truth is, only the Order's Inner Circle know.



Archery Tournament

Robyn Hode invites all beasts skilled in the noble art of archery to attend a challenge of bowcraft.

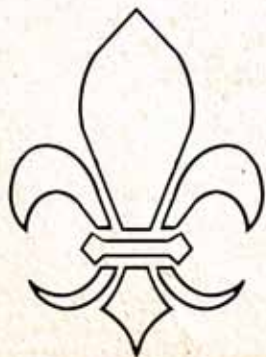
Tourney to be held at the the Old Butts, Barnsdale.

Knightly Orders

The Order of the Lily

The Lily is one of the oldest knightly Orders; using the Fleur de Lys as its symbol, typically coloured white, or occasionally gold for higher ranking knights. The Order is principally tasked with enforcing justice, but varying interpretations of this have lead to much argument and even infighting within the Order. There are those believe justice is the rigorous application of law, even where the law itself might be considered unjust. Others feel their duty is to promote fairness; ignoring social rank and class, taking up arms on behalf of the weak and oppressed. Most knights fall between these extremes, and few agree completely as to exactly what the Order represents.

Over the years, the Order has seen splinter groups separate off; two are the Order of Our Martyred Lady and the Order of the Crown. They still use the Fleur de Lys, but the Martyred Lady colours theirs red, and the Crown usually use blue, purple or black.



The Order of the Chalice

Focussed on reclaiming the fabled Lost Chalice of Albion, this order has a chalice as its symbol. The Order's knights often wander, hoping inspiration from the events and people they encounter will offer clues as to the Chalice's whereabouts.



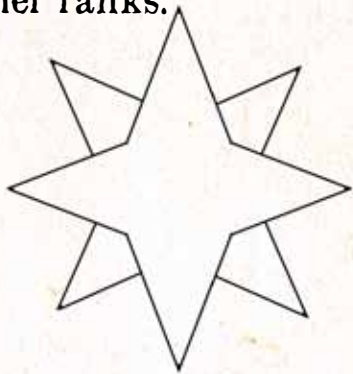
The Order of the Cleansing Flame

Dour, puritanical and militant, the knights of the Cleansing Flame use a burning sword blade, or a simple flame as their motif. They typically distrust and despise those who use magic; a great many witch hunters were trained by this Order.



The Order of the Star

A polar opposite to the Cleansing Flame, the Order of the Star embrace magic; believing it to be a fundamental part of the world, and that only those who are able to wield it are truly at one with reality. Many of their knights fight unarmoured, so as to best benefit from their sorcerous powers, but a sizeable number are of Paladin rank, and can fight and cast equally well in full plate harness. Their symbol is a star, usually four pointed, but eight pointed for the higher ranks.



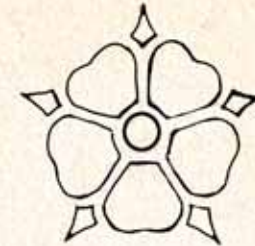
The Kindred

The holy order known as the Children of the Green Mother train soldiers as well as performing their religious duties. The Kindred are these soldiers; often fighting lightly armoured as rangers and scouts, but equally capable of holding the line in a pitched battle. They use a leaf as their symbol.



The Order of the Ebon Rose

Using a black rose as their symbol, this Order gives itself a very open brief, getting involved when and where it wants to, without concern for the how other groups might view this. Whether they are heroes or villains is very much down to individual perspective, and the politics of the Order's current Grand Master...



Fox Families and associations

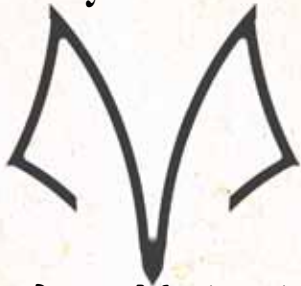
De'ath

The De'ath family are often on the outskirts of fox society; unpredictable and dangerous even by the low standards of Fox society. The De'ath bloodline seems cursed with madness, and behaviour that would be considered unacceptable, even horrifying, from anyone else, is tolerated because of the family's long history and vast wealth. They use a knife as their symbol.



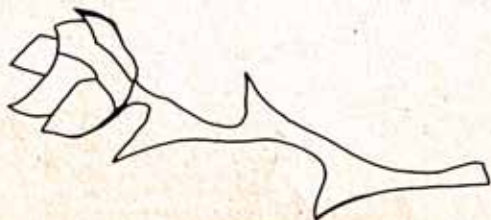
Reynard

The oldest of the fox families, the Reynards control an enormous fortune, and have an arrogance to match. They believe themselves to be the embodiment of the fox, and all other fox families to be inferior. They often hire outside help, in the form of rats and weasels, to carry out tasks they feel are beneath them, which includes almost everything. The family's Lord, Guillame Reynard, has barely stirred from his home in the last dozen years, doing nothing more than giving spoken orders to his underlings; yet his rule is absolute, and none in the family will challenge him. Not yet, anyway... Their symbol is a stylised fox head.



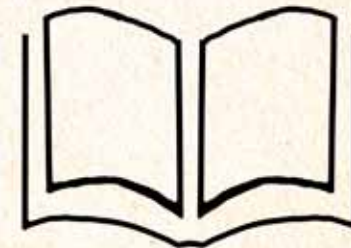
The Thorns

Sometimes an awkward but untouchable person needs teaching an elegant lesson, or an unstealable item needs to be stolen... that's when you reach out to the Thorns. No matter how impossible the job seems, the Thorns have the expertise to get it done. Just make sure you have the funds available; they don't take kindly to time-wasters...



Latimer

The Latimers seek to control information and knowledge; they have both the largest libraries and the largest collection of secrets, sins and other dirt on the noble families, stretching back to the earliest days of the Kingdom. With so many official records and archives getting lost or destroyed during the War of Storms, the Latimers are often the only place to find needed information, and even the Royals Courts will turn to them secretly from time to time. Whether you want to research forbidden magic, blackmail a Lord, or find the plans for the sewers beneath a Banking House, the Latimers can help you. For a price, of course.



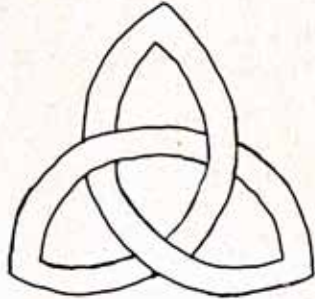
The Black Paw

When the lesson needed doesn't require subtlety but a blunt instrument, the Black Paw are the first port of call. From elite assassins to groups of simple thugs, they can provide bespoke violence to suit any occasion. If you want to exchange coin for blood, they are the beasts you need.



The Fellowship

Not all foxes are from famous families; and even those that are may prefer to serve themselves. The Fellowship are a group of like-minded beasts, largely foxes, but with many other races involved, who work in a loose alliance to further their own ends. Personal advancement is the creed of the Fellowship, but between them, they cover all manner of skills and specialities, and will help one another for mutual benefit.



Wild Clans

Hillfolk

In the Highlands and the northern Borders, the Clans of the Hillfolk live a tough existence in a harsh environment. They are most often seen in Northymbra on one of the many raids they carry out, although a few travel to trade as well, or even to seek employment as mercenaries.

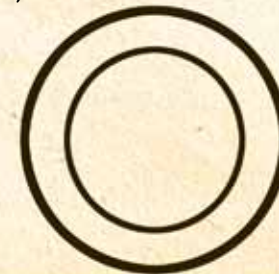
They are often thought of as hard, fearsome beasts, lacking in social niceties and refinement, but the reality is that they have a highly developed culture of their own which respects

stoicism and endurance over fancy manners and clothing. Their skill and ferocity in battle, combined with their inherent sense of honour, means the symbol of the Thistle is treated with wary respect throughout Northymbra.



Old Ones

Based around a group of toad shaman, who have passed oral traditions down for hundreds of generations, the Old Ones see the advancement of civilisation as a great evil, taking them away from their connection to the land. They believe that beasts who cut themselves off from the natural world, with their great stone cities and alchemy, are surrendering their very souls, and tearing the heart from the land. They seek to tap into the power of the land, attempting to recover lost rituals which they believe will ultimately cleanse Northymbra, destroying the towns and cities, and all those who chose to dwell in them. Their symbol is a circle; often two circles, one inside the other.



The Claw

In the Ironstone Hills, the largest rats control vast groups of beasts. They poured forth during the War of Storms, bringing destruction to much of the east coast, before the combine forces of the northern Barons brought them to heel. Although huge numbers perished, in the deep fastnesses below the Hills, new rat clans are growing again.

And the largest of these clans is The Claw; a vast and growing army of warrior rats, weasels and stoats, with crudely forged armour and weapons, preparing to bring the shadow of war to Northymbra once more.



Reapers

The Reapers are a little-known, shadowy group of assassins. Their targets vary widely, seeming to follow no particular plan; a noble Lord, then a mere scullery maid, and next an apothecary, for example. At each killing, a parchment inscribed with seven words in an unknown script is left with the victim.

There is no known way to contact or hire the Reapers though, so who or what they are

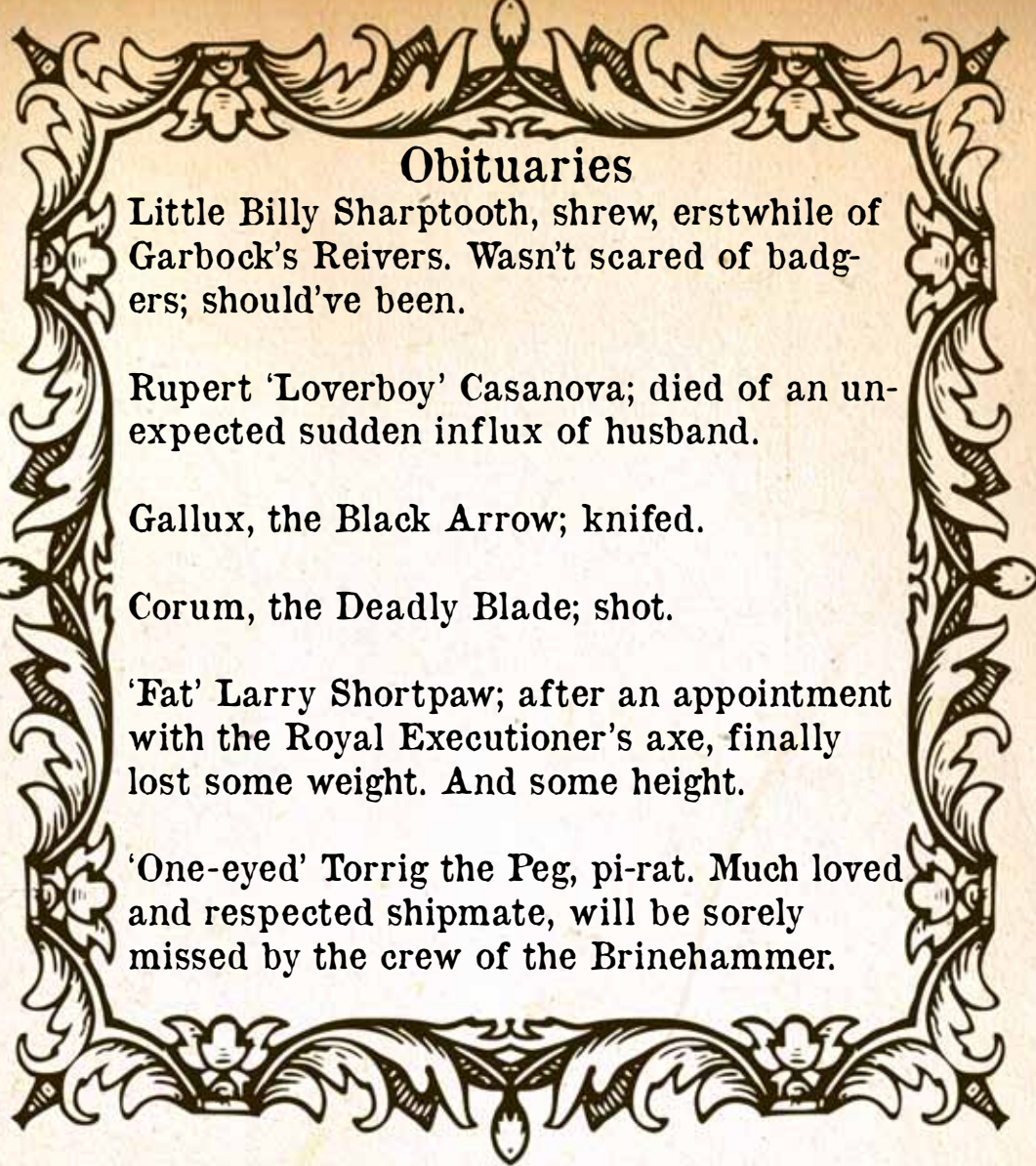
serving is unknown. Certainly, no-one who has tried to contact the group has ever spoken of what they learned. Or indeed, ever been seen again...



Night Wings

Mostly birds of prey, the Night Wings are a loose group, covering much of Northymbra and the surrounding lands. They generally keep to themselves, operating as individuals, but their code means that they do not compete with one another, or fight amongst themselves. Each of them has a territory, agreed by all, and keeps rigidly to its borders.





Obituaries

Little Billy Sharptooth, shrew, erstwhile of Garbock's Reivers. Wasn't scared of badgers; should've been.

Rupert 'Loverboy' Casanova; died of an unexpected sudden influx of husband.

Gallux, the Black Arrow; knifed.

Corum, the Deadly Blade; shot.

'Fat' Larry Shortpaw; after an appointment with the Royal Executioner's axe, finally lost some weight. And some height.

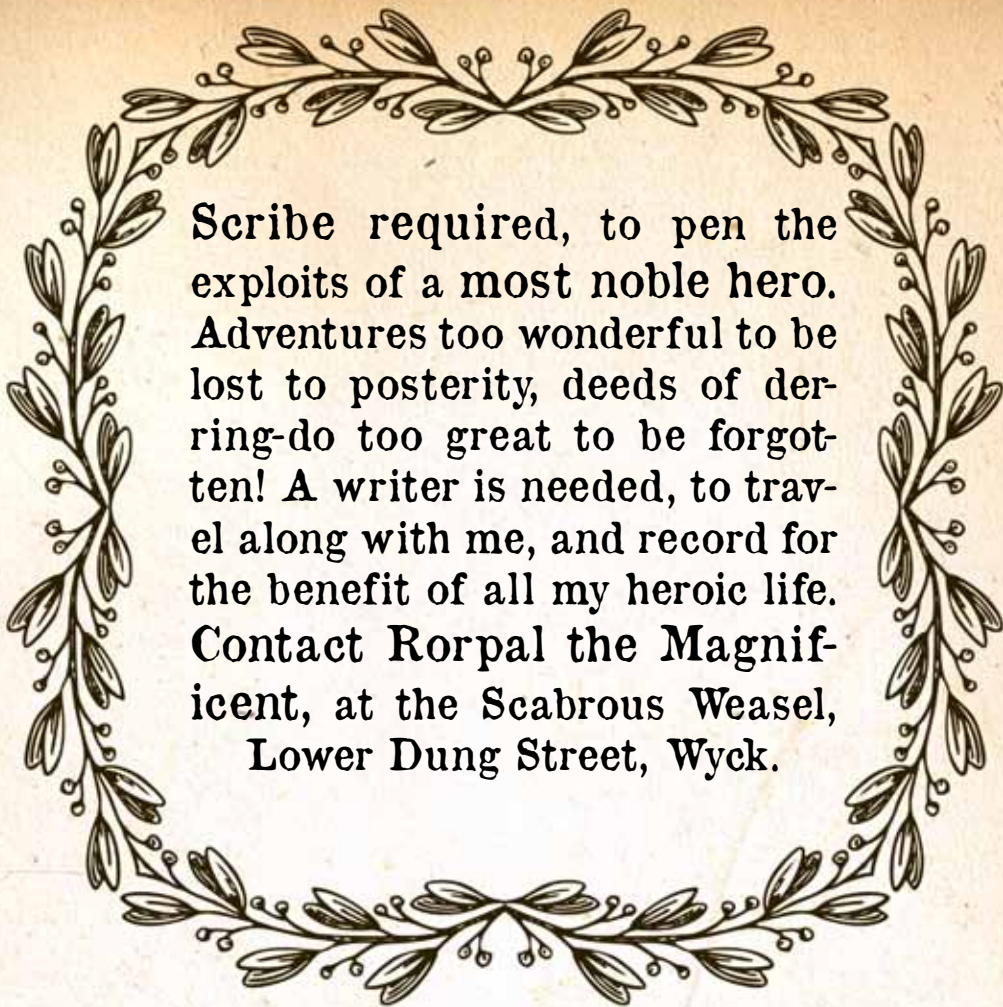
'One-eyed' Torrig the Peg, pi-rat. Much loved and respected shipmate, will be sorely missed by the crew of the Brinehammer.

For Sale; one eye-patch and one peg-leg, barely used, plus one reasonably fresh rat corpse, ideal for medical research or a cheap way to bulk out a stew. Apply to the Brinehammer, docked in Hertepol harbour.

Brief News

Complaints have been made of unsafe living conditions in the Lower Town district of Dunholm. A spokesbeast for the Brethren of the Working Paw said 'Absentee landlords charge ruinous rents on tumbledown hovels and feast while the masses suffer and starve!' Thus far, we have been unable to trace ownership of any of the slum streets or the properties on them. But while the owners are suspiciously hard to track down, their rent collection agents are all too visible due to their large size and uncompromising nature.

A delegation of the Priesthood of Gofannon are soon to be travelling from Gwynedd through Myrce and on to the Cathedral at Dunholm, bringing with them the fabled Anvil of Rheged, which is said to be the very anvil used by the Smith-God to forge the Seven Swords and the Shining Spear. The delegation will pass through Eoferwic and Catrick on the way to Dunholm, and the Anvil will be on display for a short while at all three towns. Pilgrims are invited to attend services, during which the Anvil will be struck as part of the Rites of Gofannon. Many blacksmiths and craftsbeasts are expected to travel in from the surrounding areas to attend.



Scribe required, to pen the exploits of a most noble hero. Adventures too wonderful to be lost to posterity, deeds of derring-do too great to be forgotten! A writer is needed, to travel along with me, and record for the benefit of all my heroic life. Contact Rorpal the Magnificent, at the Scabrous Weasel, Lower Dung Street, Wyck.



13th to 19th Blotmonath

Balmore indicates a total eclipse of the sun, blood-red skies and thunder with the howling voice of the moon-wolf; or, possibly, weather continues fine.

Bertram's Efficacious Liniment

Has the vigour of youth left you? Do your ears droop? Is the bushiness of your tail a distant memory? **TOO MANY BEASTS** allow Time to **ROB** them of their lust for Life! But a simple application of Bertram's Efficacious Liniment to any affected areas will provide **RELIEF** and often **REVERSAL** of symptoms! Write to Jonsan & Jonsan, Ledecester, Myrce.



20th to 26th Blotmonath

A sudden increase in spider webs points to a warm, dry spell over the next few days.

Bright, sunny conditions will persist for several days; light winds will make flying easy, but digging will be increasingly difficult as the ground dries and hardens.

An interview with Baron Grimmjaw
by
Bonita Brokentail

Although Northymbra has a Royal family who have ruled the Kingdom now for over one hundred and thirteen years, the Family of Othyr are supported by many other nobles, most particularly the Barons.

The Barons are appointed to dispose the King's Justice in the towns and lands under their personal control, and are effectively rulers of small 'kingdoms' that together make up Northymbra as a whole. One of the most powerful of the Barons, Rufus Grimmjaw, consented to meet with our humble reporter to give Sternpaw's Almanack an exclusive interview.

I attended Baron Grimmjaw at one of his townhouses in Eoferwic; to my surprise I was met initially by one Marneus Scrope, a stoat, who introduced himself as Baron Grimmjaw's General Solicitor. He explained to me what a great privilege I was being given, and that the Baron's patronage and condescension were not to be scorned nor judged lightly, and that I should show appropriate deference and respect in both my manner of address, and the subject matter of my questions. Thus informed, I was allowed to proceed with the interview, although clearly against Mister Scrope's better judgment.

I was shown into a nearby room, where the Baron sat waiting in an ornate chair. Baron Rufus Grimmjaw is a large, powerful hound, well built and imposing; although the presence of his solicitor hovering by my shoulder was little less unnerving. However, it takes more than obvious hostility from an interviewee to discourage one of Sternpaw's Almanack's reporters!

Once introductions had been made, I began with my questions, the transcript of which is recorded below:

I opened with 'Baron, I imagine your position carries heavy responsibilities; could you perhaps tell me a little about what your duties involve?'

Baron Rufus Grimmjaw replied 'There's not much to it; most of the time, the day to day running of my estates is handled by my assistants. They know all the ins and outs of business and what-not; it's not really the kind of thing a Baron should be wasting his time on.'

'What sort of thing does take up your time then?' I asked.

'During wartime, I have my own personal army to attend to, knights, retainers and the like, as well as the mass of common soldiery. They need leading properly, a firm paw, strong discipline.'

'But of course, we are not currently at war, are we?' I responded. 'What occupies you in peacetime?'

'Well, there always seems to be something to do. I'm constantly going from one place to another, various dinners, banquets and the like. Then there's the hunting, of course. I'm out hunting most days. Sometimes I have to look in on the local King's Court sessions, give a ruling on anything that's too difficult for the local magistrate to handle. Of course, Scrope usually stands in for me when that happens though; what with the feasting and the hunting, there's not much time left for the rest.'

'I... see. So, it's a pretty demanding schedule?'

'Oh yes, not much time to relax. But noblesse oblige, and all that, of course!'

'If we could touch on a more specific area of your responsibilities, perhaps? Say, those beasts who are resident on your lands – the tenant farmers and the like?'

'Well, as I say, those matters are handled by my land agents, so I don't really have much knowledge of those sort of things.'

'But surely when a major event occurs, such as, to pick a particular event entirely at random, the recent evictions during the clearance of

Warren Percy? Surely such a large change in the dispositions of your holdings could only happen with your personal knowledge?'

At this point, the Baron looks over to Mister Scrope, who appears to be having some sort of coughing fit.

Baron Grimmjaw answers 'Sometimes lands need to be cleared to allow for a change of use. It's all part of land management, and nothing out of the ordinary. I was aware that it was happening of course, but don't involve myself in the particulars.'

I continued 'Yet there are many who have questioned both the purpose and method of the clearance, are there not?'

The Baron does not reply; after a few moments, Mister Scrope does so, on his behalf. 'The clearances were carried out in line with Feudal Law, and the Ordinances of Ownership and Fealty; all necessary payments and rehousing were made accordingly. The matter is purely one of land management, and any other suggestion is merely baseless speculation. Such speculation may also be considered slanderous, and would be dealt with in whatever manner we deem fitting.'

'Yet I have been told by a number of the inhabitants that no payments or provision for

rehousing were made to them?’

Mister Scrope answered again. ‘As I said, all necessary payments were made in accord with the law. A number of the tenants were not entitled to such payments, due to their not being registered on the County Rolls.’

‘But surely the County Rolls are required to be up to date by King’s Law? Isn’t that part of the Baron’s responsibilities?’

‘Alas, many records were lost during the War of Storms; the Baron cannot be held responsible for the ravages of war now, can he?’

During this exchange, Baron Grimjaw was lounging in his chair, barely even paying attention, and his solicitor was sticking rigidly to the official story. Clearly, I was not going to get any fresh answers on the Warren Percy Clearances. I decided to switch to a different line of questioning.

‘Baron, can I ask your opinion on the recent disappearance of King Redwulf?’

The Baron looked up alertly at this; it was obviously a subject which interested him. ‘Word from the palace is that he’s gone away on a pilgrimage. If so, his timing isn’t good; the War of Storms has left the Kingdom in turmoil, and it needs a firm paw, someone responsible in charge.’

‘The Prince Regent seems to be handling matters well enough, surely?’

The Baron snorted at that, and was about to reply, when Mister Scrope suffered another mysterious coughing fit.

After a moment’s reflection, the Baron said ‘Of course, young Othyr’s doing a fine job, and has my full support.’

I tried again. ‘But there are those who feel that the House of Othyr has been weakened too much; that it might be time for a change of rulership. Where do you stand on that?’

‘As I said, the Prince Regent has my full support.’

‘Isn’t it true that your own family, the Lupines, used to rule the Kingdom, before losing out to the Othyr’s in the Third Civil War?’

Then Baron answered immediately ‘We’re an ancient lineage, descended from wolves! We were kings in Northymbra. And we should’ ‘This interview is over,’ Scrope interjected, cutting the Baron off in mid-flow, ‘and I would remind you, before you leave, Miss Broketail, of our Kingdom’s strict slander and defamation laws. Good day.’

And with that, a servant appeared, and I was rapidly ushered out.



Rogan's Patent Ear Straighteners


Bent ears? Floppy ears? One ear standing taller than the other? Try Rogan's Patent Ear Straighteners – available in sizes to suit both rabbit and hare. Order before Modranicht to receive a FREE set of Ear Stretchers – Guaranteed to add Length where you need it most!

Contact Rogan's Mechanical Health Devices, Cheapside, Morpeth.

Need a problem resolving in a hurry? Contact J. Widestripe & Son, purveyors of bespoke violence.

Arguments ended, disputes settled, unwelcome guests removed.

Mole-based issues a specialty.



Have you heard of the Paw of Glory? This Fabled Artefact has a Dark and fearful History! Able, it is Claimed, to command beasts to Sleep, to render all Paralysed, to cause Darkness to cover all but its Bearer, to Unlock all doors, and much more Besides!

The only known remaining Paw is now held in the Collections of the Museum of Whitbye; but for just 5 pennies, you can purchase our New, Illustrated Booklet – The Paw of Glory! Which contains a Full and Unexpurgated description of the History, Uses and Legends associated with the Paw.

You will also read Full details of How to Create your Very Own Paw of Glory! Enterprising individuals and those with a Penchant for the Arcane cannot afford to miss this Opportunity!

Contact the Redfern Press at Scar's Burgh for details.

Speculations on the Warren Percy Clearances

One of the most notorious events of recent months is the Clearances of the village of Warren Percy. While Sternpaw's Almanack maintains a position of strict neutrality, it should be noted that various other authorities have made speculations upon the methods and purposes of the Clearances, and we have a duty to report those.

The facts are that during the second week of Solmonath earlier this year, land agents appointed by Baron Rufus Grimjaw arrived unannounced at the village of Warren Percy and began systematically evicting the entirety of the village and the surrounding farms. No reasons were given, beyond a legal notice stating 'Land Management on behalf of the landlord' being pinned to the village marketplace. Within a few hours, all the tenants were out of their homes, with their belongings in packs, or on wheelbarrows and handcarts, being directed down the road. Where they were to go, they had no idea. No rehousing was offered, and only a very few of the oldest inhabitants, who were registered on the local Moritasgan Church Rolls received the legally required payment. Since then, some of the evicted have been taken in by relatives; others are surviving on the charity of various Almshouses and Workhouses. Still others, the younger, tougher beasts, have taken to haunting the surrounding woods, living the life of rogues and vagabonds.

The village itself appears to be abandoned; there were reports of new arrivals, with covered carts filled with who knows what, entering the village in the days following the Clearance. Since then though, the area has become considerably more dangerous, with criminal elements in the woods around the village.

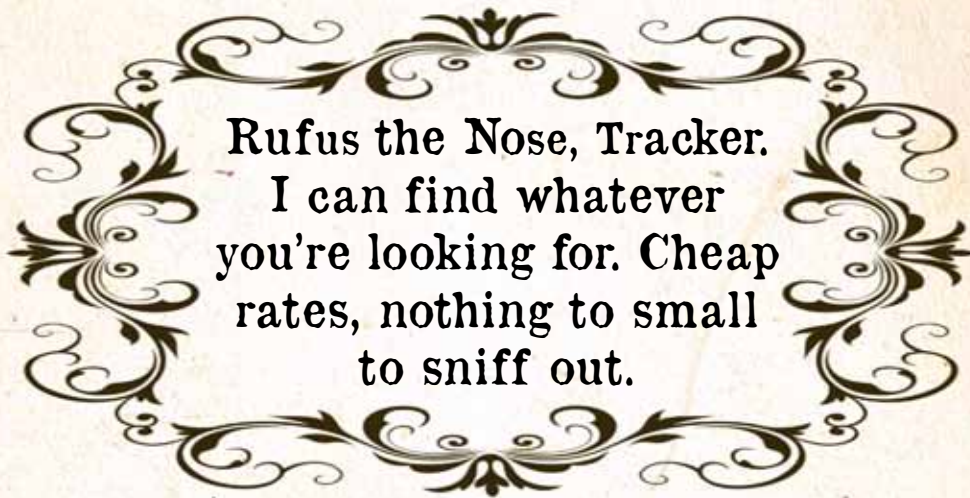
Some have suggested that the criminal elements are not, in fact, the displaced inhabitants turned to a life of brigandage. Instead, they say that the 'criminals' are trained soldiers, perhaps in the pay of the landowner, Baron Grimjaw. Also, some say that there is no possible 'land management' reason for the Clearance; that the Baron must want the village empty for a specific purpose. Certainly, it appears no further work is being carried out at the village. When questioned, a representative for the Baron stated that the area had recently been subject to a most noxious contagion, and was currently under quarantine. Work would begin again once the area was considered safe.

So, we have an entire village emptied; a party of beasts went in, but have not been seen coming out again. Rumours of contagion. And no way to safely enter the village, thanks to a sudden increase in criminal violence in the nearby area. What exactly is going on in Warren Percy, we do not know. But it certainly suspicious. If you have any information, or have been affected by the Clearances, please contact our office in The New Castle.

For sale – one fine steel breast-plate; good condition, excellent protection.

One careless owner, small hole in the upper left, easy fix.

Contact Mr. B. at the Rose Bush Inn



Rufus the Nose, Tracker.

I can find whatever you're looking for. Cheap rates, nothing too small to sniff out.



27th Blotmonath
to 2nd Aerrayulla

A good time to sow beets; although the root-chewers will also be abundant. A decoction of Galingale poured over the ground may help.

Beasts Unite! The disgraceful Actions of Baron Grimmjaw in the Notorious Clearing of Warren Percy cannot go Unavenged! The Brethren of the Working Paw are Preparing to take a Stand! Join us, Brothers and Sisters, as we March to strike a Blow against the Tyranny of the Noble Classes! Blood will Flow as the Downtrodden Masses Rise! Together we are Unstoppable!

Meetings at the ninth bell, every Donnersdaeg, at no.8 Clutterstug Lane, Slodden. Tea and biscuits provided.

Madam Rosalyn – fortunes told, lies uncovered, destinies revealed. Meet me at the sign of The Disgruntled Owl, when Lord Luna shines full in the sky above.

Missing; one King, answers to the name 'Redwulf'. If found, please return to The Castle, Bebbanburg.

Dear Uncle Tom...

Relationships and advice given by our resident expert Wildcat, Big Tom 'Slasher' MacDeth

Dear Tom,

I'm having a dispute with my neighbour; he's a mole, and although we normally get on well together, every few days he accidentally pops up in my garden, often singing raucously. I appreciate he doesn't have much sense of direction while tunnelling, but it is ruining the peace of my garden, as well as my lawn. What do you suggest?

Concerned, of Dingley Burrows.

Dear Concerned,

I can easily understand how annoying it must be to have your neighbour pop up like that. I've found the best way to handle such matters is to take a long steel spike, and as soon as you detect a mole hill forming on your lawn, thrust forcefully downwards into it. This method ensures the problem goes away permanently, and has the added bonus of not disturbing your peace; there is very little noise involved, usually nothing more than a crunch and a brief, agonised squeak.

Dear Tom,

I'm a proud mother to a gaggle of beautiful cubs. I love them dearly, and want only the best for them. But lately I am finding it difficult to control them, and they rarely do what I say, and

it's all but impossible to get them to go to bed on time! I've tried threatening to smack their little bottoms; I've tried bribing them with cakes and treats. Neither approach seems to be working. Can you help me? I'm at my wit's end! Distressed, of Pudding Norton.

Dear Distressed,

I suspect the problem is that you need an approach which combines both bribery and threats for best results. A time-honoured tradition with the young is to tell them the story of the tooth fairy. How this fuzzy little critter will come and collect any teeth left under the pillow, and leaves a silver penny in the tooth's place. The little ones will be fascinated.

Then, take a cub in one paw, a pair of pliers in the other, and start pulling. I guarantee it'll cost you no more than three silver pennies' worth of teeth before they'll be begging to do anything you say.



3rd to 9th Aerrayulla

A south wind brings warmth and moisture, and the fish will bite more willingly.

Dear Tom,

I have been watching a mouse for months now; he is handsome, dashing, muscular and charming. I flatter myself that I am not unattractive, yet I find myself quite unable to attract his attention. I wonder if I am being too subtle in my approaches, but I fear acting in an un-ladylike manner. Yet I simply cannot curb my ardent admiration and love; I must have his heart!
Cecille M, of The New Castle

Dear Cecille,

I quite understand your desire; he sounds delicious! I would not wish you to act in a manner ill befitting a lady, but in cases such as this, the direct approach is often the best one. Dress in your finest, go straight to him, and once you are face to face, let your passions guide your actions.

Just remember, ribcages can be notoriously difficult to crack. If you absolutely must have his heart, I suggest a swift cut across the abdomen, then reach in and up. The heart will be easy to locate, as it will be beating violently at this point, in a desperate attempt to extend your beloved's miserable existence. Have fun!

The Bewcastle Ironpaws vs the Gisburgh Hammers

The Shinty season reaches its climax with the Grand Final, to be held at Bearepark Showground, outside Dunholm on the third Laugendaeg of Brahmounath. Tickets 3 pennies each.

Lonely hearts


Boar brock, 26, own sett, all his teeth, WLTM sow, 20-25, with GSOH. Must enjoy worms, moles and foraging in the Old Wood after sundown.

Black Rat, youngish, considered handsome by some, WltM Rat, Black or Brown, for fun and frolics, leading to long term relationship. Must be a keen homemaker, and be interested in bearing and raising a family. Knowledge of the Inner Workings of the Secret Rites of the Second Seal of Muzardum and the Associated Mystical Practices a definite plus.




10th to 16th
Aerrayulla

An early frost will damage new shoots and roots, unless well mulched or covered with sacking. Expect three frosty mornings, to be followed by showers, then sun, then showers, a frost, more sun, and a heavy down-pour.



Published by the
Worshipful Guild
of
Fabulators
Westgate Road, The New
Castle, the Kingdom of
Northymbra.



Sternpaw's Almanack Staff

Captain Garrick Sternpaw, retired. Hare.
Editor in chief.

Lady Jayne Reynard. Fox.
Society news.

Bonita Broketail. Blackbird.
Roving reporter.

Big Tom 'Slasher' MacDeth. Wildcat.
Relationship advice and problem solving.

Miss Ann Thrope. Shrew. No fixed brief.