



A Guide to the Shire

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for

The One Ring

Role-playing Game

Author Credits

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- The Shire -

The Shire refers to an area settled exclusively by Hobbits and largely removed from the goings-on in the rest of Middle-earth. It is located in the northwest of the continent, in the large region of Eriador and the old Kingdom of Arnor.

A NOTE ON TIMEFRAME

This guide refers to the Shire circa TA 2998. At different periods in time the locations and details herein will likely vary.

GEOGRAPHY

The Shire measures 40 leagues (120 miles) from the Far Downs in the west to the Brandywine Bridge in the east, and 50 leagues (150 miles) from the northern moors to the marshes in the south.

The original territory of the Shire was bounded on the east by the Baranduin River, on the north by uplands rising to the old centre of Arnor, on the west by the White Downs, and on the south by marshland south of the River Shirebourne. After the original settlement, hobbits also expanded to the east into Buckland between the Baranduin and the Old Forest.

The Shire was originally divided into four Farthings, the outlying land of Buckland being formally added later. Within the Farthings there are some smaller unofficial clan homelands: the Took's nearly all live in or near Tuckborough in Tookland, for instance. A Hobbit surname often indicates where the family came from: Samwise Gamgee's last name derives from Gamwich, where the family originated. Buckland was named for the Oldbucks (later called the Brandybucks).

The Shire is a small but beautiful and fruitful land, beloved by its inhabitants. The Hobbits have an extensive agricultural system in the Shire but are not industrialised. The landscape includes small pockets of forest and various supplies are produced in the Shire, including cereal crops, fruit, wood and pipe-weed.

REGIONS OF THE SHIRE

The Three-Farthing Stone marks the tri-point where the borders of the East Farthing, West Farthing and South Farthing of the Shire come together, by the East Road.

The North Farthing

The North farthing is the least populous part of the Shire. It is where most of the Shire's barley crop is grown, and the only farthing where heavy snow is common. The historic Battle of Greenfields was fought here.

- **Long Cleeve** is the home of a splinter of the Took clan, descendants of Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took known as the North-Tooks, who settled here after the Battle of Greenfields
- **Greenfields** is the market centre for the northern Shire, often serving as a fish market when trout from Lake Evendim and Pike from the Brandywine are available. Greenfields is the site of the famous Battle of Greenfields where a muster of hobbits were led by Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took and defeated a force of goblins from Mount Gram
- **Bindbale Wood** is one of the larger forests of the Shire



The West Farthing

The western part of the Shire runs from the Three-Farthing Stone west as far as the Far Downs and includes the White Downs.

- **Michel Delving** on the White Downs is the chief town of the Shire. Its name means simply "large excavation". The Mayor of Michel Delving, with a seven-year term, is the only elected official of the Shire. Currently, the Mayor is Will Whitfoot, the fattest hobbit in the West farthing. Michel Delving houses the mathom-house, a museum for old items
- **Little Delving** is a village to the north of Michel Delving
- **Waymeet** grew up at the junction of the Great East Road with the older South Road that crossed the Baranduin at **Sarn Ford** before the Brandywine Bridge was built
- The village of **Hardbottle** is the home of the Bracegirdle family, to whom Lobelia Sackville-Baggins belonged before she married and moved to the South Farthing
- **Tuckborough** is the centre of the Took homeland where most Took dwell. The Thain's extended family lives here in the Great Smials
- **Bywater** is a village situated on the East Road along a natural pool in the stream called The Water, a river running through the centre of the Shire. It is known for two inns, "the Green Dragon" and "the Ivy Bush" as well as hosting the annual Four Farthings Cricket Tournament
- **Rushock Bog** is a swampy area along The Water, situated near the town of **Needlehole**
- **Hobbiton** is a village along a stream locally known as The Water, a short distance west of Bywater. There are no stables, inns, or pubs in the town, the nearest of which are found in Bywater. The neighbourhood to the north, **The Hill**, is divided into Underhill on the south and Overhill on the north; The Hill Road runs north from Bagshot Lane and continues onward to Overhill

- **Bag End** is an unnumbered smial built by Bungo Baggins of Hobbiton as a wedding gift to Belladonna Took, a daughter of Gerontius Took of Tookland. Bungo built the hole in the side of a hill off a path leading from The Hill Road on the north side of Hobbiton. It sits above its three closest poorer neighbours on Bagshot Row

The South Farthing

The South farthing is the site of **Longbottom**, where the best pipe-weed is grown, owing to the area's warmer climate.

- At **Longbottom**, Tobold Hornblower introduced the cultivation of pipe-weed to the Shire with plantations in his garden, c. TA 2670
- **The Green Hill Country** is a region of rolling countryside in the central part of the Shire, extending into both the South Farthing and the East Farthing
- **Sackville** is the second largest town of the South Farthing, surrounded wheatfields and orchards, and terraced vineyards and melon-fields on the nearby hills. The Sackville's are rare among hobbits in the pride they take selling their goods to folk 'over the bounds'. Wine and leaf from Sackville may find its way as far east as Dale.
- **The Overbourne Marshes** are a swampy area along the western bank of the Baranduin, across the river from the mouth of the Withywindle. The River Shirebourne flows through the marshes into the Baranduin just south of **Haysend**
- **Haysend** lies on the borders between the South and East Farthings and Buckland
- **Sarn Ford** is the stony ford across the Baranduin on the southern borders of the Shire. A road leaving the Great East Road at Waymeet crosses the ford and meets the Greenway farther east

The East Farthing

The East Farthing borders Buckland and contains the towns **Frogmorton** and **Whitfurrows** and the farms of the **Marish**. The farmers near the Brandywine largely acknowledged the authority of the Oldbucks, even after the latter moved across the river and became the Brandybucks.

- **The Marish** is the name of fertile but marshy farmlands along the Brandywine River. The Marish was settled about thirty years after the Shire had been created, by Stoors who arrived there from Dunland. The Marish was important in Shire history as the home of Bucca, the first of the Shire-thains. Gorhendad, one of his descendants, crossed the Brandywine and founded Buckland. Farmer Maggot lives at **Bamfurlong** the largest of the farms in the Marish
- **Stock** is the major town of the Marish and the location of "the Golden Perch", an inn with a reputation for excellent beer and mead. Stock Road is a road that runs eastwards from Tuckborough in the West Farthing across the Green Hill Country and past the Yale to Stock
- **The Yale** is a low-lying farming area shown on the Shire Map between the Stock Road and the East Road. This is the homeland of the Boffin family
- **Scary** is a village in the northern part of the East Farthing at the southern feet of the Hills of Scary. A road runs south from Scary to cross the Water at **Budgeford** and join the Great East Road at **Whitfurrows**
- **Woody End** is a forested upland near the village of **Woodhall**
- **Woodhall** is small handsome village surrounded by orchards and groves of well-tended apple trees

Buckland

Not originally part of the Shire, Buckland lies east of the Baranduin (Brandywine) river. The area is protected from the nearby Old Forest by the "High Hay", a tall hedge which forms the eastern border of Buckland, running from the Brandywine Bridge in the north to the confluence of the Withywindle with the Baranduin near the village of **Haysend** in the south.

The main entrance to Buckland from the north is a gate in the Hay, called variously the Buckland Gate, the North Gate, or the Hay Gate, located "where the Hedge runs down to the river-bank, just this side of the Bridge," opening onto the East Road from the Shire to Bree.

Unlike other hobbits the Bucklanders are prepared for danger and less naive than the Shire-hobbits. They close the Hay Gate and lock their own front doors at night, and are prepared to rush to arms at the sound of the Horn of Buckland. Most Bucklanders were originally of Stoor stock, and they are the only hobbits known to use boats.

- **Bucklebury** is the main town of Buckland. The Master of Buckland, hereditary chieftain of the Brandybuck family, maintains his home here at Brandy Hall
- **The Bucklebury Ferry**, a raft-ferry some ten miles south of the Bridge, provides another crossing of the Brandywine from the Shire to Buckland. It is unmanned, to be used by hobbits as needed
- **Crickhollow** is a village in Buckland

The Westmarch

The Westmarch is not part of the Shire officially and reaches from the western borders of the Shire, the Far Downs, to the Tower Hills.





HISTORY

Note that this information is not widely known to hobbit-kind but is included here as a point of interest for players.

The Shire was settled by Hobbits in the year 1601 of the Third Age (Year 1 in Shire Reckoning).

The Hobbits (who originally lived in the Vale of Anduin) had migrated west over the perilous Misty Mountains in the decades before that, and before entering the Shire they had lived in Dunland and parts of the depopulated Arnorian splinter-realms Cardolan and Rhudaur. It has been speculated that the Hobbits had originally moved west to escape the troubles of Mirkwood, and the evil caused by the Easterlings.

The Shire was a part of Arthedain, and as such a part of Arnor. The Hobbits obtained official permission from King Argeleb II at Fornost to settle the lands, which were not populated and were seen as the king's hunting grounds. The King stipulated three conditions to this grant;

- i) That the hobbits should acknowledge his Lordship
- ii) That they should maintain the roads within the Shire
- iii) That they should aid his messengers

The Hobbits therefore considered themselves subjects of the king and sent some archers to the great battles Arnor fought against Angmar. After the fall of Arnor, the Shire remained a minor but independent, self-governing realm. The chiefs of the Clans elected an official named the Thain to hold the king's powers after the North-kingdom fell. The first Thains were the heads of the Oldbuck clan. The position later came to be held by the Took.

Its small size, relative lack of importance, and brave and resilient Hobbit population made it too modest an objective for conquest. The only strangers to enter the Shire are the Dwarves travelling on the Great Road that runs through the Shire to and from their mines in the Blue Mountains, and the occasional Elves on their way to the Grey Havens.

GOVERNMENT

The only government services of the Shire are the Message Service (the post) and the Watch.

The Watch

The Watch are the police, whose officers are called Shirriffs, and whose chief duty in times of peace merely involves the rounding up of stray livestock. The total number of regular Shirriffs is 12, three for each Farthing. There is also a somewhat larger and fluctuating number of Bounders, a kind of unofficial border control.

Regional Families

To a large extent, individual families and clans handle their own internal affairs. Where a prominent family is associated with a certain area of the Shire, the head of that family will also exercise a kind of authority over the land and hobbits there.

- The Master of the Hall or **Master of Buckland** (the two titles are used interchangeably), hereditary head of the Brandybuck family, is the effective ruler of Buckland. The title Master of the Hall comes from his more immediate authority over Brandy Hall, the greatest of the dwelling places of the Brandybuck family, filling Buck Hill in Bucklebury. The Master also exercises a good deal of authority in the Marish, a region of the East Farthing just across the Brandywine from Buckland.
- Similarly, the **Head of the Took Family**, often just called the Took, rules the ancestral Took dwelling of Great Smials, the village of Tuckborough, and the wider area known as the Tookland.

The Thain and The Mayor

There are only two Shire-wide officials, the Thain and the Mayor. The Thainship is a hereditary office, set up after the collapse of the Kingdom of Arthedain, to hold the King's authority over the Shire. In practice, the Thain's duties are limited, mostly related to defence: the Thain is the master of the Shire-moot, and captain of the Shire-muster and the Hobbitry-in-arms; but as muster and moot are only held in times of emergency, which no longer occur, the Thainship has ceased to be more than a nominal dignity. Nevertheless, the feeling remains widespread that, in the absence of a King, the Thain is the source for all proper authority in the Shire.



The Thainship

In TA 2998 (SR 1398), the office of Thain has existed for approximately 1,000 years. The first Thain, Bucca of the Marish, took office in SR 379; he and his 11 successors of the Oldbuck family held the Thainship for 361 years. When Gorhendad Oldbuck led his family to settle Buckland (SR 740), the office of Thain passed to Isumbras I, head of the Took family, which has held the Thainship ever since. Thains of the Shire include:

- Bucca of the Marish (379-?)

... [11 Thains of the Oldbuck line, possibly including Gorhendad Oldbuck, who removed to Buckland]
- Isumbras I Took (740-?)

... [8 Thains of the Took line]
- Isengrim II (? – 1122)
- Isumbras III (1122 – 1159)
- Ferumbras II (1159 – 1201)
- Fortinbras I (1201 – 1248)
- Gerontius, the Old Took (1248 – 1320)
- Isengrim III (1320 – 1330)
- Isumbras IV (1330 – 1339)
- Fortinbras II (1339 – 1380)
- Ferumbras III (1380 – Present)

The Office of Mayor

The chief official of the Shire is the Mayor of Michel Delving. Elected every seven years at the "Free Fair" held on the White Downs in the West Farthing, the Mayor is also the Postmaster and First Shirriff of the Shire.

The Laws of the Shire

The Hobbits of the Shire generally obey the Rules, that is, the ancient laws of the North Kingdom, and there is no real need to enforce them; all Hobbits voluntarily obey them as they are both ancient and just.

Hobbits have lawyers, but these deal mostly with wills and other civil matters; there is no record of a formal court system, still less of criminal prosecutions or punishments. In the Shire, no Hobbit has ever been known intentionally to kill another Hobbit.

