



A SOURCEBOOK FOR THE DARK AGES™

# WORLD OF DARKNESS Dark Ages BRITISH ISLES

## THE LAND IS ANCIENT

Mithras of London fancies the Isles as his domain, but the land is far older than even he. Ancient vampires lurk in the fens and wolf-men stalk the moors. The Church has taken hold here, but worshippers of far older gods call upon power that no follower of Christ has ever known. And somewhere beyond the mist the fae laugh, for they were here before any other.

## HERE THERE BE MONSTERS

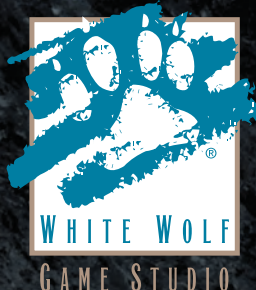
Dark Ages: British Isles is the first regional sourcebook for the revised Dark Ages line. It includes the history of the land, information on the major cities of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and details on how the supernatural denizens of Europe interact and conflict with the inhabitants of the Isles, mortal and otherwise.

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# WORLD OF DARKNESS Dark Ages BRITISH ISLES



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## No room, no room!

Just before going to press with this book, we discovered that there was too much material for the page count we'd allotted. Not wishing to simply chuck that material away (which would be a disservice to the hard work of the authors and editors), we've made it available for download at <http://www.white-wolf.com>.



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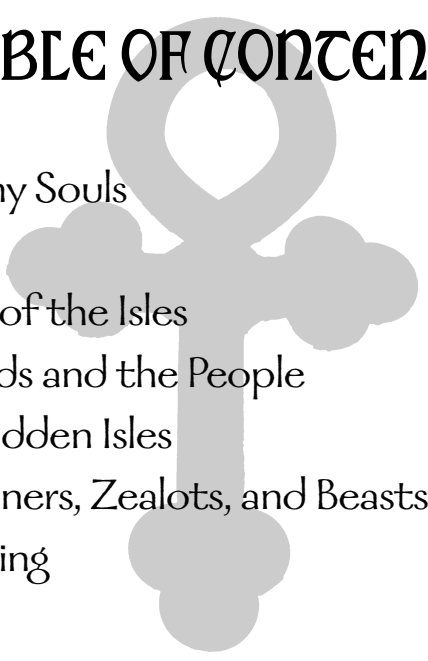


# WORLD OF DARKNESS Dark Ages BRITISH ISLES



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# PRELUDE: ONE CITY, MANY SOULS

The cobbles felt jagged under Jerome's feet as he twisted between the maze of houses, so different from the smooth softness of grass and earth. Another stone in the edifice of bitterness against the city-builders, the worshippers of the Crucified, the children of cold stone and colder iron. He slowed to an amble two alleys away from his destination and stretched his perceptions ahead, listening to the city's pulse in the mutter of bystanders.

He was too late. The silence spreading in front of him was a tangible thing. Nothing quieted the city of Winchester like this except fear.

A shriek born of that same fear broke the stillness. "Witch! Filthy damned witch!"

Everyone around him was running now, so he could run as well without drawing attention, caught in the throng. A beefy man in a coarse wool tunic jostled him against the side of a cart full of turnips, and he pulled himself up onto it to see over the heads of the crowd. The driver turned to curse at him, but when he realized Jerome's age, he shrugged. "Stay up there as you will, boy," he yelled over the



growing swell of the crowd, "but may the living God have mercy on you if I catch you taking any of my turnips!"

Jerome nodded humbly, and scrambled for a better view. Ahead, in the small square, two of the city guard were hustling *her* between them, her hands bound behind her back, a gag over her mouth — to stop her spitting out any curses or pleas for mercy, no doubt — her rich hair flowing unbound down the back of her dress, black as a starling's wing in the pale November sunlight. A monk followed them, murmuring Latin that went unheard under the yells and catcalls and prayers for deliverance.

They'd take her to the cathedral. They wouldn't be ready to try her immediately. They'd want a confession of all the things she'd been teaching him in secret, about the old faith and the true gods and goddesses and the things that one did at dawn and dusk and midnight, of the signs that he should make, and the wax patterns, and the wine and bread and blood... They would call all that sin, and she would burn.

He would have to tell her friends, Jerome resolved. He wasn't supposed to know about them, but he'd followed her one night when she went out alone. She'd thought that he was asleep, and she had lit the candles to keep him that way, but he'd already been awake, and so they had no power over him.

He would follow the monks and guards with their cart, with *her* gagged and bound in the back, until he found out where they were keeping her, and then he'd find her friends. They'd know what to do. They were like her, after all. They knew about magic.

\* \* \*

"There was a disturbance earlier today," Mark mentioned, casually, to the Tremere woman opposite him at the table. Both of them were seated below the salt — normal enough for him, but surely an insult to the guest.

"I'm astonished," the woman — Johanna, that was her name — replied coolly. "I thought your business was with love, and the Courts of Love, not with the common rabble."

"Love is..." Mark hesitated. Everything had changed since that moment when the blood first touched his lips. Previously he'd seen love in the soul alone, but now he saw it in everything physical about him. Love was the red silk tapestries that clung so smoothly to his skin when he touched them, which hid the grey flatness of the walls. Love was the sweetness of good blood in his throat, the brush of furs against his flesh. Love was all things sensual, distilled and put together, fed to him drop by aching drop. "Love is where one finds it," he finally said. Perhaps this would do for a later ballad to amuse his lady Melusine. "Love may grow in the common alleys, or flourish in the howling of the mob, just as it blossoms in the courtly reaches, or flowers like a rose in a lady's window. Love in a scream, love in a poem, love in an instant's song. Mistress Johanna, love dwells in your eyes for those who may see it."

"Toreador," Johanna said, her tone flat. But there was something in the curve of her mouth that said, *go on*.

He searched for the perfect words. "If it could be said easily, Mistress Johanna. Then it would not be worth the effort. But—"

His lady's voice broke the quiet murmurs of conversation, and all eyes turned to her. She was looking at him. "Mark, my sweet, what is this about a riot here in Winton today?"

"I do not know for certain, my lady," he said with the perfect courtesy that she had delighted to teach him, "but possibly Mistress Johanna here knows a little more." He gave her a little bow.

Johanna rose and half-curtisied. "'Tis a small thing, Lady Melusine," she said. "A mob today in Winchester, because guards and priests came to hale a witch to the Cathedral, for confession and the eventual fire, no doubt."

"Winchester?" his lady asked, and then raised a hand quickly, with a smooth fluidity too graceful to be human. "Oh, do forgive me — it's so hard not to think of it as Winton. You'll understand at some point, my dear. But — a witch, you say? Not some student of your own people, I take it?"

"Oh, no." Johanna shrugged, dismissive, but the motion had only a fraction of his lady's elegance. "Just some brewer of potions. Nobody of any significance, Lady Melusine, and the mob itself blew over soon enough. It did not come near any point of importance."

"Excellent," Melusine said. Her smile glowed, and Mark basked in her approval. "Thank you, my dears." She turned back to the man sitting next to her — a Nosferatu, Mark had heard, but under proper guise for a gathering such as this, and looking near-human.

"What has he come here for?" Johanna asked quietly, her gaze on the man too.

"Something to do with the new retrochoir for the Cathedral," Mark explained. "I hear he is an architect of skill."

"Sacred architecture?"

"No doubt. Word has it that he has studied under the masters."

"Ah," Johanna murmured softly. "But which masters?"

\* \* \*

Jerome peered across the small courtyard at the back door of the house. No servants had gone in or out of it for the last half of an hour. The streets were dark now; night had fallen, and sensible men and women had shut their doors against the bogies that walked the streets. He bit a thumb, and recited the words that *she* had said would protect him, trying to muster the courage to go up and knock on the door.

It banged open, swinging wide to let out the warmth and light from inside. A serving-man in green linen and

wool stood there, beckoning to him. "Boy! Yes, you! My masters desire a word with you."

Jerome's first impulse was to cower into the corner of the wall, and his second to run. But, he reminded himself, he needed help from these people. It was no surprise that they could see beyond their walls — she could do as much, after all.

He followed the servant into the building, shoulders hunched against a blow. The place was far richer than his mistress' own dwelling, the floor smooth polished wood, thick hangings on the walls against the cold. *It would be nice to live here in the warmth*, he thought, and then caught himself and felt ashamed.

The servant pushed him by one shoulder into a large room, then shut the door behind him with a firm thud. Jerome stepped back nervously till his back was pressed against the timbers of the door, looking around uncertainly.

There were three of them. A woman in expensive clothing, good broadcloth and linen, wimple folded smoothly around her head, a book open on her lap, the illuminated letters bright in the firelight. An elderly man, pale hair wispy round his face, in a scholar's robes, thin hands moving together in his lap. And — this was the strangest, this nearly made him run away — a foreigner, a bearded dark-skinned Moor whose eyes glittered sharply, but dressed like a proper person in tunic and hose and mantle.

"So, boy," the older man said. "You were loitering outside. Have you aught to say to us?"

"You frighten the child," the woman broke in. She had a thin, tight-lipped face, too harsh for comfort, but her voice was mild. "We mean you no harm, boy. What is your name?"

"Jerome," he stammered. "My name is Jerome." He ventured a quick bob of a bow. "Noble masters, noble mistress, I beg your help."

"We listen and attend," the Moor said gravely. He slid a curved dagger from the depths of one sleeve — precisely the sort of knife one would expect a foreigner to carry — and began to pare his nails with careful concentration.

"Please." His voice cracked, and he took a deep breath. "Mistress Gwynne, my mistress, your friend — the priests took her away this afternoon, just before Nones. Please, you have to help her—"

The old man leaned forward, brows knitting. "You know she is our friend? How?"

Jerome felt the comforting solidity of the door behind him, one piece of normality in this covey of mages. "Please, master, I am her prentice. She teaches me the proper ways. I followed her once when she thought I slept, I saw her come here, I saw her leave later,

and she had the smell of magic about her. They have taken her to the Cathedral, they say that she is a witch. You must not let them burn her!"

The old man turned to the woman. "Lucia? Hast aught to do with this?"

The woman raised her narrow eyebrows. "Your accusations aside, Master Julius, I had heard that some inquisitors are new-come to the Cathedral, and that they were hot for suitable prey. I had not thought Mistress Gwynne so easily taken. Still — I would have said that it would be a small matter to bring her out, save that if it were a small matter, she would have done so herself."

"You give her unusual praise," Master Julius said dryly.

Mistress Lucia turned a page of her book, with delicate pale fingers. "As Maimonides has said, we must accept the truth from whatever source it comes. The truth is that she is a proficient adept."

"Aye," the Moor said. "So if she cannot pluck herself out, we must oblige her in this matter. Boy, you have done well. Accept our hospitality, I pray you, while we ascertain how this matter may be accomplished."

Jerome let himself relax for the first time in several hours. Perhaps this would be all right after all.

\* \* \*

Latin hung between the stone walls of the Cathedral as thick as the smell of wax from the candles, as close as the pervasive damp in the air. Cantor and Decani sang versicle and response to each other, words falling clearly through the air like blessings from Heaven.

Andrew bowed his head and said a silent prayer. *Domine, libera nos de malo; Lord, deliver us from evil. Deliver us from the evil one, and let us not fall into his snares; O Lord Jesus Christ, save us from the mouth of the lion, and from the lake of fire....*

A dry cough from behind him made him end his prayers and turn to see who wanted his attention. It was one of the visiting priests from Canterbury, Father Dominic; a tall man with a dry manner, who stalked the Cathedral in his dark robes with a bearing that spoke of noble heritage.

"Forgive me, Father," he apologized quickly. "I was deep in prayer."

"Indeed." Father Dominic granted him a single nod. "You do well to put on the armor of God, my son. Now come with me, I pray you. We must question the witch."

Of course, Andrew mused, Father Dominic journeyed in odd company. A young nun with feverish eyes who spent her hours in desperate prayer, and two belted knights with hard eyes and scarred hands who were found in odd places in the Cathedral, at odd times. "I am still astonished," he said carefully, "that you found her so swiftly, Father. We had feared that there was some evil

at work in the town, but can only marvel and thank God for his grace that you have rooted it out."

"Praise God for all marvels," Father Dominic rejoined automatically, and began to lead the way down to the cellars. "But the witch must have the chance to recant her sins. We seek the salvation of the soul, Brother Andrew, not its loss. If God has granted us the mercy to find her, then that is His mercy upon her as well, in His infinite grace. I hope that this will not be forgotten."

Andrew reproved himself for his anger at the Father's prideful words. *As if any brother of this Cathedral would be so easily led astray.* "There is more joy over the lost sheep, Father, than the ninety-nine who were safe. We are secure in our faith."

Here in the cellars below the Cathedral, among old tombs, the walls were streaked with niter and foul with damp. The torches along the walls burned smoky and fast, their flames tinged blue.

Sound rippled down the corridor, sound where there should have been silence or prayers. It might have been a rat's chittering or squeaking, but it was a thousand times louder, and under it came the sound of gnawing and scratching.

"What in God's name—" Andrew began.

"Say rather in the Devil's name, Brother Andrew!" Father Dominic snapped. He grabbed a torch from where it hung on the wall and strode down the corridor, the flame of the torch trailing behind him.

"But—" Andrew coughed, then covered his mouth and nose with a sleeve against the stink that came from further down the corridor. Whispering a prayer for courage, he followed the older monk.

The room that they entered crawled and writhed with motion, as though the floor and walls were carpeted with furs. Then the torches flared again, and Andrew shrieked with horror, high and womanish, at what he saw. The place was foul with rats, huge abominable creatures, red-eyed and toothy, squirming over the floor and gnawing at the wood of the door behind which the witch was kept.

Father Dominic took a deep breath. In a voice that seemed, to Andrew's trembling heart, to be infused with the very wrath of God, he called out, "Fundamenta eius in montibus sanctis!" and brought the torch round in a great sweeping motion that gusted pale fire at the rats. They drew back, scattering in a dark wave across the floor. "Back, creatures of darkness! By the power which God has granted to those who profess faith in His name, by the Mercy and by the Grace — Brother Andrew," he broke off, "check on the witch, now!"

Jolted into motion, Andrew ran across to the door to the witch's cell and slid back the panel that covered the Judas-hole. The witch lay on her cot in the small room,

shackle locked still around her ankle, skirts rucked up unseemly around her thighs.

She pursed her lips and blew a kiss at him.

He slammed the Judas-hole shut and turned to see the last rats cascading over the threshold, fleeing from Father Dominic and his torch. "She is still secure... Father Dominic, God be blessed that you have put them to flight, but how can the Devil himself intrude upon holy ground?"

"The Adversary," Father Dominic murmured, "comes when he is called."

\* \* \*

Wolves howled in the forest that night. Children cowered in their beds at the sound, and wives clung to their husbands, and guards at the gates of Winchester crossed themselves and prayed that God have mercy on any travelers fool enough to be abroad.

Deeper in the forest, some of the wolves put on human shape, and sat around a fire to speak of matters of importance.

"They took a witch today in the town," a young woman said, the firelight turning her pale blonde hair to a rich bronze. "Should we do something?"

"Why?" the man lounging next to her yawned. He stretched and ran lazy, jagged-nailed hands down his sides, scratching his belly thoughtfully. "Was she Kin-folk?"

"No," the third present, another woman, said. "Mere human. I have seen her in our woods before, though. I spoke to her once, and she made the proper sign and showed the right respect."

The man snorted a laugh. "So she showed respect, that is good; but that is no cause for us to do more."

"But—" the first woman protested.

The second woman, clad in nothing but a tangle of her own dark hair, reached across and slapped the first woman across her face. It was not a vicious blow, only the careless sort of chastisement one gives a child. "Hush, Ella. True, your uncle and the other Children of Gaia care for the humans, but even they know when to leave them to tend to their own matters. Is she our kin? Is she our blood? Is she our concern? No, no, and no again."

Ella lowered her eyes, then rolled onto her back, hair tangling in the dust. "Forgive me, foster-mother," she murmured, head tilted and neck exposed. "I will know better by and by."

"Eh, leave the child be," the man grunted. "We've other matters to discuss. What of the darkness to the north? What of the word from Loch Lomond? And what of this wind that brings the scent of stag? I'm minded to steal the king's own deer this night."

The dark-haired woman laughed softly. "To work, then. Let the humans take care of their own."

\* \* \*

Johanna sat at her desk and wrote a letter in her own blood. A single candle, sufficient to her needs, lit the room. When she had finished the letter, she would mark a sigil on it that would render the blood-writing illegible to all save her masters in the Art. By now, secrecy was so ingrained that to behave otherwise was near-impossible.

*And in addition, she wrote, I have been searching for the Hermetic mage whom you suspected was within the bounds of the city, Master, but I fear that I have nothing to report. I had established contact with a woman who claimed to be a witch, and had in mind to test her knowledge and possibly place her in my service, but earlier this day she was taken by the Church, and no doubt faces penitence or the stake. Given the lack of further information, I must conclude that no magi currently dwell within this town.*

*Now, as regards the Lady Melusine...*

\* \* \*

Jerome sat in the corner of the room and watched the fire. It was a safer object for his gaze than any of the three sorcerers who occupied the room with him. They had left to perform certain rites and spells, but now they had returned to wait for their workings to bear fruit. He would have been happier without their company.

"Tell me, child—" Mistress Lucia began.

"His name is Jerome," Master Julius put in without looking up from the book in his lap.

"Tell me, Jerome," she continued, "what has your mistress taught you? You say you are her prentice — in all matters?"

"Ay, madam," Jerome muttered, watching her hands rather than her face.

"And in matters of faith, as well as sorcery?"

Jerome shivered, remembering stories that Gwynne had told him, of how certain mages hated their kind, persecuting them more viciously than any priest, and claiming Christian sanction to do so. "Ah..." he mumbled. "That is..."

The Moor — al-Nasir, one of the servants had called him — laid down the piece of wood he had been whittling into a chain. "Come, child. If you will not profess as a Christian, at least speak your own creed. See, Lucia here does not strike me down when I say mine. Allah is great, and Muhammad is His prophet." He laughed, a dry whispering noise. "You do not, do you, Lucia?"

"I strive to resist temptation," Lucia murmured, thin-lipped. "Very well. I tolerated Gwynne's pagan beliefs. I shall not object to yours, Jerome. I shall merely point out that—"

Al-Nasir coughed, and Lucia fell silent. He turned to Jerome again, eyes glittering in his swarthy face. "Go on, boy. Tell us what you may."

It was odd that he should take comfort from the most foreign person in the room, but the Saracen's words

heartened him. "We go into the forest," he said slowly, "at dawn, and dusk, and noon, and midnight, depending on the day and the month and the season. My mistress makes the sacrifices, but she has said that soon I will be able to make my own."

"Go on," Master Julius said. There was a strange undertone to his voice, and he and Mistress Lucia exchanged glances.

"She makes clay dolls," Jerome continued. "And if one loves very much, the clay man is very good, if one does certain things with it, and if one hates very much, then it is good too, but you have to do different things. She says she will show me them soon. She will only let me fetch wood and herbs for the moment," he added, bitterly. "But she has been teaching me the proper rhymes, and how before the Romans came, there was only one way, and that the way is still there, and that if you pay with blood then they will come, and they will do whatever you want. And that is magic." And, he thought to himself, soon Mistress Gwynne would let him go with her at the dark of the moon, and sign the book in his own blood, and then he too would be able to call, and they would answer him.

They were looking at him strangely.

"I think," said Mistress Lucia slowly, "that there may be reasons why Mistress Gwynne has never brought you to meet us. And I think, though I am not sure, that I do not know as much about Mistress Gwynne's beliefs as I should."

\* \* \*

After Matins, Andrew sought out Father Dominic. He found the older man in the cell that had been assigned to him, writing a report of some sort in neat rapid Latin.

"Yes?" Father Dominic inquired, not looking up from quill and parchment.

"Father — they said that the witch had confessed."

"She did." Father Dominic finished his sentence, then shook sand over the parchment to dry the ink. "And?"

"And what did she confess to, Father?"

Father Dominic folded his hands in his lap and gave Andrew his full attention. "To pagan practices, to having signed a pact with the Devil, to consorting with other practitioners of maleficium, and to taking a youth as prentice with the intent of corrupting him also. Why do you ask?"

Andrew swallowed. "I just... wanted to know."

"Yes." Father Dominic sighed. "That's how it usually starts."

And the sun rose over Winchester, bringing the day behind it.





# INTRODUCTION

“England is the paradise of women,  
the purgatory of men, and the hell of  
horses.”

— *John Florio*

The British Isles conjure many different images — moors and fens, crowded streets, lush plains and seaside cliffs, just to name a few. The Isles are a true melting pot, as many different cultures over the course of centuries have combined, with a great deal of strife.

These four nations — England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland — can form the backdrop for many rich **Dark Ages** chronicles.

## Dark Ages

**Dark Ages: British Isles** is the first book of its kind; a regional sourcebook intended for use with all four of the presently published **Dark Ages** game lines. Whether you’re playing **Dark Ages: Vampire**, **Mage**, **Inquisitor** or **Werewolf**, this sourcebook contains the information you need to set a chronicle anywhere in the British Isles.

As this sourcebook does not focus exclusively on one character type, the information presented for each of the four may seem somewhat sparse in comparison to past regional sourcebooks (such as **Iberia by Night**) that focused entirely on vampires. You should find, however, enough story seeds herein that players can immediately develop concepts for characters (or goals for already existing characters) and Storytellers can easily find fodder for many different stories.

## Crossover?

Although we provide information for all four character types in this book, we don’t really advocate players taking the roles of more than one character type in the same chronicle. It’s certainly possible to do this — most of the systems are compatible enough that one player can play a vampire while another plays a mage with relatively little mechanical problem. In story terms, however, the members of these “races” do not trust each other and never have. They all work from extremely different cosmological and cultural backgrounds — and we’ve seen what happens



when human beings of differing beliefs cross paths. Vampires and mages have very different concerns (not the least of which is that mages are still *alive*), and they are probably the most compatible of the four characters. Trying to fit vampires into a game with inquisitors or werewolves is asking for a bit *too* much inter-character conflict.

**Dark Ages: British Isles** does not assume that these characters know anything about one another except that the others exist (and not always even that). This book merely assumes that vampires, mages, inquisitors and werewolves share the same world. On an island, that means they're going to come into conflict — and conflict, as you know, is the meat of any chronicle.

## Some Other Thoughts

When reading this sourcebook, consider the following:

### On Anachronisms

Prior to the arrival of the Romans in the British Isles, little exists in the way of formal history of the islands or even the “Celtic” people, and thus what is known of the people, events, and places originates with second- (or third-, or worse) hand tales such as those of Hecataeus of Miletus, or semi-fictitious accounts such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Britons* (who attributed the founding of Britain, and London in particular, to refugees from fallen Troy). As such, we can't call the people or places of Britain by the names they themselves would have used but must instead use Greek, Roman or even later terms for people and places — names such as Stonehenge, Maiden Castle and Chyauster in lieu of the names people would have used for those locations. However, where ancient or medieval names are known — such as Cruithni (meaning “people with images on their bodies”) for Picts, Helith for Cerne Abbas or Weala-dic (a Saxon name meaning “moat of the British”) for Avebury — they may also be used in addition to the modern form.

### Myths, Reality and the Modern Media

Modern media colors our perceptions of many of these myths, twisting the legends yet further, sometimes harking back to realistic roots and at other times adding to the fantastical elements. Some are worthy inspirations for Dark Ages chronicles, while others are not. For example, the Robin Hood myths received excellent adaptations — the Connery-Hepburn *Robin and Marian*, for example, or the 1980s TV series *Robin of Sherwood*. The latter is probably the epitome of Dark Ages TV shows, incorporating as it does various legends (Robin Hood and Herne the Hunter, the latter a throwback to Cerunnos, the Celtic “Horned God”), a clash of faiths

(the old “superstitions”, the Church, infernalism and the Kabbalah) and a host of social and political conflict. The novel *Sherwood*, by author Parke Godwin, does a similarly terrific job of re-creating Robin Hood's life and world. Less well-done are Hollywood endeavors like *Robin Hood*, *Prince of Thieves*, that not only mangle British geography and history but also manage to resurrect long-dead cultures.

The Arthurian mythos likewise has suffered at the hands of the modern media. For every pseudo-historical endeavor like Bernard Cornwall's *Warlord Chronicles* books or Marion Zimmer-Bradley's *Mists of Avalon*, there is a film like *First Knight* or a TV mini-series like *Merlin*. Even *Excalibur*, which does an excellent job of capturing the mythos, is horribly anachronistic in that it uses Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* as its basis. On the other end of the spectrum are three excellent historical novels set in and immediately after the Arthurian period: *The Pendragon*, by Catherine Christian, and *Firelord* and *Beloved Exile* by Parke Godwin. Any of these sources will help Storytellers interested in using the Arthur mythos get a feel for what that time and place were actually like.

*Caveat emptor.*

### Accuracy vs. Atmosphere

One of the greatest challenges facing a Storyteller whose chronicle is set in the British Isles is how much emphasis to place on the islands' myths and legends and how much on real history and hard facts. This decision can have a dramatic impact on the story that unfolds and on the range of characters involved. There is, however, a major distinction between having legends play a role in the chronicle and having a particular legend take part in the story. For example, several of the supernatural races in the Isles incorporate the legends of King Arthur into their mythos, but the stories are just that, myths told from one person to the next. The truth of the matter remains shrouded in mystery. Is one of them right? Are all of them? None of them? Having characters investigate a site reputed to be the resting place of the Holy Grail is a far cry from having characters meet Merlin or wield Excalibur.

The flip side of this is the extent to which real history impinges on the chronicle. Some characters may want to get involved in the minutiae of the wool trade in East Anglia, while others want to know where the action is. Some players demand historically accurate lords and social systems, while others may play fast and loose with society to focus on adventure and excitement. Are the characters' actions shaped by real-world history, or are they responsible for the path events take? How to pitch this is solely at the discretion of the Storyteller — each extreme has its adherents and detractors — and **Dark Ages: British Isles** aims to support both styles of play.

It is worth noting, however, that while considerable research has gone into this volume, there are instances where a date has been fudged or a detail exaggerated to better suit the game setting. Storytellers should likewise feel free to tweak details of the setting to best suit their chronicles — **Dark Ages: British Isles** is part of a historical game, not a history book. Conversely, in order to fit in details of vampires, werewolves, mages and inquisitors, the depth of information on the British Isles' geography, history, society, personalities and legends only scratches the surface of those subjects. Storytellers wishing to add greater details of the Dark Medieval to their chronicles should consult the plethora of reference works on the period, a number of which appear in the preface.

## Chapter by Chapter

**Dark Ages: British Isles** requires at least one of the **Dark Ages** game books, and terminology and mechanics are used from all four. Even if you only own **Dark Ages: Vampire**, however, you should find this book a highly useful resource.

The **Prelude** tells the story of a young apprentice to a mage, and how his mistress' capture sends ripples through the shadow community of Winchester.

**Introduction:** What you're reading now.

**Chapter One: The History of the Isles** takes us from the dawn of time through the Roman invasion of the Isles, the Norman Conquest, the Anarchy and into modern nights, as narrated by knowledgeable inhabitants of the Isles.

**Chapter Two: The Lands and the People** is a primer on the geography and culture of the British Isles, with special attention paid to the Church and the Christian faith.

**Chapter Three: The Hidden Isles** contains the secret doings of the vampires, the studies of the mages, the crusades of the shadow Inquisition and the noble battles of the werewolves.

**Chapter Four: Liars, Sinners, Zealots and Beasts** is a collection of Storyteller characters for use as allies, antagonists, contacts or character inspiration for your chronicles.

**Chapter Five: Storytelling** includes advice on the themes and moods of chronicles set in the British Isles, and *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, a brief sample story for use with any of the four character types.

## Source Material

The authors found the following materials useful during the writing of this book:

### History Books (General)

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H. H. Scullard, *Roman Britain: Outpost of Empire*, Thames and Hudson (1999)

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### Websites

The Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs (to 1516): <http://www.ihrinfo.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb1.html>

Mysterious Britain: <http://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk>

British Goblins: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/wfl/>





# CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF THE ISLES

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.  
— William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*

The history of the British Isles is a long and bloody affair, wreathed in myths, legends and half-truths. Little of the islands' ancient history has survived the cultural imperialism of the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Normans, each of whom have put their own spin on events. Only among the Celtic peoples — the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh — do old histories survive, wreathed in legend and biased geographically. Those individuals old enough to recall those days — the Cainites and fae — aren't talking, while those like the Garou who have sought to preserve the old stories are no less likely than the islands' mortal inhabitants to mythologize and filter history through their own biases. The members of the shadow Inquisition pay close attention to the more recent history of the Isles, attempting to discern where the greatest threat to Christendom lies, while the mages of Britain look, as ever, to the future, attempt to carve something lasting and beautiful from the land.



# The Early History of the British Isles

*As told by Michael Stonebrow, Galliard Adren of the Fianna to Burntfoot, his cliath nephew*

Forget what you think you know, cub. You know half-truths and fictions as told to you by your packmates. They claim events as fact that are fiction, and are ignorant of some of the Garou's greatest triumphs. The humans remember little of the first people to walk in the Isles now known as Britain, myth and legend serving as a veil to hide the truth from those who can't stand to know it. Only we Garou maintain a true history, sung by the wisest of our people and handed down from elder to cub over the centuries. It is an epic tale of great adventure and heroism, of the Tuatha de Danann, the conflict against the Fomorians, the Impergium, the War of Rage and the birth of the Rule of Man. Come closer, and listen to the tale.

## The Cold Lands

Though our histories go back thousands of generations, neither our race, nor that of the humans, was whelped here. Our oldest tales speak of a great migration, when our distant ancestors and Kinfolk journeyed from their former lands to the edge of the Great Ice. They walked far, across lands that are now sea and across seas that are now land, following the herds. Though it was not yet the time of the Impergium, humanity respected the Fera and followed our example in hunting and foraging, never harming Gaia by staying in one place too long. Nature was in balance, the Wyld and the Weaver in harmony.

Our ancestors were not alone on the edge of the Great Ice, but were part of an uneasy trinity. The fae lived openly, interacting with humanity and Fera alike, in some cases — with us, for instance — breeding outside their own kind. Men would come to call these Fair Folk the Tuatha de Danann, the people of the Goddess Danu. What they called themselves is lost to the mists of time; even our most venerated ancestors do not remember the truth of the fae.

Yes, foolish cub, you're welcome to ask one should you encounter them, but you'll be lucky to escape with your pelt in one piece. Better Garou than you have tried.

The fae accepted our presence and that of humanity, at first warily but with more trust as we became familiar with each other. To the Fair Folk, we were potential allies against their dark shadows, the Wyrms-tainted Fomorians and their sub-human servants. These servants were superficially like our Kinfolk, recognizably close kin to humans, but trading intelligence for physical strength and wearing their bestiality on their faces. These non-men worshiped the Fomorians as their own dark gods, paying them homage and providing them with blood sacrifices. These fell masters had little tolerance for our presence or that of the Fair Folk. The result was predictable, with bloody clashes escalating into all-out war, Fera and Kinfolk fighting alongside

the fae against Fomorians and beast-men. Even today, talk of those ancient wars stirs the blood of our Kinfolk, great battles and greater heroes enshrined in myth and legend. These Fomorians were not the Wyrms-spawn we see today but rather a more terrible foe, much as the fae of those early times were much grander and more powerful than the Fair Folk who yet reside in the wild corners of the land.

Clashes between Fera, Fomorians and fae — the bloody trinity of the Isles — wracked the land, and most humans cowered before our might. While the bravest Kinfolk fought alongside us in that great war, most of humanity was yet ignorant, untainted by the Weaver or the Wyrms. As the war progressed, these non-combatants found themselves caught up in the fighting, victimized by Fomorians and fae alike, and had little choice but to take up arms in defense of their homes. Thus, the innocence of humanity was shattered as warfare became ingrained in their way of life, their

## THE TALE OF LUGH

*Nathan Bloodypaw, Ahroun of the Fianna, speaks:*

Stonebrow couldn't recognize a good story if it leapt up and bit his skinny moon-dancing arse. He's giving you the history, ain't he, but he's always missing out the good stuff, the stories that are our heritage — he might as well be a Warder. Did he tell you about Lugh? No, ah, sit back and enjoy.

The chief of the Fomorians, Balor of the Baleful Eye, his very gaze caused death. He had a beautiful daughter, Eithne, whom he locked away in a cave on Tory Island so she might not conceive and bear a child whom, according to prophecy, would slay the Fomorian leader. We all know what happens when you try to cheat prophecy, right? One of the Danann, Cian, heard of Eithne's beauty and by a combination of skill and guile bypassed Balor's safeguards and seduced the Fomorian's daughter. Balor was none too pleased to learn of his daughter's pregnancy, and threw the three children that resulted into the sea.

One of those nips survived and swam ashore, and his uncle found him, named him "Lugh," and brought him up right. Lugh, as the grandson of the Fomorian kind, had magic of his own, and when he reached manhood he became the leader of the Tuatha de Danann. He led them in a great battle against the Fomorians on the Plains of Magh Tuiredh, known today as Moytura. During the fight, Balor just opened his eye and most of the Tuathan host fell dead, but young Lugh was able to approach while the Fomorian's eye was closed, hurling a stone that penetrated his grandfather's eye and slew him instantly, just as had been prophesied. The Fomorians fled, leaving the land to the Tuatha de Danann, at least until the next invaders arrived.

Sorry about that, Stonebrow. Just thought it needed mentioning. Carry on.



blood singing of past endeavors and glories yet to be won. The peoples of the Isles would one day become the most warlike of those who strode the lands and though we did not realize it at the time, this change in humanity was the first step on the road to the Impergium — as humanity sought to change and master its surroundings, so we saw the need to control them.

Why did we not crush the Fomorian there and then in the time of the Cold Lands? Ha! So you do use your head for aught but scratching. It's a good question, and one I cannot answer. Perhaps the other Fera, weaklings that they were, held us back, or perhaps we left them alive as living testament to our prowess and magnanimity. Others suggest that the ties between the Fomorian and the fae were closer than the Fair Folk chose to admit, that one could not exist without the other. Whatever the reason, the legacy was millennia of conflict in which we Garou proved our strength time and again.

## The Impergium

While the aftermath of the war against the Fomorian didn't immediately cause problems for the Fera and Kin-folk, it did cause a steady increase in tensions as humans began to push at the boundaries we set. At first, such efforts were half-hearted, but with each success they became bolder. Perhaps we were like over-indulgent parents, allowing them too much freedom. Perhaps the oaths that the Fair Folk demanded of them were too stringent. We don't know. We have no record of precisely where and when the Impergium began.

The decision was made to control humanity, restricting their numbers and freedoms. We culled humanity, at first slaying the weak and the infirm and then targeting the healthy. The fae looked on, amused, neither helping nor hindering our efforts, save where they interfered with their own interests — to assuage their "curiosity" some fae had interbred with humans, and these half-breeds were judged to be under the fae's protection. Indeed, some say it is through these individuals that magic entered the blood of humanity, diluted down the generations from these god-like half-bloods to the wizards of the present.

From the start, it was a doomed effort. The Impergium merely delayed the inevitable and inflicted deep wounds on humanity. Yes, we kept their development in check for centuries, but no more so than man's slow discovery of his own potential — something that had already taken thousands of generations. Indeed, by subjugating humankind, we may have accelerated the process, prompting them to think and innovate. Precisely how long the Impergium lasted, we cannot know — some say 30 generations, some say 300 — but end it did as the Fera decided to relax their grip on humanity. How much of this was due to a change of heart by the tribes and how much was due to friction between the different Fera our tales do not tell, though the latter seems a likely cause, as within a short span of time since the end of the Impergium the changing breeds fought the bitterest conflict ever seen.

## THE FLOOD

*Bloodypaw speaks:*

Ach, he's being boring again. Let me give you more of the good stuff.

I'm sure you've heard that the Christians' Bible tells of a great flood sent by their God to visit his vengeance on a corrupt people. Well, I don't know about their "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," but I know damn well that Gaia goes to great lengths to protect herself and her chosen ones. The flood was all too real, but it didn't happen in "forty days and nights" or any shit like that. Rather, it was a steady encroachment in many parts of the land, drowning settlements and caerns alike. The Christians talk of Noah's family surviving the flood in a huge boat and repopulating the world. And folk accuse me of telling tall tales....

The seas that now separate England from France were once verdant lands, as were those between Ireland and Wales. We saw the signs of Gaia's wrath, and so few died in the flood, though I can tell you tales of the flooding of Finias and the migrations that followed. That's not what you want though, is it? You want the tales of the wars that erupted as the people abandoned their ancestral lands and moved onto higher and safer ground, carving out new kingdoms as they did? Yeah, well...that all happened. People built kingdoms.

But not all were successful. The *Leabhar Gabhala*, or the Book of Invasions if you like, talks of the first human inhabitants (whom the Christians claim were descendents of their Noah), of whom only one descendant, the legendary shapechanger Fintan — named by some of our tribe the first of the Fianna — prospered. Likewise, the second invasion led by the warrior Partholon foundered after plagues and demons ravaged his people. It was only with the third wave of immigrants that humans prospered in the Isles but found themselves engrossed in wars with the Fomorians and each other. Indeed, these conflicts may well have been what caused us to begin the Impergium, halting the bloodshed and ruination of the land. Despite the hardships they endured afterwards at the hands of the Fomorians, the Tuatha and, well, us, the humans regard the flood as the start of their history, a dividing line between the Isles and the rest of Europe. Folks have a certain pig-headed pride in the whole thing — it's even caught the attention of the monks who've written a version of the Book of Invasions, albeit excising anything interesting that might contradict their version of events. Hell, even Stonebrow's droning lectures are preferable to the Christians' bastardized version of history.

## The War of Rage

Our greatest shame, and the most grievous crime committed against Gaia, was the conflict that took place immediately after the Impergium. We Garou believed ourselves to be Gaia's chosen and sought to establish our authority over the other Fera. We didn't expect them to fight back so much — they were weak, and besides, we were chosen as protectors and warriors. But still, they resisted and the result was a genocidal conflict among the Fera. Whole groups of Kinfolk perished on both sides, and the Fera fought as best they could, but in the end we were victorious. Though we thought it a great victory, our hubris undoubtedly cost Gaia dearly. Henceforth, the Garou would bear the guardianship of the Isles alone, aided only by the eyes of the Corax, whose kin would become as closely bound to the people by the legend of Morrigan as would our own, and our Kinfolk.

We were merely trying to follow Gaia's will, but the result was ultimately devastating. It would not be the last time that the Garou's efforts to do good would serve the aims of our enemies; Lion's Children, those known once as the White Howlers and now the Black Spiral Dancers, would fall harder and further than any of the other Garou, but at the time of the War of Rage that was a long way in the future.

## The Time of the Builders

Shifting opinions among the Fera brought the Impergium to a close, and while many humans sought to

distance themselves from the Garou, others continued to look to us for advice and guidance, showing us their latest inventions like a child does to a parent. They showed us great art and tools of stone, and demonstrated their own innovation by establishing the first farms, moving away from the nomadic existence that we had taught them. Some among the Fera saw the mark of the Weaver in this and called for the annihilation of humanity, while others advocated their abandonment to their own fate. This was, perhaps, a contributing factor to the War of Rage and the end result, once that bloody conflict had played out and humans had been given further reason to distrust the changing breeds, was an accord in which we Garou agreed

### A DIFFERENCE OF OPINIONS

*Sups-on-Marrow, a Philodox of the Fianna, interjects:*

You human-born. You can't look at the sky and see "sky." You have to look and see "rain," "Heaven," "clouds," and a million other things. Look at the War of Rage and see "war." What is done in war is blood and bone and glory. To cry about it now, to blame the evils of the world and the fall of the White Howlers on the War of Rage, is the worst kind of folly.

Stonebrow is a Galliard, and Galliards forget where stories end and truth begins. Remember — had the war not been just, it never would have been fought. Gaia would have stopped us.

to allow humanity to go its own way, and for us to establish our own society distinct from theirs.

Allowed their freedom, mankind's "progress" was swift and determined. They began to carry out elaborate rituals to honor their dead, with processions and ceremonies forming the centerpiece of these funerary rites. Many were modeled on our own moots, and yet others adhered to the wisdom of Gaia we had taught man during the Impergium — rather than simply burying or burning the bodies, they were dismembered and exposed to the air so that flesh and sinew could nourish Gaia's lesser children before the bones were buried, often in chambers in the large long barrows that once dotted the landscape. Such traditions would hold sway for tens of generations before the concept of single burials for warriors and lords took hold.

Their tools likewise became more sophisticated. They continued to use stone — humans wouldn't master shaping metal for generations — but they made ever more refined weapons and tools. Hafting a blade into a stick created axes and spears, drastically improving their power, allowing them to fell trees and skin their prey with increased efficiency. They developed pottery and tools of bone that allowed them to create utensils and refine their lifestyles, permitting them to store food, to cook it more efficiently and even to trade it with their neighbors. They were no longer bound solely to the land; they could store the harvest of good years against the bad that inevitably followed, and their methods allowed the land to support ever-larger numbers of people. Most Garou accepted these developments but some, notably the Red Talons, decried them and made Impergium-like attacks on human settlements.

Humans began to adapt their landscape, cutting down woodlands for material and establishing farms in the newly cleared land. In addition to clearing pathways through the forests, humans built long wooden trackways across the wetland areas in what is today Somerset and Norfolk, as well as other wetlands, many of which are still present should you wish to see them for yourself. Such innovation allowed the builders to avoid long journeys around such natural barriers and also permitted them to inhabit hitherto isolated parts of the land. Likewise, settlements became ever more sophisticated, with the clustering of people into villages and the establishment of fortified enclosures to protect the inhabitants against the wild, rival groups and, of course, us. This brought them into conflict with us and with the fae, as neither of us take kindly to humankind's encroachment on our lands. The difference was that we stood impotently by, bound by our agreement to stay out of human affairs. The fae were under no such injunction, and they avenged themselves on the interlopers by cursing their land, causing crops to fail and covering farmland with peat and heather.

Whether the increasing "civilization" of humanity gave them time to study nature and the universe, allowing them to establish religions and complex social patterns, or whether the booming population merely allowed their

numbers to become visible, this era of human advancement saw the emergence of individuals who could change the world as they saw fit. These namebreakers quickly came to dominate their societies and the strongest called themselves the Wyck. They maintained strong links to the magical rituals of the people and were the direct ancestors of the druids who wielded immense power shortly before the coming of Rome to these islands.

Some legends say it was the Wyck who caused the erection of wooden and stone circles across the land at their places of power, ranging from small standing stones to massive stone rings such as Brodgar or Callanish. Already marked by henges — massive structures comprising earth ramparts and ditches — the addition of stones underlined their power, such as at Stonehenge or Weala-dic. The Wyck's influence was immense, and such structures appeared all across the Isles, once numbering in the thousands — though only the stone monuments remain today, thanks in large part to our people destroying the humans' attempt to leech Gaia's lifeblood.

These sites were (and in some cases still are, despite the Church's lies about "demonic influences"), centers of spiritual and magical power. It is no surprise that no small number of them correspond to our caerns, humanity having witnessed our power during the Impergium and seeking to harness it for their own purposes. Such sites became the focus of our conflict with humanity as we sought to protect the caerns against their corrupting influence. Some battles we won, scattering the human interlopers, but as the human population grew, so did their victories. Open conflict worked against our interests and instead we sought to deflect human attention rather than facing them head on. Our Kinfolk became the medium through which we protected the caerns, creating communities that cared for the sites and limited others' access. Outsiders were not welcome, and with few to witness their powers, the true nature of caerns faded into myth and legend. At Tara, for example, human attention focused on but one aspect of the landscape of the Brugh na Boinne, leaving our own Silver Tara unmolested.

Even where we could not wholly protect caerns, the river of time worked in our favor as the humans quickly forgot *why* these sites manifested the powers they did — such as Stonehenge's healing properties — and soon came to believe that the stones themselves triggered the manifestations of "magic" rather than Gaia's blessing. Of course, we could not protect all the caerns and our efforts led to ongoing conflicts with the humans and in some cases the fae. Many sites remain in contention.

It was, however, the first smelting of metals that changed the balance of power in the British Isles. According to legend, we have the fae to thank for this.

Fire is capricious, as anyone knows, and the humans had long feared what fire could do. They used it, true, but had no idea what tools could be crafted by applying heat to metal. But the story goes that a young man happened upon

## MERLIN AND THE BRINGING OF THE STONES

*Einar Wolfson, visiting Galliard of the Fenrir, politely interjects:*

If you listen to the human historian Geoffrey of Monmouth and his "History of Britain" written a scant century ago, Stonehenge was built — in part at least — by the great sorcerer Myrddin, who worked great magics on behalf of a succession of British kings: Vortigern, who invited the first Saxon Foederati to these shores, Uther Pendragon, who won the kingdom by force of arms and then lost it in lust, and the legendary Arthur, during the war against the Saxons. It is said that after a terrible battle with the Saxon Hengist, the first and greatest of the Saïs and Kinfolk to the Fenrir, Vortigern desired a monument be erected to mark his victory and called upon the sorcerer to bring the stones, then known as the Giant's Dance, from Killare in Ireland, which he did by means of magic in a single night.

That is how the humans tell it, at least, though we Fenrir know the tale cannot be true. While 30 generations have passed since my tribe's arrival on these shores, we know that tales of the stones predate our ancestors. I have heard Fianna stories of Stonehenge that predate the Leech-ridden Romans and perhaps even the War of Silver and Iron. These tales speak of the stones' arrival from the West, but only from the dragon-mountains of Wales. Monmouth's tale may thus be a shadow of a long-recalled memory of the stones' transportation, perhaps from a pre-existing site in the West.

And was Myrddin — or Merlin as we English name him — involved in their creation? On that the legends speak little, though an old name for Britain is the "Precincts of Myrddin." No Garou claim Myrddin as kin, not even you boastful Fianna, but his endurance and longevity are enshrined in the tales. Perhaps he was one of the Wyck who prolonged his life manyfold, or mayhap one of the Fair Folk. Another possibility is that Myrddin was an honorific or title, relating to the now-fallen Druidic priesthood in the Isles. If so, a Merlin (or perhaps several) possibly did oversee the construction of Stonehenge and other sites, his (or their) involvement remaining enshrined in human legends.

a fae weapon-smith forging a sword, and took the knowledge with him to his people. Since the fae never made any agreement with the humans regarding the secret, they could not strike the man down for stealing it (though what they did to the careless smith who let himself be discovered by a human is perhaps another story).

Different septs tell different stories, of course — I have heard everyone from angels of God to spirits of fire blamed for

humans learning the secrets of metalwork. Whatever the truth, groups armed with metal weapons easily dominated their neighbors and were quickly able to expand their influence. Even those Garou who had hitherto been supportive of the emerging human civilization were alarmed by the development, realizing that it was only a short step from working bronze to working silver, our bane. Even if they didn't make that leap, metal weapons posed a threat to Garou society and the precarious balance of Gaia, bolstering the power of the Weaver. While the idea of British nations lay a long way in the future — it would take the Roman invasion to forge a united Britain — distinct regional cultures were already emerging from the shadows of legend.

The peoples of the Isles slowly coalesced into distinct tribes. Religion dominated life, leading to the building of the great henges and stone circles. Customs solidified into distinct societies. Our legends do not tell whether these were true nations, alliances of tribes or simply areas in which customs were common. Instead, they simply abound with tales of a prosperous time as good harvest followed good harvest and the land supported a burgeoning population.

The forging of metal, however, fostered the emergence of a distinct martial caste in society that slowly took over the reins of power, separating political authority from religious power. Monument building slowed and then stopped as the power of the priests diminished. With less effort put into the creation of religious structures, people became richer — they wore fine clothes and ornate brooches and torcs, and the "sacrifice" of goods became a favored method of demonstrating devotion to the gods. Most often, such goods were cast into the water, a practice that would continue in the British Isles even after the coming of the Romans, though by then it would be an increasingly gory affair.

### The War of Silver and Iron

Having simmered for hundreds of generations, the conflict between the fae and Fomorians erupted once more, raging across the length and breadth of the British Isles with the Garou again fighting alongside the Fair Folk against the Wyrmspawn. No longer supported by their beast-men allies but instead aided by treacherous and Wyrms-tainted humans (whom even today we call "fomori"), the Fomorians wrought devastation across the Isles until the conflict came to a dramatic and cataclysmic conclusion with the Battle of Moytura, which I believe Nathan mentioned earlier.

When the Battle of Moytura ended, a rain of ash fell on the land, blighting crops and countryside. The Fir Bolg — huge, brutish allies of ours among the fae — succumbed to the blight and followed the Fomorians' Wyrmskin kin. These monstrosities, their progenitors dead, fled in great ships and hid themselves in the Highlands and islands we now call Scotland, where Lion's Children and their allies in the Cruithni hunted them without mercy. In future generations, these Wyrms-allies would build the great stone towers known as brochs to defend themselves against Gaia's fury. This defense, though ultimately futile, would allow the broch builders, descendants of the Fir Bolg, to survive



almost into Roman times, staging one last abortive attempt to seize Ireland for themselves before falling to the Cruithni and being absorbed into their nations. To our everlasting sorrow, this long war also allowed the Fir Bolg's Wyrn-taint to establish a stronghold in the areas of Scotland under their domination, something the White Howlers would fight against for many generations and eventually fall to.

With the threat of the Fomorians removed, there was little reason for the Garou and fae to cooperate any longer and clashes between our two peoples escalated markedly over the centuries that followed the Rain of Ash. The exact terms of the War — why we entered it, who struck first — have been lost to time. Even our ancestors seem unclear, but the fact that the fae were involved at all ensures a great deal of confusion. Some claim that without their dark shadows, the Fomorians, the fae had no restrictions on their actions and sought dominion over the British Isles, tolerating no rivals. Some legends say the fae taught humans how to work foul silver as a weapon against us, and in revenge, we taught humanity the secrets of iron working, knowing that weapons so made would be inimical to the Fair Folk.

Some say the Rain of Ash that fell in the wake of Moytura was the result of the violation of the oaths that the Fir Bolg had sworn to the Fair Folk and to us. Others say the fae had finally forsaken the land and visited a final curse to blight the Isles and their inhabitants. Whatever the truth, the War of Silver and Iron didn't end in glorious battle or miserable defeat. The fae simply avoided us; the most monstrous of them attacked occasionally, but the tricksters,

the beautiful nobles and the sprites of earth and air simply receded into their glens when our revels took us looking for the fae. It was, I imagine, rather disappointing.

The War did not go unnoticed among humanity, of course. Life became harder as summers became cooler and winters harsher, crops failed and pestilence wracked the land. Faced with starvation, the humans began to relocate their centers of power, abandoning outlying settlements in favor of those that remained prosperous and were defensible. Clashes were inevitable as the peoples sought the best land upon which to support themselves and warfare raged in the Isles. Massive fortifications like Maiden Castle, Danebury and Traprain Law came into use, as did artificial islands known as Crannogs, which served as both fishing platforms and homes secure against threats from the land. In this era of troubles, newcomers came to the Isles and sought to establish their culture, some by trade and shared ideas, others by warfare. The memory of these people lives on today as the Celts or Gael, a culture — but not a unified people — that once stretched from Constantinople to Ireland. The Celts' efforts to expand their culture into Scotland failed miserably — the Cruithni, locked in their war with the broch builders, resisted such endeavors.

The Celts brought with them new gods and beliefs that sought to supplant Gaia as the focus of the people's lives. While we were unable to stem these beliefs, our Kinfolk reshaped them and ensured that respect for the land remained central to Celtic life: Danu, the mother goddess whom many regard as synonymous with Gaia; Belenus, lord of the sun and

heavens; Cernunnos, the Horned God and Lord of the Animals; Morrigan, the crow-goddess of battle who supposedly serves as a mighty totem of the Corax; and Epona, the triple-mother revered by warriors and travelers who oversees horses and guards the passage to the Otherworld. Despite the insulting connotations we Garou hold with dogs, it is no coincidence that the Celtic peoples revered canines as the companions of the mother goddesses.

## The Coming of the Wyrms

None know precisely when the first of the Leeches — whose very natures are bound to the Wyrms — arrived in the British Isles, but certainly some accompanied the Celts here and established their foul presences in the large settlements that were emerging among the British peoples. A few of the Leeches lurked in the Isles before the War of Silver and Iron and made their malign influence known during the conflict, but these solitary Wyrms-spawn, though powerful, posed little danger to our own existence. Indeed, though it is hard to comprehend, some went out of their way to hunt in harmony with nature, or their twisted perceptions of it at least, in many regards following our own lead.

Do not mistake me. I do not say these Leeches were welcome, but rather that many of the first arrivals seemed to be less closely bound to the Wyrms than those that followed. They were few and could not manipulate the peoples to the extent of those that came after. They were parasites whose habits we could control and deal with at times of our choosing. Our initial fears that the vampires would challenge our own dominance seemed unfounded when it became clear that the Leeches had their own bitter rivalries with each other and would quite happily war among themselves, leaving the Garou and our Kinfolk alone. We had little fear that they would prosper and dominate the Isles. Instead, we concentrated on shepherding our own Kinfolk while leaving the Leeches to their own wars.

We were shortsighted fools. As my tribemate says, we should have wiped out the Wyrms-spawn when we had the chance. The disunity of these initial invaders deceived us and we would grossly underestimate those that followed.

The bloody practices of the Celts should have given us some hint as to what was to come. In the old days, rituals centered on the dead, honoring their lives and their journey to the next world, but the druids were impatient and sought

to dominate the world around them. They actively practiced human sacrifice, ritually murdering their victims with the three-fold death (garroting, throat cutting and drowning). Some were willing sacrifices — many noble rulers accepted that in exchange for temporal power, they must give up their lives at the end of their tenure, while others volunteered for the honor it would bestow on them and their families — but many more were not, sacrificed to placate angry gods or else as a punishment for crimes. This perversion of Gaia's intentions horrified us and we sought to steer the people from this path, but were challenged — not for the first time, nor the last — by mages and Leeches who sought to exploit the immense power inherent in the blood-sacrifices. Our successes were few, and the druids dug sacred pits in their great fortresses and placed sacrifices in them to placate the gods of the underworld. The similarity with the Pits of the Wyrms was not lost on us, though their veneration of ancient hunter-gods like Cernunnos, the Horned God, distracted us from the true horror of their actions. We believed that in honoring the Horned One they continued to acknowledge their ties to us — the Children of the Stag — when in fact they were simply using history to justify their own actions.

The first invasion of the Romans, two generations before the birth of Christ, threw the peril we faced into stark relief. While the Wyck-descended druids carried out their corrupted interpretations of Gaia's will, the Leeches marshaled the forces of the Wyrms and unleashed them against the Celtic peoples. Gaul fell in short order, its people no match for the allied forces of the Weaver and Wyrms that the Romans embodied. They attacked Britain, pitting iron and vampire's fang against our claws and the magic of the druids. It was never a serious assault, but rather a probing of our defenses, seeking to establish our strengths and weaknesses in advance of a full conquest. While they could have carved out a kingdom for themselves, these Leech-ridden invaders chose not to, instead bending numerous local kingdom-tribes to their will, chief among them the Trinovantes of modern Essex and the Catuvellauni of the Thames Valley. These newly pledged "client kingdoms" of Rome adopted much of the invader's culture and heritage, Romanizing the southeast of Britain without making it part of the Empire. Trade with occupied Gaul continued almost uninterrupted thereafter, extending Roman hegemony over the British who were seduced by the riches and wealth of their kin across the sea. They established major trading centers, many of which would become the main cities of Roman Britain, and slid inexorably closer to Wyrms-tainted Rome.

When the Romans returned, it was as much in response to rising anti-Roman sentiment in parts of the islands that had cut off the flow of goods and tributes to the Empire as it was to gain conquests "across the ocean." The insane emperor Caligula had threatened such actions in AD 40 — yes, as humans reckon years — but it fell to his successor, Claudius the Stammerer, to take action. He ordered a massive invasion three years later, with troops landing at Richborough in Kent under the command of

### AN ANGRY COUNTER

*Sups-on-Marrow protests with great fury:*

And this shows how far we have fallen since the Impergium. You speak of the Wyrms-spawn as if their presence was acceptable. No Leech should ever be welcomed, and those who suggest the Garou even think of tolerating the enemy should first slay me, for as long as I draw breath I name such whelps breakers of the Litany — "Combat the Wyrms Wherever it Dwells and Wherever it Breeds!"

## CONCLUSIONS — GOING FORWARD

*Nathan Bloodypaw livens things up:*

Some depressing words from Michael Stonebrow, and here we all are staring into our cups. What you've got to remember is that this all happened so long ago that all we have are legends and occasionally whispers from our ancestors. Michael didn't see any of this; he's chatted with his forebears and now he thinks he saw the Battle of Moytura, fought in the War of Silver and Iron, and ate babies during the Impergium.

Remember your history, cub, but also *remember where you are*. Go forward, and look back only when you need to remember something. Don't walk backwards, or you fall square on your arse. That's Ahroun wisdom for you.

Aulus Plautius. While once again Garou stood side by side with the druids to beat back the enemy, the insidious power of the Wyrms had undermined our efforts and seduced many of the people, prompting them to side with the invaders.

The leader of the Catuvellauni, Caratacus, resisted the invasion for some eight years but eventually capitulated. The Icenian Revolt in AD 60 proved to be the last gasp of British resistance, coming as it did swiftly on the heels of the destruction of the druidic base on Anglesey. In less than a score of years, the balance of power in the Isles had overturned, with both magi and Garou marginalized while the Leeches and the forces of the Wyrms and Weaver gained dominance over much of the Isles. How the fae must have laughed to see us brought low, though their pleasure cannot have lasted as these invaders, armed with iron and ignorant of the customs that maintained a semblance of balance between Garou and fae, overran lands they once saw as their own.

**My Lord and Prince,  
We seized this document (among others) from the Tremere of Durham. I have attached annotations. I have been unable to ascertain the identity of the author. We have a description of him, and a location, but nothing more.**

**Your servant,  
Wilfred of London**

To the Pontifex of the Chantry of Durham, I send greetings. You asked me to write this missive, summarizing some of the history of this land, for the benefit of newcomers from abroad. I am a historian, as you know, and I exist but to serve. I will caution, however, that this is a summary, and I have been forced to speculate on occasion.

I am told that perhaps five thousand years before Christ's birth, men had carved roads and made farms in this land. But it was not until around the time of the birth of Christ that they built cities large enough to interest the Children of Caine.

Until the coming of the Romans, this land's history is uncertain. I will not, therefore, attempt to speculate as to when the first vampires came to these isles. I beg your indulgence; my associates and I wasted years attempting to answer this question.

What I can do, however, is point to the time when the Cainites came to these isles in numbers. When the Romans arrived, the Cainites came with them. The Romans built well-fortified towns and we came to feed. Ventruë, Malkavians and Brujah crossed the channel with the Romans. The earliest came with Roman traders — exiles of the so-called Low Clans, I assume. But when the Romans came to conquer Britain in the decades after the birth of Christ, the vampires came with them, organized and prepared to stay.

**Our charming Tremere correspondent wastes a lot of time pretending up the fact that he does not know for certain when the Cainites first arrived. That is hardly a failing on his part. I have heard rumors of Cainites arriving before the Romans. Some visited these isles for whatever purpose, and then withdrew. The Clan of the Beast may have wandered to these lands - stories speak of their ancients warning among themselves with their brutish blood gifts, of the sky raining blood and fire and the very earth shaking as they fought. But these Animals-legacy was residual at best.**

**- Wilfred of London**

The Gangrel — and I assume other vampires of the Isles — greeted the newcomer Cainites with suspicion, but if they fought, no record survives. Presumably the growing cities on the coast and those at the present site of London and Colchester were of little interest to the Gangrel. But the Lupines must have been an ever-present threat to the Animals, then. Outside the cities was — and in many places remains — prime Lupine territory.

In the Year of Our Lord 43, the Roman general Aulus Plautius led four legions from Gaul in an invasion of the lands of the Britons. It was a force of close to ten thousand men. They were trained soldiers, professional warriors, and skilled at fighting barbarians. The Celtic tribes had no effective counter. The Britons had a warrior elite, but they were no match for the Romans. An example of the Britons' incompetence came early in the Romans' campaign: a British force blocked the northern approaches of a river crossing somewhere north of Cantium. Seeing that the Romans had no bridging equipment, the Britons waited in the open. That night, Batavian legionnaires swam the river in full armor, sabotaged the Britons' camp and killed the sentries. The entire British force was massacred.

Two days later, the Romans were on the outskirts of what would become Londinium. Plautius then sent for the emperor, Claudius, in Rome so that the emperor could witness the decisive battle. Under Claudius' "super-

vision," the Romans sacked Camulodunum, the capital city of the dominant Trinovantes tribe. Once it fell, Rome had established itself as an imperial presence in the Isles.

The Romans dominated England for nearly four hundred years. The Britons fled to Wales or Ireland or north into the lands of the Picts, or more commonly became Romanized. At the same time, the Romans adopted many of the ways and mores of the Britons.

These were the years of purges. The Roman vampires, now secure with all the trappings and influence and authority of Rome, hunted down and destroyed many of their predecessors. This is, again, speculation, but I think it is likely. Cainites do not tolerate challenges to their domains. While the Romans conquered, vampires murdered and committed diablerie; the Gangrel withdrew into the mountains and hills, and members of other clans — if any — met Final Death.

## The Coming of Mithras

The Romans brought with them a plethora of foreign religions. Some of the Romanized peoples simply adopted Roman practice alongside their own. One of these cults worshipped a soldier's deity, a Persian god named Mithras. I have not been able to establish whether the original Persian cult worshipped the Cainite we know as Mithras, or whether the vampire merely adapted some of the aspects of the deity for



Jim Di Bartolo

his own ends. The new Roman cities played host to many temples. In each city, a temple of Mithras was built, some in secret, some openly.

Perhaps it was the growth of his cult, or perhaps the bloodshed of the war with the Iceni, but something drew Mithras' attention to these Isles. In AD 71, he revealed himself to his worshippers. As the legions marched against Venutius of the Celtic Brigantes tribe in the north, Mithras went with them. He inspired the troops to greater heights of bravery and bloodshed. Mithras, whatever else he is, is an ancient, and ancients need copious amounts of vitae. And Mithras was hungry.

In the Caledonian wilderness, the legions fought against Celtic and Pictish tribes. In the cold damp nights, the Lupines descended upon the legion camps...but Mithras slew them all. Hundreds died by his hand alone, it is said. The Romans cowered in fear at the sight of a god made flesh, but he protected them from the things of the darkness. He stood with the legate Gnaeus Julius Agricola's legions when the Caledonian resistance was finally broken.

Though the Romans shattered British resistance, it never truly ended. A full tenth of the Roman military was stationed in this distant province, but there were always threats to Roman order. Opposition was never unified, but this was a mixed blessing; the barbarians attacked Imperial territory piecemeal, but a victory over one foe rarely guaranteed peace. Through it all stood Mithras, reveling in the carnage.

Mithras was of greater age and puissance than any of his contemporaries. Making his headquarters under the Roman city of Londinium, his influence reached out to all parts of the Roman province of Britannia. Mithras in turn threatened the Roman vampires with extinction, having purged most of the older vampires from the Isles. He made London his domain, but all other cities were allowed remain independent, with their own princes, so long as they agreed to pay tribute to him. On Festival Nights (the nights after High Days such as Christmas or Easter, by whatever names they were known then), in his temple on the River Walbrook in Londinium, representatives from the regional princes came to offer loyalty and tribute in money and blood. A few princes resisted. Mithras' punishment was swift and violent. Only beyond the borders of Roman Britain could the princes claim some measure of true independence.

## Rome Ascendant

Even an ancient like Mithras had limits. Celtic tribes in the Welsh hills, Irish raiders on the west coast and Pictish brigands remained beyond Rome's reach — and the vampires that fed from these kine were beyond Mithras' command.

Slowly, over the course of a century, Rome pacified Britain. The enemy tribes were driven into the hills. The southeast was heavily Romanized. The northern reaches were considered occupied territories. Pacified tribes paid tribute and sent hostages to the Roman garrisons.. The fertile southeast was Britannia Superior, a Roman nation. In the harsher climes of the northeast, the Romans built

garrisons and forts and named the area Britannia Inferior, the occupied realms. To the west, the Cambrian tribes were defeated, but never fully pacified.

In AD 122, the Empire began construction of Hadrian's Wall, a series of defensive ramparts and fortifications linked by a broad dike crowned by a road wide enough for men to walk two abreast. The aim was to defend Britannia Inferior from attacks by the Northern Pictish tribes. In some of the watchtowers, soldiers created tiny *mithraeums*, where they could worship their "sun god."

The Empire went on to flourish for two hundred years. Saxons from the Germanic lands raided and settled the eastern shores, but the Romanized Britons constructed a series of fortresses along the eastern shoreline to ward off these raids. Some of these raiders settled and were drawn into the Roman sphere of influence. British soldiers went to fight in the wars of Rome along the Germanic frontier and along the Danube.

In this relatively stable time, vampires came in greater numbers from the Continent and elsewhere. Many came from Rome itself, exiled or fled from the Cainite courts. Vampires of the Lasombra, Ventruue, Malkavian and Toreador clans arrived and settled in the new Roman towns, feeding on the soldiers and the largely sedentary Roman population. This led to some conflict, as resident Cainites attempted to drive the newcomers out. The newcomers tended to be victorious, as they were products of their time. They understood the language, cultures and social mores of their Romanized kine.

Mithras had no love or loyalty for either the older native vampires or the upstart newcomers. As long as these conflicts did not threaten his interests directly, he did not interfere with them. Nevertheless, he wisely paid attention to them. He watched who emerged from these conflicts, and learned from their experiences. Some he groomed for positions of authority in the power structure he was creating. Some he invited to London, and many of these Cainites were never heard from again.

As time passed, however, this stability frayed. Pictish assaults and Irish piracy constantly chafed at the Empire. On the Continent, external "barbarian" tribes and internal politics threatened the Empire itself. British legionnaires were often sent to the battlegrounds on the Rhine or to support rival claimants for the Imperial throne. In distant Rome, the intrigues and politics continued. The emperor Commodus was murdered during a palace insurrection. As Rome's intrigues flared, more vampires fled for the safety and anonymity of Britain.

Eventually, Mithras' patience ran out. He slew any vampire who was not loyal to him. Newly arrived Roman vampires greeted the sunrise. He took especial interest in the Lasombra, possibly due to some ancient slight. Mithras appointed loyal Cainites to serve as advisors or enforcers, and he and his immediate circle of loyal subjects drew the boundary maps of each of the fiefs. Cainites who survived the purges were allowed to choose their own leadership, in

a way, but each fief had to have an appointed advisor to ensure loyalty. This advisor, known as a satrap, could hold any office in the fief. Some claimed principedom, others took the post we now call "sheriff," while still others withdrew from political affairs and simply watched. These satraps were Mithras' eyes and ears outside London. They also represented his military power: The satraps' chief goal was to murder any disloyal or unwanted Cainite. After news of the purges reached the ears of vampires across the Continent, few refugees crossed the straits to this island.

**"Choose their own leadership."  
What a fascinating phrase. What  
does it mean? Our Tremere histo-  
rian rather dances around the  
truth here. He is saying that the  
Cainites were left alone to fight  
their own political battles, and  
Mithras would appoint whoever  
emerged from the nights of mur-  
der and treachery as the  
baron—but that the baron was still  
watched very closely.**

**-Wilfred of London**

By the third century, the Cainites faced another threat. Hermetic magi, growing more independent from their Imperial masters, were challenging the vampires. Some sources have claimed that the magicians were jealous of the undead. Others say the magi were too afraid of the vampires to leave them alone. Mithras offered no aid to his subjects in these conflicts. He was content to watch.

## The End of Roman Times

After 400 years, the Romans departed to prop up the failing Western Empire. They left behind an urban, civilized and sedentary population. The Christianized Romans and Britons used their baths and lived by Roman law. These people were soft, and no match for the struggle to come. Without the legions to enforce law, the Roman towns were defenseless.

Around the year AD 410, the last of the legions left Britain. Rome was gathering her strength for a final desperate stand. Invading hosts from Germany had overrun the Empire and were now hammering on the city walls. The people living in the cold craggy lands on either side of Hadrian's Wall went about the business of survival much as they had always done.

## The Great Alliance

According to some, the Irish, the Picts and the German Saxons from the Continent united in an alliance against the Romans. Apocryphal tales tell of how the Arcani, the Roman spies, were bribed to report nothing. The Roman garrisons of the north never suspected that the chieftains of the northern tribes were mustering their men and moving quietly south. It is said also that the Irish in their hide-covered *curraghs* raised their red sails and slipped out of their ports to bear eastwards

for Britain. We do know that a barbarian fleet landed near what is now York. Perhaps these were Picts, or perhaps they were Germanic Saxons. Whatever their origins, their timing was exact. The Picts assailed Hadrian's Wall and overwhelmed the defenders. By then the Irish pirates from the west and the barbarian invaders from the east were rampaging through undefended Roman territories.

The northern armies, which we may assume to be Romanized British forces, never managed to mount a coherent defense. The great barrier of Hadrian's Wall was lost. By the time reinforcements came from the south, it was too late. The barbarians picked much of the old province of Britannia Inferior clean. It was not to be the last such raid.

While the barbarians poured across the borders and harried the seacoasts, the vampires turned to Mithras for protection and guidance. But Mithras wasn't there. He had grown weary, and the sleep of the ancients claimed him.

## The Empire Falls

As Flavius Aetius, the Roman governor of Gaul, prepared to fight the armies of Attila the Hun, the Britons appealed to the remnants of the Roman Empire for aid. None was forthcoming. Attempts to restore some form of social order by selecting leaders, passing laws and demarcating borders failed, and contributed to civil war. In the face of constant raids and warfare with the Irish, the Scots, the Picts and the Saxons, civil war meant but one thing: Anarchy.

## Vortigern and Hengist

Two or three decades after the Legions departed, a war broke out between two princes of the Celtic Britons. After twenty years of chaos, the situation had stabilized enough for there to be two recognizable factions. A prince named Ambrosius Aurelianus, a descendant of the Emperors (or so the legends say), led one faction. Gwrtheyrn, or Vortigern, led the other. The names are unimportant; the worthless polemics of the mortals are confusing, inaccurate and misbegotten. What is certain is that some time later — perhaps after another decade of war — Vortigern emerged triumphant and claimed the High Kingship of Britain.

The Cainites supported Vortigern, reasoning that the kine might grow fat and happy again if order was restored. If I may speculate once more, I submit that the Lupines and their cursed allies stood with Vortigern's enemies. I am sure the Lupines would enjoy seeing the nation falling to rack and ruin and dominated by savages. But we won and Vortigern became overlord. I have spoken to Gangrel and Toreador who remember these times. They claim that the smoke from the funeral pyres of their slain Lupine enemies turned day into night, and vampires walked abroad in the fullness of noon to watch their enemies burn. The enemy fled into the wilderness. Meanwhile, Vortigern had to decide how to re-establish order.

The Romans had a strategy for dealing with barbarian enemies whom they could not overcome by force of arms. They would invite another barbarian tribe to attack the enemy. For this, the second tribe, usually a weaker and poorer

one, was offered the protection of the Empire, alliance and lands. The surviving barbarians could then be "civilized" (or more correctly, decimated and brought to heel) at leisure. The Romanized Britons, weakened by civil war inside their lands and barbarian raids without, needed help. Therefore, Vortigern sent messages to the Continent. He needed barbarians to fight the other barbarian raiders threatening his kingdom. He found a mercenary leader named Hengist, a man who had several death marks against him. Hengist was a brigand, murderer and kin slayer, but he was a professional soldier, and Vortigern needed men like him. As Roman Europe crumbled, such mercenaries were in plentiful demand.

Sources differ, but about four years after Vortigern came to the tatty "purple" of the High Kingship of Britain, Hengist set out from Frisia, in three ships with many warriors at his side. Trained fighters, they were like the knights of modern times. The disorganized Pictish raiders were no match for these battle-hardened mercenaries. Moreover, unlike the remnants of the professional armies of Britain, these warriors were skilled seamen, and they could engage the Pictish sea-going raiders where the Picts least expected it — at home. They swept the Picts from the sea, burned Pictish ships in their havens and razed the villages from whence the raiders came.

Hengist had brought reinforcements from Frisia, in the land we now call Denmark and the estuaries of the Rhine, who demanded payment. Vortigern's fragile British kingdom did not want these extra "allies", nor could they pay them. Hengist and Vortigern negotiated and traded; Vortigern put his unwanted allies to good use, and I am told that Vortigern may have married one of Hengist's daughters. Meanwhile, both bided their time. More mercenaries arrived from the German nations along the Rhine, and from the Jutes and the Frisians. The newcomers eventually rebelled against British authority, but Vortigern remained in power. He had secured his western flank by importing Celtic tribes from the north (fleeing Pictish raids) into Cambria. With the north secure, he was able to turn his attention to the Saxons. But the already fragile order swiftly crumbled. Trade collapsed. Famine came. When a beleaguered Vortigern invited Hengist to a peace conference, Hengist's men hid daggers in their boots and slew all the British elders, sparing Vortigern. It is said some of the very vampires who backed him drank his blood and cast his corpse in a river. Whatever the truth, he died alone and forgotten.

The remnants of the British forces then made war on Hengist. The Cainites who claim to remember speak of battles at Londinium and Cantium and of Hengist defending Kent with such efficiency that his kinsmen still dwell there tonight.

Grass grew on the old Roman roads. Churches were abandoned. Some of the Celts turned to their old gods. The Saxons were pagan. This should have been a good time for us — for the Cainites of that day, I mean. The Church was weak, the Lupines were in disarray, and few would notice or care if a few more kine fell during the night. But Lord Mithras slept, and feeding was poor. The regional princes claimed dominion of reduced cities, or of cities that no longer stood. A time of winnowing came, when the princes fought claimants. A Cainite

who would once have been master of a dozen vampires now fought merely to claim hunting rights over his old fief. If there was any blessing in those years in the last half of the fifth century, it was that we had massacred the Lupines, and they would not trouble us for generations.

## The Dark Ages

As a historian, I am obliged to rely on fact and documentation. But in the years following Hengist's conquest, nigh on until the Vikings came... of those times there is little fact. So we must therefore speculate, and rely on oral history. Oral history is fanciful, unreliable and colored by perception, experience and the need for drama. Real history has a drama all its own.

The Saxon kingdoms waxed and waned. The Britons resisted Saxon expansion and fought among themselves. The old Roman economy had collapsed. The gold mines lay idle; the mints did not produce coins. Plagues and famines were constant threats. The kine lived short, worthless lives, and their blood was thin and weak.

The Saxons were mostly pagan worshippers of Wotan, but some were Christian, if only in name. The Britons were Christian to a greater degree, but they too remembered their old gods, the spirits of hearth and hill. Driven further into the hills of Wales and into the heath-lands of Scotland and the moors of Cornwall, the Britons offered sacrifices to their faerie lords. They offered virgins as lovers and food to the kings of the *sidhe* mounds and revived old half-forgotten pagan customs. Their rites were rites of violence and desperation and starvation. Sometimes the lords of the *sidhe* mounds responded. The earth stirred, and the old giants woke. Dragons rose from their ancient slumbers. Ancient, hungry things rose up against the Saxons.

But the Saxons fought back, offering sacrifices of their own. They called to Wotan, and to the spirits of the dead and the spirits of the earth. The earth is older than any mortal tribe, but sometimes the things that sleep there answer to one set of voices, and sometimes to others. *Alfar* contended with *sidhe*. Dragons, free of sleep and their earthen tombs, roamed over the lands. The Worms, hideous creatures of the rivers and the bogs and the seas, rose from the fens and the waterways. Ancient forests perished amid dragon-fire. Men, women and children died in droves.

**How very poetic. On these matters, I cannot comment. These years were before my time. However, he admits to speculation, and I must respect that. Little is known of those dark times, and even those few elders who remember them refuse to speak of them. One story, fanciful as it may be, is as good as another.**

**- Wilfred of London**

On one highsummer's night, the story goes, the Severn ran red with blood.

Meanwhile, the Britons, or to be more accurate, the scattered and fractious Britonic, Welsh and Roman peoples of the west and north, warred with the Saxons in the east. Most of these wars were barely worth the name, and despite tales of magic and fire, most of these skirmishes were fought with sword and stone.

And who won them? Records tell us that the seven great Saxon nations achieved dominance over the Britons. By that token, the Saxons won the war. But who truly won? We — the Cainites — did. We found these weakened monsters and slew them. We rooted the *sidhe* from their mounds and the Alfar from their bowers. We took

those warriors for  
food or

playthings. We made the dragon slayers our slaves, and let the peasantry spin tales of their glorious ascent to the Otherworld. We tore these foolish things from our domain and we made this isle ours. We are the lords of the night. When the humans called their dark gods then, we answered. We bestowed favors. We took the virgins as sustenance. We drank the blood of sacrifices. We made the old holy places our temples and the holy men our slaves.

At the Siege of Mount Badon, early in the sixth century after the birth of Christ, the Saxons were defeated by the Britons in their quest to conquer the whole of the island. The west, the lands of Kernow and Cambria, would belong to the Romanized Britons and their pagan kin, at least for a time. The lands to the east would remain Saxon.

St. Augustine arrived in AD 597 and was received by the Saxon King Aethelberht in the city of Canterbury and given permission to preach. It would be another two hundred years before the Saxons generally accepted Christianity. Wars continued, but the Cainites still ruled the nights while Mithras slept. Fairies, Lupines, dragons and other things continued to trouble us for centuries to come, but their time was passing. The faeries warred, and we slew them where we found them.

By AD 600, the Christians were converting the Saxons, and the Britons likewise turned once more to the Church. The sorcerers of both peoples became priests, or were slain, or forgotten. The dragon-slaying *ceorls* and the *trollmanns* likewise faded away, until there were none to defend these small, embattled mortal settlements from our kind. It was a glorious time, indeed. Christianity brought with it other protectors, but they were mere irritations compared to the power of the magicians and warriors of earlier times. The Long Night began early in Britain.

## The Rise of the Saxons

When Augustine came to these lands, he found a patchwork of tiny kingdoms, some pagan, some Christian, some Germanic and some Britonic. The Saxons held the east, the Britons held much of the west. With the coming of Augustine and the strengthening of the Roman Church, record keeping improved. We can now assign dates



to events with some degree of certainty.

Augustine journeyed to Britain to convert the Germanic Saxons on the orders of Pope Gregory. He found a receptive audience. Aethelberht's wife was already a practicing Christian who worshipped at her personal church in Canterbury. Augustine converted Aethelberht and his court to the Roman faith and erected his stone church among the Roman ruins in Canterbury. The Britons, however, refused to bow to the Church of Rome, and they especially would not bow to a Church that operated from the lands of their Saxon enemies. In AD 602, the Church invited Welsh bishops to Chepstow for meetings with Augustine. Augustine berated the Celtic churchmen for their failure to observe the canon date for Easter, and for holding their own baptismal rites. He demanded that the British priests work with him in converting the Saxons. They were to acknowledge Canterbury as their archbishopric, the see to which they must report. The British priests declined. In 604, the same thing happened, but by then the divisions were deeper and tempers ran hotter. The Christian Church in these lands was divided between Rome and the older Celtic ways, and between Briton and Saxon. Augustine fell ill and died a year later.

After 40 years of war between the northern Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Deira, Mercia, East Anglia and the Saxon kingdoms to the south, Mercia became the dominant force in middle Britain. The Saxon kingdoms fought with the Northumbrian kingdom to the north, with the Welsh Britons to the west, and with Anglia to the east. Dynastic squabbles continued among the smaller Saxon kingdoms. If I may be so bold, I would point to these years as the first true revival of the games of our society. It is easy to imagine Ventrue princes standing over the shoulders of these little kings and their little kingdoms whispering folly into mortal ears. I say folly, not out of contempt, but out of respect. They may have sent many commoners and princes to their deaths, but I have no doubt the results were worth it. The kingdoms fought and expanded. Expansion brought a degree of stability. Stability brought trade. Trade made the kine rich and healthy, and the feeding was good again.

Sixty years after Augustine's death, the Christian churches held the Whitby Synod to discuss whether the northern Britons and the Welsh should comply with the doctrines of Rome. The Irish-influenced Christians of the north spoke against the Saxon bishops, but the Saxons carried the day. The change was not immediate, but this synod effectively marked the end of the Celtic Church of Britain and Ireland. It also marked the time when the Cainites became most interested in interfering in the affairs of the Church. Bishops commanded power — not so much as human princes, but their domains and their tithes became part of the political equation. Lay kings fought battles to ensure that their favored candidate took a bishopric. Politics replaced spirituality, and the aura of faith that so troubled the Cainites faded. Where once German Ventrue sat behind their Saxon kine and plotted, now Toreador and Malkavians from Rome or France could vie with each other

in the corridors of the churches. While petty princes expanded their fiefs and dominions and vied for power with Mithras' heirs, the younger and sometimes foreign Cainites of the Malkavian and Toreador clans opened up whole new areas of intrigue and influence.

Without Mithras, and without any form of centralized government on the island, Cainites rarely heeded the Silence of the Blood, and the Fifth Tradition was heeded not at all. Vampires routinely had rivals murdered, and only the craftiest and strongest vampires survived.

In these years, the Fief of London remained the Throne Fief — the place where the rulers of the vampires gathered. A Cainite who could claim and maintain this barony could expect great respect and power over his fellows. Though the politicking ran bitter, the Cainites all sought to keep London as peaceful as possible. The Fief of London created extra posts of deputy sheriff and assigned respected and supposedly politically neutral vampires to ensure that all the traditions were honored in London. Outside the city's boundaries, the rules no longer applied.

Despite the almost constant warfare between the Saxon states, the Saxons drove the Britons relentlessly back, north into Scotland and west into Wales and Kernow. British people were Saxonized (through conquest, intermarriage or through the slow dilution of their culture), killed or driven away. It was with little exaggeration that Offa was named King of all Angle-Land in AD 779. Even Charles the Great of the Frankish Empire (Charlemagne) recognized his kingship. The dynastic struggles, petty wars and assassinations would continue, however.

At some point around the turn of the eighth century after Christ, traders from the northlands beyond the sea came south. They were kin to the English Saxons, and spoke a barely intelligible version of the English Saxon dialect. They came first as occasional traders, and sometimes as pirates. In AD 793, these Northmen looted and burned the abbey at Lindisfarne. It was the first of many such raids. These "Vikings" came from the lands we know as Norway, Sweden and Denmark. They were a pagan people, who cared little for the teachings of the Church and nothing for whatever kinship they shared with the Saxons of England. Although many saw them as one people, they were separate tribes, serving separate kings. Some served as mercenaries in the continuing wars between the Saxon kingdoms or between those kingdoms and the Britons. The Norwegians came to dominate the west, building fortified realms on the east coast of Ireland, on the Isle of Man and the western isles of Scotland. The Danes dominated the east, absorbing many Saxon territories, and in truth becoming Saxonized themselves.

Even as the Danes expanded, the Saxons united. Egbert of Wessex became king in AD 802 and united the southern Saxon states of Essex, Sussex and Wessex with the people of Mercia. He and his successors, however, were relentlessly driven back by Danish invaders. From their base on the Isle of Thanet in the Thames estuary, the

Vikings assailed London. Their first attack failed, but their second was successful. They fortified London and divided their lands north into ten dominions, the five “burgs” of Northumbria and the five “burgs” of Anglia.

Vampires came with the Vikings — northerner spawn of the Ventrue, Gangrel and Brujah clans — and strove to rout the native vampires from their fiefs. But the English Cainites held on tenaciously. Some Viking vampires established themselves; many more failed and met Final Death. In time, even these invaders were caught in the web of politics and rivalry that marked Cainite interactions in England.

In AD 855, Alfred the Great drove the Danes back along a boundary running from Chester in the west to London in the east. Under Alfred, laws were organized and taxation systems reordered. Alfred’s nobles rebuilt and refortified London. Alfred paid scholars to translate ancient texts into the Saxon language of his kingdom. His successors, Edward the Elder and Ethelstan, pushed the Danish states further back, bringing more of the northeast under English control. In AD 937, Ethelstan defeated a combined Danish, Welsh, Scots and Norse fleet at Brunanburh, the Mersey estuary.

The vampires stood aloof from these struggles. If there was a rival to be destroyed, that could be arranged, but in my experience, vampires have little loyalty to kin or nation, and as long as there was hunting, the vampires were content.

Ethelstan’s successor, Edgar, was crowned King of All England. The constant warring had weakened the internal rivalry between the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Britons in what is now England, and made the people more willing to accept such a designation. The next king, Ethelred, unfortunately wasted Edgar’s successes. Remembered forever as Ethelred the Unready, he failed to prevent renewed Danish incursions. By AD 1013, the Danes had conquered, and King Canute of Denmark became King of England as well. Canute dismantled the army and some of the machinery of the English state, seeing England as a prominent province of his northern empire. He took Ethelred’s widow to wife and established powerful independent earldoms, further emasculating the English nation. After Canute’s death, his sons split the Danish empire between them.

Ethelred’s son, Edward, grew up among the Normans in France. The Normans — “Frenchified” Vikings — were kin to the Danes and the Norse, but had abandoned most of their Viking ways. In 1042, Edward returned to England to claim the throne with Norman support. Although Edward was an English king with an obvious claim to the throne, the English resented his Norman French ways. Saxon nationalists, led by Godwin, Earl of Essex, opposed the king.

On Edward’s death, Godwin’s son Harold took the kingship. However, there were two rival claimants — Harold Hardrada of Norway, and William of Normandy. Both invaded simultaneously. The time of the Vikings, indeed the time of barbarians in Western Europe, was at an end. Christian Vikings from Norway were invading a na-

tion created by their distant kin, the Saxons, in rivalry with a group of Frenchified Vikings of Normandy. Harold Godwinson defeated the Norwegians at Stamford Bridge and then marched south, sending half of his army to gather the crops. At Hastings, in the south, the disciplined heavy cavalry and armored infantry of the Normans overcame their Saxon foes and William of Normandy took England for his own. With Harold’s death, the Anglo-Saxon identity of England faded, and a new Continental and French one took its place.

## The Normans in Ireland

In AD 1155, the only Englishman ever to hold the position of pope, Adrian IV, issued a decree that, in effect, gave the island of Ireland to the English crown. Pope Adrian approved an invasion to “*proclaim the truths of the Christian religion to a rude and ignorant people.*” In AD 1166, Muirteagh MacLochlainn, the High King, fell in battle to the forces of Dublin and Connacht. MacLochlainn was a tyrant, despised by the populace and the provincial kings. His vassal, Dermot MacMorrough, fled the country. MacMorrough turned to the Norman princes of England and Wales for help. In a series of invasions, English Norman lords took and occupied much of eastern Ireland. By AD 1171, Ireland belonged to the English crown. The Normans erected the Pale, a series of fortifications, dikes and fences around their eastern territories to prevent incursions by Irish raiders.

## The Coming of the Triumvirate

Just as the Long Night began early on the Isles, so too did the War of Princes. In 1066, a powerful coterie of French Cainites — remembered as the Triumvirate — set their sights on the dominion of the English night. The Isles were in disarray; Mithras slept, and his heirs had grown weary of their task. Since the time of Charlemagne, the Cainite dominions on the Continent had grown steadily more organized, adopting some of the practices and rituals of feudal Europe. The vampiric hierarchies ossified. Ambitious Cainites found themselves trapped in a power structure that offered little hope of promotion or advancement; new frontiers were required. Many looked to the east, to the pagan states of the Baltic and beyond. The Triumvirate — three Ventrue with mad dreams of power — looked west, to the Isles.

The Triumvirate came with the Norman invaders — not as conquerors, but as diplomats, bowing to local lords and flattering them with tales of how they had come to trade with the famous vampires of England. Sometimes they offered alliances with French courts. At other times, they fomented conflict by offering aid to one lord against another. Initially the aid was financial and political. As the Triumvirate inveigled their way into the complex dynamics of British Cainite politics, their approval, or lack thereof, became a polarizing factor. Cainites who looked to the Continent sought the Triumvirate’s favor. Those who saw themselves as British sought to oppose them. They were all

deceived. Though these upstarts foiled many a plan of our Clan and House, I must admire their skill and finesse.

After some years, the Triumvirate's power grew, and they started hiring mercenaries from Europe to defend favored holdings and assault enemies. The Triumvirate was a decisive force in the balance of power. Many Cainite lords, tired from centuries of ruling over the scraps of a divided England, longed for the stability and respectability the Triumvirate offered. However, as soon as the Triumvirate's own "foederati" arrived, the true nature of their ambitions became clear. As the Triumvirate's forces burned vampire holdings across the land, the "native" vampires resisted. The Triumvirate helped prod the Normans into punitive campaigns in Wales and Scotland. Some have claimed, later, that the Triumvirate forced the Normans into action. Not so: They merely interfered enough to dictate the timing to their advantage. As the vampiric lords took to the field of battle and blood flowed, Mithras reawakened from his long slumber.

Curiously, the Cainites of the Triumvirate seem to have met their ends some time after Mithras awoke. These Final Deaths were unfortunate, of course, and I would not be so boorish as to accuse Mithras of engineering them. I will note, however, that Baroness Seren of Gloucester received her position shortly after Roald Snake Eyes met his Final Death in her lands, and that although Countess Liseult de Taine met her demise under Lupine claws, she did so in a region that had never before been troubled by werewolves. Geoffrey of Calais, actually the first of the Triumvirate to die, was slain by mortal soldiers scant moments before dawn. I have heard legends that the soldiers who killed him had stolen a bull from a nearby farm the day before. Strange indeed.

## The Rose Treaty

With the fall of Constantinople, the Long Night ended and the War of Princes began. In truth, it had started much earlier in 1066, when the Triumvirate arrived and agitated the fragile balance of power among the Cainites for their own ends. A preening Artisan named Melusine d'Anjou recruited some of the fools played by the Triumvirate and some other malcontents throughout the land, and forced — or rather, convinced — Mithras to sign the Rose Treaty, named for the Toreador degenerates who drafted it. Signed in 1215, the treaty gave Mithras a unified empire to rule, and gave his subjects a framework to operate under. We Tremere did not sign the treaty, nor do we recognize it. However, it serves a purpose.

## In Conclusion

For nearly two hundred years now, the Normans and their descendants have dominated these isles. They have defeated the Welsh, driven the Scots north and broken the backs of the remaining Vikings. Half of Ireland belongs to them. A new wave of vampiric interlopers has arrived to stalk English cities. The result has been ever-widening conflict and new waves of purges

**As our "historian" mentions, the Tremere did not sign the Rose Treaty. They were not invited to do so; the treaty was a deliberately first cursed affair. As such, it's only natural that he doesn't attempt to enumerate what the treaty entails. In brief, then, the Rose Treaty mirrored the Magna Carta in some ways; it limits Mithras' power and makes requirements of his barons. It states that Mithras cannot raise an army beyond a small personal bodyguard, but that the Barons of Avalon must come to London's defense if necessary.**

**The Rose Treaty was a response to vampires (Melusine in particular) using mortal troubles to make merry chaos throughout England's nights. Young Cainites are often surprised that Mithras ever signed away his right to raise an army. I humbly submit my own theory for his acceptance of the terms — the Prince of London does not need an army.**

**- Wilfred of London**

and murders. But things carry on; Mithras has awoken and sits on his throne in London. The borders of the fiefs are recognized. The Lupines are far from our haunts. Now it is time for our work to begin.

## Glastonbury, An Afterword

In making one final point to conclude this short missive, I will speak of Glastonbury. Much has been made of the great battle for Glastonbury. Vainglorious elders of our Clan and House speak loudly of their famous deeds, while our enemies chortle about a dreadful defeat dealt to us. But I must ask: What use would Glastonbury have been to us? We are vampires now. We do not need places of power — we have our vitae. But Glastonbury is important to other powers that could threaten the Clan and House of Tremere.

In AD 1101, we made it known that we intended to construct a great chantry at Glastonbury. Our enemies soon gathered, intending to prevent this "blasphemy." For four years we strove against our foes — witch women, foolish Christian scholars, fae and other things. We wasted quite a few useless neonates and malingering sorcerers who would

not take the Embrace. In AD 1105, the Lion's Gate Chantry was completed in Durham, and we withdrew from Glastonbury. Our enemies claimed victory, but fell to infighting as soon as we had departed. Pagan witches and warlocks threatened the Church's approved "pious" magicians; the faerie folk — those who cared about such matters — saw in the magi as great a threat as vampires. By AD 1106, the Church was hunting down the remnants of the pagan faith and the members of the "Glastonbury Compact" were fighting among themselves.

Some of our number did see the loss of Glastonbury as a major defeat — had we taken Glastonbury and kept it, it would have been a major victory for our order. But we as Tremere play a greater game; we have the time, we have the power, but we do not have the numbers. We must therefore neutralize our enemies one by one. Glastonbury saw the deaths of hundreds of those who would stand against us. In the battle for that piece of land, our enemies aligned against us — and then sought to destroy each other. That is sufficient victory for me.

**I am reminded somewhat of  
Aesop's story of the fox and the  
grapes.**

**- Wilfred of London**

## Britain Under the Normans

My dear Bertramus, ill-favored child of the noble House of Murnau, to our shores I bid you welcome. You stand at once in one of the most powerful nations in Christendom and one most disposed to succumb willingly to the wiles of the great Adversary. These isles need God's blessing upon them more than any lands bar those held by the infidel and the pagan. While all the nations now subject to the English crown have long professed to serve our Lord, most have followed a debased version of that faith that can only be the work of the Enemy and his servants, seeking to turn souls from the true path.

This is a land where kings seek to turn the Church to their own purposes and bishops marry and father great broods of bastards, mocking the commandments of Scripture.

## Norman Britain

The diabolical state of the nation is powerfully shown by His Holiness Alexander II's grant of a blessing, a banner and ring to William, Duke of Normandy for the invasion of England, a territory which was rightfully his. Harold Godwinson's refusal to grant William the allegiance owed laid bare the perfidious nature of the sinful local nobility. Harold seized the throne for his own upon the death of the most Godly and Christian soul, Edward the Confessor. William had oft proved himself a true friend and ally of the Church and a good Christian, properly penitent. His friend and advisor, Lanfranc of Bec, abbot of Caen, presented a list of the affronts to the

Church perpetrated by the Godwin family to his Holiness. Their crimes were many: They supplanted the rightful Archbishop of Canterbury with the blasphemer Stigand, so-called Bishop of Winchester, who labored under excommunication no less than five times in his damned life. Nobles who were unsure of the justice of William's cause flocked to the Papal banner, committed to bringing Christian rule to England once more. Surely, the Lord was with the forces of the Normans, for they swept the English aside and took control of these lands near two centuries since.

It is nigh impossible for us to judge the influence of the Satanic and the blasphemous on the history of this land since then, save by inference and divine guidance. Yet, one thing is sure: The noble mission of William to rid England of its sinful rulers was successful, with God's favor. My brothers in the order and I pray nightly for the insight to see the true faces of the devils who beset all the Christian souls of these Isles. Believe me, my fellow servant of the Holy Office, that in Damburrow it is impossible to escape the sure and certain knowledge that the servants of the Fallen One have put down deep roots in the soil of this land.

I shall relate enough dark tales of the slaughter of archbishops, of terrible punishments meted upon the people of these lands and of the continuing perfidy of those who style themselves kings of England as testament to the Evil One's manifold successes. This document shall stand as just cause for the full weight of your family's treasury and God-given blessings to aid England and the pursuit of the Holy Office to even the deepest forest and benighted village of this dangerous country.

## A Church Divided, A People of War

First, you must understand the nature of these lands. The four kingdoms of these isles, if some of these barbarous collections of warring peoples and petty princes deserve the title "kingdom," are all subservient to the English crown, by conquest, freely given oath and Papal decree. Lands in the west of Wales and Ireland still prove troublesome to the crown and no doubt harbor creatures of a most damnable and horrific kind. We must concentrate our work on protecting the good souls of the civilized world before we endeavor to cleanse the pagan lands.

By necessity, this account focuses more on England and its kings than those petty leaders found in the other nations. While circumstance has forced my brethren and I to take up residence in Scotland for the greater glory of God, make no mistake that the country is but a bit player on a stage where England is the leading actor. Aye, and both are as disreputable as actors, too. I shall endeavor to convey a little of the history of these lesser nations at the end of my account, or mayhap I will assign the task to one better suited to such toil.

## Two Churches

The most troublesome aspect of this land a mere century ago was its nigh-heretical view of our faith. As you

know, brother, there is but one Church and one Faith, yet both the uncouth Saxons and barbaric Celts who held this land professed to serve Christ while following rituals and ways of behavior that ran contrary to those of a true penitent soul. The form of worship followed in Ireland and much of Scotland deviated far from the stricture of Rome. Indeed, the Irish Church was so open to the Devil and beholden to his servants that it had the effrontery to send a letter to the pope, questioning his theology. All the while, their own clergy were prey to the leaders of the tiny lands that claimed the title kingdoms, prone to marrying and lacking in piety. They did not allow women to serve in the Church and indeed seem to have paid them little or no regard. Clearly, they have not learned the lesson of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

The pope could not allow this situation to continue. While the Church in England professed to follow the teachings of Rome, the nation's leaders had strayed far from the narrow path of righteousness and required a rebuke. They received it at the hands of a pious Norman named William.

## William the Conqueror

William was not a conqueror in the true sense, merely a noble man and a designated heir unseating a usurper who had stolen the crown. Many of the Saxon nobles remained in authority for years after William's ascent to the throne. The exception to this magnanimous gesture was the despised Godwin dynasty, which the king stripped of all lands, titles, and often life, too. William waged war against them throughout the land, defeating them at Canterbury, Winchester and then London. He was crowned in the Abbey in neighboring Westminster on Christmas Day in the year of our Lord 1066. To seal his power, he immediately ordered that construction begin on a mighty fortress on the edge of London, the tower that stands proud over the river Thames.

But the Saxons proved an unworthy and uneducated lot and one by one, William had to replace them with more trustworthy and Godly Norman men, often those very brave and pious souls who had supported him against the perfidious Harold. Those men and their descendants now make up most of the noble families of this kingdom and it is by far the better for it. Even the unruly Scots recognized the worth of the Norman race. Their late king, William the Lion, and his court were famous for taking Norman wives and husbands in blessed matrimony, rather than other Scots. After a spell among these barbarous people, I can see the wisdom in their choice. Thus, the influence of William and his descendants has spread to most parts of mainland Britain. I shall write more of the obstreperous Welsh race later.

## Sundry Rebellions

If you have any doubt in your heart that the Evil One sought immediately to undermine William's great work, you need only look at the case of Eadric the Wild of Wales. This sinner married a woman of the fairy race and introduced her to the king in an attempt to cast a glamour over

the pious man. His faith was too strong, thank the Lord, and Eadric resorted to force of arms to little avail. In the years following the rebellion the Devil's succubi and incubi cast their spells over many men and women of Britain, so that by the end of the decade, brave William found himself beset on all side by rebels, devils and worse.

William wisely decided to settle for containment of the barbarous Welshmen, allowing his trusted knights to build a string of castles along the Welsh borders. Those brave men became known as the Marcher lords and undertook the difficult task of pacifying those Welsh tribes nearest their territories. A rebellion in York proved so tainted with evil that William was left no choice but to slaughter many of the people of that town, the better to leave the Christian inhabitants of York safe and free.

Once the Lord granted William victory over each of his foes, the king established castles in the Norman style, both to enforce his rule and protect his subjects. Finally, in 1072, England and Wales were free of the ungodly and rebellious and William was able to turn his attention to the Scots. He boldly attacked the Scots king, Malcolm, with two armies. One struck from the west, the other from the east. Malcolm found himself trapped. To spare his own skin, he gave up the Aelthing, the last of the old Saxon ruling line, to the invaders and swore an oath of allegiance to William.

## The People and the Land

It is a mark of the justness of William's cause and the blessing God rained down upon it that little changed for the ordinary man of England. He continued to labor in his fields, raising crops and giving his devotions to God. What matters it to such men if their lords speak French and Latin and have strange names? As long as they are pious and just, they can command the plain man's allegiance as well as any Saxon lord. The most profound change that William instituted across the realm was a single line of succession. Under the Saxons, holdings had grown ever smaller through their division among several heirs. William wisely abandoned that factitious practice, bringing the land a new stability as one baron succeeded another, each generation holding the same lands as the previous. His actions were a great boon to the Church, as younger children often found (and still find) a better alternative in a monastic life when they could no longer count on an inheritance.

William's interest in the very soil he ruled did not stop there.. In 1085, while celebrating Christmas in Gloucester, he asked that a record of all the holdings of the lands be prepared, shire by shire. This great work, named the Domesday Book by those superstitious men who ill comprehended William's intentions, was completed within the year. With it, William was able to raise a just tax, the geld, based on each man's lands.

The latter years of William's life occupied him in skirmishes with the King of France in Normandy. Once such battle cost the king his life, thrown from his horse while riding through the ruins of a French town.

## The Battle for Succession

William's death, in the year of our Lord 1087, left the crown's future in the hands of three men. The king had made provision for this. He intended that his second son, William Rufus, should inherit the Kingdom of England, while the eldest, Robert, should take his original title, Duke of Normandy. The youngest son, Henry, would be left a large cash payment. Robert was a noble and pious man, but his brothers were avaricious and manipulative souls, both given to the sins of the world. Henry in particular gave himself over to lechery and sins of the flesh, fathering no fewer than 20 bastards in his time. Civil war shook England and Normandy as the three strove to settle their dispute over who should inherit what. After William Rufus fell to an assassin, Henry took his place as Henry I of England in 1100. He then sought to deprive his brother of Normandy and succeeded in 1106, finally reuniting his father's lands.

Despite his profligate lusts, Henry sired only two legitimate children, William and Matilda. William perished at sea in the wreck of the *White Ship*, leaving Matilda the only hope for the continuation of Henry's line. He married her to the German Emperor Henry V, in a move to isolate the Normans' traditional foes, the kings of France. When her husband perished in 1125, Matilda, still childless, married Count Geoffrey of Anjou. He fathered three boys, finally securing the line of succession for Henry in his mind. However, that was not God's will.

## The Rise of the Angevins

When Henry I finally left this world, no doubt to face an unfavorable fate on Judgment Day, his two-year old grandson and namesake was the appointed heir. However, the Adversary enjoyed sowing discord among the people of Britain and encouraged the deceased king's nephew, one Count Stephen of Blois, to claim the crown. The land was torn by strife once more, with Dover and Canterbury rejecting Stephen and London accepting him in the first days of his reign. The battles between the supporters of the two kings laid waste to much of England. Henry's mother, who insisted upon the title Empress, led his supporters. As the two sides fought, the other barons took on greater control of their lands, often extending their boundaries. The peoples of Wales and Scotland were quick to take advantage of such discord, throwing off much of the English control that William had imposed.

The turning point after many years of struggle was a woman. Eleanor of Aquitaine, who became Henry's wife, was not a pious woman, yet Henry's father could see the possibilities in this unlikely match. Sole heir to the rich duchy of Aquitaine, Eleanor had become a divorcee after the Church declared her first marriage within the bounds of consanguinity. It is a sin to marry too close to one's own blood, as I assume you have seen. I am well aware of the associations your family keeps and am glad you have all found penance in service to the Church.

The Lord cursed (or blessed, perhaps — the Lord's ways are oft mysterious) Eleanor's first marriage to Louis VII, the King of France, with childlessness, but gave Eleanor and Henry two sons. The royal couple seemed well matched and even in love, which, as you well know, is far from a necessity or likelihood in royal marriages. She was a strong woman, an ideal match for her zealous husband. She also had a deep purse.

In 1153, her husband invaded England with an army outfitted with Eleanor's funds. Stephen's troops faltered in battle and he, defeated, appointed Henry his heir. A year later, Eleanor and Henry II were crowned together, the first monarchs of the Angevin dynasty. The years of war had taken their toll on the young Henry, though, and God did not bless his reign with good fortune.

At first, all seemed well. Henry's empire rivaled and then exceeded that of his ancestors. He inherited his father's lands of Anjou and then gained Aquitaine through marriage. The Kingdom of England controlled lands from Scotland (after Henry ruthlessly put down an ill-advised invasion by the Scots) to the Pyrenees. It was the mightiest empire of its day.

He humbled barons who had grown too powerful during the civil war. He also pulled the administration of justice for the ordinary man away from the barons and into royal courts, in which a jury of 12 men would pass judgment on their fellow freemen. At first, he did not dare to impose such justice on men of the Church, although that would change in time.

## One Church

Pope Adrian IV, the only man from these islands to be so favored by God, had charged Henry with a mission. He was to take control of Ireland and bring the heretic Irish Church in line with the one true faith. Henry did not pursue his charge with enthusiasm, which may have been a sign of the growing influence of the diabolic on the nobility, so fallen from the piety of William of Normandy. But God is not content to let sinners idle when His work remains undone. In 1166, a century into Norman rule of England, one Dermot Mac Murrough, King of Leinster, arrived at the king's court in Tours, seeking an audience and aid in a feud.

Henry was slow to offer anything but his sympathy. Richard of Clare, Earl of Pembroke, one of the Marcher Lords, took up the challenge instead, sending 400 soldiers under the command of Robert FitzStephen to regain Dermot's lands in 1169.

His small force was successful against the lightly armored Irish, and won back Dermot's lands. However, Dermot was still beholden to his oppressor Tiernan O'Rourke as High King of Ireland. The Earl now had a stronghold in the country, after marrying Dermot's daughter Eva, and he used this to launch a second campaign the following summer, capturing Dublin and Waterford and consolidating his control over Dermot's lands.

Henry grew wary of his successful vassal. He invaded Ireland himself, with some 500 knights, 3,000 archers and 400 ships, the largest army the island had ever seen. After he landed in the autumn of 1171, almost all the Irish chiefs of the south and middle of the island submitted to his rule.

The country had none of the sophistication of England. People did not hold land individually. Instead, all the people who dwelt there held it in common. Inheritance could follow any branch of a family tree, rather than down a strict line of succession. Henry appointed Hugh de Lacy as justiciar of the island, all the better to bring civilization to Ireland and a timely end to these primitive practices.

Praise be to God, he also brought the errant Church of Ireland back to the true faith. Clerics from Rome and Ireland, including a papal legate, gathered in Cashel for a council. God anointed them with wisdom and the Irish Church agreed that "all matters relating to religion are to be conducted on the pattern of the Holy Church, and according to the observances of the English Church."

This was to be Henry's last truly godly act before the Devil consumed his very soul.

## The Martyr, Thomas Becket

Henry was clearly in the thrall of some servant of Satan, if he was not such a beast himself. Though his invasion of Ireland had done God's working bringing the Celtic Church under the banner of Rome at last, afterward he turned his attention to the service of Hell. Henry sought to turn the Church to the service of the state by appointing a friend and

ally, one Thomas Becket, to the highest station of the land: the Archbishopric of Canterbury. Becket was a Londoner and the son of a merchant who had risen through the ranks of Henry's advisors by his diligence, knowledge and deep purse. He was a scion of a wealthy house and his father one of the most notable men in the land, a background to which you profess no little familiarity, my friend. He, like you, found salvation by the direct action of our Lord. He won his way into Henry's heart with his learning, his knowledge of the people and the spectacles he arranged for the King. When the Lord gathered Archbishop Theobald to Him in 1161, Becket replaced him and the King hoped that he would bring the Church firmly under the yoke of the crown.

Henry held to the heresy that kings had a sacred autonomy, God-given, that rendered them free from the oversight of Rome. Becket shared his view and would enforce it from the highest position of authority, or so the king reasoned.

Yet, the Lord was in the heart of Becket. When he heard of the king's intention, he told a confidant that he would rather see a priest elevated to the noble office, "for if it should come about that I am promoted I know the king too well, indeed inside out, not to realize that I would either have to lose his favor or, God forbid, neglect my duty to the Almighty."

After his elevation to the archbishopric, Becket took on the duties of the penitent man, wearing a hair shirt under his rich garments of office and fasting when the opportunity arose. When the king's Satanically inspired scheme to place the clergy under the power of the courts like some



common thief from the streets came to Becket's notice, he stood firm against such a plan. He declared that the men of the Church were only answerable to the successors of St. Peter and God himself, in defiance of the king.

The two men achieved a tentative compromise but Becket balked at the details. The king wished to take charge of all communication betwixt Rome and Canterbury (and what more proof of the influence of the Enemy need you?), and only allow excommunications at his own word. He sought to seize powers that only God himself could grant. Becket resisted the blandishments of the Evil One and refused the king once more.

He fled the king and removed the blessings of the Lord from the English people. He denied the people absolution, confession and all the sacraments until the king relented. When the king brought the archbishop to heel, the archbishop appealed directly to the pope. A God-fearing follower of Becket rescued him and they fled to a Cistercian Abbey near Paris. Here he established a network of good Christian men, committed to watching England and spreading the true gospel. This network exists today as part of the Oculi Dei, as you shall learn. Through the news he gained from his trusted men, Becket was able to excommunicate those clergy who had turned from the Lord to serve Henry, such as the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London.

In 1170, the two achieved a tentative peace after a pair of meetings in France. However, good Becket knew that a man so tainted by the Enemy could not easily turn from the path that leads to the flames of Hell. He returned to Canterbury wary, yet crowds of good Christian people greeted him, singing hymns of praise to the Lord. Becket walked barefoot through them, still humble in the eyes of God. In his absence, Henry had his son and heir crowned as successor to the throne by the Archbishop of York. On Christmas Day, Becket pronounced anathema on two nobles who had aided the archbishop in the service. It was a meet act: The Church had excommunicated the archbishop before he performed the service, and so anyone who aided him was doing the Devil's work.

Henry was in France, stricken by illness as those who choose the service of Satan often are. Becket's actions angered him beyond reason, and three knights, seeking the king's favor, left for Canterbury that very day. At dawn the following morning, the three knights arrived in England, gathered further troops, and made haste to the archbishop's palace. Becket ignored their interruption and threats, and made his way to the cathedral to perform the office of vespers. The three knights apprehended Becket in the north transept and attacked him and his attendant. A single sword blow severed the arm of the attendant and sliced open the martyr's brow. A second blow severed Becket's head and a third removed his brains from his skull.

Thomas Becket is now a saint, canonized by Alexander II in 1173 and blessed in the sight of the Lord. We members of the Inquisition in these lands pray to him for his blessing as we carry on his holy work. His shrine is a place of

pilgrimage for the people of many lands. His miserable assassins found themselves excommunicated and perished on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. God's will be done.

Henry repented of his sins and made a pilgrimage to Becket's tomb in Canterbury the following year. He walked the last miles barefoot and wearing a hairshirt of his own, in memory of his former friend who had done the same. He confessed his sins at the tomb and the bishops attending scourged him with the lash. He lay all night on that cold ground, fasting and praying in full sight of his people. However, we well know that the mere mortification of the flesh will not free the soul of the touch of Satan, and I am sure that Henry even now languishes in Hell for his crimes. Many suspect that his visit was nothing more than a base attempt to win back the favor of his people. He had lost the love of his wife as well: Eleanor was leading a rebellion against the king with his own son, also named Henry.

## The Doom of Henry II

Henry the Younger and Eleanor had persuaded the young Scottish king, William the Lion, to join their rebellion. This proved to be an unfortunate choice by the Scot: King Henry defeated William's armies, captured the Scottish monarch and paraded him as a captive. At length Henry forced him to swear complete submission to the English crown and set him free. The rebellion failed in short order, with Eleanor captured and Henry the Younger treated with surprising leniency. A decade later, Henry the Younger attempted rebellion again, but perished that same year. Geoffrey, Henry II's second son, was already dead, trampled to death by horses in a tournament. That left Henry and Eleanor, who had spent the last ten years in close confinement, with two sons: Richard and John (their first son, William, had died while still a young child). The Lord blessed Richard, while John fell prey to the Devil's ways.

Becket's resistance to the king was the last chance for this country to free itself of the Devil's influence that took such a hold on Henry II and his son John. Now the work of freeing the country must fall to us. It merely remains for me to make plain the severity of the task that lies before us.

## Angevin Power, Absent Kings

My friend, I am sure you are familiar with the idea that the Devil cannot create, merely corrupt and destroy. Those with the eyes to see can find further evidence of the influence of the diabolic in the fortunes of Henry II and his sons. Of his sons, Henry always showed a preference for the younger, John, over the elder Richard. This did not sit well with the young and brash Prince Richard, who begged the aid of the King of France, the equally young Philip Augustus, against his father. Richard's mother, Eleanor, also supported this venture. The young defeated the old in 1189, and Henry perished a mere two days later, allowing Richard to take the throne.

## Richard

Richard was King of England in name and in power but certainly not in presence. Of his 10 years on the English throne, he dwelt in the country for a mere six months. The rest of his God-granted span he spent in France, in the Holy Land and in a filthy prison..

Yet he started well, tendering his crown to the Archbishop of Canterbury during his coronation and thereby clearly putting Church ahead of kingship, in stark contrast to his father. A lone bat marred the coronation, by flying, in broad light of day, through the cathedral and striking the throne. It was an ill omen, to be sure, and one that indicates a malefic interest in destroying Richard's rule. Do we not know that the Enemy can take the form of the bat and the wolf?

The Jews of England gave Richard handsome presents on his accession. The foolish and credulous masses took this act of generosity to be a sign of a plot, betraying their usual suspicion of the Jews. Richard proved himself a more forgiving, educated and Christian soul by doing his best to prevent the massacre of that people at English hands. Alas, the depths to which the English have fallen! The massacres that followed the moment Richard quit the country were another ill omen. The God-fearing English people, led astray by the Devil's wiles, thought they detected the mark of the Antichrist in the Jews and so strove to purge them from this land. You should learn, my friend, how easily our Adversary can turn good Christians into tools for his evil works.

Let us return to the King. For Richard, England and the other countries that made up his kingdom were little more than a convenient source of men and money to pursue his true interest, the waging of war. He took a coronation vow to free the Cross from the Saracens in the Holy Land, and he pursued this aim with all his ability. The Lord's favor seemed to be with him. A fire at Glastonbury Abbey revealed two bodies, those of Arthur and Guinevere, and an ancient sword, Excalibur itself most like. These miraculous events equipped the king to do God's work and affirmed his right to be King of England.

King Richard directed much of his energies against the Saracen foe, crusading in the Holy Land. In his absence, he entrusted the realm to William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely. However, many barons were not comfortable with a man of God gaining such power. See once more how the Devil's own servants recoil from and conspire against those who commit their lives to the service of Christ. The king's younger brother, the abominable John, quietly built himself a power base composed of these heretical barons, while his brother did God's work. With the Devil's aid and at the cost of his soul, no doubt, Prince John built enough power to drive good William Longchamp from England and set himself up as king in his brother's absence.

Alas, Richard endured an unfortunate capture at the hands of the King of Austria and was imprisoned in that land for two years. Eleanor herself intervened, begging the pope to aid her son. With the pope's intercession, God opened the hearts of the English and they dug deep in their

purses to secure their king's freedom. His release was bought at a price that nearly emptied the coffers of England's people: 34 tons of gold. King Philip of France once again meddled in the affairs of the English crown, aiding John against his brother's reign. When Richard was released from prison, rumor has it that Philip warned John with the words, "Look to yourself, the devil is loosed." The word "devil" would be better applied to John than the virtuous Richard, I think. The king lost no time in hunting down his perfidious brother and humbling him before all.

Richard met an ignoble end, killed in a mere skirmish while punishing a rebellious vassal in Normandy. His enthusiasm for fighting for Christendom was admirable. A pity he could not have devoted more of that enthusiasm to his own kingdom.

## Bad King John

John's reign did not start well. In fact, his reign was so inauspicious that God clearly was not with the man. His barons in Normandy and Brittany seem to have assessed the French king as the worthier of the two, and cast their lots with him. By 1204, there was little left of the Norman holdings, bar the Channel Islands. John undertook to regain his territories with an assault on the French from his mother's holdings of Poitou and Aquitaine a decade later, but the French soundly defeated him at Bouvines.

John's relations with other kings were just as ignominious. Where his noble brother had a friendly relationship with King William of Scotland, John quickly soured it and began preparations for war. William and his son wisely staved off the invasion with a large sum of money, which the

### ARTHUR AND ROBIN

Observant readers will note the presence of one notable from British mythology in Richard's tale and the absence of another. Legends of King Arthur were already in circulation by the 13th century and certainly people of the time believed that the real bodies of Arthur and his bride had been found. Richard was a strong adherent of the notion of chivalry, too, so the reworked legends to make Arthur's knights fit with the chivalrous ideal gave the discovery an added resonance for the headstrong king. Such tales were part of his upbringing in his mother's French courts.

Robin Hood, on the other hand, is first found in ballads originating in the 14th century and set in Yorkshire, not Nottingham. His story doesn't gain any association with Richard I's reign until the 18th century.

Of course, the Dark Medieval world is not the real world, so if you choose to include a variation on the Hooded man legend in your own chronicle, feel free. After all, he could be anything from a Gangrel who took more than money from the rich to a Fianna seeking to keep his Kinfolk safe to what he appeared to be: a hero and rebel opposing a corrupt ruler.

impecunious Scots could ill afford, and an oath of allegiance to John. That which was freely given to one brother was won with threat of force by the other.

Only in Ireland did the king fare better. In 1210, John returned to Ireland, hoping to undo the damage done by his earlier visit some years previously, in which he insulted Irish natives and Norman rulers alike. During his nine-week visit, he replaced the restless Norman nobles with strict English rule. In this task, the O'Connor kings of Connacht and the O'Brien kings of Limerick proved a decisive aid to the king in defeating the nobles whose power he feared. Soon 20 Irish kings paid homage to John as their High King.

This mistrust of his own barons show how clearly the Devil whispered into John's ear. He would trust no one bar those he could buy: Mercenaries were his trusted aides and blackmail, extortion and hostage-taking his weapons of choice. However, the rebellious barons answered the injustice and evil of John's reign again and again. He attempted to keep them in line by demanding onerous taxes, called scutage, to buy them exemption from military service. Heirs had to give the king monetary "relief" to gain their fathers' lands and positions. The barons chafed under such treatment and eventually they gained the upper hand.

## Defying Rome

Truly, John was his father's son. Not content merely to antagonize the peoples of the British Isles, he chose to add defying the will of the pope, Christ's Vicar, to his roll of crimes. In 1208, Pope Innocent III chose Stephen Langton as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. God guided the pope well, allowing him to find a man who would be acceptable to all, yet still the king refused him. His Holiness, heavy of heart, placed an interdict on the whole of the country, depriving the English people of the sacraments of marriage, burial in consecrated ground, communion and confession once more.

The Devil's grasp on John's ear grew ever stronger and rather than showing due penitence, John chose instead to seize Church land. The pope responded in the only way possible: He excommunicated John. In fear for his mortal soul, John briefly ignored the words of the Devil and threw himself upon the pope's mercy, surrendering the whole of his kingdom to the pope in 1213. The pope blessed this penitent act, and restored the gifts of the Church to the nation and its king.

## Magna Carta

The pope's blessing inspired John to make a last attempt at regaining his lost French territories and led to the defeat at Bouvines that I described earlier in this account. The barons saw that John was weak and sought to exploit his humbling at the hands of the pope and the King of France. Those barons who lived in the north of England launched a rebellion against the king's rule. The rebellion spread and by 1215, London itself had fallen to the outraged

nobles. John sued for peace and the barons presented him with a great charter, a Magna Carta, which curtailed his power and made him answerable to a group of 25 barons who would monitor his behavior. The king who sought to place himself above the pope found himself humbled by his own barons.

(An aside: At Runnymede, around the same time that the Magna Carta was signed, the local populace suffered a strange spike in mortality. For no easily discernible reason, the good citizens began dying, as many as a score each night, if the stories are to be believed. Was something lurking in the shadows while John was forced to sign the papers? Were the bad king's frustrations vented on the Christian folk?)

It was, of course, a ruse. John used the respite to rally his army and seek the pope's approval to dispense with the charter. With Innocent's approval, John launched an assault on his enemies in the autumn of 1215.

By 1216, John was fighting a battle on two fronts. Louis VII of France had invaded, and the king had both the French and his own rebellious nobles to contend with. Like the perfidious Harold before him, he found himself trapped between two fearsome adversaries.

The king fell sick with a terrible fever in Norfolk. He attempted to flee across the Wash to Wisbech in his weakened state, a foolish decision in the best of weathers. He and his disoriented men blundered into quicksand and much of his baggage, including a large portion of his purse and his household goods, were lost to the muck. John escaped, but a week later he was dead. Few mourned the passing of this devil-struck heretic.

## The Child King

With John dead, the barons rallied behind his newly crowned son, Henry III. Better a malleable English king than a warlike French one, they decided. At that time, London and much of eastern England were in the hands of rebel barons led by Prince Louis, son of the French king Philip II Augustus. A council of regency presided over by the venerable William Marshal, First Earl of Pembroke, was formed to rule for Henry; by 1217 the rebels had been defeated and Louis forced to withdraw from England. After Pembroke's death in 1219 Hugh de Burgh took control of the government in the name of the child king, a post he holds even today. However, three years ago, the king took up his full powers and acts as he will, with the advice of de Burgh in his ear.

Magna Carta is in force once more and the absolute power of the king broken for good. God has humbled the line that sought to usurp the power vested in the rightful heirs of St. Peter alone.

## The Welsh Princes

Now I must turn briefly to the lands beyond the castles of the marcher lords. The Welshmen fought hard against the Normans and paid the price for their resistance. By the

end of William's reign, many a Welshman feared to even carry a quiver for hunting lest he be arrested and imprisoned. The people of the north and west of the land, however, never surrendered. Instead, the marcher lords kept a watch on these restless men and the boundaries of the free Welsh lands, known as Pura Walia. What would the king gain by giving Norman lives to capture such treacherous, unprofitable lands? Welsh rebellions, while troublesome to suppress, could never pose a threat to the crown. For a time the warlord Owain Gwynedd, styled a prince, achieved a measure of power over much of Pura Walia, but after his death in 1170 war engulfed the country. Owain had murdered many of his own kin, and his family followed his ungodly example.

On occasion, friendships developed between the leaders of the Welshmen and the kings of England. Lord Rhys' great power in the late 12th century was in part a boon from his friendship with Henry II. Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, who emerged victorious from the strife of Owain's succession, pursued similar tactics. When Rhys perished, his lands dissolved once more into warring princedoms, while Llywelyn's fortunes grew. He has signed treaties with the English crown twice, both of which acknowledge him as chief amongst the Welsh princes. He holds the throne still, the closest that factitious and rebellious land has to a king.

## In Conclusion

Here I must terminate my account of these islands' fortunes, for it is near time for vespers. I will attach a brief history of Scotland for your pleasure. I look forward to meeting you once more three months hence at the next Council of Faith.

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, Amen  
— Albert d'Aquitaine, Order of Saint Theodosius

## Scotland

Quite why Brother Albert should ask me, Brother Giordano Nicola d'Arzenta, to write the history of this blighted land is a mystery whose solution is known to Brother Albert and our Holy Father, and no other living soul. My missive on the recent history of the Scottish people will be, of necessity, shorter than that of my most pious and goodly brother, due both to ignorance and a paucity of material. The lands of the Scots have not seen the same upheavals as the lands south of the border, a blessing to the people that can only be a gift from God for their God-fearing nature and endurance in the face of such evil in the heart of their cold land.

The kingdom's last period of strife came before William's arrival in England, as King Malcolm overthrew King MacBeth in 1057, with the aid of Earl Sigurd of Northumberland. While MacBeth had not been a bad king, as Scots rulers go, Malcolm III brought a new stability to Scotland, and by the glory of God none of the challenges to his rule and that of his sons succeeded. Yet the people of the north were nonetheless conquered, without any battle.

Before William invaded England, the Church stood at the heart of the kingdom of Scotland and the lands that surrounded it. The great monastery at Iona, which had suffered grievously at the hands of Norsemen, recovered and produced a famed Bible, the Book of Kells. Other centers of the faith grew in Dunkeld and Kinrymont. The Church was often called the Culdee, a bastardization of Céli Dé, "servants of God" in the primitive native tongue.

The Normans were not content to leave the lands to the north of England alone. While William did invade this country briefly, the Normans conquered it not through force of arms but through the marriage bed, slowly entwining themselves with the Scots nobility. With them came their ideas of feudalism and the rise of secular power and landholding over the glory of God. King David I, who held the throne from 1124 to 1153, spent his early years among the Norman lords of England and found them much to his taste. He brought Norman practices and Norman friends with him when he took the throne. The Scottish court used French to converse among themselves and English and Gaelic to talk to their vassals. It was not so very different from England and other civilized lands.

The king's relationship with his former hosts was not always so amicable. In 1138 he invaded Northumbria, to little avail. This reversal did nothing to quench his enthusiasm for conquest and he took advantage of the chaos following Henry I's death to capture land all the way to Cumbria. Years later, he lost these gains to Henry II.

David's lasting achievement was the imposition of the Norman administrative system and the English Church on the Scots kingdom. By 1200, all the Earls of Scotland had formalized their lands in charters, which also set out their obligations to the king. The monastic orders slowly replaced the Culdee, and developed to become the center of the country's agricultural economy. There is no greater incentive to labor in the fields than the glory of God, and the monks of Scotland pioneered methods of farming that slowly spread to the other farmers of the land.

## A Growing Kingdom

The Kingdom of Scotland has steadily expanded over the last century as landowners once loyal to the Norwegian throne transferred their allegiance to Scotland. In 1098, King Edgar of Scotland and King Magnus Barelegs of Norway met and agreed to the new disposition of lands. The entire mainland was now to be considered Scotland, while the western isles were, and remain, loyal to Norway.

However, tension remains between the kingdom and its powerful nobles in the Highlands. In 1164, the highlanders attacked the holdings of the Stewart family, to limit their power in the west and north. Successive kings have attempted to pacify the highlanders and win the western isles for Scotland. While the highlanders are no longer the danger they once were, Haakon IV of Norway stoutly defends the western isles against further rebellions. I hear



whispers that the king even attempted to purchase the islands, but had his advances rebuffed by Norway.

For all the good that has befallen Scotland, we know that the servants of the Devil are rife in this land. The small villages, heather-covered moors and dark forests of the kingdom hide all too many of his diabolic kin. We of the Red Order devote our lives and prayers to fighting the evil that dwells beneath us, whose nature I will not commit to paper.

## Going Forward – A Collection of Letters

### Magna Carta

Master Julius,

Despite your erudition, I fear you understand little of how the common folk will deal with the threat of Interdict. May I remind you that a scarce twenty years ago, the pope placed that seal upon England due to John Lackland's refusal to accept Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury? I am aware that you were in Paris at the time, but I have always understood that the Order of Hermes prided itself upon its knowledge of the physical world of politics and history, as much as on its understanding of the inner world of the soul. *As above, so below*, we read in the Emerald Tablet, from which one might also construe, *as below, so above*. I cannot believe that you did not hear of the Interdict, or of its results.

Let me say again that you lack understanding of faith. The English people — indeed, the Welsh and Scots and Irish, too, or those who had any pretensions to Christianity, any obligation to the English sovereign, and any ability to conceal these facts from their fellows, on pain of being scorned as lapdogs to the English crown — were faced with the withdrawal of all the sacraments necessary to salvation. Newborn children could be baptized, but communion, marriage, ordination, last rites — all were forbidden. I am only astonished that it took as long as it did before Lackland made peace with the Church in the Year of our Lord 1213.

Indeed, Archbishop Langton studied in Paris among many of our brothers, which makes me all the more astonished that you have never taken the affair seriously. He was a most skilled academic, a paragon of peace and order, and one whom my own order would gladly have counted among our own, had Heaven so favored us. From the first, once John had permitted him to exercise his authority as Archbishop of Canterbury, he set himself to restrain the King's lawlessness and to mediate between him and the aggrieved barons — indeed, some credit him with great influence upon the creation and signing of the Magna Carta. I do not countenance this myself, and will trust that you shall permit me to tell you why.

Surely the work of our own kind shows through the Magna Carta as does a light through glass? Observe the desire for justice for all, the respect for the basic rights of the common man as well as for the noble's natural authority,

the formal establishment of covenant between king and people? Loath as I am to dabble in the hedge-witchery of the "Old Believers," this is surely their own faith developed into a more humanistic mode, and expressed in terms of law rather than symbolic sacrifice. As such, I can only applaud it. Indeed, one of my own brothers stood as personal chaplain to a highly ranked baron present, and told me later that a coven of the Old Faith kind worked sorceries for three nights in succession, binding the written word to the land, for better or for worse. I know that there are tales of blood-drinkers who followed in the King's entourage, but I trust that we both have better sense than to believe the Charter was in any way *their* work.

Archbishop Langton's death earlier this year was a tragic loss to the people of this land, but no less to our kind. How can we be expected to study in peace, much less work for the salvation of the folk, while we are ceaselessly troubled by these wars and declarations twixt king and barons? I will confess that this Simon de Montfort troubles me greatly — but that, perhaps, is a matter for another letter.

— Lucia, this day of Autumn, the Year of our Lord 1228

*Postscriptum:* I will await your visit, and have taken a house in Winchester, where I have a name as a pious widow. You are welcome to bring your Arabian friend; let it not be said that I am unwilling to give hospitality, even to the infidel, or to disdain the Samaritan's path which our Lord himself commanded.

## Older Paths

My name is Jerome. Mistress Gwynne has bidden me practice my letters upon this slate.

The name of the King is Henry. He has been king for many years now, but he came to the throne when he was only nine years old, and so regents sat over him. This was because John Lackland, his father, was made to resign the throne to him. Mistress Gwynne says that was good, because a healthy king is good for the realm. She says that King John was poisoned in the Cistercian abbey at Swinehead, because he lusted after the abbot's beautiful sister. She says that the abbot was a wise man of our kind, who bound straw and grass together to make a woman with eyes as green as grass and hair as yellow as straw, and so he made a woman who would tempt John Lackland to his fall, and bring his servants to rise up and slay him.

Mistress Gwynne says that there are others like us in the Christian monasteries and abbeys across the land. She says that we are not yet defeated. It seems strange to me that we can both make the cross and kneel to Christ, and also attend the night ceremonies and remember the old ways, but she says that when I am older I will understand. She says that they are different ways of worshipping the same gods, and that the Christ is only a teacher; that there is no harm in giving him proper honor, but that the old ways must come first.

This makes me happier than I can write here.. I see the Benedictines and the Cistercians and all the priests, and

they frighten me. The Church is so great, and we are so small. But Mistress Gwynne reminds me that the tiniest rat can gnaw through foundations.

Those who follow the old ways have turned the course of this island before, Mistress Gwynne says, and the whole world with it. Long ago, hundreds of years ago, blood-drinking demons came out of the night and marched upon Glastonbury where the Thorn blossoms at winter. They sought to drain the heart's blood of the land, so that their leader could make herself the Winter Queen of Britain. She named herself Mary, after the Christian Queen of Heaven. But our kind stood against her. They raised great sorceries so that the earth itself shook and the sun shone at midnight. They called the names of power that had been given to them long ago, and the wolves came out of the forest and put on human shape, and bowed to them, saying, "We are here to cleanse the land of corruption." And together the Old Believers and the wolves drove the blood-drinkers from that place, and slew them as they fled, till the ground was strewn with ashes.

## Universities

Mistress Lucia,

I have, for my part, been preoccupied with the matters of Oxford University, which may be some explanation of why the goings-on at Paris have not concerned me over-much. (Indeed, it was over fifty years ago — 1167, if I remember rightly — when King Henry of painful memory banned English students from attending the University of Paris, and I fear that I have not visited since then.) Certain of my brothers have since been occupied with developing Oxford to its greatest potential, and it is indeed a laborious task, though one with great rewards.

We can trace the true beginning of a university proper at Oxford to the year of our Lord 1068, though it is not generally regarded as such till 1096, that grew from the bishop's work there. Michael of Chelmsbury, one of his clerks at the time, was of my order, and assisted in setting up the curriculum. (Naturally, none of the more primitive branches of the Art has taken any interest in the area, or in scholarship — God forbid that they should stray from their scrawled runes or their blood and herbs!) I believe that Michael still visits the area on occasion, though under different identities, and has written certain commentaries on Origen, which may be found in the current bishop's library.

In 1188, the historian Gerard of Wales gave a public reading to the assembled dons. (Which reminds me that I have certain matters to discuss with you regarding these new chronicles that every monastery would appear to be keeping — is aught of this in progress at Winchester?) In 1190, Emo of Friesland was the first recorded student to come to our doors from across the Channel. So much for Paris and its vaunted claims of superiority! Far from requiring their services, their would-be students now come to us instead. Japheth — a colleague of mine now in Paris,

perhaps you have read his *Tractata Philosophica Naturalis*? — writes most flatteringly of the esteem in which we are held.

When the scholars returned to England after Henry's order, certain of them, after coming to Oxford, continued on to Cambridge following some disputation between the residents of the town and the students. This gave rise by 1209 to the settlement of Cambridge, an entirely smaller and less worthy establishment. I suppose it may have some value in dealing with those students who are unworthy of greater learning, but it cannot be said to equal the value of Oxford itself, or even Paris. (I believe a sister of mine in the Art, Margaret of Cambridge, has some scheme of searching for potential apprentices there, but I cannot say that I approve of it.)

By 1201, we had so thoroughly established Oxford that it was headed by a *magister scholarum Oxonie*, and in 1214 the title of Chancellor was confirmed upon him. In the same year, the people of Oxford invited the students back again, as they had begun to notice that their local economy had suffered. (Certain accusations that have been leveled at my order are wholly without foundation. Do you think we would be so base — or so crude — as to force hardship on the town? It was a thriving center of trade in any case, and still is. I will admit that we took certain steps to encourage the reflux of students, but we hardly forced it.)

I have hopes that in a few years the masters may be recognized as a formal *universitas*, or corporation, rather than merely (merely, I say!) holding the title by popular acclamation. However, certain steps will need to be taken to ensure the peace and tranquility of the place, so that it may be a proper home of study and scholarship. Some rioting between "town and gown," as it is referred to (the townspeople and the students, as you have guessed) has already taken place. One possibility might be to build separate halls in which the students could reside, thus preventing their youthful high spirits and keen focus upon scholarship from providing any irritation to the traders of the town. I would be interested in your opinion on the subject, as I would value the opinion of a woman and mother in this case.

It may even happen that separate colleges will eventually be established within Oxford itself, each specializing in some different area of study. In this case, our fellow practitioners of the Art could possibly invest some particular college, forming — one might say — an Invisible College! I have great dreams of what we can accomplish in this vein. Possibly we may establish other universities elsewhere in Britain, once Wales and Scotland are brought fully under the King's dominion once more. Imagine a network of the Art, based in such universities, spreading across Britain, and indeed the whole world!

— Julius, this day of January, the Year of our Lord 1229

*Postscriptum:* I fear that we will not be able to visit till later in the year. Are there any particular manuscripts you would wish to have copied for your use?

## Chronicles

Julius,

Regarding these chronicles, many of them are the work of churchmen — hardly surprising, really — though I understand that some London merchants have begun to take an interest in compiling the annals of their city. (Astonishing how that town has come on, no?) Scarce 50 years ago, the secular churchmen who worked in the royal administration that was taking shape were doing such things. Now those who are fully "religious" and live in communities keep chronicles. I should note that these are usually the richer, larger communities. This practice may provide an account that is less biased by royalty and its whims — we shall see.

Indeed, consider the chronicle of Ralph of Coggeshall, who was of late the abbot of a Cistercian monastery in Essex, until 1218. Of 1212, he wrote, "The King extorted charters from all the clergy of England, witnessing falsely that they had granted of their own free will what he had taken from them by force." Hardly the work of one who expected royalty to censor his words! And yet, observe in this the growing force of a movement towards the preservation of truth rather than opinion, facts rather than dogma, and honesty rather than private whim.

Consider also the symbolic implications of these things; chronicles of a kingdom, written in truth and faith, bound to the heart of the kingdom. Do you not think that one who is blessed by the Lord could put his hand upon these and use them to great effect? Even the older faiths admit the power of symbolism, which we see more truly in the Divine Mystery of His Body and His Blood. Imagine the potential to use such chronicles with the great spells to perceive the past, or to place one's will upon the land described therein. My sister Judith has high hopes of what is being written at St. Albans even as we speak.

We also have the annals kept in Dunstable, which were begun some 19 years ago, and which I hope may span a century. It is St. Albans, however, on which I truly place my hopes. Roger of Wendover is working there upon a piece which he names his *Flowers of History*, and I understand that he also includes in it much goodly moralizing and literature, that the souls of the readers may receive solace as well as their minds. I am told by Judith that there is also one Matthew Paris at the monastery, who is working on a further development titled the *Chronica Maiora* (Greater Chronicle), which he hopes to continue for many years yet.

I confess that one small point in all of this troubles me. We know the nature of kings; they are prone to take advantage wherever they may find it, and are fond of seeking proof of the righteousness of their actions. What if they should seize the annals of monasteries in order to justify wars of conquest, or to support taxes that they wished to raise? You and I and others might wish to consider steps to take against such events. Perhaps we might conceal the original chronicles, if such a thing could be done without troubling the authors or monks, or maybe intercept them if

the king should demand the originals from their source? I know little of such worldly matters, and would be grateful for your counsel on the matter.

— Lucia, this day of Spring, the Year of our Lord 1229

## Stories

Julius of Oxford,

You call me your sister in the Art. You are fortunate I have my letters, else would I have to ask the priest to read your letter and write the reply. It will come safe to your door, for I have set charms of travel and passage upon it, and a raven shall watch it by day, and an owl guard it by night.

We have little in common, I think. Your Roman disdain is clear in your words. Even if I write this in the Latin tongue, it is not my own speech, so pardon me my errors, I pray you. I learned my trade from my mistress, who was a seidr-woman in her turn, as was her mistress before her. But the truth is passed down through stories. This I know. This surely you must know also. Even when all the world changes, still will my way be passed from mouth to ear, and in the hearing of the spirits. Yours perhaps must be beaten into children till they tell it by rote. But it is the same.

I heard tell that the Orkneyinga Saga, or, as you have it, the History of the Earls of Orkney, has been taken to England now, and may even be told at that King's court. It tells of the mighty men of Orkney; Haakon Paulsson, Svein Asleifarson, Earl Rognvald, and even Earl Magnus the Martyr. The mighty Counts and Dukes of England may laugh at it, or they may listen, but they do not know what was done to make it.

Listen! We came together and we sang it into being. We whispered the stories to the spirits and they sang them back to us. A voice chanted it in the center of the room until we wept for pity. We told it to Bear, and he clapped his hands to hear of such valor. We told it to Owl, and he folded his wings and closed his eyes to approve such wisdom. We told it to the spirits of the living in their sleep, and they swore to honor their fathers. We told it to the spirits of the dead that thronged around us, and we poured out blood by the mound-stone, and milk, and honey, and they drank and were satisfied.

We still live beneath the shadow of Norway. The great men walk among us in their skins of wolf and bear. The spirits sing by my window each night and bear me word of what takes place across the land. The old ways are not forgotten. Even if Scotland reaches its bloody hand across to claim us, they shall endure. The blood of the ravagers runs in our veins. The strength of the great men of the North has not yet left us. Even if you and your kin no longer pray to be delivered from the terror of the Northmen, still we survive and still we believe.

You call me sister in the Art, but my true brother would hear the words on the night air. I hear war coming. I hear war of England upon Scotland, and Scotland upon Norway, and land upon land until iron hammers on stone and brings forth blood.

We shall speak face to face before five years have passed. I know this, because Owl has told me so.

— Janet of Eynhallow

## Markets

No doubt, Monsieur al-Nasir — I do not know the proper fashion in which to address you — you have markets of your own in Outremer and Arabia, in which the folk of the town gather to do business. Often this was done in the churchyard, though in the Year of our Lord 1201 Pope Innocent III raised a cry against it, complaining that it was turned into a “den of thieves.” (I have no doubt that you will take the reference.) This in turn caused the widespread foundation of new markets on the second day of the week, particularly in those parts governed by bishops or others of the Church. Yet this in itself did cause the weakening of those markets already settled, which were oft the foundations of towns. Even such places as Oxford, despite Master Julius’ pride in his *universitas*, were market towns before any scholars came there! I have naught against scholarship, but towns are founded on the feet of the workers and the faith of their souls, rather than the wits in their heads (which oft are lacking).

And what has this to do with us? I would point to the link between certain of my brothers in Christ, and the establishment of trade as a way by which one might lead the country towards peace, and souls towards God. Of course, one might at first glance find this a hard thing to understand, and I grant that to your foreign eyes there doubtless appears to be little connection.

Even our Lord said that one must render unto Caesar what was Caesar’s, and did not forbear to feed the five thousand. Many of my Fellowship hold, therefore, that to ensure the safe transmission of food and trade through the country is a laudable goal, and one that renders it more likely that the souls of those who have been fed will turn to God in praise for his bounty. A particular brother of mine in the faith, one John of Gloucester, speaks most winningly upon the subject, and is a master of those laws and mathematics dealing with it.

The law holds that it is customary for villein tenants to carry produce to the local markets, both for their own lord’s provisioning and for the proper transmission of goods through the country, that none may hunger. A new market is defined as harmful by the law if it be held within two days of another market, or within six and two-thirds miles of it. However, throughout the country, even as I write, the horse and cart replace the ox-cart or the packhorse for traders. This will change matters, particularly in the wilder parts of the country, far from towns, where the market is important in supplying the necessities of life.

Even now, good sir Saracen, I can imagine you grimacing at my words, and pondering what all this has to do with the Art, and with the manifest power that God has conferred upon us. Consider: Julius, in his letters, speaks of an invisible college of learning that would spread its lessons across the land, and sees it as a goal towards which he might strive. I am perhaps more prosaic — indeed, my beloved husband Matthew was a cloth merchant before his death.

I see, rather, the markets in each city and town bound by a common law, where honest trade under the auspices of

God and king alike is practiced, and where the Ten Commandments and the law of the land are observed. I see a Heavenly City built on common trade. And why not? Were not the disciples ordinary men, fishers and workers and tax collectors? I say, with Saint Brigit, that I desire only that everyone should be at peace with a good meal. Stabilizing the markets throughout the land, and ensuring the smooth passage of goods, will save bodies that it might in turn save souls. There are others of my kind who feel as I do, and work to this end. A prayer here, an encouragement there, a word with a bishop or an abbot... (This also provides some influence over the merchants, and thus may serve us later in another way.)

I would be interested in knowing how such matters proceed in your own lands. Are the markets under the control of some central authorities, or do local lords and priests hold the right to host them, and to charge tolls thereto? How much power do the merchants hold in your land, and do they do aught with it? I await your visit with interest, that we may hold further converse on such matters.

— Lucia, this day of Summer, the Year of our Lord 1229

## From Outside

To al-Qadir, who is generous and merciful in permitting a penniless scholar to wander so far from his courts; light, health, strength to my teacher! May Allah shed his blessings upon you, and grant you continued life and wisdom to use the gift of his power. May he also bestow those blessings upon my humble self, a lonely traveler in a distant country.

As you suggested, my master, by the power of al-Layl I disguise my features, so that those who meet me believe me to be merely an Oxford scholar (indeed, a similar prayer disguises this very letter). This permits me to move freely among the English, though it means that I must also bow my head in a local church, as it would be regarded as most strange for an Oxford scholar to avoid this. (Impious as the townsfolk call the students, even so they take Mass regularly and make confession; many of their Masters are clergy, who expect proper behavior of them, whether they are clerics attached to a noble household, or fully ordained priests, or monks permitted to leave their monastery.)

There is an odd mood abroad in the land. If I were forced to give it a name, I might call it *Change*, though I know better than to name something unless I wish to call it to my side. The country thrums with possibility. The Magna Carta — an astonishment to me, and no doubt to you as well, master — is still heavy in the minds of all. The nobles wonder what else they may wrest from their king. The king must balance the nobles' twixt cup and lip. I hear that he has diverted money from the public treasuries to the Privy Purse, which was supposed to be for his garments, but which he now uses for payments outside the limits of what the law permits and what the Chancellor governs.

It is clear that the Christian Church holds the people as close to its heart as does Islam its own faithful — or rather, the English embrace it with all the fervor that one might hope for from the People of the Book. It brings their

Crusades uncomfortably to mind, though I cannot blame the English alone for that.

I do not think — at least for the moment — that we shall have another Crusade. The last which they took part in, the Fifth as they call it, ended some eight years ago and has left its scars on the country, and indeed England has not forgotten how their Richard the Lionhearted bled the land dry to pay for his foreign wars. *I would sell London, if I could find a buyer*, he said, and London remembers those words. I believe, or rather, I hope, that despite the efforts of the Christian Church and all the orders of knighthood, the sin and vanity that the Christians name a Crusade will never again trouble our lands. (This latest, the Sixth, was the work of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, and merely a peaceful visit, or so I am told — would that all were so!)

I have no doubt that my host, Magister Julius of the Hermetic Order, knows of this secret correspondence between us. He is a curious man, as are those others who study his Art. I find it hard to comprehend how they can differentiate so precisely between their Art and the God we know gives them power. On the one hand, they observe the most precise niceties in terms of etiquette towards those spirits whom Allah has created subservient to him, and on the other, many of them forbear to observe the proper forms of their own faith, letting their attendance at church lapse, failing to tithe alms and only paying heed to the requirements of God when the observation of their fellow man demands it. I know that you may chide me, master, with the reminder that there are those of our own brotherhood who pay lip service to Allah while using their powers at will, and that I need expect no more from Christians. Still, one hopes for better.

We are to journey to the city of Winchester soon, and will be staying with one Lucia, who is of the Fellowship that style themselves Messianic Voices. Magister Julius has taken pains to inform me repeatedly that she is tolerant and understanding and will have no objection to hosting a Paynim mage. He would be more convincing, I feel, were he a better liar. I hope to have the chance to debate theology with her.

And, master, tell me — a rumor is making its rounds among the brotherhood, and this rumor says, though it may lie, that among those foreigners who professed the Truth and found the Faith during their sojourn in our lands, there has been at least one who was given power by Allah in return, and has assayed the paths of our own brotherhood. Such a thing disturbs me — not because I doubt Allah's power and wisdom in doing such a thing, but because it unsettles certain fundamentals in my perceptions of the world, and as we know, perception is a vital tool in the use of power.

Under the Protection,

Al-Nasir, the month of October, 1229

## Impending War

Julius,

I doubt not you have noticed the friction between our King and Hugh de Burgh of late. While Hugh may have proved an excellent regent during Henry's minority, I fear

that Henry holds no affection towards him because of it. (A pity that William the Marshal, his other regent, died ten years ago — together, the two might have had a chance of opposing Henry's will.) Of course, the prime bone of contention is the lost Plantagenet lands in France; Henry will have them back, and Hugh (who speaks for many of the English barons in this) would rather let them go.

Henry's allies are something that we should bear in mind, given their intentions. He is close to his mother's second husband, Hugh de Lusignan, who dwells in Poitou at this time. He is also close to the Poitevins who once served his father John — the most important of these is Peter des Roches, who is the bishop of Winchester now. Peter's nephew (though some have it that he is the bishop's son), Peter des Rivaux, is also close in the king's counsel. The two are loyal to their master, and encourage Henry in his designs.

I am concerned as to what may come of this. If this open strife between the king and Hugh de Burgh continues, then... well, I hope it will not come to open civil war, but we have seen that our king is an opportunistic man, the law-courts have been bribed before now, and even barons can fall from power. And what then? If Henry should succeed in having his own men placed in charge of the exchequer, the chamber and the sheriffdoms of the counties, then he holds the power to wage open war on France once more. Perhaps I am overly nervous. I would that you could tell me so, and make me believe it.

— Lucia, this day of December, the Year of our Lord 1229

## The Peasant's Lot

So you consider me worth writing to, do you, Magister Julius? I spit on your letter, I spit on your offers and I spit on your alliances. What talk of brotherhood is this? What has a nobleman to say to a villein? What has a man of learning to say to a commoner who works for a living and who toils day in and day out in the fields? Fetter you and fetter your prejudices, good sir; I'd swive your mother were it not that such a one as whelped you must be dry to the bone and a gatekeeper to Hell's own doors.

Let me spit on my pen, the better to eke out this ink. Such a one as I cannot afford the luxuries that a man of wealth like you lives with. About the one good thing that England has ever given Ireland were the Cistercians, who at least had the wit to bring their spades with them when they raised their monasteries. You know what St. Nicholas' in Carrickfergus was founded on? The sweat of their bloody backs, that's what. Not that I'd expect a nobleman like you to know what it's like to work in the fields. Your Henry proposed the annexation of Ireland 74 damn years ago — you know why? "To carry through a reform of the Church in Ireland." You know what I'd have you do with your nobles, your Church and your king? Skin them for parchment, the better to wipe my arse with.

I will not deny that we've had the odd piece of good fortune from your kind. You courtly Normans brought your *amour courtois* love poetry with you, and we've improved on that with our *dánta grádha*. A bard like myself has to appreciate that. But, dear God and Goddess, dear Mercy

and Charity of the One, may Satan open his bladder and void upon the barons that the English throne whips its own land with and strives to impose upon us.

I've walked the length and breadth of your land as well as my own, and even heard the laws. By all that's merciful, he who they call a villein is no more or less than a chattel that's bought and sold along with his lord's land. Did you know that a villein woman's taxed *merchet* on her marriage, because she'll take her breeding outside the lord's manor? And if she's caught lifting her skirts before marriage, she's forced to pay *legerwite* — again, because the lord will lose his money and his property? That if a man tries to claim freedom, he can have his family haled into the courts against him, to prove his serfdom by "suit of kin"? That any land a villein holds from his lord, he holds "only from day to day at will of their lords and by no certain service"? Your noble landlords, and your priests too, are forcing up their rents as the days go by, and then mulcting them with extra fines, the better to bleed gold from their veins.

Don't worry: we have no expectations of fine gentles such as yourself, with your nose so far in your books that you can't smell the reeking shit you call your High Art of Sorcery, to see to the land or the people. The land and the people will see to themselves, and finely at that. Others like myself — Mary of Cappelmere, Joan of Bristol, Allan of Stratford — we'll see to it. We walk the land and remind the people that, by God, even if they must be English (and therefore never half the man which an Irish babe at the breast can hope to be), they can still be something worth the telling. The people are rising, and just as the barons put down the king with the Magna Carta, so in time we'll put the barons down, and dance a jig upon them to mark the occasion.

In the meantime, I've little to say to such a one as you. Keep your fine Hermetic Art, and I'll keep to the Old Faith and to the songs that go with it. May the pigeon that brings this to your desk defecate upon your favorite crucible, may you trip each time you walk to and from canting Mass, may the priest break your teeth a-purpose upon the chalice, and may you come out in boils fit to keep you standing up for the next year.

— Iain of Carrickfergus

## Grosseteste

Julius,

I would have thought that you *approved* of this man. Why, he has his benefice, and a fellowship in the liberal arts, and lectures at Oxford — I have no doubt that you could listen to him regularly, an you so desired. I am quite intrigued by one of the theories that I have heard attributed to him — that the whole universe reflects the glory of God, and is indeed an educational machine, meant for the instruction of humanity. For him, Christ's incarnation is not some form of desperate rescue of fallen humanity, but is a part of the plan from the very beginning. Christ, God incarnated in man, has always been and had always been meant to be the capstone of creation. Why, one can see the links between this and his work in natural science, where he declares that the glory of creation is best seen in light, that

being the purest, most basic and first substance. He is a scholar who translates from the original Greek, a scientist who performs experiments in physics, and a godly man.

If I understand your letter correctly, you are concerned for his lack of politics. I admit that indeed he has his eyes more fixed on the things of the next world than on the favor of the King and the barons — but is this a bad idea? He is a reformer, a virtuous man, and has a truly philosophical zeal, being convinced that on the important issues there is no room for compromise and little for debate. Very well, I concede that this may lead to possible problems should he learn the truth of magi — unless, perhaps, it can be put to him as merely one more manifestation of his natural order, and another example of the Light that shines from the Divine. I have had word from one of my brothers in Lincoln that when next the bishopric becomes vacant, Grosseteste is among the possible candidates. Reform shall come to the land, and I trust that he will bring it. True, his talk of an inquisition is perhaps a little extreme, but I am confident that he is an example of the new spirit in the church.

I await your arrival with your Paynim friend,

— Lucia, this day of spring, the Year of our Lord 1230

## The Coming Darkness

What price the storm? What cost the coming rulership?

The Church trembles, the king quakes on his throne, the barons plot in lofty might, and betwixt them all, the worm of corruption gnaws upon the living heart. Come soon, Prince of Darkness, Prince of this world, and claim your rightful feast from the souls of all who dwell herein.

I have walked the paths of different faiths, and I know to what end they all come.

First I was raised as a good Christian girl, and bowed my head to the Church, and listened to the canting priests with all their Latin. But then I looked at the world around me, as few do, and I saw the lies that veined their Christendom. Happy fools, who ignore the pulse of life in the world, and for it substitute their Crucified God and their charity! May they enjoy their blindness, and may it bring them to the body's corruption in the end; there is no salvation for the soul, and the only hope for the body is in my Master's keeping.

My watching of others led me to Old Meg, who taught me the paths of the wood and the ways of the Times Before, and who instructed me in how I might make the offerings at the dark of the moon and the full of the moon, and the mysteries of a woman's blood. And that was good. That was better. But it was not enough. A faith that failed its believers could never be enough. Others who follow those paths now begin to understand this, as they watch their fellows haled before the Church for judgment, or see the crown and the



barons claim their forests, or watch the village children turn away from them. The Old Faith has seeds of truth within it, for it knows the power of blood and darkness, and does not turn from them.. But it is not enough.

The third path, the last path, has brought me to my desires, and has promised me the wish of my heart. I have ground belladonna and aconite in my bowl with the fat of babies who never knew baptism, and I have flown where few would dare to go. I have power at last, true power, power over the hearts and souls of others, and I know — I *know* — that this faith will endure and will change the world. There will always be those who hear the word and who answer it.

Look around. The word is *hunger*.. The poor want food. The mighty want power. Those in between want both. The Templars look across the sea to Outremer and yearn for their past glories, and watch the gold trickling between their fingers, and ponder what to do with it. How long before they turn to darker masters and gain their true desire? The burgesses and mayors and merchants need security. They look at the recent wars that

have swept the land, and seek no more than the safety of their families and their moneybags.

And the mages, my fellow mages . . . what do you want, all of you? Knowledge? Power? Immortality? Come to my Mistress and you shall be given surfeit. The Messianic Voices have half the matter right when they speak of a thousand different names for a single mighty God. It is the other way round. There are a thousand different paths downwards, a thousand different names for the Nameless, but in the end it all comes down to this; service for service, and the soul given in return for everything that the heart desires. I have an apprentice. He was never truly a Christian, but merely mouthed the prayers a child learns. He is one of the Old Believers, and I still teach him their dogma, because there is some truth in it. Soon I shall teach him the full truth and open his eyes, and he too shall sign his name in the Book, and he shall never hunger or thirst again, because he shall be in the care of the Nameless One.

And I, I will wander this world, seeking the ruin of souls.

## Timelines

Events in standard fonts are historical. Those in *italics* are game events.

- Circa 800,000 BC The first hominids (*Homo Erectus*) reach the British Isles.
- Circa 100,000 BC The first Neanderthals (*Homo Neanderthalis*) live in the British Isles.
- Circa 30,000 BC The first modern humans (*Homo Sapiens*) arrive in the British Isles.
- Circa 28,000 BC Disappearance (absorption or elimination) of *Homo Neanderthalis*.
- Circa 13,000 BC End of the Ice Age. The British Isles are inhabited permanently.
- Circa 8,000 BC Start of the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) era. Numerous settlements take place, most notably at Fignen Felen and Nab Head in Wales, and Creswell Crags and Star Carr in England.
- Circa 7,000 BC *Start of the Impergium.*
- Circa 6,000 BC The post-glacial rise in sea level isolates the British Isles from mainland Europe.
- Circa 4,000 BC *End of the Impergium. The War of Rage occurs.*
- Circa 4,000 BC Start of the Neolithic. Agriculture begins to replace hunter-gatherer societies. With a more settled and stable lifestyle, more complex societies emerge, including funerary rites involving burial mounds and cairns. *First appearance of the Wyck.*
- Circa 3,800 BC Around this time, the first wooden tracking is laid in the Somerset levels. Similar paths appear in other wetland areas.
- Circa 3,700 BC The West Kennet Long Barrow is built and first used. It remains in use for almost 2,000 years.
- Circa 3,000 BC The Ring of Brodgar stones are erected in Orkney.
- Circa 2,900 BC The first phase of Stonehenge (earthworks) is in use.
- Circa 2,800 BC Silbury Hill is built; the second phase of Stonehenge (timber monument) is in use.
- Circa 2,600 BC Erection of the Avebury stones.
- Circa 2,500 BC Start of the Bronze Age with the first widespread metalworking in the Isles.
- Circa 2,500–700 BC The main phase of stone circle construction and henge building.
- Circa 2,400 BC The “Beaker Folk” culture emerges and is the focus of considerable barrow building; the final (stone) phase of Stonehenge is completed, remaining in use to circa 1,600 BC.
- Circa 1,300–1,600 BC A succession of “water cults” exists in the British Isles.
- Circa 1,200 BC The “rain of ash” takes place (from the Hekla volcano in Iceland); the climate in the British Isles worsens and marginal settlements fail. *The last war against the Fomorians; Battle of Moytura.*
- Circa 800 BC *The War of Silver and Iron between the Garou and fae.*
- Circa 700 BC Start of the Iron Age.
- Circa 600 BC–100 AD The construction of brochs in Scotland.
- Circa 600 BC Indirect trade with Greece. By Roman times, Britain is already known as the “Tin Isles.”

Circa 500 BC	Emergence of the "Celtic" culture in the British Isles; the appearance of Crannog settlements across the British Isles. <i>The Fir Bolg attempt to invade Ireland.</i>
Circa 300 BC	The abandonment of many hill forts, while some (such as Maiden Castle, Hambledon Hill and Danebury) see expansion and reinforcement.
Circa 150 BC	The emergence of the first native currency, used in conjunction with continental trade.
Circa 100 BC	Trade between Britain and Rome via America (Brittany).
55/54 BC	Julius Caesar invades southeast Britain. <i>The first concerted move against the fae and Garou by Cainites.</i>
AD 43	On the orders of Claudius, Rome invades the British Isles. Over the years that follow, the occupy much of England and undertake campaigns in Wales and Scotland. Ireland remains untouched by the Roman Empire.
AD 60	After harsh treatment by the Roman governor, the Iceni tribe under Boudicca revolts, destroying Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St. Albans) before being crushed by the Roman legions. The druids' stronghold on Mona (Anglesey) is destroyed by forces under the command of Suetonius.
AD 71	<i>The coming of Mithras.</i>
Circa AD 117	Rome is at height of its power.
AD 122	<i>White Howlers and Kin annihilate Ninth Legion, sacrificing all survivors in dark rites.</i>
Circa AD 125	Romans build Hadrian's Wall on their northern British frontier to hold back the Caledonians.
Circa AD 167	First Christian missionaries arrive in Britain.
Circa AD 200	<i>The White Howlers fall to the Wyrn.</i>
AD 407	Last Roman regular troops withdraw from Britain.
Circa AD 410	<i>Mithras enters torpor.</i>
Circa AD 410	Picts, Irish, Saxons and others start invading in earnest, shattering the remnants of Roman civilization.
AD 415	<i>Fenrir capture their first Fianna Caern in Britain.</i>
AD 432	St. Patrick arrives in Ireland.
Circa AD 446	Vortigern, one of two rival claimants to the High Kingship of Britain, authorizes the use of Saxon "foederati" to defend Britain against the Picts and the Irish.
Circa AD 450	Hengist, a Danish mercenary, arrives in England at the invitation of Vortigern.
Circa AD 500	Battle of Mount Badon. The British defeat the Saxons, but there is great slaughter on both sides.
Circa AD 500	Settlers from Ireland found Dal Riada in Scotland.
AD 597	St. Augustine establishes his mission to the Saxons of England.
Circa AD 500-600	In the face of Saxon pressure, many Britons migrate to Armorica (Brittany).
AD 664	At the Synod of Whitby, the Celtic Church bows before the Roman Church.
Circa AD 710	First contact recorded with the "North-men."
AD 779	Offa crowned King of all "Angle-land."
AD 793	Northmen "Vikings" burn Lindisfarne Abbey.
AD 843	Scottish and Pictish kingdoms are united under Kenneth MacAlpin.
AD 1014	High King Brian Boru's army defeats combined force of Irish and Vikings at Clontarf. Boru is slain.
AD 1066	William, Duke of Normandy, invades and captures England. <i>The coming of the Triumvirate. The Triumvirate polarize British vampiric politics, and soon war breaks out between the Cainite factions.</i>
1071	William invades Scotland and forces Malcolm III, king of Scotland, to pay homage.
AD 1085	Domesday Book commissioned. <i>Mithras returns to London.</i>
AD 1087	William I dies, William II crowned.
AD 1094	Duncan II temporarily displaces Donald Bane as Scots king.
AD 1096	Crusades begin; the king's brother Robert Cuthouse joins the crusaders.
AD 1097	Edgar takes the Scottish throne.
AD 1098	King Edgar of Scotland agrees on the boundaries of his kingdom with the Norwegian king.
AD 1100	William II dies, Henry I crowned.
AD 1106	Henry defeats his brother Robert, back from crusade, capturing Normandy.
AD 1107	Alexander I becomes King of Scotland.
AD 1101-1105	<i>"War of Tor" between the Tremere and Glastonbury's native defenders. Both sides claimed victory.</i>
AD 1105	<i>The Tremere complete their Lion's Gate chantry.</i>
AD 1124	David I is crowned King of Scotland.
AD 1130	<i>Church outside the Scottish village of Damburrow vanishes.</i>

- AD 1135 Henry dies, Stephen I seizes the throne.
- AD 1138 David I of Scotland invades England and is defeated. *Children of Gaia take control of Great River Caern in London by deposing the senile Silver Fang leader, whose father in turn had taken it from the Fenrir. They destroy many of the vampires in London.*
- AD 1139 - 1141 Civil war between Stephen and Matilda, daughter of Henry. Stephen defeated, but escapes.
- AD 1141- 1148 Civil war continues. Matilda eventually retreats to France.
- AD 1153 Matilda's son Henry invades, forces Stephen to appoint him heir. Malcom IV becomes King of Scotland.
- AD 1154 Stephen dies, Henry II crowned. Cardinal Nicholas Breakspear becomes the first and only Englishman to hold the office of pope as Adrian IV. *Mithras defeats the last remnants of the Triumvirate's power.*
- AD 1162 Henry II appoints his Chancellor, Thomas Becket, to the post of Archbishop of Canterbury.
- AD 1164 Henry attempts to reform the Church, leading to quarrel with Becket. Becket flees to France.
- AD 1165 William I, the Lion, crowned King of Scotland.
- AD 1169 *The Fianna and the Silver Fangs reach an accord on Ireland.*
- AD 1170 *Thomas' Men founded.* Becket returns from France and is slain. The Earl of Pembroke invades Ireland.
- AD 1173 Henry defeats a rebellion led by his sons.
- AD 1174 William I of Scotland captured while trying to invade England. He is forced to swear loyalty to Henry.
- AD 1180 *Cistercian monks near Damburrow abandon their chapel after half their number commit suicide.*
- AD 1183 Second rebellion by Henry's sons crushed.
- AD 1189 Henry II dies after third rebellion. King Richard I crowned and promptly leaves on Third Crusade.
- AD 1192 Richard captured by Leopold V, Archduke of Austria, as he returns from crusade.
- AD 1194 Richard ransomed and freed.
- AD 1199 Richard dies. King John crowned.
- AD 1202 John loses French territories to King Philip II. Fourth Crusade begins.
- AD 1204 John loses Normandy to the French king. Constantinople falls. *War of Princes begins.*
- AD 1205 King John and Pope Innocent III dispute the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury.
- AD 1207 John rejects the pope's archbishop.
- AD 1209 England placed under papal interdict. Cambridge University founded.
- AD 1213 John forced to back down and give England to the pope, receiving it back again as a papal fief.
- AD 1214 William the Lion succeeded by his son Alexander II in Scotland.
- AD 1215 The barons revolt and force John to sign the Magna Carta. *Melusine d' Anjou and supporters and Mithras sign Rose Treaty.*
- AD 1216 John dies. Henry III crowned as a minor (9 years old). Regents appointed (William the Marshal, Hugh de Burgh).
- AD 1217-1221 Papal Legate Pelasius leads the Fifth Crusade.
- AD 1218 Treaty of Worcester; Llywelyn ap Iorwerth recognized as regent of royal castles of South Wales "till the king comes of age."
- AD 1219 Llywelyn ap Iorwerth attacks English earldom of Pembroke; conflict between England and Wales.
- AD 1220 Lawman's "History of the British"; recounts mythical history of Britain, starting with Brutus coming from Troy to be first ruler of Britain: becomes generally accepted version of history. *London caern lost to the Circle of Red.*
- AD 1224 First Franciscans arrive at Oxford.
- AD 1225 The Magna Carta reissued in definitive form. *Thomas' Men officially become part of the Oculi Dei.*
- AD 1227 Henry III begins personal rule in England.
- AD 1229 *The Flaying Plague devastates the British Garou..*
- AD 1232 Henry III removes Hugh de Burgh from power.
- AD 1233 Henry III prepares army to undertake Irish expedition.
- AD 1234 Reputed death of Michael Scott the wizard.
- AD 1235 English forces largely conquer Connaught in Ireland.
- AD 1235 Grosseteste becomes Bishop of Lincoln and begins plans to introduce a version of the inquisition into England, with local juries denouncing their neighbors' sins under oath.
- AD 1237 Treaty of York signed between Henry III and Alexander II, King of Scots; defines boundaries of both kingdoms.





# CHAPTER TWO: THE LANDS AND THE PEOPLE

“Non Angli sed Angeli.”  
(Not Angles, but angels.)  
— Pope Gregory I

The British Isles are a palimpsest of cultures, each culture overlaying its predecessors and abutting that of rivals and uneasy allies. Understanding the Isles requires more than just the comprehension of its geographic form and an understanding of its history. The land is more than castles and monasteries and kings — it is the sum of its people, cultures and ideas. Although tied to the European mainland by its rulers and economy, the people of the British Isles stand apart from their Continental kin — and even from each other.

## The People

The British Isles contain a diverse population, the legacy of numerous invasions and migrations as well as extensive trade with the mainland. No language or culture is consistent across the isles (or even within the four principal countries) and even the Church is sundered between its Roman and Celtic branches, which have only recently settled the matter of Scotland's position in the



Christian hierarchy. The politics and culture of the nations are a legacy of their history: Comprehension of this history is necessary to understand why many of the nations act as they do.

## The Races

The Normans are simply the latest in a long tradition of outside forces and cultural influences to shape the population, an elite nobility overseeing diverse and polyglot inhabitants. The races that comprise the British populace form distinct linguistic, cultural and physical groups, the interaction of which colors the politics of the Isles.

### The Picts (Cruithni)

In most parts of the British Isles, Celtic traditions spreading outward from Central Europe subsumed the native inhabitants. In Caledonia — modern Scotland — the Celtic ideals never took root, however, and its inhabitants remained distinct from the Celtic population that came to dominate most of the British Isles. Commonly known as Picts, these people called themselves the Cruithni and were best known for painting their bodies with dye (their name means “people with images on their bodies”). The Cruithni absorbed the earlier peoples of Caledonia — notably the “broch builders” — and successfully resisted efforts to incorporate them into the Roman Empire, leading to the construction of the Hadrianic and Antonine walls. For a time they co-existed with the Irish interlopers, but were eventually absorbed themselves circa AD 850 by the efforts of the Scottish king, Kenneth MacAlpin, who became the first ruler of all Scotland and who set about annihilating Pictish culture and language. The Picts were the Kinfolk of the White Howler tribe of the Garou, who fell to the corrupting influence of the Wyrms long before their Kinfolk fell to the Scots.

### The Celts

The Celtic culture spread across much of central and northern Europe about half a millennia before the birth of Christ. The Celts did not represent a unified nation but rather a collection of tribes with shared cultural and physical traits. By the Dark Medieval, most Celtic culture has been suppressed. Ireland is the notable exception, where it has formed a unique hybrid with the Christian Church, though the formerly Celtic population remains notable for their dark hair and swarthy complexions. Several distinct Celtic populations exist in the British Isles. The Garou known as Fianna have close ties to the Celtic peoples, as do some Old Faith mages.

- **The Welsh and Cornish:** The Welsh and Cornish, together with some people from the north of England, are all that remains of the Romano-British population. It was this group who unsuccessfully attempted to govern Britain after the Roman withdrawal

and who eventually succumbed to the Anglo-Saxon invaders, despite the resistance of legendary rulers such as Arthur. They remain ethnically and culturally distinct from the non-Celtic Britons, speaking a version of the Gaelic tongue closely related to (but distinct from) that of the Irish and Scots.

- **The Irish (The Gaels):** Calling themselves the Gaels, the Irish are the only Celtic society in Britain that never fell under the sway of Rome and thus retains the artistic and mythical sensibilities of pre-Roman times. They have, however, suffered subsequent invasions and have been “conquered” by the Christian Church, becoming the base from which England, Wales and Scotland were converted. The Church in Ireland has maintained a distinct character from its Roman cousin. The Irish peoples speak a version of the Gaelic tongue (Goidelic) akin to that used in Scotland but distinct from the other Celtic tongues of the British Isles.

- **The Scots:** The Scots are an Irish people, formerly of Ulster, who migrated across the narrows of the Hibernian Ocean to establish the Kingdom of Dal Riada in southwest Caledonia. As such, they speak a version of Gaelic closer to that used in Ireland than that employed elsewhere in the British Isles. These migrants eventually conquered and subjugated the native Pictish population, establishing themselves as the masters of “Scot-land,” at least until the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and the various groups of Northmen.

### The Anglo-Saxons

Comprising a collection of tribes such as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes from northern Germany and commonly referred to (by the Celtic inhabitants) as “Saïs,” the Anglo-Saxons dominated much of what is now England and southern Scotland. The initial Anglo-Saxon “invaders” were nothing of the sort but rather were invited in by the native British as mercenaries (*foederati*) to protect them against other invaders. Families accompanied many of these troops and they settled in Britain peacefully, integrating with the local population before a combination of political miscalculation and weakness led to their domination of the land. These invaders lent their name to the nation that would eventually emerge — England (Angle-land) — and their language forms the basis of English. Although challenged by the Norse, Anglo-Saxon culture remained dominant in England until the arrival of the Normans and many of the lesser English landholders still regard themselves as Saxon, as do many members of the peasant classes. The Anglo-Saxons have lighter skin and fairer hair than the Celtic peoples. The Fenrir werewolves in the Isles are often of Anglo-Saxon stock.

### The Northmen (Norse)

A collection of Scandinavian peoples harried the British Isles in the period between the late eighth and the



mid 11th centuries, at first raiding and then seeking to conquer. Commonly known as the Vikings after the raider-traders who comprised the initial Norse (men of the north) visitors to the British Isles, many of the later "invaders" were migrants to enclaves and kingdoms already established by their forebears. The Norsemen established substantial enclaves in Ireland, Wales and in the Scottish islands; the Hebrides remain under Norwegian rule until 1266, and the Shetlands and Orkneys until 1472. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Danes made a concerted effort to conquer England, only to be blocked by King Alfred who divided the country between Anglo-Saxon (English) and Danish (Danelaw) counties, though dynastic succession meant there were several Danish kings of England, most notably Canute. The boundary between the two regions broadly formed a line between the mouth of the Thames and the Mersey. The lands of the former Danelaw (and the still-Norse Scottish islands) have place names and regional dialects with distinct Scandinavian characteristics (such as -gate or -bar in street names and -Thorpe, -kirk or -thwaite for settlements), and many inhabitants exhibit the blonde hair of their Norse ancestors. The Cainite *einherjar* are all of Norse stock, as are most Valdaermen mages and some Fenrir Garou.

### The Normans

Descended from Scandinavians who settled in northern France, the Normans are the latest invaders to dominate England and other parts of the British Isles.

Their physical characteristics are similar to those of the

Anglo-Saxons and Norse, but they speak the language of northern France (the *Langue d'oïl*), which has become the language of the British ruling classes. They have also established substantial presences in southern Wales, southern Scotland and the areas of Ireland called the Pale. A number of Angevin and Poitevin families have also come to power in England, culturally and linguistically identical to the Angevin Normans. The Silver Fang tribe of werewolves draws many of its Kinfolk from the Normans.

## Status and Society

Three broad distinctions exist among the people of Britain: the peasants, clergy and nobility. Each category, particularly the peasants, contains numerous sub-categories that reflect differences in freedom, status and wealth.

### The Peasants

Peasants fall into two classes: freemen, who form about a quarter of the peasantry, and villeins (also known as serfs, though that also applies to seized slaves). Villeins are the property of their lord (and thus any property or land they own also belongs to the lord) and owe him work in addition to requiring their lord's approval for marriage (which obliges them to pay a tax called *merchet*). Women accused of fornication (a common crime, particularly as few can afford to pay the *merchet*) must pay another fine called *legerwite*, though this usually only applies in cases such as pregnancy or flagrant acts. The child of two villeins is also a villein and the property of the lord, but where one of the parents is free (either a freeman or a freed villein), the child's status is often the focus of much debate and legal wrangling.

As their name suggests, freemen have no such limitations on their actions and can do as they will, eking out a living and moving between manors and fiefs as they see fit. Unfortunately, as freemen are not bound to their overlords and can appeal to the King's Justice, they are not popular tenants — a lord would much rather have a villein whom he can dominate and whose endeavors directly benefit him. Indeed, since 1066 England's Norman masters have gone to great lengths to suppress freemen, rendering them into villeins.

Both classes of peasant are usually farmers, eking out a living by growing food for their own consumption and to sell for a meager profit. Most farm around 30 acres of land and have numerous cattle including plow teams, though this quantity varies wildly. Both villeins and freemen live harsh existences; the only difference between the two is their rights.

Towns feature a much higher proportion of freemen than rural areas, working on their own behalf rather than their overlord's (though they are taxed by the town authorities and must pay for membership in guilds). In general, townsfolk are richer and more diverse than those in the country, but must rely on such riches to survive — with the possible exception of small gardens they are reliant on trade for food. The richest townsfolk, while technically peasants, exceed even the nobility for wealth and live in lavish houses with workrooms and shops. Most townsfolk, however, are less fortunate laborers and servants who live in difficult conditions without the resources a rural peasant can fall back on. As a consequence, life in the towns is hard, with poor sanitation and hygiene leading to rampant disease among the

lower echelons of society, resulting in a high infant mortality rate and a low life expectancy for adults.

### The Nobility

The main landowners and officers, the nobility serves as the government of the British Isles, following an ordered — if not strictly arranged — hierarchy. The Norman feudal structure provides a solid framework in which the nobility operates, owing service to their superiors (lieges) and receiving it from their inferiors (vassals). The situation is, however, more complex than it first appears. The vassal-liege relationship functions both ways — the liege must protect his vassals in exchange for their service — and the complex patchwork of landholdings in England means that these relationships can be tortuous. It is possible for nobles to hold manors in each others' holdings, being simultaneously vassal and liege to each other. To understand these relationships, one must understand the structure of the land.

While feudal duchies under the command of Norman dukes or earls may span large areas of the country, the main administrative units are the counties, sometimes referred to as shires, of which there are presently some 40. A shire-reeve (sheriff), whose main duty is to enforce the royal will and oversee justice and tax collection, serves as the king's proxy in each shire. Of Anglo-Saxon origin, county courts meet biannually to oversee matters in the shire and though any freeman can attend, the nobility and clergy dominated the court's affairs.

Within each county are a number of fiefs, also called honors, representing the holdings of a single noble or other landholder (usually the Church or king). These are ill-defined units — some may include a handful of manors, others much of a shire — though the holders of a fief are usually the wealthiest and most powerful people in the county. Fiefs also correspond to the areas of land that owe the king military service and in effect constitute a second, more militant, government hierarchy distinct from that of the counties. Fiefs that span several counties are called baronies and are particularly common in border areas. The lord of a fief maintains his own court and oversees the vassals in his charge (the lesser nobles who receive land from him or are employed directly by his court or military), and is in turn responsible to the king. The power of these lords — the barons — is formidable, as testified to by their ability to force King John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215.

### The Clergy

The Church stands outside the traditional feudal structure, yet its bishops are among the most significant landowners in the country and its influence pervades all aspects of society. The Archbishops of York and Canterbury easily rival King Henry's barons for temporal and

political power, but also wield their spiritual authority to extend their influence. The British Isles are home to many monastic orders, ostensibly standing aloof from mortal concerns but in truth wielding temporal authority over the lands that pious families have gifted to them.

Some members of the Church have genuine religious callings, but many see holy office as a means of gaining wealth and power, compensating for low birth or an inferior position in the line of noble succession. The Church frequently clashes with temporal authorities — the murder in 1170 of Thomas Becket being the most extreme example — particularly over legal jurisdiction, as many members of the clergy use the provisions of Canon Law (see p. 59) to shield them from civil crimes.

Members of the Church, many of whom are not of British birth, use Latin as a common language.

## Politics

Only 23 years old, the King of England has struggled to gain control of his country, facing rebellious barons and “allies” out to advance their own positions. A regency led the country during his childhood, but since 1227 Henry has overseen matters of state himself. His former chief-regent, Hugh de Burgh, has remained one of the king’s closest advisors; his mother, Isabella d’Angouleme, moved to France with her new husband, Hugh de Lusignan, and did not participate in the regency.

The young king must face his father’s legacy, in particular the Magna Carta that has placed limitations on the monarch’s actions and ensured the rights of nobility and commoners alike. Nonetheless, Henry remains sure of his power thanks to his ties to the Church — he holds England as a vassal of the papacy — though he has yet to truly test the extent of his power. Many of the barons are wary of the young king and his advisor de Burgh, whom they seek to unseat. They also resent papal interference in English affairs and Henry’s appointment of many of his mother’s people, Poitevins working for Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, to posts of authority. A clash between the king and his barons is inevitable, though for the present they seek to influence him through the Great Council.

## The Great Council

Unsatisfied with the provisions of the Magna Carta, the English barons have sought to expand their control over government by forming the Great Council, seeking to advise the king on matters of state. The council has removed the exchequer from the king’s direct authority as a means of controlling his actions. It is now located in Westminster rather than at the royal center of Winchester, where it forms the heart of a growing collection of government administrative buildings. Henry has, however, shown little interest in the council’s views, preferring the advice of his close associates. The council does not

### MAGNA CARTA:

#### THE GREAT CHARTER

The Great Charter of 1215 (though it was reissued numerous times with alterations, most notably in 1217 and 1225) sought to place limits on royal authority and acknowledge various rights granted by the Angevin kings to their vassals. Although the document has become the cornerstone of English law, in particular the clause that states “no free man shall be imprisoned or dispossessed save by lawful judgment of his peers or the law of the land,” its original issue was concerned more with the rights of the barons (especially with regard to their landholdings) and with placing limits on the authority of royal officials and the king, removing from them the absolute authority that typified English monarchs prior to the ascension of Henry II.

Other clauses regulated trade and made explicit (or reformed) key legal principles. The initial issue contained a number of provisions designed to assuage the barons’ demands in 1215 and these were not repeated in the reissues (nor were those concerning the Royal Forests, which formed the basis of a distinct Forest Charter in 1217). The final clause of the Great Charter granted the barons the right to wage war on the king should he infringe on their rights.

become a formal part of the government (the origins of the English Parliament) until the Provisions of Oxford in 1258, in the blood and toil of another barons’ revolt.

## International Relations

The barons’ revolt and the French invasion dominated English politics when Henry came to the throne, and during the regency he has seen his holdings further diminished by the loss of Poitou and the ravaging of Aquitaine and Gascony. He has sought to regain the lost possessions through diplomacy but success seems highly unlikely and he is preparing for war, despite de Burgh’s advice to the contrary. Launched in May 1230, with its goal the re-conquest of Poitou and Brittany, this campaign is a disaster. The king’s forces land at Dol and march down through Poitou to Bordeaux, the local lords welcoming Henry and his gifts, swearing fealty to the English king before renouncing their oaths and accepting French authority as soon as the English army moves on. The only permanent gain in the campaign is the Isle of Oléron near La Rochelle. Henry does not stage another campaign in France until 1242.

The papacy is the other great political worry, having established itself as England’s overlord in the reign of King John as the price for lifting the interdiction enacted by

## KINGS AND PRINCES

It's a central tenet of the Arthurian mythology so popular in 13th century Britain that the king and the land are one. Certainly, that would do much to explain Ireland's defeat at the hands of the English: Ireland lacks anyone to take the position of High King. However, Henry III of England, Alexander II of Scotland and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth of Wales are all powerful men, in whose hands the fate of the Isles rests.

### England: King Henry III

The elder son and heir of King John, Henry was nine years old when his father died. At that time London and much of eastern England were in the hands of rebel barons led by Prince Louis (later King Louis VIII of France), son of the French King Philip II Augustus. A Council of Regency presided over by the venerable William Marshal, First Earl of Pembroke, was formed to rule for Henry; by 1217 the rebels had been defeated and Louis forced to withdraw from England. After Pembroke's death in 1219, Hugh de Burgh ran the government. Henry dismisses him in 1232. Two ambitious Frenchmen, Peter des Roches and Peter des Rivaux, then dominate Henry's regime until the barons bring about their expulsion in 1234. Although Henry is charitable and cultured, he lacks the ability to rule effectively. In diplomatic and military affairs he is arrogant yet cowardly, ambitious yet impractical.

### Scotland: King Alexander II

Alexander came to the throne on the death of his father, William the Lion, in 1214. When the English barons rebelled against King John in 1215, Alexander sided with the insurgents in the hope of regaining territory he claimed in northern England. After the rebellion collapsed in 1217, he paid homage to King Henry III, and in 1221 he married Henry's sister, Joan. Now, Alexander is busy suppressing rebellious Scots lords and consolidating his rule over parts of Scotland that had only nominally acknowledged royal authority in the past. In 1222 he subjugated Argyll and the west of Scotland.

### Ireland: Roderic "Rory" O'Connor, Last High King

Rory succeeded his father, Turloch O'Connor, as King of Connaught in 1156. Since Muirteagh

MacLochlainn of Ulster claimed Turloch's title of High King, Roderic did not become High King until MacLochlainn was killed in 1166. He then attacked Dermot MacMorrough, King of Leinster, and seized his territories. Dermot appealed to the English for aid, and in 1170 the Anglo-Norman Richard de Clare, Second Earl of Pembroke — subsequently known as "Strongbow" — landed near Waterford. Soon Dublin had fallen to the invaders. Roderic laid siege to the city in June 1171, but the Normans routed his forces in mid-September. Gradually all the Irish chieftains except Roderic and the northern rulers submitted to King Henry II of England. In 1175 Roderic agreed to become Henry's vassal for Connaught. He relinquished the high kingship but was permitted to exercise authority over territories that had not fallen under Norman rule. In about 1186, members of his own family for a time expelled Roderic from his kingdom. In 1191 he retired to a monastery, where he died. Ireland now lacks any strong leader.

### Wales: Llywelyn ap Iorwerth

Llywelyn the Great is the grandson of Owain Gwynedd, a powerful ruler of Gwynedd in northern Wales. While Llywelyn was still a child, his uncle David exiled him. He deposed David in 1194 and by 1202 had brought most of northern Wales under his control. In 1205 he married Joan, the illegitimate daughter of England's King John. When Llywelyn's attempts to extend his authority into southern Wales threatened English possessions, John invaded Wales and overran most of Gwynedd. The Welsh prince soon won back his lands, however. He secured his position by allying with John's powerful baronial opponents, and his actions helped the barons influence the king's signing of the Magna Carta in 1215.

Two years after the accession of King Henry III in 1216, the English acknowledged that Llywelyn controlled almost all of Wales, but by 1223 they had forced him to withdraw to the north behind a boundary between Cardigan, Dyfed and Builth, Powys. Many Welsh princes in the south, however, still accept his rule. In his old age, he is increasingly relying on his son David to govern.

Pope Innocent III. The barons resent the already affluent Rome's use of England as a source of finance, paying not only for clerical establishments in the Angevin domains but also many overseas. Resentment of Italian clerics is even more widespread. Following Rome's instructions, many arrive in England to take up vacant positions, thus denying them to English clerics seeking advancement.

Tensions also remain high with England's immediate neighbors — Wales, Scotland and Ireland — over whom the London authorities exert varying degrees of political influence and physical control. Henry's nobles occupy parts of Ireland and southern Wales, bringing them under his aegis while both Prince Llywelyn ap Iorwerth of Gwynedd, the overlord of Wales, and King

Alexander II of Scotland are bound to the king by marriage to his sisters. Despite this, both vassals are testing the limits of their overlord's authority, particularly in areas where their borders are in dispute.

## The Laws

English law has evolved over centuries from a wide range of sources — Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman and Angevin. The country has little in the way of centralized law, though the Magna Carta is the first of many steps toward creating a unified set of laws for England. At present, however, the manorial, hundred and shire courts must adjudicate the law, relying on local interpretations and precedents to guide their deliberations. The existence of numerous town charters further complicates this process. Issued in exchange for money or political support, these charters define local laws, rites and exemptions jealously guarded by the local lords. Nonetheless, for all the complexity of English jurisprudence, there are two broad strands of law — common law, relating to a range of secular matters, and canon law relating to the Church.

### Common Law

Common law governs the actions of secular English society. It recognizes two distinct forms of crime: those involving low justice and those involving high (or king's) justice. A third strand, forest law, applies to the areas of land designated Royal Forest.

- **Low Justice:** This element of common law deals with day-to-day matters, including fines for trespassing, brawling, theft and debauchery. Local authorities oversee such matters — the lord of the manor or a hundred- or shire-court — and as such, low justice suffers from a wide range of regional variations. A criminal caught in the act may be the subject of a lord's summary justice — an immediate and usually brutal punishment — but otherwise a trial takes place, with local juries assisting sworn officials.

- **High Justice:** High justice deals with more serious offenses such as rape, mutilation, murder and treason. Royal Courts always handle such matters, usually either the county courts at the King's Bench in Westminster or, in exceptional circumstances, the king himself. The Magna Carta defines much of high justice, including the right to trial by jury and habeas corpus (the right not to be imprisoned unlawfully).

- **Forest Law:** Some regions of England are Royal Forest to protect the land for the king's hunt. Hunting game within their boundaries is illegal without royal permission — offenders usually have a hand cut off — and no one may light fires or fell wood. Foresters enforce forest law, which falls outside the remit of common law, and punish offenders with fines (called amercements) that are a major source of income for the crown.

## Canon Law

Canon law applies to members of the Church and governs the behavior of the clergy and their institutions. Until the reign of Henry II, canon law took precedence over secular law and meted out relatively light punishments. The Constitutions of Clarendon (the agreement that shattered the relationship between Henry II and Thomas Becket) attempted to reverse this situation, though the move foundered after Becket's murder. At present, the Church *may* hand a cleric over to secular authorities but is not compelled to do so, nor may someone tried under canon law suffer prosecution for the same offense under common law. Nonetheless, the Constitutions of Clarendon do clearly define the limits of both canon law and common law and their interactions, though the contentious issues that provoked the confrontation between Henry II and Becket — limitations on the right of appeal to Rome and the need to try accused clerics in secular courts — were revoked.

## The Economy

In 1230, the economy of all the British nations remains reliant on agriculture, though towns and cities are becoming more important, particularly in the increasingly cash-based economy where the townsfolk receive wages rather than goods for their labors.

### Urban Trades

The wool industry is without doubt England's primary industry after agriculture, with wool and woolen cloth the nation's principal exports. Taxes on these exports provide the crown with substantial revenues but recent decades have seen a shift from exporting wool and then importing finished woolen goods to a more efficient system of local manufacture and export of finished English cloth, with a resultant boost to the townsfolk employed in the cloth-making trade. Indeed, towns have begun to compete against each other regarding the quality and types of cloth they produce, leading to a number of regional specialties and eclipsing even leatherwork as an urban employer. Urban centers have also seen the rise of dedicated tradesmen — masons, carpenters, tanners and the like, as well as ever-more specialized variations — in addition to a burgeoning merchant class whose sole occupation is the trading of goods.

Canon law forbids usury (the lending of money at interest), but this is a vital part of the economy — particularly for the king and nobility, who often need to raise money at short notice to finance wars, purchase property and so forth — and has become the purview of England's Jewish communities, they being free from such religious proscriptions. However, while this official tolerance affords the Jews some protection, it has not prevented major attacks against them across the coun-

try. Any legal loans must be registered with the exchequer (something upon which the crown charges a commission, making it an expensive proposition), but doing so protects the Jewish interests, placing the full force of the crown behind any efforts to recover debts that have been defaulted. Smaller loans are, however, rarely secured in such a manner, the moneylenders instead taking a range of sureties including jewelry, armor and food, or perhaps a pledge on the Bible.

## Currency

Britain's first coinage appeared in the pre-Roman Iron Age to facilitate trade, and save for the so-called "dark ages" between the withdrawal of Roman authority and the emergence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, there has always been a well-maintained money supply. During the Anglo-Saxon suzerainty, reissuing of the coins took place every seven years, ensuring the quality and value of the currency as well as the kings' control of the monetary system. The kings only allowed the use of local currency, but for a fee it was possible to re-mint foreign coins for local use. At first, the Normans followed the same practice of scheduled re-minting, but found the system too cumbersome and have now shifted to an ongoing re-minting that is simpler to operate, albeit open to abuse. Coins can be "clipped," removing a part of each that, while only a small portion of individual coins, can amount to a substantial sum for minting into additional coins or otherwise exploited. The king eventually introduces measures to discourage this practice, but they do not come into use for another dozen years.

At present, only one coin is in common circulation — the silver penny — though larger and smaller units of currency exist. The coins are extremely thin and can easily be cut or folded until they break in half (to form "half-pennies") or into quarters (farthings). Twelve pennies make a shilling and twenty shillings make a pound, which should — assuming pure coins — be the same weight as a pound of silver; thus it is common practice to weigh rather than count large sums. An intermediary value, the mark, worth two-thirds of a pound, is also in common usage when counting large sums. Both pennies and pounds have their origins in Roman coins, the denarius and librum respectively, leading to the common abbreviations "d" (for penny) and "£" (for pound), while "s" denotes shilling. Prices are usually quoted in the form £/s/d, so £2 13s 4d is 2 pounds, 13 shillings and fourpence.

## Markets and Fairs

Although farmers once merely traded among their neighbors, the increasingly money-based economy has led many to trade their produce at local markets and fairs, supporting the growing urban population. In many cases, these are merely agricultural or industrial villages,

with little variation in occupation or much in the way of established rights, but market towns — many with royal charters — have become increasingly important, with some 600 recognized across England. The growth of trade has, however, seen the clear stratification of markets.

At the most fundamental level, trade occurs between near neighbors, either directly or through the mediation of villages. Such goods tend to be mundane — foodstuffs and live animals for the most part — and part of the local subsistence economy within 10 miles or so of the goods' origin. Some produce makes its way to specialist workers who provide essential services to the local community — millers, ale-wives and the like — though the end product of such transactions likely remains in the local community and is carried out on a barter basis.

Regional markets — those within 25 to 50 miles of the goods' origins — serve as the hubs of large-scale trade, their endeavors being a mix of local need and national trade. Through the aegis of such markets, a community can obtain goods not produced locally, and may more readily sell its produce for cash. These locales, such as Norwich, are the mainstay of the merchant classes, whose living depends on the acquisition and transportation of goods. In most cases, the dealings at regional markets use cash, in some rare cases paid in advance for goods to be delivered later based on the viewing of sample merchandise.

The pinnacle of the trade network are specialist markets dealing in a narrow range of goods, for example horses and livestock. While such events offer a comprehensive range of such goods, however, no guarantee exists that the profits made from such sales at specialist markets will offset the cost of moving the goods so far — perhaps several hundred miles. Major fairs such as St. Ives in Huntingdon or St. Giles in Winchester are of equal repute to the specialist markets, attracting merchants from across the country and overseas.

Ports form a fourth strand of the trade network, serving as the main link to overseas markets such as Flanders or Italy, as well as long-distance coastal trading. The goods reaching such ports commonly originated in regional markets but may, in the case of goods like cloth, be of local manufacture. The Magna Carta guarantees, in times of peace at least, that merchants may enter or leave England unharmed, and travel within it to carry out their business.

## The Places of England

The Domesday survey of 1086 divided England into 34 counties, 31 in the volume known as Greater Domesday and three in more detailed treatises titled Little Domesday,

while Northumberland was excluded (then being part of Scotland) and the records of some (Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire) were incorporated into Yorkshire and/or Cheshire (Cheshire).

This overview of England uses the Domesday counties (and the four added since or included elsewhere) as a framework, dealing mainly with the mortal world. Matters concerning the supernatural forces in the British Isles appear in Chapter Three.

## Bedfordshire

The River Ouse winds its way through Bedfordshire and its frequent floods leave behind rich soils that are ideal for farming a wide range of crops such as wheat and barley. The town of Bedford serves as the county's main market place and the outcroppings north of the city provide large quantities of stone used to build the town and surrounding settlements, though the king ordered the town's castle demolished in 1224 after Falkes de Breauté's revolt the previous year. The Bedford market has, however, been undermined by a rival event taking place at nearby Shefford. Likewise, the Prior of Grovebury (a daughter house of Fontévrault) has complained that the market of Mursley in Buckinghamshire draws attendance away from the one the prior oversees in Leighton Buzzard. Fortunately, the town's fair has not suffered the same problems of attendance and continues to prosper,

held for two days after the Invention of Holy Cross (May 5) each year

The county's other major town is Luton, which lies in the fief of William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke as a result of his marriage to Eleanor de Bethune, daughter of the Earl of Abermarle. Luton Castle, built by de Breauté and surrounded by a moat after he dammed the river, has come into the possession of the king.

## Berkshire

Located in the valleys of the Thames and its tributary the Kennet, Berkshire mixes fertile river valleys with woodland and chalk uplands. These downs encompass several mystical phenomena, including the White Horse of Uffington, said to travel the land after appropriate incantations and offerings. The White Horse overlooks Dragon Hill, where according to local legend St. George slew the dragon and which remains barren and uncovered by grass. The ancient barrow known as Wayland's Tomb lies about a mile west of Uffington and legend says that if a horse is left there overnight with appropriate payment, the smith-god Wayland — or his fae servants — will shoe the horse.

More mundanely, Abingdon is the county's main town, though the people of nearby Wallingford have complained that the Benedictine Abingdon Abbey has usurped their rights regarding trade and markets in the



area. Further south on the border with Wiltshire, the town of Newbury has emerged on the main road between Southampton and Oxford; in addition to a regular market, Newbury holds a fair on the feast day of St. Bartholomew (August 24). Reading, in the west of the county, is home to a Benedictine abbey founded by King Henry I, one of the most powerful in England, and is also the site of that king's burial. The most significant of all Berkshire settlements is, however, Windsor, established as a royal holding by William the Conqueror and around which a market town has grown.

## Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire combines fertile lowlands and the chalky uplands of the Chiltern Hills. It remains heavily forested and much of the land immediately around the town of Aylesbury was a royal estate until 1204. Despite the removal of the royal demesne, Aylesbury is now the most important market in the county, well known for its poultry and dairy produce. Several fairs gather in the town, one at the start of June and another in early October.

## Cambridgeshire

Low-lying land dominates Cambridgeshire and its two main rivers — the Nene and the Great Ouse — flood regularly, producing rich farmland, good enough in some areas to grow vines. Closer to the sea, marshland predominates and numerous hillocks — former islands now surrounded by peat — are common. The largest such “island” is Ely, home to an abbey originally founded by St. Ethelfreda and now the seat of an important bishopric. Of more secular interest is the inland town of Cambridge, the site of both Roman and Danish strongholds. Once known only as a trade center and port — the River Cam is navigable to the Great Ouse and thence to the sea — Cambridge is now England's second university town after a number of masters arrived from Oxford in 1209. A castle defends Cambridge but is located across the Cam from the main town. The largest landholders in the town are the nuns of St. Radegunds and the leper hospital of St. Mary Magdalene, both of which have grants to hold fairs (on August 15, the feast day of St. Mary and September 14, the Exaltation of the Cross). The church of St. Giles also holds the charter for a fair (on June 23, St. Ethelreda's Day) and the burgesses of Cambridge also have rights at the fair in Reach, 10 miles away.

## Chestershire (Cheshire)

The Palatinate County of Chester stands outside the king's authority, ruled instead according to the will of the Earl of Cheshire, who has his own parliament of

eight barons and is immune to most English laws (the notable exception being treason). The land has, historically, been much fought over because of its strategic location and importance as a center of farming and leatherworking. Indeed, the Romans established the city of Chester to defend the area. The city is a major trading center, particularly with the Norman lands in the Irish Pale, but has recently been losing out on trade due to silting of the River Dee that has prevented ships reaching Chester's docks. Strong walls built on Roman foundations defend the city, running for approximately two miles around the town and haunted, some claim, by the ghost of a Roman soldier. A castle in the southwest corner of the town provides additional defense and a place of refuge, as well as serving as Earl Ranulf's seat of government. The Benedictine Abbey St. Werburgh also exerts considerable influence over Chester, owning much of the city. Local legend claims that Alderly Edge in the west of the county hides the resting place of King Arthur and is the site of a spring enchanted by Merlin.

## Cornwall

Like its neighbor Devon, Cornwall is rugged and sparsely populated with a British heritage and language distinct from that found elsewhere in England. Indeed, most Cornishmen do not view themselves as English and regard traveling elsewhere in England in the same light as others view foreign travels. The Cornish climate is wet and windy, but warmer than in much of England. As in most parts of the country, farming is the main occupation, though much of the land is rugged. Mining is also significant in the county, in particular tin (and to a lesser extent silver). The king's younger brother, Richard, stands as Earl of Cornwall and has built a castle at Tintagel, the legendary birthplace of King Arthur.

The town of Launceston plays an important role in Cornish affairs, the site of both the Norman Dunheved Castle and the Priory of St. Stephens, with a market held every Thursday. It is commonly known as the “gateway to Cornwall” thanks to its commanding position overlooking the river crossings into Devon. Comprised largely of earthworks and palisades, Earl Richard is planning to rebuild the castle in stone and make it his administrative center. The conjoined settlements of Marazion and St. Michael's Mount — the twin of Mont St. Michel in lost Normandy — dominate the spiritual, temporal and economic life in England's southernmost districts, serving as both a regional market and the site of numerous fairs. Ancient tombs and circles are commonplace in the county, drawing the attention of mages and capricious Fair Folk; the stone circle known as the Merry Maidens stands near Land's End and is said to be the

petrified remains of women who danced on the Sabbath, together with their pipers, while the holed stone of Men-an Tol near St. Michael's Mount is the focus of numerous fertility and healing rites. Dozemary Pool is said to be both bottomless and the lake into which Excalibur was thrown after the Battle of Camlann.

## Cumberland

Encompassing some of England's most rugged land in the form of the Cumbrian Mountains, Cumberland was one of the last "British" areas to be conquered by the Saxons — "Cumbria" being an Anglicized version of "Cymru," a name now only applied to Wales — and remains in the front line against incursions by the Scots, much as it did in the Roman era when Carlisle anchored one end of Hadrian's Wall. Its strategic location and the armed might it contains remain Carlisle's primary reasons for existing (though Carlisle Castle fell to the Scots in 1216 when Alexander II invaded, and it remains in poor condition). The city also serves as a major center for regional trade, mainly of foodstuffs from the rich coastal plains but also including that coming across the border from Scotland. Mining, notably of silver, also plays a significant role in Carlisle's fortunes. The Augustinian Priory of St. Mary is the seat of the Bishopric of Carlisle and is entwined with the temporal governance of Cumberland, though it seems likely that both the Dominicans and Franciscans will soon establish houses in Carlisle. Cumberland has many ancient sites, most notably rings like Long Meg and Her Daughters and the Castlerigg Circle. Local tradition also states that the Roman fort in Hardnott Pass and Elva Hill near Bassenthwaite Lake conceal entrances to the lands of the fae.

## Derbyshire

Derbyshire has two distinct regions — the Pennine uplands and a lower and more fertile area in the south of the shire. The uplands are important sources of stone and other raw materials such as lead, though their passes are also strategically important trade routes to the north. Agriculture remains the mainstay of the county's economy, specifically the rearing of sheep and cattle in the uplands and arable farming in the lowlands. Chesterfield serves as the main market town in the north of the county, much of its lands part of a royal manor, with fairs benefiting both the nobility and clergy. In the south, Derby is the main market site with a charter allowing the sale of goods from Thursday evening to Friday evening. Derby has two major fairs, one of two days at the end of Whitsun week and another of seventeen days held in late July and early August, centered on St. James' day (July 25). Leatherworking is also a major industry in the town, particularly in the area around St. Mary's Gate. Several stone circles exist in the county, most notably

the Nine Ladies on Stanton Moor, also surrounded by numerous barrows and cairns, and the Hordron Edge stones, supposedly haunted by the Fair Folk. Numerous caves in the north of the county are also said to be portals into the land of the fae.

## Devonshire

Like Cornwall, Devon is a rugged county, dominated by the hard uplands of Dartmoor and Exmoor. The inhabitants of Devon are of British stock, albeit less staunchly adhering to the old traditions than Cornwall as a result of closer interaction with the Saïs. Trade and tin mining are the two major industries in the county after agriculture, though the manufacture and export of cloth plays a significant (and growing) role in the economies of port-towns like Exeter. Known as Isca Dumnoniorum when the Romans ruled the city, Exeter is the most important port in the southwest, trading extensively with both Brittany and Aquitaine, and one of the top ten wealthiest towns in the country, though it is losing ground to its rivals. Exeter is walled and its core well defended, though a burgeoning population has caused the city to spill beyond its walls. The Cathedral of St. Peter serves as the seat of the Bishopric of Exeter, while the monks of St. Nicholas' Priory control the Lammas Fair.

## Dorset

Dorset contains good farming land, particularly in the lowland valleys of the Frome and Stour, while sheep farming dominates in the chalk uplands in the north and east of the county. As in Wiltshire, ancient monuments dot the uplands, though two are of particular significance: Maiden Castle and Helith, known also as the Giant of Cerne Abbas. The former is a huge earthwork fortification about two miles southwest of the town of Dorchester, covering about a hide of land. Its name originates from "Mai Dun," or "great hill." It may have been a great city of the Romans, or the Celts before them, but is now long-abandoned. Helith is a massive figure carved into the chalk hillside at Cerne Abbas, depicting a club-wielding giant with an erect phallus. Local legend says that Helith is the after-image of a real giant who plagued the region and who occasionally gets up and walks around the area. Legend also associates the figure with pagan fertility rituals, claiming that sex on the giant ensures conception.

## Durham

The Palatinate of Durham came about thanks to agreements between the Bishops of Durham and the Earls of Northumberland. In return for overseeing the defense of the north (Northumberland being contested territory), the Prince-Bishops of Durham are

exempt from many English laws and govern without recourse to the King's authority. The western limestone uplands of the Pennines are ill-suited to farming and are home to sheep herders, though as in Yorkshire, many of the isolated valleys house religious communities seeking to distance themselves from the temptations of temporal life. In stark contrast, the lower eastern areas of the county are rich farmland, particularly in Weardale.

Durham is the main town of the Palatinate, with spiritual and secular power vested in the Prince-Bishop who resides in the castle high above a loop in the River Wear. The Cathedral of St. Cuthbert rests within the fortified castle enclosure, while most of the secular and non-noble inhabitants of the town reside outside the fortifications in one of four boroughs.

## Essex

The rich farmland of low-lying Essex has been the focus of settlement in England since the dawn of time, popular with both the Romans and the Saxons. Stone is scarce and so the main building material in the county is wood from its plentiful forests. Colchester is the county's main town and serves as a major market center and port. The Abbey of St. John the Baptist has charters for numerous markets and fairs, while the St. Mary Magdalene leper hospital (a common name for such institutions) raises funds for its inmates though similar endeavors. The walls of Colchester incorporate many aspects of the old Roman defenses, though much of the town lies outside those defenses, including the abbey and hospital. Built with stones from the Roman town, the impressive keep within the castle is the largest in Europe, designed by Gundulph, Bishop of Rochester, who also built the White Tower in London.

## Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire mixes the broad, fertile lowlands of the Severn Valley with the wooded uplands of the Forest of Dean and the Cotswold Hills. Located near the Welsh border, it is home to numerous substantial castles, though the encroachment of the Norman domains into Wales has negated the value of some of these fortifications. The county suffered grievously in the Anarchy between Stephen and Matilda, though it has largely recovered and now mixes the standard agriculture with sheep rearing (particularly in the Cotswolds) and cloth-making. Gloucester, the former Roman city of Glevum, itself controls a major crossing point of the Severn and is an important market for iron, wine and grain, as well as a center for the production of cloth and leather goods. The town is centered on the Abbey of St. Peter, founded in 681 but rebuilt around 1100.

## Hampshire

The forests of Hampshire resound with the howls of werewolves and other fell beasts, and ancient sites like the fortress of Danebury impose their pagan shadows from the uplands. Nonetheless, the county is one of the richest and most influential in the country. Winchester is a major ecclesiastical and governmental center, the site of the Royal Treasury and a mint, though its secular power is waning due to the centralization of power in Westminster. Its spiritual power, however, remains formidable, centered on the Cathedral of St. Swithins. A wall encompasses the town and includes a pair of castles — the large Royal Castle atop its mound near the west gate, and the more palatial Wolvesey Castle in the southeastern corner of the town. Winchester is the focus of considerable market activity both inside and outside the walls but is best known for St. Giles Fair, one of the largest in Europe and held on the town's eastern hill for 16 (sometimes 24) days in late August and early September. Other notable towns in Hampshire are Southampton, a major port for the import and export of wines and woolen goods, and Portsmouth, the town built to replace the Roman and Saxon fortress and settlement of Portchester. The Isle of Wight falls under Hampshire's authority and the standing stones at Mottistone (Speaker's Stone in Old English, resulting from their use as a meeting place by the Saxons) on the Isle were sacred to both the Celts and the Romans, the latter using them as a place to sacrifice bulls to the warrior-god Mithras.

## Herefordshire

The county of Hereford plays a vital role in defending the Welsh border and is home to numerous fortifications, including the Mercian earthwork of King Offa that runs the length of the old frontier. Herefordshire is largely lowland, dominated by the valleys of the Wye and Severn, though the Welsh mountains overlook the northwest and the steep scarp of the Malvern Hills forms the eastern border with Worcestershire. The town of Hereford was once a royal mint and remains an important market town, renowned for its woolen goods and the market held outside the walls. Hereford Castle's importance has dwindled with the expansion of English authority into south Wales, though it remains a redoubt against any future Welsh invasions. The 80-year old Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Aethelberht the Martyr is the latest in a sequence of such buildings constructed in Hereford, Welsh invasions having ruined its predecessors.

## Hertfordshire

Wooded and dominated by rolling hills, Hertfordshire has been a major area of habitation

since Roman times, though there are signs of more ancient habitation at sites such as the Devil's Dike, an old earthwork fortress south of St. Albans, and the Six Hills (burial mounds) at Stevenage. Although Hertford is the county town, with its own market and fairs, it is overshadowed by St. Albans. Known in Roman times as Verulamium, the martyrdom of Alban, a Roman Christian resident, led to the town's modern name and that of its Benedictine abbey around which the settlement extends. The local abbey wields immense temporal power — a draft of the Magna Carta was presented to an assembly of clergy in the town — and is also the site of a famous school where the renowned monk and historian Matthew Paris works.

## Huntingdonshire

Low-lying land dominates Huntingdon, resulting in a patchwork of woodland and marsh. The population has increased considerably since the Conquest and most of the clay and chalk upland areas are now farmed. The Danes established the county town of Huntingdon, which came under Anglo-Saxon control in AD 917 and has prospered as a market center and crossing point over the River Ouse. The inhabitants of Huntingdon have, however, recently denounced the massive fair at St. Ives — which attracts merchants from as far away as Flanders and Norway in addition to the major East Midlands towns — as detrimental to their own commercial interests. This has led to a bitter confrontation between the two towns, particularly as Huntingdon claims some tolls at the fair, which are disputed by the Abbot of Ramsey (who holds the charter for the eight-day Easter week fair at St. Ives). Huntingdon has sent armed bailiffs to enforce its rights, responding, they claim, to the Abbot's own armed men impeding Huntingdon's rights. The king has ordered the sheriff to ensure the rights of both the town and Abbey.

## Kent

Kent has two distinct regions — the chalk hills (downlands) and the low-lying coastal plains. The northern coast is low and marshy, with several substantial islands such as Thanet and Sheppey, while the southern coast tends to be higher with impressive chalk cliffs. Kent is the main crossing point for traders and pilgrims from the Continent, with natural harbors at Richborough (the site of an extant Roman fort) and Dover.

The importance of the latter is clear to see from the massive castle that overlooks the harbor and that withstood a French siege in 1217. Repairs and modifications to the northern gateway are now almost complete. The Benedictine Priory of St. Martins of the New Work, built in 1131 though associated with

an earlier ecclesiastical community in the Saxon Castle, has recently been rebuilt and extended after a fire in AD 1201. The Priory is enmeshed in a complex dispute with the monks of Christ Church in Canterbury, who maintain that Dover Priory is merely part of their institution. The Dover monks claim their charter identifies them as part of the Royal Domain, placing them outside the influence of the local bishops (but not King Henry's liege, the pope). Also in Dover is the Maison Dieu ("House of God"), built on the orders of Hugh de Burgh, the Constable of Dover Castle (also the Earl of Kent and Justiciar of England) and which serves as a hospice for wounded or destitute soldiers and a resting place for pilgrims.

Only Canterbury exceeds Dover's status in Kent, serving as the ecclesiastical center of not just the county but the entirety of England. Founded by St. Augustine, Christ Church priory at Canterbury is the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was here that Thomas Becket was martyred. The town sprawls outside its walls and two further religious institutions — St. Augustine's Abbey, founded in AD 598, and St. Gregory's Priory and the attendant hospital of St. Johns — reside outside the walls. Another hospital, St. Thomas' at Eastbridge, can be found within the city. St. Augustine's dominates Canterbury's fairs (notably eight days around the Transubstantiation of St. Augustine, September 13, and six days around the Holy Day of Peter and Paul, June 29) but the town itself controls the markets, held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The royal castle, located near Worthgate and surrounded by a substantial outer bailey, has diminished in importance and is now used mainly as a prison under the control of the Sheriff of Kent.

## Lancashire

Lancashire is not a rich county — its inland areas are the rugged Pennines, and peat bogs dominate the coastal areas. Nonetheless, it is a strategic area, controlling north-south access west of the Pennines, and is the site of several ports. The county town of Lancaster was a former Roman fort and the site of one of the county's oldest monasteries, established in the 11th century and situated adjacent to the royal castle. The massive keep dominates the castle and is the home of the High Sheriff of Lancashire. Lancaster has, however, been eclipsed commercially by the inland towns of Salford and Manchester and the port city of Liverpool, established in AD 1207 by relocating the population of nearby West Derby.

## Leicestershire

The valley of the River Soar dominates Leicestershire, which is a largely wooded county —

the hilly Forest of Charnwood covers much of the land west of the river. The young Simon de Montfort, a recent arrival in England, has with the assistance of his cousin the Earl of Chester taken command of the city and Honor of Leicester. The town has a major fair, but recent years have seen numerous changes to its charter, causing the date and length of the event to vary from 12 days after Peter Ad Vincula (August 1) until 1228 to 14 days in early February (12 to 14 days after the feast of the Purification of Mary) from 1229. In 1235, the fair moves to the fourth day after the Invention of Holy Cross (7 May).

## Lincolnshire

The county of Lincolnshire contains three broad bands — the uplands of the Lincolnshire Edge and Lincolnshire Wolds, the clay lowlands and the wetlands of the Fens. The county is rich from agriculture and the trade in woolen goods, though few major towns exist. Founded by retiring Roman soldiers, Lincoln sits at the top of an escarpment overlooking the River Witham. It is an important trade center with a major castle guarding both the town and the cathedral (the second-largest in the country and home to one of the original copies of the Magna Carta). Known as the Bail, this fortified enclosure also contains the Bishop's Palace, while a secondary fortification surrounds the town that runs down the hill toward the marshes of Brayford Pool. The Cathedral is currently being rebuilt after an earthquake in 1185, though some of the work has been rushed, leading to the collapse of the central tower in 1237.

## Middlesex

Situated in the Thames Valley, the fortunes of Middlesex are inextricably bound to its largest settlement — London — whose governors appoint the county sheriff. The walled city of London houses 50,000 souls and rests on the site of the Roman town on the north bank of the Thames. The Tower of London guards the eastern approaches to the city while six gates — Aldgate, Aldersgate, Bishopsgate, Cripplegate, Ludgate and Newgate — and London Bridge provide access to the city. Until recently, wood was the main material of London Bridge, but a stone bridge opened in 1209. The bridge has fortifications facing the Surrey shore and is largely covered by houses, though the chapel of St. Thomas of Canterbury stands near the center.

Several lesser towns surround London, both north and south of the river, including Westminster and Southwark. London is a major trade center and port, and visitors from across Britain and Europe can be found on the city's streets. St. Paul's Cathedral near

Ludgate is the most important Christian site in the city, though there are more than 100 churches and more than a dozen religious houses in and around London. The city has numerous markets, many of which are highly specialized; Threadneedle Street is the center of tailoring, Candleswick Street of chandlery, the grain market of Cornhill and Friday Street for fish, while Smithfield's twice-weekly livestock market, northwest of the city, first operated in 1173. Queenhythe, near St. Paul's, and Billingsgate downstream of London Bridge are London's main docks. Billingsgate is also London's premiere fish market, a role it has maintained (according to legend) since the fourth century BC. The Old Jewry between the West Cheap and Coleman Street is the center of London's moneylending trade and Jewish population, who are still recovering from the pogroms of 1189 and 1215. Indeed, the city's Jewish population frequently takes refuge in the Tower to escape mobs and the depredations of nobles indebted to them.

Westminster lies about a mile southwest of London and centers on the great abbey of Edward the Confessor and the royal palace by the river, as well as the Hospital of St. James. Many fairs and markets take place at the abbey and hospital, or in the land between Westminster and London.

## Norfolk

Low-lying but with some small chalk hills, Norfolk is rich farming land and also has a substantial fishing industry along its long coast and in the inland waterways, and is also involved in wool production and weaving. It is one of the most densely populated (and richest) parts of the country. Walsingham is a major pilgrimage site but the county town of Norwich dominates the region's trade, particularly in woolen goods. The town's wealth is evident in its large number of churches (at least 30, and perhaps as many as 50). The royal castle of Norwich is the seat of Roger le Bigod, the young Duke of Norfolk and brother-in-law of King Alexander II of Scotland. The Benedictine priory attached to the cathedral has a formidable reputation as a center of learning, while the Hospital of St. Paul of Norwich (Normanspitel) stands across the river from the priory. Yarmouth, 20 miles east of Norwich, is one of the main ports for the county and a major center for fishing, with attendant salt houses for preservation. Only Bishop's Lynn, also a fishing center, exceeds Yarmouth, its fairs and markets falling solidly under the sway of the Bishop of Norwich, Thomas de Blunville.

## Northamptonshire

The woods and valleys of Northamptonshire are populous and home to numerous rich manors.

Peterborough is the main ecclesiastical center though its cathedral, St. Peter's (begun in 1118) is not consecrated until 1238. The walled town of Northampton is the shire's administrative center and is also renowned for its weaving and wool dying. The main market takes place in the churchyard of All Saints. The church shares the rights to the town's main fair (held around All Saints Day, November 1) with the monks of St. Andrew's priory. The event takes place on the same site as the market.

## Northumberland

The rugged land of Northumberland has long been a battleground between the English and the Scots and lies almost entirely north of Hadrian's Wall. The Cheviot Hills form the approximate border with Scotland, and uplands also dominate the west of the county. Good farming land is prevalent only along the coast, though the uplands support sheep farming. Bamburgh is the county's main town and fortress, situated on the coast, and is the seat of the Earls of Northumberland. Both Hexam and Lindisfarne, however, are more prominent as religious centers. Hexam was a former bishopric but Durham has subsumed most of its power, though the Augustinian Priory of St. Andrew, built from stones from nearby Hadrian's Wall,

remains a major focus of the town. Lindisfarne, often called simply Holy Island, lost much of its influence and wealth after the Viking raids of the eighth and ninth centuries and the transference of the Bishop's Seat to Chester le Street in AD 884. The Benedictine monks of the island hold a market every Saturday, farmers crossing to the island by boat or a tidal causeway. The priory is best known for its richly decorated Gospels of St. Cuthbert.

## Nottinghamshire

Much of Nottinghamshire is dry and sandy, not suited to farming, and remains covered in oak forests, most notably the Royal Forest of Sherwood. Only in the south and east — the valley of the River Trent — are there rich farmlands. The county town of Nottingham has two centers — the Saxon burgh on the east of the River Leam, and the "French borough" around the castle atop its rocky promontory. The land in between is the site of numerous markets, including the well-known but unofficial "Goose Fair" in October, as well as tanning works in the caves overlooking the Broad Marsh, and brewing underneath Castle Rock. The town of Newark further down the Trent guards another major crossing point, its compact castle the site of King John's death, though unlike Nottingham — which is



Jim Di Bartolo

under the authority of the sheriff and King Henry — Newark's markets operate under the authority of the Bishop of Lincoln, as does its fair (held on July 25).

## Oxfordshire

Nestled in the upper valley of the Thames, Oxfordshire mixes the rich valley lands with the uplands of the Chiltern Hills, supporting a substantial secular and ecclesiastical population.

The walled town of Oxford is the county's best known settlement, a major center for trade but also a place of learning, evolving from the Bishops' Courts and houses established by the Dominican and Franciscan monks (though disputes two decades ago led to several masters establishing a rival center of learning at Cambridge). Since 1201, the *Magister Scholarum Oxonie* (called the Chancellor since 1214) has overseen Oxford's university, and in 1231 the masters are officially recognized as a *universitas* (corporation). St. Frideswide's Priory holds many of the town's mercantile concessions, including a newly conferred six-day fair in October, though the borough itself holds the twice-weekly markets (Wednesday and Saturday). Oxford Castle is, unusually, designed to defend against both attacks from the surrounding country and from the town, a prescient move given Oxford's involvement in the Anarchy.

Oxfordshire is also home to more ancient structures including the Rollright Stones, a circle whose stones are said to be the petrified remains of a king and his knights. Local legend also maintains that no mortal can accurately count the number of stones that comprise the circle. Another mystical site in Oxfordshire is Sinoden Hill, reputed to be the location of a great treasure guarded by a gigantic talking raven. The raven is said to warn interlopers away with the words "He has not been born yet."

## Shrewsburyshire (Shropshire)

Situated on the Welsh border, Shropshire has long been a battleground between the English and Welsh, with fortifications from almost every era of history. The long earthwork known as Offa's Dike runs along the erstwhile border between Saxon England and the Welsh kingdoms but is now largely ignored. Instead, castles such as those at Ludlow, Clun and Shrewsbury guard against incursions from Powys. Much of the county is Royal Forest, though this has not prevented the county's inhabitants from raising abundant crops and producing high quality wool. Lead, silver and coal are also mined in the county. Situated in a loop in the River Severn, its neck guarded by a formidable castle, Shrewsbury's fortifica-

tions have recently been extended to counter Welsh incursions. The Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter controls the town fairs but has reached an agreement with the town regarding the division of taxes from the purchase of goods. The town's market has, however, been placed under considerable strain by a rival event at the town of Oswestry in the north of the county.

## Somerset

The Mendip Hills, Exmoor and the Quantock Hills form a natural basin filled with marshland and scattered island-hills like Glastonbury (also known as "Ynis Witrin," meaning the "Isle of Glass") and Dolebury. Although it straddles the border with Gloucestershire, Bristol is Somerset's principal town and England's third richest after London and York. It serves as both a regional market and a port for trade with Ireland and Aquitaine. Wool is its major export, and wine from Gascony the principal import. Walls defend the town, complementing the valleys of the Rivers Frome and Avon. The abbey church of St. Augustine is Bristol's main ecclesiastical center, though not the center of the Church in Somerset. Instead, the Roman spa town of Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) to the west of Bristol is the seat of the local bishops, a role it has shared with Wells and Glastonbury. The cathedral in Wells is currently being improved, with work having just commenced on a new west front.

The abbey of St. Mary at Glastonbury has recently been rebuilt after a massive fire in AD 1184. Many pilgrims journey to St. Mary's, drawn by two legends. One claims that Glastonbury was the first Christian site in England, founded — according to myth — by Joseph of Arimathea, the uncle of Jesus Christ. The second tale says that King Arthur is buried in the abbey, a story recently complemented by the "discovery" of Arthur and Guinevere's tombs during the rebuilding work. Glastonbury's most prominent feature, however, is its Tor, a conical hill atop which has been constructed a small church dedicated to St. Michael, intended to negate the malign influence of the fae who are said to reside on the island. According to local legend, the fae use the Tor as an entrance to the underworld. Glastonbury is not alone in its links to the Fair Folk — many sites in the county have legends of fairies and boggarts, most notably the Black Downs and Creech Hill.

## Staffordshire

Staffordshire encompasses the rugged southern foothills of the Pennines but also includes farmlands and the Royal Forest of Cannock Chase. The mining of coal and iron takes place in the uplands and on the Chase but in general Staffordshire is poor and sparsely populated.

Stafford is the county town, a prosperous market surrounded by stone walls, but most of its large castle is made of wood. St. Chad's cathedral in Lichfield is the principal ecclesiastical center, inextricably linked to Coventry in Warwickshire by a long-running dispute over episcopal elections (that is, of a bishop for the diocese). The pope has intervened in this dispute, stating that the two chapters should alternate elections of the bishop.

## Suffolk

Suffolk combines rich farmland, low rolling hills and—in the west—marshland. Wool plays a major role in the lives of the inhabitants, exported via the port of Ipswich. The ecclesiastical town of Bury St. Edmunds is a major pilgrimage destination—the town's name comes from a shine to King Edmund the Martyr—and it was in the church of the Benedictine Abbey here that the barons met and swore the demands that later became the Magna Carta. The town of Dunwich also plays a major role in the county's economy, serving as a market town and port, but is suffering numerous problems from coastal erosion.

## Surrey

Situated south of the Thames and encompassing the hills of the North Downs, Surrey houses the estates of nobles who desire to live close to London but not in the capital itself. Southwark lies just across the Thames from London, linked to it by London Bridge, and is the site of the Priory of St. Mary Overie as well as St. Thomas' Hospital and its attendant markets and fairs. The Bishop of Winchester maintains a palace in the priory grounds and the Archbishop of Canterbury also maintains a manor at nearby Lambeth, opposite Westminster.

## Sussex

Divided into the chalk uplands of the South Downs and the fertile coastal plain, Sussex has a varied economy that also benefits from cross-Channel trade. Hastings is the most important town in the county, combining roles as a market, fishing village and port. Its castle was the second built by the Normans (the first being Pevensey), constructed even before the battle named after the town (but which in fact took place some eight miles inland). Unusually, the castle has become a place of pilgrimage, its chapel associated with numerous miracles. In Battle, an abbey stands on the site of the pivotal confrontation between the armies of William the Conqueror and King Harold Godwinson, its high altar at the spot—according to legend—where Harold fell.

## Warwickshire

Woods and hills dominate Warwickshire north of the River Avon, with only a few scattered manors,

while south of the river is rich, open countryside. Warwick and Kenilworth are the county's principal towns, each centered on a substantial castle. The motte and bailey Warwick Castle stands adjacent to the Avon, separated from the town by a broad ditch, its bi-weekly market held under the auspices of the earl. In contrast, Kenilworth Castle has recently been rebuilt in stone and surrounded by a lake created by damming the Finham Brook. Henry II took control of the impressive castle in 1173 and it has remained in royal control since. The castle's builder, Geoffrey de Clinton, also gave land to the Augustinian order and a priory stands to the east of the castle between it and the town. Coventry, in the east of the county, is the seat of the bishop, linked to the abbey at Litchfield in Staffordshire with whom it shares the rights to elect the bishop.

## Wiltshire

The chalk uplands of Salisbury Plain dominate Wiltshire, dotted with sites tied to pagan mysteries. The best known is the sophisticated stone circle of Stonehenge, situated just west of Amesbury and surrounded by dozens of fairy mounds and earthworks. The ring at Avebury is less refined than that of Stonehenge but much larger (nearly a mile diameter) and associated with a number of other major sites—several stone alignments, a host of satellite stone circles and fairy mounds, the massive barrows of West and East Kennet and the immense artificial mound of Silbury Hill. The pre-Christian faiths remain strong in Avebury and in response the Church has built a small Benedictine priory just outside the circle in an effort to curb pagan influence.

The county town of Salisbury is more mundane but no less fascinating. Until recently, the town resided in a hilltop fort known as Sarum, the site of a substantial Norman castle and cathedral. Problems with the water supply and disagreements between the bishop and the royal authorities in the castle, however, led to the cathedral's relocation into the valley below in AD 1220. The castle remains in use as an administrative center for the county, but the cathedral of Old Sarum was effectively abandoned in AD 1226 and is slowly falling into disrepair as its sibling in New Sarum (Salisbury) prospers.

## Worcestershire

The River Severn and the Malvern Hills define Worcestershire. Worcestershire is prosperous and has attracted numerous monastic institutions that own approximately half of the county, to the detriment of the region's nobility. The site of a ford across the Severn, Worcester is a major trade center specializing

in woolen goods, though there has been some trouble in recent years regarding the relocation of the town's cloth fair away from its traditional venues. The tomb of Wulstan — the only Saxon bishop to maintain his position after the Norman invasion — in Worcester Cathedral has become a major pilgrimage site since his canonization in AD 1203. The cathedral is also the last resting place of King John.

## Yorkshire

The largest English county, Yorkshire spans a broad area of land including the Pennines, the Yorkshire Moors, the Yorkshire Wolds and the lowlands of the Vale of York. Much of this land is rugged and inhospitable, leading to limited settlement in many areas. This isolation is attractive to many religious orders that have established houses across the county, most notably the Cistercian abbeys of Rievaulx and Fountains and the Benedictine abbey at Whitby. Situated on the coast overlooking the mouth of the River Esk, Whitby is a renowned fishing community and the site of the great Synod that determined whether Northumbria (and ultimately England) would follow the Celtic or Roman form of the Church.

York itself has been a major trade center for centuries. A port city and trade hub on the River Ouse, it has strong ties to the Continent, including to Rome, thanks to its status as an archbishopric (the second most powerful in the country). Its Roman walls survive in many areas, but the River Ouse and various ponds contribute to the town's defense and that of its castle, recently damaged by a great storm. The Minster of St. Peter dominates the city and is well known across Europe. Ten years ago the archbishop, Walter de Gray, embarked on a grand rebuilding of the Minster that, over the next two centuries, transforms into a rival for Canterbury. St. Peter's is not the only religious institution in the city. To the west lies the Benedictine St. Mary's Abbey, and between St. Mary's and St. Peter's is the leper hospital of St. Leonard's.

## The Places of Cymru (Wales)

Wales is a harsh and divided land, its inhabitants as often at odds with each other as with outsiders. Power rests in a collection of minor kingdoms whose authority has waxed and waned in recent years. Save in the south, the population is largely of Celtic descent, their ancestors from Britain and Ireland, though

the lands of Pembroke and Gwynedd have some Scandinavian heritage. The Welsh relationship with England, in both Saxon times and under the present Norman rule, has been antagonistic but the Welsh are hampered by dynastic politics and regional disputes.

## The Kingdoms

Norman barons, operating largely independently of King Henry, have come to dominate the lands of the south.. The rest of Wales forms three principalities; Deheubarth in the south, whose lands formerly included the English holdings; Powys in the hills of mid-Wales; and Gwynedd in the mountains and lowlands of the north. Prince Llywelyn ap Iorwerth of Gwynedd is the overlord of Wales and the kings of Powys and Deheubarth pay him homage. In turn, he acknowledges the English king as his master, though he is currently testing young Henry's limits by expanding his influence into areas seized by the Norman lords.

### Deheubarth

The Kingdom of Deheubarth is hard pressed by the Norman interlopers and its future looks bleak. King Owain ap Gruffydd rules the land from his fortress at Dinefr, but this region is now under threat from the Norman barony of Pembroke. St. David's on the western tip of Pembrokeshire is Deheubarth's main religious center and Wales' main pilgrimage site.

### Gwynedd

The most northerly kingdom, mountainous Gwynedd is also the most powerful. The influence of its ruler, Prince Llywelyn Fawr, extends into Powys and Deheubarth and he serves as nominal overlord of all Wales. Llywelyn has strong ties to both the marcher lords and the English crown (his wife is King Henry's half-sister) and has checked further encroachment into his lands. Llywelyn's palace is at Aberffawr on Anglesey. Farming in the area is difficult, with the exception of Anglesey limited to the valleys and coastal plains, but hardy shepherds maintain flocks on the uplands. The last bastion of druidism before the Romans annihilated the Celtic faith, stone circles and dolmens appear all across Gwynedd.

### Powys

The hills of mid-Wales form the Kingdom of Powys. Until recently, Powys was two sub-kingdoms, but only the northern section, Powys Fadog, remained independent under Madog ap Gruffydd. The southern regions have been seized by the English marcher lords, notably the de Braose family, or now fall under the lordship of Llywelyn Fawr. The capital of Madog's dwindling realm is Mathrafal, about 20 miles west of Shrewsbury.

# People of Scotland

To get some idea of the relative power and development of Scotland and England, it's worth looking at town sizes. England has over 20 towns with more than 1,000 inhabitants. Scotland has one: Edinburgh. Power in Scotland is far less centralized, with no formalized national legislation, for example. Most power is vested in the heads of the families or clans, called the *ceann cineil* or *toiseach cloinne*. These leaders have an almost feudal relationship with their families, offering protection and justice in exchange for tribute. The king is only the king because all the *ceann cineils* agree that he is so, rather than through any particular ability to wield power. Particularly powerful clan leaders become remembered in the family names. Andrew MacDonald literally means "Andrew, son of Donald," but the more usual meaning is that Andrew is part of a clan that was once ruled by a particularly powerful Donald. Surnames that don't conform to this model, such as Bruce and Wallace, are usually from imported Norman nobles, whose names degenerate over the decades.

Over 90 percent of the population lives and toils in small rural communities scattered across the landscape, and a few towns are starting to take shape through either strategic or mercantile importance. In the main, Scots live in dispersed farming communities known as *fermtouns*, made up of four to eight families of farmers, sharing oxen and horses. A wooden barricade encloses the communities. Villages, as such, do not exist.

Mills are significant regional centers, with farmers from many *fermtouns* bringing their crops there for grinding. These settlements usually have smithies and other communal facilities, like churches or chapels and kilns, attached. The churchyards act as centers for community events and festivals. They often hold the priest's house as well.

More modern farming techniques are used on the *granges*, farms run by the monasteries, especially those run by the Cistercians. Their efficient farming methods need large, consolidated areas of land and the monks often remove *fermtoun* tenants from their lands to achieve this.

The towns of Scotland are little over a century old, founded by King David and his successors in the 12th century to stimulate trade across Scotland. Many are occupied by European merchants as well as their Scottish counterparts. The towns are called *burghs* and their residents *burghesses*. *Burghs* develop their own laws to govern trading.

The *burghs* follow one of two patterns — either a grid, like Kinrymon, or one based around a single main street that links the church and castle. Edinburgh and

Stirling are both built in the latter style. In either case, a large central market place lies in the center of the *burgh*.

The buildings in the *burgh* are extremely fluid. With the exception of churches and castles, the Scots build cheaply and quickly and buildings are replaced every 20 years or less. Still, the better houses tend to occupy the area around the market place, with the poor relegated to the backstreets and outskirts. Fire is common and is another reason for regular rebuilding. The vast majority of buildings are single story wooden structures, around 25 feet long and 13 feet wide. Floors are made of sand, clay or gravel and covered with bracken, straw or heather.

## Language

The lowlanders of Scotland speak English, but with a distinct local dialect. Gaelic becomes more common the further west one travels. The nobility speak French and Latin as well and elements of Norse can be heard in the islands.

## Places of Scotland

Scotland is not a densely populated country and the growth of towns is still a relatively new phenomenon actively promoted only in the last couple of centuries. The focus of political interest lies in the central belt, known as the Lowlands, and the border with England in the southern part of the country.

## The Uplands

The vast, rolling hills of the southern uplands are the source of much of Scotland's wealth. While they may not be good land for human habitation, they make excellent grazing for sheep and cows. Scotland's economy is based on the export of wool and hides, and the southern uplands are the engine of that trade. The hills are dotted with large and industrious ranches, home to incredible numbers of small, hardy sheep. The ranches also play host to the agents of Continental cloth manufacturers, who buy the wool harvest years in advance. Scotland exports more wool per head of population than England.

Berwick and the River Tweed mark the southernmost part of the country. Berwick is the only significant town in the region, as well as Scotland's single most important port. Like the other ports, it subsists mainly on trading revenue generated from Northern Europe. However, it is also home to trading halls from the Low Countries and the Baltic states.

Roxburgh made its fortune from the same trade, being a perfect gathering point for both the sheep ranchers and the wool merchants. Local merchants

and wool dealers grew rich and endowed monasteries in imitation of their social superiors.

Soutra sits on the King's Highway, a former Roman road from England to Scotland. It is home to a major hospital that, unusually, is secular. The hospital caters to the healing of travelers, as well as the sick, mad and infirm of the surrounding lands. It stands in an enclosed area of half a square mile, protected from the road by a substantial guardhouse.

In the southwest, Peebles is one of the newest burghs. Kelso, near the royal town of Roxburgh, is home to another major abbey church. Another of these church buildings dominates Jedburgh. The river Jed Water bounds the abbey's precinct to the north and east. A royal castle lies nearby. The combination of the two has encouraged a large town to grow up to the north, drawn by the economic opportunity they offer.

In the southeast, there is only one burgh: Dumfries, the most isolated of the Scots burghs, founded in the mid-12th century.

## The Lowlands

The most fertile and hospitable part of the country is a strip across the middle defined by the valley of the rivers Forth and Clyde. Much of Scottish history took place in that band, called the Lowlands, and it is home to the region's major towns. This central valley formed by the Forth and the Clyde rivers is densely populated, at least by Scottish standards. Strip fields in constant cultivation surround the farm towns of the region. A stone dike, beyond which lies the rough grazing, encloses these fields.

## The East Coast

Edinburgh, the nation's capital, which lies just south of the Firth of Forth, is an impressive sight. It is built on the slope of a massive hunk of granite left behind in the Ice Age and has commanding views across the whole of the Forth valley. Edinburgh Castle sits impressively over the town at the peak of the city. A long street runs down the hill from the castle to the royal residence at the bottom. Leith, near Edinburgh, is the nearest port and an important trading center in its own right.

Traveling west along the firth, one passes through the burghs of Linlithgow and Airth before coming to Stirling, a town of huge strategic importance. The Scots believe that Scotland is essentially two islands, split in twain by the Forth and Clyde. While this belief is inaccurate, its source is obvious: Stirling Bridge, an impressive wooden structure spanning both the Forth and its marshy surroundings, is of vital tactical importance to the country. It is the only easy route for getting an army into the main part of the Lowlands

and then up into the Highlands. Another of Scotland's castles, with a view nearly as commanding as the one in Edinburgh, overlooks the bridge. The walls of the town also enclose a major church, the Church of the Holy Rood, just a short distance from the castle.

Immediately to the west of Stirling is the small burgh of Clackmannan. Traveling west along the north side of the Forth brings one to another burgh, this one dominated by its priory. The precincts of the Benedictine priory at Dunfermline are larger than the neighboring town. The monks have constructed an artificial stream to form part of the boundary of the site until the construction of the walls is complete, a process that will take decades. To the north of the abbey church lies the shrine to St. Margaret, a center for pilgrimage.

Right on the east coast is Kinrymon, later renamed St. Andrews, a center of Christian faith and the heart of a bishopric. The precincts of the church at Kinrymon betray a certain fear of Norse invasions through their battlements, walls and towers. The site has been home to churches for centuries and the remains of a Pictish cathedral can still be seen. It is also one of the earliest burghs, as it was given its charter in 1140. To the south of the burgh alongside one of the main pilgrim routes is a leper hospital, situated all the better for begging alms. Despite its coastal position, the burgh is not a bustling trading port. The shallow harbor is better suited to fishing, although there is some trade with Dundee.

## The West Coast

The southernmost of the lowland burghs, Ayr is just over 30 years old, yet is one of the more significant burghs on the west coast because of its natural harbor at the mouth of the River Ayr. The burgh sits in the shadow of a castle built by William the Lion.

### SCOTTISH CHURCH FREEDOM

From the late 11th century onwards, the English Church, under the direction of the Archbishop of York, sought control over the Scottish Church. The Scots developed a close relationship with Rome, however, and in 1192, the pope issued the bull *Cum Universi* declaring the Scottish Church to be subject only to Rome. This was not enough to restrain the English, and so in 1225 the bull *Quidam Vestrum* permitted the Scottish Church — which lacked a central authority — to hold provincial councils by authority of Rome. The councils, which might have stopped English interference and internal abuses of power, were rarely actually assembled.

Further north, Renfrew is the seat of the Stewart dynasty, one of the most influential families in Scotland. Paisley houses a large and influential abbey founded by the Stewarts. The abbey has several physic gardens and a reputation for healing as a result.

Glasgow is the site of a small cathedral started in 1180, the second to stand on that site. Plans are under way to build a larger replacement, but they won't see fruition for a decade. Around the burgh is a cluster of other burghs, including Lanark, Rutherglen, Kirkintilloch and Dumbarton.

## Dundee and Perth

The towns on the River Tay mark the northern part of the Lowlands, their very edge before one enters the wild Highlands. Dundee and Perth, the two burghs in the area, are important trading ports. The first Dominican monastery in Scotland lies on the outskirts of Perth. The Blackfriars live adjacent to the remains of a royal castle, destroyed in a Tay flood in 1209. Rannoch Moor, near Perth, is a major center for iron ore smelting and the source of much of Scotland's iron. Coupar Angus, also near Perth, is the site of a major land reclamation project by Cistercian monks.

## The Highlands

The Highlands are cold, wet, mountainous and sparsely inhabited. Here, more than anywhere else, the traditions of the Picts and more especially the

Celts, survive. The western portion of the region is totally devoid of major settlements. The craggy, mountainous terrain, lashed by wind and rain from the Atlantic Ocean, makes it impossible for anything larger than a fermtoun or two to survive there.

The fermtouns all over the Highlands are arranged in a different pattern than elsewhere in Scotland. The dikes are linear, following the line of the hills and making the break between cultivated lands and rough hill grazing. Some farmers construct terraces on the hillsides to make cultivation easier.

The Highland burghs all lie on the north or east coast. Two among them are of particular note: Elgin and Aberdeen.

Elgin, a royal burgh founded by King David, serves as a center of government for the region. A cathedral for the diocese of Moray is under construction in the burgh, adding to its local prestige. A royal castle, called Ladyhill, lies to the west of the burgh, while the cathedral is to the northeast.

Elgin sits on the north coast of Scotland, with the burghs of Dingwall, Inverness, Nairn, Auldearn and Forres to the west and Cullen and Banff to the east. Most of these burghs are still only a few years old and just starting to develop fully. Most depend to some degree on fishing for their income and sustenance.

Aberdeen is the region's principal coastal trading port, and like the rest of Scotland, gained most of its



wealth from exporting to Europe. It also has the major meat market for the Highlands, where whale, porpoise and dolphin can be seen among the more familiar lamb, beef and mutton. Further south down the coast is the burgh of Montrose.

## The Western Isles

The Western Isles, or outer Hebrides, are a throw-back to Scotland's Norse past. The dense concentrations of chambered tombs on North Uist, and the majestic standing stones at Calanais on Lewis, hint that the Western Isles were well populated from early prehistory onwards. The distinctive feature of the islands is the broch tower, the massive shapes of which continue to dominate the Hebridean landscape.

These circular towers were built out of two concentric windowless stone walls with a conical thatched roof, and a living space in the middle sometimes two, three or more levels high. In between the walls were several stories of "galleries" running around the building, the height and width of a man, with steps rising to the gallery above. The function of these dark galleries — not always at the same level as the living spaces inside — remains unclear, though recent thinking suggests they provided insulation and channeled heat around the building.

Modern-day Hebrideans owe their allegiance to the King of Norway and still enjoy the culture of the seafaring warrior kings, while being effectively an independent nation. The *ri innse gall* (King of the Isles), usually a member of the MacDonald clan, rules these isles. The islands enjoy only a tentative peace with their more civilized and markedly less violent neighbors in Scotland.

The same process of cultural assimilation that overtook Scotland is working its way into the Western Isles. Local leaders and nobles are taking on some of the trappings of Norman leaders and with them come the feudal system and the Roman Church. Actual conflict between Scotland and the Isles hasn't occurred for nearly a century, since the Somerland's galleys entered the Clyde and attacked Renfrew.

Individual islands in this chain nearer Scotland include Skye, Mull, Islay, Jura and Aran. The MacDonald clan, powerful lords who rival the ruling Stewart dynasty in Scotland, have a major holding in Finlaggan, on two islands in a freshwater loch in the middle of Islay. The loch provides a natural defense and the surrounding land is among the most fertile in the Western Isles.

## The Isle of Man

Up until the fifth century, the Isle of Man was the abode of a necromancer with the holy name of

Mannanan-Beg-Mac-y-Leir, or so run the legends, who kept strangers away by covering the island with mist. People who approached closely were bewitched by his magic so they saw a hundred times the number of warriors actually facing them. Missionaries from Ireland in the fifth or sixth century dealt with the mage and the island was gradually Christianized. The Norse then captured it in the ninth century.

The Isle of Man is now an intensely religious community off the west coast of Scotland. The Isle played host to St. Patrick centuries before, and a small island off the coast is called St Patrick's Isle in his honor. Castle Rushen is the island's major fortification, although a number of hill forts dot the countryside.

## Orkney

The Orkney islands are located six miles north of the Scottish mainland. Nearly 70 islands make up the Orkney archipelago, 17 of which are inhabited. The Norsemen began to colonize the Orkney Islands around AD 800 and the islands quickly became a vital link in their western sea routes. This strategic position meant that the Norse Earldom of Orkney became a powerful and necessary Norwegian possession.

The history of the Norse Earls of Orkney is being recorded in the epic *Orkneyinga Saga*, which details events up until the murder of the last of the Norse Earls in 1231. After the death of Earl John, the Earldom passes to the son of the Scottish Earl of Angus. Despite this, the islands remain part of Norway.

Christianity came late to these isles, so the churches are built on a different pattern, much more in the Roman style than elsewhere in Scotland. A major cathedral and shrine to St. Magnus draw pilgrims to the town of Kirkwall, for example.

## Shetland

The Shetland Isles are located deep in the North Atlantic, as close to Norway as to Aberdeen. Shetland consists of a group of 100 islands with approximately 900 miles of coastline.

Unlike the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands are under Norway's direct rule. In AD 1194, Earl Harold mounted an army of Orcadians and Shetlanders in an attempt to oust King Sverre of Norway. The islanders initially took large parts of southern Norway, but when the uprising finally failed, Sverre took direct control of Shetland away from the Orcadian Earldom and put the Isles under Norwegian suzerainty. The king's representatives ruled Shetland for the next 200 years, allowing Shetland to draw closer to Norway. As a result the Lawthing — the local parliament — is now a crucial part of the islands' government. The Lawthing meets at the Ting Holm at Tingwall.

# Ireland: The Lands of the Dominus Hiberniae

Ireland is the light green of pastured land, rather than the dark shade of the forests that covered the isle before the tread of humankind. Much is made of the island's ethereal, mystical atmosphere, more than a little of which has roots in the weather patterns that affect the country. The journey of clouds eastward from the Atlantic means that for the bulk of the year, rain is a common sight. Much of this rain is a delicate feathery precipitation over the hills and plains that can create a thin, misty light across the countryside. The relatively high presence of moisture is also visible in the proliferation of bog land and thick coats of moss that cling to many of the tall trees like green blankets. Healthy grass grows in abundance, while grain crops are difficult to farm and harvest except in the eastern region, under the rule of the Anglo-Normans and their estates, where such extensive cultivation is vital for trade.

Ireland has been a farmed land since settlers came to the region, and the countryside is littered with the signs of human impact on the environment. With the dominance of the Celts, Ireland was an island of cattle farmers, leaving only the occasional evidence of copper and gold mining scattered about the land from the Bronze Age, and razed woodland, courtesy of the larger settlements and the improved axes of the Iron Age. Financial wealth among the Celtic people is generally quantified in the number of cattle a man owns — and these animals are likewise the source of the nation's abundant supplies of leather, dairy produce and, of course, meat. This self-sufficient attitude toward trade and wealth is reflected in the overall cultural tendency of Celtic/Gaelic communities to be isolated and self-sufficient themselves, many leagues removed from even the closest neighboring settlement. It is worth mentioning that after Viking rule, this changed in the coastal areas — particularly the east coast, where townships such as Dublin, Wexford, Limerick and Cork expanded under Viking society and their desire for large fortified seaports and extensive overseas trade.

## The Rule of the Anglo-Normans

Not content with the coastal towns that had swelled under Viking rule, the Anglo-Norman invaders moved inland, following rivers and valleys as they established new settlements in areas of great farming potential. The Irish people (hardly tolerant of the English lords coming over and taking what wasn't theirs) were reluctant to throw support behind these

fledgling villages, which were clearly little more than attempts at establishing colonies. Consequently, without local support, many such attempts failed and the occasional ruin of an aborted (or destroyed) settlement can be seen across the north and west of Ireland.

In the south and east, where Anglo-Norman rule is more entrenched and dedicated, the land displays new manor houses, castles, abbeys and villages, with noticeable tracts of crop rotation on arable land, grain production for overseas trade, and extensive deforestation to provide lumber for ships, buildings and the homes of English settlers.

## The Gaelic Irish

Ireland is a nation that puts great stock in familial devotion and responsibility, and yet, curiously, the practice of slavery has only ceased within the last hundred years. The tight-knit families and communities are a crucial factor in understanding why Ireland developed as a scattered set of well-bonded communities. Some regions are more worthy of mention than others, simply because they remain mostly unchanged by invasion, and consequently they are dissimilar to the rest of Anglo-Norman Britain.

In regions removed and distant from the Anglo-Normans, (or those regions that simply have not accepted every facet of the invaders' rule) the key unit of social structure is the joint-family, or *fine*. The *fine* is a patriarchal and male-dominated custom of kinship, whereby the land and wealth (i.e., cattle and livestock) is split among brothers when the time comes for such an inheritance. The *fine* itself is formed of all male members in the line of descent.

In such regions, where Celtic tradition stands above any Anglo-Norman law, individuals are naturally not subject to the same legal system as those living in settlements on the south and east coasts. In truth, there is no organized system of law to speak of in these Gaelic-Irish settlements, and the *fine* dictates many of an individual's rights. Issues of law and order, both serious and minor, are often decided by either the *fine* or by public opinion within the community.

The *tuath*, or petty kingdom, is a political unit governed by a local king, also known as a *ri*, who is always elected by the *tuath* of the domain. In turn, these informal Gaelic-Irish councils and their kings are answerable to the Ard-Rí, "high king," in Cashel or Tara. At least, they were before the invasion.

## The Anglo-Norman Invaders

The occupation of Ireland is something of a misleading statement. Many regions in the west and north remain mostly untouched by Anglo-Norman colonists, and are actively considered rebellious. Tir

## DICHOTOMY

Viking rule of Ireland in the ninth century is notable for the major shift in political and social emphasis it imposed across the country. While the Celts were never much for gathering en masse in urban dwellings, the Viking emphasis on the importance of the eastern coastal cities meant that the island acquired an imbalanced demeanor. The further one traveled from the east coast, the more likely the land was to harken back to the more primitive homesteads of the Celtic farmers. Indeed, the only settlements that bore even superficial resemblance to towns before the Viking expansion were the early Christian monastic settlements — and even these were isolated and economically self-sufficient, serving as havens for religious observance rather than as fully functioning townships that sustained a sizeable population.

The current Anglo-Norman occupation has done little to change this significantly. Ireland is a land of stark contrast in many things: socially, politically and geographically.

Eoghain, Tir Connail, Fermanagh, Donegal, Breifni and Oriel in the north remain very much out of the grasp of the invaders, largely because there is little of interest for the Anglo-Normans in these bleak areas of Gaelic-Irish settlement, and the invaders' culture would more than likely not take in these places.

A mere 50-odd years ago, Henry II was handing out the counties of Ireland to his favored nobles as gifts, despite the fact that many counties remained unoccupied or were still resisting the Anglo-Norman yoke. Many nobles found their armies unable to satisfactorily hold the territory that the king had given them. This friction between ruler and ruled means that a vast amount of money has been spent on hastily erecting castles and fortresses to house the Anglo-Norman lords and press their claims to the land. Tipperary, Cork, Limerick and Kerry are excellent examples of counties that either the king himself claimed or gifted to his nobles, which then had to be forcibly brought to heel *after* the claims were made. These tensions extend to the present, and indeed, to the very heights of society: Many of the occupied Gaelic-Irish are far from thrilled that the King of England, the *Dominus Hiberniae*, "Lord of Ireland," never sets foot in their nation. Obviously, many of the king's occupying nobles are similarly less than endeared to their subjects.

In these occupied regions, the English concepts of feudalism, representative government and common law have been swiftly introduced. Naturally, these

ideas find little purchase the further one travels inland, because colonization attempts fail when established too far from the coast and strong support.

Something the invading Anglo-Normans have been keen (at times) to do is use many existing Gaelic *tuatha* as political units of administration, which they renamed "cantreds." Depending on the desires of the lord of the domain, a cantred can be either very influential or limited in authority, serving as little more than a "show of acceptance" of Gaelic-Irish customs. The wiser lords use cantreds to facilitate their dominance, forming a bridge between themselves and the populace they claim to rule.

Occupied Ireland is very much a part of feudalized Western Europe to the point where even the landscape resembles mainland Europe. While buildings of mortar and stone were not rare before the invasion, it is notable that the invaders' castles, fortresses and abbeys have introduced Romanesque and the burgeoning Gothic techniques of architecture. Surrounding these estates and places of worship, the fields are tilled and worked in tried and tested European agricultural practices and patterns. Of course, this is easy for the invaders because they hold almost all of the most fertile land, notably specializing in cereal production, which has great value when exported. Apple, plum and pear orchards are another recent addition to the landscape, as many Anglo-Norman manor houses sport a few acres of fruit trees, previously unknown (or at least, very rare) to Ireland.

## The Lord of Ireland

The one thing Ireland lacks (from both the invading and the invaded points of view) is strong, definitive leadership. The Anglo-Norman nobles under the banner of the King of England have very little support from their monarchy, after Henry II bestowed the initial gifts of land (in many cases decades before the current nobles were born).

## IRISH CASTLES

The well-crafted fortresses at Trim and Drogheda place the region of Meath well under Anglo-Norman sway, supported by several other smaller fortresses — Skreen, Delvin, Dunmore and Granard — throughout the surrounding land. These castles (and similar fortresses in the other occupied lands) are almost always populated by lesser vassal nobles who owe their allegiance to the regional lords. These provincial and regional lords, in turn, have the King of England to thank for their position, whether they hold it tenuously or with nigh-unchallenged authority.

The last time the king set foot on Irish soil was to restrain some defiant nobles in AD 1210, twenty years ago. King John came to the island with the grand army of Britain behind him, to display a show of sovereignty, demand further allegiance from his vassals and nobles, and put an end to certain rumors of fratricide that William de Barose (a Welsh Marcher Lord) was known to be spreading. After deposing Hugh de Lacy from the rule of Ulster — which was not restored to him until 1227 — King John reclaimed the de Barose lands in Limerick, treating them as Crown property, while allowing William's wife to starve to death in prison. Under his orders, prelates and magistrates came to the land and enforced English common law.

Needless to say, almost all Irish kings paid homage and swore allegiance to King John during this visit, and rebellion — almost *all* rebellion — was quelled in the face of the presence of the mighty, God-elected sovereign. However, no king has set foot on Ireland since then, and the old tensions have resurfaced with predictable results. Without the guiding presence of a strong and powerful leadership, factionalism is rife in all levels of society. Henry III, the current monarch, has shown little inclination to set foot upon Irish soil, not least because he has his own problems at home.

Although officially the island is under occupation and Crown control, in truth the Anglo-Norman mandate only stretches as far as their own agents and administration can effectively reach. With a strong king governing the nation, invader rule would be secure and definite. As it stands, the land under English control is divided into counties and governed by noblemen, or royal administrators under the supervision of sheriffs.

## Occupied Land

Currently, the counties firmly under the sphere of English sovereignty are Dublin, Munster, Louth, Tipperary, Waterford, Limerick and Cork. Tensions and discord are at their lowest ebb here, and English culture and common law prevail. Obviously, the nobles are not to be content with merely these lands, and their influence spreads to many other counties and liberties that are not held so strongly, with many a plan to take more land over the next decades through military campaigns.

Military action in Ireland is a source of confounding irritation for many European nobles, for the rocky land, large woodlands and often bog-like terrain does not bode well for a massed cavalry charge, which is the standard tactic for destroying an opposing force. Happily for the invaders and their mercenaries, the Welsh longbow is making its name feared at this time.

## The Spread of Faith

Ireland is a religious nation, even for the times. The monastic orders that entered from the mainland continent have always been granted extensive lands by both the Gaels and the Anglo-Normans. Early Cistercian churches and monasteries were founded in the 12th century, such as the larger holdings of Mellifont, Boyle and Bective.

The Anglo-Norman invasion has added greatly to the list of significant houses of God, with large abbeys at Wexford, Tintern, Jerpoint, Kilkenny and Dunbrody. Since the beginning of the 13th century, the Dominican, Carmelite, Augustinian and Franciscan orders have trickled in, establishing monasteries and churches, almost always with the approval of the resident landholders, and very often with extensive financial support. The militant and canonical orders that followed in the wake of the Anglo-Norman invasion have done much to change the face of the nation, constructing abundant schools and churches.

## The Pale

In 1230, the Pale is still incomplete, existing more on maps than in reality. The Pale itself, literally meaning “fence,” is similar to the old Roman “Limes” (wooden fence) fortifications that defended the German frontier in ancient times. The Pale is little more than a thick wooden fence, sometimes with an earthen rampart behind and sometimes a ditch in front. The

### LANGUAGES IN IRELAND

The province of Leinster, within the Pale, is close to Britain, and its ports frequently trade with Continental Europe and Scandinavia. Dublin is a cosmopolitan city, with merchants from Norway, Normandy, Wales, France and the Holy Roman Empire either visiting or dwelling there. The streets are filled with sailors from a dozen countries. Therefore, a Leinster lord or merchant should be fluent in at least one Gaelic dialect, and also understand several English dialects, and probably the language of Wales and the tongue of the Norse.

Inland, the language issue becomes more complicated. The Gaelic tribes speak the Irish language, but the dialects vary by region to such an extent that a tribesman from Tirconnell (in the northwest) will have difficulty understanding a merchant from Wexford. In many cases it is easier to speak to each other in an English or Norse dialect. This problem is never resolved and results in the ultimate demise of the Irish languages in the centuries to come.

fence is opened on commercial roads, and these gates are defended (in 1230) by wooden forts. Larger stone castles are under construction, but in general, the frontier forts are made of wood and earth. The Pale will not be fully installed for another two hundred years. Its gates impose tolls on the road and also keep watch on the tradesmen passing through. Some of the gates are open throughout daylight hours. Many, on smaller roads, only open on fair days.

The Pale is patrolled by Norman soldiers and peasant conscripts drawn from the Leinster population. The Norse-blooded Leinstermen see themselves as a separate people from the wild Gaels of the interior, and have as much to fear from Irish raids as the Normans.

The Pale does not present an overwhelming obstacle to invaders. Instead, it represents a border that can be patrolled, allowing an in-depth defense and slowing down raiders before they can damage Norman holds. South and west of Dublin, the so-called Western Marches, are rich lands. Norman nobility claim these lands and defend them in the name of the Crown and the Lord of Dublin. The further out these lands lie, and the closer to the bandit country beyond the fence, the braver and more warlike these lords are, or poorer and more ill favored.

The Pale runs along the natural borders of the Dublin and Wicklow hills, the low blunt granite slopes that rise to the south of the Liffey River. The hills belong to the Gaelic tribes, and the Normans are content to leave them there.

## Beyond the Pale

Outside the Pale, to the immediate west, lie the rich farmlands of Kildare. Without a centralized authority or a coherent set of alliances, the Irish tribes are little match for Norman expansion. The Normans have campaigned all through the Irish midlands and the southern plains, and have claimed Irish lands for themselves. Some of these lands are left alone, their lords having agreed to pay a hefty tribute. Others have been seized and fortified.

Beyond the Pale also means beyond the immediate authority and laws of the Crown. Normans still fight Normans over stolen lands, but as long as these battles do not threaten a lord's feudal obligation, he is left alone. Some Irish clans have hired themselves out to fight these battles. While they could potentially use this as an opportunity to reclaim lands for the Irish people, the Irish are notoriously temporal. The gold in their pockets now and the promise of having their lands left alone in the future are much more valuable than some vague concept of "Irish unity."

As the Normans expand, the battles continue. A mercenary can always find work beyond the Pale.

# Faith in the British Isles

Britain is a Christian country through and through. England has been converted twice: once while under Roman occupation, after which the country became pagan again, worshipping Norse gods and small, local war gods; and again through the actions of missionaries from Ireland and Europe. Ireland only needed the missionary monks. It adopted the Christian faith with a zeal not found anywhere else in Europe, assimilating its old religion into the new within a matter of decades. The Irish also gained a missionary zeal for the new faith, converting people in what is now known as Scotland, then the land of the Picts, and in parts of England.

England is regarded as one of the great powers of Christendom and Rome has extended its grip over all the nations of the British Isles. At the great Fourth Lateran Council in AD 1215, nine English, two Welsh and about 20 Irish bishops attended and contributed to the debate. They were accompanied by dozens of abbots from the most prominent monasteries in the Isles. Still, Rome is a long way away; letters take weeks to arrive at best, and often never turn up at all. The pope's solution is to place a legate in Britain who acts for him in ecclesiastical lawsuits. The British and Irish Churches, although largely under the rule of Rome, still have considerable freedom, a fact that the most powerful men in the Church, the bishops, exploit to the full.

## The Power of the Bishop

Apart from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Grant (known as Wethershead), the bishops are the leaders of the Christian faith. While some are completely faithful to Rome, spending much of their time in the Holy City, others are far more interested in enjoying the secular power their position entails, secure in the knowledge that the pope is a very long way away.

The vast majority of the British bishops come from an aristocratic background. A few people have risen from lowly status to a bishopric, but they are the exceptions. Under English rule, there are three main routes to a bishopric. The prospective bishop can win royal preferment and be appointed by the king, with little or no ecclesiastical background. He can spend his life in a monastery, rising through the ranks until he is noticed and made the bishop of an area. Lastly, he can perform similar devotion in a large church or ecclesiastical household.

As a result, the Church is split between the canny politicians appointed by the king and the loyal and spiritual theologians, a fact that causes plenty of conflict. That said, on occasion the king's appointments are successful and scandals have been few and far between. Anglo-Norman bishops, appointed as



part of the move to enforce Roman rule over their local Churches, dominate Ireland and Wales. This is less true in Scotland, where the local Church reformed itself.

Bishops, while technically based in a cathedral, are usually on the move, visiting parishes and monasteries under their aegis and checking up on their (often extensive) personal estates. They also consecrate new churches, a time-consuming business as building new places of worship is a favorite occupation of both the British and the Irish. They confirm children as well, often in ride-by sprinklings of holy water on the young of the poor.

Of course, the bishops rarely suffer any discomfort on their travels. They own a network of palaces across the British Isles, as well as each bishop having a number of other residences. Nearly every bishop also has a house in London.

### Cathedrals

Cathedrals, the seat of a bishop's power, are centers of learning as well as places of worship and pilgrimage. While they don't rival the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the cathedral schools of Hereford, Salisbury and Lincoln in particular attract scholars from all over the islands. They teach women as well as men. For example, Hereford has a strong scientific community, including a renowned female mathematician, Dina.

### British Practices

The basics of Christian organization in England were laid down by Archbishop Theodore in the seventh century. He created the network of parishes and dioceses that covered the whole of the country. Wales became part of the same structure early in the 12th century. His decisions rooted Christian practice in the parish church and priest. This local approach to religion was somewhat at odds with the more centralized version practiced on the Continent and one the Normans disapproved of when they invaded. The concept of local saints and the idea that local sites could be as holy as Jerusalem or Rome was unique to the Isles and is partially responsible for the speed and enthusiasm with which all parts of the British Isles adopted Christianity. It also sowed the seeds of later conflict between the British Churches and Rome.

The pope of 1066, Alexander II, viewed England as a rather backward place with an aberrant Church not

## THE CHANGING ARCHBISHOP

The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Grant, dies in 1231 and is buried in Italy. Grant asserted the independence of the clergy and of his see from royal control, following in the footsteps of his predecessor Thomas Becket.

Richard was the chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral before becoming archbishop. He was appointed archbishop by Pope Gregory IX at the request of Henry III and was consecrated on June 10. Henry soon regretted the decision when the freshly minted archbishop argued against the king's new tax on the clergy, believing that they should be free of secular control.

When Henry gave Tunbridge Castle to the chief justiciar, Hugh de Burgh, Richard — defending his possessions — said Tunbridge belonged to his see. The king rejected his claim. Richard then excommunicated those holding the castle, and he took his case to Rome. Pope Gregory decided in favor of Richard, but the archbishop died at the convent of the Friars Minor, in San Gemini, on his way home. Hugh, not surprisingly, is suspected of poisoning him.

It takes three years to replace Richard with Edmund of Abingdon, who holds the position until his death in 1240. There is a further interregnum of five years before Boniface of Savoy takes the miter, leading the church until 1270. During these periods, while king, Church and pope debate the best choice, the pope's legate has some control over the English Church, but the majority of power, as always, remains with the bishops.

fully integrated with the power structure of the Roman Church. He therefore granted William of Normandy his blessing for the invasion on the condition that he resolve the issue. After the invasion, the new Norman archbishop promptly removed official sanction from the long list of Anglo-Saxon saints.

The Normans brought with them a conflict between Church and state, exemplified in Old Sarum in Wiltshire, where the fortified town was also to be the site for a new cathedral. At the same time, the Normans erected a castle. The relationship between the centers of secular and spiritual power quickly grew strained and eventually Richard I declared that the cathedral should be moved five miles away to Salisbury to end the conflict.

The Normans also introduced the idea of the baron bishop who held secular power as well as religious authority, such as Gundolf and Bishop Odo, brother to William. The conflict between such politi-

cal appointees and the truly spiritual leaders plagues the Church still.

In many ways, the control and assimilation of the English and Welsh Churches proved a testing ground for Rome to bring other countries' communities under control. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, for example, brought the same strictures on the creation of new saints to the whole Roman Church that the Normans imposed on the English.

## The Changing Parish

The parish has been the center of spiritual life for 800 years in England and is now so for much of Britain and part of Ireland. While the old Anglo-Saxon independent parish is declining, the parish church beholden to the local bishopric is far more common.

Parish clergymen are usually not well educated. Many are also very poor. They act in the stead of the parish's rector, who receives the bulk of the Church's revenues. The large monastic communities that proliferate across the Isles, however, are in the process of taking charge of most rectories and running the parish churches themselves, an arrangement that is usually beneficial to both the monks and the parishioners. The priests' main duties are preaching and teaching, although most do far more of the latter than the former. Of course, the major bar to preaching is the requirement to preach in Latin, which most parishioners don't understand. Reforming bishops who have kept up on the latest thinking in Rome are encouraging their local priests to preach in English, with some little success.

The clergy are not supposed to marry (and bishops often preach against it) but many do, especially in Wales and Ireland. Marriage is a bar to advancement through the clergy's ranks, but it is not a cause for removal from the post or the Church. On occasion, the sons of bishops inherit their fathers' titles, although the Church does not approve of this.

These changes likely represent a recognition that, while most people are regular churchgoers, the clash between current Church teaching and long-held custom usually results in a resounding defeat for the Church. Then local people learn their beliefs from family members, rather than the incomprehensible Latin pulpit. Therefore, older Anglo-Saxon or Celtic practices survive in areas that are nominally under Roman control.

## Chapels and Shrines

The chapel is an important part of parish life. Many of these smaller religious buildings predate the Norman Conquest by hundreds of years. Local lay people usually run these buildings for the benefit of

those who live too far from the local parish church, or who are too poor to find much welcome there. Churches are centers of community (see below), while chapels are small centers of Christian life. Many are technically subordinate to the nearest parish church and their congregations make their way to the church to worship on major feast days. The churches seek to maintain rights over burials and marriages, much to the disgust of the chapels. This power struggle is a source of much conflict between the two.

The exceptions, of course, are the private chapels in the households and castles of the rich and powerful. These are status symbols, built with the authorization of the local church, and so they must maintain good relations with the local parish church lest Church authorities withdraw their permission to have a private chapel. The Church grants permission to build one on grounds that include distance from the local church, ill health of family members and generous donations to parish funds.

Miraculous images and holy wells are other centers of devotion for the people of the British Isles. The Church tolerates these holy sites, legacies of Anglo-Saxon Christianity and the religions that predated it, but does not approve. Communities that actively worship at such places are watched carefully for signs of pagan or heretical practices, and are now a focus of interest for inquisitors as well.

## Churches

For the last 180 years, the old wooden churches of the Anglo-Saxon faith have steadily given way to the new stone-built Norman churches. The church is very much the center of village and town life. Local churches house festivals, meetings, celebrations and schools. They function as the closest thing the era has to libraries. They also play host to the monks and priests who hold services and hear confessions. This community function of the church means that even small villages have large, dry, heated and stunningly beautiful buildings, paid for and maintained by the congregation. The churches also provide a training ground for craftsmen. Children work alongside their fathers, honing their skills in carving, wood- and stonework, gardening and painting in the building and repair of the churches.

Scotland also engages in extensive church building, with many favored chapels becoming parish kirks around the same time.

## Local Saint Cults

Vestiges of the old Anglo-Saxon Christianity remain in local saint cults. Here people pay homage to their local saints, even those technically no longer

saints under the rule of the Roman Church, instead of the nationally and internationally recognized ones. For example, the people of Bampton near Oxford venerate St. Beornwald and in Whitchurch in Dorset St. Whyte is the favored martyr. The same is true in Scotland, where individual parishes often pay homage to uncanonized figures such as Margaret of Scotland, whom they consider to be an exemplar of admirable lay piety. Most such cults are based around small, often hidden shrines to their saints.

The saints are a major part of day-to-day life in the British Isles. People call on them for protection, guidance and intercession with God. Churches and towns are named after them and local saints are particularly venerated. Here are some of the most popular in 1230.

### St. Aneirin (England)

Prince Aneirin, a younger son of King Dunaut Bwr (the Stout) of the Northern Pennines, is one of the best known ancient Celtic bards. He was sometimes known as Aneirin Awenyd — the Inspired — and was described by his near contemporaries as High King of Bards or Prince of Poets. He was apparently present at the Battle of Catraeth between the British and the Anglians of Northumbria, about which he wrote the poem *Y Gododdin*. In later life he became a monk at Llancarfan in South Wales, where he had been educated as a boy. He was apparently killed with a blow to the head by Heidyn ap Enygan and became revered as a saint.

### St. Alban (Wales)

Saint Alban was a pagan soldier in the Roman army stationed in Britain. He sheltered a Christian priest, supposedly named Amphibalus, and was so struck by the devotion to God and blameless life of this man whom he had protected that he placed himself under his instruction and became a Christian. A rumor reached the governor of Verulamium (now St. Albans) that the priest was hiding in the house of Alban, so he sent soldiers to search it. Alban posed as the priest and was captured. When the cloak that had concealed Alban's face was removed, the governor's anger flared and he ordered Alban to immediately sacrifice to the gods or to suffer death.

St. Alban steadfastly refused to offer to idols and declared his faith. When the judge saw that he could not prevail, he ordered Alban put to death. On his way to execution, Alban had to cross a river, which miraculously dried up for him. However, the executioner refused to perform his office and confessed himself a Christian also. Another man was detailed to deal the blow, and Alban and the executioner who had refused to strike were decapitated together.

In art, St. Alban is represented sometimes in civil and sometimes in military dress, bearing the palm of martyrdom and a sword, or a cross and a sword.

### **St. Brigit (Ireland)**

According to the stories of the day, Brigit was born of a noble father and a slave mother and was sold along with her mother to a druid, whom she later converted to Christianity. On being set free she returned to her father, who tried to marry her to the King of Leinster. Impressed by her piety, the King removed her from parental control. The King of Leinster gave Curragh, a plain in Kildare, to Brigit. There she founded the first nunnery in Ireland. The community became a double abbey, for monks and nuns, with the abbess ranking above the abbot. Brigit is also said to have been active in founding other communities of nuns. She appears in a wealth of literature from the time.

One of the most popular legends of Brigit is the story of Dara, the blind nun, for the restoration of whose sight Brigit prayed. When the miracle was granted, Dara realized that clarity of physical sight blurred God in the eye of the soul, whereupon she asked Brigit to return her to the beauty of darkness.

### **St. David (Wales)**

David is generally accepted as having been the son of Lady Non and Sandde, a prince of Ceredigion, who forced his passions upon the unfortunate Non. David was a man of such holiness that even from the womb he performed miracles. Non named her son, Dewidd, but he was commonly called Dewi from the local Dyfed pronunciation. David is an English version taken from the Latin, Davidus. He was soon ordained a priest and began to travel the country, evangelizing as he went. He is said to have founded twelve monasteries in Southern Wales. An Irish chieftain, named Bwya, was not pleased when David and his followers arrived in Ireland. His wife sent her maidservants to bathe naked in the River Alun and tempt David and his followers, but the clerics were far from impressed.

David became known as "the Waterman" because he encouraged his followers to live, drink and bathe in cold water. David then decided to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Upon his return, the stories say that David spoke so eloquently before his peers at the Synod of Llandewi Brefi that a hill miraculously raised up beneath him.

Saint David died in March 589. Pope Calixtus canonized him in 1123.

### **St. Margaret (Scotland)**

St. Margaret was the granddaughter of King Edmund Ironside of England through his son Edward the Aethling. She had been exiled to the eastern

continent with the rest of her family when the Danes overran England. She returned to England during the reign of her great-uncle, Edward the Confessor, but as one of the last remaining members of the Saxon royal family she was forced to flee north to the Royal Scots Court at the time of the Norman Conquest.

In 1069, she won over the Scots King, Malcolm Canmore, and married him. Their union was exceptionally happy and fruitful for both themselves and the Scottish nation.

Margaret founded churches, monasteries and pilgrimage hostels, including the revival of Iona, the building of the tiny chapel in Edinburgh Castle and Dunfermline Abbey with monks from Canterbury. She was especially devoted to Scottish saints and instigated the Queen's Ferry over the Forth so that pilgrims could more easily reach the Shrine of St. Andrew. She was buried in Dunfermline Abbey and miracles at her tomb bring her official canonization by 1249, although people are already worshipping her in 1230.

### **St. Patrick (Ireland)**

Patrick was a Christian missionary who converted Ireland to Christianity in the fifth century. St. Patrick was not actually Irish. He was born in the late fourth century in Scotland. His real name is believed to be Maewyn Succat and he took on the name Patrick upon becoming a priest. As a teen he was kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland to herd and tend sheep on Slemish Mountain, County Antrim. During his six-year captivity, he became fluent in the Irish language and then escaped after having a vision from God in which he was told to leave Ireland by going to the coast where he would find a ship waiting for him.

Patrick then had another dream in which the people of Ireland were calling out to him to come and walk among them once more. He set himself the task of teaching Christianity to the Irish and returned to the land of his captivity. He traveled throughout Ireland, preaching the Gospel and converting people as he went, for over 40 years, before he had converted the whole country. The legends around his life are numerous and he is known as the patron saint of Ireland.

### **St. Thomas Becket (England)**

For details of the life of St. Thomas, see p. 37. The miracles at his tomb and, later, his shrine, were enough to see him canonized.

## **Monastic Communities**

Monasticism is booming across the British Isles. In the time since the Norman Conquest, the number of monasteries and nunneries has grown from 60, housing 1,000 monks and nuns following the Benedictine rule in

England and unique monastic traditions in Scotland and Ireland, to over 700, holding around 1,300 people who have devoted their lives to God in a number of different orders. In a time when a city of more than 1,000 souls is notable, the monasteries are a formidable social, political and spiritual force.

In the 13th century, the domination of Benedictine establishment is being challenged by more ascetic communities, particularly the Augustinian and Cistercian monks. One major reason for this is that most kings and lords lack the resources to establish a Benedictine monastery, but other orders come at a much cheaper price. The patronage of the wealthy and powerful is vital to most monasteries, which quickly grow rich themselves. This then allows them to set up thriving agricultural businesses and acquire

local rectories, the better to do God's work. The combination of wealth, temporal power and spiritual authority this brings attracts further patronage from nobles, seeking blessing from the abbot.

Some orders, however, including the Cistercians (see sidebar) emphasize withdrawal from the world. While nobles still endow and donate to such institutions, it's more a matter of pride, status and spiritual cleansing than any real expectation of material gain from their gifts.

Many monks and other clergy look on nuns with great suspicion. They are often regarded as a sinful temptation and are kept well away from male orders and confined in lives of strict discipline. The Gilbertine Order, founded by Gilbert of Sempringham in Lincolnshire, is unique in that a third of its 30 houses hold both monks and nuns.

### CISTERCIANS: THE WHITE MONKS

Stephen Harding, an Englishman, founded the Cistercian order in Cîteaux, France, in the late 11th century. He codified the monks' rule by combining St. Benedict's rule with the writings of St. Basil and another theologian, John Cassian. This produced two documents, the *Exordium Parvum* (Little Beginning), a history of the order's short life, and the *Carta Caritatis* (the Charter of Love), which outlines the monks' way of life. It insisted absolutely on poverty, simplicity of life and physical separation from the outside world. The monks were barred from owning mills or churches, as that brought them into contact with the world. The Cistercians also opened the order to any who would join, including servants and the poor. Each abbot had to return to the motherhouse in Cîteaux once a year, to reaffirm his commitment to these principles and to pass laws for the order. The nickname of White Monks arose because the Cistercians chose to wear robes of undyed wool, unlike the brown and black of other orders.

Bernard, abbot of the abbey in Clairvaux, took that order, reorganized it on military lines and dispatched forces of White Monks to colonize new countries and regions. By the end of the 12th century, a mere century after the order's founding, it had 525 monasteries across Europe.

The first Cistercian abbey appeared in England in 1128, followed by Wales, in Tintern, in 1131. Five years later, the monks established themselves in Scotland in a Melrose abbey. It took until 1142 for the order to arrive in Ireland. From that start, the order rapidly spread across the whole of the British Isles: England has 60 houses, Ireland 35 and Scotland and Wales 11

apiece. The monks had a simple pattern for expansion: mix a few experienced monks with new recruits, build their monasteries to an identical layout and use the same book in every one of them.

The White Monks were the fundamentalists of the time, trying to return to the basis of St. Benedict's rule, living simple lives and surviving off the land they received as gifts. These lands were often rough, overgrown patches that nobody wanted to farm and that lay well away from existing towns and villages. This suited the order, whose monks valued their solitude. Their single-minded dedication to the cause allowed them to turn this land into something capable of sustaining a large monastery. Their skills as farmers grew. Soon their revolutionary agricultural methods allowed them to make money and found further monasteries off the profits. Acre upon acre around the monasteries became farmland and pasture, and sometimes whole villages were evicted to make way for the monks' business interests.

The Cistercians, perhaps because they don't seek the same temporal power as other orders, have attracted the patronage of the most powerful men in the British Isles, including the kings of England and Scotland and many dukes, earls and barons. However, their isolation and wealth has attracted the attention of other forces, from vampires who seek to hide in their ranks, to inquisitors who seek to do much the same and werewolves who resent their impact on Britain's dwindling wild places. These isolated and stunningly beautiful monasteries are set to become a battleground for the Isles' supernatural denizens.

As well as their spiritual duties, many monasteries play a significant part in community life. They feed the poor, for example, and often shelter refugees in times of famine or war. Some monasteries also have associated hospitals, organized on monastic lines, like the St. Cross hospital outside Winchester. These hospitals take a holistic approach to healing the sick, concentrating as much on the patient's faith in God as the ailment of his body. After all, as long as the first task is successful, the second does not matter so much.

## Hermits

Hermits are familiar figures throughout England. They are commonly found in churchyards, cells attached to churches, woods, marshes or even underneath bridges. Often the bridge-dwellers also take responsibility for the maintenance of their bridges. Hermits are frequently regarded as deeply spiritual men and even local priests turn to them for guidance and advice. Indeed, their advice is so highly thought of that many bishops and recent kings have hermits on their payrolls.

Anchoresses, female hermits, are common as well. In fact, they are more numerous than the males. They follow strict lives of poverty and seclusion and occasionally fulfill the same advisor role. At least, that's the theory. In practice, many teach, work as scribes or even run businesses. A few even have servants.

## Friars

Wandering friars are a common sight in the towns and villages of the Isles, and are appearing with increasing frequency. Where the clergy have slipped in their duty to preach, Dominican friars often step into the breach in preaching the Gospel, many giving their sermons in the local tongue rather than in Latin, while Franciscan friars set the spiritual example of living a life of poverty. The Dominicans arrived in 1221, establishing themselves in Oxford. The Franciscans arrived four years later, rapidly establishing a presence in Canterbury, London and Oxford, the seats of religion, royalty and learning, and have been growing ever since. The order has just gained a foothold in Edinburgh, its first venture outside England. The Dominicans have established themselves in Ireland with houses in Dublin and Drogheda and the Franciscans have plans to found houses in Cork and Youghal.

Inquisitors of the Red Order often pose as friars as part of their investigations.

## Pilgrimage

Pilgrimages play an important part in the religious culture of the British Isles. While the very wealthy can afford to travel to Rome or even the Holy Land, most



## PLACES OF FAITH

The British Isles are awash with holy ground, a consequence of the particular forms of Christianity practiced down the centuries. A holy well, dedicated to a saint, might have a Faith rating of 1, if anything. A local shrine to an equally local saint might have a rating of 1 or possibly 2. Centers of pilgrimage with several relics and shrines would have a rating of 2 or 3. The major places of pilgrimage, listed below, are truly intimidating sites of worship, baleful to Cainites and strongholds for inquisitors.

### **Canterbury Cathedral, England**

Canterbury is the center for the worship of St. Thomas Becket. His shrine, recently rebuilt, draws thousands of pilgrims a year. His story of resistance to the king and loyalty to the church has won the hearts of people across the Isles. Mere decades after his death, he has already become an unofficial patron saint of the people of the British Isles.

Ambient Faith: 4

### **Down Cathedral, Ireland**

When the bodies of St. Patrick, St. Brigit and St. Columba arrived in Down Cathedral after their

discovery in a cave nearby, the cathedral became a major center for pilgrimage in Ireland. The great missionary saints Patrick and Columba and the central female saint of the Celtic Church are too good an opportunity for pilgrims to turn down.

Ambient Faith: 3 and rising

### **Iona, Scotland**

The whole island of Iona on the west coast of Scotland is a major focus of pilgrimage for the Scots. Iona is dotted with any number of shrines, all of which have a Faith rating of 1, and a few of the larger ones can claim a Faith rating of 2. However, the monastery founded by St. Columba is the focus of the island's divinity. Destroyed and rebuilt many times throughout its history, it now follows the Benedictine rule.

Ambient Faith: 4 at St. Columba

### **Isle of Man**

The Isle of Man houses a small priory dedicated to St. Adrian, who was martyred by the Vikings in AD875. His relics are housed in the chapel, and are visited by a steady flow of pilgrims.

Ambient Faith: 2

people can travel no further than the country's own holy sites. Luckily, the Isles are far from short of them. In Britain, the usual focus is the relics of a saint.

It is impossible to overestimate the role of saints in popular belief. The transformation of pagan gods into Christian saints was a key part of the conversion of the islands. For example, the Irish and Welsh goddess Brigid became St. Brigit and the old Celtic festival of Imbolc her Christian feast day. The evangelizing missionaries who converted the Celts and Britons had sought to do so with as little disruption to local patterns of life as possible. The saints continue to play roughly the same role in society, as the immediate gods who can be worshipped and called upon for protection. Such prayers are most effective when said over the relics of the saints, hence the need for pilgrimage. The recently dead can be canonized in short order, just as some tribal leaders were once deified, although the Roman Church is doing its best to stamp out such practices, preferring that only saints officially canonized by the pope be worshipped. Roman authority is not succeeding.

One of the most prominent sites for pilgrimage is Canterbury and the shrine of Thomas Becket, which is widely reputed to have healing powers and other miraculous abilities. The new shrine, built just 10

years ago, has boosted the number of pilgrims making their way to the seat of Christian power in England.

Other motivations for pilgrimages include expiating a crime, seeking a cure for illness, fulfilling a vow or even just the remission of sin. For most people, too, it is the closest they get to a holiday. Of course, these pilgrimages are an important source of revenue for churches and so seizure of relics on the flimsiest of pretenses is common. Monasteries all across the Isles did well financially by allowing wealthy pilgrims to stay there on their journeys, a courtesy repaid with later donations.

Pilgrims have a uniform all their own: a heavy cloak, a wide-brimmed hat adorned with tokens acquired at shrines along the route, a wooden staff with an attached water carrier and a small satchel, called a scrip.

## **Scotland and Ireland: Celtic Christianity**

Ireland and, by extension, Scotland had their own brand of Christianity born, much like Anglo-Saxon Christianity, out of the fusion of Christian teachings with their existing religious beliefs. The Scots gave up their stake in this brand of Christianity readily, remolding their Church to conform to the

Roman norm just as they remolded their society along Norman lines. The Irish, by contrast, resisted the influence of Rome until invasion forced it on them.

While the Irish Church is now formally part of the Roman community, the practices of the old Church still linger. Ireland's Church structure is far looser, lacking the single authority of the pope and the local archbishop representing him. It lacks the diocese- and parish-centered approach of Rome, favoring instead large monasteries as the center of religious life, answerable only to themselves and God. The monasteries of the Celtic Church are very different from those founded under Roman rule. They are houses of secular canons, living in communally owned property and who take responsibility for the spiritual well-being of wide areas. In Ireland, the position of abbot of such communities was often hereditary and the abbot enjoyed power over the local priests. The secular status of many of the canons brought with it a distinctly relaxed attitude to celibacy among the faithful. Indeed, the majority of priests and other clergy were married and many had children who inherited their roles.

The Church in Ireland also calculates Easter differently from the European Church. Indeed, one abbot was once bold enough to write to the pope both correcting his theology and promoting the Irish Easter. Monks have tonsures, but unlike their European brothers, they shave all the hair from the ears up, rather than just a patch on the back of the head. They also darken their eyelids as a mark of their status.

The monasteries are centers of learning, theology and art, forging relationships with the local communities that the Roman monasteries lack. In many ways they are a hybrid of the role of the church and the monastery in the Roman faith.

As the Normans invaded these lands, bringing the Roman orders with them, they despoiled older monasteries while lavishing patronage on the newer institutions. While some Celtic monasteries still survive, their day is all but done.

## Relics

One notable difference between the Celtic and Roman churches is the nature of their relics. The Roman Church venerates the remains of dead saints and martyrs, while the Celtic Church places the same importance on their possessions. Thus, a bell, book or even shirt of a saint can often be a relic for a Scot or Irishman. Hereditary lines of guardians watch over these precious items, bringing them out only for ritual use such as cures, oath-swearing and cursing. They are occasionally used as talismans of war, in much the same way that Roman Christians carry their relics into battle.

## Romanizing the Celts

By the beginning of the 12th century, Scotland's ecclesiastical independence was all but gone. The Norman influence imposed by nobles intermarrying with the Norman lords of the south and their general love of all things French saw a steady change in the Church's structure. By the end of the century, the country was composed of 13 dioceses, 10 of which Rome recognized. The remaining three are in the Norwegian parts of the country and owe their allegiance to the Nidaros Church.

Ireland proved more resistant to change, just as it had proved more resistant to invasion. The Celtic Church didn't finally succumb to Roman pressure until the 13th century, and outposts of it still remain.

## Other Religions

The British Isles are without doubt Christian. Over a thousand years of steady evangelism and conversion have all but wiped the traces of previous religions from the land. By the eighth century virtually all traces of the Anglo-Saxons deities who had risen to prominence in England after the Romans withdrew from the country were gone. Just as the British people's Celtic gods were displaced and assimilated by their Roman equivalents, the regional, militaristic gods of the Anglo-Saxons were forgotten or assimilated into Christian culture. In many cases, the only remnants of other religions left in the country are people still practicing the Anglo-Saxon brand of Christianity rather than the Roman style.

In some places this change was more evident than others. In parts of Cumbria, for example, stand crosses with carvings of the Passion on one side and images of the Norse religions on the other, with Celtic designs — the remnants of a religion more than a millennium dead in the area — on the top.

The skill of the early Christian missionaries lay in taking pre-existing concepts and giving them a Christian context. For example, a well in North Yorkshire called the Thorskeld and dedicated to Thor was renamed St. Helen's Well, retaining it as part of England's spiritual life. Unlike other manifestations of the faith elsewhere in Europe, and even their Roman predecessors, the early English Christians saw no threat or malign supernatural influence in nature, attributing the most beautiful natural sites, including springs, hills and rivers, to God and naming them after saints and martyrs. Just as the locals used to call upon the resident pagan gods, now they call up patron saints to protect their villages.

While traces of the old warfare cults and the trickster religion of Wotan still exist, certainly enough to keep the mages who follow those world-views content,

they have to stay well hidden in a country that warmly embraced its own version of the Christian faith.

## Heresy

Unlike the rest of Europe, organized heresy is almost unknown in Britain and Ireland. A small group of Cathars arrived in England in 1166 but Henry II ordered them expelled from Oxford and prohibited all contact with them. They died of exposure that winter. In 1222, a couple appeared in nearby Banbury, claiming to be Christ and the Virgin Mary. The woman also claimed to be able to administer the sacraments of the Church, a job only men could do. They died, imprisoned behind a brick wall. Many believe that she was a witch, leading the man astray with her magic. Whether he was innocent or not, both paid the same, fatal price. Britain is not tolerant of heresy.

## The Jewish People

The Jews came to England in significant numbers after the Norman invasion of 1066 and may have been resident even earlier than that. At first, they were a

welcome part of the population, considered loyal and industrious subjects of the king who brought wealth to the local community. The Jews of Bristol were so highly regarded that the local people gave them the crypt of St. Giles Church as their synagogue.

Everything changed in 1187 when Saladin captured the Holy Land. Many people believed that this heralded the Biblical End Times and started seeking the Anti-Christ in their midst. They seized on the Jews. By 1190, most Jewish communities in England were under attack. In York, 100 Jews sought shelter in Clifford's Tower. After a few days, it was clear that the mob was close to breaking in, so all the fugitives committed suicide rather than be torn apart by their fellow man. Each man killed another, until only the rabbi was left. Then he took his own life.

In 1222 an Oxford deacon who converted to Judaism and married a Jewish woman was burnt at the stake for heresy. These pogroms and murders continue today. The British Isles under King Henry III is not a safe place for the Jewish people.







# CHAPTER THREE: THE HIDDEN ISLES

Remember to distrust.

— English proverb

The mortals of the British Isles have their faith, their kings and their customs. But another world exists behind theirs, where vampires scheme, werewolves defend their territory and spell-casters dance with powers that might well bring the wrath of Heaven down upon the islands. Through all of this, the members of the shadow Inquisition frantically try to do God's will.

## Vampires

*"The Baronies of Avalon...an intriguing name. Let none ever claim that the vampires do not have a sense of humor; black humor, but humor nonetheless. Avalon — the fabled land beyond the sea, where death is unknown — is beyond our grasp, and our nation is no paradise."*

— Wulfrick, Satrap of Norwich

The Cainites name the land of England the Baronies of Avalon. They break the land into fiefs, much like the mortals' shires. The Fief of London claims dominion over all the others. Barons of other fiefs in Britain — and Ireland — must pay a tribute in gold and blood slaves to the Fief of London every year. Failure to pay such tribute can result in



violence, either overt or covert. Typically, if a baron refuses to pay tribute, she can expect no aid from London in the face of Lupine raids, mortal hunters or Church interest. If the baron remains in power, Mithras' followers have a long reach, and recalcitrant barons can be removed. On occasion, however, Prince Mithras has had reason to dispatch warriors to settle disputes. These warriors, referred to as satraps, dwell all across the Isles. They are loyal to Mithras and stand ready to enforce his dictates.

The Barons of Avalon have conspired to create an illusion of civility, of servile politics and oaths of loyalty. In truth, the Baronies are the scene of endless violence, cruelty and murder. The Six Traditions are but polite fictions. The polite rituals of court can give way at any moment to all-out warfare.

## The Baronies of Avalon

The following are the fiefs under Mithras' dominion:

- The Fief of Carlisle centers on the town of Carlisle, but Baron Nathaniel looks north, to Edinburgh. The Zealot baron is in constant struggle with the fiefs of Lothian and York, but should an opportunity arise, Nathaniel may side with the Scots Toreador against Mithras.

- The Fief of York centers on the old city of York, which is the center of resistance to Mithras' rule. The Fief of York is powerful and influential, with enough strength to challenge London. Unfortunately, Baron John, a Ventrue, claims dominion over a fractious land that is under constant Lupine threat.

- The Fief of Lincoln centers on the city of Lincoln. The fief claims the eastern Midlands as its territory, but the Ventrue baron, Stephen, faces constant rebellion and the expansionist activities of the Cainites of York. Stephen fears and mistrusts Mithras, but he is loyal to the Court of Avalon for now.

- The Fief of Chester, dominating the lands west of the Pennines, centers on the city of Chester. Chester is not under the mortal king's authority, but Cainites consider Chester the most loyal fief outside London. Chester is in constant conflict with the Fief of York and the Feral Gangrel of Wales — not to mention the Lupines of the hills. The baron, however, is none other than Marcus Verus, child of Mithras of London, and he is more than willing to meet any challenge to his power.

- The Fief of Gloucester, taking in most of Wales and the Midlands, watches travel on the Severn. Cainites passing down this waterway must be prepared to present themselves and pay tribute to the Malkavian Baroness Seren. Seren is canny and capable, and a fearsome enemy. The fief also claims as hunting grounds the cities of Bristol, Saint David and Oxford.

- The Fief of Norwich claims much of the old area of East Anglia. The land is rich and the farmers are reasonably prosperous and healthy. They make good prey. Norwich is loyal to Mithras, but it does not have a baron. The fief is beset by Cainite Heresy infiltrations. Baron Stephen of Lincoln is said to have plans to incorporate the barony into his own as a "temporary protectorate."

- The Fief of Exeter, in the west, lays claim to Cornwall. The fief is nominally loyal to Mithras, but it remains

neutral, dealing with the Throne fief by almost ignoring it. The Ventrue baron, Hugh, is more interested in contacts with the French Courts and trade with Ireland and the Mediterranean world. Exeter is politically weak, and the fief is home to many Gangrel and other Low Clan miscreants who do not recognize either Mithras or Hugh's lordship.

- The Fief of Winchester stands between Cornwall and London, and is home to Mithras' rivals. The Tremere attempted to construct their largest British chantry here, two centuries ago, but they were stopped. Now, under the protection of the Toreador, Melusine d'Anjou, the Tremere have built several chanceries (small sanctums hidden away in unimportant towns). Melusine despises the Tremere, but she knows they are useful shields against Mithras. Melusine is pressuring the Baron of Exeter to join her in opposition to Mithras — or have his fief forcibly annexed.

- The Fief of Canterbury takes in the rich coastal lands of the southeast, and is claimed by the Toreador baron, Adrian of Canterbury. Adrian is a member of the despised Cainite Heresy, but Mithras has yet to take action against him. Mithras retains a great deal of influence through his alliance with the satrap and Sheriff of Canterbury, James Mannerly. Adrian may play at being prince, but Mannerly is the true power in the fief. If Mannerly were to fall from grace (or meet Final Death), the fief could become a stronghold of anti-Mithras activity.

- The Fief of London, the Throne Fief, where Lord Mithras holds court, is not the stronghold of his power that it might be. At least one Promethean sect operates out of London, and the Nosferatu Ragged Jenny, who wields a great deal of influence on London's streets, has no loyalty to the Prince.

## Tools of Influence

Prince Mithras lays claim to a wide, wild land and claims overlordship over all of the Cainites therein. Though he is a Methuselah, he has neither the flexibility nor the inclination to leave London and bring his often-rebellious subjects to heel. Mithras therefore relies on the activities of his closest associates and his centuries-old security apparatus. It is important to realize, however, that Mithras is also something of an experimenter. As a follower of the Road of Kings, Mithras is fascinated by the pursuit of power. Mithras describes his minions as "my challenges" in private. A rebellious Cainite who can successfully counteract Mithras' influence earns Mithras' respect. At least two of Mithras' closest associates, James Mannerly of Dover and the Brujah tribune Weldig of Bristol, are former regional princes whose ambitions overcame Mithras' "challenges." Despite all this, however, Mithras isn't likely to brook serious threats to his power. He respects someone who can tweak the rules of the feudal structure and still remain faithful to the Road of Kings (he has little respect for the other roads), but he is very much aware of the difference between "amusingly innovative" and "dangerously rebellious."

## Mithras Cults

Cults of Mithras are male-only secret societies, which have seven levels of initiation into the secrets and worship

practices of the cult. At the ultimate level of initiation, the cultist is considered a priest, and may give initiations to others. These cults survived Christian missionaries and the tides of years, kept alive by Mithras himself.

The cults are few in number, but their membership includes several members of the aristocracy and knightly orders. Thus, unlike many of his vampiric contemporaries, Mithras has a large measure of real political power in the British Isles. This authority comes secondhand, but a Mithraic cultist has a great advantage over his Christian counterpart in that the cultist's god is a real and direct presence on Earth. Mithras is canny enough to know that his cult is not an infinite resource, and uses it sparingly.

These cults present a perfect opportunity for loyal vampires, with their bloody initiation rituals, secretive and conspiratorial meetings and oaths of silence. Mithras cultists form the basis of herds and provide useful leverage into mortal communities.

Because of the desirability of the position of Mithraic priest, Mithras and his allies can afford to be choosy. A vampire seeking to lead such a congregation has to prove his intelligence, his loyalty and his value. Many are bound in a blood oath to Mithras or one of his childer or trusted allies. As such, Mithras cults are not just Mithras' way of influencing mortals, but also of ensuring a trusted and secret source of intelligence. In every town hosting a *mithraeum*,

### VAMPIRES AS PROTAGONISTS

If you are running (or playing in) a **Dark Ages: Vampire** chronicle set in the British Isles, consider the following:

- **Culture:** Many different cultures have contributed to what is now the British Isles. Vampires, however, tend to remain rooted in whatever culture they were part of during their mortal lives. If your character's sire came to England with the Romans but didn't Embrace your character until after the Norman Conquest, your character and his sire will hold radically different cultural views (which might well be why your character was Embraced in the first place).

- **Trapped:** England is an island. That means that a character on the run can only flee so long before reaching the ocean, and sea travel is more dangerous for vampires than it is for mortals. This is one reason why Mithras decided to stay here — while his reach doesn't cover all of the Isles at present, with enough time it *could*, whereas even he would never be able to conquer all of Europe.

- **Origin:** Is your character a native to the Isles or an outsider? Is she here representing a foreign Cainite interest, perhaps the Courts of Love or the Sea of Shadows? What does she hope to gain in the Isles? Is she looking to ally with Mithras? Against him?

Most of those questions work for native Cainites, too. Mithras has many enemies — is your coterie among them?

the Prince of London has trusted spies and reliable instruments of influence and command.

The Tremere have learned of this practice and seek to neutralize it. Tremere agents watch for Mithraic activity and detail the movements and identities of the worshippers. The Tremere then collate this information and send it to the Lion's Gate chantry. From there, the Warlocks disseminate it to agents in the Church. From then on, it is only a matter of time before the Inquisition finds it. Several cults have fallen through Tremere interference, but so far neither Mithras nor his allies have realized what is happening.

### The Satraps

As mentioned in Chapter One, the satraps are Lord Mithras' personal force. Each fief hosts one satrap, and several operate from London. The satraps' numbers are augmented by the Knights of Avalon, the order of Low Clan knights who operate from a keep in Cornwall.

The individual satraps are almost exclusively from the High Clans (though at least two are Nosferatu and one is a Lunatic). The only clan specifically prohibited from membership is the Tremere (though Mithras isn't likely to approve a Magister satrap anytime soon, either). Some hold political office — Baron Marcus Verus of Chester is one of Mithras' satraps (and Mithras' childer). The Seneschal of Exeter (the Malkavian Peter de Kennet) and the Sheriff of Canterbury (James Mannerly) also belong to this exclusive sect.

The satraps are influential, though their age and rank runs from Methuselah (the aforementioned Baron of Chester) to neonate (three of the satraps of London are a bare ten years under the night). The satraps have all taken blood from Mithras at least once.

At the first sign of disloyalty or external threat, the satrap of an area is to report to London. In many cases, the satrap's attention is enough to prevent active treason, but in more extreme cases, he can call in help from neighboring fiefs. The satrap can also call for aid from London. No rival to Mithras has anything akin to this capability. The only faction immune to such scrutiny is the Tremere from their chanceries in Winchester and their chantry in Durham. The Tremere refuse to open their chantry to the scrutiny of the satraps, and mystic wards prevent the satraps using Auspex to spy on Tremere doings. Still, Mithras' servants are working on ways to overcome these defenses.

### Mithras' Heirs

The core of Mithras' support comes from those designated as his closest followers, or heirs. They are not heirs to the throne, but rather those distinguished by their loyalty and abilities. When Mithras slept, his heirs watched over him and ensured some form of stability for Mithras' home in London. The most prominent of these heirs are Marcus Verus, Baron of Chester; Rhodry ap Geraint of Gwynedd (a grandchilder of Mithras); and Mithras' seneschal, the Cappadocian Roger de Camden. Other heirs are Aethelwulf, the Dux Bellorum of Londinium and Sheriff James Mannerly of Dover. If Mithras should sleep again, or worse, should he meet Final Death, these Cainites are to ensure an orderly transition of power and nominate a favored succes-

## MITHRAS

**M**ithras is a fourth generation vampire, the childe of the Ventrué Antediluvian. His power is godlike. His influence is enormous. Few Methuselahs would dream of challenging him. So what chance does a group of 10th or 11th generation characters have?

Against Mithras, they have no chance. Smart characters do not challenge Mithras directly. Mithras may claim to despise politics and treason, but in truth, Mithras is easily bored. He is thousands of years old, but it fascinates him to watch how different generations of Cainites attempt the same things, and in the same ways. Well played intrigues, ruthless suppression of a foe, a perfectly orchestrated assassination — these things Mithras applauds.

So while Mithras despises the upstart Tremere and plots against the Baron of York, he is impressed by their machinations and their inventiveness. Few things trigger a violent response (either Mithras destroying his challenger directly, or sending his satraps to harry the realm); but a blatant, clumsy threat against the Fief of London or Mithras himself is one of them. It upsets Mithras' carefully arranged political system. The occasional threat, however, keeps Mithras' security apparatus in fighting trim.

This does not mean, however, that the Prince of London is lenient. He isn't likely to let a Cainite off with a warning because he finds her amusing. If a Cainite finds an interesting way to challenge his power, one that makes him sit up and take note, he's likely to bind the Cainite under a blood oath, banish her from the Isles or simply destroy her and record her achievements for future remembrance.

The trick, then, is to avoid being interesting enough that Mithras learns one's name.

sor. The heirs have few shared interests and little rivalry. They have little left to prove to anyone, and treat each other respectfully. They also have little in common and few reasons to deal with each other. The heirs also ensure that the satraps in their immediate areas are prepared to fight and that they remain loyal to Mithras. These Cainites meet, irregularly, in London or Canterbury.

## Politics in the Fiefs of Avalon

At first glance, it would seem that the Fief of London holds the loyalty of every Cainite in England and Wales, and the acceptance of those in Scotland and Ireland. The reality, of course, is rather more complicated.

The British Isles play host to several major factions in the War of Princes. Among the Low Clans, would-be revolutionaries and firebrands squabble among themselves and struggle to present a united front to the High Clans. The Saxon Cainites of Lincoln, Carlisle and York challenge the Norman and Roman Cainites of London, Chester, Gloucester, Canterbury and Norwich. These latter fiefs are

## THE BLOOD LAWS

**T**he Blood Laws are the English interpretations of the Six Traditions, amplified with centuries of unique British tradition. They are an interpretation of Caine's Laws through the filter of English culture. The laws stipulate a series of fines and punishments to those who breach them, and draw on legal precedents as established by princes throughout the land. More on the Blood Laws can be found in **Dark Ages: Europe**.

sometimes referred to as the "Norman" fiefs, as the Cainites in them speak Norman French and hold to Norman versions of the Blood Laws. In Winchester, the Angevin Melusine courts the upstart Tremere, hoping to use them as tools against Mithras' allies and minions. The Tremere in their chantry in Durham and their smaller chapter houses in Winchester and Bath see the motions and intrigues of the High Clans as perfect tools against their enemies.

Even among the Saxon vampires, alliances rise and fall depending on the situations and the passions of the Cainites involved. The warlord of York, Ivarsson, makes excursions into Lincoln for no other reason than to settle some vague, half-forgotten issue of prestige between the two fiefs. If Lincoln and York were to ally themselves, they could well blunt the power of the satraps in the north. Baron John of York knows this, but he rejects this idea. What he wants is to carve out a much larger, richer fief, covering the lands of Chester, York and Lincoln, and perhaps even Norwich. Then, he hopes, with help from the Scots Toreador and the Irish Connachta, London could be pressured into renegotiating the domain boundaries of the Baronies of Avalon. The Toreador of Scotland seem uninterested, and the Irish are too far away and have their own problems. The Tremere of Durham, on the other hand, are most interested in Baron John's ambitions. They have offered to share their considerable resources with the Fief of York to root out the Mithraists and satraps from the north, in return for protec-

## TRIBUTE

**W**hile coin is always appreciated, the true currency among the vampires of the Isles (and much of the Continent) is blood. Fresh blood is best, so the basic unit of exchange is the blood slave — a healthy human sent to others for food and use in blood feasts when a baron or prince holds a tourney or festival. Slaves can be taken in lieu of cash payment for various services, or for the payment of fines, and tastes that are more individual can be satisfied for a higher price. A Ventrué who only drinks from, say, blue-eyed boys might pay the equivalent of two or three "normal" slaves in exchange for one that fits his taste. Since some of the older vampires are now reaching the stage where they can only sup on vampires, a brisk trade in newly embraced neonates carries on nightly.

tion from the inevitable repercussions from London. The Tremere hope that an assault on London would weaken both the Saxon Cainites and London, and allow them to expand their influence.

## Beyond Avalon

Mithras' power only extends as far as the borders of the Baronies of Avalon, that is, England and Wales. He casts a long shadow, however, and other vampires of the Isles who dwell beyond the border of the baronies must seek ways to accommodate or resist Mithras' demands.

## The Fief of Lothian

Lothian sends tribute and accepts vassalage under Mithras, but Edinburgh is far from London, and the fief is, in practice, an independent domain and is not considered one of the Baronies of Avalon. So long as Robert, the Toreador Prince of Edinburgh, does not blatantly challenge Mithras, he is left alone. No *mithraeums* draw worship in Edinburgh, and while Robert calls himself a satrap and makes a show of loyalty to London, he is not bound to Mithras. Mithras is old, Robert knows, and the Methuselah will sooner or later fall into torpor again. Robert plans for a future without Mithras. When Mithras sleeps, chaos will come again, his "heirs" be damned. A strong, independent fief will survive Mithras' fall. Knowing this, the elder Toreador of Lothian work to ensure that they are well insulated from the politics of London. By accident or design, these efforts have brought Lothian considerable prestige and influence in the northerly fiefs. The Baron of Carlisle has traveled to Edinburgh several times. The Fief of Chester has sent several ambassadors to represent Chester's interests in the north — or to spy on Baron Robert. Robert relies on the strength of the Order of the Bitter Ashes (see p. 46 of **Dark Ages: Vampire**) for protection and security. In a letter to Mithras, Marcus Verus of Chester has said that he does not believe Mithras' enforcers could prevail against these Cainite knights.

While Mithras looks towards the Continent out of vague interest, Edinburgh actively courts Continental Cainite powers. The Toreador of Lothian have sent slaves and neonates to the Courts of Love as tribute, and the French vampires see Lothian as a potential ally in the struggle to reclaim Aquitaine from Mithras' influence. Baron Robert is agreeable — France is even further away than London. He can support French moves against England with little risk to himself.

Far more pressing to Edinburgh's interests are the activities of the Lupines of the Highlands and the Gangrel and *einherjar* Cainites further north. The Knights of the Bitter Ashes have reported incursions by "foul, twisted things, possessed of a violence and torment greater than the normal Lupines." These creatures delve tunnels deep into the earth, and have slain many Cainites in the Highlands.

The Fief of Lothian is also a center of power for the Cainite Heresy. Heretic mendicants and missionaries are welcomed to Lothian. Baron Robert detests the Heresy, but sees it as a useful tool. He has discovered that the Heretics are engaged in a campaign of assassination, blackmail and

## VAMPIRES AS ANTAGONISTS

Cainites make superb antagonists for any of the other character types in the Dark Medieval. Their main role as threats is one of established power — with the exception of the werewolves and the fae (who aren't nearly as organized) the Cainites have had the longest supernatural presence on the Isles. Every major invasion and event in the Isles' history has had vampires slinking along in the background, quietly feeding off of the human players and subtly perverting their efforts. Now the undead are entrenched in the Isles and regard the nights as their domain.

Vampires are manipulators, and most of them will cheerfully lie to get what they want. An inquisitor can be duped into thinking a Cainite is an angel. Mages can meet vampires under a flag of truce, only to find the Cainites have alerted the Church to the sorcerers' identities and weaknesses. The undead fear the werewolves, whom they regard as savages cursed by God in a much different way than they themselves, but they aren't above sending their enemies into Lupine-infested territory to be torn to pieces (said werewolves might well wish to trace these enemies back to the source, forcing the vampires to scramble to cover their tracks).

Vampires are not inherently curious creatures. They are unlikely to make alliances with other supernatural beings because they don't understand them. Vampires are static, parasitical and patient, and any cell of inquisitors, cabal of mages or pack of werewolves that makes an enemy of a powerful Cainite had best resolve the situation, or else the Cainite might simply go to ground for thirty years, waiting until her enemies have grown old and frail...and then visiting them some dark night.

violence against some smaller Christian sects and the Mithraists. Baron Robert hopes to allow the Heresy to grow strong in his dominion, and he quietly sends money and other forms of assistance to cultists. When Mithras demands action, Baron Robert hopes to be able to send the Heretics to their doom and accept London's praise.

## Ireland — The Three Dominions

Ireland is the westernmost of the British Isles. The vampires divide the island of Ireland into three dominions. Ulidh, in the north, comprises Ulster and the lands of Tir Connell and Donegal, as well as claiming the disputed territory of the northern midlands. The Pale, in the east, is a newly forged fief, first carved out by the Gangrel *einherjar* and then invaded by Norman Toreador and Ventrue in AD 1170. Finally, the Connachta, the embattled remnants, claim influence over Connaught, Munster and Meath. However, the Lhiannan witch, Magda, roams much of the county of Mayo, and the Lords of the Connachta are hard pressed to dislodge her. Lupines claim Meath, the seat of the high kings, as their own. West of Magda's hunting grounds, the Tremere have taken two older Hermetic chantries, and they also claim

estates in Munster. Ireland is still home to individual wandering Gangrel and mendicant Malkavians who do not bow to any lord. The Connachta thus rule the largest domain, but they are in a very precarious state. London is far away, but Lord Mithras has turned his attention to Ireland, and the Connachta would do well to prepare for war. If, however, the vampires of the Pale were to ally with the Connachta, they would represent a potent force — enough to ward off any hostile acts from London.

### Uilidh

The Cainites of Uilidh are the descendants of an ancient Brujah Methuselah who came to Ireland many centuries before Christ, remembered by some as the Morrigan. The Methuselah reputedly established a coven of mortal witches and a coterie of childer to guard her when she slept. When Saint Patrick came to Ireland, the Morrigan, tormented by visions of the future, submitted to voluntary diablerie by one of her childer. The “Baroness” of Uilidh, Eileen, is the grandchilde of one of those diablerists. Eileen sends a small tribute to London every year in return for Mithras’ non-intervention in the affairs of Uilidh.

The lands of Ulster are rich and fertile, and the kine are healthy. A goodly number of vampires make their lairs in these northern hills and townships. Most are Gangrel driven from Connaught by Magda. The Gangrel, chiefly Ferals, are apolitical, but they have reached an accommodation with Eileen. Eileen’s small coterie of four makes up the vampiric “aristocracy” holding the office of baron (in Eileen’s case), seneschal, sheriff and keeper. They do not dwell together, but rather claim hunting grounds along the eastern coast. The Tremere are interested in expanding their influence northwards, but Eileen has destroyed each of their envoys.

### The Pale

The Fief of Dublin, encompassing the Norman colony and the cities of Dublin, Cork and Waterford, is supposedly loyal to Mithras. The Cainites here are all Anglo-Norman, and many are the childer of barons in England. Dublin represented an opportunity to carve out a niche for them-

selves. The Norman Cainites faced stiff opposition from *einherjar* vampires who laired in the city, but the Norman Cainites eventually drove these Norse Gangrel and Ventrue out. The Ventrue Prince, Edward de Warene, is a grandchilde of Baron Stephen of Lincoln, and is obsessed with reshaping Dublin to his own ends.

The “Pale Cainites” are reputed to be soft and cowardly, as they hide in their cities from Lupine raids. The Norman vampires, for their part, see their rivals in Uilidh and among the Connachta as barbaric fools.

De Warene sends envoys to London twice a year and frequently attends Mithras’ Grand Council. The London faction regards him as a well-behaved minion. De Warene is starting to resent this condescension from the English vampires and seeks to prove himself, or to make himself respected. He has recently approached the Promethean James O’Conlae, offering alliance against some “common foes,” but the discussions to date have been fruitless.

Cork is not physically in the Pale or in Leinster, but the Cainite Prince, Hector, is a vassal of de Warene of Dublin, and both cities are Norman-controlled. Hector is weak, and serves at de Warene’s sufferance. He may yet be sacrificed in the name of Edward de Warene’s plans.

Comparatively few vampires dwell in the Pale. Two of the Cainites are satraps, invited to dwell there by the Norman Cainites. Dublin is a port city, and quite wealthy. Hunting is good, and disposing of irritating corpses in the marshy wasteland around the city is easy.

### The Connachta

Beyond the Pale, the Connachta dominate. These ancient Ventrue are described, unflatteringly, by the Cainites of the Pale as “more like Animals than Warlords.” These elders are followers of the Road of the Beast, and make no secret of their disdain for the petty intrigues of the Angevin courts of England, or the Pale. The Cainites of the Connachta also play host to occasional gatherings by the Woodwose Savages, a band of Cainites who reject the stifling politics of the vampiric courts (see the **Players Guide to the High Clans** for more information). The Connachta do not demand loyalty from the Savages, but the Savages may strike to defend their hosts if the Connachta are attacked.

The Connachta see the growth of Norman influence in the Irish heartland as both a challenge and an opportunity. While they resent the English domination of their kine herds, the Connachta also enjoy the bloodshed of Norman campaigns for the opportunities to feed. The vampires of the Connachta are realists and have little loyalty to their herds — Norman blood is as good as Irish blood. They do, however, resent having to rebuild their networks of influence following Norman expansion. The Connachta claim Rory of Kerry as their Taoiseach (a baron, in English terms), and he seeks an alliance with the vampires of the Pale to share the spoils of Norman expansion.

### Wales

The Cainites of Wales, for the most part, do not consider themselves vassals of Mithras. While Mithras would love to be able to correct them on that point, Wales is too sparsely populated by Cainites for him to bother.

### EILEEN

**E**ileen is reputed to be a blood magician, and she makes no effort to dispel these rumors. She knows that the Tremere are very interested in establishing the truth of the matter, hence she destroys any Tremere envoy. If she does, indeed, have some ancient blood magic at her disposal, one that predates Tremere Thaumaturgy, then the Tremere would probably go to great lengths to trap her, stake her and haul her off to Durham to be dissected. If she does not, then much of her reputation (and implicit threat to ambitious fellow Cainites) would be lost.

So is she bluffing? In canon terms, yes she is. She is a Brujah and has no access to Disciplines beyond those common to most Cainites. In your chronicles, however, she may well have some remnant of an older set of Thaumaturgic practices. In that case, give her a few points of Thaumaturgy and some low level rituals, which she uses sparingly.

## Deheubarth

The Kingdom of Deheubarth, the southernmost of Wales, is nominally under the dominion of the Fief of Gloucester (and therefore Baroness Seren). Seren, a Welsh queen by birth, is one of the few Cainites in the Isles capable of effectively ruling such a domain (which, along with her show of loyalty to Mithras against the Triumvirate, is why she has his support in the first place). Her domain is extensive, however, and she cannot be everywhere at once. To the north of Deheubarth, Furores clamor against Mithras, secure in the knowledge that they are far enough away from his satraps and allies to raise their voices. Only one — the Brujah Rhys of Tregaron — has dared do anything more: When emissaries from Gloucester came to bring his domains under Mithras' aegis, he staked them both and left them for the sun. What worries Mithras and Seren is that one of those emissaries was a powerful satrap — Rhys, evidently, is either much older than he pretends or has powerful, unknown allies.

In the town of Abertawe, members of the shadow Inquisition recently captured a neonate Toreador named Gwilym and put him to torture. Gwilym, barely ten years from his Embrace and only visiting Abertawe on an errand for his sire, broke immediately. Giving up the names of the Cainites he had met took less than an hour; he has been making up more fantastic tales of the "lords of night" ever since. Sooner or later, he will say something that his captors know as false (which will spell his doom) or his sire will notice he's gone missing and send others to investigate.

## Gwynedd

Rhodry ap Geraint ap Mithras, the Prince of London's grandchilde, represents his interests in North Wales. Rhodry officially holds domain over Snowdonia, Llein and the lands bordering the Fief of Chester, but his "uncle," Marcus Verus of Chester, has made it very clear that he is quite capable of ruling his own fief and Rhodry's as well should the young Ventruer ever step out of line.

Rhodry's effective power extends only a little beyond Anglesey. His last attempt to extend that power — nearly a hundred years ago — met with disaster. The Methuselah Bodhmall of the Gangrel slew every last ghoul and Cainite he brought with him on his expedition, but left him undead when she recognized Mithras' seal on him. Mithras has never been forthcoming about his relationship with the Animal, and Rhodry burns with desire to avenge himself upon her. He knows, however, that if she can survive the Welsh wilds, it will take a Cainite much older and more powerful than he to bring her low.

## Powys

Daffyd ap Bindusarra is the Cainite power in mid-Wales; the Ventruer makes his haven at the Monastery of Meifod and claims to have known its sainted founder, Gwyddfarch. Whatever the truth of the matter, Daffyd, while neither a Cainite Heretic nor a follower of the Road of Heaven, does enjoy nudging the clergy of the monastery towards doctrinal "anomalies" — just enough



to keep the place interesting and keep their faith muddled enough that he isn't made uncomfortable. He fears being driven from his home — much of Powys is inhospitable to Cainites, and Daffyd has no desire to be torn to shreds by Lupines or to face unlife in Mithras' domains.

## Mages

*"Do you really think that the Christians appealed to the faith of the people? That they took over by revealing the truth? They stole the faith of the Isles. But don't despair — that means we can steal it back."*

— Mistress Gwynne

It is hardly surprising that mages of various Fellowships can be found scattered throughout the British Isles. The Isles contain all the amenities that mages could ask for; prosperous towns to lodge in, universities to choose promising students from or to promote learning, private towers and cottages to pursue their studies out of the public eye, spacious wilderness to commune with nature, and churches and cathedrals to celebrate the glory of God and the power He has given them.

## England

England is the most conflicted part of Britain when it comes to mages disputing which Fellowship has the most influence over the country's future. This is exacerbated by the internal dissension within the separate Fellowships. Naturally the Messianic Voices are convinced that the Order of Hermes operates with a unity and control that they themselves lack, just as the Old Faith and the Spirit-Talkers separately admire and resent the Messianics' coordination, and the odd visiting Ahl-i-Batin and Valdaermen observe the competing Fellowships and find themselves marginalized.

The Order of Hermes is currently much obsessed by the Massasa War with the Tremere vampires. Unfortunately, it seems that vampires infest the British Isles, and that a local sect of vampires is involved with sun-worship and the ancient cult of Mithraism in some way. While they as yet lack precise information, a number of Hermetics feel that it *must* be possible to play such a cult against the Tremere. Politicians among the Hermetics also would like to ally themselves more closely with the other Fellowships. Of course, the reasons for such alliance range from an ethical hope of greater understanding, to the desire to lead a new coalition to control the British Isles, to a wish to use the other Fellowships as cannon fodder against the treacherous Tremere. Those Hermetics who have retreated to distant corners of Wales or Scotland in order to continue their private researches are viewed as deserters, or at least as failing to contribute.

The Messianic Voices are caught up in the conflict between the established Roman Church and the old Celtic version of Christianity still prevalent in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Many of them are finding political and profane matters more immediately important than their sacred duties, or the Fellowship's larger plans. Generally speaking,

the older Messianic Voices are attempting to work *with* the power structures that are in place, hoping to manipulate them (and themselves) into a more advantageous position, while the younger mages are aflame with desire for crusades against heresy, for approaches to the other Fellowships, for sudden and vigorous societal change. The main reason the older Messianics are having problems bridling their younger siblings is that change is evident in Britain — universities, markets, laws, the Magna Carta — and the younger Messianics are intoxicated with its heady scent.

In turn, the concept of change is unsettling the Old Faith and the Spirit-Talkers. True, the king seems to have remembered proper responsibility to his kingdom rather than going off on wild crusades; true, new laws have been established to protect the common man; but where do we go from here? Traditional certainties become less definite when change is in the air. Apprentices and young mages talk about meeting the Valdaermen and the Hermetics and even the Ahl-i-Batin and Messianic Voices in order to build new cabals that will be able to survive and prosper in the coming age. Their elders look back on their history with the accursed Cross-carrying nitwits and paper-stifled scholars, and shake their heads at the folly of the young. The werewolves and fae are stirring, and old alliances are being called due or remade; now the Spirit-Talkers and the Old Faith must try to balance these ancient duties with new possibilities.

England has no real Valdaermen presence: Though a few of this Fellowship still remain in the British Isles up in the Orkneys, England itself is free of all but the occasional traveler. Similarly, no organized Ahl-i-Batin presence exists, though the occasional Ahl-i-Batin mage visits England out of curiosity, or to formalize some treaty with British mages, or to inspect the holy works of the Christians (who are, after all, People of the Book), or for some other purpose. While younger members of either sect might find it interesting to visit, or be intrigued by the idea of joining a cabal to build a better future, older mages are likely to be preoccupied with their own problems and with the dogma of their own traditions, and more interested in preserving those traditions than cooperating with strangers.

**London** is a place for civilized mages — in this case, mainly the Messianic Voices and the Hermetics. It is a center for political influence, for building networks of trade and finance, and for finding other scholars in order to do a bit of cross-Fellowship study. As yet no single dominant force controls London, though the young Hermetic wizard Andrew Mallory has contacts in a lot of places and frequently helps arrange meetings for the interested.

**Winchester** is a convenient location for any sorcerer, being a major ecclesiastical and political center while still close to the wild parts of England. It is the home of a recently assembled cross-Fellowship cabal: Mistress Lucia, a Messianic Voice who is the well-off widow of a local merchant; Master Julian, a university scholar Hermetic; and al-Nasir, a traveling Ahl-i-Batin who spends most of his time sorcerously disguised as a young Norman. Their colleague of the Old Faith, Mistress Gwynne, has recently proven to be an infernalist, and they are currently attempt-

ing to investigate the network of cultists to whom she belonged. (Gwynne herself has vanished from the Cathedral dungeons; see the Prelude for more on this cabal.)

**Norwich** is a place of profound concern to the Messianic Voices. Despite the glorious cathedral and the rich countryside, something is rotten at the heart of the city. Some of the Messianics suspect the local Jewish community, which is rumored to contain at least one Hermetic scholar of the *kabbalah*, while others fear devil-worship in the Cathedral. For the moment, they are extremely suspicious of other mages entering the city.

**Glastonbury** is a profoundly mystical place, steeped in legend and mystery, rumored resting place of the Grail, of Christ's body, of the staff of Joseph of Arimathea (metamorphosed into the Glastonbury Thorn), of the Cauldron of Ceridwen and of quite a few other things. Naturally, this makes it a hotbed for mystical attention. The Messianic Voices (led by Sister Julian in the local convent) and the Old Faith (supervised tactfully by the elderly Viviane from the nearby woods) cooperate to keep other mages out, mindful of the Compact (see sidebar) and the possible consequences if mages of other Fellowships do something that breaks it. Visiting Hermetics rarely have their protestations of high-minded alliance and sincere interest in study taken seriously. As a result, Messianics and Old Faith mages locally get on rather well, to an extent that would shock other members of their own Fellowships.

**Canterbury**, as the heart of the Church in England, is a major nexus for the Messianic Voices. Oddly, it has also attracted Spirit-Talkers from time to time, who are viewed by the locals as blessed hermits hearing the voices of saints, rather than the more usual pagan aspect. The Messianic Voices based here, led by Father George from Christ Church Priory, are more concerned with coordinating their Fellowship across Britain — and trying to negotiate compromises between the Roman and Celtic versions of Christianity — than dealing with the Spirit-Talkers, who are doing no actual harm. They discount the rambling claims by Linden the Ragged (a Spirit-Talker and beggar who wanders the streets) that the town is full of night-walking corpses risen from the depths of Hell.

**Oxford** is naturally a focus point for both the Order of Hermes and the Messianic Voices. The representatives from both Fellowships in the town are old rather than young, and scholars who are set in their ways rather than novices searching for enlightenment. Simon the Bearded is a Hermetic who has had to change his public identity several times (being over 200 years old), who has grown impatient with the Church's firm hold on the place and who is considering drastic measures in order to "pry the bony fingers of the monasteries from around the fragile neck of learning." Equally, Father Joseph of the Dominican Order (and the Messianic Voices) grows more and more disgusted by the lax morality of the young, their haste for petty facts (as opposed to divine philosophy) and their foolish imperiling of their souls by toying with heresy. A clash is in the wings, and given that junior members of their Fellowships support both of the two, it may shake the town.

Similarly, both the Hermetics and the Messianics see **Cambridge** as an opportunity to be seized — indeed, as the town and growing university lack Oxford's organization and rigor (if also Oxford's renown), it offers more scope for young mages trying to assert their own vision of how things should be. Cambridge is notable for housing a dual-Fellowship cabal, led by Susanna de Fontaine, an ambitious young Hermetic fresh from France (under questionable circumstances) and looking to broaden her studies. Her cabal contains two Messianic Voices and three Hermetics, all of whom look to her for direction; she frequently attends lectures while sorcerously disguised as a male student, and very much wants to get in contact with some of the Ahl-i-Batin. Cambridge is still also a trade port, and occasionally strange items are shipped to Susanna from her friends abroad — including books that contain rites that even the most erudite Hermetic might consider unwise.

## Wales

**Anglesey** has long been a stronghold of the Old Faith, ever since the days of Roman domination, when Suetonius came to burn out the druids there while Boudicca made rebellion in his absence. (Certain Old Faith mages have tried to credit this to the Messianic Voices or the Order of Hermes, and even if there's no evidence for either, it doesn't stop these mages from cherishing a distinct grudge.) These days, Anglesey shelters a coven of thirteen, five of whom are genuine members of the Old Faith, led by Bloduedd of Pentraeth. The mages of the coven are on reasonable terms with members of their Fellowship elsewhere in Wales, and maintain a guarded neutrality towards Brother Simon, an enthusiastic young Messianic Voice serving at the church of St. Tysilio. Bloduedd herself has recently performed certain charms of rejuvenation, and has the hair and body of a young maiden coupled with the hauteur of a dignified crone.

Brother Simon was dispatched from **Bardsey**, an island off the tip of the Lleyn Peninsula, which is a stronghold for the Messianic Voices. The monastery there was founded by St. Cadfan (whom the Messianics claim as one of their own) in the late fifth century, and serves as a convenient point of coordination for much Messianic activity in Wales. So many ascetics and saints have died there that it has become known as the "island of 22,000 saints," and human bones are so common that they are used to mend fences. The leader of the Messianic Voices there is Brother Pwyll, a sub-prior in his late sixties, who hopes to work with the Old Faith to protect the common folk from further English raids and wars, and if he should manage to show them God's Truth, so much the better. One of his subordinates, Brother Anthony, has possibly too keen an interest in vampires, necromancy and ghosts.

**Caer Idris** in Powys is home to Megan of the Well, a Spirit-Talker who rigidly follows the ancient ways and has absolutely no interest in multi-Fellowship cabals. Many of the local folk are nominally Christian, but visit her for advice on crops, weather and the wishes of the Tylwyth Teg (the local fae). Megan is a fat middle-aged woman, and is

## MAGES AS PROTAGONISTS

The British Isles, as mentioned previously, have much to appeal to any Fellowship of mages. A **Dark Ages: Mage** chronicle might focus on the *Massasa* War with the Tremere, the struggle between the Church and the Old Faith, an attempt to form multi-Fellowship cabals, or simply the story of one group of mages trying to achieve their disparate goals somewhere in the Isles. Such characters might attempt to learn what they can of the Isles' mystical history, tracking down beings of mystic importance such as other mages or even the fae, or they might take a more martial bent and hunt werewolves for the Tass in their bodies.

**Dark Ages: Mage** is probably the most diverse of the **Dark Ages** games, and therefore much of a chronicle depends on the characters and the desires of the troupe. Don't try to work too many legends or facets of the Isles into your chronicle; the story will simply feel muddled. Focus instead on your characters and their unique relationship with the Dark Medieval, and then read through this book and see which story seeds seem most likely to bear fruit.

actively looking for an apprentice. She frequently leaves out bread and milk to mollify the local spirits: While they are gentle enough to her, she knows that many mortals have heard strange voices on the night winds, and she fears some darker influence may be present.

**Powys** in general is the scene of a struggle between the Messianic Voices and the Old Faith, with several Messianic Voices serving in churches or monasteries in the southern reaches where the Marcher lords rule, and the Old Faith still holding strong in the northern section, Powys Fadog. Sister Meladrys, at the Abbey of the Virgin near Shrewsbury, is probably the most influential of the local Messianics, and corresponds regularly with Brother Pwyll at Bardsey. She is concerned both by the local Old Faith and by certain peculiarities of doctrine reported from the Monastery of Meifod. Alys of Mathrafal is young, but holds the trust of many of the Old Faith throughout Wales, and is seeking some sort of rapprochement with the Messianics *before* expanding Norman influence gives the Messianics too much of an advantage. The local werewolves owe her a favor due to the casting of certain fertility spells for some of their elders. They have made it clear, however, that the payment of the favor will involve the wolf-folk coming in the night to slaughter Alys' chosen target. As such, it makes a convenient threat, but one she does not wish to overuse.

**Deheubarth** shelters a number of Messianic Voices and Old Faith mages, both of whom do their best to ignore the other sect's existence. A complicating factor in all of this is Matthew ap Dernwyn, a young Welshman who went away to the University at Oxford with the help of his local priest (Saul ap Llywelyn, a Messianic Voice) and who has come back a scholarly Hermetic. Saul is lamenting his failure to see that God had blessed the boy with the

potential for magic, as Matthew has returned proud, arrogant and eager to establish more Hermetic outposts in Wales. It is possible that Matthew's maneuvering to obtain land and to build a manor or tower will attract the attention of the Norman barony of Pembroke or King Owain ap Gruffydd, as he is politically inexperienced. If the Inquisition were to take notice, this could be disastrous for all mages in the area.

**Gwynedd** is a land at peace under the rule of Prince Llywelyn, and the local mages have every intention of keeping it so. The Messianic Voices in the larger towns answer to the mages at Bardsey, and of late have been trying to find ideological grounds in common with the members of the Old Faith in further Snowdonia and Lleyn. David ap Jon serves as a general leader, or at least advisor, to the Old Faith in these areas. As he is distrustful of the Normans, dubious about Christianity (which he blames for the ills of the younger generation) and reputedly performs strange rites with the mountain wolves, the rapprochement hasn't got very far yet. It is likely to be threatened further by the activities of Sarah de Braose, a Norman Messianic Voice married into the de Braose family, who has hopes of pushing the prince into a stronger alliance with Henry and thereby increasing local Norman influence.

## Ireland

The sorcerous tradition in Ireland is strongly linked to two particular roots; the Christian monasteries established in the fifth century, which kept Ireland largely Christian when much of the collapsing Roman Empire was reverting to paganism, and the druids and bards who combined sorcery, learning and priesthood. The presence of werewolves, and the reputed presence of the fae, has done nothing to make this division of approach any easier.

What it *has* done is to establish methods of co-existence between the different branches of sorcery, which, while not necessarily peaceful, at least have the virtue of centuries of practice. Individual Messianic Voices, Old Faith mages and Spirit-Talkers may grumble at each other over their boundaries, but they rarely resort to actual confrontation. Matters are settled by formal (if frequently satirical) discussions, which are usually followed by a measure of good ale or whiskey and a general complaint about the poor manners of the young, the lack of standards these days and the rest of Britain.

At **Glannalgalt**, in Kerry, lives Old Conn, the most venerable and respected Spirit-Talker in Ireland. The well there, Tobernagalt, is believed to heal lunatics of their insanity. Certainly many of the afflicted return from the valley much improved in health. Conn commands the admiration of the half-dozen other Spirit-Talkers in Ireland, and is respected by neighboring Messianic Voices, who admire his work with the poor and ill and hold to the Biblical adage, "by their fruits shall ye know them."

The Old Faith still holds sway in **Tara**, and in many of the villages and glens, where a peasant can both respect God and leave out a bowl of milk for the Little People. Two Old Faith mages are particularly notable in the area. Eevin O'Hartigan is a *ban-draoi* (female druid) whose age and

## THE GLASTONBURY COMPACT

The Glastonbury Compact is *not* a noble, altruistic alliance between equals, whatever certain mages or fae may claim. It's a desperate agreement to respect each other's turf, cobbled together over a century ago in the middle of an attack by the vampiric sorcerers of House Tremere. The meeting in which it was hammered out involved threats by the Messianic Voices to have the entire area blessed, salted and sown with iron, by the fae to loose the Wild Hunt on the entire region, and by the Old Faith to plunge the entire area into a winter that would last seven years. Once these minor points had been settled, and all agreed that the vampires were the primary threat, the Compact consisted of an agreement by the mages to stay out of faerie rings, mounds and similar areas, and by the fae to leave humans alone unless they specifically strayed within the fae's places of power. The situation is that of an armed truce: Given the powers that the fae displayed when helping hunt out the invading vampires, the local mages don't want to force any issues.

experience make her a voice to be listened to, and whose habit of sinking foolish youths neck-deep in marsh mud causes them not to argue with her twice. Iain of Carrickfergus is a wandering bard and satirist who has even traveled to the mainland on occasion, and who serves as a traveling diplomat, arbiter and gadfly. Both of them are well known among local pagans, and there are rumors about unhallowed rites, wild bardic sessions and excessive consumption of alcohol on the Sabbath.

The central authority for the Messianic Voices has shifted over the centuries from monastery to monastery, but is currently located at **Saint Patrick's Cathedral** in Dublin, with Father Oscar, a respected archdeacon. Unfortunately, Father Oscar, who is a native Irishman, has frequent clashes with a relative newcomer, Sir Edward de Clare, a Norman from the mainland. Sir Edward is a non-ordained scholar and the son of a crusader, with close ties to the Church in England. He disapproves of the current arrangements with other mages, and if he can arrange for more Messianic Voices who share his point of view to visit from England, he may be able to cause the elderly Father Oscar significant problems.

## Scotland

Scotland offers havens for most Fellowships of mages: The farther glens are havens for the Old Faith and the Valdaermen, the Spirit-Talkers lurk in caverns and by mystic wells, the Messianic Voices dwell in monasteries or churches and Hermetic strongholds are hidden deep in the mountains, while isolated Hermetic scholars conceal themselves in the growing Norman towns. While the Spirit-Talkers and the Old Faith tend to deal well together, and even tolerate the Valdaermen, all three of them look

down on the Messianic Voices, and everyone distrusts the Hermetics — who respond in turn with a general disdain.

Old Believers and Spirit-Talkers are scattered fairly evenly throughout Scotland, but individual mages keep contact with each other through the clan structure that permeates the Highlands and that still forms a large part of the Lothians and Lowlands, despite Norman rule. Nobody's isolated; everybody knows someone who knows someone else who married cousin Bethan. Anybody crossing one of these Fellowships should be wary of their entire family and any relatives in the vicinity. These clans often include werewolf Kinfolk as well, even if the mages are unaware of this. New-come mages who befriend or who anger the Old Faith or the Spirit-Talkers may find themselves with Lupine assistance — or anger — unlooked-for.

Many common folk believe that there exists a secret society in the north of Scotland, called the Horsemen; a group of men with particular knowledge of herbs and horses, whose inner circle consists of witches and sorcerers. While there is no such society, most Old Believers or Spirit-Talkers who can handle horses know about the rumors and are prepared to play on them if given reason to do so.

Up in the **Orkneys**, the strongest Fellowships are Valdaermen remnants left behind by the Norsemen and Spirit-Talkers who have absorbed aspects of Valdaermen or Old Faith beliefs. Janet of Eynhallow, a Valdaerman witch known for her weather crafting and shapeshifting, is famed and feared across the islands. She is actively working to contact others of her Fellowship, and is conscious that without significant contact among Valdaermen and education of local children in the proper beliefs, the entire Fellowship may die out in the Orkneys in a few generations. This has made her something of an ambassador for her Fellowship elsewhere in Britain. It is widely believed that the *trow* (a local type of fae) dance outside her window at night, the selkies and werewolves both come to her call, and that ghosts follow her whenever she goes abroad by night. She has tried to train several apprentices, but so far none have managed to last more than a few months, deserting her for gentler mentors or abandoning the craft entirely.

The island of **Iona** shelters a small group of Messianic Voices, who dwell in the recently built Benedictine Abbey (raised in AD 1200 by Reginald son of Somerled, now Lord of the Isles). While they would like to spread a more enthusiastic Christianity to the rest of the Hebrides and the Isle of Man, they are outnumbered by local mages, they lack true influence among the locals — who prefer to honor both the Christian God and the local spirits, so as not to offend either — and their leader, Brother Olaf, is reduced to chewing his nails and fuming over his Psalms. He would be extremely grateful to any Messianic Voice, however junior, who could present a workable plan for expansion.

Deep in the **Pendle Forest** is a ruin named the Malkin Tower, where many Old Faith mages meet for celebrations on the solstices and for other important dates. The Chattox and Demdike families are notable among the local Old Faith, with both families having numerous celebrated witches among their ancestors — and several in the current

## UNIVERSITIES

Contrary to popular myth, Oxford University was not founded during the Biblical period when Samuel was a judge in Judaea, nor was it first established by Trojans under the leadership of Brutus — nor, even, was it founded by King Alfred after disposing of the Danish invaders. All that can be definitely said is that by approximately AD 1180 a noticeable body of students was in residence, fuelled by Henry II's order that English students not study at the University in Paris, due to the state of hostility between the countries at that time. In the previous and current decade (1220 - 1240), the newly founded orders of friars (Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite and Augustinian) are successively settling at Oxford and throwing themselves zealously into the work of teaching, motivated at least in part by the growing potential for secular thinking and non-Christian influences. Kindled by their enthusiasm, the older monastic orders (Benedictine and Cistercian) are founding convent schools at Oxford for their own members. Cambridge grows as well, though not yet as developed as Oxford, giving it similar problems as it matures.

Oxford is a hotbed for the learned and the sacred, which makes it prime recruiting ground for both the Order of Hermes and the Messianic Voices. It also makes the city important in any definitive plans that either Fellowship has for the future. Where the Order of Hermes hopes to build on a foundation of learning, and the Messianic Voices dream of a structure of faith, universities like Oxford become a point where the two forces clash over both philosophy and potential apprentices.

The whole question of what is taught is an important one — religious or secular point of view, heresy or faith, the natural sciences or the Greek philosophers or the laws of England... Naturally, this is a major enough point that both the Messianic Voices and the Order of Hermes use whatever advantages they can, be they blackmail, sorcery, political pressure or bribery, to tilt curricula in favor of their worldviews. The Messianic Voices have a natural edge, in that many of the lecturers and scholars are monks, and heresy is an important issue, but the subjects preferred by the Hermetics are often more attractive to their young pupils. (There have also been cases when a *third* party apparently was exercising some form of supernatural or political influence, which worries all mages concerned.)

For the moment, the Old Faith, the Valdaermen and the Spirit-Talkers have no particular interest in trying to influence the universities. Likewise, the Ahl-i-Batin are generally constrained by race, and by the public prejudice against Saracens, from having any influence with the universities. A pity — it would surely be an area of Britain with which the Fellowship would like to involve itself.

generation. Unfortunately, the families don't get on well, and discussions about policy tend to devolve into factional rivalry, with other members of the Old Faith joining one side or the other. Certain rumors also state that at least one local witch has turned to the Infernal in her search for personal power — though as yet no evidence has surfaced.

At the local church in **Newchurch-in-Pendle**, Father Brian is a Messianic Voice sent to look for evidence of witchcraft. He's aware of the difference between the Old Faith and "genuine" Satanism, but as the new priest who's only been there for a few years, he has yet to win the community's trust — let alone the local coven's.

The Messianic Voices — centered at **Edinburgh** around the Abbey of Holyrood — are currently in a state of internal dissension. The Scottish Church has recently separated itself from the Province of York, and as a result Messianic Voices on both sides have to try to reconcile their personal duties and beliefs with the new positions that both sides of the Church are enforcing on them. The local ranking Messianic Voice, Elisabet O'Donal, is trying to keep the Fellowship in a reasonable state of cohesion, and is having problems balancing this with her duties to her husband Robert, who knows nothing about her magic and who is on the verge of publicly (and inaccurately) denouncing her for infidelity.

Several Hermetic towers and covenants are scattered throughout the **Scottish Highlands**, existing in proud isolation and only rarely communicating with each other. One particular tower, near Ben Nevis, shelters a cluster of three Hermetics (and servants) who believe that they have found a key to the ongoing *Massasa* War with the vampiric Tremere in the legends that surround the mysterious Loch Treig. Their leader, the impetuous young Jon de Mollery, plans to investigate soon. The more distant Lady Jehane of the Glasgow covenant abets him in this: She is using him as a cat's-paw. She is a cold-hearted mage of great power but dubious loyalty, who will dispose of Jon without a second's hesitation if he offends the local Old Faith (whose alliance she courts) or manages to rouse the vampires against him.

The remains of **Hadrian's Wall** form a convenient boundary point for a contentious alliance of half a dozen Messianic Voices and Old Faith mages, who have chosen to work together in an attempt to protect the common folk from the regular armies marching in either direction. The Old Faith, led by the cheerfully vigorous Damaris of Carlisle, hail from this particular area and have a strong grasp of the peasants' daily life and regular problems. The Messianic Voices, led by the gentle and well-educated Theodoric of Lincoln, are from further south and of aristocratic heritage, and see this task as a noble endeavor rather than a practical effort. In consequence, the two parts of the group have frequent arguments about how best to fulfill their mission, with the Messianics wanting to convert the local nobles to higher things, while the Old Believers are more in favor of putting a pox on their swine, a murraine on their horses and a general plague of boils where it will do most good.

## The Channel Isles

The Channel Isles are too small to sponsor much in the way of organized sorcerous activity. While a couple of Old

## MAGES AS ANTAGONISTS

Mages are powerful and diverse opponents. The Messianic Voices might act with the power of the Church behind them, whereas the Valdaermen are likely to have only a few mages acting on their behalf in the Isles. If you use mages as opponents in your **Dark Ages** chronicle, consider the source of the conflict. Mages don't normally go looking for trouble. Yes, it's possible to have a mage who hunts vampires or werewolves or who has a grudge against the Inquisition, but what about a Hermetic mage searching for buried secrets in London who stumbles across a cell of inquisitors? Or perhaps a Spirit-Talker who communes with the unquiet dead — and thus can speak with the ghosts of a vampire's victims.

Of course, the most common reason for antagonism by mages is that they tend to take over places of natural magic (which they refer to as “crays”). Werewolves regard these places as holy sites, and take a dim view of mages siphoning the energy away from them. Inquisitors don't recognize the potential of such places, of course, but many “crays” seem to manifest in the same places as shrines to saints, which means that mages attempting to defile the place might disrupt pilgrimages. Finally, vampires don't ordinarily care about holy sites (as they tend to be out in the middle of God's Nowhere, anyway) but if a mage attempts to drum up support for a new town or church to be raised, the undead will definitely take an interest.

Faith mages live on Guernsey — Jeanne de Carmignac, a middle-aged woman, and her apprentice Rosemary — they hardly form the mysterious covens that local legends suggest.

The Messianic Voices, on the other hand, regard the Channel Isles as a safe, restful place for apprentices to practice faith as well as theurgy, or for elderly Messianics to recuperate from troubling experiences. As such, while a few Messianic Voices are scattered across the Isles at any point, the population changes regularly. Few Messianic Voices are there for long enough to notice the Old Faith, or to try to do anything significant about them.

From time to time, a Hermetic sorcerer decides that there are hidden matters to be discovered on the Channel Isles, and attempts to investigate the Roman ruins or to analyze local history for significant occult patterns. Unfortunately, it is difficult for visiting Hermetics to operate discreetly, and most leave soon after their preliminary investigations prove fruitless. Any long-term Hermetic researches would require a base of some sort, which in turn would necessitate permission from the Bailiff, or even the Warden of the Isles, which means political or financial maneuvering. So far, the Hermetics haven't considered the game worth the candle.

## Inquisitors

*“We have watched these Isles for decades, Murnau, as Thomas the martyr commanded us to do. We have seen what*



Jim Di Bartolo

*lurks within the dark places of England's forests and heard the beasts that haunt Scotland's mountains. Worse, far worse, though, are those devil spawn that seek to corrupt the Church from within and walk the streets of London like any God-fearing man. Do not make the mistake of thinking that our task will be easy, my friend. God has not chosen an easy road for any of us."*

— Simpkin Cotter, Oculi Dei

London is a long way from Rome. While in geographical terms it is only a few months' travel, or a few weeks at a push, for the members of the Inquisition in the British Isles, it might as well be on the other side of the world. So, why would the Inquisition, while still in its infancy and short of resources, turn its attentions to these shores?

The reasons are three-fold. First, as Brother Albert makes clear in Chapter One, the relationship between Rome and the British Churches has not always been a good one. From a Roman point of view, the British Isles are the edge of the Christian world and are as much a spiritual border as a geographical one.

Second, the Inquisition has more information on odd and heretical behavior in the Isles than it does in many parts of mainland Europe. Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, established a network of ecclesiastical spies some 60 years ago as part of his struggle with King Henry II. This network survived Becket's murder. Under the leadership of devoted Christians who resent the king's attempt to subvert papal power, it has been clandestinely compiling information on those who seek to subvert the Church since. Within a matter of decades, the leaders of the network, called Thomas' Men, recognized a pattern of control and manipulation that suggested the presence of an organized body of people infiltrating and abusing Christian communities. Once God opened the eyes of some of the network and granted them His gifts in their struggle, the true nature of the discovery became clear. They had found evidence of the Devil's work among the faithful.

A few carefully planned and executed attacks on vampires buried deep in the Church establishment were successful. A few others were abject failures, killing those involved and very nearly compromising the secrecy of Thomas' Men. The network stopped acting directly against the Devil's minions and returned to merely collecting information.

Just over seven years ago, however, an active member of Thomas' Men who was tracking the activities of a suspected demonic monk in a Cistercian monastery on the south coast became aware of another woman watching the same monk. The two approached each other warily and then began to exchange small pieces of information with increasing excitement. Five years ago, Simpkin Cotter and Aignen le Libraire met in a small monastery in Normandy and brought Thomas' Men officially under the aegis of the Oculi Dei. The meticulously kept records of Thomas' Men have proved invaluable for the newly formed Council of Faith for the islands as it plans deployment of inquisitors and investigations throughout the land.

Third, the early efforts of the inquisitors in the Isles met with dramatic reversals that suggested to everyone involved that they had uncovered something major. The

loss of inquisitors in Damburrow and London within a few months of one another has focused the minds of the local cells marvelously. Men and women of God have work to do in the Isles, and may the Lord forgive any who oppose them.

## The Council of Faith

At present, the British Isles have but two Councils of Faith. The main council, which meets every six months at the Murnau holding in London, oversees the whole of the Isles, while Ireland has its own, technically subordinate, council.

The five members of the British Isles' Council of Faith are:

- Brother Albert d'Aquitaine, Red Order, abbot of St. Andrew's Monastery, Damburrow.
- Sir Robert Bernières, Poor Knights of the Passion of the Cross of Acre.
- Sister Anachorita, Sisters of St. John, who sits on both councils and represents the Irish council to the main one.
- Bertramus Murnau, House Murnau.
- Simpkin Cotter, once head of Thomas' Men, now leader of the Oculi Dei in the British Isles.

Details on these characters can be found in Chapter Four.

## England

The Kingdom of England is the focus of much of the Inquisition's activities so far. Thomas' Men had more information about that country than any of the others and its unified nature compared to other lands makes it easier for the Inquisition to work there. The Council of Faith is making a coordinated effort to slowly place a cell of inquisitors in every major city and known center of supernatural activity in the land, whereas in the rest of the Isles, it is only assigning cells as and when the need arises.

## London

The newest, and soon to be largest, of the British Isles' chapter houses sits at the edge of London. There, at the heart of English commerce and governance, the noble House of Murnau has at last set up shop, the better to exploit the wealth of King Henry III's fair lands. At least, that is what Bertramus von Murnau tells everyone. If a careful trader were to investigate this new arrival on London's ever-busy commercial scene, he might notice that Murnau seems to do precious little of the trading himself, leaving that to cousins and retained staff. Fortunately, no one has had cause to investigate the flamboyant noble to any degree.

The new Murnau holding is the latest front for the Inquisition in the city. It is only a few streets away from the Inquisition's last toehold in London, which still lies empty and shunned. Even London's notoriously courageous criminal classes are reluctant to enter the place, which has developed an ill reputation out of all proportion to its age.

The one man who has returned to the abandoned chapel and its associated buildings is Simpkin Cotter of the Oculi Dei. He retrieved the secondary records of the cell and left them anonymously at the Murnau home some weeks later. It did not make pleasant reading for Bertramus. The cell had quickly, through their blessings,

become aware of two distinct groups of cultists and heretics operating in the city. The first cult had a distinctly militaristic bent and was using the imagery of the Roman god Mithras as part of its rituals. The second was based around the worship of water deity of some kind, described variously as "Sulis" (a Celtic name) and "Minerva" (a Roman goddess). Finally, the cell leader, against the better advice of Cotter, assigned the cell's two members of the Poor Knights to capture a member of each cult and put them to the question.

The first part of that order proved remarkably easy. The second half proved impossible. That very night something attacked the chapter-house and killed all the inhabitants.

The scion of House Murnau is well aware that dealing with this existing threat is his first priority. He cannot investigate the long lists of other suspicious activities in the city until he has achieved a degree of safety for both his cell and his family's holdings. Bertramus is beginning to suspect, with a heavy heart, that infiltration might be the only way forward for the cell. That rules him out, for his very calculated public persona will make people wary of him.

Bertramus has recently received some good news. Information about the activities of various cults, including the very ones he is trying to expose, has started filtering in through the Eyes. His relief at this turn of events would be significantly lessened if he knew that the source of this information is, in fact, a well-connected vampire seeking to turn his foes against each other.

## Elsewhere

The cells elsewhere in England are much freer to follow what leads they have than the London cell. For example, in **Norwich**, a cell under the leadership of Agnes of Kent, with support from the Red Sisters, is investigating rumors of men who walk as beasts savaging villagers all across the Saxon shore. She and her fellow pilgrims are working their way through the area's many isolated rural communities, trying to find further evidence of these creatures and bring healing to their victims. So far, they have had more success with the latter than the former, but a confrontation with a werewolf is inevitable. In the city itself, the inquisitors have heard the same rumors of devil-worship that troubles the mages (see p. 96). The local Oculi Dei wish to investigate but the Sisters would prefer that the scant resources available be directed towards the shape-changers terrorizing the countryside.

Meanwhile in **Cambridge**, the Oculi Dei are collecting growing evidence that supernatural forces are gathering in the city. Experience has taught the order that a certain number of strange occurrences in any city is normal, but those in Cambridge seem to be out of all proportion to those in other English cities. Quite what they portend, the cell present in the city is not sure. It does appear that the devil has some very human-seeming followers in the city using dark arts for their own benefit.

In **Durham**, dark rumors paint the countryside as a dangerous place to go. Some miles outside the city lies an area of land the locals avoid. "People tend to go missing there," they mutter. Tales tell of weird demonic shapes

flying over the town at night and strangers passing through the city after nightfall heading towards the haunted lands.

While the remains of Thomas' Men believe **Canterbury** to be a safe haven for godly people, protected by St. Thomas's tomb, they are troubled by rumors of diabolic activities that will not die away, yet which cannot be substantiated by an investigation. The rumors are the residue of an infestation of Baali vampires in the town, which other vampires dealt with. It is only a matter of time, however, before the wary and fanatical Eyes of the town become aware of the local vampires. Here, as elsewhere in the Isles, they cling to the Church like the leeches they are. The fact that they dare to do so in the center of religious power in the Isles shows how bold they have grown.

A new cell has recently established a chapter-house in **Glastonbury**. While the local abbey and the historical link with the blessed King Arthur suggest that the town should be resistant to the Devil's minions, persistent rumors link it with pagan practices and the Fair Folk. The Inquisition cannot risk such a spiritually important site quietly coming under the influence of the Enemy. Bertramus has dispatched a household priest (in reality an inquisitor of his own house) to study at the abbey and make contact with the local Eyes.

Another cell is establishing a chapter-house in **Exeter**. While the inquisitors do not consider the town itself to be at risk just now, the Eyes have long records of strange and disturbing apparitions on the nearby Dartmoor. Monks walking the routes across the moors between the three abbeys in the vicinity have often recorded suffering temptation by devils during their journeys, usually in places far from the crosses used to mark the routes. The Red Order is leading the effort to trace and deal with these tempters.

The newest chapter-house is on the island of **Lindisfarne**. The cell, mainly made up of Red Brothers and Eyes, is investigating rumors of three-eyed devils and other beasts of Satan on the island. So far, despite the best efforts of the helpful, if elusive, hermit Brother Matthew to aid them, they have turned up nothing. The sole Sister of St. John attached to the cell has recently seen visions of St. Cuthbert, who was once resident on the island, warning her of treachery within the very body of the Church. None of the inquisitors even suspect that the always-helpful Brother Matthew is, in fact, a vampire.

## Scotland

In Scotland, the Inquisition is on shaky ground. The second and longest established of the three major chapter-houses in the British Isles is in Damburrow in Scotland. The problem lies not in numbers, but in information. Whatever the politics of the relationship between the Scottish and English crowns, the members of the Oculi Dei are well aware that it is simply a game of one-upmanship. Scotland is essentially an independent land, and only nominally beholden to England. Because of this, Thomas' Men never paid much attention to the country. This decision has unfortunate consequences now, as the Councils of Faith carry out their duties. The ideal, in time, would be for the kingdom to have its own Council of Faith, but the Damburrow crisis (see below) means that the Inquisition cannot afford to ignore the

situation in the country. Efforts by the Red Order to seek information that might aid it in its battle with whatever lurks in the Damburrow Pit have led to other encounters with the minions of the Devil and the need for further cells of inquisitors in Scotland. Luckily (if the word can be used in this context), the relatively high degree of diabolic activity in the country for its population size has led to a slightly larger number of people being touched by God. Still, the problems are many and the inquisitors few.

### THOMAS' MEN

An archbishop in exile needs eyes to watch his flock. When Thomas Becket fled to France to escape King Henry's wrath in AD 1170, he set to work building a network of loyal informants who could keep him abreast of events in England. The information that this network gave him allowed him to excommunicate those bishops and other clergy who continued to support Henry and carry out his orders, while at the same time spreading propaganda and ferrying messages for the exiled clergyman.

It is a tribute to the belief and loyalty to Rome that Becket engendered that the network continued after his demise. The battle between Church and king would not end with Becket's death and most likely would continue ever after Henry died, too, or so reasoned the men who had built the network for the archbishop. The following years proved them right.

Through the succeeding 60 years, the network has been busy growing and gathering information on all men and women of the Church whose loyalty they consider less than absolute. Some archbishops received information anonymously from the Men and some even knew of their existence, while others heard nothing throughout their time in office, depending on their relative loyalty to king and state. Secrecy had to be absolute, for of all the kings of England in that time, only Richard might have tolerated such a body not directly answerable to him. The papal advisors who dealt with King John's rebellion against Rome often found their arguments bolstered by information from an anonymous source.

It took nearly two decades before Thomas' Men became aware of the forces of the Devil within the Church. A member of the organization who was monitoring clergy in Durham was the first. He noticed a beautiful woman visiting several of the clergy, including the bishop, and leapt to an erroneous if entirely understandable conclusion. The Lord opened his eyes and he saw her for the blood-drinker she really was. In the next few years, a dozen Men started to see the Devil's creatures in their true forms. It was almost as if the Lord was paving the way for the Oculi Dei in the Isles...

The organization's inclusion in the Oculi Dei has been smooth so far. However, Simpkin Cotter, the current head of the organization, is used to acting without direct oversight and may yet start to chafe under the strictures of the Inquisition.

## Damburrow

As far as the local people are concerned, the Monastery of St. Andrew is just another Cistercian monastery, one of dozens across the country. These White Monks, however, are actually Red Brothers, busy establishing one of the order's largest chapter-houses in Europe. This monastery has not grown so large because it is a safe haven. The truth is quite the reverse, as its remarkable fortifications make clear.

A century ago, a small church dedicated to St. Columba vanished from the face of the earth a mile or so outside the village of Damburrow. In its place was a fetid, watery marsh known to the locals as the Damburrow Pit, so named because, like the pit of Hell, nobody who entered it ever returned. Half a century ago, a small group of Cistercian monks set up a chapel 10 miles up from the village in Glen Damburrow but abandoned it after half the brothers involved committed suicide. Horribly enough, suicide was not at all uncommon for clergy in the area. Of course, suicide bars one from burial in consecrated ground, so most of the men of the cloth brave enough to serve in the parish have left their remains buried under crossroads near the pit.

The first brothers who set about refurbishing the chapel and extending it into a monastery found themselves shunned by the locals. It was only after they had been there the best part of a year that the residents of the area were willing to trade and talk with them. The brothers slowly learned that the locals had not expected them to survive long. A few townsfolk are glad that the monks have survived. However, members of the long established ruling family in the town remain actively hostile to the new Christian community.

The cell's first breakthrough in understanding what it faced was quite literal. One afternoon, a laborer working on the foundations for the expanded abbey broke through into cave. Inside, the monks found a large number of human remains, many carved with occult symbols and Pictish spiral designs. The inquisitors among the brothers took a careful exploratory trip beyond the cave and discovered that beneath the ground lie numerous tunnels, many of which look as if they were carved by the talons of some great beast. A few of the brothers, in their darker moments, have begun to speculate that perhaps a demon cast out from Heaven landed here instead of falling all the way to Hell, and is digging its way through the ground even now. The tunnels seem to stretch towards the Damburrow Pit.

Brother Albert d'Aquitaine suffers from dreams and visions of the lost church of St. Columba, Scotland's patron saint, seeing it whole within the cave system, desecrated and used to serve the Devil's purposes. These visions are making him obsessive and paranoid, and at each Council of Faith held so far, he has pushed for more and more resources for the Monastery of St. Andrew.

Frankly, he needs those resources. The few inquisitors touched by God, a number reinforced by members of the Poor Knights, now keep a constant vigil at the entrance from the abbey's undercroft to the tunnels at all times. Already there have been attacks by diabolic beasts, like twisted crosses between men, wolves and bats. Donald, a member of the Oculi Dei who has moved into a house in

Damburrow itself, reports that certain members of the ruling Baillie family appear tainted, possibly even possessed, when he uses the God-given sight on them.

A few incursions by force into the tunnels have been successful so far. Several servants of the Devil have fallen beneath the swords of the Poor Knights and three tomes, bound in what the inquisitors suspect to be human skin, retrieved from caves within the tunnels. One of the books is on its way to Rome for examination while the other two remain in the abbey as the Red Order works to translate their contents. Brother Albert is keen to push on with further expeditions, but so far sense has prevailed. His fellows have persuaded him to wait until further inquisitors arrive and the cell makes more progress with translating the books. How long his patience will last is another question entirely.

## Elsewhere

The Inquisition has yet to set foot in the Western Isles or the Orkneys. These lands remain under the control of Scandinavian countries and while a man of the cloth can theoretically travel freely, few inquisitors feel compelled to put the idea to the test just yet. They have much to occupy themselves on the mainland.

A brother of the Red Order spent a little time on retreat in the Benedictine abbey on **Iona**. He came away with the distinct impression that something was amiss in the abbey, but has not had time to pursue the issue. Should the Damburrow situation ever be resolved, he might turn his attention that way.

The **Highlands** remain largely unexplored by the people of the shadow Inquisition. While Damburrow sits nestled in the area north of the Ochils, it is the sole stronghold of the

inquisitors in the area. However, reports of wild creatures living in the pine forests wielding strange powers and isolated towers where diabolic sorcerers hatch their evil plans among local folk are common and of interest to the Red Brothers. It is possible that these places hold the key to the Damburrow mystery, but even Brother Albert is reluctant to commit inquisitors to explore one of the least inhabited parts of Europe. Still, tales of the Baobhan Sith, a female vampire who dwells in the Highlands and feeds on unwary travelers, are common and may have some root in truth.

The whole region around **Clackmannan** seems to be rife with the Devil's minions. The very name tells a suspect tale, of a "clack" or stone, thrown by a pagan sea god onto shore, gifting the place with power. The resonances with the events in Damburrow, with similar tales of feral attackers coupled with reports of strange lights seen on the hill of Dumyeat at all times of the year, has led to Brother Albert establishing a tiny cell of inquisitors in the nearby royal town of Stirling.

## Ireland

Ireland is unique among the countries of the British Isles in that it has its own Council of Faith, albeit one which nominally answers to the London Council, rather than straight to Rome. The problem between the Celtic Church and Rome led many, including Marzone himself, to suspect that the land has become rife with Devil's spawn without the influence of the one, true Church to keep people pure of heart. Every indication so far is that the supposition is right.

The Sisters of St. John are the predominant order in the region, with support from both a strong group of Poor Knights and a rapidly expanding group of Oculi Dei. Despite the strong misgivings many inquisitors have about adherents of the Celtic Church, it appears that God does not share them. God has touched several members of both the clergy and the congregation all across Ireland with His blessings. Indeed, one such man, Caraid Malloy, has become the new head of the Oculi Dei in Ireland after the death of the previous incumbent at the hand of a blood-drinker while meeting a contact in a tavern in Dublin one evening.

## Elsewhere

**Meath** has a terrible reputation as a dangerous place to go wandering in the hills. This is entirely thanks to the hard work of the local werewolves (see p. 112). The area around the River Boyne in particular is the inspiration for a hundred terrifying fireside stories and almost universally avoided. Since their arrival, the Sisters in Dublin have received regular dreams and visions of wild beasts tearing apart men and women in the city, and any discussion of the area around Meath only makes the dreams more intense. Clearly, this needs investigating, and soon.

**Tara** is another area that the Council has earmarked for explorations by a cell or two as soon as possible. Any region whose people still believe so strongly to be inhabited by the fae, who are nothing more than another form of devil in the inquisitors' eyes, is worthy of investigation.

## SO WHAT ARE THESE CULTS?

One, of course, is the ancient vampire Mithras' own cult, which he has been using on and off down the centuries (see p. 91 for more details). The second is the cult surrounding a demon that arrived on Earth some thousand years ago, summoned by a mage attempting to resist the Roman invaders. The mage was not seeking to raise a demon, but to summon a water spirit worshipped by his ancestors. Unfortunately for him, his family and their descendants, he chose the wrong ritual.

The demon wasted no time in enslaving the mage and his family and has used them as the heart of a cult ever since. The demon's motivations are simple: worship and power. It has sought these things since the early days of Creation and it seeks them still.

Mithras and the demon are vaguely aware of each other, but their spheres of influence and objectives for their cults are sufficiently different that neither has felt the need to confront the other. The inquisitors, on the other hand, are an unknown quantity stirring up trouble for both sides. It would be very easy for one or the other of these ancient forces to get completely the wrong idea....

The area around **Ulster** has provided a few recruits for the Poor Knights. Local knights have a tradition of hunting wolves and even werewolves that has been useful to the order's practices and successes in Ireland. The order is already making plans to establish a chapter house in the area to take advantage of the local skills.

**Leinster** is home to the majority of inquisitors in Ireland, who find the Romanized churches and Norman rule more conducive to their calling. **Dublin** plays host to the main Irish chapter house, in the form of the Church of St. Brigid, the Sisters of St. John's home in the British Isles. Despite the "good" influence of the "proper" Church, Dublin is keeping the Sisters and the other inquisitors very busy indeed. Visions of the huge variety of beings haunting the city's streets (see p. 105) have led to vigorous investigations and several confrontations with the enemy.

## Wales

Wales remains a challenge for the Inquisition and one the Council of Faith is reluctant to address just yet, simply because it remains so focused on England as the center of the British Isles and the only kingdom of any note. Its members tend to view Wales as a rather minor issue: A warring state of petty and barely Christian prices, where any infernal influence can be rooted out once the work is complete elsewhere. The lack of any Welsh in the organization's ranks is another singular bar to their investigation of the land, alongside the inhospitable terrain.

That said, the Welsh Marches are proving a fertile ground for the Poor Knights' distinct brand of Inquisition. The order, under the command of Englishman Sir Robert Bernières, a veteran of the Fifth Crusade, has taken charge of a small, abandoned castle, made redundant by border changes in one of the innumerable skirmishes between the Normans and the Welsh. From that base, small groups of knights, usually two or three members of the Inquisition who have not received God's blessings with a pair of blessed inquisitors to lead them, have mounted successful expeditions to track down and destroy individuals and places identified as infernally tainted by the *Oculi Dei*.

Now Bernières is petitioning the Council for greater support so he can set to work on other targets on his list. **Anglesey** is a high priority, with many confirmed tales of demonic beasts prowling the isle and feasting on good Christian folk, while pagan druids still enact human sacrifice. Two members of the *Oculi Dei* have disappeared investigating Anglesey, which merits an investigation in greater force, if Cotter gets his way.

**Abertawe** is another place that has caught the Inquisition's attention. Poor Knights have killed one vampire from the town and have a second under the question in their chapter-house. They have reluctantly taken to feeding the creature small amounts of blood to keep it functional enough for the next torture session and have learned the names of nearly half a dozen people in Abertawe who are vampires or who serve them.

## Werewolves

*"Oh, this is glorious! We have three of the strongest, toughest and most warlike Garou tribes in the Isles, so the Wyrn must be on the retreat! The Spirals must be cowering in their beds! The lords of Malfeas must shake with rage at the mention of the Isles! Ha! The tribes are at war — with each other! We have rival claimants for the lordships! Brother fights brother. Fianna slay Fianna and Fenrir slays Fenrir. The Wyrn laughs! Gobshites. All of you!"*

— Kierain of Uilidh, Fianna Ahroun

While members of any of the ten tribes of Garou might be found in the British Isles, three tribes — the Fianna, the Fenrir and the Silver Fangs — hold most of the power and all of the caerns. The Fianna are the eldest tribe in the Isles (if one doesn't count the White Howlers; the current Garou certainly don't) — they have called the Isles their home since before the word "tribe" had any meaning to the Garou. The Fenrir arrived with Germanic legionnaires, and more of them and their Kinfolk arrived later with Norse

### WHAT'S IN THE PIT?

The exact nature of the threat in Damburrow is left to individual Storytellers. The most logical assumption is that a hive of Black Spiral Dancer werewolves is tunneling near the monastery, but if you do not wish to make use of **Dark Ages: Werewolf** in your **Inquisitor** chronicle, other explanations would work just as well. Some possibilities:

- The first church in the area — the one that sank into the Pit — did so because one of the clergy there accidentally summoned up a creature from Hell. The demon is a being of pure hunger, and the entire Pit (and now much of the surrounding earth) has merged with its limitless gut. As such, any creature that it has consumed may be found in the tunnels, horribly warped by the demon's digestion. The creatures that the knights fought off in Damburrow might well be former monks, twisted beyond recognition.

- At one time, the Tremere were attempting to build a larger, more destructive race of Gargoyles here. They failed miserably, creating creatures that cannot abide even the briefest touch of sunlight, but do not sleep and are endlessly hungry — and completely uncontrollable. The Tremere had to leave many of their tomes and other possessions behind when they fled Damburrow, but the creatures they created are still there.

- The beings below Damburrow have always been there. They predate Christianity, the pagan gods and possibly even humanity itself. They might be considered fae, but they are of a much darker stripe than anything in Scottish legendry (which is saying something). They don't really care about the inquisitors so long as the humans don't bother them — which, of course, isn't likely.

raiders. Finally, the Silver Fangs accompanied the Normans to the British Isles, and have made their presence felt all across the land in a relatively short span of time.

In more recent times, the Children of Gaia came to the Isles, attempting to foster peace between the tribes. They claimed leadership of a great caern dedicated to the ancient spirit of the Thames River, and united the tribes, Fenrir, Fianna and Silver Fang, against the vampiric creatures who ruled the streets of London. The Children, through trickery, diplomacy and occasional violence, drove the decrepit Silver Fang leader from the caern and took his throne. They led the tribes in battle against the last of the Great Wyrms. They enforced a peace, and for a time it seemed that the Garou would emerge victorious against the powers of the night.

But in AD 1220, a group of mortal mages called the Circle of Red claimed that caern and killed all of the Garou there. The Circle of Red are not fomori. They do not possess the power to shake the heavens. They are weak human sorcerers, and should have been no match for the power of the werewolves. But the Garou of the Isles did not unite to sweep them out of the caern and save the spirit of the river. Rather they fell, once again, to infighting. A few powerful Garou led their people in raids on the mages in London, but the vampires had long since rebuilt their numbers. The crusading werewolves were separated and slain before ever sighting a single member of the Circle. London was purged of the Garou, and before any werewolf could step forward to lead another attack, tragedy struck again, this time in the form of the Flaying Plague.

Garou cubs died in agony, their skin peeled off by vile, agonizing ulcers. Lupus werewolves went insane, and many

more threw themselves into battle with Wyrms creatures or Garou rivals, wishing to die an honorable death rather than the weak and worthless end of the sick. Their numbers decimated, the werewolves turned even further inward and became even more isolationist.

So now, the Garou wait. They do not know enough about their enemies to bring war to them. They do not have the numbers to reclaim their lost caerns. They do not have the trust to make alliances with others. The Garou even shun old allies. Each caern wonders if it will be the next to fall. The High Chieftain of the Caern of the Boyne refuses to speak to his foster brother, the Prince of the Silver Fangs in Ireland. Some say the Black Spiral Dancers are active again, having come further south than ever before. The elders sneer at these reports and instead plot intrigues against fellow Garou.

## The Garou of the Isles

Of the ten tribes active in Europe, only six dwell in any numbers in the Isles. The Fianna, Fenrir and Silver Fangs are the most common, outnumbering the others by a wide margin.

- **Bone Gnawers:** The Bone Gnawers are the only tribe left with any real presence in London, and they can be found in most of the port cities of the Isles as well. They control no caerns, but aren't generally regarded as a threat, either, which gives them more freedom of movement than the other tribes.

- **Children of Gaia:** The Children arrived in the Isles in a spirit of reconciliation — and messianic arrogance. They took the great caern of London from the Silver Fangs and promised to lead the Garou to victory. Their fall was



## INQUISITORS AS PROTAGONISTS

In a **Dark Ages: Inquisitor** chronicle, the British Isles are a frightening place indeed for established members of the Inquisition. The organization as a whole is young and its presence in the British Isles even younger. The loss of the London cell and the terrible problems the Red Order faces in Damburrow have pushed this remote outpost of Christendom up Marzone's agenda, however, and he is routing what expense he can spare to the Islands. The troupe's characters are likely to be involved in this effort in one of two ways.

First, they could be among the inquisitors posted to the Isles from other parts of Europe. Certainly, Bertramus Murnau has brought a cell of inquisitors with him, the Irish chapter house has its share of foreigners and the Red Order monastery in Scotland provides a warm welcome born of necessity for any member of the cause drawn there.

Alternately, characters could easily be drawn from the people of the Isles, recruited into the slowly growing British presence through word of mouth or coincidental meetings (or is it the work of God?) and hastily assembled into a new cell. Former crusaders, and there are many in the Isles thanks to the preoccupation of King Richard with the Holy Land, fit nicely into the Poor Knights. The many monastic communities across the Isles provide good recruiting grounds for both the Red Order and the Sisters of St. John. The Murnau are the last of the orders to make it to England but Bertramus is determined to make a name for himself and needs all the help he can get from his family.

The Oculi Dei are something of a special case. With a long history in the Isles and in France as part of Becket's information network from 60 years ago, the network has been absorbed whole into the Oculi Dei, making it the strongest of the orders in the British Isles. Any cell establishing itself is likely to find an Eye at its heart, or at least as an occasional advisor and source of information.

hard, and long, and the Children of Gaia are outcasts in the Isles now. Most returned to mainland Europe.

- **Fenrir:** Kin to the Germanic legionaries of the Roman era, the Saxon invaders of the fifth and sixth century and the Viking invaders of more recent times, the Fenrir are split by language, culture and origin.

- **Fianna:** The most common Garou to be found in the British Isles, the Fianna have lost much ground over the years, losing caerns and influence to Fenrir and Silver Fang interlopers.

- **Red Talons:** Once numerous in Scotland and some of the lowland fens in England, the Red Talons have been driven to near extinction by the forces of the Wyrms, the indifference of the other Garou and the Flaying Plague.

- **Silver Fangs:** Gradually replacing the Fianna as the most numerous tribe of the Isles, the Silver Fangs are the dominant force among the Garou in England, and their influence is growing in Wales and Ireland.

- **Warders of Men:** While a few Warders are still to be found in London, the city isn't safe for Garou of any tribe. Warders occasionally venture to the Isles to visit one of the burgeoning universities or on some other tribal business, but the native Garou have no desire to see a fourth tribe attempt to claim power in the Isles.

- **Black Spiral Dancers:** These twisted werewolves have grown numerous and powerful in recent years, but many Gaiian Garou elders dismiss stories of their existence, and rationalize away tales of their numerous victories.

## Great Britain

The werewolves of Great Britain envy the peace and security of their Irish brethren. In Britain, a three-sided civil war splits the Garou Nation, and in the north, new foes are gathering.

### England

The High King Simon du Austere Howl, of the Silver Fangs, holds court in Salisbury, and expects loyalty and tribute from all the Garou of England. He does not receive it. The Silver Fangs are powerful here, but their power comes from their own tribal warriors and not from political games. The Fianna refuse to accept these interlopers as anything other than barely acknowledged equals. The Fenrir of the old Saxon Shore, the eastern regions of England, have gained their territories and protectorates through force and struggle, and have no intention of giving them up to newcomers such as the Silver Fangs — or their

## INQUISITORS AS ANTAGONISTS

If you are using the Inquisition as enemies for the characters in your game, the Soldiers of God fall into the role of an escalating threat that needs to be carefully managed. The various Churches of the British Isles have an uneasy relationship with Rome that has been positively hostile at points in the last few centuries. The Church has a long memory and part of Christendom with so many examples of rebellion against papal decrees without straying into outright heresy is cause for concern. No wonder the shadow Inquisition's eyes have turned towards the Isles. The brutal slaughter of a cell in London, the situation in Damburrow and the problems between Rome and the various branches of the Church in the Isles have all built up a picture that Cardinal Marzone finds deeply worrying and is unwilling to let rest.

Should the Inquisition lose another cell through the actions of the characters, the response is not likely to be resignation and retreat, but the arrival of more experienced and dangerous inquisitors. The comparatively large numbers of Oculi Dei throughout the land are a significant problem for the characters as well. Any repeated displays of ungodly power of any kind are likely to attract the attentions of one of the Inquisition's spies and, eventually, a thorough investigation by a full cell of inquisitors.

Norman kin. South of Scotland and east of Wales the land exists in a state of civil war. The Fianna hold the western lands — the western coast, some of the borderlands near Wales, and the wilds and moors of Cornwall. The Fenrir hold the east — York, Northumbria and Anglia. The Silver Fangs hold the south.

The three “kingdoms” made an alliance two hundred years ago, stating that representatives from all the protectorates would meet in the Great River Caern of London, then under the management of the Children of Gaia, to discuss their differences and plan their assaults against the Wyrms. But the caern is gone now, taken by the Circle of the Red. Each tribe blames the other for this loss and all have closed their borders.

Without unity, the Wyrms’ minions can assault each kingdom individually. Black Spiral Dancers slip south through moon bridges, or in coracle boats covered in human skin, and bring war to the English caerns. Without any sharing of information, the Fenrir and the Fianna of the northerly parts of England are not aware of the tunnels carved by these fallen Garou, tunnels that inch steadily southwards.

In the east the situation is even more confused. Three separate bands of Fenrir make their homes along the Saxon Shore. The first band is the oldest, kin to the German legionaries of the Roman Empire. These Fenrir are well established and as lordly as the Silver Fangs. Theirs is the heritage of old Rome and the ancient world. They refuse to acknowledge any kinship with the “uncouth” newcomers. These Fenrir have moved steadily eastwards, until they only claim caerns along the eastern coast.

Then came the later Saxon Fenrir, who followed their kin to England during the expansions led by Hengist. These Fenrir fought hard against the Roman Fenrir and the Fianna. They believe that they deserve to lead the tribe.

The last to come were the Norse Fenrir, newcomers of Viking blood, who claim a series of caerns along the northeast and the Thames valley. The Viking Garou are many and vigorous, and they seek to lead the tribe against the Wyrms. But their leaders are hot tempered and inexperienced. Many have come in the last few decades, as Christianity has forced many Norse Fenrir from their Scandinavian homes. The Norse Garou demanded that the Fianna and the Silver Fangs pay tribute to them. They wish to unite the Fenrir as one tribe — under Norse chieftains — and then sweep the Wyrms from England, and assail the servants of the White Christ in Scandinavia.

In the North York Moors, however, a Fenrir Galliard called Ute has been hearing whispers in the darkness from the Great Fenris. Born of the influential Thorsson line of Fenrir chieftains, Ute is young, but she has won great renown for her songs and her many victories against the Wyrms, including a victorious campaign against a Bane nest on the Shetlands. The Fenrir, Fianna and Fangs are brothers, Fenris whispers, one kin, who must unite, not stand divided. The divisions are foolishness, Fenris says, and Ute must work to undo them. Before she wakes each morning, Ute has one final vision, of a nation overrun by the vampires, ruled by the pale sorcerer-things of Durham;

Black Spiral Dancers howling in triumph among the burnt out hearts of many mighty caerns; and Banes so numerous they turn the sky black. Ute’s sept, the Roaring Tide, believes in her vision, and they are seeking to make a new alliance. But the sept is divided over where to start. Do they dare attempt to take the caern in London? Should they send envoys to the Scottish Fianna? Do they swear allegiance to the Silver Fangs? Until these debates are settled, there can be no unity.

In recent nights, a mortal sorcerer has visited the caern, spoken old Norse words of alliance and offered to help Ute in her quest. Ute does not trust this sorcerer, though. Each time he visits, the voice of the Great Fenris is silent, and remains so for many nights following.

Further north, in the Tyne valley, the tense politics gives way to open warfare between the western Fianna and the eastern Fenrir. Young Fenrir and Fianna come from all over the Isles and further afield to “fight the ancient enemy.” Caerns and holy places have changed hands so often that their totem spirits withdraw their favor, and Kinfolk are murdered on either side. Each side accuses the others of being in league with the Wyrms. Theurges on both sides find sufficient evidence to renew the conflict, year in and year out.

The Fianna of the western coast have their own problems. Vile Pestifers stalk the land, haunting the rural communities and hunting Fianna who travel alone. The Fianna here have no overlord, and look to their own protectorates. They fight the Wyrms and the Fenrir together, but beyond warfare, they rarely associate. The Fianna chieftain of Wales, Bladdud, has sent envoys to these septs, hoping to form an alliance between the Welsh Fianna and their northerly cousins.

### **The Protector’s Caern**

The House of Austere Howl claimed this caern two hundred years ago from a moribund Fianna sept. The caern lies in a small copse, far from any human settlement, and half a day’s walk from Stonehenge. The Silver Fangs claim that the Fianna were showing their weakness by allowing human mages to “rape Gaia’s soul” with the use of Stonehenge’s Gnosis for their magic.

The caern is divided by politics. A younger generation of Silver Fangs aims to take power for themselves. Simon du Austere Howl is the chieftain of the Silver Fangs of England and recognized as High King by other septs in mainland Europe (such as the sept of Sun’s Glory in the Holy Roman Empire). Unfortunately, the Fianna and Fenrir factions ignore him totally. Simon is an old werewolf, and has hundreds of kills to his name. He has grown arrogant in his old age, and refuses diplomacy — an unfortunate weakness, because he is a capable leader who could easily turn the Garou of Britain into an effective, united force. Simon groomed the Irish-born Silver Fang Ahroun, John Fitzwilliam, as a possible successor (none of Simon’s own children underwent the First Change, and he is long past his mating years), but in recent years Simon has doubted his choice. Having guided the younger leader’s progress from afar for so long, Simon has now withdrawn his support for John Fitzwilliam, and Fitzwilliam is furious. While he still

respects the old lord, he sees the leadership of the Protector's Caern and of the Silver Fangs of the Isles as his by right.

**Caern:** A copse of trees on Salisbury Plain, half a day's walk (for a human) west of Stonehenge

**Type:** Wisdom

**Level:** 3

**Gauntlet:** 3

**Totem:** Falcon

**Tribal Structure:** Silver Fangs; the sept accepts visitors, provided they perform a rite of supplication to Falcon

**Leader:** Simon du Austere Howl

## Scotland

The Fianna of the British Isles make a show of mourning the passing of the White Howlers and their fall to the Wyrms. The Fianna beat their breasts and proclaim their sorrow for their involvement in the extinction of the Picts, the White Howlers' Kinfolk. The Fianna speak of their peripheral involvement in the invasions of the Irish Scots and the Roman legions. They choose not to remember just how much of the Howlers' blood is on Fianna hands. The Fianna had been fighting a long war with their "fallen Howler allies" for generations before the Romans came north. The caerns of Scotland were powerful and untapped, and humanity was scattered and weak. Fianna warriors took caerns from their weaker Howler cousins, but the Howlers clung on tenaciously. Fianna leaders entered into alliance with the Pictish Howlers against the forces of the Wyrms, and stole territory when the Howlers died. The Picts were finally absorbed completely into the Scots tribes about three hundred years ago, and the Fianna bear a heavy responsibility for the Picts' extinction. Some Fianna see the coming of the Black Spiral Dancers as part of Gaia's punishment against their tribe.

For generations, the Fianna fought these twisted Garou to a standstill. They were warped and perverted foes, and deadly, but no match for experienced Fianna warriors. The Fianna controlled the southern section of the Highlands of Scotland, the Red Talons wandered the northerly hills and the Silver Fangs, of late, came to dominate the Lowlands. The Garou ruthlessly suppressed Black Spiral uprisings. The Fianna nursed their guilt, but grew contented and soft. They claimed to have destroyed the Black Spirals; the Wyrms' Garou, for their part, simply moved their hives underground and began to branch outward towards the mainland. Some of the Garou of Scotland have an inkling that the Spirals aren't dead, but they tend to be shouted down by older werewolves crowing about their victory over the Fallen Tribe.

If the surviving Talons, the highlander Fianna and the lowland Fenrir and Fangs were to work together, then the Black Spiral Dancers could easily be defeated. The Gaian Garou could collapse their tunnels, allowing the werewolves on the mainland to destroy the few enclaves the Dancers have made there. But the Gaian Garou seem more concerned with other matters (in their defense, of course, those matters include vampires, the Circle of Red and other true threats as

well as simple infighting). But in the meantime, the Black Spiral Dancers grow stronger. They have fortified a base for themselves at Fearn Abbey, in Scotland. Repeated Fianna assaults have failed, and the Fianna can only guess at what vile plans are being hatched in that leper colony. See p. 184 of **Dark Ages: Werewolf** for more information.

The Garou have also encountered an order of vampiric knights, who operate around Loch Treig. Some younger Garou who have attempted to investigate this order claim that these vampires sleep beneath the waters of the loch itself. Older Garou snort at these reports and urge the cliath to keep looking. Young Garou who encounter these vampire knights seldom live to regret it; they seem to fight with the combined strength of the most zealous Christian crusader and the most depraved Wym-ridden Leech. Homicidal werewolves who were raised Christian are often humbled by the aura of piety they radiate; elder Garou (when they can be bothered to listen to this drivel) remark that this is proof of the Nailed God's corruption.

## Wales

The Welsh pride themselves as being the last of the Britons, the last "pure" people of the Isles. The mountains, they say, warded off invaders and allowed them to keep their ancient language and customs. There is a small element of truth to this, but in reality, Wales is part of the English political dynamic, and despite occasional uprisings and lawlessness in the hills, Wales bows to the English crown. The druids fell to the Romans on the island of Anglesey in AD 50. The current "Prince of Wales" is as likely to sell his kin out to English nobles as to support them. Trade flows east to west, down the valleys, and not north-to-south, meaning that it is easier for a Welsh merchant or noble to deal with English authorities than with Welsh ones.

The Silver Fangs have used this reality to their advantage. The Fangs have driven the Fianna up into those hills, where they can live among the pure, true and powerless Britons. They drove the Fenrir out of Wales entirely. The werewolf nobles keep the cities with their vampiric infestations isolated. Still, the isolation has challenged the Fianna, and ultimately made them stronger. The Welsh Fianna have none of the contented foolishness that plagues their Scottish kin and little of the civilization and isolation of the Irish Fianna. They say they are the true line of the ancient soldier-werewolves of the Celtic peoples. They hold sacred the memory of Cernunnos, whom they name as their ultimate ancestor.

The Fangs may claim the valleys, but the Fianna own the hills. Fenrir warriors stormed these hills during the construction of Offa's Dike, and were repulsed with such force, violence and skill that the Fenrir of the neighboring English septs still send their cubs to train under these fell warriors. Each year, on the night of the summer solstice, Fenrir from all over England come to these hills to participate in duels of strength and cunning with these Fianna. They rarely prevail, and those few Fenrir who have won a duel with the Welsh Fianna earn much renown. The Fianna brand those champions with the glyphs of glory.

## Ireland

Ireland remains the great stronghold of the Fianna. The High King (sometimes referred to as High Chieftain) holds court on the Hill of Tara, ruling a great “triple caern” encompassing the Hill of Tara, the Brugh na Boinne and the source of the Boyne River. In Meath, the so-called Royal County, far from the pestilence of Dublin and the Norman kings behind their pathetic Pale, Fianna warriors stalk abroad. No enemy dares approach the center of Fianna power in Ireland. Ancient magics guard the approaches to the source of the Boyne, and no foe has ever set foot in the High King’s hall on Silver Tara. It is said that the restless spirits of the Fianna’s ancestors watch the way to the great grave barrow of Brugh na Boinne. In Meath, the Fianna are secure and powerful. Beyond the borders of the province, things are far less certain.

## Ulster

In Ulster, chieftains of the McLoughlin and O’Neill clans keep warriors of strange blood, who can see the Garou for what they are. The chieftains of Ulster remember their half-forgotten histories of monster men carrying off children and killing women in the villages and homesteads. They know that the dire wolves of legend still stalk the Irish night. The Garou maintain a single caern, guarding the so-called Giant’s Causeway. According to rumor, there seem to be rumblings deep in the earth and under the sea, and the rumblings are getting closer. The Theurges say that these rumblings are a mystery. The Fianna have no way of knowing that the Black Spiral Dancers’ tunnels draw ever closer.

## Connaught

The Garou of Connaught are concentrated in the County of Galway. The Fianna guard several minor caerns

### WEREWOLVES AS PROTAGONISTS

The Garou have many enemies in the Isles, but their biggest single stumbling block is...each other. The three principal tribes in the Isles war with each other, but none of them ever seems to gain the upper hand. In many places, the feud is based on nothing more than a half-remembered vendetta and assurances that the other tribes are unfit to hold their caerns or corrupt in some way.

Not all werewolves believe this, though. Younger Garou, in particular, might look to lost caerns in London and Ireland and cite the Litany as a damned good reason to join forces and finish feuding later. A pack might be based out of a caern, or might wander the Isles seeking refugees from the Flaying Plague or searching for clues as to the true meaning of the Fianna prophecy (current speculation in England says that the “black wolf” refers to the Scottish Fianna and the “red wolf” to the Irish). Alternately, the characters might be from elsewhere in Europe, giving support to their tribe in the Isles or attempting to carve out a niche for an under-represented tribe.

on the mainland and also hold a large caern on tiny Omeý Island on the west coast. In the north of Galway, a creature the Garou name “the Thief” and others name “the Witch of Connaught” stalks the night. This vile, Wyrnish hag has destroyed many an ancient caern and feasted on Kinfolk. That she sups on the blood of kin is worrisome, but that she is destroying caerns is a matter of gravest urgency. The hag arrived in Ireland many centuries ago and was contained (but never destroyed) until recent times, when her attacks have grown more ambitious and more frequent. The eastern area of Galway once played host to several caerns of medium power, but each one was drained to nothing and their defenders slain and drained of all blood. The Fianna found strange sigils on the skin of some of the defenders. In recent years, more creatures that may be kin to the Thief have come to Ireland. Last year, two came to Omeý and slew half a dozen Fianna warriors before they, in turn, fell. Other caerns in the west of Ireland have reported conflicts with similar creatures. Some Fianna say these are a rare form of Leech, but this is debatable.

The Garou of Connaught have sent war parties to hunt this witch, but few of their warriors have returned. One of these warriors, Ossian Son of Bane Slayer, returned from combat scarred and changed. But he remembered enough of the battle to record the sigils carved into the creature’s skin. The Theurges of Omeý hope to decipher the sigils to determine the thing’s weaknesses.

### The Sept of the Wild Sea — Omeý Island

**Caern:** The bald hill in the center of Omeý Island, on the west coast of Galway.

**Type:** Honor

**Level:** 3

**Gauntlet:** 3

**Totem:** Stag

**Tribal Structure:** Officially Fianna only, but the caern plays host to many guests. Only Fianna may hold sept positions without undertaking a quest in Stag’s name.

**Leader:** Bron of the Wild Claw. Bron is a powerful Fianna Theurge of middle years, beset by visions and doubt, but fearless in combat with the Wyrn’s minions. He opened his sept to outsiders, and now wonders if he did the right thing.

The Omeý Isle Caern lies on a tiny tidal island, not much more than a few dozen acres across. When the tide is high, the thin strip of land joining Omeý to the mainland is submerged. The humans have a small village — a bare hamlet, home to perhaps seventy souls — a little beyond the peninsula. The humans are not Kinfolk, and they do not venture across to the island when the moon is full.

The caern centers on an old pagan graveyard, haunted by the ghosts of the people who dwelled along this coast before the coming of the Celts. The ghosts’ mute sorrow penetrates the veil between the worlds, and allows Fianna Theurges to draw Gnosis from the Umbra. The caern is a place of quiet respite, but hosting refugees from the ravages of the Flaying Plague strained its resources to the utmost. Though the Fianna of the sept honored their commitment to the ancient law of hospitality, their guests put intolerable

## WEREWOLVES AS ANTAGONISTS

Uncompromising, inscrutable, terrifying and savage — the Garou make excellent antagonists. The vampires have their own legends about the Lupines, about how they were cursed by God for the crime of lying with beasts, and regard them as even further from grace than they. Mages are often fascinated by these creatures, and in some places the Old Faith and the Garou might even have occasion to speak amenably (provided the particular Garou's auspice moon is a week or more off and that the mage doesn't make any sudden moves). To the Inquisition, of course, a werewolf is a man who sold his soul for paltry power, or perhaps the unfortunate victim of a werewolf bite.

When using werewolves as antagonists, remember that, all else being equal, a group of werewolves will decimate a group of any other character type in a straight fight. Werewolves are deadly in combat — they are fast, inflict horrific damage with their claws and teeth and worst of all, they hunt in packs. As Storyteller, make it clear to the characters that direct combat with these creatures is suicide without the proper preparations (silver is the best bet, but this isn't exactly common knowledge, nor is silver especially easy to come by). The best way to fight werewolves is to point them at another target — but beware. The Garou are savage, but not stupid.

strain on the caern's Gnosis and the hosts' patience. The Garou here wish to be left alone.

Unfortunately, the Wyrms has no such generosity. Along these coasts, ancient heroes drove Wyrmspawn into the sea. These "Fomorian" creatures (as traditional Fianna call them) lie sleeping, and they may soon stir and return to assail the isolated werewolves.

## Munster

Munster is the largest province of Ireland and one of the richest, home to the fertile lands of the Golden Vale and the Southern Plains. The newcomer Silver Fangs usurped these lands from the Fianna in ages past. The city of Cork is home to several powerful vampires, but the Fianna have no interest in entering that city. They say it is "a vile place, whose existence pollutes the very sea it sits beside." The Fianna have even invited some Warders of Men to live in the city, to spy on the doings of the vampires and the mortal tradesmen. The Warders of Men have refused.

In truth, the water flowing through — and under — the city of Cork is tainted by the effluvium of some ancient Wyrms thing that sweats and bleeds into the River Lee from a cave north of the city. The creature pollutes the water and when humans drink it, some manifest minor fomor traits. The people of Cork display few of these signs outwardly — the main effects are mental. Some become true fomori, however, and these tend to hold positions of influence and

power. Some Theurges have even gone so far as to suggest the city to cleanse the taint.

Beyond the city of Cork, the farmlands are wide and tilled. The forests have been felled and the meadows are under cultivation and grazing. The lowlands of Munster have little room for the Garou. The Silver Fangs draw impressive maps and claim vast lands for their own protectorates, but few acknowledge them. The Fianna, instead, take to the hills of the Boggeragh and Galtee Mountains. The further west one travels, to the scenic coastal highlands, the poorer the peasants become, and the shoddier their fields. The Garou are quite comfortable here, and no vampire or other Wyrms thing would be foolish enough to hunt there.

## Meath

The province of Meath occupies the richest midland pastures of Ireland. Until recent times, Meath was the seat of the High Kings. Once heavily forested, a Neolithic people carved small settlements out of the woodlands along the valley of the Boyne River. The Celts considered the river so important — as a life giver and as a holy place — that they worshipped it as a goddess. The province of Meath is generally flat, except for successions of tiny 100-foot hills, known as drumlins. The Hill of Tara, only about 400 feet high, dominates the surrounding lands. This is the Tara of myth, from where Fionn MacChumail led his Fianna — soldiers — into battle. Those days are gone, but until the coming of the Normans, the High Kings were still crowned here.

Viewed from the Umbra, Tara is not one hill, it is three. Iron Tara is the otherworldly reflection of the Hill of Tara, and atop its summit, the echoes of those old human fortifications are still visible. It is a haunted place, close to the lands of the dead. Fianna and Silver Fangs make yearly pilgrimages to this site to remember the kings of old. To the north lies High Tara, where the Sidhe make their homes. This is the Court of All Kings, the place of the Silver Gate — the path to the distant land of the fae — and the site of the greatest of all the faerie balefires. Fianna are always welcome in that great hall, but in recent decades, the doors are usually closed, as the fae keep their secret councils. To the west lies Middle Tara, the Silver Tara, where the high chieftains of the Fianna hold court.

**Caern:** Silver Tara, on the Hill of Tara, in the Province of Meath, in Ireland.

**Type:** Leadership

**Level:** 5

**Gauntlet:** 2

**Totem:** Stag

**Tribal Structure:** Fianna only.

**Leader:** Brendan of the House of Oscar is a Fianna Philodox who claims the title of High King of All Fianna. Brendan rules by the consent of the Fianna of Meath, and with tribute from many Fianna septs on the Continent.

Tara is but one part of a complex pattern of magical power. At the heart of this latticework of Gnosis are the

three primary founts — the source of the River Boyne (and indeed, the river itself), the passage tombs at Brugh na Boinne (Newgrange) and the Hill of Tara. This pattern draws from dozens of other sources — old passage graves, faerie forts and sites of ancient battles. The very land is alive with power. This is the land the Fianna claim. Here, Silver Fangs bow to them. Even though the Church makes mortals forget the glory of the Garou, and the Flaying Plague has but recently passed, this is a vision of the Fianna at their height.

Tara is also the home of several Silver Fang “emissaries” who have come to the High King of the Fianna to “advise.” In truth, these emissaries represent several powerful sects in France and Britain, and are there to bend the Fianna to the Silver Fangs’ dominion.

## Leinster

Leinster is the province of the Pale. Fenced off from the “wild people” of the hinterlands, the Leinstermen (Norman, Viking, English and Irish) pay tribute to the English crown and go about their civilized business. The Garou despise this place. At the festering heart of the Pale lies the Black Pool: Dubh-linn. The English name the city Dublin. Vampires stalk the streets, and the sorcerers and murderers of the Circle of Red hold a guild house on the northern shore of the river, in the poorer part of the city.

The Circle has not despoiled Dublin’s one potential caern — an old caern guarded by the Fenrir before the sacking of the city by Brian Boru in 1014. The werewolves do not claim this caern either: They have long ago dismissed it as a war loss. The Circle of Red is too adept at

stopping Garou raids into the city, and the Leeches are ever watchful for assaults from beyond the Pale. To reclaim the caern would require a massive, overwhelming assault, and that would require the fractious tribes to ally and work together. This occurrence is unlikely. Some Garou, however, such as Lena of Orkney (see Chapter Four) have called for a different approach. Perhaps if a small, savvy pack were to infiltrate the city and work to neutralize the Circle of Red...then an assault might be easier.

## The Others

Britain’s legends are full of things other than “mere” vampires, sorcerers, or werewolves. Ghosts stalk the night, demons whisper in the ears of those who may be tempted to sin, and the fae throng in the woods and sing on the downs. Of course, some of these legends may be attributed to mages, vampires or werewolves, but some might — and do — have their own explanation.

## Ghosts

Ghosts haunt Britain. Any old wife will be glad to share tales of the ancient soldiers who battle on the hill at night, or the green-haired widow who lurks near the pond after drowning herself there, or the evil lord who walks the battlements of his fortress after being cut down by his enemies, or the screaming skulls that appear in the old monastery after sunset. People believe in ghosts... and in the Dark Medieval world, ghosts exist. The following are some of the more widely carried legends that might have



come to the ears of characters, and be considered worthy of investigation. The truth of any of these stories is left in the hands of the Storyteller.

The **Battle of Mount Badon** is recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth as having taken place in the fifth century, between Britain and Saxon, where Arthur broke the back of the Saxon advance and slew their leaders and a tenth part of their forces. It is said that the ghosts of Arthur and many of his war leaders have returned to this place, the location of their greatest victory. It is also said that rash treasure-hunters or priests have been found there at dawn, with many wounds on their bodies and a look of inconceivable terror on their faces. Certainly, if any know the site of Mount Badon, then it is unwise to go there unless prepared for battle. However, even the learned disagree as to where the legendary battle took place, with some suggesting it was at the old Solsbury hillfort, near Bath, and others claiming it was at Badbury Rings hillfort (now hidden by thick woodland) in Dorset, or at Liddington Castle (adjacent to the town of Badbury) in Wiltshire.

**Lough Gur** in Ireland is a vast lake that houses a castle sunk deep beneath, haunted by the ghosts of the sorcerer Gerard Desmond and his young bride. He agreed to reveal certain secrets of dark magic to her, including the mystery of the Black Cat, but on the condition that she uttered no sound. He then showed her such terrible sights that she screamed aloud, upon which the castle caved in on her and her husband, and sank beneath the lake. Every seven years, Gerald Desmond rises from the waters and, riding on a white horse shod with silver, circles the lake three times before returning to its depths. If anyone can catch his rein during that time, Desmond will yield his accursed grimoires to the courageous soul.

In **Cornwall**, the ghosts of wreckers who died during storms while looting ships that they had lured onto the rocks can still be seen on stormy nights, bearing torches and hunting for the treasure they hid in the local caves. It is said that anyone who can follow them down through their caves before the tide comes in may claim their treasure, but that a priest must then bless the treasure, or it will turn to salt water in the morning.

At **St. Albans Abbey**, in Hertfordshire, terrified locals have heard ghostly choral singing late at night, and seen the figures of monks processing through the abbey grounds, led by the martyr St. Alban. Of course, no truly Christian man would have grounds to fear such ghosts.

**Bramber Castle**, near **Steyning** in Sussex, has more than its share of ghosts. The spirits of three children of William de Braose, who were starved to death by King John in the early 1200's after their father angered the king, are consigned to haunt the castle. The other ghosts are Lady Maud de Hurst and her unknown peasant lover. After Sir Hubert de Hurst, her husband, discovered Lady Maud's infidelity in 1210, he murdered her and walled up her lover alive within the walls of the castle. Her ghost wanders the place, rapping on the walls and searching for her lover.

## Fae

Legends of the fae are common throughout Britain, but the actual explanations as to what they really *are* vary wildly. Some claim they are nature spirits, creatures of the woods and wilds, while others say they are angels who refused to choose a side in the battle between God and Lucifer, and who were condemned to remain caught forever between Heaven and Hell. Others again say they are the souls of dead pagans, not good enough for Heaven or wicked enough for Hell, while some of the more learned believe they are the children of Adam and Lilith.

Any peasant is likely to know the usual ways to ward off local fae. These vary in different parts of the country, and include such things as a horseshoe nailed above the door, a bowl of milk left out by the fire, red thread, rowan twigs, holy names, the sound of church bells and so on. Extreme courtesy is necessary when dealing with the faerie lords (or Sidhe, as some call them) who sometimes ride the roads at night or at midday. Groves of oak, ash and thorn trees are known as faerie groves and should be left alone, and certainly not cut down unless the priest is present to bless the area and make it safe from fae influences. Similarly, rings of mushrooms, also called faerie rings, show where the fae have been dancing, as do the great ancient circles of stone. Anybody who frequents such a place at night does so at his own risk.

Some faerie take changelings, kidnapping a baby and leaving behind a log of wood enchanted to look like a child, or one of their own children, in the empty cradle. Wise parents notice that their baby is not eating or drinking, watches everything going on with eyes too old for his body, and is wasting away in his crib. Various ways exist to force the fae to return a changeling: Known tales include attempting to baptize the child, taking him onto holy ground, carrying him to the faerie court and demanding the return of your own child, or doing something unlikely (such as attempting to cook in an eggshell) and thus causing the changeling to cry out in astonishment and reveal its true nature. Nobody is quite certain why the fae steal children, whether for servants, future spouses, or sacrifices to Hell.

Different fae inhabit different parts of the British Isles. In England, most fae are the sort known as the Little People, who help around the house when suitably propitiated, or creatures such as bogies and goblins, which hide in abandoned mines or lonely places and bring misfortune and death where they may. Faerie lords and ladies such as Oberon and Titania, renowned as the King and Queen of the Fae, are few and far between, and only interact with humans if they need a human midwife or musician, or if the human stumbles on their revelry and dancing.

In Ireland, the fae are generally referred to as the Sidhe, but are also known as the Good Folk, the Blessed Ones, the Little People, the Gentry or the Wee Ones. They often travel abroad, and faeries such as gold-hoarding leprechauns and shape-changing Pwca are known and watched for by all sensible peasants.

In Scotland, the faeries are divided into two broad categories, the Seelie and Unseelie Courts. These two courts travel across the countryside in Rades (or Rides) where they fly across the woods and fields on the wind like ghosts. The Unseelie Court shelters the blood-drinkers, the devourers of flesh, the redcaps who dye their caps with fresh blood and the warriors armed with elfshot that kills any human whom it touches. They are so terrible to behold that people have died of fright just watching them pass by. The Seelie Court, by contrast, is home to the gentle Faeries who watch over the innocent and leave gifts for the virtuous; small house-guarding brownies and gnomes, and golden-haired lords and ladies.

Welsh Faeries, also known as the Tylwyth Teg, are courtly noblemen and ladies known for their love of horses, and many stories circulate of a traveler who is called aside from the road at night to tend to a priceless stallion or assist a mare with her foal, and who is then paid in gold for his work. Welsh fae are often called the Fair Folk, Night Walkers or Them Who Be, and they always wear green about their person, even when attempting to pass in disguise.

## Demons

Demons walk the world. Nobody disputes this. Gargoyles are carved and set on the roofs of cathedrals in order to scare demons away. Lucifer himself may be portrayed as an easily fooled buffoon in half the common folk tales, but in the other half he manages to carry away his victim's soul. Everyone's heard the story about the farmer who remarks carelessly that he'd "sell his soul for a mug of good ale," and ends up finding he has done precisely that.

Some tales of demons are generic; the black cat or toad who is actually an imp in disguise and a witch's familiar, the mysterious dark gentleman who shows up when an honest man has just lost all hope and despaired, the howling mob of demons conveniently exorcised by a helpful saint, or the huntsman whose dogs have eyes of fire and teeth that drip blood. (Some people claim that the latter is actually a creature of faerie and an ancient god, rather than a demon, to which the Church replies that in any case both are damned.) Incubi and succubi bring erotic nightmares with them and lie with innocent men and women, sucking out their souls. Incubi and succubi also make agreeable bed-


partners for overweening sorcerers, and may serve them as concubines, body-servants, pages, scribes or other tasks that will keep them close at hand. Other demons are more singular and exotic.

In Ireland, Cromm Cruach (or Cromm-cruaich, *bloody head*) is still worshipped in some quarters. This demon manifests as a living head of gold, which must be born into the world at ceremonies where he is invoked. The demon's stone image shudders during the invocation, as the blood of infant sacrifices is smeared over him, and grows a caul, which is then torn asunder to reveal the golden form of the demon. The bodies of the children are then buried beneath his shrine. Cromm Cruach offers plentiful corn and milk and prosperity to those who worship him, but expects them to offer up their own children in return. Some worshippers claim that he is merely an aspect of the Dagda, the father-god, but Old Faith mages and Spirit-Talkers deny this vehemently. He is a cruel and vicious demon who roams Ireland at will but may only enter a place if summoned there.

In Lancashire and Yorkshire, it is said that a demon known as Rawhead and Bloody Bones (sometimes shortened to Bloody Bones, or Old Bloody Bones) haunts old marl-pits or deep ponds, seeking to drag children in and drown them. Similar demons elsewhere in the country are Peg Powler (also sometimes called the spirit of the River Tyne) and Nelly Longarms. They are more violent and murderous than corrupting, though some tell stories of them making bargains with evil men or sorcerers, and offering them wealth or power in exchange for children as sacrifices.

According to local legend, the Devil himself rides around Malmesbury once a year, on the anniversary of the third night after an old witch's death. She had made a pact with the Evil One, but confessed on her deathbed to the local monks, who placed her body in a stone coffin with iron bars and said Masses for her soul. Demons came for her soul on the first two nights, and on the third night the Devil himself appeared riding upon a black horse, and in a voice of thunder called to her to rise out of her coffin. Her corpse replied that it was bound down by chains and bars. The Devil thereupon repeated some words, at which the coffin burst asunder. Seizing the witch, he placed her on his horse and rode away to Hell. The witch's grimoires were never found — or, if they were, the monks have not seen fit to discuss the matter.





# CHAPTER FOUR: LIARS, SINNERS, ZEALOTS AND BEASTS

“Who is this woman,’ I asked, ‘that wears such splendid garments?’

‘That is Fee the Maiden,’ said the Lady. ‘Many is the time she has injured me, slandering my dear friend Honesty, and denouncing her before the magistrates.’”

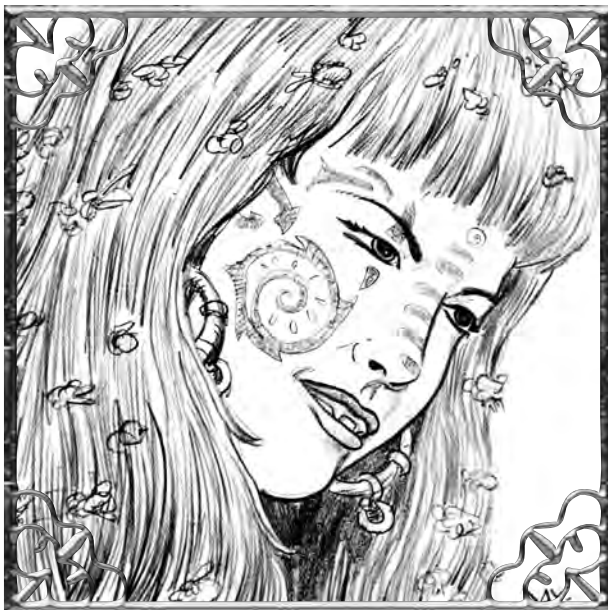
— *William Langland, Piers the Ploughman*

This section contains descriptions of some of the characters mentioned in the previous chapters of this book. Some of these characters have been given game traits: In other cases, these traits are left to the desires of the Storyteller.

## Vampires

The Cainites of the British Isles run the gamut from the godlike to the pathetic. Some are powerful elders, others rank neonates, but over all of them towers Mithras of London.





## Magda, the Witch of Connaught

**Background:** Magda was born in the years before the Fir Bolg's final invasion of Ireland, inducted at a young age into the druidic priesthood that had recently gained a grip in the Isles. She demonstrated strong beliefs and precocious abilities and attracted the attention of the ancient Cainite who had accompanied the Celtic people from their origins in Central Europe to the Atlantic shores. During the invasion, the Fir Bolg brutalized Magda's body and left her for dead, barely clinging to life until nightfall. Her sire, whose name she never knew but who was ancient even then, chose to Embrace the young girl rather than see her talents lost to death. Magda descended upon the interlopers with a fury that bordered on the insane, casting them back into the sea whence they came. Over the centuries and millennia that followed, the Witch of Connaught has sought to take enough blood to make up for what she sees as the insidious murder of her people's ways, fighting against the incursion of Christianity and then attempts to dominate the Irish Celtic culture by the Norse and later the Normans. She hunts Connaught, her Beast always close to the surface, looking for a way to enact a final retribution upon every living thing in Ireland.

**Image:** Magda appears as a feral child, her outward appearance mimicking her wild heart. Her clothing — when she wears any — is little more than rags and is covered in dirt. Tattoos and mystic sigils mark her pale skin and her dark hair is matted with blood and filth.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are a creature of nature, as much driven by instinct as by rational thought. Your actions are in defense of the land and your territory rather than from any deliberate callousness but you shirk from nothing to do so and have no qualms about turning on erstwhile allies if the situation demands it. Well into your second millennium, you

don't really even remember what the sign of the Cross means anymore, only that it drives you to fury.

**Haven:** Mayo, Ireland

**Influence:** Magda holds herself distinct from the Cainites and other supernatural beings of Connaught, finding that — almost without fail — they seek to kill or dominate her. Her only regular associates are mundane animals, though she maintains a tenuous relationship with some of her more lucid childer. The mortals of Ireland call her the "Witch of Connaught," a title that both the Garou and other Cainites have adopted when talking about the ancient Lhiannan. Both groups hunt Magda, though only the Garou actively, usually only in response to her own actions. Many Fianna call her "the Thief" because she feeds on caerns as well as blood, draining (and in many cases destroying) their powers. Magda's knowledge of and affinity with the land is such that even the most powerful Garou have been unable to curtail her activities, each effort to do so resulting in bloody carnage.

**Clan:** Lhiannan

**Sire:** The Crone

**Nature:** Barbarian

**Demeanor:** Barbarian

**Generation:** 5th

**Embrace:** 500 BC

**Apparent Age:** Mid-teens

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

**Mental:** Perception 6, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 6, Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 5, Empathy 6, Intimidation 7, Leadership 3, Legerdemain 4, Subterfuge 5

**Skills:** Animal Ken 8, Crafts 5, Melee 4, Stealth 6, Survival 6

**Knowledge:** Hearth Wisdom 8, Linguistics 6, Medicine 6, Occult 7, Theology 5

**Disciplines:** Animalism 6, Auspex 5, Celerity 5, Fortitude 4, Obfuscate 5, Ogham 8, Potence 2, Presence 3, Protean 4

**Background:** Contacts 3 (childer), Domain 5, Retainers 4 (animals)

**Virtues:** Conviction 4, Instinct 4, Courage 4

**Road:** Beast 2

**Willpower:** 6

## Marcus Verus, Baron of Chester

**Background:** Baron Marcus Verus was a legionnaire with the Valeria Victrix (Legio XX), inducted into the Cult of Mithras and subsequently Embraced by the Living God himself. Unlike Mithras, Marcus was active throughout the dark years after the fall of Rome and built his power base from the ruins of Roman Britannia and the Saxon kingdoms that followed. His combination of martial skill and classical learning have stood him in good stead as the

Baron of Chester, a post he secured in the mid-eighth century before the arrival of the Danes and that he has maintained through a mix of guile and brute force. He remains a major power in the Cult of Mithras, inducting numerous mortals and Cainites into its mysteries, and aided his sire's return to power. Like Mithras, Marcus revels in battle and takes the field whenever the opportunity arises, though the opportunities are rare and the troops he faces or commands are less impressive than those of the past. Now more than a millennia old, Marcus is beginning to feel the pull of torpor but has thus far resisted its call, engaging in skirmishes against the Welsh and the troops of the Fief of York under Eyolf Ivarsson to keep him stimulated, though Mithras is unhappy at his child's aggressiveness.

**Image:** Baron Marcus is a well-built man who is clean-shaven and wears his salt and pepper hair short. He is almost always dressed in armor — contemporary Angevin designs rather than the Roman issue he trained in — though he keeps his original armor and short sword in his haven.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are gruff and authoritarian, leading few to question your wisdom or prowess. You do not so much speak as bark orders and have little time for courtiers and non-military personnel. For all your warlike appearance, however, you are intelligent and well educated, though that is not an aspect you show often, preferring instead to let others become overconfident so you can draw them in and manipulate them to suit your objectives.

**Haven:** Agricola Tower, Chester

**Influence:** Marcus is the oldest and longest serving of the barons and commands near-fanatical loyalty in his fief. Furthermore, his seniority in the Cult of Mithras — he is second only to the Living God — extends his reach across the Court of Avalon.

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** Mithras

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Defender

**Generation:** 5th

**Embrace:** AD 192

**Apparent Age:** Early 40s

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 6, Empathy 4, Intimidation 5, Leadership 5

**Skills:** Animal Ken 4, Archery 4, Etiquette 4, Melee 7, Ride 4, Stealth 3, Survival 4

**Knowledge:** Academics 3, Law 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 5, Seneschal 4, Theology 3

**Disciplines:** Animalism 3, Celerity 3, Dominate 4, Fortitude 6, Obfuscate 3, Potence 5

**Background:** Allies 3, Contacts 4, Domain 5, Herd 2\*, Influence 3, Mentor 5, Resources 4, Retainers 4, Status 5



**Virtues:** Conscience 4, Self-Control 5, Courage 5

**Road:** Humanity 5

**Willpower:** 6

\* Marcus only feeds on soldiers.

## Mithras, Prince of London

4th generation Ventrue, childe of Veddatha, walker on the Road of Kings

**Nature:** Innovator

**Demeanor:** Autocrat

**Embrace:** 1258 BC

**Apparent Age:** Mid-20s

**Background:** As a soldier in life, Mithras received the Embrace in 1258 BC and established himself as the living “war god” of various peoples. As the Lord of Light, Mithras portrayed himself as the bringer of civilization and morality, who spent his days guiding the sun through heavens and thus only appeared at night. Solidly established in Rome by the century before Christ, Mithras found himself nonetheless beset with rivals immersed in the convoluted politics of the Empire. The expansion of the Empire drew him to Britain, where his cult flourished among the soldiers of the frontier province, and he quickly became one of the principal Cainite lords of the land, deciding to enter torpor as the lands under his sway fell into barbarism.

He slept fitfully until the years after the Norman Conquest, waking to find the despised “shepherd’s cult” had grown beyond his wildest fears, subsuming as it did many aspects of his religion. Attempts to rebuild his cult and influence initially met stiff resistance from other Cainites, but through subterfuge and manipulation, he was able to clear his path to power, eventually regaining acceptance as the lord of the Court of Avalon just as mortal society stabilized under Henry II. His age, power



and charisma allow Mithras to dominate an unprecedented area, roughly analogous to the Angevin Empire but strongest in England, which he manipulates with the subtlety and cynicism of a master.

**Image:** Mithras is of medium height, with a compact but muscular build and darker skin than is usual in the British Isles. He wears his hair long, usually tucked beneath a soft cap, and prefers loose-fitting clothing that does not impede his movement.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You rarely act quickly, keeping your attitudes and motivations hidden. You never ask, only instruct; none in the Isles are your peers, let alone your betters. Some nights you consider revealing yourself to the hapless kine and showing them that their Nailed God is powerless next to you, and then leading them on a glorious campaign against any Cainite who opposes you. It would be suicide, of course, and that's why you don't — you don't intend to meet Final Death, ever.

## Meerlinda, Regent of Lion's Gate

4th generation Tremere, Walker on the Road of Kings

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Caretaker

**Embrace:** AD 1022

**Apparent Age:** Late 30s

**Background:** One of the Tremere's Inner Circle and among the most powerful magi in the Order of Hermes, Meerlinda participated in the ritual that created Ceoris in AD 980, and the Great Becoming that transformed the Inner Circle from mortal magi into vampires forty years later. At first she struggled with her new condition but eventually prevailed,

adopting the post of mediator between feuding Goratrix and Etrius. When the disparate members of the Inner Circle began moving around Europe to further the Tremere's objectives, she journeyed to England, arriving in AD 1098 to establish a chantry. At first she sought to do so in the southeast before running foul of the Triumvirate, and then in Glastonbury where she faced the concerted opposition of the native defenders of the land and the Christian Church. Eventually, she made her way to Durham where, after convincing the Cainite Baron of York as to the Tremere's benign nature, she founded the Lion's Gate Chantry in 1109. With Lion's Gate solidly established, Meerlinda and her associates have begun exerting their influence throughout the region, mainly within the Palatinate of Durham and Yorkshire but also Northumbria and the Scottish borders. She has established strong ties with Baron John of York via his representative in the Palatinate, Eloise Marchand, working carefully but diligently to win over the young Ventrue while simultaneously concealing from her the true objectives of Lion's Gate, namely the expansion of Tremere influence in Avalon.

**Image:** Meerlinda is a handsome woman of middle years who dresses conservatively in public, hiding her fine features and long auburn hair beneath her wimple. Within the confines of the chantry, she shows less restraint but always appears in control of her emotions, exuding an aura of power and authority with only her intense green eyes betraying her true age and determination.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You always appear calm, even when inwardly you are seething, getting your way with subtle persuasion and by understanding the motivations of others. Your outward appearance hides a heart of cold stone and you show no mercy when the situation prompts you to act.



## Melusine d'Anjou, "Queen" of Winchester

7th Generation Toreador, childe of Charles of Poitiers, Walker on the Road of Kings.

**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Caretaker

**Embrace:** AD 865

**Apparent Age:** Mid-20s

**Background:** Angevin legend tells of a beautiful woman who married the Duke of Anjou and bore his children but who could not abide to enter the church at Lusignan, and fled screaming when forced to do so. By some tales this woman — Melusine — was a fairy, in others a dragon or demon. The Cainite who goes by that name claims she is the progenitor of the myth, at that time a ghoul of Clan Toreador later embraced into the clan. It has proven impossible to verify this claim and any who challenge it have become victims of Melusine's cold temper, excluded from her favor until they admit their error.

Entering the political limelight in the late 10th century, she established herself as the preeminent power in Anjou and expanded her influence into Aquitaine and surrounding counties with the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry of Anjou. For many years, she resisted the influence of both Avalon and the Courts of Love and only accepted Mithras' rule in AD 1175. The implosion of the Angevin Empire during John's reign also sundered the Cainite holdings and Melusine found her lands overwhelmed by those loyal to the Court of Love, prompting her retreat first to Poitiers and then to England. She has come to despise Mithras for what she sees as his abandonment of Avalon's French holdings, establishing Winchester as her base of operations and becoming the focus of opposition to the prince.



Melusine has rebuilt her fortunes in England and turned her resources against Mithras, whom she would like to see deposed. She is the focus of resistance to Mithras' rule, but her public antipathy toward the London authorities means she is more effective as a figurehead of opposition than an active plotter against the prince, though she has worked with John of York and Nathaniel of Carlisle, as well as Meerlinda in Durham.

**Image:** Pretty and aware of her looks, the diminutive Melusine cultivates a coquettish image and flirts outrageously while never overstepping (publicly, at least) the bounds of courtly love. She always dresses in exquisite fashions, usually made from the finest cloth.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are always the center of attention. You want all men to love you and all women to want to be you, and you take great offense when people do not pay you the attention you deserve. You work hard to get what you want, alternating between velvet persuasion and brutal intimidation, the latter quite effective despite your small size.

## Thomas the Rat

9th generation Nosferatu, childe of Richard de Worde, walker on the Road of Humanity

**Embrace:** AD 1155

**Apparent Age:** Indeterminable

**Background:** Orphaned when only six years old, young Thomas eked out a living on the streets of London, running messages for the city's merchants and stealing his fill from the markets of the East Cheap and Billingsgate. He learned the city's alleys and byways, discovering nooks and crannies that few adults knew existed, his ability to worm his way into buildings quickly earning him the nickname of "the Rat." It was a harsh life and Thomas relied on his quick wits and agility to survive. The larger boys sought to take what little food he stole for himself and Thomas had to avoid their attentions or else face a horrible beating. Even as a child, Thomas was observant and soon learned how to spot easy targets and those who were liable to beat him if they caught him.

He was perhaps eight years old when he saw the twisted man for the first time, marveling that an adult could be so stealthy. Thereafter he saw the figure at various points around London, only to come under observation in return. Eventually, the man spoke to Thomas, offering him food scraps in exchange for his observations. It was the start of a long relationship between Thomas and the Nosferatu known as Richard de Worde. Already adept at skulking and spying, the boy became one of de Worde's eyes and ears in the city, feeding information to the Nosferatu first as mortal agent and then, once he had reached adulthood, as a ghoul. As the Anarchy wracked England, Thomas learned of the war raging behind the scenes between an ancient vampire lord and Norman usurpers. De Worde worked



with the ancient and when this Mithras became unquestioned master of the city, the prince offered de Worde any reward he desired. He chose to Embrace the man who had been his agent for so many years, and so Thomas' mortal life ended.

Lacking his sire's social graces and desire to move among the city's upper echelons (or his haughty manners), Thomas maintains his connections to the guttersnipes and lowlifes of the docks — his main haven is near Billingsgate — which serves both he and de Worde well. Thomas maintains a clear domain within the city, playing a vital role in the spymaster's network by observing the comings and goings at the docks. Like all of London's Nosferatu, Thomas is polite and civil, frequently being the first Cainite encountered by visitors to the city. His only problem is the city's Nosferatu crime lord, Ragged Jenny, who is Thomas' main rival for domain over the underclass that surrounds the docks.

## Rhiannon the Bard

8th generation Gangrel, childe of Angharad, walker on the Road of Sin

**Embrace:** AD 892

**Apparent Age:** Mid-20s

**Background:** Rhiannon was a beautiful child. Her mother — a minor noblewoman in the court of Powys — likened her voice to that of an angel. Music was her life and through it she could get her heart's desires — clothes, sweetmeats, pets — as much of the court fell in love with the delicate music of the young girl. It could not, however, bring Rhiannon her deepest desire, to take her place as one of the great Bards of Wales like Aneirin or Taliesin. Despite her skill, her sex blocked her path onward — in a young girl the pursuit of music was charming, but as she grew into womanhood it was an eccentricity to put aside

in favor of more appropriate pursuits like marriage and childrearing. She resisted her family's urgings, encouraged in her defiance by an old woman who for as long as Rhiannon recalled had listened to her playing late at night. The crone encouraged her to forsake the life of a wife and chattel to wander the land, experiencing firsthand the stuff from which famous tales emerge. The woman called on Rhiannon to see the world as it truly was, and if she could capture this essence in song, she would reveal great mysteries to the girl.

For long years Rhiannon wandered, cast out by her family and shunned by society. She fought, fornicated and feasted, taking in every experience her young body could survive. As her experiences broadened, she saw the truth in the old woman's words; she could perceive the insecurities and jealousies in men's hearts, their struggles to subsume their desires beneath the morality of Christianity. Rhiannon made no such efforts, living a visceral existence that shocked those around her. Some called her a harlot, others a witch. Her songs changed, no longer the simpering of a girl-child but biting satires from which none escaped. Rhiannon's metamorphosis pleased the old woman, Angharad of the Gangrel, who saw in her feral behavior an ideal "daughter" for the clan.

At first the world of Cainites shocked Rhiannon but soon she came to revel in the new reality that surrounded her, finding in the Cainites and their politics a bottomless well of tales to be told and notables to be brought low. In the centuries since her Embrace, Rhiannon has variously praised and ridiculed most of the Cainite notables in the Isles, though she frequently singles out her distant kinswoman Baroness Seren and Prince Mithras, leading to her being unwelcome in both Gloucester and London. Instead, Rhiannon wanders the Isles, visiting the barons' courts and other sites that pique her interest, all the while seeking new experiences for her undead body.



# Mage Characters

The Isles play host to many unique and powerful mages, of all levels of initiation, from every class of society and from all the peoples who dwell there.

## Morvyth

**Background:** Young, but wise beyond her years, Morvyth is a respected and influential figure among those who follow the Old Faith of the Isles. A powerful and elemental witch, Morvyth worships the maker of all things under the name Don, the Welsh mother-goddess.

Morvyth is something of a mendicant for her faith, who travels between scattered communities and congregations of pagans. She has claimed a small cray in Gwynedd, in Wales, from where she draws her power. Here she communes with the Great Mother, and here those seeking knowledge or supernatural assistance can visit her. However, she remains close to her roots in Kernow, just across the Bristol Channel, and can frequently be found in Cornwall or Wessex.

Morvyth watches over her people, but plays at a delicate balance between helping them and hindering them. She is well aware that when Christians come to ensure that Christ is being given His due, her presence is more harmful than helpful. She therefore does her best to remain hidden from anyone she doesn't recognize as pagan, and sometimes lures Christian interlopers into danger.

**Image:** Morvyth is a pretty, earthy and lively young woman. She is not beautiful, and despite her best efforts, seems to be older than she is. She wears the loose rags of the peasant woman.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are a passionate, fiery personage. Your loves, lusts, obsessions and hatreds are powerful and extreme. Nevertheless, you are also an intensely focused and ambitious person. You are a witch, a priestess of your adopted communities. You are responsible, primarily, for your congregation's welfare. You will risk all to save them, even the life of your closest allies.

**Influence:** Morvyth is well-respected among those who know her, but she keeps an extremely low profile.

**Fellowship:** Old Faith

**Nature:** Autocrat

**Demeanor:** Celebrant

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

**Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Archery 2, Crafts 2, Herbalism 4, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

**Knowledges:** Cosmology 3, Enigmas 2, Hearth Wisdom 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 4, Cray 3, Sanctum 3



**Foundation:** Spontaneity 3

**Pillars:** Spring 2, Summer 3, Winter 1

**Willpower:** 6

## Gustav

**Background:** Names have power. Old magicians know better than to reveal their names (or much else) to those they do not trust. "Gustav" reveals his real name to no one. He has too many enemies.

Gustav is old, kept artificially ageless by his command of magic. He has lived in the region of East Anglia since the coming of Hengist. An ancient Valdaerman, he continues to harry the Messianic Voices and the worshippers of Freya, be they members of the Old Faith, Valdaermen or mere mortals. The origin of this hatred is unclear. He once confessed to a lover, decades ago, that a "terrible fire of the Nailed God" burned him many centuries ago. He said that the worshippers of Freya turned him away when he demanded help and healing.

Gustav has borne the agonies of his burns since then. He must constantly maintain his body through magical healing. The "divine fire" he speaks of charred his body to the bone. The pain from the burns is constant and maddening; when he works magic, his skin turns waxy, as if the burns start showing through.

While Gustav has made enemies among the Messianic Voices, it is the Order of Hermes that has grown most concerned with his activities. He has gotten more active in recent years, and he has visited the western parts of Wales and Northumbria in the company of, apparently, werewolves. The Hermetics accuse Gustav of infernalism — accusations Gustav does not deign to answer — and they fear that his crusade against Christianity will attract undue attention from Rome.

Fellow Valdaermen whisper that Gustav is going insane. His pain and his obsessive crusade are sapping what



his left of his soul. The Valdaermen wonder if the Hermetics are not justified in their concerns, and are watching Gustav carefully. But while the other mages watch and wait, Gustav is busy.

Of late, Gustav has paid occasional visits to a sept of werewolves in North York. Ferreting out the proper greetings was simply a matter of casting some runes, and now he has taken audience with a young werewolf called Ute on several occasions. Gustav is impressed by the raw power of the werewolves, but considers their spirit magic laughable — true magic power is based on sacrifice and blood, not chanting and incantation. He wishes to harness the werewolves' destructive power against his enemies, and perhaps take Ute away with him afterwards. He feels no love for her, however — to him, she is an animal in a comely human body.

**Image:** Gustav is an older man, in his early sixties, with a full head of long straw-blond hair worn shaggy and long around his shoulders. He has a thin, lined face and narrow, feral eyes. His fingers are long and end in hard, sharp fingernails. He wears a long Viking cloak and woolen Saxon clothes. He walks stooped, leaning on a cane. In anger, he stands straight, and he towers over most people.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are obsessive. You are driven. You are justified in your crusade. No matter who gets hurt, you will have your vengeance. You do not care what needs doing, but the followers of the Nailed God must suffer for their actions and for their pathetic beliefs. You have striven against your weaknesses — your burnt body, your limited human perceptions — for centuries, and you respect strength. Few command your respect. Few are worthy. You look at the world through narrowed eyes, and speak softly.

**Influence:** None to speak of. Gustav is extremely powerful but doesn't trust anyone enough to ask them to do even simple chores for him.

**Fellowship:** Valdaermen

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Rebel

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Expression 4, Leadership 2, Subterfuge 3

**Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Crafts 3, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

**Knowledges:** Enigmas 2, Hearth Wisdom 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Politics 3, Theology 2

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 2, Fount 3

**Foundation:** Blôt 3

**Pillars:** Fara 3, Forlog 2, Galdrar 4, Hjaldrar 3

**Willpower:** 8

**Talismans:** Gustav's cloak is enchanted to translate his pain directly into magical power. Once per day, he can channel the pain he constantly feels from his burns through his cloak for the equivalent of two points of Quintessence, which must be spent immediately.

## Al-Nasir

**Background:** Hassan Al-Nasir claims to be the child of an Arabic Batini mage, raised and educated in Grenada. He wanders throughout the Isles, though he can be most frequently found in the area near Winchester. Fearing persecution, he disguises himself via magic as a young Norman scholar. His role is twofold. He is something of an ambassador from the Ahl-i-Batin of Grenada to the Mages of England, and frequently consults powerful and important mages throughout the Isles on the orders of his master. Also, he is an active member of a new cross-order cabal in Winchester, a relative rarity, and he seeks to find common threats against which to unite mages. Al-Nasir (whose name in Arabic means "the victorious") is an active and ambitious young man, driven to excel.

Al-Nasir claims his forename is Hassan (meaning "slave" in Arabic). He was not born with that name. Many Batini take particular names upon reaching the level of Murid. Al-Nasir is different, however. He was born Joseph, in Canterbury, in 1200. In 1212, fired by religious fervor and powerful dreams, Joseph joined the Children's Crusade, traveling along with hundreds of other English children to the port of Marseilles. Like all the others who survived the voyage from Marseilles, he was enslaved and sold in the slave markets in Tunisia.

A man who needed a child to clean his sanctum — and perform other, depraved, duties — purchased him. The man took him to Grenada, where the Batini condemned the boy's master as an infernalist and destroyed him. The Batini saw magical potential in Joseph and trained him as a mage. His years among the Batini changed him; his skin color darkened as he subtly adopted



the body language and appearance of his Ahl-i-Batin tutors. But each night, he dreamed of his time in the hold of the merchant ship and the long dark nights in his first master's bed. The dreams tormented him. To ward off sleep, Joseph worked, studied, practiced and meditated harder. He went through his apprenticeship in half the normal time. He mastered a dozen languages — the eastern Saxon English of his home, the French of the Normans and the French of the people of Languedoc, Kurdish, Farsi and many Arabic dialects. He was named the “victorious one” as the other Batini praised his work ethic and potential. Then they sent him to England.

Now al-Nasir works closely with Julius, a Hermetic mage, in Winchester, and serves the ends of his Fellowship in Grenada. He harbors a deep hatred of infernalists and anyone who would hurt children. However, al-Nasir is also a broken man, his sanity fraying at the edges. He is too close to home. He has also recently heard that his mother still lives, in Cambridge. He refuses to visit her, knowing it would destroy his sanity (and possibly hers).

**Image:** While disguised as a Norman, al-Nasir has fair hair and fair skin and appears to be a slightly overweight, soft-skinned scholar. Normally, he is a lean, thin, muscular man who appears to be of Iberian Arabic descent (with a hint, perhaps, of native Spanish blood). In either guise, he wears a scholar's robes.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are driven, eternally curious and ambitious. You are a risk taker and a dedicated academic. When not working, or deep in thought, you are fidgety and nervous. You need constant challenges. You have few friends, and are not particularly close to any.

## Lysander

**Nature:** Caretaker

**Demeanor:** Pedagogue

**Fellowship:** Order of Hermes

**Background:** The mage known as Lysander is a historian. A member of the Order of Hermes, he has undertaken to record the shadow histories of the mages of the British Isles, and further afield. An apprentice of mediocre potential, he knew that he could never match the power and authority of others. Ignored and overlooked, his career seemed destined to flounder. That changed after a chance encounter with a man named Gunther, an old dying Valdaerman of Waterford. Gunther told Lysander the story of the Norman assault on his town.

The tale of blood and slaughter outraged Lysander, who decided that someone must record these tales and make a history of the mages beyond the hagiographies of the archmages and the outright lies of the ancient legends. With just enough magic to protect himself, Lysander traveled alone to Germany, Italy and France, compiling books of histories of the Order of Hermes and of the other Fellowships. His quest impressed others. Like-minded mages sent Lysander reminiscences, eyewitness accounts and records; the missives came from all across Europe and even the Levant. Lysander, using an old ritual (Corona 3, Primus 3), could transcribe and copy these accounts with incredible speed. His library increased to number dozens of books. His works brought attention, and his influence grew. Lysander now has access to every Hermetic chantry in Europe, and some of the other Fellowships. A history text by Lysander carries immense prestige, and copies of his work command high prices.

During his travels, Lysander has had encounters with the fae. He has grown fascinated with them, and plans his next work to be a “comprehensive study” of their kind.

Lysander should have made many enemies, but he has found that even if his reports are unflattering, old mages consider it an honor that Lysander has guaranteed their place in history.



**Image:** Lysander is a small, slight, youngish man with pale green eyes. Waif thin and fidgety, he is very different from the confident adepts of the Order. He sports the brown robes of the monkish scholar, but unlike a monk he wears his hair long. A fastidious man, he cleans obsessively, which makes him stand out amid the muck of the lands in which he travels.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are diffident and shy. You are not comfortable in social situations, and you laugh in all the wrong places. Nevertheless, you are an honest and genuine person, and very loyal. You listen, and you wait. Eventually even the most secretive mages will reveal something, and then you can start to unravel their stories. You do not like fighting and have little confidence at magic. You prefer to leave both to others.

## Linden the Ragged

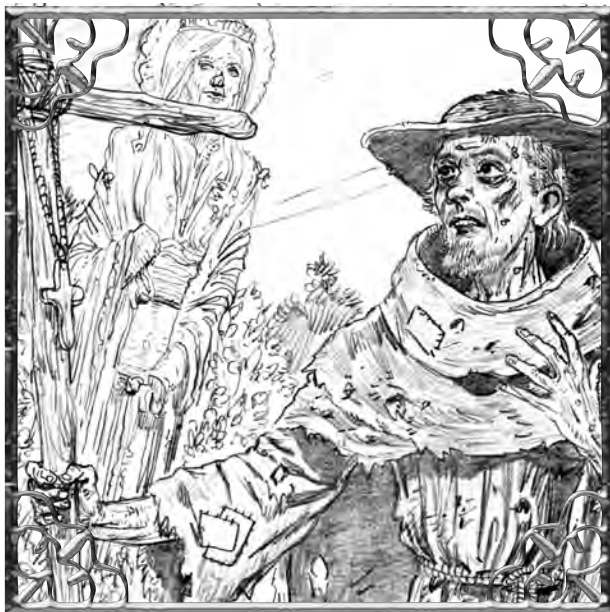
**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Penitent

**Fellowship:** Spirit-Talkers

**Background:** Linden was born in Canterbury in April of 1204. Though his parents had no way to know it at the time, he was born at the exact moment that the first fire was set in far-off Constantinople. His parents recall that he was an especially moody child; even as a baby, he was always frightened, always eggy.

As Linden grew older, he calmed down some, but only because he learned to ignore the voices that constantly spoke to him. Linden could hear the crow-like screeches of the dead from half a world away, and he often wonders how he has managed to keep his sanity (if, indeed, he has, which many of his acquaintance dispute).



Linden has never left Canterbury, but he speaks more than a dozen languages, is fully literate and knows customs from various eras and countries all across Europe. Most people assume his eclectic cauldron of knowledge stems from living in a city that draws so many pilgrims, but the truth is that Linden listens to the dead more than the living, and he has a superb memory. Unfortunately, the constant deluge of information has left him unfit to do any sort of work. He subsists as a beggar in Canterbury, scraping by on the generosity of the pilgrims. Although he is a Spirit-Talker, Linden is Christian — unlike most of his Fellowship, he never speaks to nature or animal spirits, only the spirits of human dead. He has yet to encounter anything that he would consider an angel, and until recently the same was true of demons.

Not long ago, the spirits began to reveal the walking dead to Linden. They are vague, unfortunately (as the dead often are when talking of anything but themselves), but Linden knows that these corpses from Hell rise up after dark and stalk the town. While other mages in Canterbury disregard what the old beggar says, Linden is getting desperate — he knows the situation is going to get worse. He hears whispers of “the thorns of the blood rose” and “the Shining Blood ascendant,” and desperately cries out for succor. He usually receives only a bit of bread or perhaps a half-penny for his pain.

**Image:** Linden is not quite 30 years of age, but his sallow, sunken eyes and grubby face make him look much older. As his moniker suggests, he dresses in beggar’s rags, and is so thin that his ribs are clearly visible through his skin. Even if the walking corpses don’t get him first, the townsfolk say, Linden isn’t likely to last another winter.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You have no idea why God saw fit to curse you with this maddening gift; you long ago stopped asking. The spirits that surround you are sometimes of benefit — they can hide you, or lend you their strength, but you would gladly give that up for a moment’s *peace*. The revelation that the dead walk in the hallowed halls of the Church frightens you to death, but you have no idea where to turn with that information. Perhaps after you die, you can find another like yourself and pass on the terrible truth. Oh, God — could that be the true nature of the spirits surrounding you even now?

## Brother Anthony of Bardsey

**Nature:** Rebel

**Demeanor:** Defender

**Fellowship:** Messianic Voices

**Background:** Brother Anthony resides on the island of Bardsey, at the monastery founded by St. Cadfan. He is one of several Messianic Voices at the monastery, charged with watching over the flock on



the island and keeping them safe from harm. His superior, Brother Pwyll, strives to make peace with the Old Faith so as to ward off English raids, and Brother Anthony half-heartedly helps with this effort, but his real interest lies with death and the dead.

It might be the island itself that made him thus — “the island of 22,000 saints” has a history of death, natural and otherwise. When Anthony arrived and saw the fences made from human bones, he felt a strange shiver inside, as though he had found his calling. Since then, he has focused his theurgy studies on death (and undead). What causes a soul to remain on Earth, rather than fly to its reward? What about vampires — Anthony has heard many legends of these creatures, but has seen no real proof of their existence. Nothing in his research indicates that they should not exist, however.

Anthony is aware of how his research would be received by other Voices, and so keeps it to himself. He has become the official performer of last rites on the island, however, and knows the name and age of everyone who has died there since his arrival. He has a bit of a death wish himself — and he fully intends to linger as a ghost once he dies.

## Elisabet O'Donal

**Nature:** Defender

**Demeanor:** Celebrant

**Fellowship:** Messianic Voices

**Background:** Elisabet O'Donal is a happily married woman. Her mother, who, while married, was never very happy about it, made certain that her daughter married a good man. Robert O'Donal is just such a man — strong, healthy, honest and intelligent, he fell instantly in love with the young Elisabet and their life together began well.

They had been married for only a year when Elisabet met a Messianic Voice named Brother Ewan. Ewan recognized the potential for magic in Elisabet, and solemnly informed her that it was her duty to leave her husband and serve God. She retorted that in holy wedlock, she *was* serving God, and that if God had anything more to show her He should do so — she would face it along with her husband. Ewan stayed in the area for a few years, training her as a member of the Fellowship, and then left. By that time, the always-industrious Elisabet had become involved with the other local Voices, and while she never achieved the same level of power as some of her compatriots, she was just as driven and pious as any of them. Somehow, though, the moment never seemed right to inform her husband of what had happened — he knew that she was a devout woman, but she performed her chores and bore him three fine sons, and so he never suspected anything amiss.



Recently, however, the split in her Fellowship (see p. 100) has been demanding more and more of her time. Robert and her children have noticed her distraction, and she has taken to using her powers to cover her absences from their home. Robert, never a stupid man, has realized that she is hiding something, but is too hurt by the notion that his wife might be unfaithful to ask her directly. Unfortunately, if he accuses her of this publicly (which he might well do), the resulting consequences might be devastating for both the Messianic Voices in Scotland and for the lovely young woman torn between her faith and her man.

## Inquisitors

The Inquisition is new to the British Isles. Its most significant figures are a mix of local people, a few returning natives and some successful inquisitors from elsewhere. The first five profiles below are the leaders of the five

orders in the Isles, making up the main Council of Faith. The other two are notable members of the Inquisition.

## Simpkin Cotter

**Background:** Simpkin Cotter was a London boy like a thousand others, growing up in a large family, many of whom didn't survive childhood. As he reached manhood, he had to choose between apprenticeship and poverty and wisely went for the former. He spent the next two years of his life in his master's carpentry shop or the local chapel. Perhaps it was the skill of the local preacher, or perhaps it was the profession that Jesus and Simpkin shared — carpentry — that awakened the lad's faith. Whatever it was, it affected him so deeply that when he caught a monk in the arms of a whore in a London back street, his first reaction was tell his preacher. When his preacher told him to keep his mouth shut, he took to watching the preacher in his rare free time, to see what had possessed him to so abuse God's Commandments.

Simpkin was not the only man watching the priest. A member of Thomas' Men had been watching both the monk and the priest for some months and was impressed to note how swiftly the unskilled boy learned their mutual secret: Membership in a sensualist pagan cult that seemed to offer certain members genuine diabolical power. He was of a mind to approach Simpkin when God intervened. Cotter was trailing the priest one evening and, to his delight, watched him meet with the monk. The two then met with a third hooded man and entered a house together. Simpkin managed to steal a glance through the window just as God showed him the truth. The third man's diabolic nature was laid bare to the young apprentice, who started screaming, "The Devil is here, the Devil is here" as loud as he could. The watching member of Thomas' Men calmly punched the lad into insensibility, made some excuse about drunken apprentices to the crowd that had

gathered and escaped with the lad before the occupants of the house could emerge.

Simpkin spent the next six months of his life learning how to read and write English and Latin, while also learning the mechanisms of Thomas' Men. He proved a quick learner and an able spy. By Easter the following year, he was back on the streets of London, in the pay of the Men. He was serving God, and he was happy.

By 1215, Cotter was approaching middle age and had become the Men's most senior spy in London. The transition to serving the Oculi Dei made little difference in his life until the day the London chapter-house was destroyed in an hour of violence and blood. Simpkin was the first to find the bodies and the last to visit the house after it was emptied. The experience has given the quiet man a harder edge and an absolute loyalty to the Inquisition. Many of his fellows underestimate him because of his lowly background, especially the Norman Abbot Albert and Sir Robert Bernières. Simpkin doesn't mind: It's his information that's important, not his self-esteem. After all, isn't pride a sin?

**Image:** Simpkin is a typical Anglo-Saxon, of average height and stocky, with muddy brown hair. His mouth seems perpetually downcast and he has a habit of walking in a round-shouldered manner that makes him seem shorter than he is. He dresses exactly like every other artisan in London, except that he carries a slightly larger bag than most do. This, of course, houses his paper, pen and ink.

**Roleplaying Notes:** Don't talk, listen. When you do talk, only offer information, not opinion. Listen to everything and remember everything. Sometimes a well-deployed fact can change the course of a discussion more than an impassioned 10-minute appeal, and you're well aware of that power. The only thing that makes you angry is politicking and point-scoring between your fellow inquisitors. Can't they see that there are more important things to address?

**Influence:** Considerable. Simpkin Cotter is a high-ranking member of the Oculi Dei, and most members of Thomas' Men have heard how he found a diabolic cult without any training or aid. He commands the loyalty of much of his order in England, and as such has a tremendous amount of information available.

**Order:** Oculi Dei

**Nature:** Perfectionist

**Demeanor:** Survivor

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Commerce 2, Crafts 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Performance 2, Ride 1, Stealth 3



**Knowledges:** Academics 2, Hearth Wisdom 1, Investigation 4, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 3, Politics 3, Theology 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Contacts 5, Flock 2, Influence 1, Rank 4, Resources 3

**Orisons:** Eye of Vigilance, The Penitent Man

**Endowments:** (Benedictions) Gift of Second Sight, Heavenly Shepherd, Divine Liturgy, Water to Wine; (Psalms) Fiat Lux

**Curses:** (Anathemae) Lamb of God, Silent Vigil ; (Interdictions) Suffer the Little Children

**Virtues:** Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 4

**Superior Virtues:** Faith 1, Wisdom 3, Zeal 1

**Piety:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

## Sir Robert Bernières

**Background:** Crusading should have been a great adventure for young Robert Bernières. It was the chance to fight for God and the pope and win a place in Heaven, and also an opportunity for an unremarkable middle son of a Marcher lord to win himself some wealth or land. With those thoughts firmly in his mind, Robert set off for the Holy Land on the Fifth Crusade.

As the months turned into years, the idealistic young lad changed into a bitter, battle-seasoned warrior. After years of conflict, he began to ask what he was really fighting for and to contemplate a return to England. That night, a lone Saracen warrior attacked the soldiers' camp, slaughtering dozens before they even left their beds. As Robert swiftly mounted his horse and prepared to face the attacker, he whispered a small prayer for the strength to defeat this devil warrior. God answered his prayer. Robert's body burned with unexpected strength and, after a short duel with the surprised killer, Robert neatly removed his head from his shoulders. The body was dust before it hit the ground.

Robert fell to his knees, thanked the Lord and committed his life to serving Him against the Devil. The only problem was that not a single one of his friends would believe his tale of that night. They ascribed his stories of the demon warrior to a soldier's normal hyperbole and laughed it off. Word of his tale spread, however, and reached more sympathetic ears. Within the year he was a member of the Poor Knights of the Passion of the Cross of Acre.

His career since has taken him all across Europe in the service of the Knights and the Inquisition. In his decades of service with the order, he has fought creatures far more fearsome than that devilish warrior and come close to dying more often than he can count without disrobing to look at his scars. When the chance came to return to England for the first time in ten years, he accepted without hesitation.

Given a free hand to establish the Poor Knights, he chose to return home to the Welsh Marches and establish



a chapter-house for the training of new members of the order there. The constant warfare that wracks the land would make an excellent training ground, he reasoned. It was easy enough to find an abandoned castle in his brother's lands and arrange a favorable deal leveraging family connections and the order's considerable wealth. Now he is the leading proponent of direct action against the Devil's works in the British Isles. That often puts him in conflict with Simpkin Cotter and Abbot Albert, who prefer to wait and research before moving. Robert is not a patient man and has chosen to start his own purges in Wales. His growing success is boosting his confidence in his plans.

**Image:** Robert would be a good-looking, healthy man in his late 30s if it weren't for the network of scar tissue that covers his face and much of his body. Some scars look like sword wounds, others like the marks of animal claws. He makes little attempt to conceal them, wearing his hair close cropped. Robert has spent his life in uniform and is getting too old to break that habit now.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are surprisingly jovial for a man of your experiences. You hardened yourself to the necessities of the cause long ago and it's rare that even the worst atrocity of the enemy affects you visibly in any way. You find dealing with other inquisitors trying. You are used to giving and receiving orders, and all this discussion gets on your wick. You only have a few years left to do God's work on this Earth, if you are lucky. Why waste it in talking?

**Order:** As a knight and a noble, Robert has a great deal of personal clout with the citizens nearby. His influence within the Inquisition is considerable as well, but largely limited to his own order. Robert doesn't play politics when he can avoid it; he leaves such things to Simpkin Cotter and Bertramus von Muranu.

**Order:** Poor Knights of the Passion of the Cross of Acre

**Nature:** Defender

**Demeanor:** Celebrant  
**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1  
**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3  
**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4  
**Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Archery 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 4, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4  
**Knowledges:** Academics 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 3, Seneschal 3, Theology 1  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Chapter-House 5, Contacts 1, Influence 3, Rank 4, Resources 4, Retainers 2  
**Orisons:** The Hierophant, Moral Compass, Sanguine Hymn  
**Endowments:** (Investitures) Catechumen, Transfiguration of the Flesh, Flight of Angels, Auto Da Fé; (Legacies) Noblesse Oblige  
**Curses:** (Interdictions) Solemn Oath (honesty), Call of Duty; (Stigmata) Lashed in Judgment  
**Virtues:** Conscience 3, Self-Control 2, Courage 4  
**Superior Virtues:** Faith 3, Wisdom 1, Zeal 4  
**Piety:** 6  
**Willpower:** 5

## Bertramus von Murnau

**Nature:** Penitent  
**Demeanor:** Gallant  
**Order:** House of Murnau

**Background:** Bertramus has spent most of his life trying to avoid three things — the family curse, its consequences and, most of all, his father. Munifrid von Murnau was an austere and pious man, and one of the family's strongest proponents of joining in the fledgling Inquisition. He encouraged his children who showed signs of the



curse, and even those relatives who didn't, to work to use this talent for the good of the Church and the Christian world. Bertramus, on the other hand, was more interesting in getting rich and having fun.

A merchant by profession, inclination and aptitude, Bertramus has only one hard and fast rule: When you smell the stink of the Devil, turn away from the deal. This rule, combined with his own skill in the mercantile world, made him a wealthy man by even his family's standards. Still, as he rarely stayed in one place long enough for letters to be delivered, he avoided the secondary and secret aspect of the family business until two years ago.

His personal life had gone well, too, once his father passed on. He had married young, to the youngest daughter of a minor noble house. This marriage helped furnish an alliance between the Murnau and the girl's relatives. The match was a good one and the two fell in love, despite the political nature of the marriage. Liedrada bore him two sons and a daughter and never seemed to mind his extended absences on business. She was frugal and efficient in running his house and a useful hostess with it.

After one fateful trip, he returned to his home in Bavaria, longing for a kiss from his wife. Instead, he recoiled in horror as the stench of the Devil rose from her very flesh. For a week, he lay beside her, unwilling to reach out and touch a creature of Satan, even though he had loved her for 20 years. In the end, he swiftly arranged another business trip and sent an important message to his cousin, an active inquisitor. His wife was captured two days later. Under the question, she revealed the name of her corruptor before she went to the fire. When Bertramus returned, his town was a little safer for good Christian folk, and his heart was empty.

His family took their errant cousin under their wing and turned his misery to anger as they slowly inducted him into the secret work of the Inquisition. By the turn of the year, the despair in his heart had become a raging passion for the Lord's work. When the Inquisition offered him the opportunity to extend the family's work into the British Isles, he accepted without hesitation.

Bertramus is surprisingly happy in London. It is a trading hub of Northern Europe, which keeps him busy enough on its own. However, the challenges facing him as the leader of the Isles' Council of Faith and the man with responsibility for cleansing London of the Devil's spawn keeps him too busy to consider what he lost.

**Image:** Bertramus is, by careful contrivance, the very image of a wealthy, dissolute merchant. He carries enough weight to conceal a muscular frame and dresses gaudily and ostentatiously. Indeed, he has his clothes slightly padded to make him appear bulkier and sweatier than he is in reality. When he is alone, or working on Inquisition business, he wears simple, black clothes, plainly cut. They remind him that he is in perpetual mourning for his dead wife and her lost soul. In black robes, he is so different from his normal

appearance that he can pass unrecognized among friends, if he is careful.

**Roleplaying Hints:** In public, you are the consummate merchant, always ready to make a deal or sell your wares with a steady line of patter. You speak English and French with a distinct German accent, which you thicken on occasion. In private and when on the Inquisition's business, you are a changed man, serious, focused and terse of speech. The Devil took your wife from you and now you shall take more from him.

## Abbot Albert d'Aquitaine

**Nature:** Autocrat

**Demeanor:** Judge

**Order:** Red Order

**Background:** Albert, like so many unfortunate later sons of Norman lords, ended up in the Church. He had little choice. His father, an astute man, raised the boy with that very destination in mind and Albert obligingly slipped into the role. In fact, his father did a better job than he realized, awaking in the boy a passionate belief in God that served him well during his early years in a French monastery. The young Albert's thirst for knowledge was prodigious and brought him to the attention of a visiting monk from the Order of St. Theodosius.

After some days spent deep in conversation between the daily offices, the Red Brother invited Albert to join the order and accompany him back to the Abbey of St. Denis in Paris. Albert was reluctant at first but slowly came round as Gervèse le Fèvre spun tales of the research and learning the order was pursuing.

Gervèse and his new protégé rose quickly through the ranks of the order. Gervèse became abbot, while Albert became one of the order's most talented wielders of the Holy Art. Albert tested himself repeatedly in combat with the enemy and triumphed every time. He grew restless in Paris and craved greater challenges elsewhere. His friend's growing arrogance and pride troubled Gervèse and he worried that Albert was falling into sin. After some thought, he assigned Albert the most challenging job within the order: Overseeing the troublesome Brother Giordano Nicola d'Arzenta at the Abbey of St. Andrew in Damburrow, Scotland.

The assignment has taught Albert humility, all right. His initially troubled relationship with Brother Giordano has become unimportant as Albert struggles to deal with the Satanic forces on their very doorstep. He is discovering that some things take more than learning, arrogance and the Holy Art to overcome: They take genuine faith. He's beginning to wonder if his faith isn't rather weaker than he thought.

**Image:** Albert is a tall, rangy man with an intense face, narrow eyes and a snub nose that make his features look slightly out of balance. He wears the traditional robes of the order at all times but fidgets endlessly with his hands and



paces restlessly, as if overburdened with energy that seeks escape through motion.

**Roleplaying Notes:** You are sharp of tongue and sharper of mind. Your conversational style is one long series of staccato questions to all those around you, followed by a concise summary of your ideas on the situation. You disdain small, trivial conversations and end them abruptly. Of late, you have developed a slight stammer and have become increasingly paranoid. Living near such a stronghold of the enemy is having its effect on you, one that only a major victory over the Devil's forces will reverse.

## Sister Anachorita

**Nature:** Pedagogue

**Demeanor:** Autocrat

**Order:** Sisters of Saint John

**Background:** Anachorita was born Ameline in a small village some miles from Orléans, in AD 1195. She was always an intense and serious child and by the time she entered her early teens, her future was clear: She would enter a religious order and devote her life to serving God. Ameline approached the local convent and endured through an unusually trying series of tests. Finally, she met an older woman with a lined and weary face but kindly eyes. The young girl, who was wondering if she had made the right choice, warmed to this nun instantly. The two talked for a while of God, faith and life.

Finally, the old nun asked Ameline if she had ever had God talk to her. "No," the novice replied.

"Let us see if he will, then," said the old nun. She taught Ameline how to clear her mind and search outward for the love of the Lord. The girl seized hold of this idea and pleaded to the Lord to open her mind. He did not reply. Disappointed, Ameline retreated to the



dorm she shared with the other prospective recruits to the order.

That night, God opened her mind. Her visions, of pale creatures stalking humans in the streets of the city and diabolic sorcerers calling forth demons from Hell, terrified her beyond all reason. The following morning she joined the Sisters of St. John and studied under the old nun, Petrona. Her mentor was not a great seer herself, but she excelled in bringing on the talents of others. Ameline quickly became a gifted seer and an excellent inquisitor. She worked with an all-female, cross-order cell based in the Languedoc, rooting out the forces of the Devil.

She was an obvious choice to lead the Inquisition in Ireland. Her combination of powerful insight and strong leadership skill would be invaluable in a land still smarting from the imposition of Rome's rule over the native Church. She accepted the job with misgivings she still has, fuelled by her growing visions of a terrible confrontation between the Inquisition and the creatures of evil the Irish describe as the "Fair Folk." Still, she has done her job well. She changed her name to Sister Anachorita, a Celtic name that sits better with local people, and set about her business with determination and faith. Dublin's troubled streets are a little freer now of the creatures of Satan and new cells of inquisitors are taking root all over the country. The joint Red Sisters and Sisters of St. John chapter-house she runs in Dublin has proved a success as well, without the terrible problems faced by the London cells. The members of the British Council of Faith tend to defer to her without thinking on occasion, a reaction that she and her closest ally, Simpkin Cotter, find endlessly amusing.

**Image:** Anachorita is a striking woman with a long face, large eyes and a full mouth. She looks too earthy for a woman of the cloth, yet she is as pious and chaste a woman as you can find in Ireland. Her robes are always immaculate and her hair kept closely cropped.

**Roleplaying Notes:** You project an air of calm piety that you do not always feel inside. You miss your old cell desperately, even after two years in Dublin. You find your fellows in both Councils of Faith to be unnecessarily self-interested and have little tolerance for inexperienced inquisitors who cannot see the need for all orders to work as one. Those inquisitors who do hew to your concept of unity can rely on you for life.

## Agnes of Kent

**Nature:** Caretaker

**Demeanor:** Defender

**Order:** Sisters of Saint John

**Background:** Only a miracle from God Himself can explain how young Agnes survived when her family and almost all of the inhabitants of her small village in Kent were killed in a summer fire. The other survivors took the orphaned young girl to Canterbury, in search of alms and a new life.

Canterbury turned out to be a confusing place for the young country girl. The town was overflowing with pilgrims, all there to visit the tomb of the martyr saint Thomas Becket. Some were piteous wretches, desperate for healing. Others were jovial holidaymakers, enjoying the taverns as much as the cathedral and prone to making lewd comments to the frightened girl. She took shelter with the third group, fervent pilgrims come to worship at the tomb of England's greatest saint.

Agnes will never forget the moment she touched the martyr's tomb. The very moment her small fingers touched the cold stone, she felt God move within her. He opened her eyes and ears to the spirits of her dead family and as their beloved voices filled her ears once more, she fell into a trance, in which she stayed for days. The people of Canterbury were used to strange occurrences and miracles around the Archbishop's resting



place, but this girl was clearly touched by God. Word spread, particularly of her tales about demons corrupting the Lord's church and defiling the martyr's tomb. Five days after she went into the trance, a small party of nuns collected the half-starved and delirious young girl and took her to the Convent of St. Cecilia in Amberley, Sussex, a chapter-house of the Sisters of St. John.

Agnes has never escaped the ghosts of her family. Instead, they direct her in the work of rooting out the servants of the Enemy, making the novice inquisitor a formidable investigator. They only leave Agnes be when she has exposed a minion of Satan, giving her a brief respite before she must return to His work.

While her superiors worry about Agnes' obsession with her duties, inquisitors are still too few within the Isles for them to put too many barriers in her way. The novice is now leading a small cell in Norfolk, seeking the Devil's pawns behind a series of killings in the county with the help of her family.

## Brother Giordano Nicola d'Arzenta

**Nature:** Dreamer

**Demeanor:** Perfectionist

**Order:** Red Order

**Background:** Brother Giordano was the first member of his family to take Holy Orders in three generations, principally because he comes from a long line of unapologetic heretics. The son of a knight in service to the Viscount of Carcassonne, Giordano was born the year Innocent III took the papal tiara and was eleven years of age when the Albigensian Crusade came to his homeland. Judged too young to fight by his father, he and his mother and younger siblings were sent to live with sympathetic relatives in Arzenta. By the time they were finally summoned home in 1218, Giordano was a grown man, knighted in his own right, intelligent, curious and even-tempered.

Had his life taken any other course, he might have dedicated himself more closely to the faith of his youth and concentrated on rebuilding his shattered homeland. It was not to be: A brush with the supernatural left his family devastated and Giordano himself badly injured in body and soul. Only the efforts of the Poor Knight Fantino di Milano saved him from death and worse, and turned him onto the path he now walks. He made a genuine and heartfelt conversion to the one Church, accepted baptism and was taken into the Red Order on the weight of his personal experience with the minions of the Enemy more than any other factor.

His appointment to the Damburrow expedition was his first real taste of command responsibility, an experiment that Abbot Albert d'Aquitaine appears to consider an unqualified failure. The personality conflicts between the two have thus far severely impaired their ability to work together effectively. After weeks of confrontations, Giordano decided to surrender the field to his superior and



pursue his own researches with the aid of a few trusted allies. Damburrow is a place with many secrets and he is intent on ferreting all of them out, even in the face of not inconsiderable local hostility. After all, if they want to run you out of town, you're usually on the right track.

## Werewolf Characters

The Garou of the Isles are a complex and fractious lot. It is beyond the scope of this book to include more than a few sample personalities.

### Aneurin ap Rhys

**Background:** Aneurin ap Rhys is a young Garou born to a respected lineage of Garou heroes. His rite of passage is a scarce few months past, and he has yet to join a pack. Aneurin waits, spending his time training with his uncle and other warriors of the sept, and communing with the spirits.

Shortly after his rite of passage, Aneurin's home sept hosted visitors from mainland Europe, a pack of French Fenrir hunting down a Bane that had fled across the Channel. Their Theurge, Yvonne Hidden-Voices, had quite an impact on young Aneurin, although he can barely admit the extent of it. Ever since the battle where her pack and several Garou from his sept hunted down and slew the Bane, he cannot keep her face out of his mind, and worse, cannot help but smile when he thinks of her.

Aneurin's uncle is a mighty Fianna Ahroun, who up until recently was so proud of his nephew that he made a present of the mighty Stag's Klaive to him. Now that he's seen his nephew swooning over another Garou, he's ready to take it back. He recently revealed to Aneurin that he sired a metis son, and that he intends to find and kill him.



Since that revelation, Aneurin's visions — which previously included only a stag and wolf walking together — have now shown him the stag, the wolf and a huge, hulking beast with ram's horns. Aneurin has decided that he should find his cousin before his uncle does...even if it means shaming his uncle by revealing his sin.

**Image:** In Homid form, Aneurin is a handsome young man, with a mop of fair hair and a wild beard. He has not truly grown into himself yet, and his face is boyish and his mannerisms juvenile. In Lupus form, Aneurin is every inch a Fianna — a hulking, red-eyed, dire wolf. His dark coat is shot through with bands of gold and deepest red.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are young, bored, restless, uncertain and desperate not to be. At heart, you are modest and you aspire to the quiet confidence of an established Theurge, but years of exposure to the Garou and their ways has made you adapt a façade of aggressive confidence. Sometimes you overdo it. You are terrified of disappointing your uncle, but your love for Yvonne matches your respect for him. In a pinch, you aren't sure which would win.

**Breed:** Homid

**Auspice:** Theurge

**Tribe:** Fianna

**Position:** None

**Physical:** Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 (3/1/1/1), Appearance 3 (2/0/0/0)

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 2, Primal-Urge 2

**Skills:** Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

**Knowledges:** Academics 1, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 3, Rituals 2

**Gifts:** (1) Distract the Fool, Faerie Light, Mother's Touch, Sense Wyrms, Persuasion

**Rank:** 1 (cliath)

**Rage** 4      **Gnosis** 3      **Willpower** 5

**Rites:** (Accord) Cleansing, Contrition; (Caern) Opened Caern; (Mystic) Spirit Awakening

**Fetish:** Stag's Klaive — This massive klaive contains a stag-spirit as well as a war-spirit. In addition to the normal powers of a grand klaive (see p. 222 of **Dark Ages: Werewolf**), successfully activating the fetish doubles Aneurin's jumping distance and allows him to run for one hour per activation success at top speed without tiring.

## Lord John Fitzwilliam du Austere Howl

**Background:** John Fitzwilliam is a Silver Fang, born the third son of a minor Norman lord in Wexford. Sent to England at a young age to be educated, he came to his First Change late. The Silver Fangs of the English baronial courts that Fitzwilliam frequented marked him early as one of their own. They sent spirits to trace his ancestry and learned that he was a scion of House Austere Howl. After his First Change — he became lost during a hunting expedition and transformed himself unthinkingly while he slept — the Silver Fangs of the Protector's Caern on the Salisbury Plain adopted him. Having proved himself a capable warrior defending the caern's bawn from vampiric incursions, Fitzwilliam was groomed for leadership.

Sent to the Fenrir of Munster, as he returned to his father's lands both as a student and a treaty hostage, Fitzwilliam learned the value of strength and lost much of his Silver Fang finery and superior attitude. Though the Munster Fenrir have a valid claim to nobility, they are wild in combat and raucous in celebration. After his release, Fitzwilliam lived for a time in his father's house,



and worked hard to make many contacts among the Irish and Norman nobility and merchant classes.

Fitzwilliam claimed the title of his House on his majority and formed a small pack of Irish Fenrir and Silver Fangs. The pack was temporary — meant as a proving ground for future leaders — but it was effective. Its members amassed a great deal of renown and slew many a Wyrn-thing in southern Ireland.

John Fitzwilliam du Austere Howl has recently returned to England, now in his late twenties with a mighty reputation. He has joined a small Silver Fang pack based on the Isle of Wight and has added to his fearsome reputation through leadership and combat ability. His relative youth and sterling heritage mark him as a potential heir to the kingship of the Silver Fangs in the British Isles.

Fitzwilliam is also a lusty soul and, if rumor is to be believed, has sired a string of bastards — both kin and possible Garou — in Ireland and England. There are even whispers that he is the father of at least one metis. Despite this, the heir of House Austere Howl has learned his political lessons well, and has successfully made overtures on behalf of the English Silver Fangs to Fianna caerns in Cornwall and Anglesey. His mastery of the various languages needed for negotiations — Latin, French and common English — makes him invaluable, while his obvious personal charm and powerful courage earn him plenty of respect and grant him generous hearings.

Fitzwilliam faces many threats to his future career, however. The rumors of dalliances with Garou are quite true. Eventually someone will discover enough evidence to shame him. Worse still, he has quarreled with his adoptive grandfather at the Protector's Caern, and Simon du Austere Howl no longer trusts him to lead the House of Austere Howl.

Fitzwilliam may yet prove himself and mature into the king the Garou of the Isles need. For now, he remains an Ahroun of great potential and a martial reputation, but little discipline.

**Image:** In Homid form, Fitzwilliam is a tall, powerfully built man, his hair worn long. Though impeccably groomed, he somehow always looks a little wild. He sports several days of beard growth, but this only adds to his handsomeness. He has deep blue eyes and a wild, irresistible grin. Confident and poised, he is too much of a nobleman to swagger, but he wears his impressive reputation well.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You try to fit the stereotype of the leader everyone wants you to be, but you always fail and end up coming across as the devil-may-care warrior and lover. Being a leader implies responsibilities and heavy decisions. You prefer fighting or wenching. In combat, yes, you are that leader, but in the soft, deceptive waters of politics, you are uncomfortable. You flirt with every pretty female you come across. You are quick to anger, and you prefer violent solutions.

**Breed:** Homid

**Auspice:** Ahroun

**Tribe:** Silver Fang

**Position:** None, officially

**Physical:** Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 4 (2/0/0/0)

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Leadership 3, Primal-Urge 3

**Skills:** Etiquette 4, Melee 3, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Survival 3

**Knowledges:** Academics 2, Enigmas 1, Hearth Wisdom 1, Linguistics 3, Occult 3, Politics 3, Rituals 1

**Gifts:** (1) Eye of the Falcon, Falling Touch, Inspiration, Master of Fire; (2) Spirit of the Fray, Staredown; (3) Wrath of Gaia

**Rank:** 3 (Adren)

**Rage** 6      **Gnosis** 2

**Willpower** 4

**Rites:** (Accord) Cleansing, (Caern) Moot Rite

**Fetish:** Klaive

## Lena of Orkney

**Breed:** Homid

**Auspice:** Theurge

**Tribe:** Fenrir

**Rank:** Adren

**Background:** Born to Orkney Islander parents, Lena is but twenty-five summers old. An artist, visionary and a powerful Theurge, she is respected for her tenacity and insight. In her 13th year, only a few months past her First Change, she challenged her sept's guards and advisors, demanding an audience before the chieftain. She knew she must warn him against an assault that would have led to the tribe's defeat. The forces of the Wyrn had planned to strike at the sept when the warriors were out searching for a non-existent foe. Even bloodied and torn, she was able to crawl before the chieftain, climb to her feet and warn him of the danger.



Later, she took ship with a pack of Fenrir pirates and helped raid Leech strongholds in her native Orkneys and in Scotland. She rose to lead that pack, but she frequently parted ways with them and traveled alone. On one such journey, she visited Dublin and meditated in the lost Fenrir caern there. The caern must be reclaimed, she knew, and she preached this gospel to other Fenrir in Ireland.

Lena is a seer, but her visions are violent things — revealing to her the face of the Wyrms and its minions and hinting of ways to kill those servants. She has no time for diplomacy or consensus building or selling some glorious future. The future can look after itself: The Wyrms must be fought *now*.

Currently, Lena worries about the visions and activities of Ute, the Fenrir *skald* of Northern Yorkshire. She has learned of Ute's visits with the mortal sorcerer, Gustav, and senses some evil purpose on his part. She thinks Ute has fallen under the Valdaerman's influence and that her tribemate's drive towards peace and diplomacy may lead to the Fenrir's undoing. Gustav, Lena suspects, must be Kinfolk, and possessed of enough knowledge to manipulate Ute into doing his bidding. If Ute does not turn from her doomed path, Lena intends to stop her.

**Image:** Lena is a small, petite, blonde woman with pale skin and big blue eyes. Her features are sharp and delicate, and she speaks softly. She appears distant and silent. She makes small movements keeps her eyes demurely to the floor. When necessary, that reserve falls away and passion smolders in her eyes, and Rage gives her a presence beyond her small physical form.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You give the appearance of the stereotypical “ice princess,” but in truth, you are a little shy, and beyond your mission to counter the Wyrms you are out of your league. In social situations among strangers, you can be diffident and uncertain. But as a Garou, you are transformed, in every sense. No longer halting, shy or quiet, you are an embodiment of Gaia's rage. You have no time for the honeyed words of diplomacy or the filthy words of treason and politics.

## Bladdud

**Breed:** Homid

**Auspice:** Ragabash

**Tribe:** Fianna

**Rank:** Elder

**Background:** The Fianna of Wales name their chieftain the “Cernunnos” — the Horned One. The mightiest Welsh kings of the ancient British Garou take the Antler Crown — the skull and antlers of the long extinct Great Deer — as their symbol of office.

The current chieftain of the Welsh Garou is Bladdud, a Fianna Ragabash of middle years, the

grandson of the greatest traitor to the Welsh Fianna. A vampire named Stephanie, a Gangrel who claimed to have come from ancient Macedonia, infatuated Bladdud's grandfather. For love, Bladdud's grandfather gave up everything — his life, his tribe and his soul. The vengeance of the Garou against him was legendary. He still lives in some forsaken corner of the Umbra; his suffering will not end in this age of the world.

After undergoing the First Change and learning of his grandfather's sins, young Bladdud sought to prove himself and transcend his family's legacy. He left Wales and traveled the Isles, never revealing his name or lineage. He fought alongside the Fianna in many battles, slaying a Thunderwyrm in the bogs of Ireland and ending the unlife of an ancient vampire in the Scottish Lowlands. On his 18th birthday, he returned to Wales in disguise and presented himself to the Fianna as a young orphan cliath, without rank or renown. The spirits knew the truth, but they remained silent. In Wales, Bladdud helped scour the vampires from the hills, slaying them where he found them and murdering their spies. He went north with his newly founded pack to make war on the Black Spiral Dancers. He reclaimed an ancient Fianna caern in Northumbria from the Fenrir by trickery and bravery, outwitting the caern's crafty totem and then facing a Fenrir champion in single combat.

In his 21st summer, he challenged the highest chieftain of the Welsh Fianna to single combat and took the Antler Crown from his fallen rival. He made his defeated foe his closest advisor, and then worked to bring unity to the fragmented and fractious Fianna packs of the British Isles. In this, he has been somewhat successful. His ambitions are greater still: If the Fianna, the Fenrir and even the Silver Fangs of the



British Isles were united as one, they would have the power to defeat the Wyrms utterly in all its forms.

Some years after taking the crown, Bladdud revealed his heritage, and the tribe declared him free of his grandfather's taint. Those who dared whisper otherwise were challenged to single combat and defeated. Bladdud may be a Ragabash, but he is also an experienced warrior — and anyone expecting him to fight like a mindless Ahroun is in for a surprise. Bladdud fights like the no-moon he is — that is, he cheats.

One foe, however, Bladdud cannot defeat. The vampire Stephanie still walks the Welsh hills and Bladdud has dreamed of her. He has grown obsessed with finding her and thinks of her in every spare moment. One night soon, he will encounter her, and then he will face the greatest struggle of his life, for here is the one enemy he truly fears. He has no chance, he thinks, of actually winning the fight — the best he can hope for is to make sure they both perish. Then, perhaps, his grandfather's soul can be freed.

**Image:** Bladdud is still tall and strong. Age sits lightly on him, with little sign of his advancing years save a touch of gray to his hair. His years as lord of the Fianna seem to have honed his features, and now he is every inch a king of the Garou. He has a handsome face, a squared jaw and a tough, muscular body. He favors fine but practical clothes, and always carries his klaive. He smiles rarely, though some say his eyes still have the glint of mischief, especially when he is planning some devious plot against the Wyrms.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are a Ragabash, though you are no longer the wild jester or berserker of your youth. You favor new and innovative solutions to problems, and always rely on intellect where strength fails. You have honed the Fianna in Wales into an effective and deadly force, and few dare challenge you in the hills, where you are strong. But you are wise enough not to overextend yourself, and you have little time for the foolish bloodlusts of other Garou. You have not lost your love of mischief, nor your skills at deceit. You have no time for fools, but if someone entertains you or intrigues you, you will respect them forever. You have a weakness for beautiful women even now. You are an outrageous flirt — even with female Garou.

## Ossian Son of Bane Slayer

**Breed:** Homid

**Auspice:** Ahroun

**Tribe:** Fianna

**Rank:** Fostern

**Background:** Ossian Son of Bane Slayer is a young Ahroun, poised to take the chieftainship of the Garou of Ulster. Ossian is a warrior, but his poetry is



the envy of every Galliard of Ireland. Fair of face and even of temper, some say that he is without auspice. He is an exemplar of the Fianna, a representation of all that is good about Gaia's warriors. Thus he was chosen by a faerie curse, and thus he will be undone.

Ossian's sept carved out a harsh existence on the northern Donegal coast, fighting with human knights and vampiric incursions. The sept fought Black Spiral Dancers raiding from the sea, and the Witch of Connaught and her kin. Ossian distinguished himself in these battles, earning great renown and bearing his scars proudly.

On a night two winters ago, Ossian led his pack against the Witch of Connaught herself. The ancient vampire murdered half of his pack and left Ossian near death. In his delirium, he wandered the countryside half-blind and more than a little mad. Before his life had slipped away, he stumbled into a small glen nestled in the hills. Challenged by the faerie folk guarding the glen, he summoned what was left of his strength and Rage. He overcame them and collapsed, senseless, in the faerie forest.

He woke to cool hands and gentle whispers. The princess of that faerie realm had brought him back to life with her magical arts and care. Watching him sleep, sharing his dreams, sorrow and pain, she had fallen in love with him.

Ossian was proud. He would not fall under the faerie woman's glamour. He fled from that place and returned to his sept, but they knew something was wrong. The Theurges said he was "fairy touched" and refused to speak to him. Others questioned where his scars had gone. All wondered at what he had done for the year and a day that he had been missing. For Ossian, sleeping in the faerie glen, only one night had passed. Perhaps, he conceded, he had spent a few nights there. But no, a year and a day had gone by.

The remnants of his pack had chosen a new totem and a new leader. Alone, Ossian despaired. At night, he dreamed of the faerie woman. Dreams turned to obsession. Ossian was in love.

Ossian is destined to venture into that faerie wood once again, and destined to die alone and lost hundreds of years from now. Deep in his heart, he knows this. But he will not go quietly. He intends to fight this magic and the infatuation that threatens his sanity. He would scour the fae from the Earth if it could save him. His people, the Fianna, want no part in his conflict. Ossian is searching for allies, warriors who can fight to undo the curse.

**Image:** Ossian is a tall, handsome man in his twenties with a broad, angular face. He wears his auburn hair long, and apart from a small tribal tattoo on his shoulder, he bears no other marking. A warrior, he had borne many scars, but now they are all gone. His eyes are bright green. He wears simple peasant clothes, but in battle he wears a dedicated red cloak.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are trapped between two obsessions. You struggle with your love for the faerie woman, and with your need to save your soul. You never had much truck with the fae before, and now you despise them. They are Wyrnish things, you know, evil spirits of the night who seek to undo the Garou nations. Without your pack, and without the support of your sept, you are alone. This breaks your heart. You need the support and companionship of a pack, but you fear that your doom could destroy any new pack you join.

## Sea's Howl

**Breed:** Lupus

**Auspice:** Galliard



**Tribe:** Red Talon

**Rank:** Athro

**Background:** Born to one of the few Red Talon septs in England, the wolf who would become Sea's Howl grew up with her pack much as the other wolves in the area did — avoiding man, hunting, playing and simply living. She underwent her First Change beneath the gibbous moon as humans in the forest played strange sounds on a hollow stick and leapt about a clearing like rabbits...seconds before the Red Talons pounced upon them and tore them limb from limb.

From that horrific introduction to the world of the Garou, Sea's Howl's life only got worse. She took to her role as a Galliard with gusto — collecting and retelling the stories of the Garou was the only thing that sustained her. She hated fighting and could never quite latch onto the hatred she was told to feel for humanity. She did relish her tribe's role as keepers of prophecy, however, and worried endlessly about the Prophecy of Shadow given to her tribe.

When the Flaying Plague arrived, Sea's Howl was away from her sept on an Umbral quest (part of her challenge for the rank of Athro). By the time she returned, everyone in her sept was dead, the bodies had been burned and the Silver Fangs had taken over the caern.

Sea's Howl fled north into Scotland until she could run no further, and now wanders the coastline trying to work up the courage to walk into the sea and end her life. The inhabitants of the nearby fermtouns have heard her howls at night, but they have nothing to fear from this wolf. What Rage and hatred she had is spent — all that's left are stories and grief.

## Bogrunner

**Breed:** Lupus

**Auspice:** Philodox

**Tribe:** Bone Gnawers

**Rank:** Fostern

**Background:** Born to a Kinfolk wolf pack in Ireland, Bogrunner experienced his First Change after he chased a rabbit into a peat bog and nearly drowned trying to get out. After his induction into the Bone Gnawers, he took his leave, understanding that he would probably never join a pack. This still causes the young werewolf grief, as he is a congenial soul, but he consoles himself with the fact that, as he doesn't belong to one of the three warring tribes of the Isles, he can travel from place to place and not have to worry about being torn limb from limb.

Bogrunner is a half-moon, but he has a terrible memory and can't even recite the Litany without help. He fancies himself a teacher of practical reality (not that he would ever phrase it that way) — he

teaches young werewolves important lessons. Approaching humans in wolf form is bad, unless you intend to kill them, and that creates other problems. Relying on Gifts above your natural senses is dangerous, as many Wyrn creatures can fool spirits. Neglecting the Umbra or the Realm is unwise, because Garou are creatures of both.

Bogrunner usually arrives at a new sept and asks to tutor any new cubs in the basics of being a werewolf. In return, he requests the opportunity to be recognized at a moot and perhaps learn a Gift or rite. A city-born homid Bone Gnawer probably wouldn't be treated as kindly as Bogrunner usually is, but the lupus is just so enthusiastic and clever that even the most stuck-up Silver Fang can't turn him away.







# CHAPTER FIVE: STORYTELLING

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.  
— William Shakespeare, Richard II

The British Isles is a diverse environment, physically, historically and culturally, and has a unique and exciting character. Faith clashes with politics and history with innovation. Ancient monuments dot the landscape while new cathedrals rise in the cities. A king who is little more than a boy rules the largest nation, beset by ambitious advisors, while powers old when Rome was founded rule the islands' nights. Mages clash with werewolves while inquisitors seek out the vampires and other fell creatures lurking in the shadows, as the Fair Folk look on bemused by the others' deadly games.



# Themes

The weight of history presses down on the British Isles, distorting its geography and politics to create a patchwork of nations and regions whose interrelations, alliances and rivalries are almost incomprehensible to those raised outside its bounds. These interactions — or characters' perceptions of them — should shape any chronicle set in the British Isles.

## Perceptions of the World

A modern person states: "To Americans, 100 years is a long time and to the British, 100 miles is a long way." For all their history and cultural diversity, the British Isles are a relatively small area; approximately 600 miles as the crow flies along the long axis of Great Britain itself, or about 850 miles overland, with the widest part of the main island, excluding the southwest peninsula, spanning only 230 miles. Much of this land is rugged upland ill suited to permanent habitation, which further decreases the available space and increases population pressures. It is no surprise therefore that conflict between the disparate groups that inhabit the islands is commonplace.

The British Isles are a palimpsest of cultures, one society overlaying another, retaining the elements they desire and discarding others. Norman culture predominates across much of the Isles even in the Irish Pale and lowland Scotland, but overlies pre-existing cultures: Anglo-Saxon, Norse and British in England; British and Celtic in Wales; Pictish, Scottish, Norse and some Anglo-Saxon north of the border; and Celtic in Ireland. Mortal society is thus a patchwork of these cultures, varying considerably from region to region and even within regions in some cases. For example, Yorkshire — like much of north-east England under Scandinavian authority until 250 years ago — retains distinctive Norse traditions and place names, while the far southwest, the country of Cornwall, barely came under Anglo-Saxon suzerainty and retains a Celtic character more in keeping with Brittany or Ireland than England.

Among the supernatural denizens of the British Isles, these historical and cultural distinctions become even more pronounced, particularly those who have extended life spans such as mages and Cainites. A vampire Embraced in the first nights of Norman England might still be seen as a neonate by Cainites Embraced in the times of Saxon, Danish or even Roman rule. Mages face similar problems, though for more diverse reasons. They might be practitioners of the "modern" Hermetic tradition or the theurgy of the Messianic Voices, or perhaps the druidic Old Faith that retains a foothold in distant corners of the British

Isles. Valdaermen in the British Isles may be holdovers from Danish rule in England or the former Viking enclaves across the realm, or perhaps contemporary residents of the still-Norwegian Kingdom of Man and the Isles or the Earldom of the Orkneys. Problems commonly arise because of this cultural diversity, different perceptions, outlooks and moralities causing frictions within the disparate groups. The Cainite population is perhaps the best example of this, ruled by a pre-Roman Methuselah who, thanks to a 600-year torpor, has little concept of Anglo-Saxon England, let alone the modern Norman-ruled domains.

## A Clash of Cultures

Challenging the "established order" is a common feature of British history and might well be the focus of many chronicles. At the most fundamental level is the conflict between the old and the new societies in a region, one seeking to supplant the other. This might be a political conflict — for example, the establishment of Norman lordship over Saxon domains, or more recently Norman lordship over Irish or Welsh lands — wherein the underlying principles of society are left alone. Such conflicts may also be more subtle — the king's importation of foreign (Poitevin) advisors or the Church's growing influence over temporal affairs in the wake of John's excommunication and swearing of fealty to the pope.

Resisting cultural changes, in particular in the occupied areas of Wales and Ireland, but also in Scotland, all under pressure from the English, can be a major facet of any chronicle. Indeed, such themes color the relationship between the British nations for generations to come, even to the dawn of the 21st century. Characters may find themselves on either side of such conflicts, the invaders seeking to impose their will or the natives seeking to hold back the invaders. In Wales, Prince Llywelyn Fawr ap Iorwerth is in the ascendant, challenging the Norman magnates who dominate southern Wales while using his marriage to the king's sister as proof of his "loyalty" and as a shield from reprisals. Such endeavors also hold true for the British supernatural forces — and doubly so in many cases, as not only do the groups fight each other but they also engage in internal conflicts. For example, while the Fianna once dominated the Isles, their lands have suffered attack from not only mundane forces and the Leeches but also from rival Garou such as the Fenrir. Here the situation becomes even more complex as the different factions of the Fenrir — those of Saxon blood and those of Norse origin — struggle for dominance, while a third tribe, the Silver Fangs, expands its own influence.

Clashes between the supernatural groups are perhaps the bloodiest disputes within the Isles, lacking

the conquest mentality of mortal groups and leaning more toward genocidal conflict. The fae have suffered the greatest losses, not only targeted by deliberate attacks (such as the War of Silver and Iron; see Chapter One) but also accidental encroachments and usurpation of their sites by mundane and supernatural forces. Some sites are of interest to numerous factions (Glastonbury and the Avebury-Silbury complexes, for example), becoming the focus of conflicts. Occasionally, groups ally against a particularly hated foe — enmity towards the Tremere was the driving force behind the uneasy Glastonbury Compact — but for every such “grand alliance” (no matter how short-lived) there are a host of lesser conflicts simmering away in the shadows.

## Church and State

Relations between the English crown and the papacy have been erratic, with the low points being the feud between Henry II and Thomas Becket and the excommunication of King John that led to England becoming a papal fief. The Church maintains a strong grip on English affairs and its magnates rival noble lords for their power, riches and the extent of their landholdings. This is not universally popular and many mortal magnates resent the influence of the Church in their affairs. Nonetheless, the Church continues to grow in influence and wealth to the detriment of the common folk. Religious institutions dot the islands and number some of the richest and most powerful in Europe.

The Holy Office never gains a solid foothold in the British Isles, but the islands’ supernatural heritage ensures that the shadow Inquisition faces a stiff challenge. They use Britain’s widespread religious houses as refuges against the evil that pervades the Isles, little realizing that the enemy lurks at their heart. For example, Canterbury Cathedral and its attendant buildings house a number of vampires who adhere to the Cainite Heresy, as do other high profile institutions including the Cathedral of Norwich and York Minster.

## Chronicles

Britain provides a vast array of chronicle opportunities and can accommodate almost any type of story. Chronicles may focus on a single theme — the conflict between the Church and state, for example, or the Fianna versus the Leeches — or can incorporate numerous subjects, exploiting the rich tapestry of history, culture and politics. Each concept may be woven into the fabric of the chronicle, playing broadly equal roles in the stories that emerge, or receive discrete attention as the focus of particular stories.

## The March of Time

The information contained in **Dark Ages: British Isles** focuses on the year 1230 but there is no reason why chronicles could not start earlier (or later) as the Storyteller desires. For example, a **Dark Ages: Vampire** chronicle, though largely set in the Dark Medieval period, might feature scenes in the Roman or Anglo-Saxon eras, or earlier in the Norman age. In chronicles built around the clash-of-cultures theme, the Battle of Hastings might serve as a starting point, underlining the Norman usurpation of power and the subjugation of the Anglo-Saxon people that followed. Likewise, the ninth and 10th centuries see the campaigns of the Vikings, which can provide an interesting backdrop for martial or ecclesiastical chronicles.

Alternative times need not, however, be so extreme. Even going back a dozen years to the end of King John’s reign presents a host of unique possibilities — John’s excommunication and the rise of papal authority, the Magna Carta, the Barons’ Revolt, the French invasion — that may feature in either the chronicle itself or the preludes of one or more characters. Indeed, only with King Henry’s majority and assumption of power is the specter of John’s reign being laid to rest.

## Mythic Locations

Each of the four principal nations of the British Isles — England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales (the latter two being federations rather than true nations) — have very different social, historical and political structures and thus offer a wide range of chronicle possibilities.

### England

England is the largest nation but also the most disparate, socially and politically. Here the Norman nobility are strongest and resistance to their rule is weakest. Some Saxon resistance remains, but it is a pale shadow of what happened in the late 11th century or what is currently occurring in Wales, Ireland and on the Scottish borders. A host of more subtle political confrontations are underway, however — the jockeying for power among various of the king’s advisors, the intervention of the papacy and the ongoing struggles regarding the former Angevin holdings in France. England is also the region where vampires, Hermetic magi and the shadow Inquisition are at their most powerful, having gained their strength at the expense of the fae and Garou.

England is not, however, a monolithic entity and chronicles set in the political and economic heartlands of the southeast will be a far cry from those on Cornwall’s Atlantic shore or in the Welsh Marches. Even cities have widely differing characters. London is a thriving metropolis but most of the realm’s other urban areas,

even the second city of York, are much smaller and less developed. This may not be of great significance for chronicles involving mages or inquisitors — indeed, the main centers for such groups tend toward smaller towns where they can operate with less interference from secular authorities — but the size and population of a city is vital for Cainites holding true to the Sixth Tradition and not wishing to alert mortal authorities to their presence. Although the fae and Garou don't have nearly the same influence as the other supernatural beings in England, it would be unwise to discount either of them. Both wield formidable power that may be localized (a site like Wayland's Forge or Dozmary Pool) or diffuse, spread over a larger territory than the stronger (or at least more focused) factions. For example, Winchester is a major Cainite center but werewolf packs roam across much of Hampshire in which the town resides.

## Scotland

Scotland lacks the population and urban centers of its southern neighbor but has an equally glorious history, having been fought over by Picts, Scots, Anglo-Saxons and Northmen. The present lowland society has a veneer of Norman civility but retains much of the clan-based structure of the Scots' Irish homelands. Politics in Scotland are thus much more complicated and factional than in England and the king's power proportionally weaker. The Scottish lowlands offer chronicle opportunities that are similar to those of England, the rivalries between clans replacing that between fiefs. Numerous English magnates hold land in Scotland (and vice versa), complicating the politics of the lowland with — by the end of the century — terrible consequences for the Scots. The lowlands are also the only part of Scotland in which Cainites prosper, the Garou-dominated Highlands also being home to creatures that even the werewolves fear. The Scottish Islands pose an interesting conundrum for mortal and supernatural beings alike: Being under Norwegian rule (until 1266), they are culturally and politically distinct from the rest of Scotland.

## Wales

Wales is a land in transition, caught between the power of Norman England and the determination of the Prince of Gwynedd, Llywelyn Fawr. Much of it is a frontier realm, with battles by day and night as its various lords vie to control its lands. Lacking major urban centers, it is not the best location for **Dark Ages: Vampire** chronicles (though at least one Methuselah, Bodhmall, calls the mountains of Powys home), but is ideal for the Garou and their Kinfolk. Sites such as St. David's, Strata Florida or Vale Crucis provide members of the Church with sanctuary and a base from which inquisitors operate, while Gwynedd and in particular

Anglesey are strongholds of the Old Faith. Legends of the Fair Folk (Tylwyth Teg in the local tongue) are common throughout Wales, from the elf-cows of Llyn Barfog to the horrible Gwyllion who lead travelers astray in the mountains.

## Ireland

Ireland avoided conquest by the Romans and has thus retained much of its Celtic culture, though the efforts of first the Vikings and later the Normans have led to the establishment of non-Celtic enclaves, particularly along the coast. It is here that the greatest potential for conflict exists, both among mortal groups and among the supernatural powers. Ireland is the center of both Garou and fae power, while Cainites are at their weakest (although Magda's one-vampire war against the Fianna and other Cainites might suggest otherwise). The Church also wields formidable power — after all, Ireland was the first part of Britain to accept Christianity — with numerous monastic institutions and houses of the militant orders. The shadow Inquisition must work diligently to safeguard the Church in this land that while tied to Rome, maintains strong links to its pagan Celtic past.

## Characters

Locale and date narrow the choices available for a chronicle, but in most parts of the British Isles, a wide

### FOREIGN FIELDS

While it is easy to look at the nations of Britain in isolation, they are inextricably linked into the wider European framework and chronicles set in the Isles may well feature foreign involvements of some kind. Henry III is the first King of England not to also rule his family's ancestral lands of Normandy and Anjou, lost during his father's reign, though he retains control of Gascony and has some influence in Poitou despite its loss during his minority. Angevin and Poitevin influence remain strong at the English court via the king's advisors, and merchants from Aquitaine are frequent visitors to Bristol and the major ports. Likewise, Italians are an ever-present part of British society, most commonly as agents of the Church but also as independent traders — Lombard Street in London is so named because of the north-Italian merchants who reside there and who eventually become the city's bankers. England also maintains strong ties to the Low Countries, with Flanders a major trading partner. Norway maintains considerable influence in Scotland via its suzerainty over the Hebrides and the Orkneys, but also has trade ties to England and Ireland.

range of story options remains. The selection of character types narrows the possibilities further but does not straitjacket the players. Members of either the shadow Inquisition or a Cainite coterie might be involved in military efforts to dominate land in Ireland, seeking to advance their own position against their divergent foes. Likewise, werewolves or mages might seek to control a stone circle, one to protect a caern and the other to secure a cray. As the Glastonbury Compact demonstrated, such endeavors need not be at cross-purposes: Different groups can cooperate against a common enemy, though such events are extremely rare. Cross-species alliances usually center on a common antagonist (as at Glastonbury) but can also be for common interest. For example, shadow Inquisitors might tolerate members of Messianic Voices to help defend an isolated abbey against werewolves, the dynamics between the two groups presenting a new and potentially explosive aspect to the chronicle. Whether players create disparate characters, however, must always be at the discretion of the Storyteller. Alliances do occur, but they are rare and for very specific objectives and some groups — such as Garou and Cainites — would cooperate only in the most unusual circumstances and probably return to being bitter foes afterward.

## Sample Chronicles

The British Isles offers a host of chronicle opportunities, and the following are a small selection of the possibilities.

- **Powerbrokers:** The characters form part of a noble's (or churchman's) retinue and are dispatched by their master to deal with problems in a vassal's domain, perhaps non-payment of taxes or a series of strange occurrences. The problem may be mundane — a corrupt lord, bandits or superstitious villagers — or might be of supernatural origin as best fits the chronicle. The characters may simply facilitate a solution to the crisis or be forced to intervene directly in the interests of the lord or the villagers. Doing so may, however, place them in an awkward position as regards what is right and what is politically expedient.

- **Pilgrimage:** Numerous sites in the British Isles are the destination of pilgrimages — Canterbury, St. David's, Durham, Whithorn — and the characters may find themselves journeying to one such site, either as pilgrims or in the retinue of a noble or churchman. The pilgrimage may be the reason for the journey or it may conceal ulterior motives such as communications with the Tremere Chantry in Durham, efforts to trap bandits preying on pilgrims, or perhaps seeking to gain entrance to the pilgrimage site to steal a holy artifact.

- **Bandits:** Although the king's representatives attempt to maintain law and order, some people always

seek to profit from others. The characters may take on the role of bandits or perhaps be charged with tracking down and neutralizing such a group. If the former, are they seeking to line their own pockets — or even just to survive — or do they have a Robin Hood-like agenda, seeking to right perceived wrongs or to bring a corrupt noble or churchman to justice? If taking the role of hunters, do they simply seek to eliminate the bandits or do they seek to determine the underlying reason (if any) for the bandits' actions? Do they seek a direct confrontation, lure the bandits into a trap or seek to manipulate them through their families and allies?

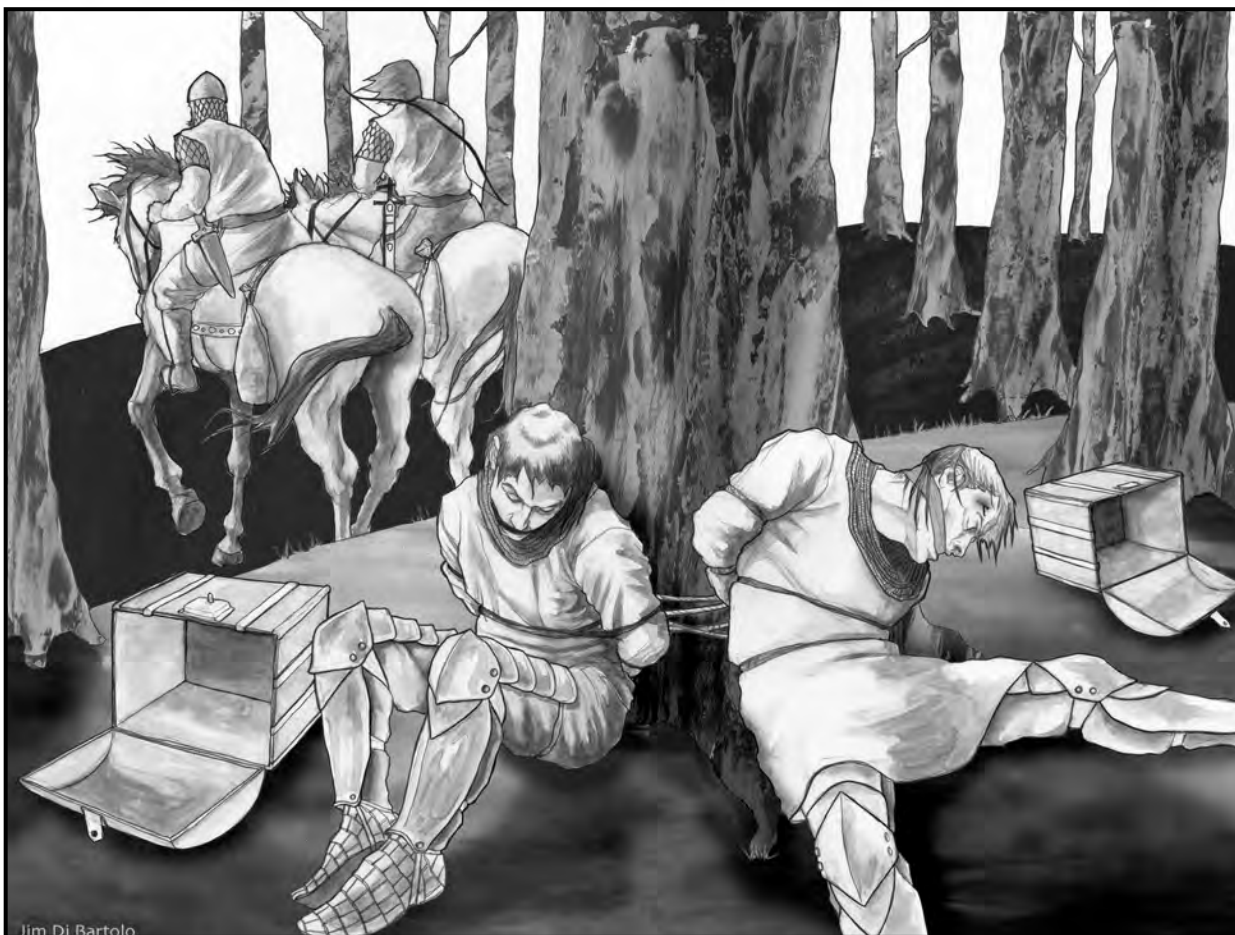
- **Crisis of Faith:** The Church permeates the British Isles but despite its best efforts, holdouts of pagan or heretical beliefs linger. The characters may have to root out one such problem, or perhaps are themselves targeted by zealous inquisitors. Are the charges genuine or have superstitious villagers accused an innocent person or twisted evidence to suit a personal agenda? The target might also belong to the Old Faith, or perhaps the Cainite Heresy, targeted by members of the shadow Inquisition or their own political rivals.

- **Marchers:** Military action is a reality of life in the Dark Medieval, nowhere more so than along the borders of the disparate British nations. The border between England and Wales is, in many parts, ill-defined thanks to the adventurism of the Norman nobility, and likewise the Irish Pale sees the intermingling of English and Irish authorities with predictably bloody results. In stark contrast, the English-Scottish border is well defined but this has not prevented frequent cross-border raids. The characters may be in charge of a border skirmish, or are perhaps the targets of a raid seeking to protect their holdings. They might also be neutral in the matter, seeking to prevent a feud escalating out of control or innocent bystanders caught in the middle or co-opted by one of the combatants.

## Sample Story — Fall of the Rebel Angels

This story is designed to be playable by any group of characters — Cainites, werewolves, magi or inquisitors — and can be set in any major town in England. Of course, the inhabitants of whatever town is chosen are liable to take an interest in the course of events. This may mean substituting them for some of the Storyteller characters provided or simply letting them be the ones who suggest that the characters investigate the situation.

Miracle plays are a comparatively recent innovation in England, brought over (with many other things) after the Norman Conquest, and have only become relatively common in the last fifty years. While the classic of its type, performed across England with many



different variations, is the Harrowing of Hell, other short plays are common — especially those celebrating the life of the Virgin Mary. (Full cycles of plays come later, in the 14th century, and are not yet part of English culture.)

A new miracle play, the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, is due to be performed in whatever town the Storyteller chooses to set this story. While at first sight it appears to be a normal and spiritually uplifting piece of drama, murder and blackmail prompt the characters to investigate, and hopefully discover it to be a dark ritual intended to consecrate the town to an entity best described as diabolical. Various townsfolk and supernatural entities have other ongoing schemes involving the new miracle play, which are likely to complicate matters and confuse the investigation.

The Storyteller may well not want to stage a major crossover involving four different types of supernatural entity (we don't really recommend it, in fact). This scenario has been arranged so that the Storyteller may choose one of several different culprits to be behind the central plot, and may include any number of other factors to confuse the issue. If the Storyteller wants to run it as a purely **Inquisitor** story against the forces of diabolism, that's fine. If she would prefer a **Werewolf** battle against Wyrn-ridden Black Spiral Dancers, with

perhaps a few mages to complicate matters by sticking their noses into the business, that's fine too. Statistics are not provided for the supporting characters, since you, as Storyteller, know the needs of your chronicle better than we ever could. Instead, this section focuses on character description, plot and motivation, so the Storyteller can take what she wants in order to create a vivid scenario for her players.

Players should read no further, as by doing so they may spoil an interesting story for themselves and their characters. Storytellers, on the other hand, should go right ahead.

## General Characters

The following characters are normal humans, and common to all versions of the story.

**Peter Shoewright** is an honest man who's seen that the world is changing, and wants it to change in favor of himself and his friends. While not planning rebellions on the scale of Robin Leeland, or anything of that order, he sees potential in organizing others who work in similar trades to himself (butchers, tanners, leatherworkers, shoemakers) and using that organization to get fair prices from merchants, better sites at markets and so on. Since most of the cast for the play (mainly the

assembled angels and demons) are drawn from among his friends, he is likely to notice anything odd going on — and take his own steps to investigate. He is a devout, God-fearing man, but has scant regard for clergy who do not belong to “proper” holy orders; that is, ordained priests, Benedictines or Cistercians.

**Bernard Cammens** is the middle-aged third son of a nobleman and keeps the book of the play (there is only one copy). He is a scholar, though not in holy orders, and desperately wants to go to university to study. His wife died last year, and he is childless. He helps all of the actors with their lines and serves as the equivalent of a director and dialogue coach.

**James Butcher** is playing God, given the part through a combination of his commanding voice and stage presence, and loud public morality. He keeps his visits to prostitutes secret. His wife colludes in this, as their marriage was arranged to please their families, and she’s quite happy not to share his bed. James is a generous man, and as a prominent local butcher can afford to pay his whores well. Local women are more suspicious about his extreme public virtue than local men. James is being blackmailed by a beggar in the town and is trying to find some non-violent way to rid himself of this potential threat.

**Daniel of Northtown** is playing Lucifer. He is a local tanner who combines height, eloquence and the smell of half-tanned leather. Daniel is not a particularly God-fearing man, but is doing his best to hide this, given the current preponderance of clergy. He is unmarried and has a mostly unjustified reputation as a drunk and gambler. He is surprisingly enthusiastic about the play, and will do whatever he can to make sure that it goes off as planned.

## The Play Itself

This play expresses Lucifer’s Fall as the result of an inner pride, which causes him and his angels to fall spontaneously without being driven out of Heaven, referring to passages in Isaiah, Revelations and Luke. It is staged with Heaven and God’s throne above, and Earth and Hell below. The main parts are those of God, Lucifer and a couple of minor angels and demons who ask questions at various points so that the principals can deliver long speeches. The chorus mainly stands around and sings hymns, or chants verses in unison. The stage itself is fairly minimalist, though it includes a few trapdoors. Various pieces of scaffolding are being set up to support chairs for all the clergy and nobility who merit them — commoners must stand.

Anybody attempting to infiltrate the play as an actor will have problems. The cast is all male, and is drawn from a group of men who know each other. Being introduced as a “special favor” by Peter Shoewright, Bernard Cammens or an authority figure results in the

whole cast being very curious about the character. However, it’s comparatively easy to join the throngs of clergy, beggars, relic-sellers, onlookers, pious bystanders and refreshment-vendors who watch any bits of rehearsal that they can, or who hang around afterwards to debate politics, the weather and current prices.

## Structure of the Story

As can be seen in the sections that follow, whichever **Dark Ages** game the Storyteller chooses to work with, at least one main plot is likely to result in general turmoil, and several side plots can complicate the issue. Since much of the action is driven by character interaction — as many of the characters have plans involving the same cast members, location or potential sacrifices — it is likely that these elements cause the players’ characters to become involved.

Depending on the plot threads that the Storyteller chooses, events may commence in several different ways. Possibly Bernard Cammens the book-holder has a minor nervous breakdown in public, due to multiple attempts to supernaturally influence him, or he runs amok in some entertaining fashion. Maybe Peter Shoewright takes exception to newcomers being introduced into the cast of the play, and the characters witness back-alley beatings. Conceivably they could hear some of the altered text of the play during a rehearsal and feel the need to look into the matter. Maybe an early murder or sacrifice by one of the more bloodthirsty antagonists, or a panic-stricken confession and appeal for help from a terrorized cast member, attracts their attention.

Numerous reasons exist for why characters should take an interest in the miracle play. Possibly their superiors (be they elder Cainites, senior members of the Inquisition, tutoring mages or higher-ranked Garou) request that they investigate the matter. After all, the miracle play is good for the town as a whole, stimulating trade, bringing together important political and religious figures — well, moderately important ones — and providing a moral and uplifting religious vision for the common folk. However, since these are rarely important enough reasons for a *senior* figure to leave his studies or duties, the characters are ideally suited investigators. Or possibly characters already have an alliance with one of the characters the Storyteller has chosen to make a pivot of the story, or a grudge against that character, either of which could draw them to interfere. Alternatively, the characters may wish to prevent the miracle play for reasons of their own, and find that the Storyteller characters are a positive hindrance...

It is recommended that the Storyteller consider the possible plot threads and themes, and choose the ones that best suit the characters in his chronicle. While all

## RUMORS

The following rumors are current: Characters may already be aware of them or may learn of them during play.

- **A lunatic murderer is killing prostitutes!** (True. The culprit may be one of the villains of the piece, or their assorted cults or minions, or the story may be a case of a single killing of a prostitute by a drunken client, blown out of proportion.)

- **A holy prophet is foretelling the destruction of the town!** (True or false, at the Storyteller's discretion. While the most logical candidate is Sister Julia of the Order of St. John (p. 153), the town's overfull with clergy as it is, and most of them are ready to sermonize at short notice.)

- **Someone intends to assassinate the Bishop!** (True, though nobody's quite sure how or why. Jennifer of the Loom (p. 152) certainly intends to do so.)

- **The play is cursed.** (Very common. Everyone has a story about how events went wrong during rehearsals, or how their nephew's brother came down with spots after talking to the actor playing Lucifer.)

- **The book-holder's a drunkard.** (False, but the number of people trying to exert pressure on him may cause him to turn to drink.)

- **A succubus is haunting the town and luring virtuous men into depravity.** (True, up to a point. This rumor is usually followed by a detailed description of the succubus' lascivious charms. The culprit may have been Lucille Singes-the-Wyrm's-Cul (p. 154), or it may not, at the Storyteller's pleasure.)

twelve characters listed below are likely to overcrowd the story, three to six should provide a reasonable degree of confusion while the troupe's characters try to find out what is going on. Ideally, the situation comes to a climax just before the play, or during it, as the player characters attempt to prevent sacrifices, havoc, bloodshed, destruction or large-scale fires. Storyteller characters may also recur, assuming they survive, as persisting allies or adversaries — especially if the players' characters somehow managed to foil their plans.

## Iniquitous Schemes of the Undead

Three different Cainites have plans involving the miracle play. Lucien de Champagne is a ninth generation Toreador, of the direct bloodline of Hélène la Juste of Champagne, and intends to alter the script of the play for "artistic reasons." Martha the Weaver, grandchilde of the Lasombra Lucius of Lincoln, is carrying out orders

from her grandsire regarding spreading the Cainite Heresy. Johann is an eighth generation Tremere, looking for some method of advancement, and far too eager to experiment with infernalism and court dark powers.

**Lucien**, at least, has no actively malicious intent. He is a follower of the Road of Heaven, and an aspirant to the Order of Bitter Ashes. As the script has been translated from the French in any case, he intends to alter certain parts of the dialogue between God and Lucifer during the play, in which God will cast out "all the children of Caine, and give them to thy part," and Lucifer will claim "none such to me, for those who seek thy name shall once again reclaim thy holiness, and serve thee once again, and marked with bitter ashes find thy mercy...." If this is passed on verbatim in future performances of the play, it could be impossible to eradicate wholly from the text.

Lucien is a charming young Norman with a heavy French accent, and is incapable of dressing less than tastefully, or buying poor quality clothing. His target is Bernard Cammens, who keeps the only copy of the script, whom he intends to awe into obedience through Presence. If he finds out that other Cainites are taking an interest in the play, he attempts to persuade them through reason rather than threaten them or assassinate them. He is violently averse to the Cainite Heresy and to infernalism, and willingly cooperates to deal with such things, whether or not his emendations enter the script.

**Martha** has been ordered by her grandsire to enslave some of the local clergy. (He has left it to her discretion whom to choose. She believes this is a high proof of trust: It's actually more of a test of her judgment.) Given that there will be a public celebration of Mass after the play, and that clergy from across the city will be present, she sees this as the ideal moment to choose targets, and maybe administer a first taste of her vitae. Of course, the play offers an enthusiastic young Cainite like herself all sorts of opportunities to demonstrate her knowledge of the Heresy, and her faith in it. It's a pity she's such a poor writer, as any additions she makes show clearly as alterations to the original script.

Martha is a young woman of clearly Saxon descent who is noticeable more for her personal energy and liveliness than any particular beauty, though she dresses neatly and soberly enough. Her primary target is Father John, the Bishop's secretary, who is coordinating the arrival and lodging of the clergy from neighboring villages and monasteries, and who is, not incidentally, exhausted and on the edge of a breakdown. Her secondary targets are the actors playing God and Lucifer. A bit of Dominate before the play will have them speaking new dialogue about salvation being through the Blood of Caine, and other gems from the Cainite Heresy. (Should matters get that far, the Storyteller is encouraged to make it clear that these emendations clearly do *not* match the rest of the

text.) She's devious and methodical, but only harasses interfering characters to a degree, trying to warn them off rather than kill them, not wanting to reveal her adherence to the Heresy — obvious as it is. If necessary she'll retreat from meddling with the play and simply fulfill her original task in the shadows.

**Johann** of Vienna is a Tremere Scion fresh from Germany who was trained as an assassin. His accent is barely noticeable, and he has skill in the Discipline of Obfuscate despite his clan. He was sent to England with orders to destabilize Mithras' position, so that Meerlinda (in Durham) could improve her own, but to refrain from any contact with Meerlinda so as to leave her blameless in the event of discovery. This deliberate break with the structured Tremere hierarchy has left him open to the temptations of power and diabolism. He's rationalizing his current actions with his blood oath to Clan Tremere by the logic that increasing his own power is acting for the good of the clan, and that in any case a disaster here will be useful to Meerlinda elsewhere.

According to the ritual that Johann has discovered in a German text entitled *Complexities of the Dragon*, it is necessary for a group of people costumed as demons to lead a chant invoking the "Master of the Depths, Lord of the Pit, and Wyrms which devours Itself," accompanied by the sacrifice of a sinful man. This requires either altering the script of the play or dominating the actors backstage to make sure that they recite the chant on schedule. (Finding a sinful man to sacrifice on cue is probably the simplest part of the ritual.) At the climax, the "Master of the Depths" is supposed to arise from the ground and offer the celebrant his heart's desire. Even if all it does is create a major disturbance and public hysteria, Johann feels he won't have wasted his time.

Johann has a pleasant smile and a ready knife. He doesn't scorn to get his hands dirty by doing his own killing, though he's not stupid enough to tackle someone who's clearly better than him. He needs to avoid attention until his scheme is complete, and is aware that at least one other person, who may be a Cainite, is trying to tamper with the arrangements for the play. Johann attempts to throw suspicion on anyone else in the vicinity, going so far as to leave incriminating documents in their rooms, or hire assassins to assault the characters. If cornered, he'll claim to be a pitiful outcast, escaped from an abusive master, and make a sniveling appeal for acceptance and fellowship.

## Sacred and Profane Doings of the Sorcerers

A major focus of faith and public belief, secular and holy authorities present, the entire town gathered to watch a ritual performance — how could mages not be interested?

Andrew ap Gryffyth, a young Welsh Hermetic fresh from Oxford, wants to use the entire play as part of a

scrying ritual, but needs to make a few changes in the script and structure of the play for it to function as he hopes. Father Thomas, a Messianic Voice on the edge of a nervous breakdown, is looking desperately for his illegitimate son, and is willing to go to dangerous lengths to find him. Jennifer of the Loom, a wandering Spirit-Talker, has allied herself with a group of demon-cultists whose master was recently captured and killed by the Inquisition. She intends to have various flammable items placed through the area, then summon spirits of flame to light them during the performance, hopefully eliminating most of the clergy of the region.

**Andrew** is an intelligent young Hermetic who may someday become a leading spirit in research — assuming he survives that long. He went from a lowly village in Wales to scholarship in Oxford, and is now attempting to make a name for himself. While he's happy to cooperate with other Hermetics, and even with magi from other Fellowships, he wants to be in charge of matters, and wants any credit that results. He's perfectly pleasant in an overbearing, authoritative sort of way, and quite convinced that as a member of the Order of Hermes, he is automatically the best informed of any given group, in any given situation.

Andrew merely needs to insert certain lines in the text involving God seeing all things that take place upon the Earth, and ensure that the actor playing Lucifer wears a green stone in the crown that is part of his costume. This, combined with certain rituals that he intends to perform, will let him see the town's future — or so he believes. Of course, he needs to find a place near where the play occurs to conduct these rituals. His tactics are bribery or mental domination: He's never encountered significant supernatural (or even natural) opposition to his plans before, and may react badly if thwarted.

**Father Thomas** is an elderly Messianic Voice who fathered a child on a tavern wench before entering the priesthood, and has been cloistered for the last twenty years or so. Now that he is old, he wants to see his son again, to be sure that the boy has been raised properly in the Christian faith and to discover whether he has potential as a mage. The *sortes Biblicae* — a method of divining the future through Bible verses — have led him here and suggested that the youth, who would now be in his twenties, is involved in the miracle play. However, they also suggest that his son is in great danger.

Father Thomas is hanging around rehearsals, looking for some clue as to his son's identity. Fortunately, enough other monks and priests are in the vicinity that he isn't too obvious. He doesn't want news of his son to reach other Messianics, as it would betray his own sin. In an attempt to ensure righteous behavior among the actors and chorus, he has been sorcerously providing a bit of divine punishment for the drinkers, the gamblers, the lechers — nothing too serious, but the continual

minor plagues of fleas, diarrhea and misfortune are making the whole cast nervous. He is a white-haired man bent by age, constantly murmuring psalms or intoning prayers at the request of the superstitious chorus. (The Storyteller is left to determine the identity of his son, who may merely be in the audience rather than part of the chorus, may be one of the featured Storyteller characters, or might even be one of the players' characters. Father Thomas' spell reveals the man's identity at a moment of the Storyteller's choice.)

**Jennifer of the Loom** is a driven middle-aged woman who's decided to rid this part of Britain of some Christian clergy in a dramatic way. She's been forced to leave her last three dwellings by overly enthusiastic monks or inquisitors, and has finally slipped over the edge into murderous insanity. Her meeting with some cultists who had just lost their leader was the worst thing that could have happened for all concerned: She gained a group of allies who lack moral or Christian bounds on their behavior, and the cultists gained a new, motivated, powerful leader.

Jennifer intends to position barrels of oil or other potential fire risks around and under the area in which the clergy will be sitting during the play, and to summon spirits of fire to torch them. The cultists don't feel that she's going quite far enough, and will be adding suitable signs and runes to make the whole affair an acceptable sacrifice to Satan the Great Dragon. They're currently scouting out the neighborhood while Jennifer remains hidden, though bird-spirits — pigeons and owls, mainly — are also reporting local news to her. So far the cultists have also killed a couple of late-night drinkers by way of pre-consecrating the location, though these are believed to be "normal" murders locally (at the Storyteller's discretion, the cultists may also be responsible for the murders of the prostitutes). Jennifer herself is a tall woman with a commanding if absent-minded air, and a mass of dark hair that blows loosely around her face. She is obsessed with the idea of removing the local clergy, though she has no real idea as to what will happen next, or any plans other than vengeance.

### **Uplifting Plans of the Righteous**

The Inquisition is a righteous and holy organization, where every member strives to save the souls of those around him. They're often prepared to do anything in order to fulfill their duty. Sometimes they go a little bit too far.

Sir Jeremy von Ovbach, a bastard sprig of the Murnau line, is aware that there is evil in town — why, he can smell it on the wind — and his natural concern for the innocent has become a paranoid fear causing him to stalk the town at night with his minions. Sister Julia is a Sister of St. John whose visions are causing her to prophesy day and night

in the town church, and whipping up apocalyptic fervor in the town. Brother Richard is a Red Brother with several servants who believes that invoking a very minor and ineffectual demon, who can surely be banished easily, will terrify the townsfolk into virtue.

**Sir Jeremy** is a forthright, determined knight who has seen far too much in the service of the Inquisition, and who bears both physical and mental scars. His report to the hierarchy has not yet been answered, and in the meantime he feels that he must defend the town. With his two hulking faithful servants, he stalks the streets by night, smiting petty crime — or more serious offences against royal or Biblical law — wherever he may find it. He can be enlisted to help the characters, if they have evidence of serious malice, or he may be turned against them. His accent is obviously German, but his voice is cracked and broken from an old injury to his throat, and he speaks little.

**Sister Julia** is inspired by constant visions of fallen angels, great serpents rising from the ground and rains of fire and blood. She evaded her companion several towns back and is now prophesying to anyone who will listen. If the Storyteller is running a game involving other supernatural beings, they may well have noticed her. (Sister Lucrece, also of the Sisterhood of St. John, was assigned to keep Sister Julia safe and to prevent her from saying too much in public. She's still looking for Julia, and may show up later in the story.) While Sister Julia may provide some useful information in her raving, or be able to perform exorcisms if the party can get her calmed down and rested, the main effect of her words is to increase the town's already high level of religious fervor. If anyone is fingered as a witch — or worse — a riot may erupt. The characters must be careful whom they accuse, and where, and when, and had better take care not to be accused of anything themselves.

**Brother Richard** had several ancient documents that he was supposed to be taking from the Monastery of St. Andrew at Damburrow to be sealed for perpetuity in Rome. In search of knowledge to combat evil, he read them. He is now quite convinced of his course of action, though his deep-set eyes have a somewhat fanatic glare, and his hands shake at odd moments. One incantation he found gives instructions for summoning a very minor demon, via a chant spoken by a group of people costumed as demons and the sacrifice of a sinful man. The manuscript also includes a banishing ritual (which may or may not work, according to the Storyteller's needs).

Brother Richard intends to have some of his dozen menials/guards substitute for some of the actors, recite the ritual with them, slay a sinful man (of course, he needs to find a sinful man first) and let the demon terrify the townsfolk. He will then banish the creature and leave town that same night. While not actively against

the Inquisition, he believes that he is serving a greater mission than theirs, and intends to actively recruit from the ranks of the Red Brothers in future. Should he be forced to move against the characters, he will have them subdued, bound and imprisoned until after the performance rather than killing them. (Of course, if they're supernatural creatures, he'll instead attempt to see them sent back to Hell.)

## Savage Exploits of the Garou

Enough werewolves dwell in towns — or at least, around the fringes — that a number of them are interested in the play, or in its location, and intend to take advantage of them.

James Strives-Under-Gaia is a Silver Fang Galliard from a noble human family who wants to make a few changes in the text — such as, for example, God exalting certain beasts of the woods so that they may lead mankind into the ways of righteousness. In a different vein, the Bone Gnawer Ragabash Lucille Singes-the-Wyrm's-Cul is hunting down a murderer who's gutted two of the local prostitutes, and believes he's among the chorus for the play. Finally, Thrahth, a malicious and learned Black Spiral Dancer, has found that a Gaian caern once existed under the location where the play is to take place, which was corrupted and then sealed. She believes that a combination of ritual and sacrifice can invoke the Wyrm itself.

James Strives-Under-Gaia is a young aristocrat (among Garou). He can handle himself well with all classes of humanity, but

has more difficulty dealing with fellow werewolves, whom he feels owe him proper deference as a hereditary leader. He's in town with a couple of Kinfolk companions, and intends to use straightforward bribery to persuade Bernard Cammens to alter the text. A few suitable lines, for instance, about how God shall "raise up the wolves that they may thee chastise, and in thy sight bring down the sinful few who would raise the Wyrm of Satan in thy hearts...." This is a comparatively minor mission, but it's his first chance to prove himself to his tribal elders, and to gain enough prestige to command a pack. (He has not as yet joined any pack because he does not want to take a subordinate role.) If forced to deal with others, he'll do so through bribery and then threats.

Lucille Singes-the-Wyrm's-Cul is a brash, cheerful, vicious young Bone Gnawer who's out for the murderer's blood and who doesn't care if a few other people suffer along the way. She's working with two other Bone Gnawers in town, and also has contacts with



the local prostitutes, who are nervous (to say the least). Between the two, she has a good picture of what's going on in town. Her primary aim is to find the killer, but she doesn't mind disrupting the play in the process, not being at all Christian. Having something go wrong mid-performance would suit her sense of humor. Her usual pack is elsewhere, but she will be rejoining them once she's finished this investigation.

Lucille's tactics are rather rough-and-ready. She's dropped in on the bedrooms of some suspects in the middle of the night, and they've woken to find a giant wolf sitting on the bed, turning into a naked woman and asking them questions about where they were recently. (This has, incidentally, sparked some spectacular confessions to the local clergy, who may — at the Storyteller's whim — be planning to take action.) She tries to avoid open conversation with any investigators, preferring to question them from the shadows and then vanish. If she can be convinced that the characters are sympathetic to Gaia, and not supporters of the current Church or social order, she could be a valuable ally.

**Thrahth** is that rare creature, a scholarly Black Spiral Dancer who hasn't been torn to pieces by his savage kindred for weakness. Certain runic texts retrieved from Germany (from a now-dead Fenrir Kinfolk) have helped him identify the area where the play is to take place as the bawn of a long-defunct caern. It once belonged to the Black Spiral Dancers, before a vigorous group of Garou cleansed the place, killed all the inhabitants and placed a ritual seal on the site. Thrahth believes that the stars are now right to reopen the caern; all he needs is a group of followers to chant the correct responses and a sacrificial victim. While there may be some minor supernatural manifestations, they shouldn't be too large. (A sad error in his calculations: A creature of the Wyrms far beyond his ability to control will be invoked.) The idea of doing all this during a miracle play to the false Christian god suits his twisted sense of humor.

Naturally, certain preliminary work must be done. Thrahth needs to investigate the location or have Kinfolk minions do so for him. He also needs to check the play's script, by borrowing either the text or the bookholder, and to arrange for his Kinfolk to take the place of some of the chorus for the crucial moment. Finding a sacrifice will hardly be difficult. The matter of leaving the scene afterwards also needs consideration, as being arrested by civil or religious authorities (or, as is more

## THE CREATURE

Each of the factions in this story has a reason and method for conjuring up some hideous creature from Hell (or, in Thrahth's case, the depths of the Wyrms' realms). What exactly this creature is capable of doing, and therefore its game statistics, are entirely up to the Storyteller. However, consider the following:

- **Function:** What is the creature here to do? Brother Richard assumes the creature will be a minor demon, capable of doing some damage to the town but nothing fatal. Thrahth imagines the creature to be a powerful but controllable manifestation of the Wyrms, while Johann is hoping to expand his clan's influence by asking the demonic monster for help. The creature's game traits should reflect the role the Storyteller intends it to play in *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, whether or not the being(s) who summoned it are expecting it.

- **Form:** What does the creature look like? The cultists following Jennifer of the Loom are expecting a dragon-like beast. Brother Richard expects a minor imp. You are encouraged to make the creature's form mesh with the themes of this story and the ongoing chronicle.

- **Power level:** Can the characters kill or banish the creature? Can it throw fire or wield magic, or does it simply attack with fang and claw? Does it warp the minds of those who see it (perhaps in a manner similar to the Dementation Discipline or the Delirium that werewolves induce)? Can mages harvest the creature for Quintessence?

- **Agenda:** Does it flee, forcing the characters to track it down? Does it immediately possess one of the townsfolk, hiding in his body and slowly reshaping it? Does it obey the beings who summoned it (probably not)? Can the characters take control of it? Should they?

likely, being detected by Gaian werewolves) wouldn't suit his plans. He is more interested in *recruiting* other Garou than killing them, and may even attempt to capture them for later indoctrination into the Black Spiral. Of course, if the circumstances are desperate, then he'll kill as necessary.