

# EDGE OF THE WILD

THE PUBLICATION OF THE MIDDLE-EARTH REENACTMENT SOCIETY

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## FROM THE EDITOR:

Greetings, and welcome to the summer 2020 edition of *Edge of the Wild*!

This season sees us in uncertain times, when our members and readers alike are confined to their abodes to prevent the spread of pestilence. At this time of global upheaval, it is all too easy to be reminded of the Great Plague of T.A. 1635-37, which came from the East to disrupt the kingdoms of Men. We suggest that you emulate the Rangers of Ithilien, whose “faces were...*masked* with green”, the Rangers of the Grey Company, who sat “*a little apart*” from those mustering around them, or even the Men of Dunland, who “suffered...less than most, *since they dwelt apart and had few dealings with other men.*” From a certain point of view, these groups were practicing Middle-earth versions of ‘physical distancing’!

With group journeys on hold for the immediate future, we have endeavored to bring you resources that may help you better travel the trails of Middle-earth in your mind, and which you can hopefully put into practice when this storm has passed.

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-A. HOLLIS

“FROM THE TONGUE OF LÓRIEN TO THE  
ARGONATH IS ‘230 MILES DIRECT:  
OVER 300 BY WATER, TAKES 10 DAYS”  
--MARQUETTE MSS 4/2/19,  
QUOTED IN READER’S COMPANION  
(HAMMOND & SCULL), 347.



# FOOTWEAR OF THE DÚNEDAIN

G. LAMMERS

*"Suddenly Frodo noticed that a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall, was also listening intently to the hobbit-talk. He had a tall tankard in front of him, and was smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved. His legs were stretched out before him, showing high boots of supple leather that fitted him well, but had seen much wear and were now caked with mud. A travel-stained cloak of heavy dark-green cloth was drawn close about him, and in spite of the heat of the room he wore a hood that overshadowed his face; but the gleam of his eyes could be seen as he watched the hobbits."* - The Lord of the Rings: Book I:Chapter 9: *At the Sign of the Prancing Pony*

The character of Strider is perhaps one of the most iconic and imitated characters in fantasy literatures. Dozens of characters from many authors have been inspired by him, and his portrayal in film cemented him as a hero character worth imitating. One thing that is often overlooked in his character, however, is his role for decades prior to the War of the Ring. Along with the rest of the Rangers in Arnor, he is credited by Gandalf as being "the greatest traveller and huntsman of this age of the world", and one does not earn this distinction sitting down. He has walked farther than most will ever dream of, and none of it could have happened without a sturdy pair of boots.

At first glance, we might think the "supple" leather to be a misnomer; that Tolkien didn't think through what he was writing. After all, in

this day and age, boots are made of thick, stiff leather with heavy soles and often even steel reinforcement, but here we have a lifelong on-foot traveller wearing well-fitted boots made of "supple leather"!

Moving further through the text, we find another indirect reference to Rangers' footwear. When examining the dell below Weathertop, Aragorn deduces that a recent fire and small store of firewood were left there by Rangers, but then notes that there are footprints that could not be theirs: *"But there are also several newer tracks that were not made by Rangers. At least one set was made, only a day or two ago, by heavy boots. At least one. I cannot now be certain, but I think there were many booted feet."* (LR I:11).

If there were Rangers present and someone else, and the other footprints were made by heavy booted feet, then this furthers the idea that Rangers would be wearing lighter-weight boots that leave a less distinct print behind, perhaps due to a soft sole.

So how does one travel great distances on soft shoes? It may be surprising, but people have been doing this for most of history! Only until relatively recently have shoes become so stiff and supportive, and began sporting such thick soles.

The vaguely 'early Medieval' feel of the text—including the material culture described as being carried and used by Aragorn—would point us toward a wide range of dates that are largely populated with similarly constructed footwear,

from the early Migration Period all the way through the Renaissance: the **turnshoe**.

Turnshoes come in many forms, but the vast majority are stitched inside-out and then flipped right side out (often when wet) to help the shoe stretch around the intended foot or a wooden form to give it its final shape. The widespread use of stitched leather soles for centuries was worth investigating, and several years of testing have yielded impressive results.



For starters, leather-soled boots are surprisingly comfortable. Yes, you do feel much more of the detail of the ground—such as twigs and rocks—through them, but this has encouraged a new approach to walking. The wearer is more alert to where they are putting their feet than in modern shoes, and this leads, in part, to the second major benefit: they are extremely quiet in the woods. On a well-beaten path they are virtually silent, while careful steps and the soft sole can render even the most crunchy leaves much

quieter than they would be otherwise underfoot.

Turnshoes also provide impressive traction. If made with the "rough" side of the leather down, despite wearing slick over time, they grip the ground and organic materials very well, and the inherent 'feel' you get of the ground through the soles doesn't hurt your stability either.

Lastly, they are very durable. A single-layered leather sole managed us several long trips (10+ miles) before a small hole developed in one heel. A clump sole—a second layer stitched beneath the shoe—was added, and is still going strong several years and over a hundred miles later. Easily replaceable, a clump sole can both extend the life of a turnshoe and be carried as a spare easily in one's pack.

So if you intend to engage in a Dúnedain impression, despite what modern convenience would suggest, a hard sole or perhaps a thick riding heel are not ideal for the pursuit, but the correct answer lies right where it should be: in the text!



# LESSONS FROM THE TRAILS OF HISTORY

A. HOLLIS

In addition to the more well-known foreground quests of Bilbo, Frodo, or the Three Hunters, Tolkien also described two ‘background’ journeys that give us great insight into what a long-distance Middle-earth adventure might look like. While separated by over 3,000 years, they follow similar routes through Wilderland (although their approaches to travel somewhat differ), and in both cases Tolkien gives specific information on the dates each journey occurred and the distances traveled. For our purposes of authentically re-creating Tolkien’s world, this is a goldmine...but as in all mining, some digging is required—so grab your shovel and let’s get started!

In the autumn of 2 T.A., Isildur of Númenór left Osgiliath bound for Imladris. As king of the Realms in Exile, he was accompanied by his three eldest sons and a guard of 200 Dúnedain soldiers of Arnor, all supported by ten “small, sturdy” packhorses. With the goal of reaching the North before winter set in, from Osgiliath they expected to reach their destination (a distance of some 924 miles) in 40 days, a journey which was supposed to have taken from approximately 26 August to 5 October; the Disaster occurred on the thirtieth day (approximately 26 September). At the outset, given the expected time and known distance, we can calculate an average speed: approximately 23.1 miles per day.

Despite the length of the journey before them, Tolkien makes no mention of speed, but describes the tall Dúnedain as “men of great *strength and endurance*”, who are “accustomed to move fully-armed at eight leagues a day ‘with ease’: they accomplished this by counting 5,000

paces (called a *lár*) making a league, “with short breaks at the end of each league...and one hour near midday. This made a “march” of about ten and a half hours, in which they were walking eight hours” (1).

When faced with the prospect of covering 24 miles in eight hours, one can certainly feel daunted at first! However, by including such details, Tolkien inadvertently helps us break down how his Dúnedain accomplished their daily feat, and it turns out to be quite achievable (assuming your legs and lungs are in shape), as it is primarily an exercise in endurance—as well as strength, if you armor yourself as a Númenórean—instead of one of speed.

Since the entire day’s march takes ten-and-a-half hours, and we know that of this time eight hours are spent actively walking and one hour spent resting, this leaves only one-and-a-half hours to be divided among the “short breaks” after the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, and 7th *lár*. (The 4th *lár* is followed by the midday break, and the 8th ends the day’s march). Dividing this hour-and-a-half remainder between the six breaks gives an even one-quarter hour, or fifteen minutes. The inclusion of a fifteen-minute rest period every three miles teaches a valuable trail lesson for one’s long-term comfort and efficiency: **it is not only permissible to take a break while on the march...it is recommended!**

It is worth noting that the Arnorian Dúnedain in Isildur’s company are “wholly or in part” Númenórean (2), and so are much taller than today’s average person: “the normal height of men of Númenórean descent ...appears to have been about seven of our feet” (3). The



Left: route taken by Isildur's company (green) and intended path to Imladris (blue); Aragorn with Gollum (dark red) with two possible paths to Thranduil's kingdom—via the Dwarf road (possibly more likely—lighter red) or Elf-path (orange). While both journeys measure around 300 leagues and were completed on foot, Aragorn's required slower pace meant he reached his destination in 50 days while Isildur would have taken only 40.

*ranga* by which they measured their marches was a step length of 38 inches (4), over half a foot longer than the average today. This lengthened stride adds up over time from inches into feet and feet into miles, so that a somewhat shorter individual of mixed blood would find themselves working just as hard, but would not see the same return on their day's efforts! For example, my personal stride is a hair under 29 inches—75% of a Númenórean *ranga*—and so even if I follow the Númenórean prescribed eight-*lár* day, in 40,000 paces *I* will only have gone six leagues to Isildur's eight!

It is worth pointing out that these Dúnedain aren't greenhorns: they are "war-hardened knights and soldiers" who are "*accustomed*" to traveling in this manner. The 24-mile march is not something that they only do at great need

(that's a 36-mile day!), but something they've **built up to through training**, and they probably do it regularly to keep in practice. Likewise, you shouldn't plan for your very first trek to be an impressive, long-distance feat—but **by starting small and building little by little we can prevent burnout (both physically and mentally) while eventually being prepared for long-distance trekking.**

The importance of on-the-trail attitude also comes to light in Tolkien's description. On the day of the Disaster as the Dúnedain are close to finishing their last *lár*, they are **singing!**: presumably not only because they will be three-quarters through their journey, but also as a way for footsore soldiers to raise their morale and push on to the day's end: "Just a little farther, we've almost made it!" Even if you're not a

Númenórean superman, **we can all emulate these Dúnedain by using a bit of song to raise our spirits on the trail!**

Another point on attitude is raised early in Tolkien's description of Isildur's journey. When setting out on the trek north, we read that "[Isildur] had no fear, save for weather and weariness, but these men must endure whom need sends far abroad in Middle-earth." In other words, if you're hitting the trail in peacetime (or if it's wartime, and you're well-armed and well-trained) then the only thing you really need to be concerned about is the weather, and getting worn out (again, mentally and physically). But if you *need* to go into the outdoors, then these things come with the territory, and you simply have to **deal with it**. After all, starting on day 20 of Isildur's trek it rained for four days, but they soldiered on (literally) and didn't turn back. **It all comes down to attitude!** In the end, if they wanted everything to be safe and avoid unforeseen difficulties, they would've stayed home!

In a footnote, Tolkien states that during peacetime in the Númenórean sphere, long travel was generally not undertaken between a period that corresponds to our 21 October through 20 February (5). The reasoning behind this was put so well by Bilbo: "*When winter first begins to bite/And stones crack in the frosty night/when pool is hard and trees are bare/'tis evil in the wild to fare*" (6). It is worth pointing out that it is smack-dab in the middle of this period that the Fellowship of the Ring sets out on its quest—a time precisely when most people in the North would be expected to be burrowed in, safe at home! For us common folk, unless the fate of the world hangs in the balance, Winter is a time much more suited to keeping watch over the homestead or repairing gear than undertaking a long-distance forced march!

Over 3,000 years after the Disaster of the Gladden Fields, Isildur's heir Aragorn II undertook a similar northward journey through Wilderland. In 3017 T.A starting at the tail-end of the travel-free period just discussed, Aragorn commences an epic 900-mile trip (on foot) from the Dead Marshes to northern Mirkwood "accomplished with weariness in fifty days" (6).

Aragorn begins this phase of his journeyings on our 12 February: starting near the Dead Marshes, then heading north through eastern Emyr Muil to cross the Anduin north of the Sarn Gebir rapids, then across eastern Rohan, under Fangorn north to Lorien, crossing the Anduin again, and then through Mirkwood to reach the Elvenking on our 30 March. Aragorn's mileage—averaging 18 miles per day—is impressive enough on its own, but is even more so when we consider that he had to accomplish this feat with a traveling companion the size and with the temperament of the world's most uncooperative three-year-old: Gollum!

The logistical and practical difficulties of this adventure only further underline how Aragorn earned his reputation as the Third Age's "greatest traveller and huntsman" (7). Besides its impressive length, the journey required at least six river crossings, and aside from the first crossing of the Anduin (with Gollum tied to a piece of driftwood!), and having Beorning assistance for the second time across, Tolkien gives no details how the others were achieved.

We know from his travels with Frodo and Sam that Gollum was able to travel on little food, and we can assume that Aragorn was familiar with 'tightening his belt' as well, for as he admits "gathering and catching food is long and weary work" (8). Even if he were able to forage (somewhat unlikely considering the season) or beg a meal from local Northmen farms or villages, haste and secrecy were essential to this

mission. It might therefore be beneficial for those who seek to emulate him to **experiment with travel and exertion while experiencing reduced caloric intake**. Similarly, we can imagine Aragorn pressing on through the lengthening days without devoting much time to preparing a shelter each night. **Being comfortable in unfriendly conditions** would also be a useful adaptation for a reenactor to experiment with.

We can note that while Aragorn's average daily mileage was not unreasonable, his journey was finally "accomplished with weariness" likely a result of such extreme long-distance travel with minimal allied assistance, exactly what Isildur knew to be aware of three millennia earlier. ✨

## References

- (1) Unfinished Tales of Númenór and Middle-earth: The Disaster of the Gladden Fields.
- (2) The History of Middle-earth Volume 12: the Appendix on Languages, §13.
- (3) The History of Middle-earth Volume 12, The Atani and their languages
- (4) UT: The Disaster of the Gladden Fields: Note 9
- (5) The Lord of the Rings, Book II:Chapter 3
- (6) UT: The Hunt for the Ring
- (7) LR I:2
- (8) LR I:11



# TIN CANDLE LANTERN REVIEW

E. BURTON

While not essential, a little extra light around camp can be a great help. A campfire can provide some light, but bright flames require a lot of small fuel which is consumed quickly. Carrying a small lantern allows some small chores to be done after sundown, leaving more daylight hours for travelling, setting camp, processing firewood, and other tasks best not done in the dark.

Tolkien often mentions candles, lanterns, and lamps, but does not provide much detail. It seems lanterns were not uncommon in the Shire and Bree (1), and the house of Tom Bombadil is lit by "candles, white and yellow" (2), while "two tall red beeswax candles" flicker on the table of Beorn's hall (3). Haldir's elves have "a small lamp that gave out a slender silver beam" (4) and "silver lamps" swing from the boughs of Lóthlórien (5), and, in addition to torches, a "little earthenware lamp burned in a niche" in the Rangers' refuge behind Henneth Annûn (6). Most other lighting in Middle-earth, however, goes largely undescribed.

Pumpkintown Primitives tin pocket lantern is not directly supported by the text, but it is easy to imagine this little lantern in the pack of the "occasional Bucklander or adventurous Took" (7) following the East Road to Bree. Measuring a little less than 5" tall, 3" wide, and 1" deep, it is easy to tuck into a satchel or bedroll, and it makes a handy place to store a spare candle or a little extra tinder. The reflective metal directs more of the light where it is needed, and while it will never be as bright as a flashlight or headlamp, a beeswax candle in this lantern provides enough light to read by. My lantern had a few spots of rust when I purchased it (which the vendor mentions in the product listing), but not enough to affect its performance. The soldering is a bit

rough in places, and some of the corners are a bit sharp, so I wrap it in a scrap of wool before stashing it in my bedroll. All these imperfections are acceptable to me given the price; I picked up this handy little piece of kit at an 18<sup>th</sup> century market faire for \$6. If I had purchased it online and paid the additional \$7 for shipping, I would still be satisfied with the price.

I'm not certain that a pocket lantern like this would suit a Ranger, what with their "strange powers of sight" (8), but for a Hobbit of the Shire or man of Bree who finds themselves making camp along on the East Road for the night, a bit of candlelight can make the road feel a bit more like home. ✨

### References

- (1) Lord of the Rings, Book I: Chapters 1, 4, 9
- (2) LR I:7
- (3) The Hobbit, Chapter 7
- (4) LR II:6
- (5) LR II:7
- (6) LR IV:5
- (7) LR I:9
- (8) *ibid.*



# RIVERBOATS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

A. HOLLIS

While the popular view of travel in Middle-earth may be ‘a bunch of dudes walking (or maybe riding horses)’, this overly simplistic understanding overlooks a great chance for authentic adventuring: travel by water!

Trekking by boat or canoe allows a company several advantages over mundane foot travel, chief among these the ability to pack large and heavy items that one would be unable to easily bring with knapsack or bedroll setups (1): multiple blankets, larger shelters, greater food stores, etc., all of which potentially allow for longer journeys than would be possible on foot.

With these advantages in mind, to better inform the ‘inner persona’, we thought it would be valuable to present a quick survey of what is known about the various craft found throughout Middle-earth and how they might relate or compare to those found in our own history. While larger seagoing vessels have featured in numerous historical episodes since the First Age, the majority of our details and evidence comes from smaller river-going boats of the late Third Age.

The boats which we spend the most time with by far are those of Lóthlórien. We read that these elves built “many boats and barges. Some were brightly painted, and shone with silver and gold and green, but most were either white or grey (2). As these are seldom depicted by artists, it is fascinating to imagine what a ‘brightly painted’ Elvish boat would look like! We know the small, grey boats used by the Fellowship were propelled with “short-handled paddles” with “broad leaf-shaped blades” (3), while Galadriel’s large swan-boat was “steered” by two elves with black paddles (4).

The following chapter sees Boromir describe these craft (possibly disdainfully) as “cockle-boats”, perhaps as a comparison to a form of boat he is familiar with from Gondor. (A ‘cockle-boat’ or ‘cockboat’ is a fairly unspecific term, which can be used to describe any kind of small, manually-propelled boat, such as a dinghy, dory, punt, pram, etc., but does not apparently include canoes.).

One of these boats’ most intriguing feature is mentioned only once: as it begins to rain, the Company “drew the skin-covers over their boats to prevent them from being flooded, and drifted on....” (5).



Was this what Tolkien envisioned for Lórien’s boats? (6)

This raises several questions about the design of these boats. Unless Tolkien imagined the craft as kayaks (equipped with watertight skirts or deployable overhead ‘sun shades’), if these were open-topped ‘rowboat’- or canoe-style as most interpret them, pulling a cover over the top would make them unable to be paddled, which seems to agree with the ‘drifting’ that follows. However, would this mean that the occupants

would have to lie in the bottom of the boats beneath the covers? Hardly a romantic image of our heroic Company!

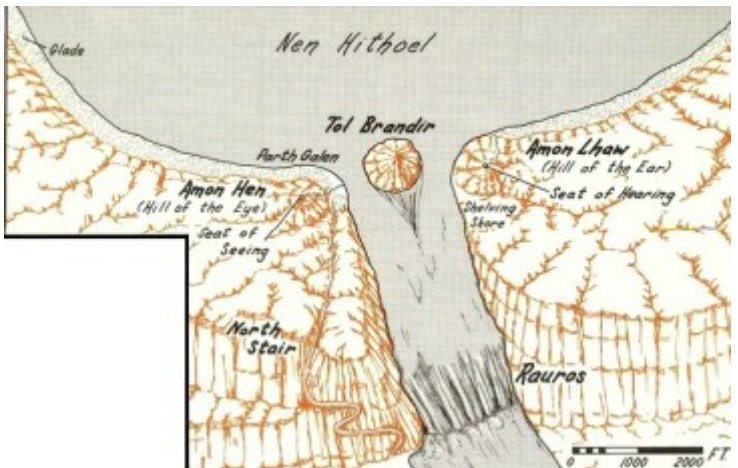
Later, during the portage around Sarn Gebir, we read that Merry and Pippin are able to carry one of the boats over flat ground *by themselves*, suggesting an unnaturally light weight!...along with the claim that the boats “will not sink, lade them as you will...” (7), this is clearly a case of elvish craft-‘magic’ at work!

The Mannish culture most familiar with watercraft of course are the Men of Lake-town (for our analysis of the watercraft of Lake-town, see [Edge of the Wild Volume 2:Issue 3](#)). Tolkien’s depictions of the Mirkwood-Esgaroth barrel trade may put one in mind of a raft with a lean-to, being poled down the Forest River, *a la* Huckleberry Finn (8)?



However, in *The Great River*, Aragorn makes an intriguing remark that implies the rest of Wilderland is not quite as disconnected as we might

originally assume: “[the portage west of Sarn Gebir] cannot yet have perished; for *light boats used to journey out of Wilderland down to Osgiliath*, and still did so until [approximately T.A. 3009.]” (9). In addition to the above portage, a second, more difficult portage was required to reach the lower Anduin—to “bear...boats by the ancient way to Rauros-foot, and there take to the water again.” (10):



This leads us to wonder then: how light *were* the boats of Wilderland? The great elevation change and presumable switchbacks of the North Stair would make for a significantly difficult portage, likely impossible with large craft of plank construction, which would be too heavy and unwieldy to be carried down the stairs by a crew of men.

One alternative would be a hide-on-frame boat: possibly something along the lines of the Irish *currach* or Inuit *umiak*. Well-suited to transporting people or cargo, a 24-foot hide-covered *umiak* can weigh only 150 pounds (11), much more than manageable for portaging! For comparison, the seagoing [Ferriby \(c. 1,800 BCE\)](#) and [Dover \(c. 1,500 BCE\)](#) Bronze Age boats—made of **oak** planks sewn together with yew withies—may have weighed five or six tons **empty**!

When it comes to hobbits of the Shire, only those of Buckland and the Eastfarthing had any



**Reconstruction of the Ferriby boat (Roger Waite)**

interest in watercraft. We know that the hobbits of southern Buckland took Tom Bombadil across the Brandywine in their *wherry* (12), a type of sailed or rowed English skiff whose name is related to their use as a *ferry*—exactly how we see them being used in the text! After all, Bombadil only required the help of these ferry-hobbits because the Brandywine was flowing ‘too swift’ for his own cockleboat (13).



In his inquiry into the finding of the One Ring, Gandalf seems to have learned that the

imagine a small *goblin-skin coracle*?



Given their depiction, the surviving coastal bands of Drúedain—described as “fishers and fowlers” (18)—could conceivably have been producing dugout canoes as part of their Paleo/Mesolithic lifeways. Logboats, often made of linden or oak, have been found in European archeology dating back well over 10,000 years (19).

Look for our discussion of the Gondorian and Corsair fleets in a future edition! ✨

#### References

- (1) for a primer on basic gear-carrying options, see [V5:II](#)
- (2) [Lord of the Rings](#), Book II: Chapter 8 (3) *ibid.*
- (4) In his draft, Tolkien added that these paddles were “contrived that the blades folded back, as a swan's foot does, when they were thrust forward in the water”; Christopher Tolkien believed that his father “saw this as too much of a ‘contrivance’, too much a matter of ingenious carpentry” ([History of Middle-earth Volume 7](#), Ch. XIV)
- (5) [LR II:9](#)
- (6) [Covered lifeboat](#)
- (7) [LR II:8](#)
- (8) Barrel raft: from Lake-town: [Pictures by JRR Tolkien](#) p133; [‘Huck Finn’ Raft Trip: 5 Days Down Swedish River](#)
- (9) [LR II:9](#); Appendix B: The Tale of Years of the Third Age
- (10) [Atlas of Middle-earth](#), revised edition p. \_
- (11) [The Umiak](#)
- (12) [Adventures of Tom Bombadil #2](#); image: Pauline Baynes
- (13) [ATB #2](#)
- (13) [Skiffs photo by Motmit](#)
- (15) [LR I:2](#)
- (16) [John Scofield, National Geographic Society \(1971\)](#)
- (17) [TH](#), Ch 5
- (18) [Unfinished Tales](#): Part Two, Ch 4
- (19) see: [Pesse canoe](#) (Dutch) dated to c. 8040 BCE to 7510 BCE



**A pair of English racing skiffs (14)**

Stoorish proto-hobbits of the Gladden River “made *little boats of reeds*”, which Déagol sat *in* while fishing (15). Many cultures have created watercraft with their local reed (papyrus, totora, tule, etc.) and most seem to incorporate an up-turned prow, like the following example from Lake Chad (16). In [The Hobbit](#), we read that Gollum “had a little boat” and would paddle it “with large feet dangling over the side” (17). It seems unlikely that he would be able to acquire fresh reeds deep under the mountains, so what could this boat have been made of? Might we

# How Fast is an Orc?

a. hollis

The Tolkien archives at Marquette University contain some little-known nuggets of Middle-earth lore which can help add depth to our own ‘inner personas’ and let us better inhabit Tolkien’s world. If you’re in need of motivation for physical conditioning, look no further:

In an early note, Tolkien calculated that an **“Orcs’ usual pace is a steady 4 mph.** They can keep this up for 5 hours but then need one hour rest. They can thus cover at need 80 miles per diem, and can do this for 5 days & then need long rest so in 5 days they can cover 400 miles but must then rest. At need for short period they can trot from 6 mph for about 50 miles. Isengarders could go a little faster and need only ½ hour rests.” (Marquette MSS 4/2/19, quoted in Reader’s Companion p 379).

This means an orc-march of 20 miles in six hours gives an average pace of 3.33 mph, and this march could be repeated four times a day! We can assume that running in sunlight would reduce their efficiency, though by what factor is unknown.

If an Isengarder’s pace is say, 1/8th faster than the usual orc (4.5 mph), they would travel 22.5 miles in 5.5 hours (average pace of 3.75 mph) x 4.36 marches per 24 hours = 98 miles per day! (Saruman’s Uruk-hai seem to be less—if at all—affected by sunlight. We can then compare these to the Númenorean marching regimen discussed earlier:

Númenorean regular pace at 24 mi/day is 3 mph, but average pace (factoring in rest times) is 2.3 mph; Númenorean ‘in haste’ pace at 36

mi/day is 4.5mph, and (assuming same 8-hour marching) average pace 3.4 mph.

## How fast is an Ent?

After much drafting and calculating, Tolkien finally concluded that “an Ent would take nearly nine hours to do 70,000 strides and presumably in that time would go 70,000 yards at least, probably 4 ft a stride”. This gives around 2.2 strides of 4 feet per second, covering a distance of 53.3 miles, at a speed of about 6 miles per hour! In another note Tolkien wrote, “Ents are (as long as they can drink running water) almost tireless. They can go at c. 12 mph – averaging say 10 hours (even 24) at a stretch. Max[imum] speed of Treebeard was 20 mph when charging” (ibid., 385).

**One thing it helps to be reminded of is that Middle-earth is a world with a much slower pace than we moderns are used to...even a charging Ent’s top speed is still below the speed limit for a neighborhood street.**

## How fast is a winged Nazgul?

“...it would take about six or seven hours for a Nazgul to fly from Barad-dûr to Isengard, 600 miles or more” (ibid., 454). 6 hours gives us 100 mph; 7 gives 85.7mph; if we split the difference at 6.5hr, 92 mph!

## Paces compared:

Númenorean march	20 minutes/mile
Orc	15 minutes/mile
Uruk-hai	13.3 minutes/mile
Ent	5 minutes/mile
Fell beast	36 seconds /mile!

# GETTING UNDER COVER

G. LAMMERS & A. HOLLIS

Throughout Tolkien's works, groups from various cultures go about Middle-earth in many fashions. While we have the remnant Dunedain roaming the wilds with naught but the cloaks on their backs as Aragorn does with the hobbits from Bree to Rivendell, we also have whole armies traveling with row upon row of tents and pavilions, and everything in between. No surprise: tents and other portable shelters provide excellent and (sometimes) quick solutions to rain, wind, and cold. While they check many boxes of necessity, they do not, however, get around easily. Convenience is utterly sacrificed if one intends to bring a true self-supporting tent on a venture. However, if one digs into the texts, a little analysis shows that there are plentiful cases of groups traveling afield equipped with "tents" or "pavilions", and all these share a common element of realism. (For brevity's sake, unless a specific detail is included in their description, we will refrain from providing the complete passage for each example.)

-In the First Age, the Drúedain live as part of the Folk of Haleth, and "lightly" build their tents "around the trunks of large trees..." (1); in the Second Age, it seem Númenóreans brought tents with them on their expeditions to Middle-earth (2); according to Elendil, "...the tents of [Ar-Pharazon's] host were ranged all about him, blue, golden, and white, as a field of tall flowers" (3).

-Tents and pavilions are set up as part of Bilbo's 111th birthday celebration (4), and are used by the Eorlings and Gondorians after the Oath of Eorl (5).

Aragorn tells us that even in peacetime,

herdsmen of the Eastemnet stay with their animals "in camp and tent, even in winter-time" (6), and when these Rohirrim muster later at Dunharrow we see that they have set up such shelters in "ordered rows of tents and booths" which stretch into the distance (7).

Even the Enemy uses prepared shelters: not only at home in Mordor (8), but while besieging Minas Tirith "...as far as eyes could strain in the mirk there sprouted, like a foul fungus-growth, all about the beleaguered city great camps of tents, black or sombre red" (9).

In the aftermath of the battle of Pelennor Fields, tents become more frequently mentioned. After passing through southern Gondor and sailing up the Anduin to turn the tide of battle, much is made of Aragorn's insistence to remain camped in tents upon the field and again before his coronation (10). Following the Ring's destruction, the victory feast at the Field of Cormallen is held beneath tents and pavilions (11). When Sam looks out to nearby Cair Andros, "many ships lay by its shores", and these are likely the same ones that brought wains with "store of goods" from Minas Tirith via Osgiliath (12)—perhaps Tolkien's clearest view of a detailed, logistical supply train.

-Finally, on their postwar journey to Rivendell from Gondor, the party of Ringbearers don't have to sleep under the stars, but are "well provided with all that they needed; and they went on their way at their leisure, setting up their tents when they would" (13).

For those of us who might wish for some better protection from the elements, it is significant that *these* are the examples of shelters (concluded on page 15)

# ABOUT US

*The Middle-earth Reenactment Society is dedicated to the furthering of J.R.R. Tolkien cultural studies, within the framework of 'historical' reenactment. We exist to recreate the cultures of Middle-earth in both form and function, and to mold ourselves into peoples fitting to associate with and live as members of these fully-realized cultures. A part of the [middleearthrangers.org](http://middleearthrangers.org) Tolkien re-creation community, the Society publishes the online periodical Edge of the Wild, showcasing new research, methods, materials, and instructional articles, while meeting throughout the year at various sites deemed 'wild' enough to still capture the reality and imagination of the wild lands envisioned within the pages of Tolkien's works.*

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being used in Tolkien's narratives. Every single one is either a 'home base', or else involves pack animals or boat support. Those of us who set forth on foot—alone or only in small groups—are generally not able to use such cover, unless we are travelling by boat or with a pack animal (as each of our examples shows) and must resort to shelters made of natural materials or pre-existing structure(s) such as caves or rock overhangs. ✨

## References

- (1) Unfinished Tales Part IV: Chapter 1
- (2) History of Middle-earth Volume 12: *Tal-Elmar*
- (3) The Silmarillion: *Akallabêth*
- (4) Lord of the Rings Book I: Chapter 1
- (5) UT III:2
- (6) LR III:1
- (7) LR V:3
- (8) LR VI:2
- (9) LR V:4
- (10) LR VI:8, 9, 5
- (11) LR VI:4
- (12) LR VI:5
- (13) LR VI:6

