

EDGE OF THE WILD

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Greetings readers!

We have long encouraged members and interested readers to pursue personae which reflect common folk: the free peoples most likely to be encountered throughout Middle-earth. As fun as it sounds to become a Lord of Gondor, Middle-earth is largely made of common folk living common lives, and their endeavors deserve recognition.

To that end, we are focusing this fall on “That which they defend”: the peoples, places, and everyday tasks that keep their world turning.

We sincerely hope you enjoy!

- The Editor





“...WE WOULD NOT HAVE IT OTHERWISE. IF
SIMPLE FOLK ARE FREE OF CARE AND FEAR,
SIMPLE THEY WILL BE, AND WE MUST BE
SECRET TO KEEP THEM SO.”

- THE LORD OF THE RINGS: BOOK II, CHAPTER II
THE COUNCIL OF ELROND

IN PRAISE OF THE FARRIER

E. MEULEMANS

The term farrier comes from the Latin Ferrarius, owing to the ferrum (iron) of the horseshoe. But shoeing is only a part of the farrier's duties, in ancient times and today. Indeed, most horses are not shod at all, but their hooves must be regularly trimmed (every 6-8 weeks, typically) and injuries and defects treated. These are not just of the hoof, but the leg, bone, tendon and musculature throughout the body, all being complementary. In the past, and particularly in cavalry parlance, farriers may have served as all around horse doctors in a time when veterinary science was not yet widespread. While many even now use the term blacksmith and farrier synonymously, the two trades were infrequently practiced by the same person, though certainly sometimes this was the case. Tolkien makes no explicit reference to either horseshoes or farriery, but we can be sure that with as many horses as he describes, those skilled in their care were present behind the scenes.

Palfrey, pony, or steed of a king
None are forever spared from malady
In Bree or Buckland
From Esgaroth to Eastfold
Arnor or Harad beyond

Where there are horses so too am I there
Hunched beside Hafling cob
Stooped by Rohirric colt
I've been kicked at and bit at and stomped
on and abused
And sometimes the horses are mean to me
too!

I arise before the sun, and always see it set
Many leagues I travel, so please give me rest
Prepare a space and keep your mounts
steady
A meal and some brew are welcome
There are few of us already

Occasion may make me a smith, but rarely
is the opposite true
It takes more than pounding iron to
understand living flesh
For horses have five hearts, and only one in
their chest
Yet they all must pulse
No hoof, no horse!

For a horse's ability, and continuation in
goodness
Is known by his hooves; strong, smooth, and
hard

The foundation of all his building
Giving fortitude to all the rest(1)
Without which work and life are soon
expired

Aye, the farrier is your friend
Knife, pincers, and rasp in hand
With camphor, tow, and tar to fight
Experience and knowledge to wield
I've many tools, the greatest of which is
patience...

Against ceaseless foes
Punctures, sores, and cuts
Splints, sprains, and strains
Canker, abscess, and thrush
And dreaded colic too

Look you to one who knows these ills
Spavin of bog and bone
Cracks of toe, quarter, and heel
Scratches, windgalls, and ringbone
Quittor and founder most vile!

Forging, not with the hammer and anvil but
betwixt hoof fore and aft
Paddling and dishing, swinging out and in
Brushing one side against another
Balance and break-over, these things I know
To keep the gaits as sound or return them to
true

Walk four flat: Clip-clop, Clip-clop
Trot two sharp: Clippety-clip!
Canter three steady: A swift clatter
Gallop four fast: Thudding!(2)
Sweet sounds all until they falter

First, last, and at all times
Look after your horses
Rain or shine, day or night
Attend to them at once
When trouble arises

And should you find need of a farrier
Call for me with no delay
Through field, over hill and river I will come
If any man mistreats an animal before I
arrive
Let the punishment be more severe than that
given

1. Paraphrased from Taplin, William. Taplin Improved, or, a Compendium of Farriery... W. Lane, 1796.
2. These are the sounds Tolkien writes of in his description of hoof-falls.

DOGS IN THE NORTH

G. LAMMERS

“For the Númenoreans kept dogs, especially in the country, partly by ancestral tradition, since they had few useful purposes any longer. [...] In the sheep-rearing regions, such as that of Emeria, they had dogs specially trained to help the shepherds.”

- The Nature of Middle-earth. Part 3, Chapter XI: Lives of the Númenoreans

“As for the major animals, it is clear that there were none of the canine of related kinds [in Númenor]. There were certainly no hounds or dogs (all of which were imported)...

- NoME 3, XI

Thanks to this new information found in the recently published The Nature of Middle-earth, we can say with surety that some form of sheep-herding canine was found native to the mainland of Northern and Western Middle-earth during the second age, and could likely still exist well into the Third. This works well with the knowledge of shepherding in the Bree-lands, and the guesses at Homesteading among the Dúnedain settlements in the lands surrounding.



It seems likely that most Bree-folk would rise with the sun or the cockcrow(1) – while Frodo requests breakfast at six-thirty(2) and that Butterbur has the four hobbits' ponies ready to depart by eight o'clock(3), and the innkeeper agrees, there are no mentions of clocks on the mantelpieces of Bree as there are in the Shire(4). If there are mechanical clocks in Bree, one might be found in the *Prancing Pony*, given that the inn has a long history and the innkeeper is an important person(5), but that does not necessarily mean they are commonplace. In fact, the interior of this large, old inn is the only one described in Bree-land, and much of the material culture mentioned is found there, as well. While it is perhaps unwise to rely too much on the description of a single building (and a remarkable one at that!), there are many hints there about the lives of Bree-folk.

While the average home in Bree is likely not as well-furnished as the *Prancing Pony*, the bed a Bree-lander rises from might be quite comfortable; even if it doesn't boast the bolsters of the inn(6), textiles seem readily available in the village. Tablecloths(7), curtains(8), bedclothes(9), and a brown woollen mat(9) are all mentioned at the *Prancing Pony*. If Bree-landers also observe the Shire custom of eating upon rising (Butterbur is at least familiar with it(2), preparing a morning meal might involve coaxing the banked embers of the previous night's fire back into flame. This would likely be in a fireplace(10), rather than a central hearth. Of course, if the food served at the *Prancing Pony* is representative of standard Bree-land fare(11), a morning fire would not be necessary, but perhaps Bree-folk are familiar with a beverage known to Hobbits and Dwarves – coffee(12)!

While very few of the occupations of Bree-folk are explicitly mentioned in the text, it seems likely that many are farmers, cultivating the fields between the villages(13). The material culture of the *Prancing Pony* suggests that there are plenty of tradespersons, as well. Perhaps the stone houses of Bree(14) seemed especially large and strange to the four hobbits(15) because they were more than one story tall, with workshops on the ground floor and living quarters above (after all, the Inn was made up of three storeys(15)). Local merchants might sell wares to travelers on the East Road(16) (and perhaps even to those mysterious wanderers from the wild lands beyond Bree(17)). For some likely occupations of Bree-folk, see "Pick a Persona: Bree-land" in Volume 2, Issue 1!

While how Bree-landers spend their days likely varies quite a bit, it seems that many of them (Big Folk or Small Folk) end their days the same way – at the *Prancing Pony*. Men of Bree might share benches with hobbits, dwarves, travelers, and wanderers¹⁸, listening to news from afar or strange stories¹⁹ before returning to their own beds.



References:

1. "[Frodo] opened his eyes, and heard a cock crowing lustily in the inn-yard." *The Lord of the Rings*, I:11
2. "'In any case we must be called at dawn,' said Frodo. 'We must get off as early as possible. Breakfast at six-thirty, please.'" *LR*, I:10
3. "'I shan't be doing anything of the sort again, Mr. Butterbur, I promise you. And now I think I'll be getting to bed. We shall be making an early start. Will you see that our ponies are ready by eight o'clock?'" *LR*, I:9
4. "'No, don't give the ring to me,' said Gandalf. 'Put it on the mantelpiece. It will be safe enough there, till Frodo comes. I shall wait for him.' Bilbo took out the envelope, but just as he was about to set it by the clock, his hand jerked back, and the packet fell on the floor." *LR*, I:1
5. "The Inn of Bree was still there, however, and the innkeeper was an important person. His house was a meeting place for the idle, talkative, and inquisitive among the inhabitants, large and small, of the four villages; and a resort of Rangers and other wanderers, and for such travellers (mostly dwarves) as still journeyed on the East Road, to and from the Mountains." *LR*, I:9
6. "[T]he windows had been forced open and were swinging, and the curtains were flapping; the beds were tossed about, and the bolsters slashed and flung upon the floor; the brown mat was torn to pieces." *LR*, I:11
7. "There was a round table, already spread with a white cloth, and on it was a large hand-bell." *LR*, I:9
8. "Many of the lower windows showed lights behind thick curtains." *LR*, I:9
9. "'I've ruffled up the clothes and put in a bolster down the middle of each bed. And I made a nice imitation of your head with a brown woollen mat, Mr. Bag - Underhill, sir,' [Nob] added with a grin." *LR*, I:10
10. "Meanwhile an argument was going on by the fireplace. Mr. Butterbur had come trotting in, and he was now trying to listen to several conflicting accounts of the event at the same time." *LR*, I:9
11. "There was hot soup, cold meats, a blackberry tart, new loaves, slabs of butter, and half a ripe cheese..." *LR*, I:9
12. "Some [of the dwarves] called for ale, and some for porter, and one for coffee, and all of them for cakes; so the hobbit was kept very busy for a while." *The Hobbit*, Ch1
13. "Lying round Bree-hill and the villages was a small country of fields and tamed woodland only a few miles broad." *LR*, I:9

14. "The village of Bree had some hundred stone houses of the Big Folk, mostly above the Road, nestling on the hillside with windows looking west." LR, I:9
15. "The hobbits rode on up a gentle slope, passing a few detached houses, and drew up outside the inn. The houses looked large and strange to them. Sam stared up at the inn with its three storeys and many windows, and felt his heart sink." LR, I:9
16. "[The Inn of Bree] was a meeting place for the idle, talkative, and inquisitive among the inhabitants, large and small, of the four villages; and a resort of Rangers and other wanderers, and for such travellers (mostly dwarves) as still journeyed on the East Road, to and from the Mountains." LR, I:9
17. "But in the wild lands beyond Bree there were mysterious wanderers. The Bree-folk called them Rangers, and knew nothing of their origin." LR, I:9
18. "Barliman Butterbur was standing near the fire, talking to a couple of dwarves and one or two strange-looking men. On the benches were various folk: men of Bree, a collection of local hobbits (sitting chattering together), a few more dwarves, and other vague figures difficult to make out away in the shadows and corners." LR, I:9
19. "When [Rangers] appeared they brought news from afar, and told strange forgotten tales which were eagerly listened to; but the Bree-folk did not make friends of them." LR, I:9



DÚNEDAIN CHILDREN: A DAY IN THE LIFE

G. LAMMERS

Of all the cultures in Middle-earth that have been studied, imitated, and re-imagined, the Dúnedain are a major frontrunner for popularity. As exciting as the culture of a once-noble exiled race of Men sounds, we're only seeing the tip of the iceberg if Rangers are where the story both starts and ends. For the line of kings to have continued for an entire Age of Middle-earth, there must have been settlements, and there must have been women, and there must have been children. But what would their children's lives have looked like?

At the time of writing, nothing is specifically known from our primary source material, but much can be guessed, and still more inferred from the ways the Free Peoples surrounding them live. We can't be sure of everything, but with this information in hand, let's take a look at a day in the life of Dúnedain children.

They wake up early. They always do; the animals need looking after. The rooster is already carrying on, and in the dim morning light the rest would be stirring...and hungry.

They dress hastily, pulling their linen sleeveless surcotes on over their light linen smocks. Blue is a cheap and easy color to come by, while the simple garments were easy to make, and easier still to hand down to younger siblings.

They come alone, as their mother will be up and tending to the hearth. They bring no light with them, because the sun is rising fast, and they can make their way to the pens without trouble. Without these wood-and-wattle pens, the risk of a predator problem would go up substantially; there are numerous highly intelligent foxes in the region, and potential for bigger threats from the mountains.

First, they lower a bucket into a stone-lined well. The contents are splashed into a few wooden troughs and then eagerly lapped up by the livestock.



The chickens roam and eat as they please once their coop is opened to daylight. There are eggs to collect, and one hen is sitting stubbornly; she's trying to hatch them. The girls leave a few eggs with her, and separate her from the flock in hopes of more birds hatching soon. Yesterday's kitchen scraps are thrown to a few dark, bristly pigs in the sty. They are fattened all Summer and then slaughtered in the fall. They will become all manner of cured and/or dried meats to get the farmstead through the coming winter. Salt Pork is a staple they can not live without.



In the next—and loudest—pen, are goats. Milking is the first major task of any given day, and will be among the last before bed as well. The goat's head is put through a

simple wooden stanchion that keeps it in one place while it is milked. Four does go through the process, receiving a handful of grains for their cooperation, while their kids watch eagerly through slits in the fence. They will eat their fill afterwards, but the young ladies get theirs first.

The early meal is often simple, and made of the first fruits of the day: eggs and milk, often with a simple baked loaf and fresh butter. This is freshly churned from the goat's cream after it separates for a day or two while chilling in the root cellar by the creek.

The girls spend their day in various ways after their morning routine. Some days the priority is washing clothes that have been worn too long, or mending those that have taken hurt. Other days they tend to the garden. Sometimes, they steal away moments to wander through the woodlands



searching for herbs and other treasures they can make use of on the table.

Regardless, their day always ends around the hearth: cooking, eating, and talking. They tend the fire, fetch wood, and bring water as needed to aid their mother in meal preparation. Family ties are vastly important for an exiled people, and around the fire is where they stay together. With fathers who may likely be gone for extended periods of time as Rangers in Eriador, working together as a family unit is indispensable.



The hearth

J. CORCORAN

Nenlaith lifted the wooden bowl in both hands. She judged the weight by long habit..not quite enough. On the floor nearby sat her little Tuilinn, a stuffed horse in her lap. "Here babe," Nenlaith called as she passed down a wooden scoop - "fetch me another from the maslin-chest." Tuilinn dropped her toy and toddled to the heavy chest in the corner. She heaved at the oaken lid, and gingerly filled the scoop with maslin-flour.

The scoop was large and clumsy in her small hands. She waddled with the weight of it back to the table, then lifted it up with both hands. Loose flour floated in the air. Tuilinn looked hopeful as her mother took the scoop from her. "Make sweet cake?" Her mother smiled down. "Making Waycakes."

She poured out more flour, judging the amount by weight and eye. Perfect.

She tossed in a small handful of salt, and set Tuilinn to grinding a bit of feathergreen seeds. While the girl worked, Nenlaith went to the hearth. There - well back from the fire - she had sat a bowl of honey-water, now thick with yeast-froth. This she brought to the table, and poured carefully into the bowl. Little Tuilinn watched her mother stir. She pursed her lip as she thought.

"Daddy gone."

"He is," answered Nenlaith. Flour and water became dough.

"So why hardcake now?"

"For Haerrudir. He told us Halbarad's men are going far away. They will gather Daddy as they go."

"Daddy not coming home?"

Nenlaith paused. She looked out the window, lest Tuilinn see her face.

"Daddy's coming home, sweet thing," she answered. "It will just be longer than we thought." She took a breath, then wiped clean her hands and knelt to hold the girl. "And tonight you see Halbarad again, and the Elf-Lords too, for Haerrudir says they travel together."

Tuilinn's face lit up. "We see Elfs?!!" Her mother smiled again.

"For a night. They rest here on their way to the Bruinen."

Nenlaith rose. She pulled a tall stool beside her, and patted the seat with a smile. Tuilinn climbed up onto the stool behind her, and together they worked the dough. "Bru... Brui... Bru bru...Why we no go?" Nenlaith leaned over and kissed her head. "We have work here."

Tuilinn grimaced as she kneaded the sticky mess. Nenlaith sprinkled on more flour. "Nordheg say us work not important." Nenlaith looked down, her

face almost sharp. "Our work is *very* important!"

Tuilinn looked up. "Why?"

Nenlaith thought as the dough stiffened beneath their fingers. She smiled as she reached for a pin and began to roll the dough smooth.

"Do you remember when you went fishing with Nodheg and Brodhi? And you fell in?" "Ya. Stupid Nodheg."

"Do you remember when you came home?"

"You gave me blanket, and Nana make me sweetmilk!"

"She did! but what would you do if there was no fire in the house when you came home? What if there was no one to meet you?"

Tuilinn looked stricken.

"I be cold."

"You would be cold."

"I be hungry."

"You would be hungry."

"I be sad."

"You would be very sad."

Tuilinn thought in silence a while.

"But Daddy not come home wet," she said at last.

No," allowed her mother. "But while Daddy's gone, he's outside all the time. And he gets very wet and cold, just like you did. And he gets hungry, and

sometimes he gets scared, and sometimes he gets very, very sad."

"Oh no!" cried Tuilinn.

"Oh no!" echoed Nenlaith.

She bent low, her face close to Tuilinn's ear - "But you know what?"

"What?"

"*You* are keeping a place in his heart warm. All the time." Tuilinn looked doubtful.

"I am?"

"Yes! There is a shape in his heart, made just for loving and protecting you. Just like there's a place in yours for hugging him tight when he comes home. And he always knows that because of what he does, whenever he comes back home there will be a fire here waiting for him, and people who love him.

And so he can keep on being cold, and hungry, and scared - as long as need needs to be - because he has a reason to do it. And that reason - Nenlaith paused to kiss her head -

"... is you."

Tuilinn pondered this as Nenlaith cut cakes from the flattened dough. Finally she spoke, her voice soft.

"My job *important*." Nenlaith gave her a squeeze.

"Your job is *very* important."

Nenlaith took the knife, and Tuilinn watched as she cut a star into the top of the first cake. "Now you."

Mother guided daughter's hand as they cut the sigil onto each cake. Tuilinn smiled. Nenlaith held the knife to her - "Here now, cut your name-rune."

"You first!"

Nenlaith smiled, and on each cake cut a T-rune for her name. Then Tuilinn took the tool from her, and cut a second line for T onto each of her mother's runes ...

Tuinn grinned - then she added a little dot to make a bird.

Her mother laughed.

"I think Daddy will like that very much. He will see your mark, and he will think of you, and he will think of me, and his heart will be warm."

Far off came the the sound of a hunting horn upon the wind.

"Let's get these into the oven."

MASLIN Waycake

Ingredients:

2c Wheat flour, fine
2c Rye flour, fine
½ cup butter, warm and soft but not melted.
(lard can be substituted)
2 tsp ground caraway seeds
2 tsp salt
1 Tbsp Honey, 2 tsp yeast in 1 ½ cup warm water

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 350°
2. Stir honey and yeast into warm water and set aside.
3. Mix wheat flour, rye flour, salt and ground caraway seeds into a large bowl.
4. Cut ONE HALF (½ cup) of the butter into the flour mix.
5. When the froth of growing yeast appears on the honey water, stir the liquid into the flour mix.
6. Stir the mix into a dough: add flour or warm water as necessary to create a dough that is smooth without being sticky or crumbly.
7. Knead dough until completely smooth and firm.
8. Roll out dough to approximately ¼" thick.

9. Cut circles from dough into cakes approximately 3" around.
10. Cut a star in the top of the cake, then add runes for the maker.
11. Set cakes in the oven for about twenty minutes.
12. Remove cakes from oven, and let them sit until cool.
13. Reduce oven temperature to 120°
14. Melt REMAINING HALF of butter.
15. Brush the cakes with melted butter.
16. Bake cakes again for approximately another forty minutes.
17. Turn off oven, let cakes cool in place with a cracked-open door.
18. Cakes should be firm but not hard. Keep as is if they will be eaten in the next week, otherwise bake again at low temperature until cracker-hard.



SOCIETY News

*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 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.*

Please join us on facebook, follow us on Instagram, download back issues at edgeofthewild.org, or contact us to receive future issues sent direct to your inbox!

This has been an interesting Season for the Society. Despite the continued pandemic and challenges it represents, we have been busy! Our normal editor has begun (and is currently on!) a thruhike of the 2193-mile Appalachian Trail in the Eastern United States. At the same time, Tolkien Scholars the world over were greeted this month with a brand-new publication of original Tolkien writings: The Nature of Middle-earth, which has given us some new insights into aspects of cultures that can be used to further flesh out accurate personae. In future issues, we will go into further depth of what we have found that is particularly useful for our pursuits; we hope you'll be joining us!

We are always looking for New Members! If you are interested in joining our fellowship, have questions about our membership Standards and Tiers, or are looking for assistance in building your kit, we love discussing ideas for possible personas and impressions! Here, we have our two newest Society Members, portraying Dúnedain children living in Eriador during the exile in the Third Age, approaching the time of the War of the Ring.

