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1 The Marches

?Pride in small things, loyalty to great ones?



The Marchers are an unyielding people, implacable and stubborn, who will never be ruled again.
For centuries, the Marcher Households have followed the beat of the Empire's drums. Aided by the Landskeepers' magic and inspired by the faithful of the monasteries, the Marcher armies have been built from the strength of the yeomen's arms, the courage of their hearts, and the knowledge that they fight for the green fields of home. Stubborn as stone, they give ground grudgingly, and even if they are forced to retreat they are not defeated: they will return.

The Marches are the guts of the Empire. They may not be pretty, but they are vital. They fought a war of independence long ago and they will die, one and all, before they give up their freedoms. None stands above another but that their neighbours put them there. Everything they have they have taken with blood and sweat, every season, their prosperity dragged from the soft earth with every harvest. Nature is their servant, bound and shackled with looming menhirs and iron ploughshares, a hound tamed and set to lie before their doors.

They understand sacrifice - not the easy sacrifice of blood for the harvest, but the hard sacrifice of lives spent day after day working for the future.

The Marches is the sleeping giant of Empire. Enemy boots churn up the rich soil, as the dog days of summer give way to the cold dawn of autumn ? and to war.

Hearth and home, loyalty and land. Rivalry, pride and a nation of traditions. Sentinel hills, silent marshes, and standing stones that mark their dominance over the fields. Generation to generation tilling the good, dark earth as their forebears did, and reaping the harvests that feed all the Empire.

Hered the Wakened, Memories of Home

1.1 Five things about the Marches

- **Land matters above all else.** Control and ownership of the land influences every aspect of Marcher life, most especially politics and magic.
- **They have deep roots and long memories.** Proud of their history and the long rivalries between Households, they never forgive a grudge.
- **They're fiercely independent, proud and stubborn.** They solve their own problems and stand their ground to defend what is theirs.
- **They're governed by consent.** They choose their leaders; Marchers are led not ruled. Everyone is born equal and respect is earned not demanded.
- **They hold their traditions dearly.** This is a land that dislikes change for change's sake, a land comfortable with routine, where Imperial Virtues are just plain common sense.

1.2 What the Marchers are not

- **Pagans.** The Marchers use magic and hard work to tame and control the land; they subjugate it to their will, they don't worship it. The Landskeepers draw on many of the visual imagery of druids, but they are a core part of the agricultural Marcher society, not a throwback to an earlier age.
- **Authentic.** The Marches is a low-fantasy nation designed to allow people to use the extensive costume resources of The Anarchy, the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years war. However the Marches is still a fantasy nation, owing as much to *The Wicker Man* (1973) or Pratchett's Tiffany Aching series as the Ellis Peters' Cadfael stories or the Cousins' War; this is no place for arguments about historical authenticity.



1.3 Further Reading

Core Brief

- Introduction
- The people
- Culture and customs
- Look and feel
- Hearth magic

Additional Information

- History
- Leadership
- Economic interests
- Military concerns
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Territories
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- Archetypes
- Groups
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2 The Marches people



Cora Hale and Sister Meredith Stellamaris relaxing at a Marcher fair
The Marches is a proud nation. The folk here are proud of their accomplishments, proud of their households and history, and proud of their traditions and their mastery of their land. The Marches is the breadbasket of the Empire. No other land is as fertile and no other people work as hard as the Marcher folk, they say. The Marchers have no time for idle hands and idle tongues.

Land is at the heart of Marcher society. Those who farm the land, yeomen, band together in households that wield great power. The market towns may be filled with skilled and wealthy crafters, but without land they do not have the right to influence the politics of the Marches. The monasteries by comparison do own land. They are a thoroughly Marcher creation, blending religion and hard work and their monks till their fields like everyone else. Their influence is growing and may one day rival the most powerful households, but its roots lie in the ownership of land. Behind it all lie the Landskeepers, powerful magicians whose traditional rituals help to keep the land fertile and prosperous.

The archetypal Marcher is famous for stubborn pride and unyielding self-reliance. They are a hard people, who are well accustomed to a long day working the land. The yeomen wear their Household livery with pride, viewing those in other colours as rivals at best. This leads to passionate and sometimes bitter rivalries. Marcher history is filled with accounts of bloody conflicts between once powerful Households, fortunes that wax and wane with victories on the battlefield. Marcher folk have long memories and feuds are nursed down the generations. In some cases they've become so ingrained that the truth behind them is no longer remembered, or even considered particularly relevant.



Photo by Tony Jebson
One reason the Marchers are prosperous is that they don't waste anything. Thrift is virtuous in the Marches; it is the root of prosperity. Their possessions are likely to be old, worn, trusted and well-maintained rather than new and untested. Throwing away a serviceable cloak that simply needs patching is frivolous; it shows disrespect to the crafter, at the very least. Even when they do buy something new, they see no reason to discard an old possession, not while there are family members or friends who might still get use out of it. There is a saying "*every coin is washed in sweat.*" The Marchers earn what they have through hard work, and being frivolous with that wealth devalues the work that went into earning it.

Marcher folk don?t stand around waiting for someone else to solve their problems; self-reliance is a large part of their national character. While there is land for the ambitious to start new farms, it has to be cleared. Some places have trees to fell, some have enemies to defeat. People of other nations talk endlessly about what it means to be heroic; Marchers don?t waste their breath, they just get on and do what needs to be done.

Self-sacrifice underpins many elements of Marcher culture. It is found in the tenacious attitude of the people to hardship. It is found in the belief that hard work pays for good fortune. And it is found in the response to the loss of their territory: the ultimate sacrifice, death in a wicker man, for the ultimate responsibility.

2.1 Names



Costume by Jude Reid
Marcher names are usually English in origin. Given names in the Marches are usually plain and simple.

Surnames often come in three flavours: where you're from, what you do, or a nickname.

Most often, they'll be for where you live, perhaps your home hamlet; "Of Stoke" for example. You might be named for a territory; usually if you live far from there. "Tom Of Upwold" might be a useful way of denote a particular Tom who lived in the Mitwold, not so for one in Upwold.

Less often, Marchers are named for what they do. "Beater", "Landskeeper", "Friar", "Brewer", "Smith", "Tailor" "Thatcher" etc.

However, a Marcher might also be named for a nickname: maybe a pet, or a description; "Wise", "Good", or something less complimentary.

2.1.1 Sample names

Alice, Agenes, Brigit, Jack, John, Henry, Matilda, Margaret, Robin, Thomas, Walter, William

N.B. Whilst some names are inspired by real world names which may be given to specific genders, Empire is a gender blind setting and people of any gender choose any name they like that is appropriate to their nation.

At sixteen summers I was finally a man, and ready to take my place in the world. From my ma I got this old almanac that she?d had off her nanna afore her. At the time I wasn?t too impressed, truth to tell, but you?d be surprised how handy the damn thing has been over the years, especially since I got me own place and had to figure out plantin? an? croppin? an? such for meself. From me da I got Old Stinger, the gnarled ash bow what was made by me great-great-grandad. Not much of a bowyer but a real bear of a man who could straight-arm an anvil . Pull on it like an oxen, an? by Virtue, if you didn?t learn to use it just so you?d find out the hard way why it was called Stinger, cos you wouldn?t be able to use yer hand fer the rest o? the day! But I didn?t care, an? I thanked ?em right smart (somethin? told me bein? a man didn?t mean too old for a switchin? if I didn?t show manners.) That night I got to go out to the lightning oak with the other young things, to say our words to the Landskeepers, an? after that there was beer an? dancin? an? such under the stars. Next mornin? I was a man steerin? a plough instead of a boy steerin? a plough. Not sure why it made all the difference, but somehow it did.

2.2 Further Reading

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3 The Marches culture and customs



Marcher Wassail, Autumn Equinox 378YE

3.1 Tradition

Tried and trusted traditions bind the folk together and give a context to their lives. Traditions such as *hue and cry*, *rough music*, *shunning*, *shriving*, *beating the bounds* and the *wicker man* are all part of a system that has worked to make the Marches strong for centuries. Several of these traditions have their roots in necessity - when times are hard, people who act against the interests of their neighbours endanger the entire community. These traditions help to maintain the cohesion of a community, and lay down punishments for those who act against the communal good.

3.2 Hue and cry

The Marcher attitude of taking matters in hand is the basis of the *hue and cry*, the old tradition of law enforcement in the Marches that still endures. Any Marcher who witnesses a crime can raise a hue and cry. All able-bodied people, upon hearing the shouts, are expected to assist in the pursuit until the felon is apprehended. In the pre-Imperial past, the hue and cry would often result in summary justice for a criminal, which occasionally lead to innocent people receiving harsh punishments. Today, suspects are turned over to Imperial magistrates to judge. The readiness of the Marchers to defend the common good derives from their belief in doing the right thing and their pride that they are up to the task of getting it done.

3.3 Shunning

Those who persist in ignoring Marcher traditions may end up subject to Shunning. Individuals who are shunned are effectively cast out of society. They are turned out of their household and find every door closed in their face. Helping or in some cases even acknowledging someone who has been shunned can result in the offender being shunned in turn. Shunning may last for a week, a season, a year or even indefinitely. The extent of the punishment depends on who is enacting it ? one family may shun another and anyone who helps them, or an entire household or town might shun someone and encourage all their allies to do the same. Many individuals who are shunned are forced to leave the area.

Children are *never* shunned. Until someone has passed their test of adulthood, they may be punished by their parents but they are not considered mature or responsible enough to gain any benefit from being shunned. Adults who suggest shunning children are considered to be idiots.

You listen to me young Alice. You're of age now, so you're old enough to come with us, but you better have a care to be doing exactly what we told ya or there will be more trouble than you've ever seen. Firstly, the music stops once we get there. Has to - otherwise nobody'll be able to hear what the beater's got to say. And most important of all, nobody goes in their house, and if they run off, no damn fool goes chasing after them. And nobody, but nobody lays a hand on them... *or else*. That's how rough music turns into bloody murder - and that's not what this is about. We're going down to their Common to show Green Cobb how pissing furious we are, not to start the next Cousin's War. You got all that? Right - grab your pans and lets be off...

Ann Beater

3.4 Rough Music

- **Rough music is only used on Imperial institutions like the Senate or large national groups like a national council, shunning is used for anything smaller**
- **You must get a referee to accompany you before the rough music begins**
- **It starts with an energetic procession that moves through Anvil and ends within a minute or two of arriving at the destination**
- **The Marcher tradition incorporates three golden rules to prevent bloodshed if things get out of hand**
    - **Everyone involved must stay well back, nobody is allowed to get close enough to start a fight**
    - **The music stops outside the culprit's building or tent, nobody is ever allowed to go inside**
    - **Everyone makes sure that the wrongdoers have a clear route to flee if they want to, nobody is allowed to go after them**



The rough music is a particularly egalitarian form of punishment.
Those who break Marcher traditions are often called out publicly. Unlike shunning, however, rough music targets a group of people who have offended their neighbours rather than an individual. Within the Marches, one village will often use rough music against the next village along if they get caught cheating at foot-the-ball. At Anvil Marchers reserve rough music for institutions like the Imperial Senate and the Military Council or large national groups or bodies like the Brands Council in Navarr. If a lone individual or small group are responsible for breaking traditions or causing upset, then shunning used instead if a demonstration needs to be made.

Be Dramatic - Not Punitive or Intimidating

Rough music is **not** a license to break the conduct rules for roleplaying conflict. Everyone who attends Empire must take reasonable steps to ensure that nobody is out-of-character physically intimidated by your roleplaying in a dramatic confrontation. Avoid in-character confrontations where there is out-of-character animosity, or when you are angry out-of-character for any reason. The new version of rough music is designed to lets players produce a dramatic scene that ends with a climactic confrontation, without breaking the conduct rules.

The in-character goal of rough music is to demonstrate the depth of feeling, to show how outraged people are and to highlight the offenders' actions to everyone. The out-of-character goal is to make a big dramatic scene that creates an impact and draws attention to the cool things the perpetrators have done.

At its simplest, rough music is simply a group of Marchers bringing a lot of noise to the house of the folks they're punishing. Rough music is a peculiarly egalitarian punishment. The more Marchers agree with the punishment, the louder it is. The more serious they deem the transgression, the more effort is made in preparation. The more outraged the people are by the behaviour of the targets, the more theatrical the presentation. It usually ends with a formal shaming of the people involved - everyone in the mob stops making a noise, then someone loudly declaims what offences have been committed - and then everyone turns their back and walks away in silence.

While the perception is that it rarely has any sort of formality to it, a proper rough music is generally an organised undertaking. (**OOC Note: You must get a referee before the rough music starts**). It starts with a procession, folks get together, agree what they're going to do and then start to march towards their target while making a hullabaloo. The precise nature of the "music" varies across the Marches, but it is always noisy. The racket may just be chanting, or it may involve drumming, rattles, bells, hooting, and improvised instruments such as pots and pans. Sometimes, the wrongdoers are presented in effigy, and at its most sophisticated the targets are shamed by theatrical performance or puppetry.

Whatever the format, the procession inexorably proceeds towards the target, although the route can be circuitous if folks are angry enough. The rough music will continue the whole time they march, culminating in a great crescendo once they arrive at their destination. The finale will continue for a few minutes at most but stops if the culprits have the courage to come out and face the mob. Once there is quiet someone, usually a respected beater or whoever has the loudest voice, will be pushed forward by the crowd to recite whatever transgressions have roused the anger. It is foolish in the extreme to try and interrupt whoever is presenting the mob's demands since that only invites the rough music to start up again. Once the denunciation is delivered, the crowd will turn their back and walk away in silence - ideally just as the offenders are trying to rebut the accusations.

There are three golden rules for rough music that sensible Marchers ensure are never broken. The first is that nobody is allowed to get close enough to the culprits to in order to prevent a fight starting. The second is that nobody enters the tent or building at any point. And the third is that everyone leaves plenty of room so that the culprits can flee if they need to; those that do flee are ignored. Marchers understand that people do foolish things when they feel trapped.

These rules are set in stone because rough music can all too easily descend into violence and murder when passions are high. The goal of rough music is to demonstrate the strength of feeling, and how badly a group has offended, not to threaten or punish people and certainly not to take a life. That's a bad outcome for everyone, so sensible Marchers make sure everyone knows the three rules before they begin the march.

3.4.1 Rough Music and Imperial Law

Like curses, rough music does not intrinsically contravene Imperial law. However, like curses, care must be taken not to break the law while engaged in rough music, otherwise the militia will investigate and the magistrates are likely to take a dim view of the proceedings. Provided no Imperial laws are broken then there is no crime to answer for, but Marchers who enter premises where they are not welcome or who assault another character or unlawfully detain them during rough music can expect to face severe punishment.

3.5 Shriving



An old Marcher tradition says that dark deeds can be mitigated through disavowing their actions and to cleanse their souls through the practice of shriving. A Marcher will often seek out a trusted friar or monk and share the onus of their wicked thoughts or unvirtuous deeds. A priest who hears a confession transfers some of the culpability for the dark deeds recounted to themselves; only an individual who is certain their soul is relatively unsullied will offer shriving.

3.6 The Beating of the Bounds

The beaters mark out what is Marcher and what is not, and they help the Civil Service with the recording of who is loyal to whom. The Beating of the Bounds usually takes place after the harvest is in. At this festival every Marcher marks their land, by walking around the boundary led by the beaters. Certain stones, trees or other marker points around the boundary are beaten literally, ceremonially striking them with sticks or willow wands. Market towns beat the boundaries laid out by their warrant, and individual market towners often have a second ceremony in which they beat the bounds of their shop or workplace.

The ceremony is designed to remind all of the size of the holding, but it also works to remind everyone of who is part of the community and who is outside it. On a practical level, the beating of the bounds is often preceded by the beaters ensuring that the boundary areas are safe for the upcoming ceremony, and followed by a period of maintaining and replacing whatever physical markers delineate the bounds - it is a time for repairing fences, planting hedges and the like.

This ancient tradition certainly has its roots in Marcher understanding of hearth magic, especially when it comes to the power inherent in boundaries.



Wassail, the harvest festival

3.7 Wassail

After every harvest, Marcher farmers perform this traditional religious ceremony to celebrate prosperity. Wassailing varies from place to place but typically involves parading through the village singing and drinking to celebrate the health of the fields and orchards. Food and drink produced during the year is consumed or left as an offering; ale might be used to toast a barley field or a pat of butter buried in a dairy pasture. The parade is often led by the children of the village. As the yeomen go from house to house they share food and drink with their community and receive in return a taste of the food that each household has in excess from their own harvests.

At each Autumn Equinox, Marchers parade from camp to camp, singing the Wassail and sharing their home-grown produce with other nations. Although not expected, other nations often reciprocate in small token exchanges of goods that their own territories have in abundance.

Wassail songs can be found on The Marches music page.



Don?t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant. Well sown, Ned. Well sown.

3.8 The Wicker Man

This is a large figure of wicker and wood, which is set alight to burn sacrifices. Ideal sacrifices are things that have been raised by mortal hands from the land such as crops and domesticated animals. These sacrifices are made to atone for acts of vice. By giving up the rewards of prosperity, and creating the need for more prosperity to replace them, the Marchers believe that they make reparation for their unvirtuous behaviour and in this way ensure that they reincarnate well in the next life.

The greatest sacrifice of all is to give up your own life. This is only ever permitted for individuals whose failure cannot otherwise be redeemed. Primarily this responsibility lies with a person whose actions cause a Marcher territory to be lost. In Marcher eyes, that individual - and everyone who worked and fought for them - is responsible for the failure. By going voluntarily to the wickerman a general or senator absolves not just their own failure but the failures of everyone who served under them. A recent example was in 349YE when former Senator Thomas Overton of the Mournwold went into the wicker man to absolve himself for his inability to keep his territory out of Jotun hands.

In Autumn 381YE, former general of the Tusks Nedry Galest of the Cullach went to the wicker man to atone for the curses on the Mourne which had killed so many. "Only Remembered For What We Have Done", they sang as he burned.



Which precise epithet is shared with the enemy here is unclear, but context suggests a typically Marcher piece of salty wit.

3.9 Proverbs

Marchers are keen on mottoes and folk sayings. Many Marcher households adopt a single motto, a phrase meant to formally summarise the spirit of the group. Marchers in general make common use of proverbs, pithy pieces of folk wisdom often expressed as admonitions. Favourites can have double meanings often unnoticed to the outsider. Individuals generally pick one or two that they like or find particularly wise, but some collect dozens of sayings and employ them at every opportunity. While there are some common Marcher sayings that many people know, nobody could expect to know all of them and new ones are regularly created when a pithy comment is repeated.

3.10 Sports and Games

At their best, Marcher folk relish competition. All kinds of sports and ball games are taken very seriously, to the bafflement of outsiders unfamiliar with the subtleties of rules that often only exist in oral form, depending of the regions involved. Foot-the-ball might be a simple game of five-a-side or it might be a more traditionally Marcher game with unlimited participants. Stick-and-ball might ban sticks wielded above the waist, or might, in a version much favoured by some younger Marchers, be played at head height. There is no centralised authority to define and enforce rules; it's traditional for participants to double-check their understanding of the rules before they start. Sporting competitions are sometimes used to decide serious matters or settle disputes. In some cases participation may even be part of ancient treaties between Households.

Beaters Annals for the Household of Barrowfield, Summer?s End Festival, Year of the Empire 294

"I hereby bear witness to the annual match between the allied lesser Households of Elderhowe and Youngerhowe to determine cultivation of the Old Howe orchard, as is the custom since the division of Old Howe farm between the Sons. Rules were agreed as follows:

Teams of five. First to three scores wins.

Elderhowe running from Mill Lane End, scoring at the oak by Blacksmith?s gate, John the Blacksmith counting at the oak.

Youngerhowe running from Blacksmith?s Gate, scoring at the red beech at Mill Lane End, Grey Allan counting at the red beech.

Let it be recorded that Elderhowe won by three scores to two, retaining the orchard for a fourth year. Bond of three baskets of apples, three of pears was promised to Youngerhowe for six pairs of strong hands at picking time.?



The dead rest peacefully beneath the shadow of the apple trees.

3.11 Funerals

Marcher dead are buried in good fertile soil, often with an apple seed or small apple sapling planted above the body. There are plenty of stories of Marchers who die far from home and who "rest uneasy in the poor soil, cold in their stony beds" as one song (The Unquiet Grave) has it. Sometimes these are little more than ghost stories, but there is some evidence that so ingrained is the desire to "sleep beneath the apple trees" that the spirits of dead Marchers may trouble friends, relatives or even random travellers until their remains are given a suitable burial.

Should an apple tree actually sprout in a graveyard, the apples are not to be gathered, but are free for the poor and desperate to eat. The wood of these graveyard orchards is said to contain some of the wisdom or knowledge of the deceased. Many Shunned individuals survive on apples taken from graveyards. There is also a common belief that for those souls who have achieved true greatness, the grave is a literal ?resting place.? According to this superstition, the greatest heroes of the nation simply slumber beneath the ground, ready to defend the Marches in its darkest hour.

The lone exception to this rule is briars. There is a longstanding superstition that the magic in a briar's blood can affect the ground around where it is buried. There does *seem* to be a connection between the burial of briars, especially those with high lineage, and peculiar supernatural effects. Several sites across the Marches are attributed to the burial of a briar including the Bleeding Dolmen of Oddmire whose infrequent secretions are said to promote chaotic fecundity; the Fallow Field of south-western Green March where plants grow unnaturally quickly and resist all efforts to clear them; and the Poison Glen that once stood in north-eastern Birchland, the trees of which sprouted unwholesome fruit.

As a result, some Marcher communities refuse to allow those who manifest briar lineage to be buried nearby. In these cases, their bodies are burnt and the ashes scattered or they receive more traditional burials but in soil that is outside the Marches. There are also a rare few places where burial grounds specifically for briars are laid aside, often in land that is of no use to anyone else, or that is owned by a briar yeoman.

Very few Marcher heroes lie on the cold marble biers of the Necropolis, and those that do have a good thick layer of soil in the tomb under them.

3.12 Maritime Traditions

Every Marcher knows that land matters. They may go to sea, sometimes for months or years, but they always want to come home. Many traditional Marcher sailors wear a small bag of soil around their neck. This serves as a link to the place they were born, or where their family or household lives, or more often to the place they plan to retire to once they are sick of the sea. This tradition is sometimes adopted by Marchers who need to spend extended time away from the Empire in other nations, even if they are not themselves sailors.

Many ship captains make a point of organising a big meal with their entire crew, from the newest cabin boy to the oldest sailor, the night before their ship leaves port for an extended journey. For that meal or night, rank is set aside and people talk frankly and freely. This also traditionally marks the point at which any new crew have a last chance to back out. Meals are a serious business for all Marchers and it is held to be very bad luck for someone to not sail with the vessel after they take part in the meal. Some crews extend this tradition and make a point of meeting up for a big meal together at the solstice or the equinox, inviting along all those who ever served with them and their families, or combining their efforts together with other crews for a larger-scale celebration of salt and soil, especially at the Autumn Equinox.

Some crews, especially those from Upwold, make a point of creating a big poppet that serves a similar purpose to the bag of soil worn around the neck but for the entire ship. As well as keeping the crew tied to the land, it is also said to head off the kind of bad omens that ships have to deal with, and helps stop sickness. This "ship's poppet" is usually much bigger than the normal poppet, and may even be more like a scarecrow than a poppet. Sailors, whether members of the crew the poppet belongs to or not, touch it for luck when they board a ship or enter a space belonging to that crew. Some even dress the poppet up like one of them, making it metaphorically part of the crew. They give the poppet a fancy name and talk about how they ?work hard?. Some even carry them with them when they are given license; they are bought their pints and treated like they're alive. The luck of the ship is serious business - it's not unknown for a nasty brawl to break out if their ship's mascot is disrespected.

Last of all, many Marcher sailors have a particular dread of drowning at sea. This can make Marcher sailors particularly concerned with omens; watching the flight of birds and as concerned about the state of the weather and the sky as any farmer. One sailor explained it as a fear that if one drowns at sea - if a ship sinks or someone gets swept overboard - there is no chance their body will be laid to rest properly. Instead they are doomed to become a ghost, left to haunt the empty sea, or forced to find their long and lonely way home by foot from a strange land. These ghosts are invariably seen as malignant - there is a belief that the sea in their heads washes away their memories and leaves only a monster behind.

3.13 Icons and Artistry

The iconic symbols of the Marches are those that represent the bounty of their farms, most commonly the wheatsheaf, the pig (especially the boar), and either an apple or a basket of orchard fruits. These symbols are closely associated with Prosperity, a virtue that is close to the heart of many Marcher folk. The symbol of the seed or apple and seed are both popular representations of the soul and the cycle of rebirth peculiar to the Marches - in some parts they are more popular than the labyrinth as symbols of the Way. The crow and the rat, by contrast, are both images of ill-omen and bad luck.

Gates and doors are traditionally decorated or adorned with woven bundles of grain on either side, while the hearth is ideally adorned with freshly cut flowers or blossoming branches. More than any other subject, Marcher art strives to capture the straightforward beauty found in flowers and plants, especially using pencils, charcoal, and watercolour paints. Portraiture is also common; wealthy stewards often commission respected artists to paint one or more portraits of the household, but less well-off yeoman will hang their own paintings of family members.

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4 The Marches look and feel



4.1 Overview

Gritty, solid, practical, traditional, mud, blood, green fields, rural, iron.
The Marches draws strongly on English history from the 12th century through to the War of the Roses for costume, weaponry and armour.

The costume of the Marches has a 'solidity' to it, a worn, lived-in look that contrasts with its neighbour Dawn's high romance, gleaming plate and vivid hues. The Marches is Kenneth Brannagh?s Henry V rather than Laurence Olivier?s.

4.2 Breakdown

Influences
Wars of the Roses England, Rangers of Ithilien (Beaters), Cadfael (Monks and Landskeepers).

Materials
Wool, calico, linen, leather.

Colours
Plain flat colours, mostly the soft colours of natural dyes or unbleached cloth. The palette is autumnal suggesting natural dull blues, greys, browns/rusts, mustards and greens, dull reds etc. especially at the lower end of the social scale. Wealthier Marchers may use deeper, brighter shades.



4.3 Clothing

Marchers favour plain clothes, tunics, simple hoods, hose and shirts. Wealthier characters might wear finer robes, cotehardies or a simple doublet, but even then plain wool or heavy linen will be more appropriate than fancy patterns or embroidery. Medieval re-enactments are a great source of inspiration for the look and feel of the Marches territories - although unlike history, its worth noting that Marches society is gender neutral. Marcher leg wear is practical and slim fitting. Close fitting trousers are practical and easy to come by or make. Hose, either joined or split, are worn with braies and a long shirt. An extremely simple untailored cut for shirts fits the Marches very well: Full in the body and sleeve, possibly gathered at neck and wrist. Doublets are popular in the Marches, a snug-fitting buttoned jacket that is shaped and fitted to the body. It can be worn over the shirt or under another layer of clothing. They tend to be short and simple ? fancy slash work doesn't really fit the Marchers practical approach.

A woollen or heavy linen overdress such as a kirtle or cotehardie over a shirt or shift is be a good alternative to shirts and hose. The look is long, lean and smooth and laced to fit. Back lacing shows higher status and gives a better line. Side lacing is more common. It would be rare to see a gathered skirt (common to Tudor kirtles) in the Marches.

Marchers prefer pouches to pockets ? bollock or kidney pouches or leather bags are perfect. Belts are often very long, wrapped round, looped at the front and left to dangle. The typical clothing of monks and friars consists of a traditional plain monk's habit.

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4.3.1 Hats

Headwear is frequently worn, from a simple cap or coif, to hats or something like a hood with liripipe or a chaperon.

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4.3.2 Stewards

The head of a household, a steward, may wear richer colours, but most likely in home grown wool not rarer silk. Wealthy Marchers may show their wealth with ornamentation, while maintaining the practical styles favoured by all yeomen. Rich Marchers are often seen in full harness of plate in battle.

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4.3.3 Beaters

Beaters are skilled trackers and gamekeepers. They watch the borders of the Marches. They are inspired by the classic British archers of the period mixed with the Rangers of Ithilien from Lord of the Rings. Beaters usually wear lighter armour, either just a padded or leather jack or else a leather tunic like the ones worn by the Rangers in Lord of the Rings.

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4.3.4 Alders and Townsfolk

Many alders take great pride in their ceremonial chains of office, sometimes referred to as "Chains of Prosperity". Some go so far as to commission them as magical items, such as an Alder's Edge.

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4.3.5 Monks and Friars

Monks and friars of all genders wear traditional plain monk's habit either in dark colours, or white with a dark scapular. A simple brown cassock works well but it might also be seen in black or grey. A more complex arrangement with dark scapular over white undergarments is also a popular choice. A chasuble or cowl may be worn over the habit, in particular during the cold seasons, but monks and friars alike tend toward simple outfits.

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4.3.6 Landskeepers and Mummers

Some landskeepers wear robes, similar to the monk, but hose, jerkin, and a shirt with rolled-up sleeves is just as good an alternative. A landskeeper is well used to hard work in the fields and their look reflects that. By contrast, Mummers are more likely to wear flamboyant costumes as suits magicians whose tradition involves performing plays.

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4.4 Weapons and Armour

4.4.1 Weapons

The classic Marcher fighting unit is a block of bills and other polearms recruited from the yeomanry. Two handed swords are common for richer characters in heavier armour, as well as warhammers, maces or poleaxes. Any historical weapons from the Hundred Years War and the War of the Roses are typical: poleaxes, bills and other polearms are iconic; warhammers, bollock daggers, axes, falchions and mauls.

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Bows

Bows, in particular longbows, are also a common sight among the Marchers units on the battlefield. They are especially popular with beaters.

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4.4.2 Armour

Poor Yeomen may wear just a plain coloured jack or padded gambeson as their only armour. Wealthier Yeomen usually have livery coats in their household colours and mail or plate over the top if they have it. Brigandine is an intermediate option. Households often wear matching livery coats, although simple sashes or badges are also used to denote affiliation

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4.4.3 Mage Armour

Mage armour is often from similar materials - fabric, leather and possibly pieces of chain mail - in both natural and household colours, but is more likely to be adorned and decorated with elements of no immediately obvious use.

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4.4.4 Shields

Large shields are much less common than in other nations; shield-walls are seen as a tactic best left behind in Dawn. Marchers who have a good reason not to use a polearm or a great sword, such as martial Landskeepers fearing arrows, or skirmish groups protecting the flanks will often use a small buckler to go alongside their weapon of choice.

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4.5 Household

Any Marcher who owns farmland is a member of a household, albeit perhaps a household of one, and any Marcher Household can declare a **livery**. Members of the household tend to wear the livery colours in some way. Stewards of a household that allies to a more powerful household usually retain their own livery, or combine it with the new households? colours in some way. Households often wear matching livery coat or jackets, although simple sashes or badges are also effective ways of showing affiliation. Many households own a banner showing their livery.

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4.6 Camps

Gates and doors are traditionally decorated with woven bundles of grain on either side, the respect shown to the land prevents evil doers from entering. The hearth is where food taken from the land is prepared. It is the core of a Marcher home and should always be kept clean, ideally decorated with fresh cut flowers to prevent food cooked there causing a poison of the blood. Poor March Folk or those on campaign will make do with bundles of grass or common meadow flowers.

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Leech's Garden
Brews and Herbs
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4.7 Children

Children in the Marches can be dressed in scaled down versions of their parent's clothes. For toddlers and babies, traditional smocks, or simple t-tunics and drawstring trousers are simple and easy to pull-on garments, that can be made in linen or cotton for easy washing! These types of clothes also have plenty of flexibility in terms of size, meaning you'll get more than one year's use out of them. Small coifs are great for keeping the sun off a baby's head and simple straw hats can also be used to stop children burning. Older children can either have their own costumes, or be given adult clothes which are then rolled up and belted to fit - the practical Marchers are unlikely to waste any clothing and hand me downs are a cheap (in and out of character!) way to clothe children.

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General tips for costume for children:

- Robes that stop at knee - mid-calf will be less of a trip hazard
- Headgear that can be very simply retied is great
- Avoiding things that can pull around the neck is wise (strings on cloaks/hats on cords/ tabards that don't secure under the arms
- Wider neck holes, sleeves and armholes will help with getting costume on and off, and leave room for growth

- Patterns for Medieval children's clothes
- Revival Clothing's Premade items for children

4.8 Inappropriate Costume

Whilst this look and feel page provides the ideal costume for the nation, it is important for players to familiarise themselves with the general costume rules for further guidelines, including those for inappropriate costume

4.9 Further Reading

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5 The Marches hearth magic

5.1 Overview

In the world of Empire, formal magic is the application of learning and willpower to create supernatural effects. There is another form of magic, however which does not require the user to be a magician. Hearth magic employs the innate natural magic of the world to produce subtle but significant effects in much the same way that a compass needle always points true north. The magic is not based on the abilities of a magician, but relies on the innate mystical properties of the world. Hearth magic is usually subtle rather than potent, and where formal magic is predictable and reliable, hearth magic is none of these things.

While the principles that underlie hearth magic are common throughout the world, in the Marches, there are certain specific practices, customs, or traditions that draw on the power of the world's innate magic. Often these proud customs are nothing more than traditions - but sometimes their practice taps into some facet of the world resulting in a truly magical effect.

You can learn more about hearth magic, what it is and how it works, here.



Poppets bring good health.

5.2 Poppets

Most Marchers carry a straw dolly or poppet, made at the time of harvest to bring good luck and ward off evil omens. These intricately twisted and knotted effigies of crop stalks, rushes, twine or wool traditionally bind the vitality of the fields and pasture and grant that vigour to the bearer. Folk rarely

agree on the best way to make a poppet. Some believe that the power of a poppet derives from its appearance - so the most effective are those fashioned into the crude shape of a person. Others argue that their strength comes from the natural vitality of the land, harnessed and harvested by mortal hands. Thus any shape can be used provided it is constructed from the healthiest produce available. Regardless, their use is ubiquitous throughout the Marches as a way to grant health and protect against sickness. Expectant mothers carry poppets to ensure a healthy birth, children are shown how to make one as soon as they are old enough, and landskeepers often employ them in magic that binds or shares vitality or strength.

The same hearth magic is used in the traditional practice of keeping a sheaf of corn near the hearth, where it serves to capture the vigour of the fields and bring them into their home. Farms that don't grow corn or similar crops will often use a tun of cider, or lay a new fleece in front of the fire. Even alders observe this tradition where they can, taking produce from their gardens or window boxes and placing the best of them at the centre of their home.

When the season turns, many poppets and wheatsheaves are laid in the fields and ploughed back into the earth, or more often ceremonially burned, to ensure a bountiful harvest for the following year.

Poppets in Play

Making a poppet or straw doll a part of your character's costume is a simple way to call out your Marcher heritage. Poppets are ideally made out of the produce from your character's fields or garden, which is why they are commonly made of crop stalks, rushes, twine, flax or similar but there is nothing to stop you making a poppet out of cloth (if you are a weaver) or twigs (if your character owns an orchard). The important element is the idea of taking some of the boundless health of the harvest, shaping it, and using it to bring good health and protect from sickness.

Burning your poppet is another way to call out this hearth magic in play - especially if it is done with a little ceremony. Gathering your friends and family together to share food and drink and burn your poppets can be a good way to mark the end of the first event of the year.

Poppets are not the only form this hearth magic can take. With a little preparation you can make a wheatsheaf by tying twine around a bundle of stalks, prepare a small barrel of cider, or even lay out a sheepskin fleece. Regardless of how you evoke the hearth magic, something like this can make a great piece of set dressing at the heart of any Marcher camp.

5.3 Food and Drink

Food plays an important role in Marcher hearth magic and culture. Many important bargains are sealed with a meal, and it's common practice for everyone who works a farm to break bread together at the end of the day. It plays a central role in celebrations, especially births, weddings, and funerals, and is also an important part of community festivals such as the Autumn Wassail. Those who eat together find it easier to work together, and there are plenty of accounts of ill fortune and sickness befalling those who transgress against people they have eaten alongside, or whose hospitality they have abused.

The best way to make a deal in the Marches is to make it while eating and drinking. Whether it be a shared feast, a companionable pint, a plate of simple stew, or provisions for the road, agreements made during a meal carry the weight of hearth magic and every Marcher knows it is unwise to welch on such accords. Gifts of food and drink are common in the Marches. When freely given, they can bring health and good fortune to the recipient. One popular tradition is to give something prepared in ones own kitchen as a present to newlyweds, or to people moving into a new home. In all cases, the best gifts are those one has cooked, brewed, or harvested oneself - food purchased from others rarely brings any magical benefits.

The hearth magic of food does not only apply to dealings with mortals. There are accounts of bargains made over food with heralds and other creatures from the magical realms. In some cases, lesser heralds agree to help a farmer by tending fields or shepherding flocks, sometimes even working alongside the mortal yeomen in some fashion. In almost every case, these creatures require payment in the form of food and drink - a bowl of stew in the corner of the northernmost field or a pitcher of cider lowered into a well every full moon. In return the well might never run dry, or a garrulous servant of Ephisis might join the yeomen in gathering the harvest. There are also tales of the misfortune that befalls if these deals are broken; a field may become full of stones, the well water tainted and brackish, or the scythes in the barn warp and rust overnight as the angry herald turns on their host with the support of the powerful hearth magic.

Food and drink in play

Eating and drinking together can create a bond that helps people work together and build communities; a flip side to this is that you can feel free to be a little more suspicious of people who you haven't broken bread with. Food and drink are often employed in magic, especially in night magic, and a coven might recognise this by beginning each ritual with a ceremonial sharing of bread and water. Taking the time to offer food or drink before, during, or after a negotiation adds weight and significance to that negotiation, and you may want to claim that an agreement made after sharing a meal is more binding than one sealed with a contract or recorded in a ledger. The fuller the table, the cooler the effect, but you can evoke this hearth magic just by sharing something as simple as a loaf of bread, a pitcher of water, or even a plate of biscuits.

When talking about your home, it's quite acceptable to weave a story of some sort of magical creature such as the ones mentioned here into your tale. These kinds of minor heralds are not commonplace in the Marches, but some larger or more prosperous farms have one that helps with day-to-day activities, perhaps by preventing sheep straying, or working to til a field in return for the agreed payment of food or drink. These creatures are magical in nature, most are minor heralds of the Autumn realm, and owe fealty to one of the Autumn eternals - most likely Prospero or Ephisis - and are not seen as mysterious or exotic by most Marchers.



5.4 Chalk Figures and Standing Stones

The standing stones and chalk figures common throughout the Marches mark the land as the property of humankind. A Marcher who wants to claim an area of wilderness will often begin by placing a standing stone in the middle of the area they plan to claim. This stamps the presence of humans on the rolling fields and hills, yoking the forces of nature, and subjecting them to the authority of mortal hands. Their presence is a crucial part of what makes Marcher lands so fertile.

Part of the power of standing stones and chalk figures is drawn from their resemblance to a person, they stand in for the people who created them and who claim dominion over the land. Most chalk figures are crude images of people, although domesticated animals such as horses, pigs, and hounds are not unknown. Many Marcher stories speak of these figures watching over or guarding the surrounding area, but their hearth magic is one of dominion and control rather than warding.

The biggest stones and figures are often placed in regio, and many are associated with powerful magic. Some are employed by landskeeper circles as the focal point for important rituals, while others serve as the central points of mana sites or regio. Standing stones often feature prominently in local legends, either because they are associated with unpredictable magical occurrences, or because they tend to attract tulpa who live in or near them. Marcher scholars theorise that the tendency for standing stones to attract astronomantic spirits is a consequence of giving human form to tamed magical forces.

Chalk Figures and Standing Stones in Play

Obviously chalk figures and standing stones are hard to phys-rep on the field at Anvil, but a standing stone doesn't have to be a massive and impressive structure to reflect this hearth magic. Anything that shows evidence of human hands is effective, the best structures resemble the rough shape of a person, but even a simple signpost can all stand-in for a standing stone if needed.



5.5 Dolmens

Although less common than standing stones, the Marches are well known for their dolmens. At the simplest level a dolmen consists of a trilithon - two vertical stones stood side by side and a third lintel placed across the top to form a gate or passage. Visitors to the Marches often confuse the two, but their hearth magic is very different. Dolmens are linked to the magic of doors, gates and travel, and it is no coincidence that their shape and form mirrors the constellation of the Door.

If the stones are placed wide enough for a person to pass between, then the dolmen is open. Placed in an appropriate regio, such a dolmen makes it easier for the magic of that realm to suffuse the area as well as enabling travel to and from the chamber associated with the regio. On the other hand, if the stones are placed tightly together, so that not even a child could slip between them, then the doorway is closed. These are commonly used to wall off an unwanted regio, making travel more difficult and prevent bothersome creatures or dangerous magic from emerging. A closed dolmen is usually placed at the centre of a regio, but might also be positioned more generally in an attempt to ward an area against malign magic or supernatural intrusion.

Dolmens in Play

As with chalk figures and standing stones it is no easy feat to bring a dolmen to Anvil. However, you can still evoke this hearth magic by paying a little extra attention to doors and gates. Mundane thresholds are just as important as magical ones, even if they are not marked with a dolmen. They're how someone can enter your space through your boundaries so probably deserve protections of their own. Hanging a runestone, a couple of poppets, or other symbolic protection over or near a doorway can draw on a little of the hearth magic that recognises the importance of doors and gates and dolmen.

You don't own it unless you can defend it.

Marcher Proverb

5.6 Boundaries

Marchers understand the importance of protecting the places that matter to them. You are stronger and more powerful when you are in the place you call home. The Marcher tradition of beating the bounds serves to reinforce this hearth magic by identifying and strengthening the boundaries. One of the first things a Marcher is likely to do when they visit a place is to take the opportunity to wander around its bounds, gaining a sense for the place and reinforcing their connection with its boundaries.

Observing boundaries can be a personal activity, but it is often communal in nature. An entire household will beat the bounds, and all the citizens of a market town come together to mark out the edges of the land claimed by their charter. At the same time, individuals often mark out their own personal domains - the low fence around a herb garden or the environs of a shop or house can have the same significance as the fences and hedges that surround an entire farm.

Marking a boundary confers a degree of magical protection, weakening curses or making it hard for malicious heralds to enter the area. There are occasional stories of creatures of the realms trying to trick an unsuspecting Marcher into inviting them onto their land or into their home, or being unable to use their supernatural abilities against them while they stand on their own soil.

Boundaries in Play

Beating the bounds is a traditional Marcher activity that takes place after the harvest is in. Although the camp at Anvil currently lacks obvious trees and standing stones to hit, people can still gather to walk the bounds of the camp. This is meant to be a time of celebration, so it's appropriate to sing, and play instruments and generally make some noise.

Knowing where your boundaries are can be an important information for a Marcher. When someone enters your camp, or your personal tent, they are coming into a space that you have claimed. Putting up makeshift fences around your group tent, or just marking and area you consider to be yours with a banner or sign of some kind can help reinforce this hearth magic. The more clearly you mark your boundaries, the stronger the effect is likely to be.

Boundaries don't need to make your camp or your tent unwelcoming - quite the contrary - but ensuring everyone knows they are in *your* space helps underline this hearth magic. Marchers find it easier to relax in places with clearly defined bounds; even if your character is normally dour and grim it can be fun to relax your demeanour when you're in an area you define as "yours". The Marcher camp at Anvil is a good example of a shared space that "belongs" to all the Marchers within it - while individual groups may mark out their own areas the camp as a whole belongs to everyone from the Marches. It can be fun to be a little suspicious of people from other nations when they come into the camp. By the same token, when you visit somewhere that is clearly within someone else's bounds, you can subtly adjust your roleplay to make it clear you feel like a guest - or a trespasser.

5.7 Useful Links

- Article on how to make a corn husk doll
- Video on how to make a straw doll

5.8 Further Reading

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6 The Marches history



The exodus from Dawn gives the nation its name, and defines their stubborn independence.

6.1 The creation of the Marches

The history of the Marchers begins with a rebellion in Dawn. A group of disaffected yeofolk determined to leave their lord's lands and make a better life for themselves. Their complaints were numerous and varied; the lack of opportunities for those of low-birth, the failure to recognise the importance of hard work or to adequately reward it. Personal disagreements inflamed these inequities, petty rivalries and personal snubs exacerbated the tension.

The March began relatively peacefully, with petitions to the monarch of Dawn for greater opportunity and recognition of the yeofolk. When there requests were refused the rebels laid their plan. With no other opportunities, and nowhere else to go, they marched across the country heading for the western border, intent on claiming land outside of Dawn. This initial diaspora was joined on their pilgrimage by thousands more, until they became known as the Marchers. Not all were driven by disgruntlement, a few joined the March because they imagined it would lead to glory and more than a few marched for love.

After leaving Dawn, the Marchers entered the woods of Miaren. At this time, much of the territory was still dominated by the vallorn, and the March nearly ended in disaster. The local Navarr, however, offered aid and support to the Marchers. After all, the Navarr have a long tradition of helping those who are unhappy with their situation find a new place to live, or a new way of life. While some chose to join the Navarr, the majority of the former yeofolk wanted a land of their own. With some aid from sympathetic stridings and steadings, the former Dawnish folk passed through Greenfalls and Oakways to what is now Upwold

The first Marchers had few real weapons or pieces of armour between them. The Dawnish nobility fully expected them to flee the oncoming winter or die at the hands of the orcs. The traditional view is that the Marchers confounded these expectations by taking their farm tools and padded jacks and carving out a kingdom for themselves, slaughtering the orc clans they encountered and driving them before them with grim determination. In addition to their Ambition, the Marchers benefited from a unity of purpose that the orcs broadly lacked. While the barbarians as a whole outnumbered the Marchers, they failed to present any cohesive resistance to the invading humans.

Some historians believe that the Marchers were also given some support by the Navarr, supplementing their armaments with the bows and spears both nations favoured. The benefits to the Navarr are obvious; with a friendly human nation to the west they would be able to expand the trods and hasten the destruction of the vallorn. Indeed, the Marchers succeeded beyond anything the Navarr could have hoped, ultimately providing an opportunity to reconnect with the steadings of distant Liathaven, isolated since the fall of Terunael by hostile tribes of orcs.

Regardless of how they did it, the Marchers carved out a patchwork of cleared lands controlled by a score of independent-minded yeoman households; first Upwold, and later Mitwold. Attempts to conquer the Mournwold were inconclusive; unlike their cousins in the northern regions, the orcs of the Mournwold presented a much more united front. The Mournwold clans not only found it easier put aside their differences and resist attempts to conquer them, they were more open to the idea of assimilating those orcs defeated by the Marchers. There is also evidence that they enjoyed some support from the orc clans of Kahraman to the south. While the Marchers were able to hold Freemoor, the Chalkdowns, and Green March at various points they were never able to hold all three simultaneously nor push the orcs out of the Mourn.

The first forays west into Bregasland began later, after Upwold and Mitwold had been settled for several generations. Those parts of the territory that were dry and fertile at this time were under the firm control of the orcs, but the estuary of the river Od had always been a treacherous marsh and the orcs gave the whole area a wide berth. It was inhabited by several Feni tribes, but they proved no match for the heavily armed and armoured Marchers and were soon driven out of the few areas of high ground. The land would support no great households, but the hostile marsh was an effective deterrent keeping the new occupants safe from the orcs and over time it became a haven for Marchers who tired of the internecine feuding between the households. To this day, the archetypal Bregas is seen as aloof and standoffish by the rest of the Marchers - while the people of Mitwold and Upwold were caught up in feuds and alliances they remained broadly independent.

In between fights with the orcs. there were sporadic conflicts with Dawn. Occasionally one or the other would attempt to expand into the neighbouring nation's territory, passing through Miaren to attack Upwold or Astolat respectively. They occasionally clashed in Miaren, but large-scale conflict in the woodlands often attracted the attention of the vallorn, or opposition from the local Navarr. To this day the easternmost parts of the Marches, the westernmost parts of Dawn, and central Miaren are scattered with battlefields and ruined forts built as part of this long-running rivalry between the nations. Despite the conflicts and the tension, the two nations often refer to moving to the other; Marchers who put on airs and graces are told to "Piss off to Dawn", while Dawn nobility or yeomen who question the validity of their ancient traditions are given equally earthy advice to move to the Marches.

6.2 After the March

Even as the Marches spread and established a thriving nation, there were frequent battles between the Marchers themselves. Although Marcher households found it easy to unite against a common enemy, they often fell to quarrelling amongst themselves. Bitter feuds and grudges developed, usually over land and often paid in blood. By the time the First Empress began her crusade the Marches was split into half a dozen great households, each supported by the loyalties of countless minor households. While the Marchers were culturally united, these great households (at least two of which, the Talbots and the Bolholts still endure to this day) each ruled their lands independently. Negotiations between households were usually arranged at fairs where powerful and wealthy Marchers would meet up to make deals and alliances and to discuss trade, politics and war. The most important of these was the Stockland Fair held every Autumn equinox on the village green. As the Stockland Fair grew in size and importance it became an essential forum for households to air grievances with each other, make alliances, and broadly agree the defence of the Marches against the southern orcs of Mournwold.

The Marchers had no armies as the Empire would recognise them at this time. Rather, each household undertook to equip and train themselves for war. If a household was threatened by orcs, the neighbouring stewards would meet and select a prominent yeoman to act as field marshal for the coming battle. The marshal was required to make the final decision on what strategy to employ for a battle and to provide appropriate leadership once the fighting began. An experienced and successful field marshal was a huge asset to any household, allowing them to dictate terms when negotiating a potential attack on orc lands with other households.

This resistance to establishing any formal permanent leadership was a consequence of the independent and stubborn nature of the Marchers. They were in broad agreement that no single individual would be in charge - they had quit Dawn, after all, to get away from a system where the nobles ruled over those who toiled and the idea that someone would set themselves up as "monarch of the Marches" was anathema to them. Choosing their own stewards to run a household and a Field Marshal to run a battle was the pragmatic compromise that enabled leadership when it was essential, but it was a system with numerous obvious flaws. Attempts to create some more formal method of providing unity to the Marches were made, but each one quickly fell apart.

In the last years before the foundation of the Empire, this resistance to unification nearly spelled the downfall of the Marches. The Marchers were slowly driven out of their holdings in Mournwold - not an uncommon situation at a time when battle waged back-and-forth across the borders of Upwold and Mitwold. This time, however, the southern barbarians continued to push. They captured Gravenmarch in Bregasland - then a source of a significant amount of the Marches green iron. They captured The Heath in Upwold, wresting control of Sutton Stone Quarries, and launched numerous probing raids into Golden Downs and Oddmire - the latter having the potential to cut Bregasland off from the rest of the Marches entirely.

Those yeomen who had not lost land to the orcs were not overly concerned - the barbarians regularly raiding the southern Marches and were always turned back - but this time something was different. The orcs fought with a singular purpose, and their internal divisions seemed significantly less pressing in stark contrast to the Marchers themselves. Historians point to a similar situation in Kahraman, and to the rise of the first kings and queens of Narkyst exerting a strong unifying influence over orcs displaced by the Marchers and the Freeborn in previous centuries.

6.3 Joining the Empire

It is perhaps unsurprising that in the face of the barbarian threat, when Landskeeper Brigit of Dourfen brought word to the Stockland Fair of the meeting arranged by the First Empress, only a small handful of Stewards were prepared to leave their estates to make the journey to distant Anvil. While a number of other households sent representatives along, they were largely more interested in *"keeping an eye on whatever it is the Dawnish are up to now"* as one of them put it.

After hearing the Empress' proposal, the Marchers who attended withdrew to consider the matter. Most of the stewards who had attended in person were in favour of the proposed alliance, but there was little agreement among the remainder. The contrary, stubborn, and vengeful nature of the Marchers was a well-known stereotype even in pre-Imperial times and the mere fact that some households were prepared to support the nascent Empire seemed to be enough to ensure that their rivals opposed it. Eventually the group nominated Henry of Meade to present their decision to the Empress and the other gathered dignitaries - some of the Marchers were prepared to join, but the remainder were not prepared to sacrifice their freedom for the security on offer.

The Empress publicly refused to accept the offer. "*I will take all of you, or none of you.*" she announced. It fell to wise Brigit to explain the Empress pronouncement - that the Empire had no use for a divided land. It would not take some of the Marcher Households, and let the others squabble among themselves. The Empress was eager to embrace the Marches but any attempt by her to unite the nation by force would be a disaster. The Empire could not afford to become embroiled in a civil war and worse the Marcher ability to hold grudges would leave the Empire viewed not as liberators but as conquerors. If the Marchers were serious about joining, they would need to be united in doing so.

Another of the Empress' close confidants, Barell, Merchant Prince of Tassato, approached Henry of Meade with an alternative. The cities of Tassato and Sarvos were looking to join forces with others to form a league of like-minded city states. Meade could "cut their losses" and join the Empire as part of this new league. The offer might have been appealing to the alders of Meade, but it was given short shrift by the stewards of Upwold and their representatives. The city might be an important source of trade and wealth for many yeomen but by long tradition it was land that ruled the Marches, and not coin.

6.4 The Cousin's War

The Marchers returned home, and brought word of the Empress and her plans to the next grand fair at Stockland. The news was divisive; there were many who argued passionately that this was a chance for the Marches to unite as a nation and that that, and their new allies, would give them the strength to finally drive the orcs from Mitwold and potentially conquer the Mourne. The detractors were just as adamant that the Empire would spell the end of Marcher independence, that they would be ruled over by foreigners, including the widely disparaged nobles of Dawn. The Fair descended into arguments, and in some cases brawling, as drunken Marchers spat insults at each other. It was a relief to many when the Fair managed to close without open fighting breaking out, but the two factions withdrew, hostile and angry, and a descent into civil war began.

Following the dissolution of the Fair, those Marcher households and landskeepers who supported the idea of joining the Empire tried to recruit as many Marchers as possible to their side. Steadily the number of Marcher households remaining neutral was whittled away, with more and more feeling the need to choose one side or the other, or risk being considered an enemy by both sides. There were numerous armed clashes between rival households and old grudges came to the fore, leading to open skirmishes and bloody exchanges. It was always common for a household to call on allies when a grudge turned to open-fighting but the matter of the Empire split the Marches and the bloodshed escalated like never before. There were a few minor battles, but though the losers lost their lands and in many cases their lives, for the most part they were inconclusive, neither side could shift the balance firmly enough to settle the matter.

While there were certainly folk on both sides motivated by the grudges and rivalries that underpinned Marcher society, others had more idealistic inspiration. Tom Drake, for example, wrote of his certainty that if the Marches could not be united, they would be conquered either by the orcs, or by a newly-invigorated Dawn. With the might of Highguard and the southern city-states behind them, the Marchers would be unable to resist the Empire's hunger for their rich farmlands. Even if they did not ultimately end up joining the Empire, the Marches could no longer afford to be a divided nation of petty households squabbling with each other. Henry of Meade spoke several times of the danger of an Empire where the elitist notions of Dawn were allowed to reign unchecked, and of what such an alliance might look like without any Marcher common sense to balance our Dawnish pig-headedness.

By contrast his main rival on the opposite side of the matter, the fiery Agnes Tiller of Wayford, argued that the Marches would simply be swallowed up if they attempted to join the new alliance. Instead of going cap in hand to this Dawnish monarch and her Highborn allies, the Marchers should look north to their friendly rivals in Wintermark - after all the Winterfolk king Alof Beorning had also declined to join the proposed Empire. She and her supporters actively sought a military alliance between the Marches, Wintermark, and the Navarr of Miaren and Hercynia, with the Winterfolk serving as liaisons to those Varushkans who were also unconvinced by the First Empress' vision.

After a year of escalation, the stewards again came together at Stockland but this time there was no appetite for trade and celebration. The two factions and their supporters camped separately on either side of Hepton Bridge. Those who sided with the Empress were led by Brigit, Henry, and the canny military commander, Tom Drake. They established an armed camp on Monk's Heath on the northern bank of the River Meade. Those who believed the

Marches should remain independent were led by Gregory of Ashill and Mary Hay. They pitched camp south of the river, on the commons at Maiden's Run. The fair itself was cancelled for the first time in living memory, and as the sun rose over the fields both armies began to move.

The fighting was bloody, and continued until close to sundown. Although they marginally outnumbered their rivals, Tom Drake's strategy was widely credited with carrying the day. The defeated stewards were forced to accept the outcome to keep their lands, those who refused either fled the Marches or were executed. The Battle of Hepton Bridge was not strictly the last battle of the Cousin's War, but with the deaths of so many opposing stewards on the fields of Stockmarch, the outcome was never in doubt. Some of the defeated households bowed their heads to inevitability, while others refused to capitulate and lost their lands. A few, led by Agnes Tiller's surviving daughter Hazel, quit the Marches with their soldiers and fled north.

Within weeks of the victory at Stockland, Henry and Drake drew up their forces on the fields in Ashbrook and dispatched an invitation to the Empress to meet them there. The popular version of events tells of how First Empress marched out of southern Miaren, along the road guarded by Brock's Toll, on foot with her standard bearer, and accepted the Marcher request to join the Empire. There is plenty of evidence in the Marches however that this version of events owes more to fancy than fact. The Marchers bargained with the representatives of the putative new alliance not as humble supplicants but as people who had just won a war of unification. Henry and Tom laid down several very specific demands regarding the nature of the alliance, the position of the nations within it, the adoption of the field marshal to provide battlefield leadership where soldiers from multiple nations worked together, and crucially the requirements for how the military of the member nations would operate. Legend has it that Henry is reported to have thrown the Empress own words back at her when presenting the demands ending with the phrase "*we want all of them, or none of them*" - presenting the very real chance that the Marches would not join the Empire and would seek their own path.

The first foundations of the Military Council were laid during this meeting, with the Marchers receiving unexpected support from both representatives of the Brass Coast, the early League, and several factions of the Navarr. In the end, the Marcher demands were met and the newly-united Marches became part of the Empire.



6.5 The Marches in the Empire

The first thing the newly united Marchers did was turn their armies south and with the assistance of League mercenaries and bands of soldiers from the Brass Coast and Highguard, drive the orcs out of Graven Rock. By removing the immediate threat to Bregasland, the Marchers of Mitwold and Upwold went some way toward reinforcing their claims to have put the past behind them and unified under a single banner. The Bregasland households officially joined the unified Marches shortly afterward.

The barbarians in Upwold and Mitwold could not hold out against Marchers supported by the Empire, and retreated south into the Mournwold. Their raids continued, but the Marchers were in a much better position to rebuff them. Still, the southern orcs remained a constant threat to the Marches, until 74YE when the conquest of Mournwold drove the surviving forces down into Kahraman.

Almost immediately after securing their southern borders, however, the new armies were called away to fight in the first campaign of the new Empire. Tom Drake of Redston led his household and a band of landskeepers to Varushka along with one of the first Imperial armies - the Drakes. They fought through unfamiliar forests, alongside all those who opposed Alderei the Fair and brought Varushka into the Empire. Historians say that Tom faced the boyar-king on the battlefield and ultimately defeated him. The Redston folk wear a broken crown on their livery to this day.

Entry to the Empire brought some changes. Pious Marcher folk returning from pilgrimages to Highguard founded the monasteries which now dot the landscape. Friars have become an important part of most households and few powerful Marcher households do not have one or more of these learned folk by their side. Imperial writ created the market towns, outside the control of the households. Yet the traditional beliefs that give the Marchers their strength have endured every transformation brought by the Empire.

6.6 Marchers on the Throne

Two Marchers have sat on the Imperial Throne, and their reigns could not have been more different.

The first Marcher to take the Throne was Emperor James of Mournwold. Appointed in 257YE, he was crowned as the Empire was in real danger of being destroyed by the barbarian orcs after decades of fruitless back-and-forth conquest and liberation. He is perhaps most famous for "*fixing the borders*", making it illegal for the Empire to add new territory until such time as the Senate and the Synod were both in agreement that the Empire was sufficiently strengthened as to be able to hold those territories. His reign ushered in the Second Interregnum, just under twenty years of relative peace and prosperity for the entire Empire during which the Throne remained vacant.

The second Marcher Throne was Emperor Walter of Upwold. An effective businessman and alder, he was appointed only a short time ago in 371YE. His reign was very short, and very chaotic - he attempted to run the Empire like a business with near disastrous consequences. He is largely viewed as a failure and an embarrassment by the rest of the Marches. About the only good thing to come out of his reign was an awareness of just how much trouble the Empire was in - laying the groundwork for the appointment of Empress Britta and the resurgence that continues to this day.

6.6.1 More Marches History

- Life of Tom Drake - contains discussion of Marcher hero, and casts a new light on the Cousins' War
- Steward of Brock's Heath - Historical research into the life of "old Morgan", a pre-Imperial steward of House Brockheath, which discusses early-Marcher relationships with the Navarr in particular
- Bregasland and the smiths - research relating to the sinking of Bregasland, and the story of the disappearing "Marcher smiths"
- The Ore Hills Rebellion - research regarding the short-lived rebellion in Mournwold in 326YE

6.7 Further Reading

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7 The Marches leadership



Once Marchers have chosen a leader, they do not renounce them lightly.
Marchers do not allow anyone to claim authority over them without their permission. Loyalty is an important virtue in the nation and once they have chosen a leader they will not renounce them lightly, but they refuse to be ruled over by anyone. They remember their history and will not tolerate anyone who thinks they are better than their fellows. Leaders find it almost impossible to lead effectively in the Marches without the consent of those they lead. Those who are given power in the Marches are expected to reflect this understanding in the way they act.

The Marchers do accept the authority of the Senate and the Empress, seeing it as an extension of their own complex structures of household loyalties. They know that any one of them could become a Senator or take the Imperial throne. Likewise, they can follow orders on a battlefield so long as their officers remember that they hold their position of command with the consent of their troops. They can be given orders, and obey them, as long as the one ordering them about remembers that they are ultimately equals.

Agriculture is the basis of political leadership in the Marches, and power is vested in those who work the land. The Marcher households are groups of yeomen who have given loyalty to each other. They are led by one of their own, chosen by themselves. This leader is called a steward regardless of gender. Even a single yeoman may call themselves steward of their own household, and have a direct voice in the leadership of the nation.

Anyone who owns a farm has the right to call themself a yeoman, and only they have a voice in Marcher politics. Owning farmland is considered a great responsibility; it is the duty of the yeoman to ensure the best interests of everyone who lives and works on it. Monasteries that own lands are treated as identical in every respect to a Marcher household in terms of votes allowed but the market towns, which hold no farmland, are not.

In times past, a household would be responsible for the defence of all the members? lands, so it was practical for members to live near each other. In modern times this requirement is less important, thanks to the existence of the Imperial armies, and the lands claimed by a household may be scattered throughout a March. Smaller households often swear loyalty to larger ones, partly to further cooperation between Households and partly to increase their political power.

7.1 Leading a territory



Orrick of House Bolholt, former Senator for Bregasland

The steward whose household controls the largest value of land - including that controlled by any smaller households who declare their support for them - selects the Senator who will represent that territory. It is not uncommon for the steward to appoint one of their supporters to the Senate than to fill the seat themselves, but there is no stigma attached to a steward who serves their territory in the Senate.

The competition to appoint the Senator for a March can be very fierce. The larger households in a March compete with one another to have the largest number of landowners under their banner, and as with so much else in the Marches the results of these selections have caused bitter feuds and sometimes open conflict.

The traditional method of determining who selects the Senator is for every interested yeoman to gather together in an open space. Each steward in turn then either declares themselves a candidate for the election, or declares their support for another steward. Support is measured in "Marks" which reflect the value of the combined farmland as assessed by the Imperial Civil Service. This valuation reflects not just the actual physical size of the combined farmland their household controls, but also its quality.

The candidate with the largest support selects the Senator. These meetings tend to be rowdy affairs, with much barracking and the occasional insult. Candidates try to get stewards who support them to declare their support as early as possible, but some canny stewards prefer to wait to see which way the wind is blowing before proffering their support.

Merchants, miners, crafters, priests and the like are forced to rely on neighbouring households to speak for them in the political process. Over recent years, there has been growing dissatisfaction in some quarters about this arrangement, but it represents one of the oldest traditions of the Marches and is not going to be changed any time soon.

The Marcher attachment to land means it is not common to move from one territory to another, but it is certainly not unknown. When a Marcher citizen changes territory, they cannot vote to appoint a senator in their new territory until a year has passed since they last voted.

The senators for each Imperial territory are re-elected at specific equinox and solstices during the year. The senator for Mitwold is elected at the Summer Solstice, the senator for Upwold is elected at the Autumn Equinox, the senator for Bregasland is elected at the Winter Solstice, and the senator for Mournwold is elected at the Spring Equinox.

7.1.1 Tallying the votes

Each Marcher citizen whose farm resource is in the contested territory receives votes in the election of a senator for that territory. Each character receives ten votes, plus two additional votes each time they have upgraded their resource. They verbally pledge their support for themselves, or for one of the Stewards from their territory who is contesting the election.

7.1.2 Incumbent

The current senators for the Marches are listed below - see the individual territory pages for a full election history for each position.

- Bregasland - Vacant
- Mitwold - Mary Birchsmith
- Mournwold - Mel Bleak
- Upwold - Honest Bobby Boarbridge

7.2 Further Reading

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8 The Marches economic interests



Traders trade at market towns and local fairs.

8.1 Overview

Agriculture is the basis of wealth in the Marches. Even a modest holding produces an income that allows its yeoman to live comfortably. With some improvement, a Marcher farm can pay for luxuries and imported goods. Marcher fields and orchards feed people across the Empire. Trade surplus in the form of cured and preserved meats, flitches of bacon, barrels of beer, bushels of fruit and vegetables, sacks of flour, tanned leather and bales of wool travels from one side of the Empire to the other, purchased by intermediaries from the Brass Coast or The League.

Many of these traders come initially to one of the many small but important market towns that dot the landscape. The first market rights were established by Imperial charter, and towns with these rights are outside the direct control of the households.

8.1.1 Alder

The inhabitants of a market town appoint **alders** (also sometimes *aldermen*) to represent the town. In most cases these folk are wealthy merchants of the town. However their ranks may also include prominent town folk such as a friar or blacksmith who lives in the village. Those market towns that employ their own militia usually raise the captain to the rank of alder.

The name itself is sometimes assumed to be a corruption of *elder* but in fact is a very old reference to the alder tree whose presence is known to be good for the fertility of soil. The metaphor is obvious; the alders (and by extension the market towns) are good for the farms and the farmers help them improve their prosperity in a symbiotic relationship.

Many alders take great pride in their ceremonial chains of office, sometimes referred to as "Chains of Prosperity". Several towns maintain a healthy level of competition in providing the most magnificent chain for their representatives, and some go so far as to commission them as magical items, such as an Alder's Edge.

8.1.2 Market Town

Most market towns are small, little more than a few score houses on either side of a main street. The Imperial charters prevent a market town being established within a full day's travel of an existing market town but competition and rivalry between market towns is at least as fierce as that between rival households. Because the market towns lack a stake in the political process, they are forced to rely on neighbouring households to represent their interests. While most Marcher folk see this as right and proper, a life of honest toil on the land being superior to a life spent haggling for every last silver, alders often have a rather different view.



At the heart of almost every prosperous market town is an inn. These large structures are often fortified, with a wall surrounding the building and adjacent compound. Merchants visiting the town will usually eat and sleep at the inn but so will visiting yeomen bringing their goods to market, unless they have relatives who live in the town. Only Meade is large enough to support more than one inn, so the quality of the food and drink provided by a town's inn can have an impact on the prosperity of the whole town, as foreign merchants may avoid those towns whose inns have a bad reputation.

The innkeeper is almost invariably an alder of the town and can be one of the wealthiest members of the community. They are often also the best informed; inns tend to be hotbeds of gossip, with news and information being bought and sold as regularly as the drinks.

8.2 The Imperial Breadbasket

The three northern territories of the Marches - Bregasland, Mitwold, and Upwold - are dotted with public buildings referred to as a whole as the *Imperial Breadbasket*. These granaries, barns, warehouses, gain silos, and storage houses are maintained by the civil service, and overseen by the Keeper of the Breadbasket who makes any important decisions regarding their bounty. They exist to ensure that the farms of the Marches are prepared to meet any potentially disastrous setbacks such as poor harvests or wide-scale curses. They were completed just before the Spring Equinox 381YE. Any Marcher farm-owner can make use of their services, and at a reasonable price. The great work they represent was created as a result of the disasters that beset the nation in 379YE and 380YE.

During Autumn 387YE, the Marcher national assembly set the nation's Highest Calling to expand the Breadbasket to the Mournwold. This expansion was completed in time for the Autumn Equinox 388YE.

8.3 Billet

Any Imperial general can order their troops to billet in any of Mitwold, Mournwold, Bregasland or Upwold, supported by the breadbasket. The opportunity to create this special order arose as the result of a mandate enacted by Friar John of the Mourn following the Spring Equinox 383YE. If the breadbasket were extended to cover other Marcher territories, the billet order could be taken there as well. The order was extended to Mournwold in Spring Equinox 386YE after a Senate motion reinstating Drake's Due.

8.4 Further Reading

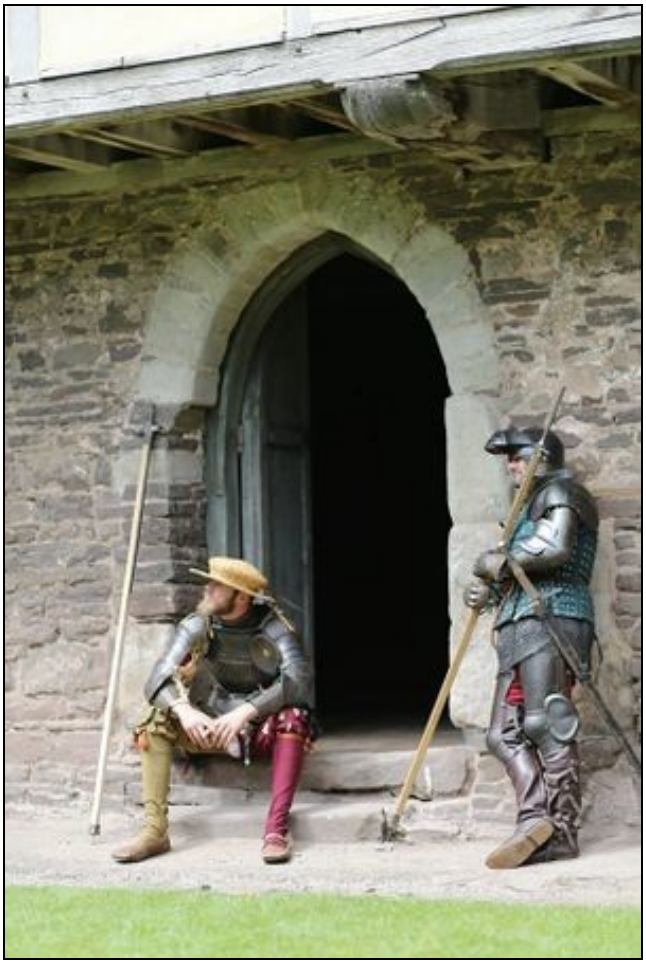
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- Egregore
- Keeper of the Breadbasket - details the history of the Imperial Breadbasket

9 The Marches military concerns



Hard work wins wars.

9.1 Overview

The rich Marcher soil gives rise to great military strength and, after the recent recruitment of The Tusks, four of the Empire's armies come from the Marches. Marcher generals have a reputation for being cautious, and for valuing victory more than personal glory. War is seen as work, hard dirty work, something to achieve over months of effort, not something to be won or lost in a moment. It is also seen as a shared responsibility, something that everyone who can must face together. On campaign, even Marcher generals who can't fight for whatever reason are expected to share the same risks and privations as the common soldier, one yeoman amongst many.

Powerful households field ranks of heavily-armoured yeomen wearing their colours and fighting together. Neighbours well-used to working together fight shoulder to shoulder. The expectation of loyalty and sacrifice can make a Marcher household a fearsomely cohesive force. Traditional rivalries are put to one side when a Marcher army faces a force of outsiders, and folk who would go out of their way to avoid acknowledging each other will fight back to back against a band of invading orcs.

The strength of the Marcher forces is derived from their long hours of toil. Arms hardened by days at the forge, cutting a forest, or threshing grain are strong enough for any fight. It is common for Marchers to wield weapons made from the tools of their labour; bills used for cutting hedges and great hammers used for driving piles are pressed into service of war. The wealthiest may march in a harness of plate but plenty have nothing more than a hard leather tunic or quilted jack they have made themselves. Their true strength is their loyalty and discipline; at their best a Marcher army is a great hedge of steel, moving inexorably forward like a harvest-gang through a field of wheat.

Service to the Empire in one of the Marcher armies is considered an excellent coming of age for the children of a yeoman. This offers them a chance to learn a little of the outside world and to earn enough to purchase their own farm and become yeomen themselves. For a nation that prides itself on its military prowess, it also ensures a steady stream of soldiers with practical experience of battle.



Beaters watch for thieves, vagrants, and other ne'er-do-wells.

9.2 Beaters

Beaters roam through the Marches, learning every part of the land, watching for thieves, vagrants and other ne?er-do-wells. Beaters are often instrumental in settling land disputes between neighbours and they still play a vital role in the tradition of beating the bounds. Beaters often live off the land and most are skilled rangers or hunters. They serve as an informal police force, investigating crimes and tracking criminals. While an individual beater often associates with one or more households, they make no secret of the fact that they maintain an informal network among themselves.

The beaters watch the boundaries and defend them against trespass until its forces can muster. They also remain vigilant for internal threats. In addition to the orcs that still occupy the more inaccessible hills and wild forests of the Marches, there are bands of Féni, the ancient people driven from the fertile lowlands centuries ago. These primitive humans cover their skin in green and yellow tattoos and launch raids against civilised Marchers to steal cattle or crops. If something or someone is raiding out of the forests or hills then the beaters are the ones who are called on to hunt it.

In time of war, beaters serve the Marches as scouts, ranging ahead of the main force. Their experience watching the boundaries of the nation makes them useful light troops, particularly in forested areas, an excellent complement to the heavily armoured yeomen.

9.3 Imperial Armies

The Marches field four armies: the *Drakes*, the *Strong Reeds*, the *Bounders* and *The Tusks*. There has been some upheaval in the nature of the Marcher armies in recent years, following a careful examination of Marcher values in the wake of the liberation of the Mournwold.

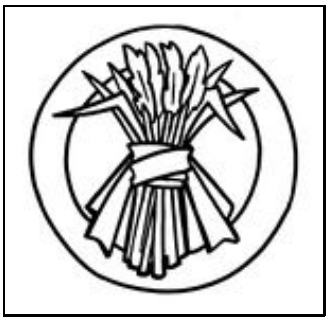


9.3.1 The Drakes

First led by the legendary Tom Drake, this army is extremely well-supplied and has an excellent corps of quartermasters, allowing it to recover casualties much more swiftly than normal. Many of the soldiers in this army come from Mitwold, and this has led to a reputation for dogged determination and occasional internal conflict away from the battlefield. Its ranks have been swelled in recent years with soldiers displaced from the

Mournwold, which has helped exacerbate the situation. As of the Winter Solstice 382YE, the Drakes have been relying on the support of their people to make the most of these raw recruits, and are in the process of being enlarged.

The first Marcher general leads the Drakes army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Summer Solstice each year.



9.3.2 The Strong Reeds

Initially raised from the people of Bregasland, there is still a strong territorial bias in the soldiers of this army. The Strong Reeds is notorious for the dour, stubborn nature of the soldiers who serve under its banner. The Strong Reeds have a long history of resisting Jotun aggression against the marshes, and have several times in their history fought alongside the Wintermark armies in Kallavesa. In recent years they have embraced much older, secretive stratagems, relying on skills honed by years in the fens to perfect the art of scattering into a territory and lay low in appropriate territory.

The second Marcher general leads the Strong Reeds army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Winter Solstice each year.



9.3.3 Bounders

This adaptable army attracts many beaters who support a solid core of Upwold soldiers and a small cadre of dedicated battlefield magicians. They are skilled skirmish fighters, able to quickly learn the lay of the land and relentless in their pursuit of their enemies. Some of the best military archers in the Empire are part of the Bounders adept at bringing down their opponents with a combination of clever placement and withering storms of arrows. They are also adept scouts and trackers - unsurprising perhaps given the number of beaters who serve or have served under their banner. Since the Spring of 383YE, they have focused their efforts on guarding the borders of the Empire.

The third Marcher general leads the Bounders army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Autumn Equinox each year.



9.3.4 The Tusks

The fourth Marcher Army was raised by Senate motion proposed by Henry Ward, then Senator for Upwold, during the Winter Solstice of 377YE. Mustering completed shortly before the Summer Solstice 378YE. The army of The Tusks was briefly named after High Courage, an ancient monument in Mournwold. This highly disciplined force saw its first major engagement when the Empire launched its liberation of the Mourn in late Autumn 379YE.

The fourth Marcher general leads the army of The Tusks, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Spring Equinox each year.

War is a thrice-ploughed field.

Marcher Traditional

9.4 Army Orders

- **Marcher armies cannot give the Give Ground order**
- **Marcher armies can take the Shoulder to Shoulder order**
- **Marcher armies gain advantages when fighting in a certain territory**

As a result of mighty oaths sworn in 386YE, each of the four Marcher armies gains a significant benefit when fighting in their *home* territory. The Strong Reeds in Bregasland, the Tusks in Mournwold, the Bounders in Upwold, and the Drakes in Mitwold operate as if they had an additional thousand strength when fighting in the relevant territory.

Unlike other generals, the leaders of the Marcher armies are slightly restricted in the orders they can give to their troops. Following the events of the Summer Solstice 381YE, no Marcher general can issue an order to give ground. If they try to do so, it will default to solid defence.

However, as a result of a mandate enacted by **Friar John of the Mourn** during the Autumn Equinox 382YE, any Marcher army can now issue the defensive order to fight *shoulder to shoulder*.

Shoulder to Shoulder

- **The ability of this army to defend territory is increased by a fifth.**
- **For each additional Marcher army beyond the first that stands shoulder to shoulder to defend the territory, casualties suffered by all those armies and casualties inflicted by all those armies decreases by one tenth.**

A general who gives the order to fight shoulder to shoulder relies on the legendary Marcher bill blocks to hold the enemy at bay, while units of archers loose arrows on any that come too close. The goal is not to spill blood, but simply to keep the enemy at bay for as long as possible. By fighting in disciplined ranks, the Marcher army can form an impregnable line that is difficult for any enemy to breach.



The Marcher officer walked out into the middle of the gathered mob, slow and casual, thumbs tucked into his belt. He took a long look around.

?Who here?s got a neighbour they can?t stand??

The circle of Marchers looked tentatively one to another, a few raised hands and chuckles.

?Quite a few of you, I see. So let me ask you this ? raiders come to burn their farm, would you go help them??

Nods, fist shaking, raised bills and bows.

?Course you would, only common sense; they burn that farm this week, could be yours the week after, couldn?t it??

He pointed at the gaudily dressed Free Company officers swaggering about in the League lines on their flank.

?See them? I don?t like ?em. I don?t like their plumes, I don?t like them silly pantaloons, I don?t like the perfumed piss they call wine, or the way they put on airs when they talk, or their grub what?s so full of spices it gives me the gallopin? trots. Nope, I don?t like ?em, not one bit. But, them? They?re our neighbours.?

He pointed to the other end of the valley, where thousands of grey-skinned orcs covered the ground like blades of grass on a pasture.

?And those motherless bastards? They?re going to try and burn down our neighbour?s barn.?

Rumbling growl, stamping feet, billhooks banged on the ground.

?We proposin? to let em??

Full throated roar, weapons brandished, rising chant.

?Right then, let?s go pull the idiot neighbour?s arse out of the fire, eh??

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10 The Marches religious beliefs



The Marchers take a practical approach to religion.
Long before the foundation of the Empire, the people of the Marches looked to their friars for spiritual guidance. These plain spoken folk were often at the centre of the Marcher households. Although they worked their own land, they also provided spiritual advice and counsel to their fellow yeomen. Many also served as scholars for their communities, acting as a chirurgeon, assisting with the writing and interpretation of formal correspondence, and teaching letters and history to young children. Awareness of, and belief in, reincarnation was a strong component of Marcher faith even before The Way took hold. Today, some of these beliefs are seen as problematic by the Synod - especially the beliefs to do with reincarnation as trees or vermin - but the Marchers cleave to them with stubborn indifference to the criticism of foreign priests.

Following contact with Highborn wayfarers, many friars undertook a pilgrimage to Bastion. Marcher folk are not easily impressed, but it is difficult to visit the great white towers of Bastion without being moved and inspired by their majestic spirituality, and soon other Marchers followed in their footsteps. Long discussions between the friars and the Highborn priests saw the legendary Marcher figure, Good Walder, recognised as a Paragon of Prosperity.

Upon returning from Highguard, some of these pilgrims founded the first monastery.

10.1 Monks and Friars

Today there are two distinct priestly traditions in the Marches. The friars live amongst the households and market towns, tend to their spiritual needs and exert gentle but far-reaching influence.

Monks live in politically powerful monasteries, their control of farmland granting them the power and influence of an equivalent household.

10.2 Marchers and the Way of Virtue



Not everything in the Marches is completely orthodox.
As with any adherents of the Way the Marchers believe that unvirtuous behaviour and unworthy thoughts stain the soul, and that a soul that has more dark deeds weighing on its conscience than virtuous deeds is deemed wicked, and faces a dreadful fate after death. However, some of the older pre-Imperial beliefs about reincarnation still linger.

Some of these beliefs are at odds with the orthodox beliefs in the Labyrinth of Ages, but do not directly contradict any of the Doctrines of the Faith and so does not fall under the definition of heresy. Friars who feel the need to defend these practice are often quick to emphasise the role of Pride, Loyalty and Courage that fills them.

A few Marchers continue to believe that a dead soul spends an amount of time being reborn as a non-human between lives. It was once thought that a virtuous soul is reborn as a tree, especially a fruit tree, and rests between lives (see funerals). An unvirtuous soul is reborn as a succession of vermin, vexing their descendants with foul behaviour and stealing the food from their mouths. These old beliefs have mostly been abandoned and few people talk about them openly but some Marcher folk continue to believe them and rats and crows are often killed on sight by Marchers as a consequence.

10.2.1 Shriving

Another old Marcher tradition holds that dark deeds can be mitigated somewhat through the ceremony of shriving. Marcher folk disavow their actions and try to cleanse their souls through this practice. By unburdening oneself of the misbehaviour and dark thoughts to a willing person, a trusted friar or monk, one makes them complicit in the actions and shares some of the burden. Both souls are then stained by the deed, halving the burden between them. The assumption behind shriving is that the person offering absolution - usually a priest - will pursue a highly virtuous life and thus mitigate the effect of some dark marks on their soul. Following the acceptance of The Way, Friars of the Marches continued to perform shriving, and the practice has occasionally been taken up by priests in other nations.

May your sins be shared,
your burdened halved,
and your spirit guided
by the virtues.

from the Pickham shriving benediction
While liao is sometimes used during shriving, it is not generally accepted as a true liao ceremony in its own right. Rather, some priests adapt the dedication ceremony that allows a priest and a pilgrim to share virtuous dreams to gain greater insight into the darkness within the petitioner and to gain a clearer understanding of the burden that is to be taken on.

Because of the burden taken on by the confessor, pious Marchers expect to pay for this service, and contributions to pay for the shared guilt have helped swell the coffers of the monasteries.

Another way to deal with unvirtuous behaviour, which has not travelled quite so well, is through sacrifice, most often in a wicker man. This sacrifice also allows for one person to take the spiritual taint of failure and unvirtuous behaviour from several people and then absolve themselves - and their companions - through self-sacrifice. A Marcher who offers themselves as a sacrifice is believed by fellow Marchers to be completely purified by the act, passing immediately to their next life.

Initially our efforts to spread the Way in the Marches were fruitful.

Though they show little interest in the immortality of their soul or the nature of the Labyrinth of Ages, there is clear evidence that virtue, especially Loyalty, informs much of their culture. There are also tales of a man they call Good Walder whose legend I would submit to the Assembly as possible Exemplar of Prosperity. We had even encouraged some to undertake a pilgrimage to Highguard.

Regrettably, the situation has become complicated when Sister Ashara burned one of the false idols that they insist that their children carry with them. Upon the child?s cry, a mob descended upon the inn we are staying at. They beat upon the door as I write?

From the Epistles of Wayfarer Lucien

to the Winds of Virtue Chapter, 12BE

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11 The Marches magical traditions



Despite their apparent focus on the mundane, the Marches has a strong tradition of spellcasting and ritual magics. Their ritual magic in particular is used to great effect to help ensure excellent harvests and to prepare yeoman soldiers for war. A great deal of Marcher magic comes from concepts of ownership of land; of harnessing the symbolic power in the wheel of the seasons; and of the connection between the human body (flesh, sweat, breath) and the physical world (soil, water, wind).

Spellcasting is often seen as a practical discipline. A doctor is as likely to know a charm to heal as to rely solely on herbs and potions; a respected blacksmith may use a magical word to mend a damaged pot - or weapon. The magic they wield is steeped in tradition; the methods they use have been handed down from one magician to another for centuries. This means that both the village healer and the powerful ritualist alike are wielding magic tried and tested by the generations that have gone before them.

A great deal of magical power rests in the hands of the landskeepers, politically powerful magicians who safeguard the customs of the Marches and see to its magical wellbeing. They are steeped in tradition, and tend to be given a wary respect by the folk of the Marches. By contrast, the Mummers practice a rough and ready form of magic that is often seen as suspect, unreliable or downright dangerous - but does not prevent them being in demand for the kind of magical workings that may be seen as beneath the notice of the "stuffy" landskeepers. Both groups look down on *hedge wizards* - magicians at the beck and call of a steward.





11.1 Mummers

Some Marcher magicians practice dramaturgy, and join together in bands of *mummers*. They tend to maintain an itinerant existence combining the practice of ritual magic with entertainment. Traveling from place to place freely, they attend fairs, markets and other regular gatherings performing plays and feats of skill. They are often greeted with a little suspicion - compared by some uncharitable souls to the mountebanks of the League. Some market towns observe local ordinances that ban mummers from spending the night in their environs.

Mummers pride themselves on working magic through improvisation, without scripts but with a strong intuitive feel for the stories they create and the roles they use to work their magic. The personae are usually presented with a single key prop rather than a mask or sumptuous costume, while the thrones are generally established by narration rather than through expensive - and unwieldy - scenery. Almost all groups of mummers include the fool as a major character, weaving narration and commentary through the performance as the personae act out the events they describe - the fool is also responsible for encouraging audience participation and attracting patrons prepared to pay a few coins for the magic or entertainment the mummers provide. In contrast to League dramaturgists, the fool is often the only member of the band who wears a mask.

Their plays are often rough and full of broad humour, but no less effective at providing entertainment or instruction for all that. It is quite common for bands of mummers to have a broad mastery of ritual lores rather than to focus in any one lore - many pride themselves on mastering the four rituals that allow a farm to be enchanted through the year. They use the opportunity of seasonal fairs to stage grand performances that enchant all the farms in the vicinity usually for a suitable donation from the yeomen who own those farms.

The tradition clearly has roots in the Dawnish traditions of the guisers.

11.2 Beast Magic

One form of magic practiced in the Marches is a type of aspect magic. It has partially fallen out of favour, but some Marcher magicians draw on symbolic beasts (and in some cases plants) to work their magic. The practice is quite old, predating the formation of the Empire, and many modern Marcher magicians look on it as being quaint and better suited to the history books.



Marcher enchantments (and curses) often involve poppets
Some of them are quite large.

11.3 Sorcery and the Threshers

Someone who is suspected of using magic in ways that violate Marcher traditions faces shunning or worse. The Declaration of Sorcery used by the Conclave was originally a Marcher idea. The landskeepers could judge fellow magicians accused of misusing their magic, declaring them to be sorcerers and punishing them for their misdeeds.

There is a common belief in the Marches that all magic should be done publicly. Only sorcery is done in private - "dark minds find dark places to do dark deeds" so the saying goes. That is not to say that every magical ritual requires an audience, but the more effort the practitioners make to keep people from seeing what they are doing, the more suspect their magic must be.

Some Marchers dedicate themselves to tracking down, exposing and destroying sorcerers wherever they may operate. They are called Threshers and they watch for things that are *wrong*. Every farmer knows about separating wheat from chaff, and the Threshers look to separate human wheat from human chaff. They seek out those who are using magic or old lore against the interest of the people. Where crimes are being committed they work with the beaters and landskeepers to capture the sorcerer and hand them over to Imperial justice. If the sorcerer has not broken any Imperial laws then the rough music is their punishment, or shunning if they persist. It falls to the Thresher to convince the folk of the Marches that these punishments are merited, and in many cases to oversee their performance.

Several Threshers expand their interests to include the rest of the Empire, looking for villains outside the borders of the Marches whose wickedness threatens - or may eventually threaten - the innocent folk of their Nation. These Threshers have an interests in groups such as the circle of sinister sorcerers called the Volodny, or the most powerful barbarian shamans, who threaten the Marches by dint of the threat they present to the entire Empire.

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12 The Marches territories

12.1 Overview

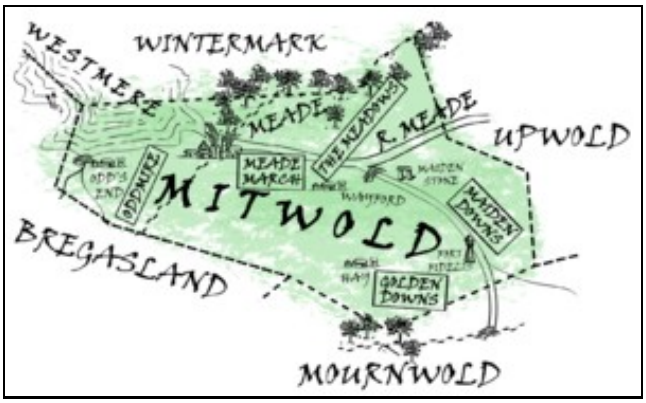
The Marches lie in the western Empire. Mitwold and Upwold are largely made up of fertile farmland, while Bregasland is rich fenland and the Mournwold is a combination of wide grasslands and rolling hills. The territories are covered in a patchwork of farms, small villages, household estates, and the occasional small town. While much of the Marches is civilised, there are still plenty of wild lands - deep forests, lonely hills, and dour marshes alike can harbour greedy brigands, savage orcs, lost ruins, and hungry monsters.



12.2 Upwold, The Silver Chase

Upwold is where the Marchers first established themselves when they walked away from Dawn. The scattered orc nations that dwelt here were no match for the Marcher determination to carve out a home for themselves and were swiftly driven out or defeated. Today, Upwold is a wealthy territory in a wealthy nation, although perhaps surprisingly a significant amount of its wealth comes from industries other than farming. While there are of course many farms in Upwold, the eastern forests of quick-growing silver birch trees provide a great deal of income. Charcoal-burners live there, turning wood into easily transportable fuel for smith and hearth alike while the birch bark is used in the tanning industry, to cure the hides of the cattle that graze on the river pastures.

The forests of Upwold also create a need for skilled beaters - the woodlands are deep and the Feni that make their homes there do not welcome trespassers. For the most part, the painted savages keep to themselves but every few years there is an incidence of raiding, or an attack on a lumber camp or charcoal burner village that they decide has strayed too far into "their" woods.



12.3 Mitwold, Pride of the Marches

More than in Upwold or Bregasland, the households of Mitwold engage in feuding and bitter rivalry. The closer two households are to one another in Mitwold, the more likely it is that they are engaged in a long-running feud. This is also the territory where many of the best known ball games are played, and it is a regular occurrence for some dispute to be settled by a savage game of rugby, football or rounders. Outside observers wryly observe that this enthusiasm for sports arises directly from the simmering resentment between the houses - or as often as not is part of the cause.

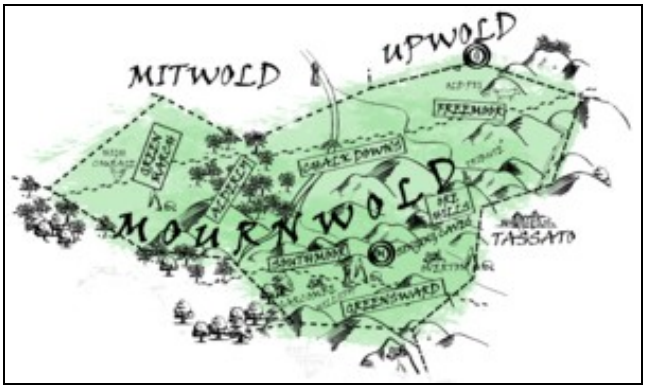
Mitwold's substantial coast, populated by small fishing villages along the shore, gives way to fertile chalk-soiled downs further inland, with rich game-filled woodland and larger farms and market towns beyond. The city of Meade stands on the western coast of Mitwold - the largest settlement in the Marches, and in some ways its spiritual heart.



12.4 Bregasland, the Dour Fens

Lost in 384YE, liberated in 385YE, lost in 387YE Sandwiched between the dark woods of Liathaven, the southern Jotun kingdoms, and the sea, lies Bregasland. The territory is primarily made up of freshwater fenland. Home to ?Bregas? (fenlanders), this is a place of small islands of abundantly fertile soil, surrounded by seemingly endless marshes where eels are caught. There are several households here made up entirely of merrow, and several settlements populated by people who have been shunned but cannot bring themselves to leave the Marches.

Bregasland is home to partially sunken ruins, including several stone circles that pre-date Marcher possession of the land. It is also home to dangerous man-eating lizards, giant insects, flesh-eating plants, marshwalkers, bottomless bogs and strange lights that seek to lure the incautious into deadly situations. Those who explore the depths of the marshes here sometimes disappear without trace ...



12.5 Mournwold, the Mourn

Lost in 349YE, liberated in 381YE, lost again in 386YE, liberated again in 387YE This desolate land was known as the Mourn even before its final fall to the Jotun hordes. Originally the name referred to the sound of the wind in the trees and across the craggy hills. After three decades of loss and bitterness, it seems an even more fitting name than ever for this lonely land of chalky sheep-grazed grassland and dark-boned hills.

Whereas Upwold and Mitwold in particular are known for their sprawling farms, the rugged terrain of the Mourn is better known for its mines. The folk of the Mourn have a reputation for holding grudges, and for being stubborn and quarrelsome, even among their fellow Marchers. Prior to the invasion of the Jotun, there had been a growing tide of dissatisfaction among professional miners that all political power had been vested in the hands of those who owned farms. The Jotun invasion more -or-less put an end to this grumbling, but events during the occupation and ultimate liberation of the territory have proved even more incendiary for the people of the Mourn, the Marches, and the Empire.

12.6 Marcher Territories in Play

Every character in Empire has a home territory - which is the territory where your personal resource is located. Land is especially important for Marchers - their society is based around farming and ownership of farms. The territory where they live effects who you can vote for during Senator elections, but in

the Marches *who you are* is sometimes seen as a function of *where you are from*.

If you are part of a Marcher household, market town, or monastery, you probably all want to be from the same territory - if you make a mistake during character creation an e-mail can easily sort that out. After you start playing your character, however, changing your home territory is a little more complicated - it costs money, and if you have upgraded your personal resource you may lose out - so ideally you want to get your territory right before the game begins.

You don't need to declare which region you live in, but given how Marchers feel about *where you come from* its usually a good idea to look over the territory page and pick a region. You might be from one of the established settlements, or you might have your own village or farm anywhere in the territory - the named villages and towns are by no means the only settlements in the Marches! Your character background, or your group background, can include a few details about your home if you like.

Each of the four territories has certain themes, which are often used as a starting point when plot writers create plot. Furthermore, certain personal resources lend themselves to certain territories better than others.

12.6.1 Being from Bregasland

The marshy territory of Bregasland has a theme of **strangeness**. The pub from *American Werewolf in London* with its suspicious villagers and grim secrets might be an example of a Bregasland settlement, as might the weird town of Innsmouth from Lovecraft's fiction (albeit with less emphasis on tentacled horrors). The stereotypical Bregas is insular and suspicious. This is also a territory with several mysteries - the dead waters, the strange rocks, the odd ruins, the rum beasts - which while they may not get explored in play can provide an interesting underpinning to your character's background.

Outside of Gravenmarch most of the territory is marsh - farm life is very different in Bregasland than in the rest of the Marches - you're more likely to be raising eels than sheep. Bregasland is an excellent choice however if you play to have a herb garden, and its emphasis on strange mysteries makes it a good choice for a mana site. Along with Mitwold, Bregasland also has a coastline. While it lacks the emphasis on foreign trade that its richer neighbour enjoys, a character from Ottermire or North Fens could easily operate a fleet resource.

Incidentally, Bregasland is also an excellent territory to choose if you plan to play a character with the merrow lineage - the stereotypical Marcher merrow, secretive, cold and altogether too clever by half, is often assumed to come from the Fens.

12.6.2 Being from Mitwold

The Pride of the Marches is rich, but its theme is **politics**. The households, villages, towns, and monasteries of Mitwold are mostly locked in centuries long feuds. The citizens of one village view their neighbours in the next town as everything that is wrong with the Marches. They scheme and plot against each other, and to advance their own household. The stereotypical Mitwolder thinks their home is the best part of the Marches - and would rather deal with someone from another nation or even another country than someone from another part of Mitwold.

This is a good territory to establish a group, and is an excellent choice for a yeoman's farm, alder's business,or a monk or friar's congregation. It's also a good choice for a military unit - local militias like the Hay irregulars and the yeomen soldiers associated with a household are both good examples of military units. Mitwold is also one of the best places in the Marches to have a fleet resource - the city of Meade and the town of Odd's End both have strong traditions of trading with foreign powers.

12.6.3 Being from the Mournwold

The Mourn has only recently been liberated after thirty years of Jotun occupation. The theme here is **conflict** - even before the Jotun came the Mournwold was uneasy. The conflict between the mine workers and the farm owners, for example, had been simmering for generations and was very close to boiling over. When the Empire came to liberate the Mourn, their actions soured the people against them and even if solutions are found it is likely many Mournwolders will continue to resent Imperial citizens for decades to come.

If the Mourn is your home territory, you have an obvious first question to answer - did you stay, or did you go? When the orcs conquered the Mournwold, many families chose to stay on their land, and lived as thralls of the Jotun warlords. The orcs were not especially cruel, but they were harsh masters, taxing their thralls mercilessly to support their war effort. You are likely to have some understanding of the Jotun (it is well worth looking over the Jotun page for background details). In particular, access to weaponry and armour was restricted - thralls are by definition not allowed to fight. Likewise, you will have grown up or spend three decades alongside orcs - both warrior-orc overlords and orc thrall neighbours. How has this shaped your attitude to orcs - what will you make of the Imperial Orcs? Did you support the resistance? How do you feel about the exiles returning to the Mournwold now it has been liberated? How do you feel about the Empire's actions leading up to the liberation - remember that roughly one in six people living in the Mournwold died at the hands of the Military Council's powerful curses.

On the other hand, many yeomen fled north and lived in exile in the remaining Marcher territories. If you or your family fled, and returned after the Mournwold was liberated, you may encounter prejudice from those who stayed behind - or view those who stayed as collaborators. How easy was it for you to reclaim your family land? What do you make of the orc thralls scattered across the Mournwold?

The Mournwold is an excellent choice of home territory for anyone who wants to have a mine resource - before the Jotun came it was the centre of Marcher mining. Yet having a mine in Mournwold brings with it a little baggage - the relations between mine owners and farmers is not an easy one. It's also a good choice for a farm, obviously - although it is probably a slightly less appropriate choice for a business unless your resource either represents something the orcs would have made use of (a forge perhaps), or a new establishment in the wake of the liberation. It's also an interesting choice for a forest or herb garden especially if you are planning to play one of the residents of the forest of Alderly.

12.6.4 Being from Upwold

The Silver Chase is the oldest of the Marcher territories, and it is steeped in **history and tradition**. It's where the exodus from Dawn ended, and where they built their first farms - and had their first fights with the native orcs. In their hearts, many Upwolders know they are the only *true* Marchers - and some resent that the people of Mitwold have largely eclipsed them in terms of wealth and influence. There are elements of Upwold that reflect elements of the other three territories - understandable given that at the end of the day almost everyone is descended from people who first settled in Upwold. Like Bregasland, it has its own strangeness - the Woldstone and the village of Mumford. Like Mitwold it has its feuds and factions - it's easy to imagine the people of Stockland feuding with the folk of King's Stoke over politics, Like Mournwold, it has its unique industry - the woodlands of Birchland and Tower March are the best places in the Marches to have a forest resource, for example (although a business could also represent a lumberjack, charcoal burner, or forest warden just as easily).

Upwold is a great choice for a farm or business, but it also makes a good choice for a congregation perhaps as part of a monastery focusing on preserving the Marcher's odd religious traditions. As with Mitwold, it is a good place for a military unit - there is a long tradition of Upwold protecting the rest of the Marches from Dawn and Wintermark, and while these days the three nations are technically allies, tradition dies slowly in the Marches. Today, Upwold soldiers are more likely to be concerned with bandits, feni, the weird creatures lurking in the depths of the Bloody Great Hole, or have spent the last three decades watching the borders with Mournwold.

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13 The Marches children



Marcher children are treated like any other growing thing; they are nurtured so that they may grow straight, strong and true, they are showered with love like the rain and sun and with discipline like the frost and wind.

It is universally recognised in the Marches that children are not yet ?finished?, that is, that they have not grown enough in order to bear fruit (have children of their own, fight in the armies, or contribute to the nation in quite the same way as an adult). Until adulthood is reached, a child?s soul has not ?fixed? or ?settled? in their body; this is why children can be prone to selfishness, whim or fancy and can be unpredictable or fickle.

However, that doesn't mean they can't be useful to have around. The notion is that they'll learn best by watching and helping where they can. This practise is formalised by custom as "giving a hand". It's a precursor to apprenticeship but more based on the child?s interest and not a permanent thing. If a child is watching what you?re doing, ask them to ?give you a hand? and give them something to ?do?, something which doesn?t get in your way. That involves them in what you're doing whilst they watch and learn. An interested child might ask if they can ?give you a hand?, meaning they want to learn more by helping out.

Most Marcher children are given a poppet each year. Looking after the poppet is part of the child?s growing and maturing process ? ?learn to look after yourself and you?ll better look out for others? many a mother has been heard to say to her child. The poppet contains a hearth magic that helps to protect the child against disease and illness. When the child?s poppet is ploughed back into the field their connection to the land is strengthened.



Like other growing things children need to be nurtured so they grow straight, strong and true.
When a child passes the tests of adulthood, there is a celebration. Not unlike a birthday, gifts are given and some parents present their children with a weapon so that the child may fight for the Marches when needed and with a tool so that they may work the land in the mean time. These items are often heirlooms and have been passed along generations of families. There are a few regional variations upon this, but the principles are the same. Some well-wishers give a gift of symbolic jewellery representing the items instead.

13.1 Things every child should know

- **Give people a hand.** Hard work is the secret to respect in the Marches. If you see people you know who are working hard, offer to give them a hand. If they include you in what they are doing, they'll treat you with more respect and you may learn something useful.
- **Hue and cry.** In the Marches, people work together to stop criminals. Keep your eyes open for anyone up to no good and give a shout if you see it.
- **Shunning.** You must never shun another child, but if you are told that someone is shunned then you should make an effort to ignore them and not talk to them.
- **Sport.** When you're not working, get a ball and some friends and have a game. Don't worry about the rules, worry about winning!
- **Traditions.** If you see someone breaking the Marchers' traditions always speak up and let others know that something is wrong.

13.2 Further Reading

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14 The Marches music



Marcher music is often boisterous and earthy.

14.1 The music of The Marches

14.1.1 Style summary

A capella harmony singing, no-nonsense, boisterous and earthy, simple folk and morality tales, minimal instrumentation, heavy rhythms on guitars or concertinas. Themes of working the land, agriculture and fishing, harvest, enjoyment of food and drink, recognition of obligation to the land and its people.

The music of the Marches is drawn primarily from the folk song traditions of Devon and Cornwall, Derbyshire and Yorkshire: wassails, shanties, drinking songs, and work songs.

14.1.2 Commonly known songs

- Marcher battle song - invariably sung before battle!
- Bringing in the Sheaves - a harvest song (not the hymn), often sung for solidarity.
- Down to Earth - a song about the importance of good earth and common sense to the Marchers!
- Many people in the Marches will know one version of a Wassail

14.1.3 Musical traditions

After every harvest, Marcher farmers perform a traditional ceremony, a Wassail, to scare away evil spirits from the fields and ensure a good crop for the coming year. There are more details on the wassail in the Marcher brief.

In the Marches, misdeeds are sometimes rewarded with a public shaming using noise, music, even satirical performance of some kind, called Rough Music. Some chants are known throughout the Marches such as those below (usually interspersed with verses detailing the misdeed), some songs/performances are written especially for the occasion!

- "Ran tan tan, raise your hand, a sin to us is a sin to the land"
- "Old Fred Thatcher (insert name of miscreant), we know your name, Old Fred Thatcher, you are to blame, Old Fred Thatcher, we know your shame, Old Fred Thatcher, we know your name!"

14.1.3.1 Battle Songs

- Marcher battle song - easy song for marching into battle
- Rebel March - easy song for upsetting the Dawnish (and battles)
- Yet another Marches Battle Song
- Marcher At My Side - easy song popular with soldiers in the Marcher armies

14.1.3.2 Seasonal Songs

14.1.3.3 Autumn

- Bringing in the Sheaves - medium harvest song (not the hymn)
- John Barleycorn - medium folk song
- Wassail - easy call and response, and lots of versions
- Harvest Time - song about the land and Britta's lost army

14.1.3.4 Winter

- Drive the Cold Winter Away

14.1.3.5 Funeral Songs

- Marcher Dirge - a bit heretical
- Turn the Circle - a song which can be sung as a round
- Carts Come Home - easy song about bring back Marcher dead from the wars
- Only Remembered For What We Have Done - medium harmony song
- Lay me Low - medium difficulty harmony song



Making music in the Marches is usually a shared activity.

14.1.3.6 Songs from Mournwold

- Jonah Gold - traditional miners song from Mournwold
- The Mournflag - a song inspiring the fight for the Mourn

14.1.3.7 One for the kids

- Whose Pigs Are These? - a fun round
- Chants for naughty children

14.1.3.8 Songs about notable people/entities in the Marches

- Jack in the Green - a song about the Marches Egregore
- The Culloch Boar - tells of the origins of the Culloch banner

14.1.3.9 More Songs

- The Unquiet Grave
- Tom A'Bedlam's song
- Ye Mariners All - medium drinking song
- Here's A Health to the Company - easy drinking song
- His Banner's Not Mine - medium love song
- Pull Down Below - medium shanty with chunky harmonies
- One More Day - easy shanty: lyrics, tune
- Ten Thousand Miles - love song with easy harmony accomp
- Pretty Ploughboy - easy song about saving the lad you love from the war
- Silent Giants - easy song about standing stones

14.1.3.10 Instrumentation and tunes

Songs are usually unaccompanied in the Marches, typically sung in raucous harmony rather than using instruments. However sometimes drums, accordions, guitars, fiddles, and whistles/recorders are used. For instrumental music, look to the very heavy rhythms of trad English music (the kind of tunes used to accompany morris dancing would be perfect).



Themes of working the land, agriculture and fishing, harvest, enjoyment of food and drink, recognition of obligation to the land and its people. .

- The Chicken Dance - dance tune often brought out at hen parties and other festivities, by Cora and Kit score, recording
- The Bond Ring - dance tune for weddings and other bondings, by Cora and Kit score, recording

14.1.3.11 Other performance traditions

Marches Tales

14.1.4 How to adapt your repertoire

The Marches is all about people singing *together* so choose songs that have a chorus, or even better, a call and response line. Nothing wrong with a bard leading a song but try to encourage participation from the people around you, even if just banging their tankards off the table. Can you turn your song into a drinking song?! Think of some harmonies ahead of time and if possible teach them to your group instead of using instrumental accompaniment. Any folk song will be fine but especially those in the themes listed above. If you are mostly a solo performer perhaps learn a few easy rounds and sing them with people between your solo numbers.

14.1.5 Our sources

- Songs: Coope, Boyes and Simpson; Muldoon's Picnic; Fisherman's Friends; Chumbawamba (the folky stuff e.g. English Rebel Songs and ABCDEFG), and number of Welsh a capella choirs; all great acapella harmony singers. Seth Lakeman (sans guitar), June Tabor.
- Tunes: Florida, Eliza Carthy
- Great list of harvest themed songs: http://piereligion.org/harvestsongs.html
- Good list of sea shanty lyrics (stick to the very English sounding ones, preferably about fishing): http://www.boundingmain.com/Lyrics.htm
- Good list of sources for English folk suitable for the Marches: http://www.informatik.uni-hamburg.de/~zierke/folk/

Here is a youtube playlist of appropriate or inspiring music.

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15 Category:Archetype

15.1 The Brass Coast

Dhomiro	A dhomiro is a member of a Freeborn family who is chosen by the family to be their representative to the wider world; sometimes as a leader, sometimes as an emissary.
Kohan	Kohan are groups of volunteer and outcast warriors-without-family, who traditionally pledge loyalty to a group of hakima.
Sutannir	Sutannir perform inspiring religious ceremonies for the Freeborn, and encourage people to exemplify and celebrate Virtue.
Hakima	Hakima are highly-organised groups of magic-users whose loyalty is to the nation, not their family. They are taken to be wise.
Corsair	Freeborn corsairs are traders and privateers who deal with - and raid - barbarian shipping in the Bay of Catazar.
Scrivener	Scriveners are Freeborn contract-writers who help traders frame the terms of their deals, and then decorate them with artwork and calligraphy.

15.1.1 Dawn

Earl	The Earl of a Dawnish Noble House is the House's leader, who leads the House in all its great achievements and who sets its conditions of membership.
Knight-errant	Knights-Errant are engaged in their Test of Mettle. Still technically yeofolk they are expected - and are questing - to prove themselves glorious.
Questing knight	Questing Knights are those Knights who have proved themselves worthy in their Test of Mettle and have chosen to keep on questing for ever-greater glory.
Troubadour	A Troubadour is a priest who learns all the stories of their Noble House, past and present, and tells them in poetry and song to inspire their people to greatness.
Witch	Witches are Dawnish magic-users. In noble houses, they fight alongside the House's warriors. Most others belong to Weaver Cabals, independent groups of ritual witches which accept both yeofolk and noble members.
Guiser	Itinerant entertainers who often combine magic with their performances and practice dramaturgy. They are often (sometimes justly) accused of being spies, tricksters and mountebanks as well as performers.
Enchanter	Some Earls who have studied magic choose the title "Earl-Enchanter" or simply "Enchanter". Most learn ritual magic to benefit their people; some build relationships with powerful Summer Eternals.
Seneschal	A Noble House's Seneschal is a trusted yeofolk who oversees its financial affairs, arranging deals and trades and keeping the House solvent.
Advocate	Dawnish Advocates are yeofolk politicians who navigate the murky waters of Senate politics for their noble masters.
Retainer	A yeofolk Retainer is a Dawnish Noble's most trusted attendant, who works closely with a particular Noble, or sometimes for the whole House.

15.1.2 Highguard

Exarch	The Exarch, or Exarchs, are those who are appointed by a Highguard Chapter as their leader(s) as determined by the Chapter's creed, or by embodying its principles.
Guardian	Guardians form the core of Highborn military, taking on a range of roles in defence of their Chapters, and in prosecuting vigilant warfare.
Unconquered	The Unconquered are Highguard's elite guerrilla troops. They are prone to using ruthless tactics, even operating behind enemy lines, to destroy the enemy's capacity to make war.
Cataphract	Cataphracts are Highguard's elite heavy warriors, who once rode horses into battle but who, in modern times, represent a resolute and unbreakable wall of steel.
Wayfarer	Wayfarers are Highborn priests with a long-standing tradition of teaching the truth of The Way to the ignorant, and seeking out Exemplars and Paragons born in other lands.
Inquisitor	Highborn Inquisitors are zealous defenders of The Way from those that would threaten it, whether mortal or supernatural.
Steward of the Dead	Stewards of the Dead dedicate their lives to preserving the legacies of the worthy. This includes the interring of remains as well as the preservation of legacies and tales.
Magister	Magisters are the master magicians of Highguard, often with an affinity for Winter Magic. They shape magic using movement, sound and the chime of bells.
Benefactor	Benefactors are affluent Highborn merchants and tradesfolk who do not pursue wealth for its own sake, but who sponsor individuals, great works and endeavours.

Archivist	Archivists are a unique class of Highborn scholar dedicated to preserving the essence, or truth, of history, over and above accounts and evidence that may seek to undermine that truth.
Grey pilgrim	Grey pilgrims are a recent phenomenon. They walk the trods in a crusade to free the souls believed to be trapped between life and death by the vallorn, but they also oppose heresy and idolatry, convert foreigners to the Way, and seek to guide the other human nations of the Empire toward enlightenment.

15.1.3 Imperial Orcs

Warlord	Legions chose their own commanders, called warlords, with individuals chosen for their ability to provide clear effective leadership in battle, according to the traditions of the individual legion
Pitfighter	Professional fighters of the Pits in which the Orcs hone their combat skills; trading on the reputation for skill and strength that they have built up in previous fights, pitfighters build their careers until their notoriety means that other orcs begin to seek them out and actively challenge them.
Shaman	Most orcs only experience communion with the ancestors when battle is upon them but a few individuals - called shamans - are able to hear the voices more frequently; they are almost incessantly surrounded by the constant input of ancestral advice much of it bearing a contradictory or even hostile message.
Preacher	Those Imperial Orcs who embrace the Way and become priests.
Warcaster	The highly physical traditions of the Wintermark runesmiths has appealed to some orcs who adopt a similar approach and become Warcasters.
Oathwright	Oathwrights believe that the bond between an item and a person affects them both, items may gain worth by being owned and bonded to the right person and the right item affects an individual?s hopes of becoming an ancestor.
Bonesetter	Usually trained apothecaries, physicks or both, Bonesetters are expected to attend to the physical needs of the legion, but their remit runs well beyond this.
Thief-taker	Working closely with Imperial Magistrates, Thief-takers earn their income by collecting bounties on criminals who have fled the law and more rarely by taking payments from private individuals looking to identify perpetrators of crimes.
Reaver	Soldiers of the Legions who become dedicated to raiding and mercenary work.

15.1.4 The League

Merchant Prince	A Merchant Prince is the head of a Guild, the tight-knit mercantile organisations which define the shape of League society.
Bravo	Bravos are the members of the mercenary Free Companies, as rough and rowdy off the battlefield as they are disciplined and professional on it, and immensely proud of their Companies.
Bishop	The Bishops of the League are its high priests, who provide Virtuous guidance to any who can afford it, and who compete using the size and influence of their congregations.
Troupe Magician	Troupes are bands of actors who often go masked while performing, and when performing ritual magic. To them, magic is a commodity like any other.
Mountebank	Mountebanks are street magicians whose tricks may be sleight of hand or genuine magic, many of whom skirt the edges of the law playing short-cons and rigging street games.
Cicisbeo	A Cicisbeo is an expensive professional paramour, the only exception to League culture's absolute prohibition on extramarital relations.

15.1.5 The Marches

Steward	A steward is the chosen head of a Marcher household. However a steward leads their household only with the consent of the other yeoman.
Beater	Beaters are a roaming informal police force, learning every part of the land, watching for thieves, vagrants and other ne?er-do-wells. Beaters are often instrumental in settling land disputes between neighbours and they have a vital role in the tradition of beating the bounds. Most are skilled foresters or hunters.
Yeoman	The yeoman is to many the archetypal inhabitant of the Marches. They are a hard people, who own their own land and are well accustomed to a long day working it. Military service is a proud tradition in the Marches, and the majority of yeomen are also soldiers.
Monk	Monks minister to the spiritual welfare of the folk around their monastery, largely ignoring household boundaries. They divide their time between study of the Imperial Faith and working the farmlands claimed by the monastery.
Friar	Friars work their own land and provide spiritual advice and counsel to their fellow yeomen in their household. Many also serve as scholars for their community, acting as a chirurgeon, and teaching letters and history to young children.
Landskeeper	

	A landskeeper is a figure from the Marches magical tradition, who supports the territories or the nation as a whole. Landskeepers can use a variety of methods, from hearth magics and good practical advice to rituals.
Mummer	Itinerant entertainers who combine theatrical performance with magic using the techniques of dramaturgy. They attend fairs, markets and other regular gatherings performing plays and feats of skill but are often greeted with suspicion and (sometimes unfairly) accused of being tricksters and mountebanks.
Alder	Alders are the appointed leaders of market towns, and are the rough equivalent of the yeomen. In most cases these are wealthy merchants of the town, but often they include prominent town folk such as a friar or blacksmith who lives in the village.
Smith	A skilled crafter who has used a lifetime's experience selling their wares to become a canny trader and experienced negotiator.
Thresher	A thresher dedicates their life to tracking down those who use magic for nefarious purposes and finding ways to punish them.

15.1.6 Navarr

Brand	Navarri who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, who work tirelessly to aid others without fee. They might be from any profession - Thorn, Vate, blacksmith, tanner, it doesn't matter. They are named for the brand burned into the skin on their left cheekbone.
Dreamspeaker	Philosophers, visionaries, and activists who aspire to make dreams into reality.
Thorn	A Navarri sworn to service in battle - usually, but not necessarily, a warrior. Always tattooed, they often wear warpaint into battle.
Guide	A Navarri who follows the path of the Virtues, and takes it upon themselves to ensure that members of the Empire have found the place in society that they are best suited to.
Broker	A Navarri who serves as an intermediary between a buyer and a seller, usually claiming some sort of payment from the deal.
Vate	The magical practitioners of Navarr. Often called upon to perform rituals in service of the nation and the Empire, they are the Navarri most trusted to meet with eternals or their heralds.
Vine	A Navarr who has dedicated themselves to healing the wounds caused by the vallorn.

15.1.7 Urizen

Arbiter	An arbiter is the elected leader of the spires, citadels, and temples of Urizen. They are often called on to resolve disputes within a community or to represent it to outsiders.
Architect	Architects are interested in economics and how money moves around and the influence it exerts on the world.
Illuminate	Illuminates use their understanding of the Net of the Heavens to perfect the world; focusing on building up the virtuous... and removing the unvirtuous from prominence.
Mage	Mages are magicians motivated by politics. Ambitious and potentially ruthless, a mage understands that all magic is inherently political.
Seer	Seers believe that perfect understanding is they key to unlocking the Net of the Heavens. They seek out opportunities to get the right information to the right people so they can make the right decisions.
Sentinel	Sentinels study the art of war with dedication and commitment that matches that of any magician.
Stargazer	Stargazers are scholars of magical lore who love magic in all its forms; they are the theoreticians and debaters who push knowledge to its limit.
Sword scholar	Sword scholars are warrior priests with a passionate commitment to reason and wisdom. They exhort others to test what they have learnt.
Torchbearer	Torchbearers are dedicated to ensuring that as many people as possible know the truth. They work to keep fellow citizens informed about current events and abhor falsehoods and secrets.
Questor	Questors consider the Way of Virtue to be an unfinished work and the Doctrines of the Faith as incomplete. Questors are radical priests who are willing to tear apart the Way in their quest for perfection.

15.1.8 Varushka

Boyar	A Varushkan Boyar is the hard heart of a Varushkan community, whose first duty is as a strong protector of their people. Second to that, they arbitrate and govern their vale in council with their Wise Ones.
Warden	The Warden brotherhoods are heroic warriors who employ magical protection along with their armour and weapons to hunt down the terrors of the Varushkan wilderness, and to uphold Imperial Law.
Schlacta	The Schlacta are Varushka's well-organised bands of soldiery, who provide defence to a place or an employer.
Wise One	Wise Ones are the true hearts of Varushkan communities. They are the thinkers who deal with those problems which cannot be dealt with by strength, and who look through the appearance of things to discover the threats lurking beneath.
Volhov	A Volhov is a Varushkan who studies magic, particularly warding magic (so necessary to Varushka's safety) and divination, to uncover threats before they grow too great to deal with. They often find it necessary to deal with Eternals, and sometimes even to pacify

	Varushka's deadly Sovereigns with rituals or bargains.
Cabalists	Cabals are teams of ritual magic users, who often act as individual groups, independent of their vales. Each Cabal is different from each other, but their magical might grants them considerable influence.
Storytellers	Varushkan Storytellers are the nation's ragged priests, often itinerant, around whom entire communities will gather to hear news, entertaining tales, and spiritual messages told well.
Stzena	The inheritors of a tradition of night sentries, Stzena are bands of musicians who perform at local events.
Wagon raider	Opportunists who seek their fortunes by launching forays into barbarian lands to grab whatever riches can be found.

15.1.9 Wintermark

Thane	The leader of a Hall in Wintermark, a Thane settles disputes that lie outside the law and provides civic and military leadership.
Banner-Bearer?	Warriors whose purpose is to raise the morale and fighting spirit of their companions. Banner-bearers often literally carry their warband's banner.
Stormcrow	The ragged priests of Wintermark, who act as guides, witnesses and confessors, and who provide spiritual and moral inspiration and guidance for the Winterfolk.
Runesmith	Artisans who specialise in the magic of the old runes of Wintermark, who create engraved weapons and armour, or scribe warding marks to protect people or places.
Icewalker	The cunning mages of the Suaq, who use their magical skills and their knowledge of the Ice as part of their hunting tradition.
Mediator	A Wintermark merchant who specialises in negotiating weregild between aggrieved parties.
Maggot	A scavenger, a looter on the battlefield; "Maggots" are seen as scum by most Winterfolk.
Mystic	Deeply spiritual Kallavesi who make predictions about the future and advise their fellows on the wisest course of action. Often a magician, but some do it with hearth magic and intellect.
Scop	The professional entertainers of Wintermark, Scops are known for their mastery of saga and song, and their skill with alliterative poetry. They are responsible for granting an adult name to a child coming to adulthood.
Grimnir	The battlefield doctors and healers of Wintermark, Grimnir swear an oath to stay clear of the front lines.

16 The Marches groups

16.1 Overview

There are many important households, landskeeper circles, market towns, and monasteries in the Marches. Despite the number, only a comparative handful are involved in the affairs of the Empire (that is, attend the seasonal summits at Anvil). Their influence can wax and wane, and involvement in Imperial affairs is not always a reflection of their prominence within the nation itself. This page presents in-character information about the groups that attend, or have attended, Anvil ? the kind of thing that someone who asked about them might uncover from talking to their peers. In each case, the information is provided by the players and edited before being put on the wiki.

The majority of groups listed here are made up of player-characters. You should not create a character who is part of a group, or has personal history with one, without first clearing it with the appropriate players. You should also check before including other players' groups in your background. The background team are unlikely to approve a background that significantly impacts or involves another player character group without their permission. There are also a handful of prominent NPC groups included for completeness, but they are not intended for use by player characters.

16.2 Households and Monasteries

The households and monasteries of the Marches wield the lion's share of political power in the nation, because they control the largest amount of farmland.

16.2.1 Households of Bregasland

16.2.1.1 Barrowby Abbey



Barrowby Abbey

- **Location:** The Rushes
- **Motto:** Hand Proffered, Lantern Lit
- **Symbol:** Clasped Hands, Lantern, Herbs and Pears set within a Quatrefoil

Barrowby Abbey was originally founded by local Marcher priests working side by side with pilgrims from Highguard in the aftermath of the Cousin?s War. The abbey's mission is to attempt to provide a source of spiritual guidance that exists outside of the grudges and squabbles commonly found between and within Bregasland households, with a focus on the virtues of Loyalty and Vigilance.

The abbey itself is built on top of one of three barrows, ancient burial mounds that have stood out from the surrounding fens since before the first Marchers settled in The Rushes. The second barrow, so low and sunken that it is prone to flooding, bears a small herb garden and an orchard that sprawls out into the surrounding wetland. The third barrow, by far the largest, lays bare. Eerie stories about the third barrow have been passed down in hushed tones by generations of lay Marchers, but such tales have never been acknowledged by the monks of Barrowby.

The daily work of the monks consists of tending their lands, distributing herbs and produce to their congregants across northern Rushes and southern Ottermire, and delivering sermons, shriving and the traditional funeral rites of Barrowby Abbey.

16.2.1.2 The Black Vigil



Black Vigil

- **Location:** Near Gravenmarch
- **Livery:** Quartered Black and Purple
- **Motto:** A Lantern Lit, a Shadow Felled, a Debt Fulfilled.
- **Symbol:** Barbed Crescent Surrounding a Lit Lantern
- **Steward:** Gideon of Graven Rock

Across the marshes of Bregasland, the lanterns of the Black Vigil can be seen cutting through the dark as they patrol the fens and guard against encroaching threats.

Unlike many houses of the Marches, the Black Vigil?s ancestry does not trace back to Dawn. Its founding members come from Kallavesa, Tassato and the heart of Bregasland itself. They are warriors, brewers, mummers - vagabonds all.

Each, in their own way, were without guidance before being brought together by Gideon of Graven Rock and given purpose in hunting monsters across the shadowed recesses of the world. A kinship grew, and now through the fog and the fens of Bregasland they come, each member equipped with a lantern to always be a light in dark places. The lanterns' importance and what it represents is proudly displayed on their livery. The Black Vigil believes that ?monster is a state of mind', so for those who behave monstrously, be they beast, barbarian or Imperial, the hunt is on.

As highly skilled fighters The Black Vigil frequently offer their services as mercenaries, guards and enforcers, to any with coin who may require their aid. The Vigil values respect highly, and for those who have earned their respect they will drink, fight, and share in revelry with until their lanterns burn out.

With their lanterns lit, shadows will fall, and all debts will be fulfilled.

16.2.1.3 House Elver



House Elver

- **Location:** Northeast of Greywater
- **Livery:** Mustard and Azure with Eel Rampant
- **Motto:** The water sustains me without even trying. The water can't drown me, I'm done with my dying
- **Steward:** Dick Elver

Most of the early history of house Elver is lost but according to their own stories they were part of the first wave of households to march from Dawn. However, instead of marching on foot they spent most of their time on small boats following rivers and streams until finally arriving in Bregasland on a small jutting of land east of Greywater on the coast of Westmere. During the Cousin?s War the household was reluctant to pick a side but eventually sent a small retinue to fight to join the Empire.

In recent years, the household has pursued a quieter life of farming eels, keeping to themselves and avoiding involvement in wider Bregasland or Marcher politics, choosing to pursue artistic endeavours with art and music being strongly encouraged alongside eel farming amongst the household.

During the recent invasion of Mathilda Fisher and her Jotun allies the household had to re-assess its non-political status and now takes an active part in the fight for Bregasland freedom and actively engages in the politics of Anvil.

16.2.1.4 House Greywater

- **Location:** Southern North Fens
- **Livery:** Drab grey and olive
- **Motto:** We remain
- **Steward:** Margery Greywater

House Greywater came to recent prominence following the conquest of Bregasland by the Jotun. A household from North Fens, they have a chequered reputation in the Marches, even by the standards of Bregasland. "Poacher" is a dangerous word to bandy around... but it's commonly said of the Greywaters that "they don't own a lot of land of their own, but they sure know a lot about other peoples..." What can't be denied is that they're skilful archers and they know the Bregasland marshes like the backs of their hands. They were also known to hate Mathilda Fisher, so-called Steward of Bregasland. Apparently, some old, old grudge exists between the Greywaters and the Fishers involving a basket of stolen eels that predates the founding of the Empire. They refused to take the Jotun conquest of Bregasland lying down - not only did they actively resist the invaders, they weren't quiet about it either. With a little assistance from Marcher heroes, they took to the Grey Fens, working with the Strong Reeds to resist the would-be conquerors. From hidden camps they mounted a guerrilla campaign against Fisher and her orc allies, using the cover of the marshes to make it impossible for the Jotun to bring them to heel. They helped the Strong Reeds lay low, granting significant advantages. They continued to bedevil the invaders, and fought bravely to drive them out of the territory.

NPC Group: The Greywaters are an NPC group; you cannot create a player character who is a member of the Greywaters.

16.2.1.5 House Selwyn



House Selwyn

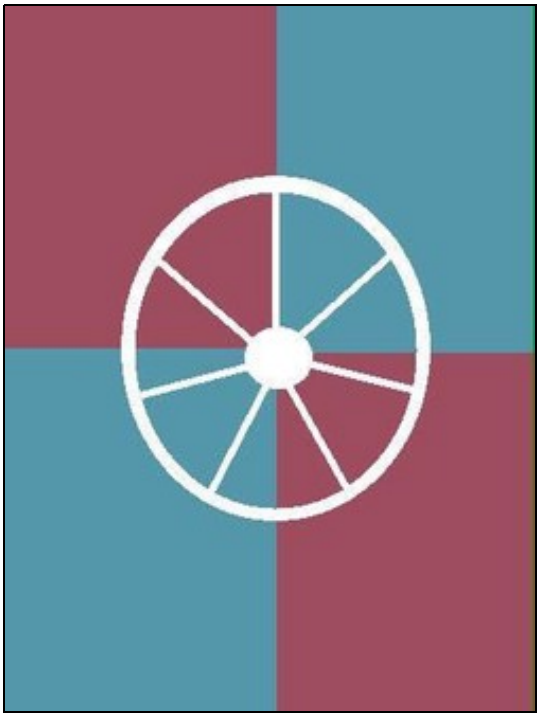
- **Location:** Ottermire
- **Livery:** Green & Blue
- **Motto:** Remember to return
- **Symbol:** Salmon spear pointed downwards
- **Steward:** Sole Selwyn

House Selwyn make their living and their name through the tight control of the rivers that run through their lands in Ottermire. The household is deeply tied to the river's salmon, which return each year to spawn, supposedly inspiring their motto, "Remember to return." The majority of the household is made up of farmers, fisherfolk and sailors tutored by its friars primarily preaching Prosperity, Wisdom and Courage, but most walks of life are found and welcomed within their numbers.

Their most sacred holding is that of the Silver Dolmen, a slumbering Autumn regio surrounded by apple trees that stands on an island splitting the river?s mouth. It serves as a burial ground for the fallen as well as a gathering place for the landskeepers that ally themselves with the household.

Fearful of the elevation of House Greywater?s status in Bregasland and the expansion of Eel?s Landing by Emperor?s decree, members of the Selwyn household first ventured to Anvil in the season following its construction, eager to build up their own name and ensure no poacher would build up enough courage to visit their lands.

16.2.1.6 House Wheelwright



House Wheelwright

- **Location:** Near the Gullet
- **Livery:** Claret and Blue

- **Symbol:** Seven-spoked wheel
- **Steward:** Reg Wheelwright

House Wheelwright have a small plot of land near the Gullet. Originally just the Wheelwright family lived here with some farm hands, now this includes a few other families that have married in and taken a field as their own. The land is mostly used to raise small livestock that are able to thrive in the conditions. There is also a small church built next to the main farm house. All members of the Wheelwright household or attached church are encouraged to wear imagery of a seven spoked cart wheel. This hails back to the founder of the House, while also acknowledging the seven virtues.

House Wheelwright has lived here since their founder, George Wheelwright, bought the land from an old widow. Having always dreamed of a life outside of the town he grew up in, George didn't question the fantastic price, ending up right in the edge of Jotun territory.

As the name suggests, Wheelwrights like to make things, although there is more demand for mill wheels than the cart wheels they were originally named for. Various members of House Wheelwright have been seen in Anvil, including the steward, Reg, when he has the chance. When Reg is unable to make meets at Anvil, his sister Rosemary speaks for the Household.

House Wheelwright claims links to House Fenner, due to an aunt marrying into House Fenner.

16.2.2 Households of Mitwold



House Crossland

16.2.2.1 House Crossland

- **Location:** Near Hay, Mitwold
- **Livery:** Yellow and green
- **Motto:** Life's short, play in the dirt
- **Symbol:**Quartered Yellow/Green with each quarter showing a pickaxe, eel, apple tree and wheat sheaf
- **Steward:** Marcus Crossland

House Crossland is a relatively young Marcher household, first formed in 384YE, but has grown rapidly in the years since. Based out of the Crossland Estate in the Golden Downs of Mitwold, with strong ties and trade routes to Upwold, the Crosslands draw members from many backgrounds and professions across all Marcher territories.

Though they come from different walks of life, they are united by a shared desire to improve the Empire, and to make sure people have a good time while doing it.

Known for their hospitality, their betting house, and the rowdiness of their pub, The Yeoman?s End, the Crosslands take pride in creating spaces where folk can gather, party, drink, wager, and feel part of the - albeit dysfunctional - family.

The Crosslands believe that a good time, fellowship, and a tankard full of cider are as important to the strength of the Empire as hard work and duty.



House Garamond

16.2.2.2 House Garamond

- **Location:** Mead, Mitwold
- **Livery:** per pale Sanguine and bisque in
- **Motto:** That which is yet to be found we shall seek
- **Symbol:** fess point a pair of keys yellow-ochre in nombril a corn sheaf yellow-ochre
- **Steward:** Leof of Mead

House Garamond is situated in one of the oldest buildings in Meade town centre and can trace their roots back to some of the oldest families of Dawn. The crumbling vaults of House Garamond were once used by the settlers of Mead to store their coin and valuables as well as the irreplaceable historical possessions which House Garamond had accumulated. Eventually folk trusted the Talbots over House Garamond and their dilapidating vaults to store their coin resulting in a shift of the House?s income to rely more on its crops and breweries. The artifacts stored in many of the Garamond vaults eventually decayed or were buried as the old vaults collapsed, leaving only a handful that are now proudly displayed for all to see.

To this day, yeomen of House Garamond still have a particular interest in preserving ancient history and can be found travelling from town to town in search of interesting objects of historical importance and educating visitors on the history of their proud remaining artifacts. The keys depicted in their livery once represented the security of their vaults though now only two remain in service, they are considered by House Garamond to be one of the most secure places in Mitwold.



House Hoottree

16.2.2.3 House Hoottree

- **Location:** The Meadows
- **Livery:** Dark red and grey brown
- **Motto:** Always room on the branch

- **Symbol:** Owl wearing a kettle helmet and carrying a polearm
- **Steward:** Tarryn Spry

House Hoottree takes its name from the ancient oak marking the boundary between Mitwold and Upwold, where its lofty branches and deep hollows are home to generations of fat, contented owls fed by mice stealing from the household's grain stores.

Once unremarkable farmers content to stay out of the Empire's feuds, the household found its purpose when Meade fell to the Jotun and the roads east filled with refugees. Sitting squarely on their route, House Hoottree opened its barns without debate, a habit that's stuck since.

The house is now made up of a ragtag group of farmers, business owners and traders ready to muster for a relief effort, daft scheme, or just a good scrap.

16.2.2.4 The Hotspurs

- **Location:** Meade March
- **Livery:** Black and blue
- **Motto:** De Terra Fortes (from the earth, the strong)
- **Symbol:** A four pointed compass on a background of blue and black
- **Steward:** Gerald Burberry

Traditionally based around the docks of Meade, the household has holdings on a series of small craggy isles known as the ?Stoney Isles? within the delta of the river Meade. This allows the house to keep a watchful eye on the comings and goings of the various barges and ships making their way to and from the docks and permits the house?s fleets to venture out into the wider waterways of the Empire.

Household legend tells of the youths coalescing around the docks many years ago, carrying out odd jobs for anyone willing to pay and "persuading" those who are unwilling. This public service has led to a somewhat rough and ready reputation, aided further by the continuing recruitment from the docksides and dark alleys of Meade.

As business has grown increasingly lucrative the Household's primary concern has become the management and transport of goods coming through the docks from across the waters of Westmere.

16.2.2.5 The Marcher Tea Company

- **Location:** Meade March
- **Livery:** Black and green
- **Motto:** Irrita Me; Invenies Quid Valeam
- **Symbol:** A badger rampant on a green field
- **Steward:** Chestnut

The Marcher Tea Company is something of an institution in Meade and can trace their distant roots back to the Balstons of Upwold.

Once a proud trade dynasty with roots across the Marches, years of war against the Jotun and the loss of the Mourn fractured the trade ties built carefully over so many years. At the head of their new steward the Tea Company seeks to reclaim its position as one of the premier trading Household and caravans laden with exotic teas from across the Empire are an increasingly common sight in Meade.

16.2.2.6 The Talbots of Hay



The Talbots of Hay

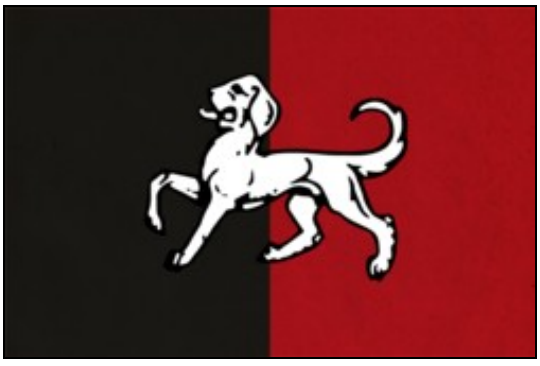
- **Location:** Golden Downs
- **Livery:** Red & Black
- **Motto:** Fort et Fidelis (Strength and Loyalty)
- **Symbol:** Passant white hound
- **Steward:** Hardulph Talbot

The Talbots were originally a noble house in service to House Gauvain. They created a shock wave in Dawnish society when they joined the Yeomen?s' revolt that subsequently led to the creation of the Marches nation.

Since the foundation of the Marches the Talbots have constantly sought to preserve the integrity of the nation against all aggressors, proving stalwart in the defence of the Marches during the many conflicts with Dawn and other bloody engagements. Despite their desire for a strong and independent Marches the Talbots recognised that incorporation into the expanding empire was inevitable and were one of the main proponents for unification. That said, the Talbots very much view themselves as Marches first. They recognise the importance of preserving the Empire but are keen to see the Marches and their Household prosper from this relationship.

To maintain their power, the Talbot are especially keen to invest in and control land in the Mitwold, often binding yeomen to their cause through negotiations and subsequent indentures. In addition, they have maintained a legacy for the quality of their blacksmiths and count several amongst their number. Ever since the fall of the Mournwold the Talbots have helped maintain the garrison at Fenrose keep with money, supplies and on occasion soldiers. Several prominent Talbots have served there as a rite of passage, turning errant youths into hardened warriors and effective leaders.

16.2.2.7 The Talbots of Meade



The Talbots of Meade

- **Location:** Meade Downs
- **Livery:** Red & Black

- **Motto:** Fort et Fidelis (Faithful and Strong)
- **Symbol:** Passant white hound
- **Steward:** Edward Talbot

The ancient House of Talbot were once the seneschals of the De Gauvain noble house in Dawn. When they made the decision to March with the other yeomen families they brought with them not only military might but the administrative skills needed to run a successful household. Taking lands in Mitwold, they eventually sided with the First Empress in the Cousins War, being present at the bloody battle of Hepton Bridge - they claim it was their forces that took the bridge itself.

The Talbots are well-known as landowners and manage well-run estates. This business sense has led them over time to be entrusted with the coin of other houses, using it to buy the stores their neighbours needed. This allowed, over time, the household to accumulate a vast wealth. Eventually they became a powerful household in Mitwold, especially around the trade centres of Meade and Hay. They have extensive properties in Meade but the seat of power for the house is the fortified Talbot Manor on the Meade Downs, situated in acres of sheep grazing land, from which their wool and subsequent wealth is harvested.

The household's animal heraldic symbol being the loyal hound, the white dog of Talbot. Loyalty is the virtue prized highest amongst the Talbots. The family motto ?Fort et Fidelis?, which translates to ?Faithful and Strong? in one of the Asavean dialects, echoes this sentiment. Although many of them prefer the unofficial motto ?Never Knowingly Under Cater?, which is particularly popular around household gatherings and has yet to be proven wrong.

16.2.3 Households of the Mournwold

16.2.3.1 The Boon County Miners



Boon County Miners

- **Location:** Boon County, Ore Hills
- **Livery:** A pickaxe overlaying the rune Feresh on a brown and beige field
- **Motto:** Our hills remain
- **Steward:** Jedediah ?Jed? Boon

Boon County is a large portion of land, deep in the Ore Hills. Made up almost entirely of miners, the Boon County Miners are technically called ?House Boon? but choose to steer away from this due to its association with farming households. They are a reclusive lot, deeply entrenched in mining tradition, such as burying their dead by lowering them down a burial mineshaft. They have a notable briar lineage and are zealously dedicated to Pride; their insular nature has left them with a distinct Ore Hills accent. Their former Steward, Ezekiel ?Zeke? Boon, was executed as a ringleader of the Ore Hills Rebellion in 326YE.

The Boon County Miners were devastated by the Jotun occupation. Those who survived the initial battles refused to leave, choosing to remain on their land due to their Pride; they would rather work their mines as slaves than be ousted. They attempted several revolts during this time, none of which were successful. The lengthy occupation and subsequent Imperial curses further decimated the Boons; when the Mourn was freed, Boon County began to open back up to the Empire. They remain staunchly religious, dedicated to Pride, and have renewed their push to get miners the right to vote in the Marches.



House Bleak

16.2.3.2 House Bleak

- **Location:** Greensward
- **Livery:** pink, white, blue
- **Symbol:** Blue mournflag over black and white field, 6 forget-me-nots across the top in pink, white, blue
- **Motto:** "The Mournwold is made of hills to die on."
- **Steward:** Mel Bleak

If you take the road west out of Tassato Mestra, on the mithril route out to the Singing Caves, then just past the scattered line of menhirs marking the border of the Greensward, you'll find a small crossroads that has grown into a respectable little village.

In the years following the devastating "*Winter of Hell*", Mel o' the Mourn worked to restore a haunted, ruined farm on the very edge of the territory; her way of rebuilding in a way that didn't involve returning to the site of Greenhill's obliteration. She named it 'Bleak House Farm'.

Despite some controversies, Mel nevertheless found that the farm's position in the Greensward was a great one for employing travellers and strays for seasonal work. Five years of work paid off: enough good folk stayed more than a single season to grow the farm to a village, and enough of those agreed to name Mel as Steward of the new House Bleak, that they?ve come to accept it.

Aside from a mix of grain, sheep, and pig farms, Mel also takes Pride in the small garden she planted, from which they harvest their own small supply of groveblossom.

16.2.3.3 Copperhill Monastery

- **Location:** Greensward
- **Colours:** Grey and Red
- **Symbol:** Prancing Cockerel
- **Leader:** Abbott Thomas Arch

Copperhill Monastery is dedicated to the virtue of Pride though all virtues are practiced here. The abbey located between two hills in the Greensward in a region with a long tradition of copper mining. The monks have a tradition of taking in people with lineage who have nowhere else to go, and a result the population of Copperhill are mostly lineaged. With the war in the Mourn, Copperhill was destroyed but they are working to rebuild and to restore the Pride and Prosperity of the Greensward.

16.2.3.4 House Drayton

- **Location:** Freemoor and Graven March
- **Livery:** Black (for the peat), crimson (for the herbs)
- **Motto:** From dirt to stream to river
- **Symbol:** A Duck Sinister
- **Steward:** Nathaniel Drayton

House Drayton started its life in Freemoor, struggling to cope with scrubby farmland. Several winters were survived by trading skills and herbs picked from the local scrubland of their neighbours. As the years passed, trading became more important to the family. By the time of the Jotun occupation the family had adopted a non-traditional lifestyle living aboard several small river craft, farming the stream banks for herbs and collecting flotsam for trade. They moved much of this to the family members who had moved to Graven March. With the approach of the Jotun cutting off trade and being unable to sustain themselves by staying stationary, the Draytons were some of those who left the Mourn. Those at Graven March established a business trading in herbs and other resources - the Wanderin' Shop - that moved around, even as far as Anvil at times. The shop has a reputation for selling practically anything?



House Forrester
Even without land, though, the Draytons have never seen themselves as anything other than true Marchers. The head of family still takes the title of steward and the household gathers resources to secure the banks of their home. The Draytons know they come from the land, and though they are now more nomadic in nature than most, the Mournwold moor, its rivers and dirt are where they will return to. Brackish water is common in the streams of the moor and no Drayton will ever turn down a request for a drink; just don't hold out for water.

16.2.3.5 House Forrester

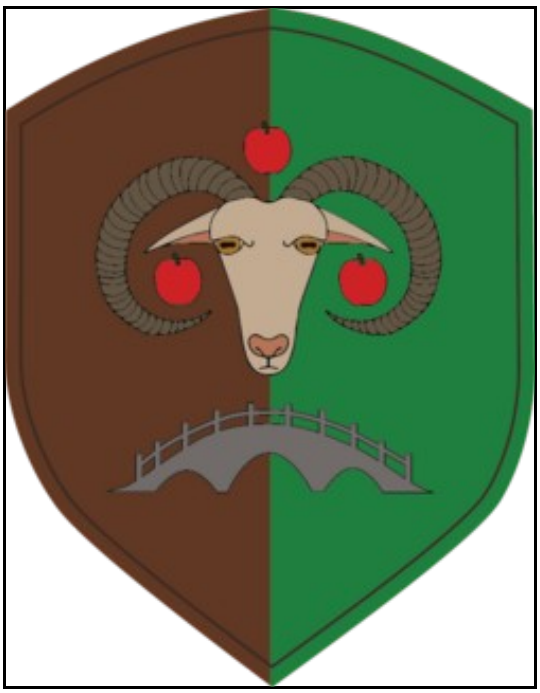
- **Location:** Southmoor, outskirts of Sarcombe
- **Livery:** A tree on top of a sword hilt located at the centre of a Vertically split burgundy and bottle green background.
- **Steward:** Gabriel Forrester

House Forrester is a young household that formed from a chance meeting of forgotten relatives upon their arrival to Anvil. For a short while they spent their visits to Anvil getting to know each other and finding other members of their family.

Since then they have grown to include Marchers of various professions and skills based primarily out of the steward's Mournwold estate located just outside of Sarcombe. As a household based outside Sarcombe their interests are in the trade of goods and craftsmanship.

The Forresters have also joined The Unbound Union during their time in Anvil.

16.2.3.6 House of Goatsbridge



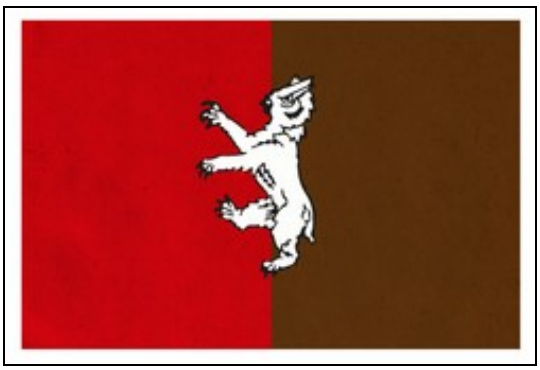
House of Goatsbridge

- **Location:** The Chalkdowns
- **Livery:** Green and brown
- **Symbol:** A goat, a bridge, and three apples
- **Motto:** Retake the Mournwold, Rebuild what we have lost, Regrow the land's bounty (Retake, Rebuild, Regrow)
- **Steward:** Sashka of Goatsbridge

Goatsbridge is a farming village situated halfway up a high hill in the Chalkdowns. A large steward's manor squats in the centre, overlooking the market square. The ancient stone bridge the village is named for sits astride a shallow stream that carves through the hills, connecting the village proper to rolling, steep acres of pasture for the goats.

Its people are a mix of those who returned to their homes after the liberation of the Mournwold, and those who remained behind when it was conquered by the Jotun. It is particularly notable for its affiliation with a large coven of mummers who work to ensure magic is used for the prosperity of the Marches under the firm supervision of the local landskeeper circle.

16.2.3.7 Happiston Volunteers



Happiston Volunteers

- **Location:** Chalkdowns
- **Livery:** Red and Brown
- **Symbol:** Roaring mandowla rampant

The Happiston volunteers are a young Marcher household founded by a group of former thralls and yegarra. This group was initially a voluntary militia formed to defend the town of Happiston and its surrounds during the period of lawlessness following the retreat of the local jarl's forces. In the years since the Mournwold's re-integration into the Empire the household has grown to include Marchers with a wider range of talents, as well as allowing those who fought for the Jotun to retire their weapons and pursue other enterprises. To this day, the group is committed to rebuilding Happiston, seeing it prosper, and to defend it from those who would take it again.

The house's symbol is derived from the time when the yegarra members of the household served with the Jotun army, the Mandowla's Roar. Due to this connection the red standards and mandowla iconography were what the Happiston Volunteers had easily to hand in the founding of their militia. Some take a certain glee in having taken something from the Jotun, others merely found it practical to adopt the trappings that had struck fear into many a heart in the heat of battle.

16.2.3.8 Hogsgrove Coppice



Hogsgrove Coppice

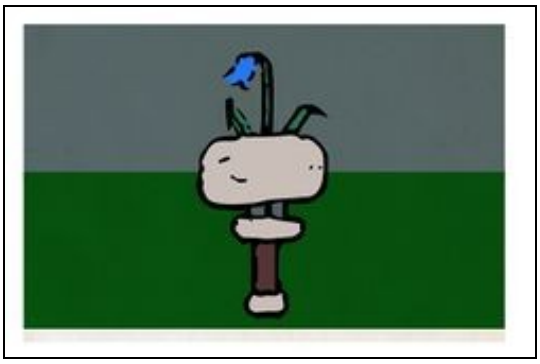
- **Location:** Freemoor, across the valley from the Old Pig
- **Livery:** Mustard and Grey, with surnames on the back
- **Motto:** The Old Pig, The Coppice, The Mourn / Caligis tremite ante Sagittarios Marchiae (antiquated)
- **Symbol:** A white boar on a hill with a single tree atop it.
- **Steward:** Henry Dogwood

The Hogsgrove Coppice are a group of coppicers and foresters who work the land and care for the trees of the Hogsgrove Coppice, a small settlement in the hills of eastern Freemoor overlooking Old Pig, a chalk pig carved into the hills, from where the grove gets its name.

The Hogsgrove count among their number several pilgrims of Virtue, and a few talented artisans. They also maintain a strict discipline of longbow archery. Despite their knowledge of forestry and knack for the bow, the Hogsgrove, for the most part, see themselves as yeofolk, not beaters. They prefer to shoot in disciplined units, rather than skirmishing around the woods. They care for trees but work the land like any proud farmer, herder or ploughhand.

Most of the surviving members of the Coppice were born after the Jotun conquest of the Mourn, and they were among the Marchers of Freemoor who shunned the Imperial armies during the reconquest of the Mourn. The choice to re-join the Empire was not one made lightly, but in the end their loyalty lies, like all true Marchers, with their land.

16.2.3.9 House Stone



House Stone

- **Location:** Ore Hills
- **Livery:** Grey above Green, Millstone on Hilt with Bluebell
- **Motto:** All of us or none of us, we chose all! We beat down all who did not agree, we're the House of Stone!
- **Steward:** Blayk Stone

House Stone's earliest records start at the beginning of the Empire, when the First Empress came to the Marches. Fighting for union in the civil war, the house went from building mills to breaking skulls. Upon the eventual victory, the House stood depleted, and so began a tradition of taking in odd ducks by accepting members divested of their original households. After a period of rebuilding in their lands in Upwold, their Prosperity was again cut short, this time by a sickness that claimed many of the household around 74YE, and the remaining members took House Stone south into Ore Hills in the Mourn. It was here that they built their first "rock farm", with farmers working alongside miners to exploit the natural resources of the hills, as a way to assuage internal conflict over voting rights. The loss of the Mournwold saw most of House Stone's people falling to the Jotun's blades.

The current steward of House Stone, Blayk Stone, succeeded her brother Dunstan in the summer of 381, and since then has been rebuilding the house for the third time. Today the rock farming tradition continues, even if only half the rock farmers can legally vote, spearheaded by the House Stone Rock Farm, the official central holding of the House. Loyalty is considered one of the more important virtues for the House as a whole, while the traditions are often focused on the soil and stone, drawing on its connections as if worried it is going to fly away.

16.2.4 Households of Upwold

16.2.4.1 Applewood Levy



Applewood Levy

- **Location:** Applewood, Stock March
- **Livery:** Black and green
- **Symbol:** Full apple tree
- **Steward:** Tilda Reaper

The Levy is a group of allied households who live, farm, and work in the Applewood northern Stock March. Their farms are scattered around the village of Applewood on the road between Stockland and Moot in Hahnmark, mostly on the west side of the road. Applewood is known for its abundant crop of apples, and for the orchard graveyard that lies to the west of the village where generations of Applewood residents rest beneath the soil.

Applewood had regular problems with the Feni in the past. Indeed, two months before the Winter Solstice of 376YE much of the village was burned by a major raid which saw several local households forming a levy to act as a unified force and defend the area against future threats. The smaller households merged to form a single household under a single steward who also oversees the Applewood Arms in Anvil. In recent years many of its members have formed a substantial military unit presence, known as the apple corps, led by whoever is the senior captain; to secure the Applewood itself and extend their help to the rest of the marches when called on.

16.2.4.2 House Balston



House Balston

- **Location:** Birchland
- **Livery:** Blue and green
- **Motto:** Rise Again
- **Symbol:** Rampant badger
- **Steward:** William Hooke Jr

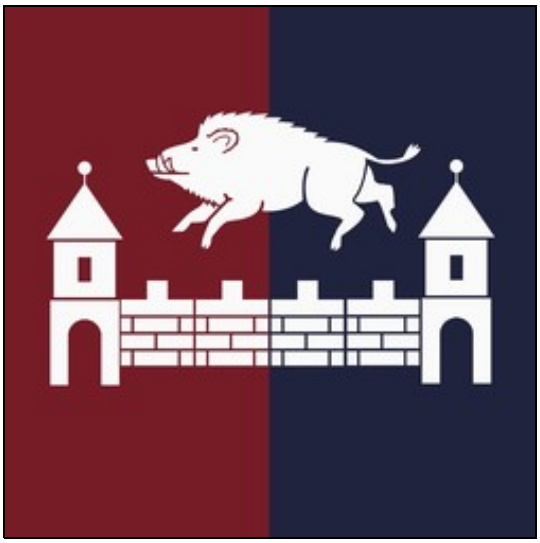
The Balston Household originated from a group of trappers and gamekeepers during the March from Dawn. Their first leader, James Balston, gathered support as they marched west, pursued by the Knights and Earls - and was eventually caught and executed at Brock's Toll - an incident from which the Balstons believe the bridge takes its name. After his death, James' daughters; Hester, Ann and Lily Balston established the settlement of Lambrook, which has been an influential presence in Birchland ever since.

The Balstons take in Pride a tradition of hard-bitten stubbornness in times of war. The household claims to have been the last non-Mournwolders to leave Sarcombe during the territory's fall to the Jotun in 349YE - covering an Imperial retreat which cost the Household's battalion dearly. After some years attending Anvil, the Household again suffered heavy losses when ill-fated fights through the Sentinel Gate saw a number of its members fall. Those who survived however have worked hard to see their proud household rise and thrive again. For these reasons, the members of the Balston household have earned a reputation for sanguine ferocity in the eyes of both their allies and rivals. If not fighting in their iconic blue and green livery, "The Badgers" as they are often known can be found making merry - or making trouble - across Anvil.

Rise again, rise again
Though your heart it be broke and your life about to end
No matter what you've lost, be it a home, a love, a friend
Like the Fighting Brock of Balston rise again

Balston song

16.2.4.3 House Boarbridge



House Boarbridge

- **Location:** Birchland,
- **Livery:** Burgundy and navy
- **Motto:** Cross us if you dare
- **Symbol:** White boar above a white bridge, white towers
- **Steward:** Nana Boarbridge

House Boarbridge was formed after the cousins' war. A group of yeofolk made their farms among the dense trees of Birchland. According to local stories the fertile marshland over which the bridge now stands was once home to a dire boar of gigantic proportions. Taking this as a sign of Prosperity, the newly assembled household set to task to clear the area. So stubborn was this boar to move from their home during the initial settling of the area that the yeofolk felt an instant kinship with it. They felt that it embodied the best of Marcher values. The boar was allowed to stay, the yeofolk instead choosing to build their settlement around and bridge over the boar?s home.

The wealth and influence of the household has recently taken an upturn after Lorenzo?s Deep Pockets, as it's known, opened in Spring 381YE. There has been an increase in travellers being forced to go through the forests of Birchland due to the sinkhole, seeing more and more traffic making its way over the bridge on their way west or east. Seeing previously unknown prosperity, and having a larger number of farms than ever before means that the household is finding itself more and more involved in marcher politics and wider Imperial affairs.

The household itself is comprised mostly of yeofolk, with a strong tradition of beaters, and a number of threshers.

16.2.4.4 Cockscroft Farm



Cockscroft Household

- **Location:** The Heath
- **Livery:** Orange and green
- **Motto:** All Yield
- **Symbol:** Crowing rooster beneath three sheaves of wheat
- **Steward:** John Fisher

The Cockscroft Farm is a collection of farms in Upwold, sitting just above the border to Mournwold. Though the Heath isn?t best suited for agriculture, the many ritualists on the farm work together in a coven to ensure that their harvests remain prosperous, helped along by the circle of standing stones that enclose their land. They pride themselves on hard work and efficiency, using their graft and magic to grow crops with the most bountiful yield possible.

The household and its farm are young, having been started by a handful of farmers less than a decade ago. Still, they are a close family with firm values that are built on their belief in the Way and Marcher traditions. In the local towns, the household has gained a reputation for their bountiful farms and dogged determination. That, and the fact that a lot of them are called John.

16.2.4.5 House Dunholt



House Dunholt

- **Location:** Upwold, Stock March
- **Livery:** Mustard Yellow & Burnt Orange
- **Symbol:** Crossed axes below an autumn oak
- **Steward:** Alfred Dunholt

Perched atop a flowery hillock in Stock March is the ancestral home of House Dunholt. A site as old as its nation, whose founders had slipped away into the ranks of passing rebels and took with them an eternal aversion to authority. An aversion which would lead to their decline.

At the outbreak of the Cousins War, House Dunholt was a major producer of barley and their steward Adam ?Two Fingers? Dunholt was a very vocal opponent to the Empire. They pledged the household to the independence of the Marches, mustering a force of archers to meet those encamped towards Hepton Bridge. They never made the journey there, ambushed upon the way. Nearly all of them were fought to the death, leaving few left to tend the barley. The great fields were converted into a graveyard orchard and those who remained began anew.

Now House Dunholt is known more for its cider and mead than barley - most often trading in Stockland. Preparing the more popular inns and pubs for those out-of-towners who would turn their nose up at the local ale.

16.2.4.6 The Greaye Hunt Merchants



The Greaye Hunt Merchants

- **Location:** Stockmarch, Upwold
- **Livery:** Blue and Black
- **Symbol:** The Greaye Rampant
- **Motto:** From ashes we grow, water our road, coin our bill, and contract our bow.
- **Steward:** Merriweather Greaye

The Greaye Hunt Merchants were formed after the tumultuous Winter of 384YE. Various parties had come into poor luck with fires, homelessness and other rough turns of fortune, and in their time of need, close friends offered their home beside the river as a temporary respite.

After spending time beside the waterways, tending to their wounds, several business opportunities were discovered, allowing for the group to flourish anew.

Friendships were strengthened over trade and food, and the parties eventually decided to establish themselves as a new household. They now try to act as a trade hub, a financial centre for the local region, encouraging Marcher market towns to reach further and gain access to new goods from across the Empire.

16.2.4.7 House Guildenstern



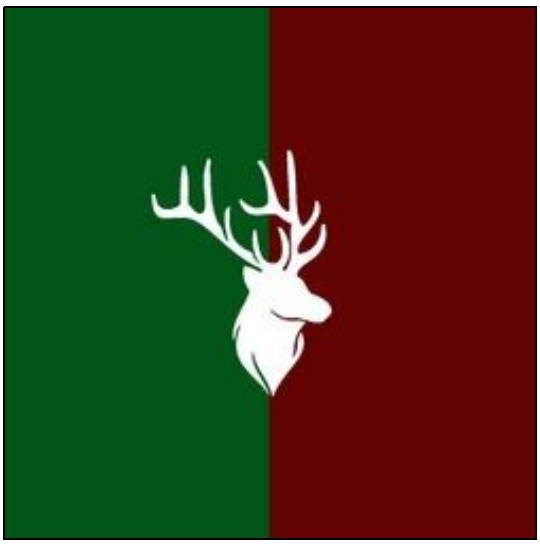
House Guildenstern

- **Location:** Stockmarch, Upwold
- **Livery:** Burgundy and Bottle Green.
- **Symbol:** Manticore leaping over a star

House Guildenstern is one of the many houses of the Marches that traces its roots back to the original exodus from Dawn. The woodlands and hills around the Guildenstern estate are particularly wild and home to dangerous and according to stories, ?otherworldly? entities. Still to this day opting to use larger swords than billhooks. They largely kept to themselves, becoming involved in Marcher politics only during the Cousin's War. House Guildenstern still boasts that one of their household was present when the Empress accepted the Marches as part of her Empire.

Due to their knowledge of "strange things" and a general reputation for being "not quite right" House Guildenstern has connections with the thresher movement as well as many Hedge-mages, fighting against the sorcerers serving Alderei the Fair as part of Tom Drake's retinue in the army that would become the Drakes. House Guildenstern continues their involvement in the more magical aspects of the Marches and the Empire, in many cases aiming to treat with eternals. Their banner is a manticore leaping over a faltering gold star as a nod to their traditional way of thinking (although some link it to an ancient story of the House before the March, another sign that the house is a little peculiar by Marcher standards, their banner being almost Dawnish in its outré imagery). The Guildenstern are very aggressive towards the Feni. They are a part of the Unbound Union

16.2.4.8 House Hartell



House Hartell

- **Location:** Hartford, Ashbrook, Upwold
- **Livery and Symbol:** Dark green and burgundy with a white stag head badge
- **Motto:** Through the mud and the blood to the green fields beyond
- **Steward:** Edmund Forster

Despite being an old household whose chronicles trace farther back than the March of Succession, other Marchers do not particularly revere the Hartell like they might King's Stoke, Talbots or Grey Shanks. The household itself takes its name from the white stag their hunters pursued through Miaren, which according to their folklore, led them to be the first settlers to emerge from the woods of Birchland.

Hartford, a village within spitting distance of the River Meade, is known for its thriving tanning and leatherworking industry due to its abundant access to birch bark and beggar?s lye from neighbouring Birchland.

Their yeofolk have customarily served with the Bounders from inception and take pride in its reputation for ruthless pursuit. Those who do not go on to become beaters or retire to a well-earned farm maintain the proud tradition of service as sentries at the fortification of East Guard in Birchland.

They often come accompanied by the roaming bar known as the *Black Rat* - named after the first patron of its cider.

16.2.4.9 House Kinahan



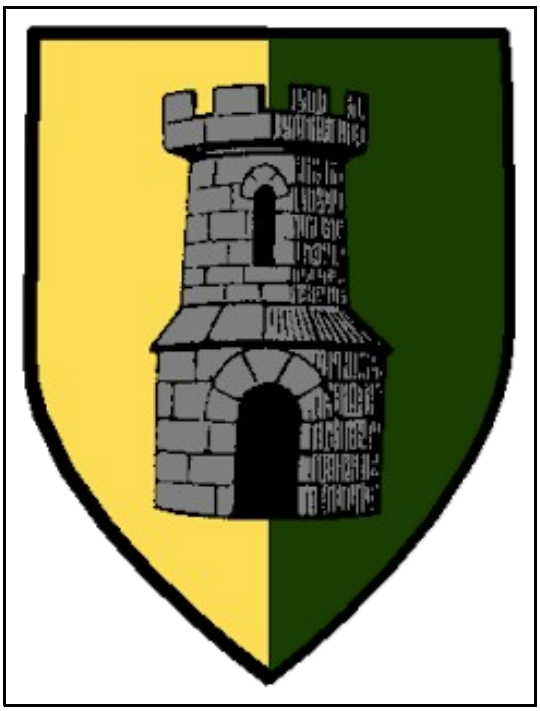
House Kinahan

- **Location:** Tower March
- **Livery:** Forest green, walnut, and carrot orange
- **Motto:** Through the mud and the blood to the green fields beyond
- **Symbol:** Rearing Yale
- **Steward:** Rantalot Kinahan

The lands of House Kinahan are comprised of open fields found nestled in amongst the dense forests of Towers March. Clinging onto its traditions it has refused to embrace the change of becoming a part of the heavy forestry business, instead making income farming lower valued crops and only cutting down trees for the occasional woodworking to help ends meet.

Although having been everpresent through the history of the Marches, the Kinahans have only recently begun to hold higher aspirations and reach out. They are best known for their absolute loyalty to the household, unnecessary hoarding of food and their strange distaste for all orcs.

16.2.4.10 King?s Stoke



King's Stoke

- **Location:** Tower March, Upwold
- **Livery:** Yellow and green
- **Motto:** ?King's Stoke, first and always: first to march, first to stand, first to break the king"
- **Steward:** Watkin

The villagers of King's Stoke proudly trace their history to the first Marchers who settled in Upwold and repelled Dawn at the Battle of King's Stoke. The village has remained prominent in the Marches, with several notable, historical figures.

In Anvil, King's Stoke runs the oldest Marcher tavern, The Mandowla's Arms. Several Imperial titleholders have come from the village since the death of Empress Britta, and it has commissioned historical research. Away from Anvil, the village welcomes friends annually to its remembrance of the dead and celebration of harvest, the King's Stoke Wassail.

During invasions of the Mournwold, the village has found itself on the frontier with Jotun territory. Accordingly, it has always been proud to be represented on the battlefield; while losses mean it no longer fields the full bill block it once did, there is rarely a battle where the livery of King's Stoke is not represented.

The influence of prominent briars made the village one of the first to openly welcome briars, and briar children are unusually common in the area. The village has opened its doors to briars rejected by other parts of the Marches and offered space in Tilly's Orchard for burials, giving the village the occasional nickname ?the briar patch?.

16.2.4.11 Pickham Monastery



Pickham Monastery

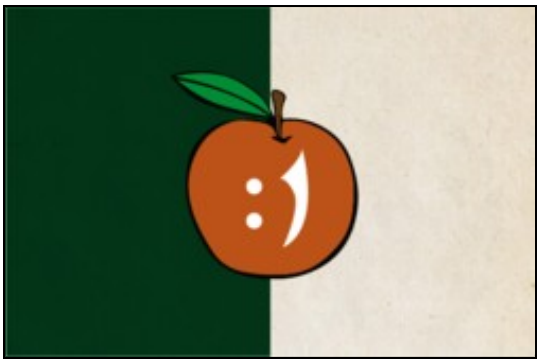
- **Location:** Tower March, between King's Stoke and the Eastern Guard
- **Colours** Blue and Red
- **Motto:** If you want to hold the land, first build a tower
- **Symbol:** Blue, a Silver Tower crowned by a Red Stag's Head

?If you want to hold the land, first build a tower? speaks the proverb, and it speaks truly. The monks of Pickham Monastery live by a Rule that demands readiness for action, simple living, and watchfulness in all things. The monastery?s founder was Major Joshua Benson, Exemplar of Vigilance. A sharp-eyed sentry, he foiled a Dawnish raid on the village of Pickham, and became a renowned local priest of Vigilance. His followers once claimed only Pickham's run-down peel tower, but Pickham Monastery grew to dwarf its namesake village.

The monks have long supported the beaters and threshers of Upwold. Their library is stocked as much toward practical Vigilance as religious matters, and the monks themselves often train as intelligencers, ritualists, or exorcists. They are known for their careful study and cunning use of hearth magics, folklore and curses. A necessary expertise, as the Monastery?s lands have a reputation for hauntings and strange events around Wassail.

Siblings of Pickham often nurture grudges towards fools who act without thought. Dubious assumptions and shifty arguments are seen as falsehoods to be sought out and overturned by the faithful. As such, the siblings of Pickham are as dogged in the pursuit of Clemency or acquittal for the Virtuous as they are in the condemnation of criminals.

16.2.4.12 Smuddy Russets



The Smuddy Russets

- **Location:** Birchland, Upwold

- **Livery:** Green and white
- **Symbol:** The rune Rhyv on an apple
- **Steward:** Nancy Smudd

The Smuddy Russets are apple farmers through and through. The house itself is a relatively small one now compared to what it once was, due to fighting for the empire or family tragedies. Living in Upwold, in Birchland, the family was shaken when their house and farm partially fell into ?The Bloody Great Hole?. The family quickly acted to stop the house falling in, roping parts of it to the ground and reinforcing others. With this, the Smudds have been working to rebuild ever since and have continued to grow apples in what is left of their orchard as well as ?branching? out with having a sideline in the pig business, bar their pet mini-pig, Bacon. He?s special.

As well as growing apples, the Smudds work to help the armies of the Empire by acting as physicks in any battles they are a part of, making sure that any Marcher that falls is picked back up and gets back home. With green and white tabards, the Smudds, with the rune of Rhyv on their banner to show how important blood is, strive to keep the land they live on and their friends and family safe and strong in ever changing times.

16.3 Towns and Circles

The market towns are prosperous, but their businesses give them little opportunity to wield political power directly. Likewise, each landskeeper circle has its own agenda, often tied to the protection or prosperity of a single region but again they have no direct say on who will lead the territories of the Marches.

16.3.1 Market Towns

16.3.1.1 Punters' Knoll



Punter's Knoll

- **Location:** Ottermire, Bregasland
- **Symbol:** A black frog, squatting on a mauve background, surrounded by the initials B F B C
- **Steward:** Morgan Sweetlathe

A distinctly Bregas market town, Punters' Knoll perches above the marsh on a network of piers and platforms. Accessible exclusively by boat (or an overpriced ferry service), the town is patronised by local water traffic but also enjoys an 'anything goes' reputation: every boardwalk is crammed with tiny pubs and businesses offering smoking, substances, gambling and other diversions. Thanks to its obscurity, it is a prime location for those looking to do business in private or to abandon their inhibitions for a few days. Nevertheless, the Punters are as proud as any Alders of Meade: 'trendiness' well sums up their attitude, with fashion tips and gossip magazines being worth as much as any crown.

The town is practically synonymous with the Black Frog Boating Company. All the local Alders are members, and everyone else is in some way employed or contracted by the Company. There was once a wooded hill here and this was a town of carpenters and boatwrights, but by the early years of the Empire the trees were gone, the knoll had slipped into the mud and the town was left to survive on its network of walkways and business

relationships. Granted a market charter during the reign of Empress Deanne, the BFBC was thusly established to represent the towns' business interests, and has since grown to own a trade fleet in the Westmere and a smattering of river traffic throughout the Empire. Trade across the water to Kallavesa was one of their early successes, and to this day the Punters proudly claim they were among the first to push (or appropriate) Goosewhisper as a recreational substance outside of Wintermark.

16.3.2 Landskeeper Circles

16.3.2.1 The Reapers

- **Location:** Maiden's Menhir Inn in Hay, or the Applewood Manor in Upwold
- **Motto:** Serve the Marches, Reap the Rewards

The Reapers aren't so much prominent as everywhere and useful. They came to Anvil after Auld Grimm died at the same time as Empress Britta, and have gotten quite skilled at cat herding and ritual shenanigans. So if you wondered who gave the Mourn its prosperous year just after the conquest, it was them. They still gather up small household covens, stick their noses into most of the powerful rituals, and push the borders of what the Marchers can do with magic. Rather a lot of them are what you might call Rainbow Wizards, mainly spread around the realms of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Night.

If you're looking for where they're based, then the closest I can get you is the Maiden's Menhir Inn in Hay or the Applewood Manor in Upwold. Nicholas Reaper, who's officially their if-landskeepers-did-leaders-then-he-would-be, has a favourite seat at the both of them and visits every few weeks. If he's up for taking business, his staff will be outside the door.

16.4 Other Groups

16.4.1 Beaters

16.4.1.1 The Boundaryfolk



The Boundaryfolk

- **Location:** Winterstoke Manor, near Ashill, Upwold
- **Livery:** Yellow crescent moon on a dark blue bende
- **Motto:** ?The bounds don?t beat themselves.?

In the years leading up to the Interregnum, the woods and fields in and around the Silver Chase were becoming less hospitable. The local charcoal burners, woodcutters and yeomen grew fearful as the itinerant Feni became bolder, no longer seeming content with thieving the occasional sheep or

run-of-the-mill banditry. The threat was constant enough that the informal groupings of beaters just couldn?t keep up. Thus, the Boundaryfolk were formed: a collection of beaters drawn from many smaller houses, joining forces for the good of all.

An unprecedented attack on the settlement of Applewood by Feni gave the Boundaryfolk their first real engagement as a unit and cemented their reputation as canny fighters and loyal Marchers. Since then, there has been much kinship with other houses, such as the Applewood Levy and King?s Stoke.

More recently, the Boundaryfolk have concentrated their efforts on protecting the Empire from threats of a more sorcerous nature. Always happy to share their fire with newcomers, some of them have even made Winterstoke their home. Beating the bounds is a dangerous life, but Upwold?s safety is a rewarding harvest!

17 Marches Egregore

17.1 Jack-of-the-Marches



Kit and Mildred playing the music they love.
Stories of Jack have been told since before the Marchers seceded from Dawn. Jack was said to appear when words or actions were needed to help common folk with the daily challenges of a life born of hardship and graft. Jack was the farm hand that appeared to help with a difficult harvest, the beater that arrived to assist with local disputes, the Landskeeper that came to lend their wisdom, or the musician who lightened a burden with shared song. A solitary but friendly figure who kept tender watch, revelled in games and lent their voice to a chorus.

With the Brass Coast ritual 300 years back, Jack stepped out of folklore.

17.1.1 Current Hosts

17.1.1.1 Mildred

17.1.1.2 Jonah



17.1.2 Former Hosts

17.1.2.1 Kit the Mummer

For a time Jack walked as Kit the Mummer. Kit travelled place to place, bringing news and gossip, plays (invariably magical in nature) and songs and always plenty of tunes to tap your foot to! There was nothing more important to her than keeping the customs and traditions of the Marches alive. This Jack was most at home in the thick of a crowd, whether in taverns, round the maypole on the village green or a town square.

Whether at a rowdy game of foot-the-ball, a jolly Wassail parade or a grim acknowledgement of the shortest days of Winter, she was there. The more people involved in the spectacle, the better. She had a particular fondness for maintaining Marcher magical traditions, including its hearth magic, and

was a friend and supporter of the landskeepers.



17.1.2.2 Robert of Ramsbruck

Jack as he walked until Autumn 379 was Robert of Ramsbruck. He claimed to have performed his duties for several generations, 75 years by his last count, although he's unsure when that started. Seldom drawn on his life before he took up the mantle, he appeared as a Beater and performed the role of one. Convinced that ?Nothing gets done sat down? he was fiercely stubborn once his mind was made up, but he never made a decision before drawing counsel from those he believed knowledgeable. Once his shoulders were set to a task no-one could tell him no. This Jack had little time for the politics of the senate or the guiding of the synod, but often sought the advice of senators and priests, believing a quiet conversation by a fire side or bar table achieved just as much, and in considerably less time.