

Embra Travelling Places of Interest 1:

Toll Cross

Toll Cross is a large urban area surrounded by impassable, overgrown, thorny hedges and woodland, beyond which are more scattered woods and open grassland. Four roads lead in through cleared routes in the hedges, so anyone wishing to visit the built-up area on foot has to follow these. Although it is possible to explore small parts of the enclosed area from each road in, those wishing to pass further will eventually have to brave the central part of the crossroads here, Boulder Square. It is unwise to use flight to circumvent these restrictions.

Notes on the features and peculiarities of Toll Cross follow. First though, some more general points.

The misty edge to the mapped area is because, like all the Embra Places maps, Toll Cross does not link directly to any other specific location in the city. Instead when leaving the mapped zone (or sometimes only when passing some form of threshold within it - GM's choice), the party can return either to the Travelling Places map, or the Embra Official Guide map, from where the GM can select a new location for the players to visit.

While scales are provided alongside the map, accurate to the features as drawn, and directions in these notes refer to the standard pattern of north being towards the map's top as viewed, east to its right-hand edge, and so on, none of these elements need be considered strongly fixed. Such things in the Faerie Realm can be quite fluid, to fit whatever the GM may prefer.

However, the featured text also beside the map is an essential part of what makes Toll Cross unusual, and should not be ignored by GMs wishing to use this area.

For greater clarity, note that the FCW file has a toggle to allow the on-map labels to be turned-off, if desired, while a second toggle allows the interiors of the mapped buildings to be shown.

Aspects of Toll Cross

As noted in the opening paragraph above, the **Impassable Hedges** surround the entire built-up area. These are dense, high, thorny hedges and woods, impassable to any corporeal creature larger than D&D's Tiny size, and even Tiny creatures can proceed only at a much reduced speed. Consequently, the four roads channel foot visitors in very specific ways should they wish to access the buildings.

There are certainly many buildings of varied shapes and sizes here, some taller, some shorter, but all possess just a single accessible storey at ground level inside, the layout and connections for which can be viewed using the map toggle in the FCW file. No individual structures are singled-out for discussion here, since none of the many shops and houses (in a typical mix as found across much of Embra elsewhere otherwise) have a fixed location between visits, or sometimes just different times during the same visit. There are also many tall spires and tower-like structures of different sizes and forms,

some of which are visible above the trees from outside the settlement. These features are all entirely solid, and appear to have simply grown from the roofs and upper walls of the buildings. Few are straight, and many could pass for horns. Quite a number of roofs overhang their properties as well, and can give the impression of being ill-fitting, or as if they were worn as wigs that have slipped slightly. The whole can be quite unsettling for those not used to Faerie, and even those visitors with Faerie blood may feel there is something a little off-kilter about Toll Cross. Those attempting an aerial approach will find the roof adornments make strenuous efforts to swat all but natural, unaccompanied, flying animals from the air, the spires and towers in especially vicious ways, moving and growing like living tentacles in doing so. This is unnerving to witness from the ground, and potentially deadly in the air.

The whole place centres around, and derives much of its unusual character from, what happens in the (actually rectangular) **Boulder Square**. This is the largest open area in Toll Cross, and is the place the map's featured text directly relates to: "A great purple boulder sits at the crossroad, sculpted with many naked humanoids posed as if pleading for help. They protrude as if grown from the stone in places. A demonic, spider-webbed, bat-winged satyr collects tolls from those wishing to pass. He may wear a white mask, or carry a golden wand. The tolls he asks might be anything at all." The huge boulder and the satyr are always here, waiting like a spider in the middle of a web of buildings and streets.

The street names are listed, and their locations identified, below. Note that those classed as "alleys" are all dead-end routes: **Ash Place** (west-east alley off Throughway in the northeastern part of the settlement, north of Boulder Square), **Blind Way** (an alley with two dead ends, as it forms a cross street near the western end of Delabole Street, in the central-western part of the built-up area; only the southern part is labelled for clarity), **Boulder Way** (the main southern route in, leading directly to Boulder Square), **Cardinal Way** (two labels on one "U"-shaped narrow lane on the south side of Elbow Road in the southeastern part of Toll Cross), **Cataract Road** (east-west route on the north side of the settlement; its western part dead-ends, although Nudge Alley continues a short way south off this end; its eastern part turns into Hobb's End), **Catchway** (north-south alley off the south side of Hedge End in the central-eastern part of the urban zone, east of Boulder Square), **Caterpillar Street** (long west-east route in the inner northern part of Toll Cross, ending where it turns north into Hobb's End to the east; broad in its eastern two-thirds, but the western part is narrower, except at its very end in the shadow of the Impassable Hedges, where it forms a small square), **Crosscut** (north-south route between Old Harry's and Goat Lanes in the southwest corner of the urban zone), **Delabole Street** (the main route in from the west once it passes inside the Impassable Hedges, ending at Boulder Square; it has two slight doglegs towards its west end), **Elbow Road** (the main route in from the east, Elbow Road crosses the south end of Boulder Square, passes the north end of Boulder Way, then narrows to an alley that turns sharply north in a right-angle before dead-ending), **End Walk** (the most southwesterly route, passing north-south between the ends of Old Harry's and Goat Lanes), **Goat Cut** (two unconnected alleys, one leading south off Old Harry's Lane, the other north from Goat Lane in the southwestern part of Toll Cross), **Goat Lane** (two labels for one street, running right along inside the southern perimeter), **Hedge End** (short west-east route running between Throughway and the central-eastern Impassable Hedges, northeast of Boulder Square), **Hobb's End** (cross-street at the east end of Cataract Road and Caterpillar Street in the northeastern corner of

the urban area), **Hobb's Lane** (the main route in from the north; it crosses the western part of Caterpillar Street, and although still as broad as before, it then has a right-angle turning as an alley in the northwestern part of Toll Cross), **Kal's Entry** (alley off the south side of Delabole Street close to its west end, near where that Street starts to enter the Impassable Hedges), **Nudge Alley** (alley running north-south off the western dead-end of Cataract Road, in the northern part of the settlement), **Old Harry's Lane** (east-west route in the southwestern corner, running between Boulder Way and End Walk), **Prince Alley** (alley leading west off Boulder Way in the southwest area), **Quiet Place** (alley north off Delabole Street just west of the north end of Boulder Square), **Throughway** (cross-street between Caterpillar Street and the northeast corner of Boulder Square; its northern end crosses the north side of Caterpillar Street, narrowing into an alley), **Walker Street** (crossway between Cataract Road and Caterpillar Street in the northeastern corner of Toll Cross).