

Orade Mountains

In the northeastern mountains of Peredur is this mapped area, roughly 40 miles square (65 kilometres), where some of the numerous tributary streams rise that flow east, eventually down to the upper reaches of the River Arthec, which lies more than 10 miles (15 km) southeast of the southeastern corner of this map at its closest. It is a remote, fairly quiet, wild land, with a cool temperate climate, given its latitude is around 53 degrees South. No regular trails cross through the mountains to the west, and few run far into them at all from the east. Only a couple extend east off the map, the main one being the River Road that runs by Whistle River from Angelwell and Foxgate. Much of the lower vales in the southeastern part of the map are quite heavily forested, mostly with pine woods, which are collectively known as Prince Forest hereabouts.

Various significant terrain features and other places are labelled, with further notes given for selected sites below. Those not so described include the major mountain peaks of (north to south) Mounts Element, Obelisk, Blodwine (the highest and most massive of the peaks shown) and Squire, the lesser mountains of Mask, Cone, Marble, Clock, Bird and Torch, the streams of Channel River, Whistle River, Glue Stream, Tea Brook and the River Gemstone, and the lesser woodlands, partly separated from Prince Forest by trails and stream lines, of Jewel Wood, near the centre of the map, and Brack Wood in the southeast. There are also three lakes in the mountains, the ribbon-like Queen Bee Lake between Mounts Element and Cone, Locket Tarn north of Marble Mountain, and Iron Pool in a steep vale on the southeastern flanks of Blodwine.

Names for many of the marked sites were based on keywords randomly chosen from tables in the "Knaves: Second Edition" RPG rules, published by Jacob Hurst & Swordfish Islands LLC, with names for individuals similarly constructed from tables in the "Nomicon" of Mythmere Games. Site locations were largely randomly placed. Their details were determined and adapted from ideas and images on randomly-chosen cards from decks in the Inkwell Ideas "Hexploration Kit", specifically the "Stranger Places", "Into the Wilderness" and "Settled Lands" decks.

Location Details

Angelwell: Close to the centre of the map, this is the primary settlement here, a town situated on a sizeable island formed by a major branching of the upper Whistle River, where it splits into three main tributary streams just north of Jewel Wood. The town has chiefly white-walled, red-roofed buildings, and looks cheery from a distance, with its sturdy wooden bridges over both the Whistle branches. The northern bridge carries the River Road into the heart of the settlement, where it ends at the final Waystone (see the River Road notes for details on these) in the stone-paved Market Place. There are also a couple of landing stages on the eastern peninsula for the local river-fishing boats, with defensive stone towers by these and the bridge crossings: a larger, square-plan tower by each island bridge end, and a smaller round-plan one by the river landings. A further, larger, round tower is attached to a chateau-like castle building (more like a palace than a defended castle), Angelwell House, occupied by the town's leaders, including a couple of mages and druid-priests. Inside it is the Angelwell itself, a magical well whose waters can provide minor healing, especially for long-lasting injuries and conditions. Pilgrims still travel the old River Road to visit here, something that remains an important part of the town's activities. There is a sharing, frontier culture here, and all citizens are expected to train as part of the local militia to defend the settlement at need, with most folks bearing arms that are always kept in good repair. There is a degree of local resentment about the zealotry of the tax-collectors, albeit such collection goes to support things like the upkeep of the bridges, landing stages and defences - tolls are collected when crossing the bridges in each direction, for instance, and for each boat landing on one of the river stages. There is a growing problem from what are thought to be large river rats, actually a gang of Wererats, who are trying to open-up a kidnap ring in town.

Beacon Hall: In the southern foothills of Mount Element in the central-northern part of the map, a poorly-defined, winding trail north from Angelwell follows parts of the upper Channel River and its tributaries through the mountain valleys to end at this structure, which looks like a large, medieval fortified manor house. It has huge, square-topped, double wooden doors on one side, and a large, round tower at its western end, towards the river, with a conical, grey-stone-tiled roof. Broad wooden stairs lead up to a raised wooden platform, set like a loading dock in front of the double doorway. Built as a supply depot, training centre and armoury for military cavalry in the days of a long-gone kingdom, its security is much more lax now, and although still reasonably intact, the building is fairly easy to enter without anyone knowing. Its current owners are notionally a dubious cult who are rarely here, although its present occupants are an outlaw band, using the place as their headquarters. Tales still circulate about the treasures that were - perhaps still are - hidden away here, although how much truth there may be in one suggesting there to be a cellar of bottles full of gemstones, is anyone's guess.

Black Pearl Temple: South over a lesser peak from Beacon Hall, another of the upper Channel River tributaries west of Cone Mountain has a trail along it from Angelwell, in which valley is this long-established monastic holy site, chosen from its founder's prophetic vision. Pilgrims seek healing cures for particularly intractable illnesses or injuries here, for the typical offering of a vow aiding the Temple, geared to the individual in question. The services of worship are commonly lengthy, and the central facet of the Temple is a natural warm-water spring in a rock basin, in a large, central, often mildly steaming, chamber (given the cold mountain air), although the water is pleasantly warm, never too hot.

The Cube: South of the Channel River, in the hills south of Cone Mountain, is this gigantic, grey-stone, cubic structure, ancient, worn, and tilted over towards the southwest. Its fairly flat, featureless, outer surfaces show no signs of individual stones, as if the whole was carved from a single, vast, rock, or perhaps was manufactured from some type of stone-like concrete. A series of low stone steps, also tilted over, following the distorted contours of the land, lead up to its large, angular-arched entrance, which looks like Dwarf-work, although the bulk of the structure seems of less-fine construction. High up on the tilted-down wall is a sizeable, irregular hole, showing blackness inside, around which a few large birds can usually be seen, nesting in season, and roosting in the upper parts year-round. The Cube was once a prison, concealed by magical illusions, wrecked by an escape a long time ago that destroyed the charm maintaining the illusions, and tilting it over at its current angle. It now houses a small clan of Hill Giants and their Hobgoblin servants. Rumours suggest a treasure is hidden inside, or near, it.

Dragon Rock: Across the southern branch of Whistle River at Angelwell, in the northern part of Jewel Wood, is this huge, leaning stone ruin, set on a low, rock and grass knoll. Though leaning and badly damaged, especially in its higher parts, it still retains much of its original form, that of a vast, rectangular, tablet-shaped tower (broad front and back, much narrower sides), supported by a pair of broad, low, angular buttresses on its narrower sides. Remains of an old pathway and some ragged stone steps lead towards its open, square-arched doorway at the base of its front, above which on this outer front wall is an enormous, low relief carving of a stylised, legless, flying dragon or serpent in profile. Built long ages ago by an old empire's draconic cult, its current state resulted from a dragon attack in ages past. It once led down inside to a dragon's lair, although any entrance to such a subterranean place has been long lost in the ruin within. It is said that those sleeping nearby may have dreams with clues to locate a dragon's hoard, perhaps here or elsewhere.

Foxgate: Roughly twelve miles (20 km) east of Angelwell along the River Road north of Whistle River, this is a rustic settlement in the northern Prince Forest, composed of simple, "A"-frame timber houses, roofed with turf, with yards separated by basic pole-and-rail fences. Among the more notable activities here are the preparation of leathers from animal skins, often found stretching on wooden frames around the village, and intricate wood-carving, which features on many of the houses, gates and even some of the fences. There are skilled woodland archer-scouts and guides here, able to communicate with the woodland birds, and one of the magical Waystones (see River Road for details) stands towards the western edge of the settlement. The Forest south of the River here is dangerous, as a group of Mothfolk live there, who will attack any trying to cross their territory (albeit that area is poorly-defined for non-Mothfolk; they rarely venture north of the River at least). Foxgate is protected from such attacks by the Forest God, providing the villagers retain their light-touch, simple lifestyles - hence the relatively crude structures here.

Griffon Heights: On the northwestern slopes of Mount Blodwine towards the map's central-western side, lies a large area of open moorland, with this peak being one of the highest spots in the area. Contrary to the name, this is actually the favoured nesting and hunting ground of a flock of hippogriffs, who also range far across the upper slopes of Mount Blodwine, and parts adjacent, including off the western map edge.

Hammercliff: Near the headwaters of one of the tributaries to Tea Brook in the map's lower south-centre, east of Torch Mountain, and set at the top of a high, rocky hill, overlooking a steep cliff into the river valley, this appears to be a small, fortified castle, with very high outer walls. Effectively, this surface part of the place is a single huge building, as everything connects internally once through the main gateway, with very little open to the sky inside. However, there are open plazas on some of the more easterly, flat rooftops, where a tented trading market frequently sets up, whose large canvas stall-covers form a near-complete, if temporary, roof. At busy times, similar tent-roofed "villages" spring up attached to the external base of the outside walls as well, away from the cliff. However, much of the settlement, a trading town, is actually cut into the cliffside below this castle, with connected balcony-walkways linking many of the places there, all of which can be accessed only by flying, other than passing through the castle on the surface clifftop. Created and run by Gnome wizards, the market does a brisk trade in rare goods and magical items, with visitors coming from many places and planes. Its primary defences are magically-animated rocks, which may take the form of elemental humanoids, through to simple high-speed flying rocks that act like bullets. Such things are rarely needed though.

Home of the Lost: Hidden away in the southeastern outskirts of Brack Wood in the map's southeast corner, this place is normally invisible, until a simple ritual is cast using a spell found in numerous old tomes of lore. Once revealed, it looks like a large, rather ramshackle hut, similar to a circular yurt in shape, from whose sides and roof extend a number of large to very large, gently curving, vicious-looking, bony spines and horns. A ring of tall, rune-marked standing-stones surrounds it, one of which is encircled by a chain that continues into the earth alongside it. By the hut's entrance is a lower standing stone, with the form of a small altar-shrine. Only those who sacrifice a small item of genuine worth to them may enter. The object permanently vanishes from the altar-table if the sacrifice is worthy, and the face of the visitor doing so is transformed into their spirit-animal form while they are within the hut. Inside, the hut seems oddly large compared to its outer dimensions, and is full of items, shelves, boxes and chests stuffed with whatever interesting MacGuffins the GM chooses, a blessing from Romughar, God of Improvisation. Seated towards the curving far wall opposite the entrance, in an ancient stone throne, is a most unsettling humanoid daemon-child, Biapharis, Daemon of Crossroads, who has eyes that seem to pierce the soul, is solemn and millennially old, yet still seems ageless. From here, Biapharis can view the whole land when it wishes, guarding secrets, treasures and lore too dangerous to be allowed into ordinary reality, a mine of information should it decide to reveal any to querents.

The Horn Lens: Set on one of the foothills southeast of Marble Mountain, and a couple of miles (3 km) north of the trail northwest between Angelwell and Kingfisher Oracle, is this grassy, domed mound, from whose outer surface extend numerous, irregular, long, sharp, stony spines and horns. A crude, worn, stony pathway, with low steps, leads towards its circular entrance-opening on its southern side, which shimmers continually with a pale, blue-green light from within. Inside the mound is a rounded chamber, in the centre of which stands a large Lens-shape of molten star-glass, that constantly flows and shimmers with shifting oracular patterns and images. Created long ages ago by the twisting of a poorly-worded magical wish, when anyone comes to consult it to try and interpret its shifting patterns, the Lens exudes a scent that attracts monsters from the surrounding area, who simply wish to be near the Lens. Each time it is successfully consulted, a fresh stony horn-spike starts growing on the outside. There is an even chance that one or more creatures will have taken up temporary residence inside - such as a Bear or a pair of Mountain Lions.

Jade Mine: Towards the southwest end of Queen Bee Lake in the centre-north of the map, is this old, largely forgotten mine. A poorly-marked turning off the valley trail to Beacon Hall starts to lead northeast along the stream towards the Lake, but disappears long before it reaches either the Mine or the Lake. The Mine is haunted by undead workers, killed in a dreadful collapse that caused its abandonment long ago. Their existence has been perpetuated indefinitely by a curse, meaning they now attempt to influence and bully the living who chance here into obeying their twisted wills, and reopen the mine workings. There is certainly much danger - and potential opportunity - in trying to do so, as the history of the place, if it can be traced in still-extant old records, may suggest. The haunting could be ended by finding the remains of the workers in the Mine, salting and burning the bones.

Kingfisher Oracle: In the peaks south of Mount Obelisk and west of Marble Mountain, a trail leads northwest from Angelwell along the northernmost tributary of Whistle River, and then on to a lesser, yet very steep, rocky pinnacle. The pathway winds up this to a great cliff-edge near the summit, just beyond which, floating in the air, is a large, hexagonal-plan, stone tower set on a huge, irregularly-rocky base that also floats free. A stone causeway leads out from the clifftop, ending in mid-air, just beyond which is the first of a series of quite large, free-floating, rounded, flat-topped, stone platforms, again with irregularly-rounded bases. These hang in the air as a spiralling series of stepping-stones up and around the tower to the entrance, which lies towards its green-tiled, conical roof, on the far side from the summit. A large deciduous tree, always in full, fresh leaf, grows from the roof on the tower's south side. The roof tiles shimmer with iridescent colours, like a kingfisher's feathers, in the sunlight. The whole structure of tower and stepping stones is fixed magically in space here. A great, immovable, rainbow-shimmering, green rod - the Oracle itself - runs from the stone base right up through the centre of the tower to the underside of its roof, said to be what holds the place here. Only polite visitors are admitted - the stepping-stones will tip others off at the entrance into a very long drop - and they must share a secret with the Oracle's guardian, a wealthy, retired, magic-item merchant, Baly, to be admitted to consult the Oracle.

Lost Cabin: Down in the map's southeast corner, north of the trail southeast from Rusty Pine, itself tucked away in the pinewoods, is this ramshackle, sag-roofed, Cabin, with its near-collapsing veranda, half-boarded-over windows and door. It is rumoured that it can be found only by someone when they are drunk. This is perhaps as well. Those who claim to have chanced-by say it is lit within by a single, bright candle, showing several people sitting or standing inside, staring at nothing, quite unresponsively. It is the home of an ethereal hunter, Mortoc, who is almost never here. The candle is real, but its flame is a perpetual, unmoving illusion.

Missing Gate: By the trail passing along the Tea Brook west to Painter's Mill, roughly halfway between the Screamer Trail junction and Russet Shard in the map's lower south-centre, is a grassy mound on the edge of

the trees, from which protrude numerous large, rocky outcrops, and up which runs a crude set of similar-looking, rough stone steps. On its top, one much larger, high, rocky outcrop was long ago carved into a thick, rounded disc form, with a large central hole cut right through it, making it like a huge, near-circular frame. This frame is carved with weather-worn runes, and its surface is pitted and crumbling in places. One large piece is missing from its upper left side as viewed from the south, overgrown fragments of which may be found embedded in the grassy knoll. It was once a viewing portal, used by those seeking relief from grief, although it no longer functions. The area nearby now is used as a lair by a pride of Mountain Lions.

Mountain Gate: Out in the wild hills near the centre of the map, west of Prince Forest, south of Jewel Wood and north of the upper part of Glue Stream, a very tall, free-standing, old, partly ruined, wooden gateway, with a wood-shingled, high-peaked roof, straddles a short, low-stepped dirt and stone pathway that runs through it, the path roughly aligned parallel to the west-east course of the nearby Stream. Some thin pine woods surround the Gate, a few of which trees are dead. A worn, old stone statue and a weathered, inscribed standing stone are set-up one to either side of the eastern end of the short pathway through the Gate. The Gate was part of a series of magical, regional, transmontane Gates built by an order of mystics that nobody now seems to remember. If it can be made to work, it can still allow limited communication with any of the other Gates elsewhere that still survive (off this map), for all it would be risky to try using it to teleport as it was originally intended. Something happened when completing this Gate, and the mystics here were turned into trees. The area has become infested in more recent times by Giant Rats that pose a threat to anyone trying to stay here to examine the Gate at length.

Nectar Cloud: North of the trail leading along the Tea Brook tributary westwards to Hammercliff, this is a fine, pale-roofed, white-walled, towered building set among trees, with several other large, palatial buildings of similar form nearby, a richly-appointed residence set in park-like estate grounds. The estate was granted and built many years ago as a reward for the then-owner having supported, legitimised and popularised a since-disgraced cult. The present owner, a later relative, likes to dabble in the fine arts, and there are numerous artists living and working in parts of their patron's estate. The fortunes of that owner though are deep in debt, thanks to their reputation for such patronage.

Oracle Circle Labyrinth: A ford and trail on the southern side of the upper Tea Brook valley, south of Painter's Mill and north of Torch Mountain, leads to this ancient, stone-built, historical site, now run as an attraction for an entry fee, including signage along the trail from the ford, guides and merchandise at the site itself. It is though run by a minimal staff, relying on donations to keep the place in reasonable repair. Much of the Labyrinth is underground, and correctly traversing it - which may take days sometimes - is said to provide prophetic insight and weird visions to those managing it.

Painter's Mill: At the end of the trail along the north side of Tea Brook in the map's south, north of Torch Mountain, this is a toweringly tall, stone-built water mill, with a stone-built channel leading from, and back to, the upper Tea Brook, to power its overshot mill-wheel. Built originally by Dwarf engineers, as its design clearly shows, it is currently operated by a small-village-sized community of civilised Kobolds. The area nearby is a Fey site, and the Kobolds enjoy friendly relations with the Fey. This may explain how the Mill, despite its highly isolated and mountainous setting, is never short of grain for flour-milling, and why the quality of the flour produced is so prized elsewhere, ensuring a regular flow of trading wagons.

Quezzal Tower: High up on the southeastern side of Mount Blodwine is a corrie valley with a rounded lake in it, the Iron Pool, from which flows the start of Glue Stream. On the lower mountain slopes overlooking the Pool stands Quezzal Tower, an old, partly ruined, stone tower with a form like a windmill, with fixed, stone vanes. There are clefts and caves in the rocks nearby where lurk Wyverns and still more dangerous creatures, along with a clan of Ogre-sized, humanoid Badgerfolk, that sometimes use the more intact, ground-level, parts of the Tower as a lair. Quezzal Tower, and what lies beneath it, are detailed by separate Atlas maps.

Relic Hall: On the northern side of the Blodwine massif, at the end of a trail west from Angelwell, is a gigantic stone structure with the form of an ancient mead hall, as if built by giants. Crudely-shaped stone buttresses support its long sides, and by the trail's end, in the shorter gable end wall, is a suitably tall, single doorway, set with an angled-arch top. Rocky spines jut from the eaves and roof crest, as spiky decorations (or perhaps deterrents to large flying creatures trying to land there - Griffon Heights is not far away to the southwest). Inside, the place is set-up like a vast trading hall, with portals in the interior walls leading to all manner of places, and possibly different times. Many of the traders are apparently otherworldly beings, and all who trade here place a similar value on magic, gems and life. Both stock and people at the Hall are protected by Repossession Dragons, creatures that can track thieves by magical scent, and which will safely retrieve any items stolen from here, no matter how long that may take, or how far the distance.

River Road: Running from the east-central map edge along the northern side of Whistle River through Foxgate, to Angelwell near the map's centre, this is the best-maintained of any mapped trail in the area, for all it is little more than a well-used, broad, hollow-way track through the northern Prince Forest. The Road leads eastwards off-map by the Whistle to the edge of the Forest at the northern River Arthec, around 20 miles distant (30 km) from the eastern map border. It is most notable for the fact there are a number of rune-marked standing stones, called Waystones, at roughly 5-mile intervals (8 km) alongside it, with cleared campsite areas near each. On the map, two of these stones are shown, although there is another on the western outskirts of Foxgate, and one more, the last, in Angelwell. The next eastwards is about a mile (1.5 km) east of the map edge, and so on beyond that to the Arthec. The Waystones are magical. A brief prayer at one activates it to magically grow suitable food sufficient for the group of travellers nearby in a matter of minutes. This power can only be used once per day per Waystone, and the prayer is a traditional one, known primarily by those locals that regularly travel the route. In addition, the stones will only function for travellers that treat their mounts and any other beasts encountered with respect, care and kindness. If any in a travelling group does not do so, the stones will fail to operate for that group. The route began as a pilgrim's way to an ancient holy site at Angelwell that still exists, and which continues to be used by such travellers now.

Russet Shard: A mile or so (1.5 km) north of the trail along the north bank of Tea Brook, and roughly midway between Missing Gate and Painter's Mill, one of the hills appears to have been transformed into a craggy, rough, stony hummock, with a large, shallow crater in its top that has a very ragged edge. Above this, in mid-air, floats an enormous, rocky spine. It is needle-like in form, and reddened towards its base, as is the area inside the crater and around its rim. The Shard's upper parts, and the surface rocks further from the crater, are a pale grey, almost white, making quite a contrast. Several smaller rock needles floatingly orbit about the Shard, each with a similar colouring. It is a site of great magical power, although it can be unlocked for its power to be used on just one night every ten years, when it is able to bring back to life any single entity for the voluntary sacrificial death of a mortal. To unlock it requires its interior to be correctly traversed and the ritual performed to do so, something which is made more difficult as the Shard is used as the home of the great wizard Suro Chagamimi, and who has a warband of barbarians who live on the surface nearby to help keep the inquisitive away. The Shard is made from a magical substance the wizard calls "Featherite", and there appear to be no external doors or windows for a ground-based viewer, or any means to get to it from the surface without flying or using magic.

Rusty Pine: A little east of Brack Wood, at the south end of Screamer Trail in the southeastern corner of the map, this is a pale-stone-built village with domed, green copper roofs, constructed in and close to a gigantic, very ancient, thriving, deciduous tree (clearly not a pine, although the woods all around are primarily of conifers). Much of the settlement is in and entwined with its branches, and parts are similarly half-grown into its huge, surfacing roots that extend a long way from its trunk. The inhabitants are chiefly, though not exclusively, Elves, and the place originated from a prophecy tying an old noble family's prosperity to this great tree. The Tree-Springer Rangers are based here, parkour archer-snipers, who form its main defence. Local tales say the place is little more than an insular retreat, although its location at the end of Screamer Trail is intriguing, with a lesser trail continuing east from here, eventually down to the upper Arthec valley.

Sand-Trap Fortress: In the valley of the Channel River, at the southeastern foot of Mount Mask stands this vast, crumblingly-ruinous, yellow sandstone tower. It has an overall square-plan footprint, and stands some way back from the River's northern bank. Its lower parts are still fully intact, accessed by a large, round-arched entrance, led up to by a series of broad, ancient, very worn, sandstone steps. Its upper parts are more broken, looking like irregular, broad towers of different heights from a distance, although they are really part of the same single, square-plan structure, separated from one another by areas of collapsed wall. It was once the lair of a great dragon in ages past, whose enemies were Sand Monsters of indeterminate form and origins. It is said after they destroyed the dragon, their sands came to hide corpses and treasures far below within the Fortress. Whether any of the Monsters remain is unknown.

Screamer Trail: A ford south over Whistle River from one of the Waystone halts on the River Road, leads to the northern end of this Trail that winds on southward for nearly 20 miles (30 km) to Rusty Pine. Its wending nature stems from the fact it originated as an old game trail made by deer through the depths of Prince Forest. It often feels like a roofed-in corridor, as the woods and undergrowth cluster thickly alongside the pathway for much of its route, even where it fords the various small rivers along its way, including Tea Brook. There are several cleared campsites alongside it, however, showing it does receive regular use still. It is not an especially safe route, however, as travellers can be subject to attacks by Werewolves from the surrounding Forest on occasion. Its name derives from a common local tale, that the Trail is haunted by The Pale Screamer, a humanoid creature that steals travelling children and raises them to become other Screamers. The rumours suggest that the Screamer either lives near Mountain Gate (which is nowhere near any part of Screamer Trail), or somehow uses it to come and go from the Trail.

Silent Oak: A couple of miles (3 km) north of Foxgate towards the northern edge of Prince Forest, the pines thin to an area of more deciduous trees, including this large, spreading, old Oak. From one of its lower, broad, western limbs hangs a rope noose, above a low, wooden, gallows platform with steps leading up to its top. A roughly 8-foot high (2.4 metres) old, partly ruined, stone wall with a fallen gate through it, extends from the eastern side of the gallows platform for approximately 100 yards (30 m) east of the Oak, petering-out to a ragged end there. The purpose of the wall is unknown. This is a dangerous place, curse-created some say by either an unjustified lynching, or a dishonoured suicide (the tales vary). Regardless of its origins, the veil between life and death is abnormally thin here, making summoning the dead and other necromantic activities easier nearby, and meaning it is a place shunned by locals. Those trying to cut down the Oak are magically snagged by its branches animating, ending up bound to the tree in life and death thereafter, becoming ultimately one of the other revived undead that lurk here protecting the site from harm.

Winter Grove: Towards the western edge of Prince Forest, east of the Mountain Gate hills and Jewel Wood is this highly magical site. A great, broad-trunked, ancient, hollow, leafless, deciduous tree stands facing west. At its base on that western side is an irregularly triangular, arched "doorway" to its hollow trunk interior. This looks uncomfortably like an open, toothless maw, an impression strengthened as there are two irregularly-shaped, asymmetrically-placed, slitted "eyes" on the same side of the trunk, each a narrow, vertical hollow filled with skulls. A line of flat, very worn, curving stone steps lead slightly upslope towards the trunk's opening, steps that are flanked by great tree roots, like curling, tentacular finger-claws, partly in the earth, partly in the air alongside the pathway. The roots have clearly pushed aside and up huge stone boulders in doing so, making them look like low standing stones alongside the path as well. Other, lesser, deciduous trees form a substantial Grove all around the main tree, which do have leaves in season, although the central tree never does. The Grove always feels wintry, whatever the time of year, and there are normally mists even in the surrounding pine woods close-by, thick enough to make the sunniest summer day seem icily dull and overcast in the depths of the Grove. The central tree exudes a power that feels like winter frost to anyone daring to approach. The tree was once the living staff of Mnoroth, avatar of the Forest God, set and left in the woods here long ages before. Bringing the tree the gift of a dead crow allows that person to enter the trunk, where they are able to pass through "tree-rings" of past time and see events then that they choose. It requires ever greater courage to see further back in time, carrying an increasing risk of becoming trapped within that time, unable to return to their own time and place.