

Selass Town

Selass is a small sea-bed frontier town on the edge of the abyssal plain of Nibirum's greatest ocean. It functions like an independent, minor city-state, whose main purpose is to support adventurers and prospectors trying their luck further westwards in the ocean. Its population is about 850, mostly Merfolk, though by its nature, it also attracts other intelligent undersea dwellers, and even a rare few magically-adept lands-folk able to cope with the deep undersea environment. Should it be necessary, all folk, regardless of their race or other affiliations, are expected to help defend the town at need, whether from predatory sea creatures, or attacks by inimical undersea civilisations. Its relative isolation means the latter have been extremely rare before now. The nearest "Sea Devil" (= Kachayan) city, Kelchayn, is about 75 miles (120 kilometres) to the northwest, for instance, while the closest larger Merfolk settlement, the stronghold of Shaldun on the great cliffs of the continental shelf, lies over 100 miles (about 160 km) away to the east-southeast. Although a Water Elemental is often present somewhere in the water column around 12 miles (20 km) or more to the southeast, it has rarely approached the town in the past. Swarms of giant, luminous jellyfish a lot nearer to the northwest are more frequently seen at times (their most favoured haunts in the water column are barely 5 miles, 8 km, away in a purely horizontal sense). The town is below almost 11,800 feet (3,600 metres) of seawater, thus receives no natural light from the surface. Captive bioluminous creatures, oils and some magical lights are used indoors in places however, particularly where colour vision or fine working is important. The town is about 600 miles (950 km) off the nearest shore of Errynor in northwest Alarius.

Selass is situated in a sea-floor hollow created by the partial collapse of the underlying rock, which has left a series of cliff-lines often riddled with natural caves, caves that were formed by a large amount of gas once present in the basaltic rock here, while it was still molten. Many homes and workshops have been built into these caves, expanding the originals very often, along with numerous sea-floor constructions in a range of styles and materials typical of Merfolk building practices. Some are of cut stone blocks, some of concrete made from ground-up bedrock mixed with lime-rich silts, crushed shells and coral, others are of reused driftwood, preserved animal skin and bone, along with three partial shipwrecks brought in from elsewhere at various past times. Several surface properties have been built as towers up to several hundred feet high (*circa* 100 m or more), whose upper parts are used as lookout posts, while some rectangular-plan structures are built in a prism or "toast-rack" shape - that is, with triangular gable ends that reach to the sea-bed, and roofs/outer walls that do the same on the building's long sides. Such surface building shapes can seem quite like those on land superficially, with pitched roofs sometimes, or domes, or flat- or slope-topped boxes or cylinders, as suits the needs, interests and styles of the individual owners and builders. This can look somewhere between charmingly eclectic to chaotically ramshackle, depending upon the observer's perspective and beliefs. Some may be purely above-ground constructions; others have cellars up to entire extra-building-sized suites cut into the rock beneath and around them, at times extending into neighbouring properties, notably where those are already caves. Thus a single surface structure may have several possible access routes beyond those obvious from outside it.

Selass began as a village set in the northwestern part of its current location. As its population grew, a second village, Lub, grew up to its southeast, to help provide farmed and hunted animal food for the inhabitants of both settlements. The two have effectively now merged into one, with “Lub” used simply as a name for Selass’ southeasterly “suburb”. A further village was established to help produce additional food in a smaller, but similar sea-floor hollow almost a mile (1.5 km) to the southwest, known as Selyn. “Selyn” is a diminutive form of “Selass”, which latter means “ear” and also “seat of wisdom”, a very ancient real-world belief regarding the ear. The extent of the agricultural lands is demonstrated by the map, though these are not all in constant use. Planted and farmed animals include hydrozoans, corals and some types of fish. The area also denotes the general water column region where hunters from the Selass communities may be encountered most commonly. Their hunting-range is not strongly tied to just this area, however. Selyn has a settled population of approximately 150.

The Map

There are three main parts to the map. A large illustration of Selass with a key to its labelled structures is on the right. A smaller drawing, to the same scale as the Selass map, is of Selyn, to the lower left. Again, this has a small key to the labelled properties there alongside it. To the top left is an area map to a separate scale, showing the relative positions of both settlements and their surrounding agricultural lands.

The Merfolk

Merfolk are more or less the equivalent of Sea-Humans, in that they are by far the most populous of Errynor’s intelligent humanoid sea-denzens, and their upper bodies, limbs and heads are often very Human-like, including to skin, eye and hair colouring. Their lower bodies and legs show considerable variation however, including some that have a single, large, fish-like tail instead of legs, while others have scaled legs that end in large, propulsive fins, not feet. Some are able to change forms between such options, while some can alter their lower halves into a form more suitable for whatever their current needs and environment are, including to fully humanoid legs and feet capable of walking on land. They cannot stay long on land, even so. Many Merfolk can cope with a broad range of sea environments, from shallow to great depth, providing they have sufficient time to acclimate to the substantial pressure changes involved with changing water depth. Most are able to see normally even without natural light in the ocean depths, although under those circumstances, only in monochrome. A significant proportion, especially those that preferentially occupy the shallower, nearer-surface waters, are able to breathe in air or water with comparable facility. Merfolk pay little heed to the physical differences between their variant forms, which can have its own dangers for land-dwelling air-breathers who fall into the sea, as Merfolk will sometimes mistake them for their own folk, and not realise they may be drowning. Their own name for themselves reflects this, as it is simply “The Folk”, and even within a family group, it is common to find a mix of legged and tailed types. They communicate using vocal speech and eye-contact-range telepathy, though they can use telepathy only when underwater. The only distinction Merfolk sometimes draw is with that proportion of Merfolk that follow a nomadic existence, whom they can know as “The Sea-Folk”, compared to the more sedentary settlement-constructors, “The Place-Folk”. Nomadic Merfolk are only very rarely encountered near Selass, however. (Similar to the Merfolk of D&D, while the nomadic types are based on D&D’s Tritons.)

The Merfolk communities of Selass are ruled by a hereditary monarch, currently a King, who also commands the local military forces. The latter are chiefly a militia-style

group, augmented at need by every other citizen. The day-to-day organisation of Selyn village is carried out by a Mayor, appointed by, and responsible to, the King. The Selass communities owe no fealty to any higher authority elsewhere, although as with all Merfolk, they would feel obliged to aid others of their kin, should that be required. The folk here are generally friendly, including to outsiders, though they are never stupid in their dealings with those they do not know.

To assist their activities, the Selass Merfolk have semi-domesticated the large, fast, strong, sleek types of barracuda that frequent Errynor's oceans for use as steeds and as towing animals. They are of comparable size to the larger ocean-going sharks. To use them more effectively, they have also developed special harnesses and saddles, and train the fish to wear these as a matter of routine. The harnesses are made from preserved skins, sinew and cartilage, with some bone fitments. Such large fish are common sights at the settlements hereabouts.

Surface Features

The surface terrain for many miles/kilometres around Selass is generally relatively level, with mostly just gentle undulations. The exceptions to this are the sunken areas at Selass and Selyn, where sub-surface collapses of the underlying rock have created a series of descending, stepped platforms, separated by near-vertical black basalt cliff-lines that are between 30 to 75 ft (9 to 23 m) high. The average cliff height is about 50 ft (15 m). The open ends of the cliff-lines, towards the southwest at each settlement, contain a gently sloping, broad, sunken channel, which descends further towards the lower heart of each respective place (indicated by the slightly darker shading on the map for each location). The deepest area of Selass, towards its open centre, is roughly 200 ft (60 m) below the normal surface level. At Selyn, this central depth is about half that, so 100 ft or 30 m. Parts of the cliff-lines are of hexagonal columnar form. A few places have outcrops of crystals of corundum (including occasionally gem-quality sapphires and rubies), many of which have been removed for use as an abrasive - only diamond is a harder natural mineral (see further on this in the general notes on Selass following this section).

Selass

Selass has a couple of unusual features. One is The Pinnacle, a near-vertical columnar basalt stack on the northwestern fringe of Lub. It rises around 130 ft (40 m) from the sea-floor, so does not quite reach the general sea-bed level beyond the town, as that is about 150 ft (45 m) above the lower level of Lub here. The stack is roughly 75 ft (23 m) in diameter. Its flat top has had a roughly 45 ft diameter (14 m) hemispherical, concrete, living-dome built on it. This has a splendid spiral-patterned outer surface, in contrasting blue and yellow colours (when there is light enough to tell), created by a carefully-tended micro-organism coating, like that applied to other surface properties in town that are coloured or patterned as shown on the map. The dome connects down by a tunnel with the rest of the properties set into The Pinnacle. As the map demonstrates, there are five separate cave entrances scattered at various places and heights down the column's flanks. The stack's interior, delving well below the surface too, has been honeycombed extensively into often quite elaborate living quarters for several Merfolk families. All the connecting tunnels and caves have a vertically-hexagonal form, taking advantage of the natural forms within the rock to simplify the carving-out process. The interstitial column faces show signs of pockmarking in places, indicating where corundum crystals have been carefully removed, often in quantities, for use as cutting and abrading tools elsewhere.

These have again included some sapphires and rubies of larger gem-quality, like those found sometimes in the open cliff-lines, as noted earlier. It is likely that more await discovery here still. The columnar form of the basalt, and its strength, seem to be why this one fragment survived unscathed when the rest of its neighbouring rock collapsed long ago. It is an unmistakable landmark, and forms the loose “border” between Selass proper and Lub in most people’s minds here.

The second main unusual feature of Selass is that it possesses a substantial burial ground for the bodies of the dead on its northeastern side, at the usual sea-floor level. The area is marked by mounds of varying sizes and heights, up to 6 or 7 ft (*circa* 2 m) tall, scattered across it, sometimes with small rectangular or square carved markers of wood or stone nearby, or in places with no mounds close-by at all. Such markers usually have a name, and a simple inscription regarding the deceased person, such as might be found more commonly in places on land. There is no fixed boundary to the area of burials, except the cliff-line above Selass on the ground’s southwestern side, though as the area map suggests, it is very approximately 800 ft northeast-southwest (245 m) by 1,200 ft northwest-southeast (365 m). What makes it so special is that very few undersea communities bury or preserve many of their dead at all. Even those that do not practice cannibalism of the dead (such as the Kachaya and Ketorka - Sea Orcs) will often allow the bodies of the deceased to be de-fleshed by sea creatures, before rescuing those bones suitable for reuse as, for instance, tools or in construction work. Selass is thus something of an undersea rarity in this regard.

One further item, not obvious from the map, is that a very rare, rich vein of diamonds was discovered some years ago by miners prospecting for minerals in southeastern Lub (see the description under Precious Metals (20) below). Their use greatly assists in the stone and metal working at Selass, and gives a literal extra edge to many of the undersea weapons manufactured here.

Labelled Structures

The Key for the Selass map indicates those places that serve as more than simple dwellings. That list includes the nature of the structure and, where it is at least in part a surface construction, what its chief building materials are. As noted earlier, the nature of the outer surface of the buildings here may be coloured and patterned as shown in the map (turn off the RGB Matrix Process Effect on the whole map to see these colours), thanks to physical carving or manufacturing, and the subsequent placement and tending of suitably colourful micro-organisms. Any colouring can be seen properly only when there is sufficient artificial light, of course. These remarks apply equally to Selyn and its Key below, incidentally.

1. Artist - Concrete Dome: Upper tier, north Selass. Like many inhabitants of Selass, the family and assistants of the Artist here are able to turn their hands and minds to tasks beyond what their title might suggest. Thus this modest dome and its subterranean levels house workshops and finished products such as furniture and containers, along with sculptures and carved inscriptions. Most signs across the town were made here too. Stocks of suitable materials and corundum for cutting, abrading and incising stone and wood are kept here, along with some seawater-proof precious metals and gemstones for decoration. Commissions undertaken.

2. Axes - Cave: Lowest tier cliff-line, southwest-central Selass. The need for tools and weapons is one constant of life at Selass, and this group of caves houses the town’s

specialist stone axe maker. Other items, such as maces, hammers and digging tools of stone and preserved bone are also produced here, with stocks of materials for such tool/weapon heads and hafts always maintained readily to-hand.

3. Builder - Cave: Lowest tier cliff-line, east-central Lub. Home to the family of the town's main building construction planner and worker. More building workers' families occupy several of the other caves nearby along this cliff-line in central-eastern Lub. The Building Materials store (4) to the southeast on the higher cliff-line is run by the same family. One of the caves here is set aside as the main office, with stored records, and where discussions regarding new and ongoing projects occur, aside from those conducted on-site. Repairs and cave extensions are also organised from here.

4. Building Materials - Cave: Upper tier cliff-line, southeastern Lub. Materials for use by workers from the Builder (3) are brought-in and stored here in an extensive series of caves. Some fresh quarrying of the cliffs nearby is apparent too, and a couple of the caves within are occasionally used for crushing and preparing materials for making undersea concrete. There are also tools and corundum stocks for stone cutting and working as well. Often busy when building projects are underway, though at quieter times, the stores here are overseen by only a couple of caretakers.

5. Citadel - Square Stone Building: Upper tier, western Selass. The largest building in town, this has a square footprint overall, including a west-facing open "courtyard". Much of the main structure looks rather like a land-surface noble villa, albeit with fewer windows and doorways, though it does boast pitched, stone-slab, roofs. The main "C"-shaped building rises two storeys from the sea-bed, with the two square towers at its northeast and southeast corners rising a further two storeys. The towers are used as lookout posts, as they rise above the level of the nearby upper tier cliffs. Strongly built, with exterior openings that can all be sealed with stone portals from inside, this is intended as the last defensive redoubt for the whole town in a dire emergency. Caves delve deep below the surface structures too, linking with the neighbouring caves of the Military HQ (18) and the Military Store (19), along with the nearest Food Store (9), where stores of preserved food are maintained, sufficient to stand-off a lengthy siege, should that prove necessary. The King holds court here, and there are offices in the surface building to administer the day-to-day running of the settlement. There are always military/militia personnel about, both inside and out at all times, including in the sub-surface barracks and storage caves.

6. Cleric - Cave: Mid tier cliff-line, northwest Selass. Selass is not a strongly religious place. There is though modest Shrine (21) to the south of these caves on the mid tier, which the leading Cleric from here looks after, with their staff, advising those seeking spiritual guidance when necessary. The Cleric is also the town's primary healer. Among the caves here are places where those especially ill or badly injured can be cared-for, along with stores of medicaments. There may be up to four other lesser-ranked clerics present here as well, when they are not making visits elsewhere in Selass, or to Selyn. At least one cleric is always available here, however.

7. College - Cave: Lower tier cliff-line, north-central Selass. Caves extending back into the cliffs here, and linking with the adjacent Library caves (14), allow the teaching of the young in a variety of knowledge-based disciplines, notably undersea navigation, along

with reading and numeracy. Those with aptitude are instructed in the magical or clerical arts, including teaching visits from the town's Cleric (6) and Mage (15). More practical teaching, such as physical fighting skills, creative physical construction, and agricultural works, tend to be carried out elsewhere in town, such as with the Builder (3) or Farm Manager (8), or at the Military HQ (18) and Citadel (5). A small, regular, teaching staff is often present here or in the "T"-shaped surface building on the mid tier just northeast of the College cave symbol on the map. This building is the teachers' official rest and family quarters.

8. Farm Manager - Rectangular Stone Building: Lowest tier, southern Selass, north of The Pinnacle. One of Selass' larger surface properties, this is a long, rectangular structure, elongated on its east-southeast to west-northwest axis, around two storeys tall, and of a prismatic "toast-rack" form. A shorter "toast-rack" extension runs out on its northern side, and where the two meet, a cylindrical, dome-topped cupola tower sits, a full two storeys taller than the main structures. Flat-roofed rectangular blocks on the long building's north side, to either side of the short northern extension, form additional storage facilities for agricultural tools and harvested living-animal crops, before the latter are taken on elsewhere for use as food. The agricultural overseer, titled the Farm Manager, lives here with their family, and others of the town's leading agricultural workers. Instruction is carried out in some of the surface building's rooms, with the main offices for planning and record keeping situated in the upper parts of the cupola tower. Living facilities for the families based here are set mostly in two sub-surface levels of caves, under and near the building.

9. Food Stores (2) - Both in Caves: Lower tier cliff-line, on the eastern- and western-central sides of Selass respectively. Each facility comprises a number of close-netted caves in the cliffs where harvested and captured hunted food creatures are stored for daily distribution across town, as required. Tunnels lead back through the rocks of Selass' mid tier from the westerly Food Store to join those of the Military HQ, Store and Citadel (18, 19 & 5 respectively), along which the food stocks can be moved rapidly, and the tunnels blocked, in an emergency. Each Food Store is overseen by a family group that lives in part of their respective cave complex, towards its outer, cliff-line, side.

10. Greenhouse - Round Wood & Preserved Skin Building: Lowest tier, western Lub, south of The Pinnacle. A large, three-storey, circular-cylinder structure of rather rough outer construction, with a low-angled pitched roof over the central section of its otherwise flat top. The northern vertical end of this pitched section gives access to the interior via a double pair of hinged, wooden, shutter-like doors in the form of an "airlock", albeit actually serving the purpose of a "light-block", as the whole interior is brightly lit magically to simulate near-surface lighting conditions, to allow the growing of a range of photosynthetic marine organisms. The entire structure is heavily-walled to prevent light escaping more generally. Some of the growth is simply experimental and small-scale, though other items are grown because they have particular beneficial, essential or healing properties for Merfolk. The whole is tended by a select group of agricultural workers especially skilled in light-reliant crop work, several of whom are also magically-adept, to maintain the cyclical lighting within. The light varies on both daily and annual cycles, just as it would were the settlement not in the ocean depths. The life inside would soon wither in the light's prolonged absence over a few days. Open entryways on the sea-floor surface within lead down to a series of storage caves for harvested crops and, where useful, their

preservation for later use, along with seeds, tools and some lit places for bringing on new young growths. Several workers and overseers are always on-site in shifts, to ensure nothing goes awry.

11. Harnesses - Cave: Lowest tier cliff-line, central-southern Selass. Materials for use in creating barracuda harnesses and saddles for riding and towing are prepared, stored and made-up into finished products here. Such materials include skins, cartilage, sinew and bone from dead sea creatures, preserved, and where necessary softened, using chemical, alchemical and sometimes magical means, to make them supple and suitable for such work. Bioluminous lights are used in various of the inner caves where any particularly detailed activities associated with these tasks are carried out. The adjacent cave and nearby surface building to the southeast are also used for some of this work, and to house members of the team involved who do not live elsewhere in town, including the owner and their family. The building is of stone, two storeys high, and of prism/"toast-rack" form on its north-south axis, with a pitched-roof rectangular section rising a further storey above its southern end. Its main entrance is towards the surface on its western side. This structure is largely open inside, and is commonly used for stretching and straightening the longer pieces needed for harnesses, and also for making and storing finished towing sleds. These latter are wood and bone frameworks strung with netting and cargo ties, lightweight when empty, but robust enough to hold substantial amounts of properly fixed cargo in a variety of different containers, when prepared by those skilled at doing so. The sleds vary in size according to need, averaging about 15 ft long by 7 ft wide (4.5 m by 2 m). One of such a size when laden can be towed through the water by a pair of trained barracudas or 4-6 Merfolk when properly harnessed to it, at a speed similar to that of a laden wagon on land.

12. Inn - Cave: Mid tier cliff-line, northern Selass, commonly known as "The Adventurer's Rest", or just "The Rest". A substantial series of caves extending back far into the cliff-line provide rest areas, food and limited storage areas for travellers, including adventurers passing through Selass, or using it as a base from where to explore into the Adventurer's Ocean to the west. Publicly-available information regarding the town is freely provided to visiting enquirers, such as where best to find particular tools, materials or advice. Despite being the only such facility in Selass, its prices are reasonable, and there are usually some chambers available for new guests. Probably the place most likely to find or meet non-Merfolk in Selass. The proprietor and their family also lives-in, along with the permanent staff who do not live elsewhere in town. Temporary staff are taken on as required when the Inn is particularly busy.

13. King's Home - Wrecked Ship: Lowest tier, north-central Selass. The largest of Selass' three reused shipwrecks, at about 100 ft long (30 m). It was brought here from a long way off many generations ago, preserved, partly rebuilt, repaired and adapted over time to become the comfortable home for the town's ruler and their family it now is. The craft is only superficially ship-like in form, as it has been connected to subterranean tunnels and levels well below the sea-bed over time. It could not be reused as a ship on the surface, for instance. Not a palace in any surface understanding of the term, the King will sometimes hold audiences here apart from at the Citadel (5), and there is space too for invited special guests to stay. The exterior is quite extensively decorated, much of it from the original ship, or recovered from other shipwrecks subsequently brought here. It is one of the places in town most likely to be lit within using bioluminous lights, which commonly

shine out on the surface as well, making it a landmark for the town. Frequently referred to by the ship's original surface name - still to be seen inscribed on its stern - "The Selkie", though no one here knows what the name is supposed to mean.

14. Library - Cave: Lower tier cliff-line, north-central Selass. Extensive caves connecting with the adjacent College cavern complex (7) are home to a small group of sages who preserve a broad range of documentary sources on metal, wood, stone, preserved skin and concrete tablets. Most relate to useful practical topics suitable for undersea populations, though there are some more esoteric titles too, as copies of any text items of significance brought here are made onto materials able to survive the deep sea environment, particularly any that are written on substances that would ordinarily be ruined by even a short spell in seawater. Materials used in preparing such texts are also kept here. Access is restricted for those not from Selass or studying at the College. Often lit within when specific caves are in use.

15. Mage - Cave: Upper tier cliff-line, northern Selass. Home to the town's leading magical practitioner and their family. It is impossible to approach this cave, or enter it, without being detected in advance from inside, even when the Mage is elsewhere in town, such as teaching at the College (7) or visiting the Library (14). An important member of the community, including in defence of the town should the need arise, as well as willing to provide small magical effects or amulets for townsfolk or outsiders for a fee. Materials for working magic and preparing such small magic items are stored here, along with some finished products. Several especially sealed caves within are air-filled and dry, as the Mage originated on land, and still maintains some typical surface materials, furnishings and magics here. In addition, one of these air-caves can be used as a magical de-/re-compression chamber should such be needed. Leading members of the town's community are aware of its existence, and would immediately seek the Mage's assistance should anyone require it - including Merfolk, as that cave-chamber can be flooded if necessary as well.

16. Meeting Hall - Rectangular Wood & Preserved Skin Building: Lowest tier, central Lub. A large, northeast-southwest aligned "A"-frame or "toast-rack" building, with a short, round-arched entryway tunnel on its southeast-facing side. Once, this was merely a small public meeting house just for Lub village. It was rebuilt as a larger facility for the whole of Selass some years ago. Aside from important meetings and discussions, the hall is used for entertainments too, and sometimes small markets. It has a deeply-sunken floor inside, with tiers of platforms facing inwards, some suspended from the underside of the roof of the surface building, so can contain rather more than its outward appearance might suggest. Frequently lit within when in use, this structure is commonly unoccupied at other times.

17. Messengers - Square Stone Tower: Lowest tier, northern Lub, east-northeast of The Pinnacle. This 50 ft tall (15 m) square-footprint stone tower rises from the sea-bed. The lower levels inside contain harnesses and saddles for riding barracudas, and a small stable for preparing the riding fish. The upper levels are home to around half-a-dozen Messengers, barracuda-riders who maintain contact daily with Selyn, and Shaldun at longer intervals, carrying news and other information to and fro. Reports are passed directly to the King at their Home (13) or the Citadel (5) as appropriate, depending on

when they arrive. Messages and letters can be transported this way too for any ordinary citizen, for a fee. Such items are handled at, and delivered from, this tower.

18. Military HQ - Cave: Mid tier cliff-line, western Selass. This cliffside cave complex connects inside with the neighbouring Military Store caves (19), the Citadel (5) on the clifftop above, and the tunnels leading down and east to the nearby Food Store caves (9). There are secure cells, barracks, barracuda stables, offices and briefing areas scattered among the HQ caves. The official military contingent is relatively small, at about 70 Merfolk, around 20 of whom are trained and experienced barracuda riders. A similar number of riding barracudas are stabled here too. All citizens undergo some basic military and weapons training here at some point, as everyone is expected to help defend the community at need. The command structure is answerable to, and under, the King, although the highest-ranked commanders are essentially the King's military advisors. The military also serve as the local police force, and provide a small cadre of troops to act as commanders and weapon-trainers at Selyn, where they carry out a similar dual role. There is always some activity here, and in the places connected underground. Lights are used occasionally, when detailed work is required, such as repairs or harness-fitting for the barracudas.

19. Military Store - Cave: Mid tier cliff-line, western Selass. As noted above for the Military HQ (18), this cavern complex links with it, the Citadel (5) and the nearest Food Store (9). Its primary function is as a place to store weapons and the materials needed to make and repair them. There are several caves of varying size involved, including a workshop which is often lit deep inside. Parts of the facility are frequently occupied, usually by at least a few of Selass' military personnel.

20. Precious Metals - Wood & Preserved Skin Tower: Mid tier cliff-line to upper tier, southeastern Lub. This tower is around 100 ft tall (30 m), yet its conical top is still below the level of the upper tier of cliffs to its southeast. This is because its base is at the foot of the mid tier cliff-line, which here rises about 60 ft (18 m). This lower section is built into the cliff, which has been largely dug away within, so the interior still forms an almost cylindrical vertical structure, with working platforms connecting the tower's walls to the cliffside in places at various heights, to allow the continued mining of veins of precious metals and gemstones that have been located around this spot. More work spaces are in the tower above the cliff-line, along with an office and a store-/show-room for finished items. Tunnels lead down below the base of the cliff-line too, and extend into the rock behind the cliff-face, all following or seeking for additional mineral veins. Unusually, a rich vein of diamonds has been uncovered here, which gives the stone workers and tool/weapon makers of Selass a literal extra edge in their products. This vein, though worked for many years, still shows little sign of expiring, and produces a range of sizes and qualities of the raw stones. Gold, silver and lead veins are apparent too, together with other unusual, though less precious minerals and metals. The miners, including the owner, live in the nearby caves of southern Lub, several of whom are very expert in such work. A couple are also capable gem appraisers and cutters, with several more having mastered the magical arts necessary for the deep-undersea working of metals - which usually requires some form of magical heating. Such work is carried on from time to time in the upper parts of the tower (typically employing the solid rock surface of the clifftop protected by the tower in so-doing) and the adjacent parts of the open surface upper tier's

flatter rock surface. Lights are commonly used in much of the work in the tower, though little is normally allowed to spill beyond its structure.

21. Shrine - Square, Dome-Topped Stone Building: Mid tier, northwestern Selass. A square-cruciform building, each arm of the cross-shape a single-storey prism or “toast-rack” structure, which opens out into a broad central cylinder beneath the dome. Each arm’s outer end is an open accessway, while the interior is open as well, the walls and ceiling fitted with many small suspended platforms and wall niches containing icons, statues, plaques and carvings of a wide range of deities, mostly, though not exclusively, of undersea types favoured by the Merfolk. The building and its visitors are assisted and guided by at least one Cleric from the nearby caves to the north (6). Individual platforms or niches may be lit from time to time, though relatively little of this light filters to the outside.

22. Stables (2) - Both in Caves: Both are in the lower tier cliff-line, one on the northeastern-central side of Selass, the other on the southwestern side of the town. Staff trained in the care of barracudas for riding and towing - including any medical needs - are available at both the town’s Stables. The more northerly is set in a smaller series of caves, as it deals mainly with the royal and military riding fish (including those of the Messengers (17)). The Stables on the southern side of town caters for a broader range of requirements from a larger series of caverns, including the needs of most of the towing fish. Fresh harnesses and towing sleds come chiefly from the Harness shop (11), conveniently near the latter Stables. Both Stables have Merfolk staff available to train new barracudas, and there are supply caves with food and spare harnesses at each too. A few riding barracudas are usually available for hire from the more southerly Stables.

23. Stone Worker - Cave: Upper tier cliff-line, northwestern Selass. The town’s main stone working facility, whether for building stone, statues, weapon blanks or other carvings. Stocks of smaller unworked stones are available in storage caves here, while larger amounts are normally quarried fresh either from the cliffs near where the stone is to be used, or from the unoccupied cliff-line further out from Selass to the northwest from here. A team of Stone Workers live here and in the nearby caves, along with their families. Stone working tools, including various grades of corundum and some diamond are kept here in addition.

24. Tools - Square Stone & Wood Building: Mid tier, north-central Selass. A broad-based, roughly north-south aligned, two-storey prism or “toast-rack” building with single-storey, short, similarly “A”-frame access blocks on its northeastern and southwestern sides, this is home to the family of the town’s main specialist hand-tool maker. Supplies for manufacturing these, including stone, bone and rescued wood, with corundum and some diamond cutting stocks for working or adding to tool blades, are maintained in the surface-level workshop, together with finished products. The family home is split between the upper level of the surface building and a series of caves dug into the clifftop below it. Most commonly-required tools can be made quickly, if not immediately to-hand, and the owner is always willing to try new things with little encouragement, should that be required.

25. Undertaker - Round Stone & Concrete Building: Lower tier, southwest-central Selass. A *circa* 60 ft diameter (18 m) circular building with a gently-pitched, low, conical

roof is the workshop and funeral parlour for those in the town wishing to make use of the chance to bury or preserve their dead in the town's Burial Ground on its northeastern side. A range of requirements - including coffins and wrappings of various forms - can be accommodated. There is no single standard preferred burial practice here, so each client's family can ask for whatever they prefer. Stocks of rescued wood, bone and preserved skins are kept here, along with tools for working them. Separate chambers inside allow different tasks to be carried out, including storage of several different bodies discretely prior to their interment. The Undertaker's family lives in the caves immediately to the southwest of this building.

26. Weapons - Cave: Lowest tier cliff-line, west-central Selass. A general weapons manufacturer, with stocks of prepared weapons and materials to make or repair more readily to-hand. Most are simple hand weapons of short sword, mace, axe and multi-headed spear form, often with barbed or serrated blades. However, undersea crossbows are made here too. Unfortunately, these latter are not always reliable, although the owner persists in trying to refine the skills needed to improve them. Anyone offering such expertise would be handsomely rewarded, should a significant improvement in what is currently produced prove possible. Living caves for the owner's family are mixed in with workshops, store rooms and a display cave, most of which are below the cliff-line level, rather than extending back into it.

Selyn

In some respects, Selyn village is simply a smaller version of Selass, sitting in a cliff-lined sea-bed hollow, surrounded by agricultural lands. As noted earlier, its population is around 150, mostly Merfolk, albeit the number of residents + visitors is somewhat variable from day to day, as people regularly pass between Selyn and Selass, moving goods, changing posts (for the military), visiting or travelling, including to access services only available locally at Selass. It is run by a Mayor, chosen by and responsible to the King at Selass, who also leads the militia here at need. All villagers are expected to defend the settlement, should the occasion demand.

The cliffs are similar to those at Selass in height, but the rocks, so far as has yet been established, are rather less rich in occasional corundum deposits than those at the larger settlement. No precious metals or diamonds have been located here either so far. The village is thus essentially a farming and hunting settlement, though its location west of Selass means it is often also the first or last stopping point for those brave souls venturing out into the deep Adventurer's Ocean further to the west. For uncertain reasons, possibly relating to the luminous giant jellyfish that like to congregate somewhere in the water column about 4-5 miles, 6-8 km, north-northwest of Selyn, other, smaller bioluminous creatures are often present in the waters relatively closer to Selyn towards the northwest at times, a particularly useful resource for those requiring occasional use of light sources both here and at Selass, aside from those water-column animals hunted for food. Perhaps the most notable aspect of Selyn is that several sea serpents have been caught nearby and killed here down the years. At least some hard parts of each are preserved in the Trophy Room at the Mayor's Home (C).

Labelled Structures at Selyn

A. Farming Supplies - Cave: Upper cliff-line, eastern Selyn. An extensive series of caverns dug into the higher part of the cliffs here contain an array of tools, cargo sleds and harnesses for towing by barracudas or Merfolk, stables for around a dozen of the huge fish, eggs and growing young in profusion awaiting planting-out, and storage facilities filled with food creatures for the village and its barracudas, together with any awaiting transport to Selass for which there is currently no space at the Warehouse (F). All the livestock caves, along with the main entryway, are heavily netted to prevent escapes or unwanted intrusions by hungry sea creatures. Some spare materials for repairing tools, nets, sleds and harnesses are also kept separately here. Often busy, with most of the nearby caves and surface properties occupied by families who work here and in the agricultural lands around the village.

B. Lamps - Round Stone Building: Upper tier, southwestern Selyn. A two-storey circular-cylinder-shaped building with a conical roof sits on the surface, that has two more sub-surface, storey-height levels beneath it where the owning family lives. This is the main collection and storage place for most of the bioluminous creatures “harvested” nearby, and their extracted oils, as some creatures can be “milked” for such oils repeatedly without taking harm. Other animals are kept alive in containers instead, until their luminosity fades. Sometimes, simply releasing such animals into the wild again will restore their brightness with time, though the fading may signal the animal is dying alternatively. Containers of various forms and sizes to hold the animals and their glowing oils for use as lamps are made, stocked and refilled here too, with materials to make and repair such lanterns, including preserved skins, bone, cartilage and rescued wood. The interior is always lit thanks to its contents, although the single, near-surface accessway on the building’s northeastern side is heavily skin-curtained to minimise stray light spilling outside.

C. Mayor’s Home - Cave: Lower cliff-line, northwest-central Selyn. Home to Selyn’s Mayor and their family, this cave system also includes a cavern large enough to host village meetings not far inside its entrance. The Mayor may be here, at the Militia HQ (D), elsewhere in the settlement, or somewhere out in the surrounding agricultural lands, at any given time. Several sets of barracuda ties are fixed to the cliffs near the entrance, as messengers and visitors carrying information to and fro are commonplace. There is always someone here to assist even in the Mayor’s absence. Another main public-access cave near the entrance is the Trophy Room, where preserved mementos are kept on display from every sea serpent fought and killed by the villagers - such as spines, teeth and particularly impressive scales - a matter of understandable local pride. Lights are often used here, notably in the Trophy Room.

D. Militia HQ - Cave: Upper cliff-line, southeastern Selyn. Like the Mayor’s Home (C), this series of caverns has an entrance surrounded by barracuda tie-points. Military personnel from Selass are quartered here, along with visitors from elsewhere who may be passing through when necessary, in the absence of an inn at Selyn. Military training is carried out here, on and above the adjacent upper tier for the villagers, with weapon stocks maintained securely within. There are also limited medical stores and facilities for treating both barracudas and humanoids. A small number of military personnel are always present somewhere in here, supplemented by locals at times, all of whom are classed as

part of the militia. Even Selass' King visits occasionally. Weapons are issued from the HQ to all villagers only when such need arises. Those stationed here act as Selyn's police force, when required.

E. Navigational Gear - Cave: Upper cliff-line, western Selyn. Items for assisting in travel and navigation across the great deep ocean west of Selyn can be found here, such as ropes, containers, lodestones and advice. Some physical items are made on-site, while others - notably the magnetic lodestones - have to be brought in from elsewhere. There are no sources of lodestones anywhere locally, for instance. The reliability of the advice, given there are no maps of the deep ocean floor west beyond Selyn, can be variable, being based essentially on generations of travellers' tales, despite the best efforts of the proprietors down the years to sift and identify the more useful, and more probable, features from the tales reported to them. This store is a common last stop for travellers heading west, and a point of first contact for those returning this way. More than a few village families owe their existence to returning adventurers choosing to stay here, or at Selass, sometimes due to injuries, or general travel-weariness.

F. Warehouse - Rectangular Preserved Skin & Wood Building: Lowest tier, southern Selyn. One of the largest surface structures in the village, this "toast-rack" construction stands two storeys high, and has a further sub-surface level under it. It holds harvested and hunted food supplies, some for village use, most awaiting transport to Selass. Transport sleds and harnesses are kept here too, and there is space inside for readying and loading sleds for towing. There are large double access doors set at either end of the building's north-south long axis, and heavy nets inside each. It is about 70 ft long (20 m). At least a couple of guards are always present at each doorway to prevent escapes by the live creatures within, as much as to stop undesirable access. Its busiest periods are when the latest harvested or hunted stocks are being brought in, or shipped out.