

# Thalassan Castle Ruins

*The remains of three great, conical towers stand on the sea-bed, with mounds of silt-covered rubble. Separate rubble-mounds suggest the largest tower once had two smaller towers attached towards its top.*

*Partial remnants of internal floors can be seen still too. The map shows an overhead plan-view and a side-view of the complete site looking north. The highest surviving towers are about 180 ft tall (55 metres).*

*The pale blue shading shows the region around, above and below the ruins affected by ancient protective magics. Typically, these manifest as ghostly figures approaching anyone living within the zone.*

*Underground passageways and chambers are shown in blue with black outlining. The floor of the lowest tunnels is the lower limit to the residual magic associated with the ruins.*

(Banner texts from the Map)

In The Deeps about 520 miles (840 kilometres) off the northwestern shores of Errynor in Alarius, below around 10,830 feet (3,300 metres) of ocean, are the remnants of three Fish-folk, or Thalassan, concrete-built, conical towers, which once formed a small, castle-like, settlement. Originally, each stood about 310 ft tall (95 m). Two were around 60 ft (18m) in diameter at their bases. The third was almost twice that, at 110 ft in diameter (33 m). This third tower, the more southerly of the trio, had a pair of smaller sub-towers, each roughly 120 ft tall (36 m), attached to its upper storeys, one on its western side, the other on its southern. The settlement, once home to approximately 150 Thalassans, was abandoned for now unknown reasons several hundred years ago, and all three towers have since partly collapsed into substantial, silt-covered, piles of rubble. The highest surviving parts of the larger southerly tower, and the narrower eastern one, rise to about 180 ft (55 m), while the narrower northwestern tower remnant rises only some 120 ft (36 m) from the sea-bed. There is no indication of any other architectural features that may once have existed on the former upper parts of the towers, now lost to the ages.

The conical spires are made entirely from typical Thalassan undersea concrete, a mixture of ground-up basaltic sea-floor bedrock and lime-rich sea-bed silts, crushed shells and crushed dead coral. Their external surfaces have deliberately-formed patterning, which roughens their texture, to help make suitable homes for colourful micro-organisms which once covered them completely. These organisms are now long gone too, and the concrete has reverted to merely its natural, relatively uniform, grey colouring, should sufficient light be cast upon the ruins to tell. Indeed, the area around the site is remarkably sterile, with none even of the commoner sessile life-forms found across Nibirum's deep ocean floors elsewhere. The water column too for hundreds of feet/metres above and for some miles/kilometres around, is equally devoid of almost all living creatures. Given the choice, most animals will avoid the place, while sentient humanoids will feel at least somewhat uncomfortable if approaching the ruins at all closely. On land, such a place would be likely considered haunted by any nearby locals. Here though, there **are** no locals to provide such rumours.

## The Map

The first view of the map provides a near-surface plan of the complete site in its upper two-thirds, with an elevation drawing as seen from the south in its lower third. The rough contour lines on the pale rubble mounds are at very approximate ten-feet (three metre)

intervals above the sea-floor surface. The solid walls of the surviving towers are shown by stronger lines and forms, including levels for the broken floors within the conical towers in the elevation view.

Activating the Residual Magic toggle in the FCW file superimposes a pale blue shading over this first view, indicating an area of persistent magic that extends around, below and far above the physical remains. Those parts of the rubble mounds not within this effect are shown without any blue coloration, including the plan-view of the detached mound that lies south-southwest of the main site, where - and on the mapped view only - it apparently intersects with the upper part of the elevation drawing's vertical domed glow. This domed glow is actually intact all around the site in reality.

The Subterranean Tunnels toggle adds superimposed plan and elevation views to the map for a series of underground tunnels and chambers beneath the surface structures and rubble, from where the domed glow effect emanates. The final toggle, Original Towers, shows a schematic elevation drawing for the towers as they would once have been when intact, scaled identically to the main map, and showing the various internal floor heights above the surface. As these schematics are central cross-sections for both the broader and narrower tower forms found here, the diameter for any specific floor level, or intervening area, can be directly measured using the scale lines, or the measuring tools in Campaign Cartographer when using the FCW file, should those be needed.

Game-relevant notes for various of the illustrated features are provided below, after some general notes on the site's builders.

### **The Thalassans**

Thalassans are slender humanoids with four limbs, including webbed hands and large, webbed feet, control fins on their arms, legs and back, and narrow, forward-facing, fish-like heads, with large, dark eyes. They are entirely marine aquatic beings, and cannot breathe in air without magic. They are rare in Errynor's seas, but do form settlements from time to time, often ones that are well-concealed, carved skilfully into native rock or dead coral within a still-living reef. Their architecture favours narrow openings that suit their slender frames, along with tapering, conical towers, which can make their buildings look quite castle-like to land-dwellers (or like miniature seamounts for sea-dwellers). They build almost exclusively using undersea concrete. They are at home in almost any depth of water, given enough time to acclimatise to the pressure changes involved, and can see readily at all light-levels, including the darkness of the Deeps - though only in black-and-white without light sources. Although most prefer a relatively settled lifestyle, even when they do not build structures to live in, a small number favour a free-swimming nomadic existence instead, some of whom will tackle lone surface vessels on occasion. The Fish-folk live otherwise primarily as hunter-gatherers, but will trade with other creatures, and produce particularly fine, artfully-carved work in stone, coral, shell and similar substances. They communicate using a mixture of visual gestures, skin-colour changes (including bioluminescent patches), some noises, and limited-range telepathy (circa 1,500 ft = 450 m). (Thalassans are similar to D&D's Locathah.)

### **Features of the Map**

The standing remains of the three former towers and their collapsed rubble heaps are all that can be ordinarily seen by those able to use vision in the lightless ocean depths. The standing tower walls have no obvious access points to the outside of either door or window type, though given what little survives of them, this is perhaps unsurprising. Similarly, the floor remnants show little trace of any connecting accessways between

levels inside the structures. However, many of these floors are shown by fragmentary scraps of concrete still attached along the inside of the walls at their various levels alone. No evidence of internal fittings or usage of specific areas can be found in the towers, or by digging into the rubble heaps. Those rubble piles are in fact often less solid than they may seem, with voids and other ill-consolidated places, so are unsafe to explore for long in direct contact with them.

Circular section vertical chutes down to the three uppermost, vertically-flattened ovoid chambers below the sea-bed's surface can be accessed physically only by first clearing enough rubble from the central area within each tower ruin. Each chute is closed by a carefully-fitted, round trapdoor hatch, easily opened once revealed and cleared of debris, while forming a tight seal that has long prevented any dust or rubble from above entering the subterranean passages and chambers prior to such an opening. Moving the rubble around the site will of course stir-up much silt, reducing visibility, and this may enter any opened chutes down too, unless great care is taken.

Any creatures passing into the blue-limned Residual Magic Limit area will become subject to its effects. Animals, including mounts and baggage creatures, will refuse to pass into it, unless coaxed with great effort. Even after that, they will continually make their unease very obvious. They cannot be left tied or unattended in the zone, as they will simply flee. Sentient humanoids will become affected by unease, increasing the longer they try to stay in the area. If they persist in exploring the marked zone, they will begin seeing ghostly figures, chiefly of Thalassan form. Able to cause fear, rather than physical harm, such figures cannot be made to go away fully by any means, so long as the affected person remains in the blue-tinged area of the map. Staying there for an extended period - such as setting up camp - or trying to remove the ghostly figures (which are magical manifestations, not undead creatures, so cannot be permanently removed as long as the magical field continues), may prompt other ghostly figures to become apparent, commonly only in peripheral vision. These have a far larger, vaguer, form, loosely resembling something like an oddly undulating sailboat in appearance, shapes which are able to move equally along, or through, solid surfaces, and through the water. These too can create fear in their viewers, more strongly than the Thalassan figures. They can also cause limited physical harm, again by magical means. Those with sufficient knowledge may realise such "sailboat" figures seem comparable to descriptions of ghostly shapes occasionally associated with the rare, very ancient, Wheel-Race structures of city size found in places on land, where they have normally been dismissed as mere mirages.

Investigating the magical field will reveal its extent to be as shown on the map; to be relatively weak yet consistent throughout its area of influence; to be defensive in nature, so was likely once part of the settlement's protection; and to originate from somewhere below the surface.

The subterranean tunnels that form the source of this effect can be physically accessed if any of the three entryways below the centre of each ruined tower can be excavated. Each entry tunnel below its circular hatch is neatly-cut into the basaltic bedrock in Thalassan style, circular too, and around 10 ft (3 m) in diameter. Each chute leads vertically down into a similarly-cut, vertically-flattened, ovoid chamber beginning about 10 ft below the sea-bed. The chambers are all of identical shape, *circa* 40 ft in horizontal diameter by 20 ft in height (12 m × 6 m). There are no doors or hatches below the surface.

The chamber beneath the largest, more southerly, tower has three circular-section, 10 ft diameter passageways leading out from it. One links horizontally with the chamber below the northwestern smaller tower. The other two descend approximately 10 ft to the

lower level. That to the northeast connects with another ovoid chamber of Thalassan construction, and equal size to the upper room. This lower chamber is central to the outer circular tunnel shown on the Subterranean Tunnels view of the map, and to the plan view of the Residual Magic glow. The southerly descent leads directly into the outer “ring” tunnel. This outer tunnel, while circular in overall plan, is of square cross-section, some 20 ft (12 m) in height and width. It is distinctly different to the Thalassan structures elsewhere, being much smoother in its cut surfaces, and is very much older. There is a continual pale blue glow within it, of indeterminate source, a glow which can be noticed in any of the tunnels and chambers which link directly to it.

The ovoid chamber under the smaller northwestern tower ruins also has three 10 ft diameter circular-section tunnels leading out from it. One connects with the chamber below the largest tower to its southeast at the same depth below the surface. A second links with the lower-level central chamber to the east-southeast, while the third drops to the west-northwest to join the square-section ring-tunnel with the blue glow. A pale reflection of this glow is obvious in the chamber as shining up this passageway.

The third ovoid upper level chamber, that below the eastern smaller tower’s ruins, has two descending passageways out from it, one to the west to join with the central Thalassan chamber, the other - again illuminated by a clear, pale blue light shining up it - links to the square-section ring-passage to the east.

On the lower level, the central ovoid chamber has an identical shape and size to the three on the upper level, being again of Thalassan build. Four 10 ft diameter circular-section tunnels lead out of it, three sloping up to the east, west-northwest and southwest to those three upper level chambers, while the fourth heads horizontally due north to link into the square-section ring-tunnel. A pale blue glow can be seen in this tunnel from the chamber.

All four chambers and the tunnels connecting them are devoid of any contents or wall-markings. The inner (convex) wall of the square-section ring-tunnel, however, has been carefully carved at various times with archaic Thalassan-character texts in many places along it. These can be viewed easily thanks to the apparently all-pervasive pale blue light in the tunnel. There remains no definable single source for the light beyond this passageway. The glow is identifiably magical in nature, the magic incredibly ancient, though not Thalassan, or that of any other recognisable, still-living, intelligent species. It would take much time and effort to find, transcribe, translate and read all these carven texts. Their content includes numerous notes on the history of the undersea world in general, and its intelligent races, particularly relating to the Thalassans. There are some magical and religious texts too, and some details, perhaps only speculative, on the nature of the Great Wheel-Race, their cities and buildings. From some of the latter notes, it could be established that this outer ring-passage and its associated magical effects, were believed by the Thalassans here to have been created originally by that Wheel-Race, despite the structure here being most unlike any of those known so far on land. The reality, or otherwise, of this is left up to individual GMs.