

The Whispering Wastes

Despite lying well within Nibirum's Antarctic Circle at approximately 69 degrees South latitude, this mapped region of southwest-central Peredur, in the area sometimes known as Haddmark, is also part of one of the more heavily-populated places on this small continent. While always cold, shelter from the great mountain and hill ranges around Haddmark allow a more temperate climate to persist in the vales closer to the great inland sea of Siljan Lake and the Torne River that flows south out of it. Scattered farmsteads through to larger settlements of up to city-size can be found on the grasslands and scrubby moors of the area especially, linked by roads and trackways that remain passable in all but the worst winter weather. Wind-blown dry grasses, tall dried plants and dead leaves are said to be the origin of this sub-region's name.

The map covers an area roughly 120 miles by 70 (195 by 115 kilometres), the bulk of which has been divided up into 6-mile (north-south; almost 10 km) hexagons. It is the zone mapped within the outlined heavier hexagonal border which is described in more detail here, where specific features have been set within their own number-labelled, highlighted hexagons. For clarity, the series of numbers used to define each hex location has been added outside the hexagonal border, within the outermost rectangular one, along the upper and left edges of the hex-mapped section, indicating the vertical column, and place within that column, respectively.

Uplands and crags of the Siljan Hills form much of the north-central edge of the mapped area, which hills run alongside the southern and western sides of Siljan Lake, whose southern tip appears in the map's top right corner. The Lake extends about 130 miles (210 km) north from here. The Torne River flows from that southern end through the grasslands (darker shading) of the map's eastern segment, with more hills, the Skara Brays, rising from, and off, the southeastern corner. Much of the map's central and western parts are lower-lying scrubby moorland, with some scattered woods. Within the hillier places are some denser, chiefly coniferous, woods. A second main watercourse, the Black River, just crosses the southwestern map corner. It meets the Torne at the town of Vadstena (with its famed Sacred Temple) around 50 miles (80 km) beyond the map's southern edge, where the rivers become the Ume.

The nature of the contents for each labelled hex was determined using, or adapted from, tables in, the Shadowdark RPG rules, and the general map appearance, with highlighted, labelled hexagons, and limited map-edge numbering, was based on the style adopted in the supplementary materials for this system published in the Cursed Scroll periodicals also owned and produced by The Arcane Library. Parenthesized comments beginning "SD" below, sometimes with page numbers, indicate aspects of the description pertaining specifically to these rules, where differences to the usual ones apply, or where other clarification may be useful.

Labelled Hex Locations

003 - Katrine Tower: Half-buried in scrubby overgrowth some way north of Ljungby Village (Hex 005) are the remains of this isolated, ruined, small stone tower. Hidden away somewhere in part of the more substantial standing stonework is a small golden lockbox containing the flawless, dazzling Katrine Diamond (SD: Box + gemstone = 360 gp). An unusually powerful Stone Golem, made from the same rock as the Tower, endlessly moves a pile of stones from one place to another in the ruin, setting them in a careful stack each time. The Golem can also teleport in bursts over short distances (SD, p. 222, Stone Golem, except this one is LV 10, HP 49, does double normal damage, and in place of its usual attacks, can teleport up to near).

005 - Ljungby Village: A modest village on both banks of the Swirl River, with a main road leading east to Ivan's Keep (Hex 505), and southwest off-map to the hamlet of Fagersta at the Black River bridge some 35 miles (55 km) away. Detailed by a separate Atlas map.

009 - Ostlin Tower: Near the east bank of the Black River is a small stone tower in reasonable, if in places somewhat crude, repair. It is home to a Troll, Lemen, who would love to be an entertainer. He has a beautiful lute made of ironwood with gold fittings that he can barely play (SD: 75 gp), and often practises juggling four silver ceremonial daggers with much greater facility (SD: the daggers are 10 gp each). A small riverside cave connects to the Tower's ground level, which is the webbed lair of four Ettercaps.

104 - Voraga's Keep: North of the Ljungby-Ivan's Keep road by the south bank of the Swirl River, northeast of Ljungby itself (Hex 005), is this small fortified Keep with an attached manor house, all stone-built, home to the Half-Orc sorcerer Voraga. A channel diverts some of the river water into a small lake around the Keep. Voraga has some unusual powers, a variety of different guardian minions, and a main lair-room set-up like a temple, with two idols on opposite walls, one a piece of meteorite sculpted into an amorphous, tentacular

form, the other an ivory scorpion that grants immunity to poison on its owner. (SD: Voraga is a LV 8 Mage, p. 231, with an AC 15 ironlike scaled skin, HP 36, one extra attack, and is able to use a paralytic touch instead of a normal spell attack. The tentacle idol = 85 gp. The scorpion idol that grants one Death's Sting Blessing = 320 gp.)

203 - Planar Gate Caverns: On the southwestern edge of the Siljan Hills near where a tributary of the Swirl River rises, is the entrance to a substantial series of Caverns, hidden away among which is a gateway to another plane. Occasional unusual creatures may be found in the vicinity, including in these caves, as a result, and there are numerous other oddities and dangers throughout the Caverns too.

209 - Nura's Mound: By the northwest bank of the River Kline, that runs from the southwestern Siljan Hills along the western edge of the Scrublands by and southwest of Ivan's Keep (Hex 505), eventually into the Black River in the map's southwest corner, is what seems like a low, sculpted mound with a loosely spiral form, if seen from above. This actually contains a long-asleep dragon. A semi-permanent camp of normally nomadic Human barbarians sits on the Mound, most of whom live a typical hunter-gatherer existence here, and who use a breed of hardy ponies as steeds. See also Farond's Tower (Hex 210) below.

210 - Farond's Tower: South of Nura's Mound (Hex 209), east of the River Kline, where it flows through some more substantial woodland (which woods straggle northeast and east from here to Woody Hollow - Hex 309 - and Hex 410), and built/grown into the upper parts of one of the older, larger trees, is this Elven Tower. The area is guarded and patrolled by Elves who do not welcome outsiders. They keep watch over Woody Hollow and Nura's Mound, without showing any overt antipathy towards the dwellers in either place. They do though know the hidden secret of the Mound.

309 - Woody Hollow: Among the woods that run between Farond's Tower (Hex 210) and Hex 410 is this, roughly large-town-sized, low-lying area that looks very much like a region of overgrown ruins to the casual eye. However, it is really an area with vast mounds of rotting vegetation, covered by a veneer of living plants. It is marsh-like to try to cross on foot, and disturbing the top cover is liable to release an appalling stench that will cling to anything immersed in it for days. Worse still, the Hollow is home to an unknown number of Otyughs, who live beneath the outer surface, and which fiercely guard the "riches" of their great expanse of rotting vegetable matter here.

401 - Cavern of The Lightless Guardians: On the western fringes of the Siljan Hills on the map is this hill in which is an intricate series of dangerous caves, where a secret circle of wizards meet, The Lightless Guardians. They are a group of Halfling magic-users, who once defeated a dragon. In the process, however, they also became cursed to now always take extra harm from silver weapons. They are known by rumour in parts of the mapped area. There are presently five surviving members, and when here, they set-up an assortment of guards, wards and traps among the caves, only some of which remain at other times. (SD: The five Mages - p. 231 - take double damage from silver weapons.)

403 - Bruga's Hold: A logging hamlet at the edge of the wooded southwestern Siljan Hills, run by self-titled Queen Bruga. The settlement is on the northern side of the Swirl River, over which a ford carries the trail south to Ivan's Keep (Hex 505). Detailed by a separate Atlas map.

408 - Cavern of the Slumbering Depths: Some woodland in the undulating Scrublands hides the entrance to a series of caves here. Outside the main cave-mouth is a half-buried, gigantic stone head. The stone is pale-coloured, where the greenery allows, and the one visible eye is closed. This "head" is simply the tiny above-ground portion of the Cavern's ancient guardian, Denelnonne, an Angel composed of alabaster, able to use some magic, and with, when open, golden eye orbs. Deep within the Cavern is a talking stone, a transformed witch, Vakesh the Lesser, who wakes only at certain times, appearing as an otherwise unremarkable part of the Cavern's rocks when asleep. She speaks only true omens and portents. Once she has spoken, all lights throughout the Cavern go out, and she sleeps once more. If her stone were to be destroyed, Vakesh would also cease to exist. Denelnonne is there to prevent this from happening, possibly using other denizens within the Cavern to assist. The witch-stone has no other powers. (SD: Denelnonne is a LV 13 Principi Angel, p. 195, with AC 18 (+3 plate mail), HP 55, and instead of one attack, may cast a spell, once per day each from - Light, Magic Circle, Dominion and Passwall.)

502 - Shrine of Karom: Hidden among the wooded hills northwest of Bruga's Hold (Hex 403), near where the Swirl River rises, is this small stone Shrine built into the side of a hill, and extending a little way into it, where

there is a natural cave. A small order of priestesses tends the Shrine, although visitors are rare, as no clear trails lead here. There is the suggestion of one in places, leading southeast to the Tower of the Forgotten King (Hex 603), if one that seems scarcely used. Embedded in the back wall of the inner cave is an anthropomorphic meteorite with rubies in it, two of which are in roughly the places eyes would be for a humanoid. When one of the priestesses becomes possessed by the spirits, she can combine with the awakened power of the meteorite-idol to open a gate to the Plane of Fire, during which she, and sometimes other priestesses, become Fire Elementals, until their rapture passes and the gate again closes.

505 - Ivan's Keep: Towards the western edge of the Scrublands on the southeast bank of the River Kline is this village-sized settlement, from which a road leads over the ford west to Ljungby Village (Hex 005), that also forks north to Bruga's Hold (Hex 403). A third road leads northeast to Toresk (Hex 805) and beyond. From time to time, marauding bands of Goblins and Kobolds are apt to attack the village, thus most places are strongly-built, and there is the eponymous stone Keep on the village's eastern side. A stout timber palisade on an oval earthen bank encompasses the village. Ivan's Keep is detailed by a separate Atlas map.

603 - Tower of the Forgotten King: A small hilltop stone tower near the southwestern edge of the Siljan Hills, not far from where the upper River Kline descends over a series of cascades. The Tower is occupied and defended by an order of knights, The Dread Explorers, zealous worshippers of a deity aligned with order and positivity. They operate under a geas which means they must loudly praise their deity whenever they see her symbol. While not a rich order, their military gear and the Tower are always maintained in good repair. A faint, hard-to-follow trail runs from the upper Kline past the Tower northwestwards to the Shrine of Karom (Hex 502), and the knights here act as loose guardians of access to, and protectors of, the Shrine. (SD: The knights are worshippers of Saint Terragnis, and are Lawful.)

611 - The Savage Fane: Set amongst scattered trees on the Scrublands east of the small River Zune, is a stone-built temple that has the form of a high, rounded, tapering, wasps' nest. A circle of mysterious nature mages uses it for their meetings and ceremonies, The Dark Sentinel Druids. They have a long-standing rivalry with Hiloshrinne the Sorcerer who uses Doraine Circle (Hex 710) as his home. The Druids have a loose connection to Ivan's Keep (Hex 505), as detailed in the separate Atlas map for that site.

706 - Gossamer Hollow: A substantial, low-lying area of grassland with some scattered woods, surrounded on all sides by denser shrubs that create a loose "hedge" isolating it from the surrounding Scrublands. The town-sized, more open central region inside the hedge is covered with a haze of spiderwebs, making it look like a shimmering lake, even from quite close-by, thus the Hollow is a significant local landmark. The webs conceal a very large number of Giant Spiders, making it unwise to take a dip in the "lake".

710 - Doraine Circle: Some way southeast of the River Zune, and northeast from the Savage Fane (Hex 611) is a ring of ancient menhirs surrounded by, and partly within, an area of woods among the Scrublands, where the Sorcerer Hiloshrinne Six-Finger lives. He has a long-standing rivalry with the Dark Sentinel Druids at the Fane. Hiloshrinne, or possibly the Druids, may be responsible for the Goblin attacks at Ivan's Keep (Hex 505). The separate Atlas map for the Keep has a little more information on this.

801 - Mounds of the Immortal Horde: In a small valley in the midst of the more central Siljan Hills on the map, with dense, aromatic pine woods all around, is the solitary abode of the hermit Deulinaronne the Red. All about his dwelling in the valley are burial mounds, each sealed with an anciently rune-etched boulder. No paths lead here, although a tributary of the Cindaros River rises in a spring among the Mounds too, joining it in Hex 901, from where the Cindaros flows south through the Hills, then southeast over the Scrublands, eventually into the Torne River in the map's southeast.

805 - Toresk Village: Roughly midway along the west-east road between Ivan's Keep (Hex 505) and Osalin (Hex 1105), this Village lies in a curve on the east and north banks of the upper River Dent, one of the tributaries of the Cindaros River. It is described in a separate Atlas map.

808 - Lemlin Spike: A tall, substantial, upstanding rock pillar, rising from the Scrublands around 20 miles (30 km) south of Toresk (Hex 805), this is a significant local landmark. In the woods by its southern foot rises the River Zune. Whether legendary, or an event those approaching the Spike may witness (perhaps as a vision from the past or future), a pale wizard dressed all in black stands atop the Spike, while a group of ten or a dozen Elves stealthily move in towards the pillar's base, as if preparing to attack.

903 - Denen Arch: Where the Cindaros River exits the southern edge of the Siljan Hills, it passes through a great rock archway that looks as if it was once the mouth of a vast cavern, now a very obvious landmark, some miles north of the west-east road northeast of Toresk (Hex 805). In the pine woods by its southwestern side is a loosely village-sized encampment of Kobolds with their Bugbear King Kresk (who sits upon a beer-barrel throne that can be used as his litter when he is on the move in his official capacity). Kresk also has a Minotaur bodyguard, Breetos. These are probably the Kobolds that attack Ivan's Keep (Hex 505) at times, perhaps at the secret urging of The Shimmering Cult, based in Lightning Ravine (Hex 1002). The separate Atlas map for Ivan's Keep has some further details on this.

906 - Lios Hills: In the Scrublands, quite some way from the nearest settlements (Toresk, Hex 805, to the north-northwest and Osalin, Hex 1105, to the northeast), are a number of low, artificial hills that are very old barrow-mounds, some of which still have stone-sealed entrances visible through the overgrowth. The area is home to an ochre-coloured Basilisk, often to be found basking on rocks, and puffing its orange throat pouch. The burials may have an ancient link to Osalin, as described in the separate Atlas map for that settlement.

1002 - Lightning Ravine: For all it is a major landmark, this Ravine is remarkably little-known, as it is well-concealed by pine woods among the central-southern Siljan Hills. It is deep in places, and very difficult to access thanks to its sheer cliffsides, as it seems to have resulted from a sudden massive fracturing of the native rocks, rather than something which has been cut over time by a river, as no river flows through it. Its mapped appearance, rather like a forked lightning jag, is accurate, with its northeast-southwest length being about five miles (8 km). Hidden away, quite low-down on the north-facing internal cliffs of the more southerly western arm of the canyon, is a ledge with entrances to the Crystal Cathedral, main focus of worship and ceremonies for The Shimmering Cult. There is a difficult, narrow route down to this ledge from the western end of this part of the Ravine, although finding and using it would be extremely problematic for those outside the Cult, as Cult members make strenuous efforts to keep the path concealed. The Cathedral is detailed by a separate Atlas map. The place-name may relate to the form of the canyon, although it may be a memory of the falling meteorite that landed here long ago (as mentioned in the Cathedral map notes).

1004 - Myrkhos' Tower: On the rising Scrublands south of the Siljan Hills, north of the west-east road between Toresk (Hex 805) and Osalin (Hex 1105), and north of the Cindaros River, is this small stone tower, now occupied by Marincint, a telepathic, unusually powerful, ancient Frost Dragon. There is also a roost of (as the Dragon sees them) "pet" Arctic Stingbats in the upper Tower, D&D's Stirge-like creatures that have insulating fur making them impervious to cold. (SD: The Frost Dragon - p. 211 - has attacks that do +1d6 extra damage, and is considered LV 16 for treasure rolls. Arctic Stingbats have the normal stats, p. 254, except that their thick fur gives them AC 14.)

1102 - Devil's Drop: An unremarkable group of caves in the southerly Siljan Hills some way southeast of Lightning Ravine (Hex 1002) is used as a stopping-off point by members of The Shimmering Cult, on their way to or from the settlements away from their Cathedral in the depths of the Ravine, and where they sometimes hold captives for a while. The caves are notable for their sharp stalactites, some of which are rigged by the Cult as traps to fall on any sudden loud noises here (Cult members only ever speak softly and in whispers), usually just when the caves are unoccupied. There are signs that people have been here in parts of the inner caverns, and, should the GM determine, clues as to who left them, assuming a group of Cult members is not using the caves at the time.

1104 - The Grey Mounds: In the Scrublands between the southern Siljan Hills to the north and Osalin Village (Hex 1105) to the south, are some low, gently undulating mounds, a series of ancient barrows, in one of which lives the necromantic Sorcerer Vanov, who has ten Zombie guards. He possesses an unusual crystal ring, decorated with thorns, which when worn, enables the user to see invisible and incorporeal creatures. Like the burial mounds of the Lios Hills (Hex 906), these too may have an old connection with Osalin, as described in the separate Atlas notes for that settlement.

1105 - Osalin Village: On the west side of the Cindaros River ford, where the road northeast to Arvika (Hex 1304) crosses it, is this Village. Other routes lead off to the northwest across the surrounding Scrublands to Toresk (Hex 805), and south across the River Dent's ford (in Hex 1106) to Rularn (Hex 1307). Notable for its vast expanse of graveyards, the Village is detailed by a separate Atlas map.

1107 - Moondrake Pool: A subterranean spring feeds a substantial natural lake, surrounded by rocky outcrops and cliffs in an area of woodland right on the grassland edge of the Scrublands. The Torden Stream

flows out of its eastern end, joining the Cindaros River some distance away at Rularn (Hex 1307). There are many Dryads living in the trees, at least four of whom are also Druids. (SD: Combine the powers, and assume the higher values for the various other stats, of both Dryad and Druid, p. 213, for the Druidical Dryads here, each of which is LV 9, HP 42.)

1109 - The Unholy Queen's Road: On the grasslands some way northwest of a bend in the Torne River, are a number of ancient menhirs, set in two, more or less parallel, lines, running roughly north-south for about half a mile (800 metres). The standing stones involved are irregularly separated, and of unequal sizes. This makes it unclear in places if some stones are just ordinary field rocks on the surface, or parts of the deliberately-placed ancient pattern. For all there are no nearby settlements or farms, someone has recently carefully constructed a woven-grass, life-sized horse effigy on the Road, towards its southern end.

1201 - Death's Delve: One of the higher hills inland from, yet still overlooking, the Siljan Lake, contains this series of caverns, used as a roost much of the time by a number of Wyverns. The lower slopes are surrounded by quite dense pine woods, into which few other creatures, including humanoids, dare venture. Even ships on the Lake are at risk from Wyvern attacks at times.

1206 - Temple of the Covenant: By the east bank of the Cindaros River southeast of Osalin (Hex 1105) is this sizeable Temple complex, guarded by an order of military templars, the Knights of the Covenant. The Temple is also under the direct protection of its order-favouring deity. (SD: The Temple and Knights are dedicated to the Lawful deity Madeera the Covenant.)

1304 - Arvika: This hamlet is in the vale of the Silvertongue, sited east of the river, where the road northeast from Osalin (Hex 1105) crosses the watercourse on the very old stone Silver Bridge, said to be older than the settlement. The road continues east towards the Torne River and the village of Brightlawn (Hex 1604) from here. Northeast of the hamlet is the entrance to the great, steep-sided, dry valley of Stormy Cleft, that runs east for several miles/kilometres from there. It is rumoured to contain a legendary treasure hidden by guarded webs. The settlement and Stormy Cleft are described elsewhere in the Atlas.

1307 - Rularn: A rather shabbily run-down hamlet near the confluence of the Torden Stream with the Cindaros River, set on both banks of the Torden, just west of the Cindaros. A trail runs to the northwest, leading off to Osalin (Hex 1105). Most curiously, the entire hamlet is located inside a huge circle of standing stones, with a raised earthen ring-bank henge placed just outside them. Described in more detail elsewhere in the Atlas.

1409 - Vorn Village Ruins: It is hard to identify now that this was once a settlement on the road by the eastern side of the Torne River, some way northwest of Skara (Hex 1611), as it was abandoned long ago, leaving only overgrown ruins. Some of these remain substantial enough to act as shelter for an Ogre, Lud, who lurks here. There are places where some crudely-scratched graffiti is visible on the more upstanding walls with less vegetation on them as well.

1507 - Urgana's Shrine: Indications in the area nearby are that the road east of the Torne River most likely once ran close beside this old Shrine. Now though, the trail veers away from it in a sweeping curve that carries it circuitously several miles/kilometres from the Shrine, as if deliberately avoiding it. The Shrine is a modestly-sized stone building, set above a large tomb, which tomb has an accessway within the Shrine. There are no priests here, and the place seems quite abandoned. It is, however, haunted by an extremely angry Ghost.

1508 - Fernland: After the road south on the east side of the Torne River is seemingly safely past Urgana's Shrine (Hex 1507), it starts to wend its way back towards the river through what seem to be some lower outliers of the Skara Bray hills further to the southeast. In places, the route is not very clear, and it can be easy for non-locals to lose the path through Fernland entirely. Becoming lost here is inadvisable, as the "hills" are really old barrow-mounds, the lairs and haunts now of Vampires. The road's difficult visibility through them thus seems unlikely to be purely accidental.

1604 - Brightlawn: North of the Torne River, nearly 20 miles, 30 km, south of the River's outflow from the Siljan Lake, is this hamlet on the road between Arvika (Hex 1304) and Fairbridge (Hex 1702). It is detailed by a separate Atlas map, and is notable for several subterranean streams.

1609 - Wolf Peak: One of the higher western peaks in the generally moderate-height Skara Bray hills in the map's southeast. There are some fairly shallow caves in its higher parts, in which lurk a number of long-established, lumbering, insectoid Cave Brutes (SD, p. 200; similar to the Umber Hulk of D&D). Sometimes they will attack small groups or lone travellers on the road nearby to the northwest, including those wandering lost in Fernland (Hex 1508).

1611 - Skara: This hamlet forms the centre of a scattered farming and logging district on the southwestern edge of the Skara Bray hills, where the road east of the Torne River takes a long detour away from the riverside to pass through it. The road continues off-map to Vadstena and its Great Temple, some 50 miles (80 km) to the southwest. A small river, the Salwin, that rises in the hills off the southeastern map edge, here forms the eastern and southern limits of the settlement. One especially notable feature just northeast of the place is PlikPlok Cavern, famed for its water-lain mineral deposits in curtains, stalagmites and stalactites, in whose depths is a partly mineralised ancient ruin that seems almost to have grown from the rock, thanks to its mineral coating. Skara is described by a separate Atlas map.

1702 - Fairbridge Village: Alongside the western end of the eponymous stone bridge over the Torne River, about ten miles, 16 kilometres, south from its outflow at the southeastern tip of the Siljan Lake, this is a significant, small settlement, because of its bridge and the west-east road that uses it, linking places on this map to the many settlements east and north of the great Lake, including the city of Thvariden on the Lake's eastern shore, 60 miles and more to the north (100 km+). The road runs west and south from here to Brightlawn in Hex 1604. Described by a separate Atlas map.

1704 - Basilisk Rocks: Along the road east of the Torne River, opposite Brightlawn (Hex 1604) to the northwest, a narrow, elongated oval of menhirs flanks the route - which trail actually passes down the oval's long axis. The last stone on the southwestern end is not an ordinary rock, but a fossilised tree-trunk.