

WYVERN CITADEL DEFENCE ZONE

THE DEFENCE ZONE IS A REGION IN SHOENIA, WEST-CENTRAL KENTORIA AROUND 150 MILES (240 KILOMETRES) WEST-EAST BY 130 MILES (210 KM) NORTH-SOUTH, CENTRED ROUGHLY ON THE GREAT DELTA OF THE RIVER JACKSON. THE DELTA IS A HUGE, LOW-LYING MASS OF RIVER CHANNELS AND STREAMS OF VARYING SIZE AND FLOW-STRENGTH, MANY LAKES AND PONDS, AND EXTENSIVE AREAS OF MARSHES, BOGS AND MANGROVE SWAMPS. IN PLACES, THE MANGROVES MAKE LAND OR WATER TRAVEL EFFECTIVELY IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTREMELY DENSE GROWTH. AWAY FROM THIS TRACT OF SWAMPLANDS, MUCH OF THE AREA IS VERY FERTILE AGRICULTURAL LAND, WATERED BY FREQUENT RAIN - THE REGION IS CLOSE TO NIBIRUM'S SOUTHERN TROPIC - HEAVILY LACED WITH FRESH NUTRIENTS BROUGHT INTO THE VALLEYS OF SHOENIA BY THE JACKSON AND ITS MANY TRIBUTARIES FROM THE CENTRAL GREAT STONE WALL MOUNTAINS THAT RUN THE LENGTH OF WESTERN KENTORIA.

THE REGION HAS BEEN LONG KNOWN FOR ITS WYVERNS. INDEED, IT HAS BEEN SAID THE SMALLER, OFTEN COLOURFUL, VARIETIES OUTNUMBER THE BIRDS HEREABOUTS, AND ARE OF COMPARABLE SIZES. LARGER VARIETIES, EACH WITH ITS OWN PARTICULAR COLOURING ARE ALSO RELATIVELY COMMON, AND BEING AMENABLE TO RIDING, PROVIDING THE WYVERN CHOOSES THEIR RIDER, SUCH PAIRINGS FORM A MENTAL BOND WHICH LASTS A LIFETIME. THE AREA IS SOMETIMES CALLED THE WYVERN COAST ELSEWHERE IN KENTORIA, AND NOT UNNATURALLY, THE LEADERS HERE WERE KNOWN AS WYVERN LORDS IN EARLIER TIMES. WYVERN CITADEL ON THE STONEMOOR RIDGE WAS LONG THE SEAT OF THOSE LORDS, UNTIL THE LINE DIED OUT A FEW CENTURIES AGO. SINCE THEN, THE SEAT OF POLITICAL POWER HERE HAS SHIFTED TO THE CITY OF MONSEIGNOR NEARER THE COAST, THOUGH THE CITADEL HAS CONTINUED IN USE AS A MILITARY CENTRE, COORDINATING THE AREA'S DEFENCES WHEN THREATENED BY BARBARIAN RAIDERS FROM OVER THE WESTERN OCEAN.

FOR MANY YEARS, THERE WERE FEW TO NO RAIDS, AND THE POLITICIANS STARTED TALKING OF DISBANDING THE DEFENCE FORCES AND THEIR EXPENSIVE WYVERN UPKEEP NEEDS. THE DEFENCES WERE ALLOWED TO DECLINE, OFTEN STARVED OR RESOURCES, UNTIL LAST YEAR, WHEN AN UNUSUAL, POSSIBLY MAGICAL, SICKNESS LAID-LOW LARGE PARTS OF THE HUMANOID POPULATIONS ACROSS SHOENIA, AN ILLNESS WHICH CONTINUES TO LINGER-ON EVEN NOW, DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE KENTORIAN HEALERS. THEN THE WINTER - OFTEN SCARCELY NOTICED AS SUCH HERE IN THE TROPICS - PROVED ABNORMALLY SEVERE, WITH STORMS, SNOW AND ICE, TO THE POINT WHERE MANY OF THE NORTH-FACING MOUNTAIN SLOPES STILL RETAIN SIGNIFICANT REMNANTS OF THE SNOWFALLS. IN RETROSPECT, IT SEEMED VERY PROBABLE THIS ATROCIOUS WEATHER HAD BEEN MAGICALLY AUGMENTED BY BARBARIAN SHAMANS AND DRUIDS, AS SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF BARBARIAN RAIDING VESSELS BEGAN ASSAULTING THE COAST IN VARIOUS PLACES DURING ALL THIS. SOME WERE DRIVEN-OFF OR DESTROYED. OTHERS WERE FOUND TO HAVE CONSTRUCTED TEMPORARY SETTLEMENTS IN ISOLATED COASTAL SPOTS, NOTABLY ON SOME OF THE ISLES JUST OFFSHORE OF THE DELTA. THESE HAVE ALL (OR PERHAPS ONLY MOSTLY) BEEN FORCIBLY REMOVED NOW, ALBEIT IT BECAME EVIDENT DURING THE SEARCHES FOR MORE THAT THESE WERE NOT THE FIRST SUCH "VISITORS" TO HAVE SET UP CAMPS HERE DOWN THE AGES.

A FEW RAIDS DID MORE DAMAGE, HOWEVER, MOST SIGNIFICANTLY THAT BY A NUMBER OF VESSELS WHICH MANAGED TO SAIL INTO THE SOUTHERNMOST JACKSON ESTUARY, AND THENCE UP THE PARTLY CANALISED SOUTHERN CHANNEL OFF IT, CUT TO CREATE A DEEP-WATER ANCHORAGE FOR SHIPS TO TRADE MORE EASILY AT MONSEIGNOR. THE VILLAGE MARKED ON THE MAP BY THE SOUTHWESTERN BANK OF THIS CHANNEL IS VIRTUALLY A NORTHEASTERN SUBURB OF MONSEIGNOR NOW THANKS TO THIS INCREASED TRADE, AS THIS IS THE MOST NORTHERLY HARBOUR IN WESTERN KENTORIA USED REGULARLY BY SAILORS COMING UP FROM THE KENTORIAN HEARTLANDS ON AND AROUND THE CENTRAL INNER AND ANCIENT SEAS. THE RAIDERS SACKED THIS VILLAGE AND WENT ON TO SEVERELY DAMAGE PARTS OF MONSEIGNOR, INCLUDING RAZING ITS FORUM, LEAVING WITH MUCH LOOT AND PRISONERS. WHILE A LOT OF THIS DAMAGE WAS QUITE QUICKLY REPAIRED - ALTHOUGH MORE THAN IS PUBLICLY ADMITTED REMAINS ONGOING OR MIGHT BE QUIETLY FORGOTTEN ABOUT, SHOULD THE COST PROVE TOO HIGH - AND THE MONSEIGNOR FORUM REBUILT "BIGGER AND BETTER THAN BEFORE", AS THE RULING LOCAL POLITICIANS LIKE TO SAY, MOST OF THE POPULACE REMAINS VERY NERVOUS, AND HAS DEMANDED ACTION TO ENSURE THEIR BETTER SECURITY IN FUTURE. HENCE THE RESTRUCTURING AND REINVIGORATION OF THE NEWLY-NAMED WYVERN CITADEL DEFENCE ZONE.

MOST OF THE WYVERN DROMES SHOWN ARE NEW OR HAVE BEEN ENLARGED ON PREVIOUSLY-USED, SOMETIMES ABANDONED, SITES. AS WYVERNS PREFER LIVING IN HIGHER-LEVEL CAVES WITH EASY ACCESS TO THE AIR, EACH BASE IS SET ON SOME SUITABLE UPSTANDING TERRAIN FEATURE, WITH CAVES ENOUGH FOR ALL THE WYVERNS AND RIDERS (WHO TEND TO LIVE ALONGSIDE THEIR OWN WYVERN), AND SOME OF THE MORE ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL. SUCH CAVES MAY BE NATURAL, THOUGH MORE OFTEN THEY HAVE BEEN FRESHLY DUG-OUT OR EXPANDED. NON-RIDING DROME PERSONNEL ARE MORE COMMONLY BILLETED IN SURFACE WOODEN HUTS NEARBY, AS FEW OF THE TERRAIN FEATURES HAVE ANYTHING LIKE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR MORE CAVES THAN THE WYVERNS REQUIRE, AND THEY ALWAYS TAKE PRIORITY.

EACH DROME HAS ALLOCATED TO IT A NUMBER OF TWELVE-STRONG WYVERN SQUADRONS, EACH SQUADRON MADE UP OF DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF THE FOUR CHIEF WYVERN COLOURS, RED, BLACK, BLUE AND GREEN, APPROPRIATE FOR THE PERCEIVED LOCATION'S NEEDS. EACH COLOUR OF WYVERN HAS ITS OWN PECULIAR FEATURES AND SPECIALISMS.

Red Wyverns: THESE ARE THE MOST PHYSICALLY POWERFUL OF ALL THE WYVERNS, ABLE TO RIP OR SNAP THE MAINMAST FROM A SAILING VESSEL IN A SINGLE, AERIAL STRIKE. THEY HAVE A PARTICULARLY POWERFUL POISON TAIL-STING.

BLACK WYVERNS: THEIR TAIL-STING POISON IS LESS STRONG THAN THE REDS, AND THEY ARE NOT SO PHYSICALLY POWERFUL AS THE REDS EITHER, BUT THEY ARE ABLE TO BREATHE A JET OF FIRE SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.

BLUE WYVERNS: THESE HAVE THE LARGEST WINGSPAN OF ALL THE WYVERNS. THEY ARE ABLE TO FLY HIGHER, FURTHER, FASTER AND MORE ACROBATICALLY THAN ANY OTHER KIND, AND THEY HAVE EXTRAORDINARILY KEEN VISION AS WELL. THEY REGULARLY CATCH AND EAT PREY ON THE WING, AND IF LEFT TO THEMSELVES WOULD ONLY RARELY COME TO LAND AT ALL. THEY ARE NOT ESPECIALLY PHYSICALLY POWERFUL IN AN ATTACK, THOUGH THEY STILL HAVE AN EFFECTIVE POISONOUS TAIL-STING.

GREEN WYVERNS: GREEN WYVERNS ARE WEAK FLYERS, PREFERRING TO LIVE BY COASTAL CLIFFS OR ON CRAGS IN MARSHLANDS, FROM WHERE THEY CAN LAUNCH INTO GLIDES WITH LESS EFFORT. THEY FREQUENTLY WORM THEIR WAY ALONG THE GROUND VERY READILY THOUGH, LIKE A GREAT WINGED SERPENT, INCLUDING THROUGH THE TANGLED ROOTS AND BRANCHES OF THE MANGROVE SWAMPS. THEIR TAIL-STING HAS THE STRONGEST VENOM OF ALL FOUR OF THESE TYPES OF WYVERN, AND WHEN THEY MUST, THEY CAN SPIT A SOMEWHAT LESS POWERFUL VENOM A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE TOO.

THE DROMES

THESE ARE DETAILED FROM ROUGHLY SOUTH TO NORTH AS SHOWN ON THE MAP, NEARER-COASTAL DROMES FIRST.

LIMPING: THE PLACE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN NAMED FOR AN IMPOVERISHED PEDLAR FOLLOWING THE QUENTESCO TO MONSEIGNOR ROAD, WHO STOPPED BY THE HAMLET NEAR HERE TO REMOVE A STONE FROM HIS SHOE THAT WAS CAUSING HIM TO LIMP. WHILE DOING SO, HE ACCIDENTALLY OVERHEARD A PAIR OF OGRES PLOTTING TO ATTACK SAID HAMLET, AND HIS TIMELY WARNING ALERTED AND SAVED THE FOLKS THERE FROM HARM. OTHERS SAY IT'S A COMICAL REFLECTION ON THE MILESTONE BY THE HAMLET WHICH STATES THE PLACE IS 250 MILES FROM QUENTESCO AND 60 FROM MONSEIGNOR (400 AND 95 KM RESPECTIVELY). THE DROME IS SET ON A ROCKY, WOODED HILL NEAR THE HAMLET. TWO WYVERN SQUADRONS ARE BASED HERE, EACH WITH A MIXTURE OF RED, BLACK AND BLUE WYVERNS.

HENHILL: A RUGGED KNOLL WITH CAVES, SAID TO LOOK LIKE A DOVECOT FROM A DISTANCE. THE "HENS" ARE SMALL WYVERNS THAT LOVE TO FLIT ABOUT THE TREES AND SHRUBS HEREBOUTS. FOUR WYVERN SQUADRONS ARE LOCATED HERE, AND IT IS THE MAIN TRAINING CENTRE FOR NEW RIDERS, SO IS OFTEN PARTICULARLY BUSY. THE FOUR BASED SQUADRONS HERE ARE COMPOSED OF A MIX OF RED, BLACK AND BLUE WYVERNS.

MIDDLE WALL (O.P.): THIS IS THE CONTROLLING OBSERVATION POST (HENCE "O.P.") FOR THE DEFENCE ZONE STATIONS THAT LIE SOUTH OF THE RIVER JACKSON, WHILE STILL UNDER THE OVERALL COMMAND OF WYVERN CITADEL. THE DROME IS SET ON THE HIGHER OF THREE ROUGHLY PARALLEL ROCKY RIDGES IN THE VICINITY. LOCAL LEGEND HOLDS THAT THESE RIDGES ARE THE REMAINS OF GREAT WALLS BUILT BY GIANTS IN AGES PAST TO SEPARATE THE LANES IN THEIR OUTDOOR BOWLING ALLEY THAT WAS SUPPOSEDLY ONCE HERE. THREE SQUADRONS USE IT AS THEIR HOME BASE, MOSTLY COMPOSED OF RED, BLACK AND BLUE WYVERNS, WITH A FEW GREENS AS WELL.

BIG 'UN HILL: A ROCKY RISE WITH SOME ANCIENT GIANT-BUILT STONE RUINS ATOP IT, THE RUINS STILL SUBSTANTIAL ENOUGH TO BE USED AS HOME CAVES FOR ALL FOUR SQUADRONS BASED HERE (EACH A MIXTURE OF THE FOUR MAIN KINDS OF WYVERN). THE FEATURE AND ITS RUINS HAVE BEEN A LONG-KNOWN LOCAL LANDMARK IN THE SURROUNDING SWAMPS, TO WHICH A LOCAL NAME FOR GIANTS HAS BECOME ATTACHED.

STINGMERE: PART OF A REGION IN THE DELTA MARSHES AND MANGROVE SWAMPS NOTORIOUS FOR ITS BITING INSECTS, AND THE ABUNDANT, SMALL, BRIGHTLY-COLOURED WYVERNS AND BIRDS THAT FEED UPON THEM. THE HUMANOID SQUADRON PERSONNEL ARE MUCH LESS KEEN ON POSTINGS HERE, HOWEVER. THREE SQUADRONS ARE MAINTAINED AT THIS BASE, MOSTLY COMPOSED OF GREEN WYVERNS, PLUS A FEW BLUES.

BARBYLEA: ONE OF A NUMBER OF LOW HILLS IN THE VICINITY, "LEAS" IN THE NEARBY VERNACULAR, MANY OF WHICH, WITH THEIR LOWER-LYING SURROUNDINGS, ARE HOME TO A SPECIES OF UNUSUALLY LONG-SPINED MANGROVES WHICH BEAR A PARTICULARLY DELICIOUS FRUIT. THE LOCAL FRUIT-PICKERS ARE FOREVER COMPLAINING ABOUT GETTING CAUGHT ON THE TREES' BARBS. THREE WYVERN SQUADRONS USE THIS LEA AS THEIR BASE, SOME BLUES, BUT MOSTLY GREENS.

HAWKEYE: TOWARDS THE SOUTHERN LIMIT OF THE JACKSON DELTA IS AN EXTENSIVE AREA OF FLAT LAND ALONG THE ESCAD RILL'S FLOODPLAIN, WHERE IT SEPARATES FROM THE MAIN JACKSON CHANNEL. THIS IS EXCELLENT CATTLE-GRAZING COUNTRY. IT IS ALSO AN IDEAL PLACE FOR GENERATING THE THERMALS THE WYVERNS OFTEN USE BEFORE SETTING-OFF ON PATROLS OR ATTACKS. RAPTORS AND OTHER SOARING BIRDS COMMONLY MAKE USE OF THE THERMALS HERE AS WELL, SOMETIMES IN GREAT SWIRLING FLOCKS THAT CAN GIVE AN EYE-LIKE APPEARANCE TO SURFACE ONLOOKERS. NOBODY IS REALLY SURE IF THIS IS HOW THE NAME ORIGINATED, OR SIMPLY BECAUSE IT'S A GOOD PLACE TO SEE HAWKS MAKING USE OF THE THERMALS. THE DROME IS ON A LONG

ROCKY RIDGE THAT RUNS ROUGHLY PARALLEL TO THE RILL'S CHANNEL FOR A WAY, AND IS HOME TO THREE WYVERN SQUADRONS, MOSTLY COMPOSED OF BLUES, WITH A LIMITED MIX OF THE OTHER THREE KINDS.

STONEMOOR: A GENERALLY ROCKY AREA OF LANDSCAPE ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE GREAT JACKSON BEND, WITH A STONY RIDGE THAT BOTH WYVERN CITADEL AND THE STONEMOOR SQUADRON BASE MAKE USE OF. THE SURROUNDING AGRICULTURAL LANDS ARE QUITE POOR-QUALITY, SUITABLE MAINLY FOR SHEEP AND GOAT GRAZING, WHICH THE STONEMOOR VILLAGE COMMUNITY RELIES UPON AS THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME. A PAIR OF SQUADRONS ARE BASED AT STONEMOOR, ONE EXCLUSIVELY OF BLUE WYVERNS (OFTEN PERCEIVED AS A PARTICULAR ELITE, IF PERHAPS ONLY BY THEMSELVES), THE OTHER A MIX OF REDS, BLACKS AND BLUES.

DUCK'S FORD: LEGEND HOLDS THAT THIS PLACE-NAME DERIVES FROM A CUNNING FELLOW WHO ONCE TRICKED A DANGEROUS BANDIT (OR AN OGRE, OR A DEMON) INTO DROWNING THEMSELVES IN THE RIVER HERE, BY TELLING THEM THE DUCKS WERE JUST WALKING ACROSS THE RIVER BED, NOT SWIMMING, DESPITE THE JACKSON'S BREADTH. THE RIVER BED IS IN FACT UNUSUALLY DEEP IN THE AREA, AND A FERRY RUNS BETWEEN BOTH BANKS REGULARLY BY DUCK'S FORD VILLAGE ON THE SOUTHERN BANK, AS THERE IS NO WAY TO SAFELY CROSS CLOSE-BY OTHERWISE. THE DUCK'S FORD SQUADRON BASE IS A SET ON A STEEP, STEPPED HILL ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE JACKSON, AND ITS WYVERNS ARE EXCLUSIVELY BLUES, BECAUSE THIS IS THE MAIN TRAINING BASE FOR THE BIG-WINGED BLUE WYVERNS. A KEY REGION FOR BREEDING BLUES IS IN THE MOUNTAINS UP THE STREAM THAT RUNS BY DUCK'S FORD VILLAGE, FROM WHERE NEW RECRUITS ARE OFTEN BROUGHT.

ELFSTON: THREE WYVERN SQUADRONS ARE BASED HERE, EACH A MIXTURE OF ALL FOUR MAIN COLOURS OF WYVERN. IF THERE EVER WERE ANY ELF STONES, SUCH AS ELVEN RUINS, SAY, HERE, NO ONE NOW KNOWS WHERE THEY MIGHT BE, THOUGH THIS SUBSTANTIAL, CRAGGY KNOLL NORTHWEST OF INSIGHT STILL RETAINS ITS SUGGESTIVE NAME. FROM A DISTANCE THE KNOLL DOES HAVE THE LOOK OF A RUINED CASTLE OR TOWER FROM SOME DIRECTIONS, WHICH MIGHT BE HOW ITS NAME DERIVED. IT IS NOW PERHAPS BETTER KNOWN FOR THE GIBBET FROM WHICH HANGS THE CRUDE, STONE MODEL OF A DECAPITATED HEAD ON THE KNOLL'S SOUTHEASTERN SLOPES, ALBEIT NOBODY REALLY KNOW WHY THIS IS HERE, OR WHO SET IT UP EITHER.

TEMPLE HORN: ANOTHER HIGH, CRAGGY KNOLL. FROM THE SURROUNDING LAND, THIS ONE DOES HAVE THE LOOK OF A STRAIGHT, IF STUMPY, ANIMAL'S HORN, STANDING MORE OR LESS UPRIGHT FROM THE GROUND. A DELIBERATELY CLEARED, LEVELLED PLATFORM ON ITS NORTHERN SLOPES HAS A NUMBER OF ANCIENT STANDING STONES IN WHAT WAS PROBABLY ONCE A CIRCLE. SEVERAL HAVE FALLEN, OR SEEM TO BE MISSING (PERHAPS NOW BURIED, IF SO), SO IT HARD TO SAY WHETHER IT MAY ONCE HAVE BEEN THE "TEMPLE" OF THE PLACE-NAME. FOUR WYVERN SQUADRONS ARE MAINTAINED HERE, MADE UP OF REDS, BLACKS AND BLUES.

WEST MILKING: NAMED AMONG A SERIES OF MILK- AND CATTLE-RELATED HAMLET NAMES HEREABOUTS, WEST MILKING IS TOWARDS THE WESTERN EDGE OF AN ESPECIALLY FERTILE AREA OF PASTURE LAND. THE DROME IS SET ON A HANDY HILL WITH CAVES SOME WAY FROM THE HAMLET ITSELF. TWO SQUADRONS MAKE USE OF IT, A MIXTURE OF REDS, BLACKS AND BLUES.

SCRYING DETECTION FINDERS

THE SCRYING DETECTION FINDERS (SDFs) ARE STAFFED STATIONS CONTAINING SPECIALIST MAGICAL EQUIPMENT THAT ALLOWS THE OBSERVATION OF LARGER THINGS ON THE SEA, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT ALSO IN THE AIR ABOVE IT, AS AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM TO ALERT THE WYVERN SQUADRONS TO APPROACHING RAIDERS, AND TO KEEP WATCH ON THE LOCATION OF ANY PATROLLING SQUADRONS. THE RANGE OF EACH DEVICE IS PRESENTLY ABOUT 75 MILES (120 KM). THE DEVICES HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED SO THAT THEY DO NOT NEED SPECIALIST MAGICAL PRACTITIONERS TO USE THEM, ONLY PERSONNEL TRAINED IN THEIR OPERATION, AND ABLE TO INTERPRET THE INFORMATION THEY COLLECT. THE LATTER PROCESS IS OFTEN SUBJECT TO ERRORS AND UNCERTAINTIES, SO REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.

EACH SDF HAS A LARGE, NEUTRAL-COLOURED (USUALLY GREY OR CREAM) HEMISPHERICAL DOME SET VERY CLOSE TO, BUT ABOVE, THE SHORELINE. THIS DOME CONTAINS THE MAIN EQUIPMENT AND ITS OPERATORS. SET BACK FURTHER FROM THE COAST ARE SEVERAL LOW-LYING, USUALLY SINGLE-STOREY AND SOMETIMES PARTLY UNDERGROUND, BUILDINGS THAT CONTAIN STORES, COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT STAFF, INCLUDING GUARDS FOR THE WHOLE FACILITY. NEAR THE DOME IS AT LEAST ONE STRICKFADEN LIGHTNING CANNON, USUALLY A MARK III, FOR DEFENCE AGAINST SEABORNE ATTACKS. SEE THE SEPARATE "WYVERN CITADEL - OVERGROUND" MAPS AND NOTES FOR DETAILS ON THESE CANNONS.

AS NOTED, THE DOME IS ALWAYS SOME WAY ABOVE SEA-LEVEL, SET ON A RISE, HILL, HIGHER DUNE OR CLIFF, FOR EXAMPLE, TO KEEP IT SAFE FROM MOST PROBABLE SEA-SURGES. SOME OF THE SDF SITES ARE ACCESSIBLE ONLY FROM THE SEA, OR BY AIR. THE SCRYING EQUIPMENT IS CURRENTLY BULKY, HARD TO MOVE, AND SOMETIMES PRONE TO FAILURES, ASIDE FROM ANY INTENTIONAL HARM TO IT. THE SCRYING DOMES, WHILE WEATHERPROOF, COULD BE DAMAGED OR BREACHED RELATIVELY EASILY BY DELIBERATE ACTS OF BRUTE STRENGTH, THOUGH SUCH AN ATTACK AGAINST THE DOME WOULD NOT IN ITSELF DAMAGE THE EQUIPMENT INSIDE.

THE MAPPED SDF STATIONS ARE EACH DETAILED FURTHER BELOW, IN ORDER FROM SOUTH TO NORTH.

FINSMOUTH: SET ON LOW-LYING ROCKY CLIFFS JUST SOUTH OF THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER FIN IN ITS NEAR-COASTAL GORGE, THIS IS ONE OF THE NEWER SDF STATIONS, COMPLETED ONLY A SHORT TIME AGO. THE FISHING AND TRADING SETTLEMENT THAT ONCE SPANNED BOTH BANKS OF THE FIN HERE SHRANK AS MONSEIGNOR, WITH ITS BETTER DEEP-WATER HARBOUR ACCESS TOOK AWAY THE TRADE AND FISH-HANDLING DOCKS. ONLY A HAMLET SURVIVES BY THE SHORE, WHICH NOW CATERES MAINLY TO THE NEEDS OF THE SCRYING STATION. MOST OF THE PLACE'S FORMER INHABITANTS MOVED INLAND TO THE ROAD CROSSING HIGHER UP THE FIN, AT WHAT IS NOW THE TOWN OF FINSMOUTH. THE FIN VALLEY NORTHWEST OF THE TOWN IS IN QUITE A ROCKY, STEEP GORGE, WITH THE TOWN AT THE FIRST USABLE CROSSING POINT ON THE RIVER HEADING INLAND.

DROPPENHAM DOWN: THE STRETCH OF COASTLINE HERE IS NOTABLE FOR ITS ROLLING, CHALKY HILLS, OR DOWNS, WHOSE THIN SOILS MEAN FEW TREES OR BUSHES CAN GROW THERE. DROPPENHAM DOWN IS A LONG RIDGE THAT RUNS ALMOST PARALLEL TO THE SEA, A LITTLE WAY INLAND OF THE SHORELINE ITSELF. ITS INLAND SLOPE IS QUITE GENTLE, BUT ITS SHOREWARD SIDE HAS BEEN CUT INTO BY THE OCEAN AT SOME EARLIER EPOCH (IT HAS AN ALMOST CONCAVE SLOPE IN PARTS). WHILE GRASSED-OVER NOW, THIS SLOPE CAN BE CLIFF-LIKE IN PLACES. THE STREAM SHOWN ON THE MAP NEARBY ACTUALLY FLOWS UNDER THE DOWN BY A VERTICAL SINKHOLE ON THE LANDWARD SIDE, REAPPEARING FROM ANOTHER CAVE ON THE SHORE ITSELF. THE STREAM IS ACCESSIBLE FOR FRESHWATER ON THE LANDWARD SIDE AT THE BASE OF THE DOWN, WHICH IS WHERE THE SUPPORT BASE FOR THE SCRYING STATION HAS BEEN SET-UP, NOT FAR FROM THE IMPRESSIVE SINKHOLE. DROPPENHAM, WITH ROVED AND RISLE, WAS ONE OF THE FIRST SCRYING STATIONS ESTABLISHED IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE MONSEIGNOR RAID LAST YEAR. ITS DOME IS ON TOP OF THE RIDGE, TOGETHER WITH ITS LIGHTNING CANNON.

ROVED: ON THE LAST COASTAL HILLTOP BEFORE THE JACKSON DELTA MARSHES, THIS STATION WAS THE FIRST ONE BUILT. WORK BEGAN JUST DAYS AFTER THE RAID ON MONSEIGNOR. THE AREA AROUND MONSEIGNOR IS ALWAYS BUSTLING, WITH SEVERAL VILLAGES, AND STILL MORE HAMLETS, NEAR THE CITY, INCLUDING THE PORT VILLAGE, ALMOST A SUBURB OF MONSEIGNOR NOW, TO THE CITY'S NORTHEAST. THIS PORT LIES ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE SOUTHWESTERNMOST DELTA CHANNEL, A STREAM THAT HAS BEEN PARTLY CANALISED AND DEEPENED, TO LET LARGER-DRAUGHT VESSELS SAIL FURTHER INLAND THAN THE DIFFICULT, DISEASE-PRONE COASTAL MANGROVE SWAMPS AND SALT-MARSHES. ROVED WAS BUILT BEYOND ALL THIS ASSOCIATED ACTIVITY DELIBERATELY, AS SUCH BUSTLE CAN AFFECT THE SOMETIMES TEMPERAMENTAL SCRYING GEAR. ASIDE FROM THE USUAL DOME, THERE ARE TWO MARK III LIGHTNING CANNONS SET ON EITHER SIDE OF IT.

UPHAULING: A SMALL, ROCKY ISLAND SOME WAY OFFSHORE OF THE SOUTHERN JACKSON DELTA, THIS HAS LONG HAD A NAVIGATION LIGHT ON IT OF SOME FORM, WHICH, WITH OTHER COASTAL BEACONS AND LIGHTS ON THE ISLANDS AND PROMONTORY CLOSER INSHORE, PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR KENTORIAN SEAGOING VESSELS, WHICH ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY APPROACH THE REGION FROM THE SOUTH. SUCH NAVIGATION AIDS STRETCH FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES DOWN THE COAST FROM HERE AS WELL. UPHAULING AND THE OTHER NEAR-DELTA LIGHTS AND BEACONS INDICATE SAFE CHANNELS OF APPROACH FOR THE SOUTHERN JACKSON ESTUARY THAT LEADS TO MONSEIGNOR'S PORT VILLAGE. THE UPHAULING BEACON WAS UPGRADED A COUPLE OF CENTURIES AGO INTO A ROCK-BUILT LIGHTHOUSE, SOMETHING THAT TOOK CONSIDERABLE EFFORT, AS ALL THE BUILDING MATERIALS AND WORKERS HAD TO BE BROUGHT IN BY SEA, AS THE LOCATION IS TOO FAR FROM LAND FOR WYVERNS TO CARRY SUCH WEIGHTS OF CARGO BY AIR. ENDLESSLY HAULING BULKY CARGOES UP FROM THE FEW, DIFFICULT BERTHING-SPOTS AROUND THE ISLAND'S SHORES NEARBY, OR OVERLAND ON IT FROM THE ONE EASIER LANDING BEACH, WHICH WAS NATURALLY THAT FURTHEST FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE SITE, RESULTED IN ITS NAME, ALSO A CONVENIENT PUN ON "APPALLING". THE ROCK LIGHTHOUSE HAS A LARGE, OPEN, WYVERN LANDING PLATFORM SET ABOVE THE LAMP ROOM AT THE STRUCTURE'S TOP. THIS HAS BEEN RECENTLY MODIFIED BY THE ADDITION OF AN SDF DOME IN ITS CENTRE, SOMETHING WHICH CREATES PROBLEMS FOR THE WYVERNS, WHO HAVE USED IT SINCE INCREASINGLY RARELY. PERSONNEL AND SUPPLIES ARRIVE AND DEPART PRIMARILY BY SHIP. FRESH STONE ANCILLARY BUILDINGS TO HOUSE SPARE SDF GEAR AND OFF-DUTY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN BUILT SOME WAY FROM THE BASE OF THE LIGHTHOUSE, AND OTHERS ARE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION. ONE MARK III LIGHTNING CANNON IS NEARBY, COVERING THE EASTERN APPROACHES, WITH A SECOND FACING NORTHWARDS, ALONG WITH A BRAND NEW MARK V CANNON (THE MOST POWERFUL, BUT LEAST RELIABLE, TYPE, AND STILL SOMEWHAT EXPERIMENTAL - SEE THE WYVERN CITADEL OVERGROUND NOTES FOR DETAILS). THE VARIOUS BUILDERS, GUARDS, CANNON CREWS, SDF AND LIGHTHOUSE STAFF HAVE MADE THIS ISLE QUITE CROWDED CURRENTLY. IT IS, HOWEVER, ONE OF THE MOST LOATHED POSTINGS SDF PERSONNEL CAN BE SENT TO.

RISLE: ANOTHER DISLIKED, ISOLATED POSTING, SET ON CLIFFS ALONG THE NORTHERN TIP OF AN OTHERWISE UNINHABITED, LARGER, ISLAND OFF THE SOUTHERN JACKSON DELTA, ONE OF THE SO-CALLED "JACKSON FIVE", THE FOUR LARGEST ISLANDS PLUS THE PROMONTORY NORTHWEST OF BIG 'UN HILL THAT SURROUND THE DELTA'S COAST. THIS STATION WAS ONE OF THE FIRST THREE SET-UP FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S MONSEIGNOR RAID. ALTHOUGH NOT FAR FROM THE MANGROVE SWAMPS OF THE DELTA, ALL FOUR OF THE MAIN "FIVE" ISLANDS ARE AT LEAST NOT SWAMPY THEMSELVES, BEING RELATIVELY WELL-DRAINED AND ROCKY, IF WITH RELATIVELY THIN SOILS THAT LET FEW TREES GROW. RISLE'S NAME IS SAID TO DERIVE FROM IT BEING THE RIGHT-HAND ISLAND OUT OF THE JACKSON ESTUARY FROM MONSEIGNOR, THOUGH NO ONE IS QUITE SURE ABOUT THAT. A SINGLE MARK III LIGHTNING CANNON HELPS GUARD THE SITE.

DUNNISH: SET ON SOME HIGH DUNES BY THE COAST EAST OF THE MAIN RIVER JACKSON CHANNEL'S MOUTH IN THE MIDST OF THE DELTA, THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST DETESTED POSTING OF ALL THE SDF LOCATIONS. COMPLETELY SURROUNDED TO LANDWARD BY DENSE, SWAMP-MANGROVE FORESTS, THIS IS ACCESSIBLE ONLY BY SEA FOR CARGO AND MOST PERSONNEL MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, AS THE BAYS NEAR THIS RIVER CHANNEL HAVE CLEARLY LONG BEEN FAVOURED BY RAIDING BARBARIANS AS TEMPORARY CAMP SITES - THERE ARE REMAINS OF NUMEROUS SUCH PLACES SCATTERED ALONG THE COASTS IN THE VICINITY - THE BASE HAS A HIGHER PROPORTION OF MILITARY GROUND AND BOAT-BASED FORCES TO TRY TO PREVENT FURTHER SUCH INCURSIONS. THE SDF DOME IS A VERY RECENT ADDITION. ITS LOCATION AFFECTING THE PERSONNEL, AND THE PRESENCE OF THE DENSE MANGROVE BRAKES CREATING INTERFERENCE AT TIMES, MEANS THE SDF REPORTS FROM HERE ARE COMMONLY UNRELIABLE, AND SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE THAT IT SHOULD BE MOVED TO THE NEARBY "JACKSON FIVE" ISLAND INSTEAD. THAT THOUGH WOULD MEAN HAVING TO CONSTRUCT A SUITABLY RAISED SITE, AS THE ISLAND IS TOO FLAT AND LOW-LYING TOWARDS ITS NORTH-FACING COASTS. WHILE THE PLACE-NAME DERIVES FROM "DUNE", THE PERSONNEL SENT HERE DARKLY SAY IT REALLY ORIGINATES AS THE PLACE MOST LIKELY TO BE VISITED BY UNSPEAKABLE HORRORS, FOLLOWING FROM ONE OR OTHER FOLK-STORY TOLD OF A FICTIONAL LAND CALLED EITHER "INGLAND" (WHERE A TOWN CALLED DUNNISH OR DUNWICH ONCE FELL, OR WAS DRAGGED, INTO THE SEA), OR "NEW INGLAND" (WHERE A TOWN OF SIMILAR NAME WAS ASSAULTED BY AN INVISIBLE COSMIC HORROR). TWO MARK III LIGHTNING CANNONS HELP GUARD THE SHORELINE, WITH AN EXPERIMENTAL SHIP-BORNE MARK I CANNON (THE OLDEST, RELATIVELY WEAKEST, BUT MORE ROBUST TYPE) SET ON ONE OF THE LARGER CRAFT BASED HERE. THIS HAS NEVER BEEN TRIED BEFORE, AND ALTHOUGH TESTS SO FAR HAVE BEEN SATISFACTORY, IT HAS NEVER BEEN USED YET AGAINST AN ENEMY RAID.

PUNTING: SURROUNDED BY LOW-LYING SWAMPS AND MINOR RIVER CHANNELS TOWARDS THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE JACKSON DELTA - IT CAN ONLY BE ACCESSED BY SHALLOW-WATER CRAFT FROM INLAND, HENCE THE NAME - THE SDF IS SET ON A SHORT, TALL, VOLCANIC-ROCK PLUG, WITH SHEER CLIFFS ON ALL SIDES. ACCESS STEPS ARE STILL BEING CUT INTO THE ROCK, AND THE SITE REMAINS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, SO THE SDF SYSTEM OPERATES ONLY VERY INTERMITTENTLY. ASIDE FROM RISKY CLIMBING, THE SDF PLATFORM CAN BE REACHED PRIMARILY FROM THE AIR PRESENTLY, USING WYVERNS FROM THE NEAREST DROME, ELFSTON. THE INTENTION IS THERE WILL BE AT LEAST ONE MARK III LIGHTNING CANNON HERE EVENTUALLY, BUT IT IS NOT EVEN ON-SITE AS YET, WHILE THE BARRACKS AND STORES ARE ONLY TENTS CURRENTLY.

SLEEPY HEAD: ONE OF THE BEST SDF SITES, SET ON A LINE OF HIGH, BLACK SHALE, COASTAL CLIFFS, WHICH HAVE EXTENSIVE WAVE-CUT PLATFORMS AT THEIR SEA-LEVEL BASES BELOW. HIGH-QUALITY JET OCCURS IN VEINS IN THESE CLIFFS, ALONG WITH NUMEROUS, VERY FINE FOSSIL SEA-SHELLS, BOTH OF WHICH LOCAL CARVERS TURN INTO AN ASSORTMENT OF WONDERFUL, SOMETIMES MAGICAL, SMALL, PORTABLE ART OBJECTS, KNOWN BY REPUTATION AT LEAST FAR BEYOND THIS LOCALE. NOBODY KNOWS WHY THIS HEADLAND CARRIES THE NAME IT DOES, THOUGH IT IS WELL-KNOWN ELSEWHERE BECAUSE OF THE JET AND FOSSILS. THE SDF SYSTEM HERE HAS BEEN SET-UP FOR A FEW TESTS ONLY SO FAR. ONCE PROPERLY OPERATIONAL, IT WILL EXTEND THE WHOLE SYSTEM'S COVERAGE NORTH OF THE DELTA ESPECIALLY. THERE ARE FEW PERSONNEL HERE AS YET, BUT THE LOCALS HAVE BEEN WELCOMING SO FAR (PARTLY THANKS TO FRESH JET AND FOSSIL FINDS MADE AND RECOVERED THANKS TO THE SITE PROSPECTING), AND THE FOOD PRODUCED LOCALLY IS EXCELLENT, SO IT IS LIKELY THIS WILL EVENTUALLY BE ONE OF THE MOST FAVOURED SDF POSTINGS.

COMMUNICATIONS

THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE DEFENCE ZONE ARE LINKED TO THE CENTRAL COMMAND AND CONTROL POINTS OF MIDDLE WALL (FOR THOSE SOUTH OF THE RIVER JACKSON, INCLUDING THE SDF STATION AT THE UPHaulING LIGHTHOUSE), AND WYVERN CITADEL FOR ALL THE OTHERS. MIDDLE WALL FORWARDS ALL THEIR REPORTS DIRECTLY TO WYVERN CITADEL TOO, FROM WHICH LATTER PLACE ALL COORDINATED ORDERS ARE ISSUED IN RESPONSE TO ANY THREATS. SHOULD WYVERN CITADEL BE UNABLE TO DO THIS FOR WHATEVER REASON, MIDDLE WALL WOULD TAKE OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WHOLE DEFENCE ZONE TEMPORARILY.

THE PRIMARY MEANS OF CONTACT IS VERBAL, USING SECURE MAGICAL CONNECTIONS ON LAND, AND TO THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS (INCLUDING THE UPHaulING LIGHTHOUSE), VIA SUBTERRANEAN WYVERNITE VEINS, SPECIALLY EMBEDDED - MOSTLY GROWN IN-PLACE - FOR THE PURPOSE. WYVERNITE IS A MAGICAL CRYSTALLINE MINERAL SUBSTANCE FOUND IN VARIOUS PARTS OF SHOENIA. IT IS USED TO POWER NUMEROUS MAGICAL DEVICES, SUCH AS FOR LIGHTING, HEATING, COOLING, SAFE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AT A NUMBER OF PLACES, USING "ELECTRICKERY", A FORM OF MAGICAL, CONTROLLABLE, LIGHTNING THAT WORKS THROUGH SOPHISTICATED MACHINERY. THE STRICKFADEN LIGHTNING CANNONS, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THE SIDEARMS USED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL, ARE ALL POWERED BY WYVERNITE CRYSTALS AND ELECTRICKERY TOO. WYVERNITE IN ITS RAW STATE HAS A MOTTLED BLACK-AND-RED COLOURING, AND EMITS A PALE REDDISH LIGHT. IT HAS OTHER PROPERTIES TOO. THE WYVERNITE COMMUNICATION VEINS ARE ABLE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST DAMAGE IN A LIMITED WAY, FOR INSTANCE, AND CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS SOMEWHAT LIKE SELF-PROTECTING UNDERGROUND PHONE CABLES IN A REAL-WORLD ANALOGY.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS MAINTAINED BETWEEN WYVERN CITADEL AND THE AERIAL WYVERN SQUADRONS DIRECTLY USING A MAGICAL DEVICE FITTED IN THE HELMETS OF THE WYVERN RIDERS. FOR CLARITY, SUCH MESSAGES ARE GENERALLY KEPT TO FORMAL, SHORT, STANDARDISED WORDS AND PHRASES, AND ALLOW THE CONTROL OF THE SQUADRONS EVEN AT THE MAXIMUM LIMIT OF THE CURRENT SDF SYSTEM'S RANGE, SOME 75 MILES (120 KM) FROM THE SDF SITES. INFORMATION FROM THE SDF

LOCATIONS ALSO ALLOWS THE PLOTTING OF THE SQUADRONS' POSITIONS, INCLUDING THEIR APPROXIMATE HEIGHTS, AT THE CENTRAL OPERATIONS ROOM IN THE CITADEL (OR THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS ROOM AT MIDDLE WALL, SHOULD IT BE NEEDED). ALTHOUGH THE WYVERNS CAN COMFORTABLY EXCEED THIS DISTANCE LIMIT IN FLIGHT, COORDINATION BECOMES HARDER TO MAINTAIN BEYOND THE SDF ZONE, SO IS USUALLY AVOIDED WHERE POSSIBLE.