



"Strange as News from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

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# News From Bree

Middle Earth PBM Newsletter - Issue 2, January '99

## Going Fourth

By Gavin Kenny

I hope to write a regular column about Fourth Age in the News from Bree. Of all the games run in Middle Earth the least solid information is known so far about the game, and the more possible variety there is in the set-up. So if anyone wants to comment about things I have written, or contribute information, then please e-mail me at kennyg@logica.com, or, if you don't have E-mail send them into Harlequin to forward on to me.

### Information is Power

In this first article I want to talk about information. The key to ALL the middle earth games is being able as a team to coordinate information and utilise it to your advantage. Fourth Age games are no exception and indeed in Fourth Age you need to do this even more than in the previous scenarios. The starting data in the game available to you is minimal and you really need to pick up information as quickly as possible.

### What Do you Know to Begin With?

At the start of the game you have the following information about how the world of Middle Earth is arrayed : - The information contained on your starting map, and the starting pop centre locations and artefacts for the North and South Kingdoms. The starting pop centres are given below for the two Kingdoms, although bear in mind that any of the pop centres could be improved as part of the Kingdom set-up. So although you have a degree of information, you do not have exact data.

#### North Kingdom

1108 is a Major Town/Keep. The following are North Kingdom pop centres that have at the minimum towers placed on them, although the size will vary :- 1407, 1409, 1609, 2119, 2121, 2212.

#### South Kingdom

2924 is a Major Town/Keep. the following are South Kingdom pop centres that have at the minimum towers placed on them, although the size will vary :- 2227, 2438, 2527, 2715, 2927, 3024, 3124, 3221, 3423.

In addition you may have some victory

conditions that give you a few more small pieces of information. Victory conditions that mention pop centres will give you the location of a some more positions on the map, but not who owns them. A victory condition whereby you need to terminate another character will give you the name of a starting character for one of the other nations, but again not the name of the nation.

### What Do you Need to Know

There is a wealth of information in the game that is not known that is common knowledge in 1650 and 2950. The main pieces of information missing are where all the other nations are starting, and what number each artefact has been assigned. Previously it was easy to locate the Ring of Wind or the Ring or Curufin in the first few turns as all you needed was a mage good enough to cast a locate true on the artefact number. Since you no longer know the artefact number finding the powerful artifacts becomes a bit more of a lottery. To help cut down on this you and your allies need a strategy for sifting through the artefact list as soon as possible. To do this effectively you must try and avoid duplication of effort, so assigning ranges of artifacts to research may be the way to go.

Similarly knowing where the other nations are located could really help you avoid being the victim of a surprise attack from just off your map. If you know where the opponents capital is you will have a guide to the view that he or she can see on their maps (they can of course move their maps, but in fourth age at game start this is a relatively slow process).

### How Can you Learn it

One way in which you can gather information reasonably easily is by compiling all the rumours that you get on your turnsheets. This tells you two things. The names of agents from non friendly nations, and the names of various pop centres. Very often agents will train themselves up on a friendly pop centre until they get to a reasonable level. These training grounds could be key to dealing out a nasty surprise to the nations who are training their agents. A 'hit' squad sent in to challenge an assassinate trainee agents can prove devastating to the improvement plans of an agent based nation. Most people only worry about the hex number, size and owner of a pop

# new games

1650

Game 12  
Nations Available:  
13, 18

Game 13 (lucky for some)  
Taking start-ups real soon

Game 117  
Nations Available:  
1- 5, 16, 21, 24, 25  
Comments: Three week game

Also there is now a 1650 challenge game of the UK vs Brazil - pre-aligned neutrals being set up. We may need 1 more player to add to the UK team.

2950

Game 22  
Nations Available:  
2, 6-8, 11-12, 15-19, 25

1000

Game 45  
Prealigned Neutrals - team of 12-13 needed

We are looking for an Evil team of 13 players for a Fourth Age game. We have a Good team already. It will be a pre-aligned Neutral game with the Kingdoms on either side. Any takers?

## contacting harlequin

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send an email to  
majordomo@listbox.com.  
Leave the subject empty but  
in the main body of the text  
write: subscribe whispers

centre. Many players do not include the pop centre name. This can be a big mistake as the pop centre name is used in many of the rumours rather than the hex number.

If you have joined the game as a team, then the other players maps and turns will provide further information to help you map out more of Middle Earth. If you have started close together (for added protection), then your maps will be relatively similar and not as useful as if you are more spread out. The problem is that the more you spread out, the more chance of having an enemy nation interfere. However it should not just stop at your own allies at the game start. Contact with nations from other alliances could prove fruitful and there are potentially lots more allies in the game. The two Kingdoms start the game with scrys of the locations of every capital in the game. This information is too valuable to ignore. Befriending one of the two Kingdoms is important to get the jump on this crucial piece of information. So far in Fourth Age I have noticed more caginess than in 1650 due to the rapidity I suspect that nations could be taken out at game start. Gradually though people either gain trust or decide that the relationship is not proving fruitful.

Your primary source of information is your nations mages. Many people when creating a start-up instantly think of having good emissaries and good agents. Few really think about the information gathering potential of the nations mages. Here are just a few of the useful information gathering spells that are available.

*Scry Hex / Pop Centre / Area* - All these spells can give you information about areas of Middle Earth that are not on your map.

*Divine Characters with Forces* - This is key to determining the names of any characters guarding an enemy army commander.

*Reveal Production* - Useful in the early game to determine gold producing hexes for your emissaries to put camps down in.

*Reveal Character True* - Useful for determining the location of a known enemy character.

*Perceive Mission* - Useful in determining what the character is up to. Generally if the character moves around alot you will also get the location of the character through the 810 order, however this does not work with characters in companies.

*Research Artefact / Locate Artefact True* - Useful in getting the abilities and positions of artifacts in the game.

It can be sometimes useful to send a spare commander out into the unknown to move around a perform recons. Even a poor commander will get the recon map, although

they really need to be about 35-40 to be able to reliably pick up the nation and commander of enemy armies on the recon obtained.

Perhaps the least reliable source I have found so far is the Uncover Secrets SNA. I took it in my first Fourth Age game thinking it would provide me with valuable extra game information. My experience with it is that information gained through this order is unreliable, and there is no good way to determine whether the data you have obtained is unreliable. In 1650 games the Uncover Secrets order always gave good information unless a nation was spreading rumours. In Fourth Age this is not true, and about 40% of the information gained I have estimated is duff. The only thing I can add to this is that emissaries with high emissary rank tend to give more reliable information.

### Quality of Information

Sometimes bad information can be worse than having no data at all. Information that is either wrong or horribly out of date can cause you to make decisions that are based on incorrect assumptions. All data should therefore have the turn number that it was gained attached to it. Therefore you can assess the reliability of the data when you are attempting to make a decision. There is nothing more frustrating than going to an enemy pop centre with a huge army or emissary team only to find that your erstwhile ally took it turns ago and forgot to mention it. The artefact list is another area where currency is important. If a locate true was done on an artefact 10 turns ago, it is quite likely that an enemy has gone to pick up the artefact in the meantime. To avoid your mage making a wasted trip therefore you may need to re-locate it before you go and get the artefact.

In addition to the currency of the data I would recommend having an attachment indicating the source of the data. Sometimes people lie to you to elucidate information from you without reciprocating. If it turns out that later that nation turns on you can you still rely on the information he has supplied ?

### Conclusion

The more you know about the Map and other nations, the more you will get out of playing Fourth Age. The easiest way to do this is to talk to the other players in the game. The start-up gives you a list of all the other nations in your allegiance, so why not pick up the phone and give them a call. They are probably in the same boat, and as the old adage goes a problem shared is a problem halved. Although you can get lots of information yourself through your mages and, just talking to someone else in the game could potentially double your knowledge.

## across the pond

A summary of news from GSI's game newsletter "Whispers from the Wood".

The latest issue wasn't that interesting for UK readers, but as ever contains a useful question and answer section. The following point will, I'm sure, be of interest to some players, as it addresses a loophole which seems now to have been closed.

*Q. I have 2 armies in the same hex, one with food and the other without. I want them both to be able to move the full 14 movement points without the 'no food' penalty. If I give order 347 (transfer food: Army to Army), will the army that started without food be able to go the full 14 movement points and without the 'no food' movement penalty? I also need to cross a minor river with these armies. Does the 'no food' movement penalty apply to crossing a river as well or is it always 2 point regardless of the amount of food you have or don't have.*

**A.** The long and the short of it is that there must be at LEAST one food unit in the army baggage train AT THE TIME OF MOVEMENT in order to move without penalty. You can transfer the food from army to army but do not forget that the army will consume food AFTER the transfer - so make sure there is enough food to feed the army AND have food left over. With regard to moving across a minor river, the way it works is the cost of crossing the minor river is added to the movement cost of the hex. Then that cost is multiplied by 4/3.

*If anyone would like a copy of Whispers by e-mail, please drop me an e-mail or send an SAE if you want a copy by post - Colin.*

## Lord of the Rings - the Big Film Debate

By Travis Smith

Okay, so we've seen the endless debates on the who should be in a LOTR film, should one ever be made (the crappy little cartoon doesn't count). Now of course, it's official, they are making the whole of LOTR as three films (in my opinion the only way it can be done justice), one for each of the books (Fellowship, Towers, Return), so maybe it's time this old chestnut should resurface. First of all, I'll name whom I think should play the major parts and then I'll throw a spanner in the works. You'll see what I mean...

### Real Nominees

*The Hobbits*:- should all be unknown midgets. I say give the little people a chance! Apparently Danny Devito will play Frodo (with the help of CGI technology). but I don't remember Frodo ever saying lines like, "Hey, so who's dis Gandalve shmuck anyhow?"

*Gimli*: see above

*Aragorn*: - Jeremy Irons. A natch. Weatherworn appearance, getting on in years, yet still fit.

*Boromir*: - Alan Rickman Think Sheriff of Nottingham, hut nicer. Bingo!

*Legolas*: -Difficult this one. Leona... ha ha, no! Sorry girls. We need someone who can act. Daniel Day-Lewis would be good, but he's too old, but how about Brad Pitt (back in favour with the girls again!). I'm really open to suggestion here. Eddie Izzard?

*Gandalf*- Oh come now! We all know that Gandalf should always be done with a Scottish accent, just like English secret agents. Russian submarine captains. Spanish-Egyptian sword fighters and Irish-American cops. Mr Sean Connery himself! Who apparently is the prime candidate for the part. Go on Sean! Can't be worse than The Avengers!

*Eomer*- Ewan McGregor with long hair, hmm? Oh yeah, or maybe he should be Faramir and Liam Neeson should be Eomer? Again, tricky this one, as is...

*Faramir* - Of course. Could be Ewan, but Liam's too old I think (sorry mate!). Kevin Bacon? Excellent actor, hut not too sure about the accent. Cary Elwes? Excellent in the Princess Bride in a similar role. Possibly Sean Bean?

*Saruman* - Rather adversely, I think John Hurt would be excellent. He did of course provide the voice for Aragorn in the cartoon version.

*Theoden* - Someone old, but not so unfit that you couldn't believe that they would ride out to battle. Me? I'd like Mad Bob. Robert DeNiro, eh? Facing up to the Nazgul Lord saying, "you looking at me? You must be looking at me! I don't see anyone else round here, so you must be looking at me!"

*Denethor* - Similar to Theoden, but more beaten and worn. Anthony Hopkins? Michael Keaton? David Strathan? All good at playing madmen,

hut the last two probably too young. Then again, that's what we have make up for.

*Wormtongue* - Why, Rowan Atkinson! In a reprise of Blackadder, played for the comic relief in the film. Maybe Robin Williams? Go on, tell me different.

*Galadriel* - LOTR's not big on female parts, let's face it, but this one's tricky. Second most beautiful woman to walk Middle Earth. Michelle Pfeiffer's probably too old now to look like an "ageless" beauty. Isabelle Adjani, my own favourite beauty, is dark haired and French, so she's out. In fact, all of the decent actresses with the exception of one (who I've put aside for Eowyn) are in their late thirties at best (Julia Roberts, Sandra Bullock, actresses? I think not! Besides both brunettes), so I'll settle back on Michelle Pfeiffer. Well, they can do wonders with make-up nowadays!

*Eowyn* - Kate Winslet. Young enough (no not Gweneth Paltrow, please!) and feisty too. You could see her wielding a sword, couldn't you. And no! Not Lucy (Xena) Lawless!

That about sums up my major character listing. Obviously, I've not mentioned Elrond, Tom Bombadil, Celeborn or Glorfindel, who are all major players but who receive little more than walk on parts in LOTR. Then there is Gollum, but surely he would be one big computerised effect, as would the Nazgul.

Why not let Harlequin know what you think of my selection and make your own additions/amendments/suggestions?

Now for something slightly different. How about coming up with themed casting for LOTR - the film? I here's my "Football" themed listing.

*The Hobbits* - Gianfranco Zola. Dennis Wise, Brian Little & Eval Berkovic

*Gimli* - Archie Gemmill 20 years ago (ask your Dad!) Legolas - Ole Gunner Solksjaer. of' course! Aragorn - David Ginola

*Eomer* - Michael Owen

*Gandalf*- Martin O'Neill (An enigmatic, eccentric genius)

*Saruman* - Glenn Hoddle (Once a wizard on the pitch, now sadly gone astray.)

*Galadriel* - Gabby Yorath

*Eowyn* - Karen Brady (Apart from these two I can't think of any women involved in Footie.)

You could do this with other themes: Politicians, F1 drivers, Soap characters, anyone! See what you can come up with.

### Editor's Note

More news on the films next time - suffice it to say that I've checked up on the casting and can reveal that it hasn't been done yet. All casting rumours are therefore 100% incorrect!

## messages

### Fourth Age: Opinions wanted!

I will be writing a review of Fourth Age for a forthcoming issue of Flagship and would welcome all comments on the scenario. You can contact me (Colin Forbes) at: 106 Ashford Ave, Hayes, Middlesex, UB4 0NB or [bain@suilven.demon.co.uk](mailto:bain@suilven.demon.co.uk).

### ME - 2950 , game 20

Why don't the FP just throw in the white hankerchief right away ? You are bound to loose anyway.  
You all smell of womens perfume , and your mothers dresses you funny.  
Darkness is inevitable

*Khamul*

### Game 6

*To the Corsairs*

Why try and take something by force that you could have had as a gift ?

*Ji Andur*

*To the Free People's*

I regret that the way things hve turned out, I have decided to go Dark Servant. I think I would have enjoyed working with you, but it is clearly in Harad's interest in go the other way in this game. No hard feelings I hope! Maybe we'll meet again in another game.

*Haruth Ramam  
(aka Colin Forbes)*

### News from Bree

My thanks to everyone who has sent articles - it has not proved possible to fit them all in this time. I am still looking for more though, and in-game messages would be most welcome! CColin Forbes, 106 Ashford Ave, Hayes, Middlesex, UB4 0NB [bain@suilven.demon.co.uk](mailto:bain@suilven.demon.co.uk).

## Middle Earth Encounters

*By Richard Devereux*

Many moons ago, when I first started exploring Middle Earth, I encountered a mage with a wondrous artifact called email. This device enabled him to tap into a huge body of lore, published across the Undying Seas, called the "Mouth of Sauron". He was kind enough to send me a magical disk containing this lore. He has my eternal gratitude, for MoS contained everything then known (and much that was merely rumoured) about Middle Earth c1650: lists of artifacts, characters, pop centres, essays on strategy, riddles, encounters and much more. Since then I have adventured in Middle Earth for about four years and this article is to add my two penn'orth of experience with certain encounters.

### Hobbits

The MoS states that there are two hobbit encounters, at 1109 and 1209. Personally I have found no encounter at 1209, but have had both hobbit encounters at 1109. Free People armies at 1109 may meet either the Buck Hill or Hobbiton hobbits. If Dark or Neutral armies trigger the encounter, the hobbits flee (sometimes they even run from FP armies - wimps!)

Hobbiton hobbits boost the morale of any FP army they join, whilst Buck Hill hobbits provide a free recon, which is handy if you're marching into the Witch King's territory. The MoS says that the Buck Hill hobbits provide a combat bonus. I can't confirm this because, when they were in my army, they ran away as soon as the dark spires of Carn Dum came in sight! Since Arthedain needs to recruit at his towns anyway, he might as well recruit at 1109 and get the bonuses the hobbit encounters provide!

### Ents

Ents and Huorns may join a FP army which passes through Fangorn (that's the forest hexes at the bottom RH corner of the Misty Mountains). They add a hefty combat bonus to the lucky army and sometimes kill enemy characters as well as troops. Disappointingly they do NOT damage fortifications. This is surely a mistake by GSI - in "The Lord of the Rings" the Ents tore down the formidable fortifications of Isengard! Dark or Neutral armies daft enough to venture into Fangorn may be attacked by Ents - you have been warned!

### Eagles

In the 1650 scenario, Eagles are confined to the Misty Mountains. They may join FP armies, in which case they provide both a recon and a combat bonus. They attack DS and neutral armies. In Fourth Age, Eagle encounters are much more widespread. As the North Kingdom I've had Eagles attack my armies as far afield

as the Blue Mountains (0913) and even in my capital (1108). What really cheesed me off was that each time, the damn birds picked on my elite, steel-clad heavy cavalry armies instead of my hordes of untrained, ill-armed and expendable infantry!

### Woses

These wild men of the woods may be found at 0916, 2622 and 2823, possibly also in other mid-western forest hexes. If Woses join a FP army they may heal wounded characters as well as giving recons and/or a combat bonus. Woses may ignore neutral armies, but will attack DS armies. As the Blind Sorcerer I sent 100 light cavalry under Leardinoth to 2823 on the way to recruit at 1614. Leardinoth shamefacedly reported that he had been ambushed by Woses and the army disbanded!

### Balrogs

There are two Balrogs in the 1650 and 2950 scenarios. They roam mountain hexes around 2212 and 2121. In Fourth Age at least one Balrog is still around, although Gandalf has slain the Balrog of Moria. Balrogs may join DS armies which they meet. I've seen the 2121 Balrog join a powerful Dog Lord army under Bulrakur, but had the 2212 Balrog ignore a small (evil) Rhudaur army under a weedy commander. Maybe there's more chance of a Balrog joining a big army or one with a high ranking commander, or maybe it's random. If a Balrog does join your army, it gives you a huge combat bonus, so it's well worth trying to find one.

Balrogs will attack FP armies and reduce loyalty at FP pop centres. Their behaviour towards Neutrals is equivocal; I've seen a Balrog lower the morale of a neutral army, but I've also seen one improve the loyalty at a Neutral pop centre over a number of consecutive turns.

Balrogs can also be character encounters, introduced by burning ruins. Should you investigate? Not if you want your character to live! Choose the "Flee" option or be a little bit more imaginative and say "Elbereth". I've never heard of anyone defeating a Balrog in single combat (but no doubt some smart-arse will now write in and say he has!) *Er, I hate to say it... Ed*

The above comments are not of course exhaustive, just selections from my gaming experiences to supplement the info contained in the MoS. Two final points regarding encounters. It's risky to leave only 100 troops behind in a recruiting pop centre. If you get a nasty encounter you'll lose the lot and have to spend 5k on hiring a new army! Secondly if your characters are in pop centres where you might get dangerous encounters one way of protecting them is to have them join an army. Be careful out there!

## shelOB's weB

### Middle Earth on the Internet

Very early on in it's history, a number of sites started appearing on the internet covering various aspects of Middle Earth PBM. Whilst this information was once jealously guarded by the select few that had internet access in those days (about 6 years ago), these days a spirit of *glasnost* prevails. I would recommend the following sites...

The one I have most often visited is CZBACH's Middle Earth page, which can be found at:

[www.geocities.com/  
TimesSquare/3615/](http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/3615/)

This hasn't been updated too regularly in the past, but it does contain an awful lot of stuff as well as links to other related sites. Look here for lists of riddle solutions, encounters, articles (via a link to the now defunct Mouth of Sauron e-zine) and loads more. There are links to some useful pieces of software, including mapping programs and a combat simulator.

GSI have a rather graphically heavy site at:

[www.gamesystems.com](http://www.gamesystems.com)

This has rather selectively chosen articles on the various scenarios, together with downloadable rules etc.

A recent find has been Stormy's ME site, this is regularly updated and contains loads of stuff on encounters, riddles etc.

[www.geocities.com/  
TimesSquare/Battlefield/  
3772/midearth2.html](http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Battlefield/3772/midearth2.html)

I'm afraid to say that Harlequin's own web pages currently contain no information on Middle Earth! Apparently the site is in the process of being updated, but progress is slow.

## Fourth Age - the best scenario?

by Dave Tomley

In my opinion Fourth Age is the best of the ME scenarios. Having played 1650 for many years I was getting bored with seeing similar game progressions and teams collapsing because of the loss of one player. Fourth Age is a much better designed game because it allows for the inevitable player dropouts without the game losing its interest or balance.

Another bonus is the nation design. You can really relate to your nation because you designed it. No more complaints about nation abilities, you chose them, and as for those powered up characters, if you opponent has a 60/50/50 command/agent/mage then the rest of his characters will be terrible and if you want one, what's stopping you?

I have heard several complaints about the game, none of which are true, but I will try and deal with them here.

### Agents are too powerful

Not true. Whilst they are annoying (as with all scenarios) anyone who has spent that much gold getting the assassination bonus will be much weaker in other areas. Don't forget, a doubled agent cannot hurt you, and any agent can be guarded against very effectively with a much lower level agent. In the mean time your superior emissaries have set up more camps than he can steal from, or your superior mages have found the rings of curufin and wind

and now your agents are as good as his or, best of all, on turn six your superior army turned up at his capital and knocked him out of the game.

### Mages play no part.

True if you are playing as a completely independent nation intent on killing everyone, but if you want to play as part of a team then a mage based nation can become quite important. Also keep in mind that an army containing several mages is a lot cheaper than the equivalent basic troops force. Mages can also support you economy and if you take weakness as an ability can form killing squads with very high success rates and high challenge ranks (who needs RfsPers).

### There is no powergaming (Harad Players)

Turn 18 31 popcentres 84360 per turn, Hard enough?

### No one knows the artifacts, riddles or encounters.

Good !

If I have any gripe against the game it is this: The artifacts are all spread evenly between allegiances but Neutrals cannot use Good or Evil whereas they can use Neutral. This encourages a change of allegiance (especially for the kingdoms) and makes less allowance for a Neutral team.

## Confessions of a Middle Earth Virgin

by Steve Mason

I started playing Middle Earth around the beginning of October '98. I'm in game 8 and it's a 1650 game. I've never ever before played a fantasy PBM. Previous to Middle Earth the only PBM's I've played have been football sims - what a change!

When I received the start-up pack I was astounded at the size of the rulebook. It was easily five times the size I'm used to and the map was something new to me as well. I ploughed through the rules and orders list and, top be honest, I was terrified! I've never seen so many orders and I've also been told that ME is quite light compared to other games. When the game started I was confused by the sheets and didn't have a clue what to do, but I've got it now, mainly thanks to the help of the other players in game 8.

As far as the game itself goes it's probably the best PBM I've ever played. The amount of contact between players was surprising as well as refreshing. At first I thought the two week turnaround was too long, but I soon found out the reasons! Every time you look at your sheets there's something you missed or overlooked and you're never short of something to do with it.

The one thing I like best is the way the game is set up. Once you're out - you're out! There aren't any second chances. I've never been kept on my toed so much in any other game. Hopefully I'll be able to stay on them until the end of the game.

If there is one thing I see as a flaw it's that experienced players seem to know exactly what's happening, when it's happening and as such they seem to follow the same pattern over and over again. Does this not become tedious for some of you? It would for me. I realise that every game is different - but they aren't THAT different. Anyway, that's the only flaw I see in the game and with this being my first game it doesn't apply to me anyway.



## comments

*News from Bree* looks really great, and now that players start to know about it I hope that more people will send in contributions. I'd like to see some regular columns and information like the Mouth of Sauron had in the early days.

It would be interesting for example to get figures on which nations are winning more often in the UK, or later when a few fourth age games start finishing seeing whether there is a trend for perhaps Kingdoms winning or perhaps people starting in Mordor.

The other thing I'd like to see (and I'm afraid this one's for Harlequin) is a web-based message board like the one GSI have got. Would be a good way for players to talk to each other and exchange experiences.

### The Name Game

I noticed in the last issue a few complaints about character names. Arguments about keeping to the spirit of middle earth or not (Mao Tse Tung as a commander for the Easterlings?). My preferred method of finding names with a suitable ring to them without having to trawl through endless tomes is to consult National Geographic. Examples of names I have found are: Klamath, Boca Crega, Cirio Rakekniven, Ogallala, Kootznoowoo, Ocrakoke and Orcir. All of these are names of places or features in articles in the last year or so and sound as if they should belong in Middle Earth with the possible exception of Kootznoowoo which is American Indian (I cannot remember the tribe) for Fortress of the Bears and a name I could not resist using. The names are mountains, towns/villages, landscape features and personal names from foreign parts.

*Lewis Morton*

## Game Design wish-list: New Orders

by Mike Barber

This article follows the theme I first saw in the Mouth of Sauron a wish list for players to propose new orders or changes to the game GSI coded. I have seen many interesting suggestions and thought I would offer some of my own..

### Accept Most Favoured Nation

Type	Command
Difficulty	Average
Order number	160
Order Code	AccFav
Prerequisites	The nation has received an offer of most favoured nation

### End Most Favoured Nation

Type	Command
Difficulty	Hard
Order number	163
Order Code	EndFav
Prerequisites	Character has command skill & is at the capital
Required Info	A most favoured nation relationship exists

### End Most Favoured Nation

Type	Command
Difficulty	Hard
Order number	165
Order Code	EndFav
Prerequisites	Character has command skill & is at the capital
Required Info	Relations between Issuing Nation and Target Nation are Friendly.

Required Info

Target Nation ID

No most favoured nation relationship is held by the nation issuing the order

If 2 nations offer each other most favoured nation status on the same turn, acceptance is automatic. Note each nation may only have 1 most favoured nation relationship at any time

Once a reciprocal most favoured nation relationship exists, either nation may use each others population centre as their own, with the following conditions operating:

Each nation must retain its own capital MT / City, and capital orders can only be issued at the nations own capital. Most favoured nations can transfer gold between each other without paying the caravan fee. Most favoured nations will transfer population centres between each other more easily and with lesser loss of loyalty. Most favoured nations will both suffer loss of loyalty when either's population centres are captured.

### The impact of the order

This would allow more creative co-operation between nations. For example, a Mordor DS could move north to recruit at WK pop centres without needing to swap population centres. If one theatre of action is quiet (e.g. Woodman post conquering of the Dragonlord) then later participation in more interesting places is possible though to a limited extent.

Hopefully, without radically changing the game, this would add some interesting possibilities to the game. Any comments?

## From out of the West Moving and the merits of advertising

Christmas is upon us and as usual the post has gone to pot. So a holiday for us (the only one of the year) of one week and some serious gaming to be had outside of the office! (Not that I am obsessed or anything). In answer to various of the questions we are investigating getting hold of a dos-based map for the various scenarios which will be made available to anyone who asks for it. I know that there is a lot of stuff out there on the net - so if anyone has something please inform us first and then send it (or else we may suddenly get 200 Meg of "essential" programs for ME to download each day!)

The game that me and Ed are playing (in the USA) has seen us with little diplomacy (although that has somewhat been sorted) and Ed getting wiped out as North Gondor this turn. I am enjoying it although I don't hold out much hope anymore as the Neutrals have turned evil...

There has been no feedback on the requested questionnaire so we're leaving that one for the time being.

The office move went smoothly - and so we are now using the new address which you

should all have now. It would be nice to see a lot more of you on the discussion list though.

The games are now running smoothly again (after getting the main computer back the main printer died the VERY NEXT DAY), and I am happy with it all. The recent edition of Flagship has seen us bring in a few players (my "bet" with Colin was 5 at best). Oh yes - a massive thanks to Colin for all his hard work on this and other aspects of ME - hopefully now he'll even get the occasional turn in on time as well... :-)

We are steadily getting an influx of new and old players rejoining the throng - so if there is anyone out there who might be interested don't forget that over 50% of players who play are due to players such as yourself getting them into the hobby.

So all it leaves is for us to thank you all for an excellent year (1998), and here's to 1999 and lots of fun.

*Clint*

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