

News from Bree

MEPBM Newsletter: Issue 24, August '03

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

Guerilla Warfare FP Agents in 1650

by Mike Bateman

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Summer Riddle Competition
... the results!

"Guerilla Warfare" can possibly best be defined as 'hit and run' tactics used by smaller, weaker, yet dedicated forces against their stronger, more capable foes. Therefore it is the ideal term to describe what I would propose as the best strategy for Free agents in 1650.

As is oft mentioned, the Dark Servants start the game with far superior agents and agent artifacts.

More importantly, the SNAs of the Ice King, Dragon Lord, and (most importantly) Cloud Lord mean that agent losses can quickly be replaced. The free, on the other hand, have

very weak starting agents (Dudannis is the only one with the full 30 skill ranks!) and only three agent artifacts. Worse, only one free nation the Woodmen, has two agent SNAs, and they also have the misfortune of having a bonus to challenge ranks (don't get me wrong, a challenge ranks bonus is cool but I'd rather get the stealth!).

One thing that is not often mentioned is the DS Mage superiority. All told, I think the DS have 18+ quality mages while the free have 5 or 6. Given the large number of DS information gatherers and the relatively few number of free agents and artifacts you can bet on one thing—a coordinated DS team will know where your agents are each and every turn.

So that's it, then. Your foe has far superior numbers, can replace his losses much more quickly, and has far better intelligence. Is there any hope? In a head to head battle the answer is no. The DS will have better information and more firepower. Even if you do eliminate a few DS killers, they can be replaced in 4 to 5 turns. How long does it take for a Free assassin to be replaced? Ten or more turns, easily.

So what is left then? Guerilla warfare. Avoid direct confrontation and work to eliminate the DS advantages. Pick on those information-gathering mages that are hanging out and training in some

backwater camp (note here: Mages escape from being held hostage about as often as commanders!). Nab a few Fire King commanders at Barad Wath. Slip into Tol Buruth and take care of that Long Rider navy while the hidden garrison does nothing. Nibble at the edges and go for the little kills! They do add up and the DS can ill afford to replace character losses.

Keep your agents and artifacts moving, and I mean

now! As a DS, I know that its bloody likely that the Ring of Impersonation starts the game in South Gondor's capital, that Thranduil will move to the Sinda capital, and that Ringlin is probably sitting still and



learning spells the first few turns of the game. I've been able to successfully steal all three free agent artifacts by turn 4 with the Ice King. Stay in place for two turns and you can expect to have company.

More importantly, name more agents! I don't know how many times I've seen the Free keep cranking out the commanders. For crying out loud, you've got commanders coming out of the wazoo! At least make an attempt to play the agent war. This means everyone, you can bet your last dollar that every DS nation has banged out a couple of early agents (OK North Gondor might be an exception)

Remember, as long as your agents stay alive and effective the DS will be devoting resources to tracking and chasing them. You will save more Free characters by keeping the DS killers and mages busy chasing you than you can by guarding army commander's backs. And you can eventually make a big difference in the game. Keep chipping at the DS fringes and you might nail enough mages to cripple enemy intelligence (keep in mind that DS maps reveal Jack outside of Mordor and NOBODY can quickly or easily replace a 60 mage—plus Dendra's hide happens to make a nice throw rug). It won't take too many 2 or three kill turns to make a serious dent in the starting DS character advantages. You may not make a lot of headway in winning the agent war but you might level the game everywhere else.

North Gondor's Hidden Refuge in 2950

by Chris Montgomery

Waiting List: When I get all 25 (or 24 for Gunboat) nations into the game I will allocate you your choice of nation from the list of nations that you have sent me - please send multiple nation choices. Upto 2 nation game: play 1 or 2 Aligned nations, or one Neutral nation.

The following new games are filling up.

FA: 1000

[Game 48]

2 week turnaround

1 DS position available. 8DS, 7N, 9FP already taken.

TA: 1650

[Game 99]

Two week turnaround

Gunboat, 1player needed (2 nations each player).

[Game 95]

Two week turnaround

13 nations still available.

TA: 2950

[Game 227]

2 week turnaround

8 nations available.

BofA

We need experienced players as mentors for new players in BOFA - expect several games to set up after GENCON. (Get in touch if experienced for a special deal here - all the game for CHEAP!!!!!!!)

Face to Face Game

Next UK game planned for March 2004. Not taking names as yet.

Note please ask for variant games we can try to get you opposition for them if you are interested - mostly Grudge teams though - if I get 10 players for any single type of game then I will put it up for general availability below and push it.

Contact MEPBM Games for the latest details!



Middle Earth
PBM Games

When one thinks of North Gondor's (hereinafter NG) population centers (hereinafter popcenters), Minas Tirith immediately comes to mind. Few will forget Osgiliath, or even Pelargir's port. Upon deeper reflection, one may remember Minas Arthor, Imdorad, and the odd Bar-en-Tinnen. One can imagine thousands of Gondorian soldiers rushing to defend these fortified popcenters, while others maneuver to defend the key bridges into Gondor from the onslaught of Dark Servants (hereinafter DS) forces a mere march away. Alas, one may overlook North Gondor's little gem called Henneth Annun.

Window of the West

Built in the year 2901, Henneth Annun is one of the last refuges of the men of Gondor in Ithilien. See LOTR, Appendix B The Tale Of Years (Chronology Of The Westlands). Its name means 'Window on the West' (or 'Sunset') or Window of the West. Whether Tolkien was paying homage to Russia's Peter the Great when naming this place is a debate best resolved by Oxford or Rhodes scholars. Henneth Annun is by no means St. Petersburg, Russia's historical Window to the West.

Henneth Annun contains no great city or harbor/port. It is simply comprised of caves hidden by one of the fairest waterfalls in Ithilien. Those hidden caves serve as a refuge for the Rangers of Ithilien. It is here that Faramir successfully staged guerilla warfare against the DS during the War of the Ring.

2950's Hidden Opportunity at 3023

For those MEPBM players unfamiliar with the 2950 scenario, Henneth Annun is an unfortified camp strategically situated within the mixed forest located at hex 3023 within the region of North Ithilien. Precariously positioned near Barad Perras, Henneth Annun is a stone's throw from Minas Morgul and Durthang as well. As such, this popcenter is a significant threat to Mordor's security.

Lest we forget, Henneth Annun is NG's only hidden popcenter. Herein lies its beauty. With nearly NG's entire map exposed to the DS, this hidden popcenter provides NG a wonderful opportunity. Unbeknownst to the DS, NG can improve it to a village and town within the first 10 turns of a game. In the unlikely event the DS fail to reveal the popcenter in later turns, NG could go so far as to have a hidden MT backup there.

Of course, the DS can easily reveal Henneth Annun in a moments notice. Ask anyone and most would agree that a single spell can quickly quash any ambitious players plan. However with the hidden Elf capitals of Aradhyrind (hex 2908), Caras Galadhon (hex 2514), and the infamous, Imladris (hex 2209), the DS have bigger fish to fry than Henneth Annun. There is no argument that the DS should reveal these hidden locales before attacking NG's hidden refuge. Though if left unchecked, the DS may regret not capturing Henneth Annun sooner.

Timber! Life after Revelation

Arguably, the DS should try to capture not destroy Henneth Annun. Henneth Annun typically contains



a fair amount of food and timber at game start and has very solid production throughout the seasons. Furthermore, it falls within the one of the best production zones, Zone VI (Warm Continental), as deftly described by Marc Pinsonneault's article in Bree Issue #20 and #21 titled Building a Healthy Economy (see also Brian Mason's article in Mouth of Sauron #35). A popcenter unaffected by the harsh Mordor climate is a boon to any DS nations economy.

Whether hidden or not, Henneth Annun can still play a vital role within the game. Controlling the road to Minas Morgul / Minas Tirith is of strategic importance. With ample timber production at Henneth Annun, either side can bottle up the road just north of Osgiliath with a quickly built tower. NG's special nation ability of building fortifications at 50% cost to timber is extremely effective in hampering DS military movement through Henneth Annun. Conversely, the DS can prevent a surprise southern attack on the DS holdings with a fortification there.

To Enter the Forbidden Pool

Although this article focuses on NG's Henneth Annun, DS players can apply the most of the same reasoning here to the Ice Kings camp called Lag-scar located at hex 3022. For those MEPBM players familiar with the 1650 scenario, Lag-scar is a hidden popcenter in the 2950 scenario. The obvious difference between the popcenters, though it has no impact on game play, is Lag-Scara's lack of historical significance.

Henneth Annun is the setting of arguably one of the most crucial turning points within Tolkien's book The Two Towers. The Rangers of Ithilien take the Ring Bearer and his trusty companion there following Sam's campfire. It is the forbidden pool in Henneth Annun where Faramir spares Sméagol from certain death at Frodo's behest, thus sealing Gollum's fate at Mt. Doom. Fish anyone?

stand-by positions

Drop-outs available - don't forget you get a **free turn** for taking these up!

*E [Early] = 0-10 turn,
M [Midgame] = 11-20,
L [Late game] = 21+,
[A = Aligned if a Neutral, N = not aligned if a Neutral]
P = Postal and Email game,*

BoFA None
1000: Neutral (M)
2950: None
1650: Harad (M-L), Dwarves (L), Dwarves (L), Cloud (M), Dun (aligned, M)
Gunboat: None. 1x2 (l), 1x2 (m), 1 (l) (Please note past turns for all these nations are available)

grudge games

Grudge Games we need opposition for:

1000: None
1650: *Claus (DS team, mostly new players)
Aussie team (12 player team, undefeated)*
2950: *Chris M (10)*

Check out the front sheet / turn email for all the latest news on positions available!

FLAGSHIP

Flagship Magazine welcomes comments on games from everyone, not just subscribers: all comments received go into a hat and may win the writer a free copy of the magazine! Send your thoughts on Middle Earth to: carol@pbmgames.com

News From Bree

By popular demand, artwork in issue 24 is predominantly by Anke-Katrin Eissmann. For more info go to ... www.edoras-art.de/AK_Eissmann/ak_eissmann_index_e.htm

We are always looking for articles, preferably around the 900 word mark (this avoids editorial cutting). If you feel inspired, please write to ...

bree@timewyrm.co.uk

MEPBM Player Types

by Bernd Luehrsen

In a quiet moment, everybody playing MEPBM will have wondered what people there are playing with him. How often did we curse enemies and allies alike, how often did we admire them, more or less secretly? For those of you who tend to think in categories, I have listed some of the player types I encountered along the way. Some of them I still encounter every day, by looking in the mirror...

1. The Statistician

This guy is likely to study computer science. His characters and pops are named in alphabetical order. He is the one who keeps the map, character and artefact lists. Collects game data about encounters and riddles. Knows the probability of Woodmen being out of game before turn ten. Develops complex formulae to calculate if one will successfully threaten or influence an enemy population centre and can always tell how a battle will result. Very reliable - special service is something that happens to other people - but lacks creativity sometimes. Very useful to have him on the team. Will never play Woodmen, though.

2. The Organizer

The (would be) mastermind of the team, he likes to be called "captain". He keeps all threads in his hands. Army movement, direction of curses- agent- and emis squads are his calling. Writes elaborate messages with plans to his team mates. Always states that they are "open to discussion" but will be hurt if criticized. Tends to patronize newbies. Strongly identifies with the course of the game, i.e. if winning he leads it back to his good coordination, if losing he finds somebody else to put the blame on. Likely to be a German.

3. The Wargamer

The grunt of the team, leading thousands to the shamble. His other hobbies are tabletops and strategic

computer games. He doesn't care for the more subtle aspects of the game such as giving names to his characters or pops. Thanks to him we stumble over characters like "Ulbar" and camps like "Mukatana" in every game. Dreams of equipping his troops with mithril and drains the teams timber stores to produce war machines. Likes to push his commanders to Lord Marshal and reads his combat reports with gritted teeth. Needs consolation occasionally when an agent has eliminated his 2000 hc with st/st.

4. The Builder

Emissaries are his favourite characters. He likes to see his nation grow and flourish. Sometimes arranges his pops in a nice floral pattern on the map. Often finds himself using lots of orders for sending a steady stream of gold and resources to team members because he has plenty but cannot make proper use of it, while the others are broke but have better characters and armies. Rejoices when his emmies hit rank 70 and his companies become a major nuisance to the enemy. One will most probably find "Sim City" on his computer hard drive.

5. The Role-Player

His messages will often start with "Greetings to Thee" and end with "XY, Head of the Order of XY, Leader of XY, Bearer of the golden banner of XY". His turn reports are written like a bad fantasy novel and make his team mates yawn before they get to anything important. Fond of mages and agents and, the contrary of the Wargamer, will put much thought on naming his pops and characters, referring to books he read and RPGs he played. Will proudly show his girlfriend that he named a character after her and have difficulties explaining her that she was eaten by a giant spider a few weeks later.

PS Please address nominees for "Best of" in each category to dinothar@gmx.de



Hall of Fame

Face to Face Special

Mapping Program

Mapping program: Okay 99% done and testing nicely at present. Lots of work and extras to add to it. What I do need is for everyone to start using the LATEST version of Automagic if they are using AM at all. Thanks - Soon to be released.

Game Winner Certificates

GWCs revisited - we're now sending out GWCs for any games that have ended from April '03 onwards. With it you should get a certificate, a badge (coloured as follows - FP Silver, DS Gold, Neutral Bronze; Red background for 1650, Green for 2950, Purple for 1000 and Black for Bofa) and a small card appropriate to your nation (or nations). None of the above have any in-game value but provide you with plenty of bragging rights. Player response to the badge is that they're great! :-). Before you ask we WON'T be sending them out for before April '03 - sorry.

US GenCon

Just got back from USGencon and t'was good - hard work but fun as well. Nice to chat to lots of players (I reckon around 15 turned up at the stall in total) and an excellent mini-meet on Thursday night. Feedback very welcome.

One of the things whilst chatting to the players (around 8 of us got together Thursday night and chatted for a couple of hours - t'was most fun!) that came up was doing some sort of Demo game at a convention. Maybe we could fit that in with a FTF game?

If so who would be interested in that? We'd have to invest a lot of money to get a laptop Mac amongst other things so we'd need serious commitment if the players want us to do this.

Any thoughts/feedback?



The Second Game

by Ulrik Bisgaard

Due to the fast paced nature of game it was apparent that we needed results quickly. This meant that the artifact game was more or less abandoned - we wanted to dominate militarily instead...

Turn 1:

We decided to create two killers right away, so the available agent-arties were given to Din Ohtar and Khamul asap. And to put Din to immediate use he was sent to 3612 on the first turn to look for Dwarves from the Iron Hills. But a movement error from the Dwarves saved his bacon as he didn't turn up...

Elsewhere in Rhovanion all DS armies swarmed northwards towards our chosen prime target: The Eothraim. Some got through to some of his camps and one was intercepted by an Eothraim army. And in the far east Long Riders cavalry met up with Mahrcared, but one of the Eothraim armies slipped through and marched towards 3822.

In Mirkwood the Dragon Lord bet the farm and went for 2711 with both his Goblin Gate army and the capital army. But as the capital army didn't forcemarch it didn't get there, but at least he overran the blocking Woodmen army. In Angmar Witch King came out guns blazing. All armies were immediately sent towards the Arthedain homeland.

Turn 2:

More good news.

Long Rider beat up Mahrcareds cavalry out east, 2 Eothraim camps had been burned, and Dark Lt. cavalry had reached 3112 unopposed. The main Ice King army and a regular Drk.Lt. army met up with another starting Eothraim army at Thuringwathost, and Ice King cavalry had reached the Sinda village at 2915. And at 3612 Din Ohtar had sabotaged the tower and now the main Dog Lord cavalry army and the Long Rider navy was there to liberate the townfolk. Unfortunately an Eothraim cavalry army had made it to 3922, but so had Din Ohtar and Khamul..

Only downside that turn was the interception of a few DS armies in Rhovanion, and the traditional burning of DragonLord popcenters...

In the north WK had abandoned Mt. Gundabad and was instead heading for the Sinda towns, and further west the cavalry was split off and sent deep into Arthedain country, while the infantry tried not to get caught, but still marching deeper into Arthedain land.

Turn 3:

The agents did their job and the Eothraim army at 3922 was disbanded. And the citizens of Thuringwathost watched as the Ice King and Dark Lt. slaughtered a large Eothraim cavalry army, and LR arrived to liberate the dwarven village at 3916. Now only the Eoplex remained on Free hands. But not for long - DS armies were swarming the place and

more were on their way. Victory was near.

In Mirkwood 2915 changed hands, but so did Goblin Gate. A sad day indeed. And it was getting worse. Although another Woodmen army suffered defeat, and their commander was captured, the Free came closer and closer to Dol Guldur. And in the north Woodmen were defeating the WK. Mirkwood would soon be in the hands of the Free. But against Arthedain it went better. Recruitment was ongoing in the WK homeland, and further west the infantry had reached an Arthedain town at 1106 unopposed, and the cavalry was just outside the gates of the Arthedain town at 0907.

Turn 4:

Even though the Eothraim continued to fight, he was being overwhelmed by DS forces. And with Din plying his trade in the Eo-plex as well the situation looked grim for the Eothraim. But in Mirkwood the DragonLord capital was in danger. The combined forces of the Free were pressing hard to reach it, and it appeared only a matter of time before they were successful.

In the far west the Witch King cavalry finally reached the Arthedain town at 0907, and the town at 1106 was captured and this infantry was marched to 1006, which was undefended. And a second wave of infantry was sent out from the homeland. But finally the Arthedain was making offensive moves. A huge army was inbound for Carn Dum, and on the plains Murazor and his new cavalry recruits were overrun. A sad day indeed.

Turn 5:

This turn the downfall of the Eothraim continued as armies were eliminated, a commander assassinated, and his major town at 3112 were reduced to rubble. And with IK armies having reached his capital, and DogLord unopposed on his major town at 3113, which had lost the tower due to the expertise of Din Ohtar, there was no way the Eothraim would survive the final turn.

But in Mirkwood the Free had finally reached Dol Guldur and defeat was certain. The capital would fall. An eye for an eye! In the north the Free finally moved their armies to Mt. Gundabad after sabotaging the fortifications, and despite tricky army movement near the WK capital the Arthedain overran another army and reached the capital. But it wasn't all misery. Two more Arthedain towns had been captured and the cavalry was now on one of the Noldo towns to threaten. And an Arthedain and Noldo village were facing capture as well.

Turn 6:

The final turn, and lots of action.

Dark forces took control of 3012 and 3113, but in return the Free liberated 2305 and 2715. And in the north-west WK failed to threaten a Noldo town, but successfully captured the aforementioned village and took control of an Arthedain town via InfOthr. But some of these points would never count as the Arthedain had bankrupted himself (on purpose they say) the previous turn!

Now the Noldo entered the agent-game by assassinating Din Ohtar - so picking up the artifacts

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Check out the websites (above) for
more information.



payments

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You can also set up a monthly payment with us for a SET amount taken from your credit card at the beginning of each month. Ask for more details if interested.

If your account is low funds there will be an administration charge of £1 for the first turn, and 50p for subsequent turns on Low funds.

Note that CC payments are accepted in the following currencies: UK£, US\$ & AU\$ as well as some other currencies.



news from BREE

My thanks to everyone who has sent articles. I am still looking for more though! Please try to keep your articles to about 900 words (or shorter), otherwise I may have to edit you severely! This issue's featured artist was **Anke-Katrin Eissmann**

*Editor: Colin Forbes,
2A Guinea Street, Exeter, Devon
bree@timewyrm.co.uk*

proved valuable after all...

All in all good and fast paced action that saw the annihilation of the Eothraim, defeat of Dragon Lord and a fair exchange of popcenters in the north-west. Finally the FP secured all the point-giving artifacts, but in the end the DS military campaign paid off and secured them a solid victory (110 vs 70 points).

Hip hip hurrah...

The team was:

Witch King - Ulrik Bisgaard
Dragon Lord - Richard Farrer
Dog Lord - Alan Jeffrey
Ice King - Michael Grazebrook
Long Rider - Robert Glass
Dark Lieutenants - Shaun Walker



The First Game: A Captain's point of view

by Andy Wright

It was with some trepidation that we set off for Cardiff (a journey into Wales is always fraught with danger) I was taking Alan Jeffrey a long standing friend of over 14 years down as a passenger, we had met for the first time the previous evening.

Anyway we turned up at the appointed hour, after negotiating many hazards, but we won't go there. The majority of the other combatants were already on site, friends and enemies both old and new. Mutual respect for all. The inimitable Mr. Clint Oldridge, did the 'introductions', and then the 'format' speech. No neutrals?, all pops removed. Gulp!

Every nation can allocate 10 points (not stealth) to any character, as long as that individual skill does not rise above 40. People started to lick their lips. Then the teams...

We were the DS

Witch King: Andy Wright, (my first choice, but no Rhudaur? Oh dear!)

Dragon Lord: Ulrik Bisgaard, (my would be first choice for this position, excellent news!)

Dog Lord: Alan Jeffrey, (that's an anagram of Mr. Eothraim, but the dog lord has, can, and will have cavalry too!!! (all said with a maniacal grin)

Cloud Lord: Mark Stuckey (My position!, there are not many better out there, but this guy was as good. Respect!)

Blind Sorcerer: Richard Farrer (Mr. Versatile)

Ice King: Clint Oldridge (Mr. Bankrupt!, nuff said!!)

Quiet Avenger (Mr. 'No problem' Fella!)

Fire King: Richard Farrer (I did say Mr. Versatile)

Long Rider: Robert Glass (Mr. (safety and toughened to BS 5608. Solid)

Dark Lieutenants: Mike Sankey (Mr. Artifact organiser & Missed a(n) opportunity to build a camp!)

We got to play downstairs. (that's outside for the smokers.) The room was much better laid out than on previous occasions. Well done Clint. Everyone positioned themselves around the war room, further introductions, background experience etc, then Clint called us to order. Gentlemen, we have 2 hours to come up with a plan, Andy Mike & Alan are the most experienced here so I suggest we let them come up with some master plan and overall strategy.

Alan and Mike both looked at me and said, 'Over to you captain, it's your show, take it away.....' Sometime an hour and a half later I finished talking. This is what happened:

I will break the turn by turn blow by blow down to NW, Mirkwood, Mordor, East

Logistics

by Ovatha Easterlings

The hardest thing to simulate in any wargame is logistics. The GSI combat system is based on that of a pre WW I Warsaw math professor who analyzed Napoleonic combat. The logistics system is based on the pre-industrial revolution triad of depots, baggage trains and foraging. Most wargames use cop outs like abstract "lines of supply" or just side-step the matter. Bill Feild is deserving of credit in that he ATTEMPTED to replicate the triad in this game.

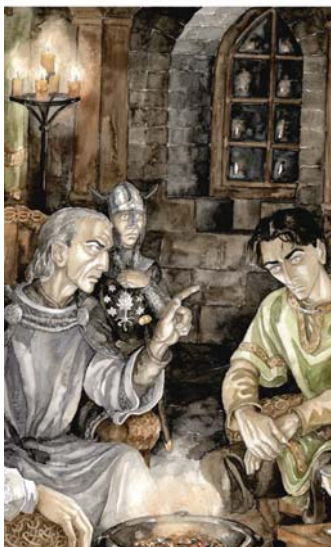
The Triad

Depots: If your troops, or those of a friendly ally, are at your pop center they can draw a limited amount of rations from the depots organized by the civil authorities.

Baggage trains: The issue at hand, at the moment. GSI made baggage trains more potent than they really were, but the game provides this choice for individuals willing to do the 'staff work' required. A minority of players in my experience.

Foraging: The most common method of supply in both the pre-industrial revolution armies and in this game. See, Bill had given the matter some thought. Essentially, you take the troops to the supply and not the reverse. It takes time to gather supply, graze the animals, etc. Hence the movement reduction.

Again, logistics is the hardest item to simulate in any wargame.



We chose to apply our character bonuses as follows:

Bonuses
WK +10 emmy on Angulion,
DLd +10 command on Lhachglin
Dog +10 command Ashburngul
CL: +10 agent Gontran
BS: +10 emmy on Akhorahil
IK: +10 Command on Khatog
QA: +10 emmy Fuinur
FK: +10 emmy Ren
LR: +10 command Voisiel
DKLT: +10 emmy Carrog

Turn 1:
The NW

Erm that will be me, I had devised a whole new NW battle plan and wanted to try it out, apart from Rhuduar was quite heavily involved. Oh well back to the drawing board. No plan, and no hope! Infact not a hope in hell of surviving up here, just make life difficult, but interesting and have fun. Gundabad was my insurance in the NW. Here I would make my stand. Recruited HI after buying steel. This force was further to be boosted by the cavalry element off the capital, plus 400 further from recruitment. The Gram and 1806 armies combined at 1810, off map. Named two command ranked characters.

Mirkwood:

Ulrik like me, knew he was on a hiding to nothing, he accepted the challenge with relish. The main strategy was to use the doglord cavalry in a delayed attack on 2514, with Dendra revealing it. Meanwhile the dragon lord would move his army east to 3116 to capture. The remaining troops from DKLT IK would stream north to entertain the Eothraim. Allowing further cavalry to be recruited to further pressure the Eoplex. GG army moved to swamp at 2511. Capital army to 3116. Named a commander and emmy. Moved Khamul and Orduclax to Sinda capital for some fun! (with a scout naturally)

Mordor:

Just recruit to maximum and see what happens, Dog lord: used first turn to swap artys around, and get Dendra into company with agent support. CL: Retired ALL but 100MA of his infantry starting troops!!!! Insane!!!! Retired two characters, named three 40agents and a commander. BS: You usually get some of the LAT trio on the BS mages. Zilch! 3 triple double learns, and 3 single learns. Named an emmy, and moved the navy west towards the sausage factory. IK: Didn't bankrupt the position, named an agent, emmy, and commander. swapped armies around. Hired on 3123. FK: Named 2 emmys and moved the capital troops to the Ithil sausage factory. It was shut!!!, no one home? DKLT: Swapped artys about, named an emmy. Learnt LA and cast it on #1 ROW QA: Removed harbour at Vamag. Named a 40 emmy and an agent. Moved to post a camp at 3825 to seal the back door once a tower had been erected on it.

East

LR: Idea was to hold LR cavalry back, and hit them once they had committed the freep resources, or use it has a back door blocker, whilst other 'things' were happening. Dino was tooled up, put into company and moved to 3116. Named an emmy and a commander.

TURN 1 STATS:

DS:

Recruitment:

WK: 400HC 1300HI

Drag: 400HI

Dog: 400HI

CL: retired 3500!!!

BS: 150HI

IK: 700HI

QA: Retired 600!!

FK: 800HI

LR: 0

DKLT: 400HI

Recruited 4400 retired 4100. (Something wrong here.)

FREE PEOPLE

Wood: 1100HI

North: 1000HI

Eoth: 146HC 1200HI

Arth: 1800HI

Cardy: 1900HI

NG: 76HC 1900HI

SG: 1500HI

Dwarves: 1500HI

Sinda: 900HI

Noldo: 400HI

Recruited: 13,200HI

Trail of destruction:

Pop Losses: -

Pop Gains: -

Characters;

Argeleb met Sauron. That's tough, real tough.

Artifacts: At game start our artifact effort and potential looked pitiful. No BS mages with any of the locating trio, Two dragon lord (Celedhring & Maben) characters with 2 researches, and Urzahil with research too. Pathetic. All three learnt and cast locate arty on ROW.

Turn 2:

The NW:

Amalgamated all cavalry and mixed troops at 1810 into separate armies and moved separate movement patterns onto 1614. Both arrived! Winner! Cavalry moved onto Gundabad as planned, and was met by the Woodies with 1900HI moving up from Fram. Toast! Named a new commander. Murazor dispatched to ROW suspect hex, compromising my position. Angulion in charge of army. Map showed a veritable storm of acorns, rolling over the horizon, with the first party kicking off at 1806 this turn. With tax already at 72% likely losing 1806, with a 17k deficit, things were warming up quicker than I had anticipated.

Mirkwood:

Former Goblin gate army moved onto Woodman capital to burn off recruitment. Capital army captured 3116 off NG and moved at 3113 expecting to be blocked at 3114. LAT learnt and cast on #175 Ring of Curufin, LA on #9 Elenya. Named a new commander. Received 10k gold from CL. Doglord cavalry arrives on 2715, with Woodman former 2711 army. Oh almost forgot to mention, Khamul and Orduclax successfully challenged and killed Thranduil & new 30 commander. Nice!

Adam Smith Conjures No Mounts

by Dan Newman

Need to pad a thin economy? Don't ask Dendra Dwar.

The practice of conjuring mounts to keep a nation afloat remains popular, and undeservedly so. It's lackluster strategy, weak economics, and dull play.

Conjuring mounts requires access to the spell, which most nations pursue through artifacts. But using a Lost List artifact takes seven to ten turns: find it, move there, investigate, respond, move back, research, use spell. Though it can be less in an ideal case (answering a known riddle can be combined with movement, for instance), it easily be more if further away, and in any case, it often requires sacrificing skill orders for most of the time. It certainly does if sending a mage, who loses a chance to be an average of 20 points stronger had he stayed at home.

While this isn't a problem for nations starting with Conjuring arties (like the Dwarves), the innate ability (the Dog Lord, or designed nations in Fourth Age), or the spell (the Wargs in BoFA and any lucky player), it still makes little economic sense.

Suppose mounts are currently buying at 5. Yes, in a cash-rich start buyout in 1650, the price can reach 30, but it can also fall to 2. 5 is a typical price after turn 12, or earlier in 2950. Since a 30-point mage costs 600 gold/turn in wages and he can Conjure 150 mounts, he makes a profit of 150 gold for two orders, conjure and sell. It's a desperate bid, even at twice the price.

Finally, it's a dull use of character resources, much less fun than many alternatives. While Dendra Dwar isn't typically slated as a mount-maker — his other skills are too valuable — other pure mages, even M50s-70s, are. An M70 selling at 5 still earns just 350 gold over maintenance cost, when he has many more valuable options.

This isn't to say it never makes sense to conjure mounts. Conjuring pays off for cavalry recruiters, and at a high price, sales are more rewarding. It's also an Easy spell, and can be used by weak mages while they PrepMgy to prepare for better things.

But to stay afloat turn after turn, don't ask Dendra to tend the stables.

Mordor:

DOG: Changed tax, named a commander. Defeated NG cavalry at 2919 and moved on to 2715. Mages learnt conjure mounts in preparation for full HC recruitment.

CL: Changed tax rate, named a new commander and agent. (came in with 35 stealth J) Erennis receives Urzahils stealth arty. Gontran +20 agent arty from Doglord. 10k gold sent to Dragon Lord. Cavalry split from capital and heads for Pelargir. BS: More mass spell learning, 3x LA learn attempts, 1x learn and cast LAT on #44 Collohwesta, 1 LA cast on #4. Two further emmys named. Former navy now army heads for Ithil.

IK: Lost 3125 & 3022 to enemy, irritating but inconsequential. Learnt and cast LA on Elenya. Named a further emmy. Swapped artys around. Moved main army out to 3020 and cavalry element to 3217. FK: Named some more emmys, recruited, and threatened Ithil! Bizarre!!! DKLT: Lost battle at 3017 against starting 3217 cavalry force. QA: Named a further emmy. Removed harbour on capital. Built camp at 3825 and forwarded timber for a tower following turn.

East:

LR: Removed harbour, and sailed out to 4415. Intercepted Eothraim coming round the back door with main cavalry army. Named an agent and emmy. Lost western cavalry to Sinda navy and SG superior force.

TURN 2 STATS:

DS Recruitment:

WK: 1200HI

Drag: 400HI

Dog: 800HI

CL: 0

BS: 400HI

IK: 300HI

QA: retired 300!!!

FK: 800HI

LR: 0

DKLT: 700HI

Recruited: 4600

FREE PEOPLE

Wood: 1400HI

North: 1100HI

Eoth: 1200HI

Arth: 600HI

Cardy: 1700HI

NG: 1300HI

SG: 800HI

Dwarves: 800HI

Sinda: 300HI

Noldo: 900HI

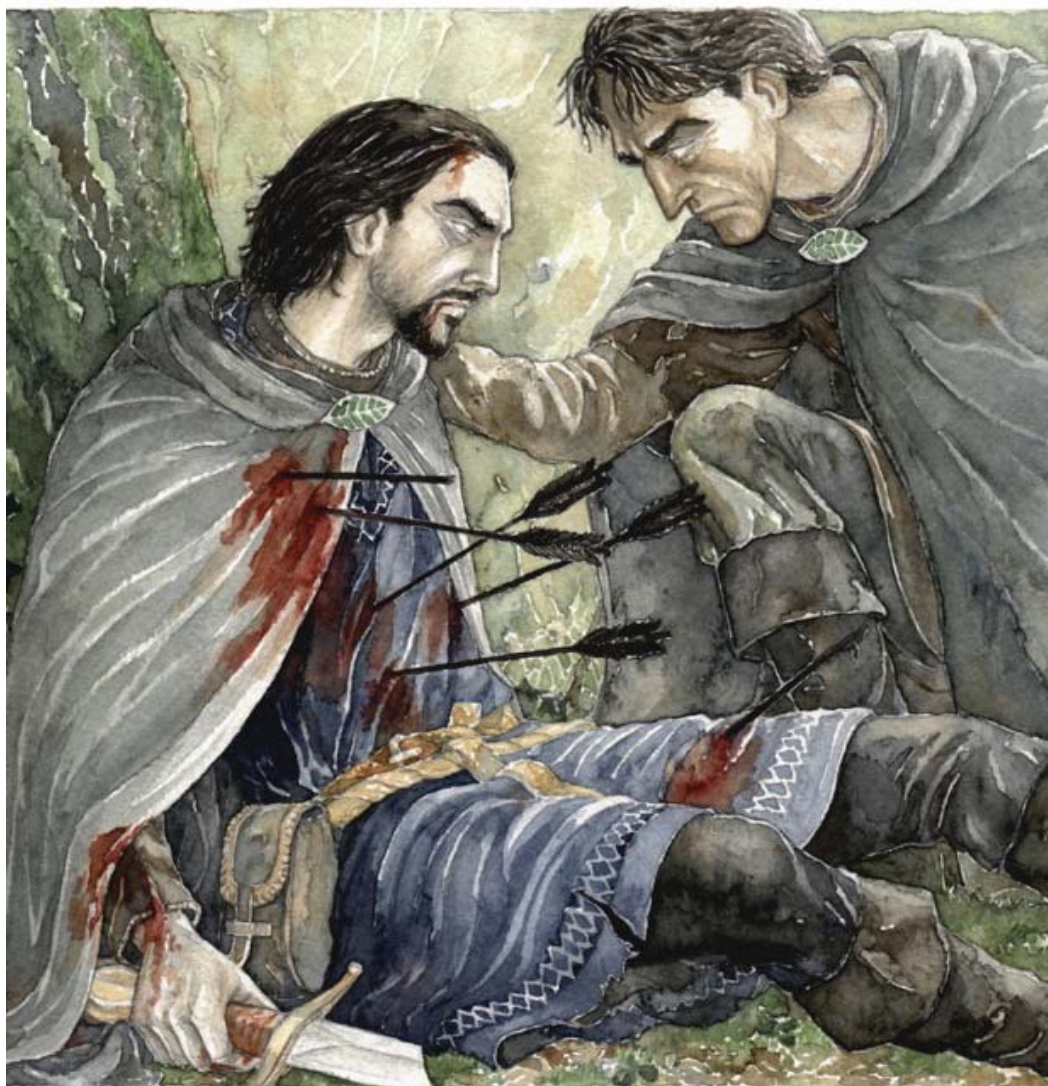
Recruited: 9100HI

Pop Losses: 3022, 3125, 3506,

Pop Gains: 3116,

Enemy Camps: 2710, 1309, 0909, 2118,

Our camps: 3825,



Saving Up for that DVD? Make Money Fast!

Dear Sir,

I am an Uruk of Mordor, charged with the discovery of a number of valuable treasures within Moria. It has come to my notice that the mithril hoard previously owned by Ori of the land of Moria has been found by one of our cave-trolls. Under our laws, the hoard will be shared between our lord Sauron and the local Balrog, but so far neither knows the extent of the treasure.

Sir, I come to you as a respectful businessperson in order that we may derive some profit ourselves from this venture, I would wish that I could arrange for the transfer of half of the find to yourself, costing roughly 20,000 silver pennies. From this amount, I will then arrange for a further such that 25% remains your own, 5% goes for sundry costs (including hire of strong Rohan horses for use in transportation), 5% is given in bribe to the cave troll to ensure the quantity reported to our respective Lords is adjusted, 65% belongs to myself and my fellow Orcs.

In order that this be accomplished, I ask only that you provide details of: Your willingness to participate in this venture Confirmation that you will not speak of this venture to anyone else, or wear any magic rings Your race and land of residence The location of your local Palantir or identity of your preferred message-carrying bird or beast Your given name, and any name you are known by in the Western lands The number of ponies you possess.

I look forward to your returning correspondence, which can be whispered to any passing magpie. I trust that you will ensure that no other dark feathered birds come to hear of this transaction.



Tolkien's Greatest Hits

Memorable lines from the Prof's works

It is one of the first things you learn in the craft of writing. Mediocre dialogue is instantly forgotten—but brilliant dialogue lives forever in the mouth of your audience.

You know those finely crafted little moments you always remember from a movie or play? Even if you don't see the performers again the brightest or funniest quips will linger on. The best movie dialogue has a way of becoming oft-heard bon mots relished among water cooler conversation.

The same goes for literature but often in broader measure. The most impressive wordplay remains within your psyche long after you put the book down. When the rubber hits the road, it's how a great writer is elevated above the ordinary herds.

Indeed one of the first things you learn about J.R.R. Tolkien is that his work is ripe with just such powerful language. His wonderful ability to play with tone, color, and emotion made it easy for me to select the following from *The Lord of the Rings*. These are my favorite one-liners (or two-liners), that stand out as having a striking impact. Consider this collection a literary sampler akin to "Tolkien's Greatest Hits."

Lord knows that the Professor himself would frown upon the idea, yet I present them playfully and respectfully. Whenever I read and encounter these moments I am forever impressed with intensity, humor, or remembrance.

Most bittersweet line

"I have quite finished, Sam," said Frodo. "The last pages are for you."

Most perfect description of beauty

Young she was and yet not so. The braids of her dark hair were touched by no frost; her white arms and clear face were flawless and smooth, and the light of stars was in her bright eyes, grey as a cloudless night; yet queenly she looked, and thought and knowledge were in her glance, as of one who has known many things that the years bring.

Most shocking moment

But even as it fell it swung its whip, and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard's knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss.

Spookiest moment:

Farmer Cotton found Frodo lying on his bed; he was clutching a white gem that hung on a chain about his neck and he seemed half in a dream. "It is gone forever," he said, "and now all is dark and empty."

Most colorful analogy

"Troubles follow you like crows, and ever the oftener the worse."

Most moving speech on the battlefield

"But no living man am I! You look upon a woman. Éowyn I am, Éomund's daughter. You stand between me and my lord and kin. Begone, if you be not deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite you

if you touch him."

Most powerful moment of rage

Then he charged. No onslaught more fierce was ever seen in the savage world of beasts, where some desperate small creature armed with little teeth, alone, will spring upon a tower of horn and hide that stands above its fallen mate.

Best invitation to dinner

"You shall come home with me! The table is all laden with yellow cream, honeycomb, and white bread and butter."

Wittiest rejoinder

Saruman "For I am Saruman the Wise, Saruman Ring-maker, Saruman of Many Colors!"
Gandalf "I liked white better."

Most gothic description of evil

Paler indeed than the moon ailing in some slow eclipse was the light of it now, wavering and blowing like a noisome exhalation of decay, a corpse-light, a light that illuminated nothing.

Most shrewd political advice

"He uses others as his weapons. So do all great lords, if they are wise, Master Halfling."

Single best piece of advice

"Do not meddle in the affairs of Wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger."

Most spectacular moment of destruction

Towers fell and mountains slid; walls crumbled and melted, crashing down; vast spires of smoke and spouting steams went billowing up, up, until they toppled like an overwhelming wave, and its wild crest curled and came foaming down upon the land.

Most Shakespearean dialogue

"Stir not the bitterness in the cup that I mixed for myself," said Denethor. "Have I not tasted it now many nights upon my tongue, foreboding that worse lay yet in the dregs?"

My own all-time favourite

There still he stood far into the night, hearing only the sigh and murmur of the waves on the shores of Middle-earth, and the sound of them sank deep into his heart.

Many of you certainly have your own take on what qualifies as the "most humorous," "most shocking," etc - so why not write in to bree@timewyrm.co.uk? Professor Tolkien showed his passion on every page, with every turn of phrase. Of his labours he wrote in a 1950 letter to Milton Waldman:

.... *It was begun in 1936, and every part has been written many times. Hardly a word in its 600,000 or more has been unconsidered. And the placing, size, style, and contribution to the whole of all the features, incidents, and chapters has been laboriously pondered.*

Book Review

The Battlefield Blind Sorcerer

by Dan Newman

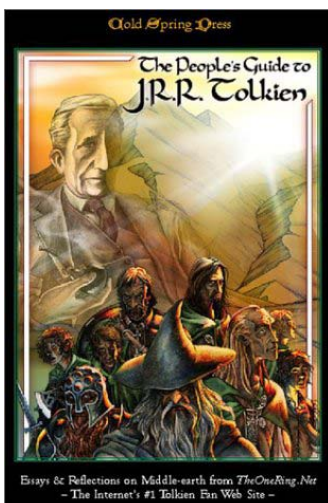
Theonering.net, the fan website, have the **People's Guide to J.R.R. Tolkien**, both for and by "the people."

After a foreword by the foremost Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey, the book launches into a series of essays. They examine charges of racism and sexism, explore the relationship between Sam and Frodo, defend escapism, study the effects of 9/11 and Tolkien's world, Christianity's indirect impact on Middle-Earth ("Wake up and Smell the Dogma" being one of these), its relationship to Arthurian legend and many other ideas and concepts.

And, in keeping with what's going on now, there is movie analysis. First they handle the ghastly Rankin/Bass film and mediocre Bakshi film. Then they go over the new live-action Peter Jackson trilogy, and the multiple viewpoints on the films themselves are great. The end of one section gives us an unusually sweet, romantic glimpse of Jackson and Fran Walsh. (Too many interviewers treat them just as coworkers, and not as a loving couple with two kids. Both sides can be seen here)

That's not to say that it's all serious analysis: There is the "Merchandising Hell" chapter, full of nightmare cash-in merchandise ("lembas" nutrition bars sold at health clubs, Gollum toothpaste), gaming, a C.S. Lewis-inspired "Screwtape" letter, and the reclaiming of the word "geek."

Whether you have been a fan for years, or watched the new movies and were hooked, this is a must-read. If you buy one nonfiction Tolkien book this year, this should probably be the one.



\$16.95 in the US, availability in the UK unknown.

No, I'm not suggesting that the Blind Sorcerer be played solely as a combat nation. Keep your curse squads, your arty hunters and character trackers, but don't overlook the tremendous military presence this nation can play through the back of Mordor.

The debate on military presence begins on Turn 0 for a 1650 player. That 5100-man army is a bruiser, to you as well as to the enemy. Your economy is weak, you have no dedicated emmys (just Akhorahil with E20 skill and you need him elsewhere), and no agents at all to help you gain more gold. You have only one dedicated Commander, a C30, and several Comm orders that need to be done quickly.

Many players disband the huge army and focus on building an economy. But as Tom Walton points out, it's a ploy better suited to a neutral than to an allegiance: Mordor needs that army. It also makes for lackluster play without it—aside from arty hunting, it's going to be a long time before you have any impact at all, and who wants to play a dull game? Finally, that army can do quite a lot of damage to the Free.

It's an overrun machine, and if your team puts sufficient pressure in other places, neither the Eothraim nor the Dwarves can focus on removing it. Move to Burch Nurn on turn 1 and head NE: you can push the Northmen entirely out of Rhun. In a recent game, my starting army took all the onshore pc's in Rhun and then picked off the smaller ones owned by the Eothraim. It took the Easterling pc's after he went Free and was still going, after a little recruiting at the recently redecorated resort of Shrel-Kain, by T30.

You're not done. Raise more troops at the capital and flood them out again; if the Easterlings go Free, you can take his northern holdings, and if he goes Dark, you can support the Pass. The Blind Sorcerer has the enviable position of being able to move huge numbers of troops out (with proper transport management) while enemy can come in: it's a one-way combat road.

The trick is to manage both your economy and your precious Comm orders. Here are some starting tips:

- name an E30 immediately, then have the new guy (or gal) name another. You've got to build your own economy, even if it costs 10K for the first emmy. Don't wait to train Akhorahil to E30—the four turns and orders needed will cost more than the extra 5K to get one now.
- Retire Mardrash, or let an ally kill him. You have more than enough mages for one curse squad, and if you really want two, you can name a new one with 10 more points of skill.
- Name a new commander immediately with Pochak, in the same turn he sails to Burch Nurn. Yes, you have some other C10s, and will make use of them, but having another decent Comm is crucial for tax management, as well as downgrades.



- Send one of your C10s with Pochak to take back 100 troops and a bunch of transports to the capital. Since you can't afford new recruits until you lose troops through combat, your C10 can help train your new C30 at the start. Two turns of 435/430 and you're ready to raise taxes, which gives your new E30s a couple turns for training before going to place camps. Perfect.
- Consider sending Akhorahil along with Pochak, too, both for training and as a backup. Another decent Comm will give you more options, and he can still return in time to prepare for joining a curse squad.
- Consider naming an agent. The cost does matter, and for a well coordinated team, it isn't essential. But it's otherwise helpful to have one, and it's a reasonable use of your fourth (or fifth, thanks to Mardrash) character slot.

In 2950, the approach is similar. You lack the huge starting army and the useful transports, but you have more combat arties, more Comm arties, more Comms, better Comms, and an army already at Burch Nurn. You also have the same pile of starting cash and an economy that needs quick attention.

There, too, it's worth naming an E30 and another C30 immediately, followed by another emmy, for the same reasons. But there's less pressing need for an agent, as you have two that can be trained. Vulmek (C20,A20,M20) is most valuable as a Comm/Agent, and Magurgoth (C20, A20, E20, M30, stlh 30) is valuable as anything but a mage—not that an M30 can't be trained, but you have better mages and no better agents nor emmys.

Since the capital army lacks transports to send a large force across the lake, it's helpful to send troops to Urlurtsu Nurn, for future recruiting, and to improve Burch Nurn as soon as possible. Vulmek's 300MA seem small, but they make the biggest allegiance army in the area; the Dragon Lord can rarely afford to start and build one at Lug Ghurzun. With a little improvement from the capital army, from recruiting, or both -- it makes a nice supplement to the Long Rider cavalry riding north to Rhun.

Whatever tactics you choose, playing a battlefield Blind Sorcerer doesn't preclude the traditional strategies. You can still arty hunt, still cast curses, still scry for your team. Continue your backfield support and push the frontlines at the same time through the back door of Mordor.

Riddle Me This

A good response to this competition with 34 entries. Only two people got all the answers correct, in fact only four people got more than five right! All ties were determined by a draw from a hat. The top five entries were as follows ...

- 1: Dave Wilson** (10/10) - First Prize of two free MEPBM turns and a year's subscription to Flagship magazine
2: Chris Hardy (10/10) - Second prize of the One Ring keychain plus a six month subscription to Flagship magazine.
3: Steve Pickering (7/10) - Runners up prize of 1 free issue of Flagship magazine
4: Oystein Tvedten (6/10) - Runners up prize of 1 free issue of Flagship magazine
5: Chris McGowan (5/10) - Runners up prize of 1 free issue of Flagship magazine

#1) Three things of beauty beyond compare
Golden objects, rich and fair
Entombed within transparent walls
Under the earth in Dwarven halls
Answer: Galadriel's hairs given to Gimli as a gift

#2) Rounded with the shade of pitch
It lies at end of path
A waypoint set by him who stands
Upon the Argonath
Answer: The Stone of Erech

#3) This is a halfling's passion,
It might even be a vice
If you should try to take these
Then that halfling won't be nice
You see them in the morning
Where they weren't the night before
But halflings don't ask whence they come
They simply ask for more
Answer: Mushrooms

#4) It gathered dust in a corner of the Shire
It glimmered though coated with dead marsh's mire
It stopped the pole arm of the great orc chief
It was a kingly gift from a so-called thief
Answer: Bilbo's mithril coat

#5) Twenty-two set out from Rivendell
Four fled from the Dwarrowdelf
Many drove eighteen into the Black Pit
Answer: Legs or Feet (18 fellowship members and + 4 from Bill the pony. Many is of course the Watcher in the Deep)

#6) Once there were 8 leaves of Lorien
One drifted over the falls
One was cast down by the wayside but found
One went to Isengard's walls
Two went in fear to the darkening East
While three hasted westward to war
Each season the leaves in Lothlorien fall
But seldom it's leaves fall so far
Answer: The mallorn leaf broaches given to the Fellowship

#7) A moon with a thousand stars it seemed
When light was caught it brightly gleamed
An heirloom lost for years but found
By him who left without a sound
He gave it away to make amends
He gave his part to save his friends

But scorned he was and turned away
But few days after Durin's Day
Answer: The Arkenstone

#8) One day he stood adorned with lights
And looked down on a sight
A thing of greatest evil there
In Middle Earth, a blight

He wondered why the thing was here
But sadly never knew
For suddenly the thing was gone
But where? He had no clue

One day he died under the sky
And wondered as he fell
Why wicked men would kill him
Then he slept there in the dell

One day his friends returned
And bitterly they grieved that day
For they were those who took
The evil thing so far away

Who was he and what was it?
Answer: The Party Tree & The One Ring

#9) I have a round body with several eyes
My mortal enemy's name is Samwise
In Ithilien Gollum heard rumour of me
And I promise I'm not who you think me to be
Answer: Potato

#10) But twice within a hundred years
Had any heard his voice
He filled their hearts with dread
The little people had no choice
They armed themselves and rallied forth
Dismissing fear of fire or foe
For when they heard his voice, it stood for
Danger, death and woe

His first call was to warn of
Lupine threats o'er Baranduin
The second was beyond them all,
Black heralders of ruin.

Who's voice am I speaking of?
Answer: The Horn of Buckland