



"Strange as News from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

# News From Bree

Middle Earth PBM Newsletter - Issue 7, February '00

## Face to Face Middle Earth!

A tale of Glory, Panic and Twitch the cat...

by Colin Forbes

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"Come to Harlequin Towers in Cardiff and we'll run a face to face game of Middle Earth" they said. And in a fit of Millennium Madness eleven or so people jumped at the idea. Well, it's not often that you get the chance to play fourteen turns of your favourite PBM in one day is it? Well, that's my excuse anyway.

Then the reality started to set in. Cardiff, by nine thirty in the morning. From London. Arrggghh! Fortunately one of our number is the proud possessor of a rather nice and very large car. Better still he offered to take five of us there and back in the same day. As I said, Millennium Madness had set in. So there we were, seven o'clock one freezing morning at the end of December, heading down the motorway. It made an somewhat surreal sight, five PBMs clutching maps and files containing various bits of Middle Earth data, huddled together in a car in the pre-dawn light, blearily staring at the motorway as the strains of various operatic arias filled the car. Most of us had just about woken up by the time we reached Bristol, so breakfast was called at a service station, greasy spoon all round, apart from one of our number suffering from food poisoning. Not an auspicious start, but it was too late now, we were almost there, and only a little late.

The Harlequin house turned out to be quite accessible from the motorway, and we were soon standing around the kitchen holding mugs of coffee. Did I say kitchen? Well, yes, something a lot of players don't realise is that the vast majority of PBM companies are not run from impersonal offices, but a room or two in someone's house. But there wasn't much time for social pleasantries, there was a game to be played and a war to be started!

Choosing teams was a fairly straight forward affair: there were fourteen of us, including three of the Harlequin GM's, so seven a side with a couple of people on each team playing two nations each. The five of us stuck together as a team and were joined by the two GM's deemed the least good as players and a toss of the coin determined that we would be the Free People's. Sensibly the two teams were split up, the evil servants of Sauron got to stay in the kitchen, whilst we had the upstairs living room, replete with comfy chairs and a useful table.

It wasn't long before we had start-up turns in front of us and the first turn strategy was planned. Fortunately one of our number had been rather sad the previous night and marked one of the glossy Middle Earth maps with all the starting positions of the various nations. Lines were drawn on the map and counters moved around, but not for too long, the first turn was due!

Have you ever written a turn, posted it off, come back home and, over a mug of tea thought, "I want my turn back, now not in two week's time"? Well you know what they say, be careful of what you wish for, it may happen. Barely half an hour later, there were the first turns (literally) hot off the printer. Manic activity now ensued, with mass scribbling of turns and shouting out of information for various people, previously delegated to the task, to mark on the map.

I'm not going to tell you what happened, not yet! In the next issue I'll start a game diary of events from a Free People perspective - though any of the Dark Servants are more than welcome to write something as well. Suffice it to say that by the end of turn 2, no less than two Nazgul were dead, either drowned or impaled on an elven blade. By the end of a very long day (past midnight in fact), the Free People's were well and truly on top, but then I would say that wouldn't I? Probably my own worst moment though came not in the game, but when I (twice) attempted accidental murder on an unsuspecting Twitch the cat, who had crept up next to me on the sofa, unaware that my arms were about to flail in that direction. Sorry Twitch!

We didn't get fourteen turns in the end, only seven. But I really can't imagine fitting any more in during the course of a single day. By the time we slouched in the rather comfortable seats of the Jag again, we were all well and truly drained. The good news though was that, the Dark Servants not knowing when they were beaten, the game will continue by post. Better yet at some point during the day someone mentioned how good it would be to have more than one day of this. Oh dear, be careful what you wish for.... Yes, the loons at Harlequin are planning another such event, though this time over a whole weekend! Sheer lunacy! What sort of person would agree to a whole weekend? Oh, sod it, I'll be there.

*Late News: There are definitely plans for a weekend event taking place over two days, with floor space provided for crashing in the Harlequin House. Contact Harlequin for more details!*

## new games

### Pre-aligned neutral game

We are looking for a pre-aligned Neutral game (12 aside no Easterlings) to play against an eager American team. Teams negotiable.

### Teams wanted!

Also looking for a 2950 DS team and a 1650 FP team.

### Standby positions available

Woodmen (T20+), FA position, Noldo (T20+, 2950), Dark Lts (2950)

### 2950 (Game 26)

Nations Available: 1, 3, 8, 10, 11, 18, 22, 25

### 2950 (Game 36)

Pre-aligned Neutral game.  
Nations Available: 11-20, 22, 24

### 1000 (Game 47)

18 positions taken so far (Also Clint and Sam want to play part of a FP team!)

## contacting harlequin

### Post:

340 North Road, Cardiff,  
Wales, CF14 3BP

### Tel: (Note new code!)

02920-625665

### Fax: (Note new code!)

02920-625532

### NEW EMAIL ADDRESS!

me@harlequingames.com  
(please use the address only  
from now on!)

### NEW WEB ADDRESS

www.harlequingames.com

### E-mail List

You can subscribe to the ME mailing list by going to <http://www.onelist.com> and following the instructions setting up an account to the "mepbmlist".

# The Forked Tongues of Elves

by Ray Devlin

## Scene I: The Court of Elrond

*Enter Dun ambassador*

*Dungingurbaly:* Hail Mighty Elrond of the Towers and the West and the Havens. The Dunlendings hope to join in the great alliance against the Dark Servants. My liege Enion has several points of concern

*Elrond:* I am the Captain of the Free peoples! This visit is not unexpected – you have no choice but to join the Free Peoples

*Dungingurbaldy:* Of course, your eminent mellifluousness<sup>1</sup>, but Enion is worried about the proximity

*Elrond:* If you join Elrond's side in this War then you will have nothing<sup>2</sup> to worry about.

*Dungingurbaldy:* Our coasts are vulnerable to Corsair incursions – might not Cardolan hand over their navy to you. Such a combined Western navy could patrol our coasts and make are allegiance more assured.

*Elrond:* Ha, ha, ha! What a ludicrous suggestion! What a foolish thing to think! The Corsair navy is too powerful and I forbid any further discussion on this matter

*Dunging:* You may have a point but at least.

*Elrond:* Good grief! Enough! Look at this quivering hand – it is ready to strike you down if you dare pursue this matter any further.

## Scene II: Still the Court of Elrond

*Elrond:* Ah, Baldy, you have returned! I had assumed you where turning evil and that I must perforce crush you underfoot with my dainty Elven boots<sup>3</sup>

*Dungingurbaldy:* Pardon my absence but I had to pay nature a call. We have not decided to declare evil in the time it takes for a Dun Ambassador to take a leak! If only such actions of mine held such meaning.

*Elrond:* Why do you distract me, little Dun?

*Dunging:* Well, one of our mages has discovered a rather nice agent artefact within the borders of your kingdom. Enion is hoping that you will let our wizened wizard stumble into Noldoland and accidentally pick the thing up. This may affect are leanings in the current War.

*Elrond:* I am afraid that you are too late. Besides you do not need it.

*Dunging:* I protest. We have the Guild of Nasty Agents and.

*Elrond:* Really Dung, you do not know what you say. I have been King in middle earth for 5 years and, as Captain of the Free Peoples, let me say that you do not need this artefact. Only an Elf can use this artefact.

*Dunging:* I understand your point of view but can you relinquish just one tiny, little, ickle, small, teeny, weenie agent artefact to, how can I say this delicately, influence the strategic thinking of the Duns

*Elrond:* No, no, no, no. I am smiling because you do not understand, little one. All these artefacts you see before you, should only be used by an Elf.

*Dunging:* I would like the opinion of your Elven brother who rules the Sinda

*Elrond:* Ah, him. He is not around at the moment. Urgent business you see. Maybe next time.

## Scene III: The Court of Elrond (still)

*Dunging:* Lord Elrond, I have come to see if the rumours are true – do you intend to crush the Duns underfoot?

*Elrond:* Yes, you evil person. You were given a chance to declare for the free. Now it is too late.

*Dunging:* Okay, we will declare for the Dark Servants!

*Elrond:* You see! You see! I told you so! I will rip out your heart and rend you limb from limb you treacherous Dun, you conniving conifer<sup>4</sup>. Oh how! Oh how! How sharper that a serpents tooth it is to have a thankless neighbour. Get out.

*Dunging:* Going.byeeeee!

<sup>1</sup> Dun scholars (while passing time in Elven dungeons) have furiously debated the correctness of this phrase for many years. Fuinvacubag declared it as perfectly capturing the flavour of Elrond but others pointed out that it is complete rubbish.

<sup>2</sup> These same Dun scholars see this as an ironic hint of Elronds future behaviour, 'you will have nothing'

<sup>3</sup> Again, the Dun scholars have noted the Elven irony implicit in this remark: the 'dainty slippers' are in fact the Slippers of Valinor, worn by Manwe himself when he used to slip downstairs for a midnight feast.

<sup>4</sup> Dun scholars are still scratching their heads over this one

## Stage version of "The Hobbit" to tour the UK

I recently saw something on the net about a stage version of "The Hobbit. Intrigued by this I checked it out on [www.whatsonstage.co.uk](http://www.whatsonstage.co.uk) with the following results.

**Leeds** - Grand Theatre and Opera House, 1 - 3 February  
**Milton Keynes**, The Milton Keynes Theatre, 1 - 3 February, 8 - 12 February  
**Nottingham**, Theatre Royal, 1 - 3 February  
**Woking**, New Victoria Theatre, 1 - 3 February  
**Sheffield**, The Crucible Theatre, 1 - 3 March  
**Sunderland**, Empire Theatre, 1 - 3 March  
**Brighton**, Theatre Royal, 1 - 3 March  
**Canterbury**, Marlowe Theatre, 1 - 3 May  
**High Wycombe**, Swan Theatre, 1 - 3 April  
**Liverpool**, Empire Theatre, 29 February - 4 March

### Extracts from a Review...

*Tackling JRR Tolkien's The Hobbit, a work of majestic proportions that has fired the imaginations of generations since its release in 1937, is not for the faint-hearted. There is a very real danger, working with such a literary favourite, of completely blowing the job or, at the very least, treading on the pictures readers have fixed in their minds.*

*Thankfully, adapter Glyn Robbins and director Roy Marsden deliver an affectionate piece of work that bears the above in mind and does a rather nice job of manifesting the book's fantasy world through the journey from Bag End to Erebor.*

*My two young companions for the evening remained captivated throughout, thoroughly enjoyed themselves and, although this Hobbit may not quite be the stuff legends are made of, they recommend it highly.*

# Diary of a Fourth Age Game

by James Spalding

Picture the scene.. four friends have just pulled off a skin of teeth win as good in their first third age game. Despite being out matched by nine players to four at the end we find the ring and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. So.. now a little wiser to the game we read about fourth age.. sounds interesting. We decide to play a team game, so get some interested friends together.

### Strategy

We have an unofficial team leader who has some good ideas about our overall strategy. He suggests we should try a 'hive' strategy, where each player has a speciality, difficult to pull off, but if it works it should be devastating. According to our Hive strategy we split our team as follows:

- Mage Nation - Will specialise only in Mages with the sole aim of identifying and retrieving artefacts, especially any that confer the lost spell of curses.
- Emissary Nation - This nations aim is to get a huge, game influencing, economy as quickly as possible. Gold and resource production to subsidise other nations. Later in the game assault enemy population centres with Emissaries
- Agent Nation (2 players) - Focus completely on agents. Quickly gain a game advantage by crippling opponents economy early. Later support the army nations.
- Army Nations (4 players) - Early targets include fielding large armies with plenty of commanders to pick off some of the opponents smaller population centers. Subsidised by the emissary nation

### Allegiance

Next we consider Allegiance. None of us fancies taking on one of the twin kingdoms so we don't want to play a neutral side. The choice between good and evil is influenced by two factors:

- 1) Dragons. Having just been trounced in the Third age, we want Dragons on our side! (something we didn't know at this stage.. there are no Dragons in fourth age).
- 2) Starting Agent Ranks. Two of our team are really keen to get the agent special skills.

### Location

Lastly, we consider location. Our favourite location is the South Western belt of desert and Southern Mordor. We arrange our forces such that the army nations are at the front, to bear the brunt of any attack and protecting the other nations, especially the emissary nation.

Our second choice is the eastern side of the map. We realise that this will be less protected, but it gives a good spread of climate.

Our third choice is North of the Sea of Rhun and the river. While this looks easy to protect we are not too keen, as it gets pretty cold up North.

### My nation

I have chosen to play an army nation. To this end I choose the Special Nation Abilities as follows:

- Armies at no cost (Great for raising vast armies quickly).
- Fortifications at half cost (as I am going to be in

the front line).

- Force March at no Morale loss.

### Characters

I choose my starting characters carefully as I guess that I am not going to be able to start any new ones for quite a while into the game.

All but one of my characters have some sort of command skill. I plan to use low ranking commanders to raise armies in outlying population centers (worthwhile strategy with the armies at no cost ability).

I choose Human as my race so I can get one good emissary (60 rank at 50 cost). This makes my loyalty strong and gives me a chance at making some sort of economy. Despite the fact that we are going to be backed up by the emissary nation I know that I will need to get camps down as quickly as possible.

I also choose to characters with agent skill as this will make it easier to protect themselves from kidnap and assassination.

With all of our nations chosen and posted we wait eagerly for the turn 0 sheets from Harlequin.

### Turn 0

We are all a little disappointed as we have got our third choice of starting position, North of the river in Eastern Middle Earth. Our army nations are positioned at the weak points, at the bridge, and at each end of the river. The fourth army is positioned in the Iron Hills, close to the road system for a fast response.

All of our Nation designs have basically gone to plan, apart from the army player on the bridge looking more like an agent nation, but it should be ok.

To give our enemies something to think about we send out "scare armies" comprising of 100 cavalry. This is intended to provoke a response and measure the opposition, as well as giving the army nations something to do in the early game.

### Turns 1-5

Camps are proving difficult to put down at these northern climes. Without the camp take up as quick as we expected we have huge problems fielding armies. The scare armies work well catching the South Kingdom, allowing us to see the make up of his forces two turns before he attacks.

The agent attacks work well, with no effective counter attack. The advantage of having specialist here really shows through. Unfortunately, with out effective army support, the pressure cannot be kept up.

### Turns 5-10

We manage to repel a couple of attacks, both across the river and East around the Sea of Rhun, without managing to mount much of a counter attack. The cracks are starting to show. We really need to blow the bridge, but that player isn't too pleased with that suggestion.

### Turn 11-15

The enemy come in such large numbers that we cannot repel them from the bridge over the river. They take one side of the river (that player capital) and its all over for us at this point. On the inside all the population centers we do have are unprotected from attack and close to the southern edge (where it is warmer and the

# sheLOB's

## WEB

News of a new Middle Earth PBM web site constructed and maintained by Kevin O'Keefe. You'll find it at...

[www.middleearthpbm.co.uk](http://www.middleearthpbm.co.uk)

Kevin's pulled together a lot of the useful information formerly scattered over a number of other sites, most notably CZBACH's site over in America. The advantage of having a UK based site is of course that things not only load more quickly, but it's not on Geocities, which is notoriously difficult for being impossible to log onto at times.

So, what's on the site? Well...

### Strategy guides

Kevin's pulled together all the strategy guides he could lay his hands on for every nation in the game. Useful for a beginner (and for anyone playing against the people who wrote the articles!)

### Game Data

Lists of starting characters for all nations and all the artifacts.

### Articles

There are a great many articles, most of which have formerly appeared in the pages of the Mouth of Sauron (an excellent e-zine, now sadly defunct). I'll certainly be happy to make all the Bree articles available to Kevin.

### Encounters & Riddles

Answers to all those riddles and how to survive against the Dragons (unless you're a Dwarf in which case just spread yourself with butter and marmalade).

Overall the site is excellent and will probably replace CZBACH's in my list of ME related bookmarks. The artwork too looks good, without making the pages too slow to load. Have a look, I'm sure Kevin would welcome feedback!

campers can be placed more easily. We all drop the game.

### What went wrong

- We can't place camps down fast enough to build the great economy we want. Our whole team suffers this disadvantage because we are all far in the North, Third Age start-ups balance this better. Our opponents, who are all in the south, put camps down with impunity and soon the camp limit is reached.
- The army players didn't concentrate enough on working together. They didn't manage to grasp the opportunities presented to them by the agent nations (their agents can't afford to stick around and get trapped, they must keep moving). The lack of coordination on the army players part annoyed the agent players.
- Our emissary player got bored. He was the one

who was primarily fighting the camp creation difficulties and because this was his primary job he understandably got fed up. He dropped early which unfortunately left the rest of us without financial support.

### On the positive side

- We had some fun. The creation and setup of the team and the nations was a good thing to put together.
- The Mage effort worked very well, managing to research about half the artefacts by turn 15 (about 10 a turn!). Unfortunately we didn't find any curses artifacts at all.

### Summary

Fourth Age is a good game, but as a team game the initial balance is influenced too much by the start-up you get. This wouldn't have such an effect when people join as individuals. I would certainly play Fourth Age again, this time much wiser.

## Middle Earth Discussions

### A look at the Middle Earth Mailing List

Since the New Year there has been a lively debate on the mailing list on the subject of people playing under a pseudonym. Someone raised the topic, to which Clint responded *"I am curious to what players think about players running positions under such pseudonym. Do you mind? Does it annoy you greatly - what action should we take should we think that something like that is happening? What proof would we need?"*

Colin Forbes kicked things off by saying, *"Traditionally in PBM this form of activity would be seen as cheating. The problem comes with obtaining proof however. Given the difficulty of absolute proof it would be hard to kick anyone out of a game. However the tried and tested means (from a GM's point of view) of dealing with these circumstances is to request the 'two' players not to play in the same games together."* Kevin O'Keefe agreed, up to a point. *"Yes it's cheating but it depends really. If it's a team game I don't mind so much because it doesn't matter who wins at the end."*

Clint weighed in again, *"Maybe then we could ask the player concerned to not play with their 'partner' in that game together? Or publish lists of players that you are playing against and if you don't want to play say so?"*

Michael Peters then made the valid point that, *"With email these days its difficult to know if one person who runs two nations under different names isn't just using his email as the letterbox of the smailer."*

Whilst Henning Rindbaek Larsen felt that, *"If people want to play two positions in one game (not counting keeping a nation alive until a replacement can be found), they should try to get a game set up with that option. Otherwise, play under your own name don't hide behind a pseudonym. You owe your team mates that. If you would play under a pseudonym to just to win a game, get a life."*

*A couple of actions that could point in the direction of a two nation guy in a one nation game could be that one of the nations could only be reached through his friend. A sudden transfer of a lot of "unnecessary" pop centers gold to a nation is NOT a proof but if it happens too often..."*

Mike Elliott felt differently though, saying that the suggestion of cheating was, *"Complete and utter rubbish. Playing under a pseudonym is not against any rule I know of and if someone wishes NOT to play under their real name it in my opinion is their right too do so!"*

Clint tried to clarify things. *"If a player wants to use a name other than his real name that is okay. I have had several players ask for this for various reasons and that is okay. However, if a player is knowingly playing 2 positions and claiming to be someone else for a benefit in the game then that does not seem to be in order for me. As you said - this is a not a nanny state (In your opinion) - therefore people are allowed to have their opinions - even if they disagree with you. But as a GM I have to make a ruling whereby I can keep as many players happy as possible. Agreed?"*

*So in that case I need to know what the players think about the situation and if they are happy about the rules we put forward. So in the case of someone playing without our knowledge (don't forget we are by law required not to pass on information if asked to by the player, although there is an assumption that unless you tell us otherwise we will do so) that is breaking the rules that we have presently in place. These rules are negotiable though (which is what I am trying to put forward here).*

*For what reasons are these players hiding their identity? Is it to gain an in game advantage - in which case this is not allowed (i.e. in a single person game, i.e. one position per player game, the rules are just that. Anything else must be discussed with the GM first.) There are plenty of opportunities to get games with us whereby you can run more than one position if that is what you like to do. (The reason for one position per player is that you are able to co-ordinate more effectively and have a certain guarantee about the positions actions which is not normally there).*

What do you think? Write to Harlequin or "News From Bree" - both will be happy to hear your views!

You can subscribe to the ME mailing list by going to <http://www.onelist.com> and following the instructions setting up an account to the "mepbmlist".

## Watchful eyes in the hills above Helm's Deep

This is an extract from a diary of somebody with a ringside seat of the developments at Dry Creek Quarry, New Zealand, where the filming is currently taking place. He lives opposite!

*"Sunday saw the first lot of rehearsing done. While all was quiet on the building front (first time in 4 months), around about 40 people, the leading extras I imagine, went through their paces. They spent around 3 hours around the "wall" near the top of the quarry, doing what? I couldn't quite work that out.*

*Then they jumped in about 6 white vans and went down to the base of the quarry. There they each had a long jousting type spear. About four times the height of themselves, 5 metres long! They looked to be in some type of formation on a large ramp. They marched up it and lowered their spears from an upright position to a horizontal position as they went. Back and forth for 30 mins. In the vans and off again towards Wellington.*

*Today is the day that the LOTR crew set up their business. They strolled onto the Helm's Deep set like an army of ants. Mega number of cars, vans, utes, trucks and cranes. The majority of cars are parked in the landfill site in Manor Park (well over a hundred now! I guess they belong to extras.) This afternoon, out came those temporary orange fences and barriers, more scaffolding and lighting rigs, not to mention the lights themselves. Also more marquee tents.*

*The wall at the top of the quarry has seen a lot of action, heaps of equipment has been set up on both sides of the wall. Including some large ladder-type rigs placed into position (as I write) by crane against the side of the wall."*

Another local has sent word that residents in nearby Manor Park have been given notices in their mailboxes concerning the Helm's Deep set; it seems that filming is set to start Monday night, 17/01/00 Apparently it was to be kept hush hush....

# Between Enemy Lines

## Dunland Strategy and Tactics in 1650

by Henning Rindbaek

Signing up as a neutral can be one of the most exciting things in MEPBM but beware.... all your neighbours may not accept Your more or less reasonable demands on territory or the price that your demand for your aid.

Dunland is often assumed to join the Free People due to its location right between Northern Gondor and the Free Peoples in Eriador. It is a sensible thing to do but it is not the only alternative, but more about that later.

### Geography

Dunland is located in the mild plains of Enedwaith, south of the Swan river, north of the White mountains and west of the Misty mountains. North of the Swan river Cardolan is watching You and guarding his rear against a possible attack from the south. East of the Rohan gap Northern Gondor will probably keep an eye on you too. You are ruling a nation with a great variety of natural resources and by placing camps you can ensure your nation any commodity it may need.

### Military

Your army is adequate and consists of well trained, well equipped and well-motivated troops. Unfortunately a lot of them are of the lighter stock so a reform in the army will do you good.

Your main problem is that the capital is on the road and only fortified by a tower and that you don't have a backup capital. The good thing is that you are a neutral and probably won't be attacked in the first couple of turns. And by placing a camp at 1920 and fortify it with a tower you can ensure another turns recruitment before an enemy can reach your soft homelands. The village in 1715 would also benefit from a tower to slow down Cardolan should he get any good ideas. If you have Ice in your stomach, you can retire all but your cavalry and heavy infantry to help your economy while you replace the retired troops by heavy infantry (1600 is possible each turn). Just remember to get the cavalry shuffled into a single army, without infantry, to act as an emergency reaction force.

### Characters

You have two of the best human mages and they can fairly easily learn those lore spells that they need to know. And within 10 turns they can be into the artifact hunt and even though they won't find Tinculin or the ring of wind for you, there is still several good minor and medium level artifacts left. Your Commanders is adequate and most are multi skilled even though the secondary skill really needs improvement. You don't have any emissaries or agents so get yourself some ASAP 3 emissaries and one agent is my recommendation for the first four characters. Train the agent to at least 40 in skill before naming new agents (you are in no great hurry just be ready at turn 6). After that keep naming a good mixture of agents and emissaries, and now and then a commander agent or commander emissary.

### Economy

You are very close to having a balance of zero at game start and there is a good chance of you to keep it there by placing camps and selling out of your production. If you do choose to retire your light troops you will end in the black for some turns. Use it to create camps. I recommend that you also lower the taxes to 39 to ensure a steady growth in loyalty of your pop centers.

### Diplomacy

At game start send a letter to all possible allies (or enemies) to get contact. You should also state what you consider your borders (be reasonable and open to minor changes) and tell what will happen if your borders are crossed by foreign forces without prior permission. And stick to it (that's where you cavalry will earn their bread). This is the hard part. You have to be hard enough to ensure that you are left alone and yet not that hard that your neighbours decide that you are a threat that they have to deal with. You may also wish to state how long you intend to stay neutral (not many will object to turn 10 as breaking point) unless forced to choose by enemy actions.

Talk with both sides and do not forget Rhudaur You two may be able to get an agreement about guarding each others back.

If you suddenly find a Cardolanian or North Gondorian army at your capital "just to protect you from the evil ones..." Immediately join the Dark Servants and start a war of attrition.... It is better to go down in flames than being subdued into joining a cause. If the Servants on the other hand decides that You do not need your gold and forgets to ask for financial aid; be assured that the Free People will love to have a nation that can name 40 agents and have a doubled skill on scouts/recons (not to mention your armies) to join them.

Should you decide to go dark, demand a SECURE backup capital before you flip your icon to the evil eye. Even though most dark servants would love to have Dunland as an ally they will not and cannot afford much (at least not early on). This is a choice that should be considered thoroughly before doing this. If the Free People attacks you coordinated you may not last for long, but if they are uncoordinated it is a choice that your nation can benefit from and it could be really fun too.

If you on the other hand choose to join the Free People in their fight for freedom and justice, you can allow your self to claim a higher price for your services, but once again be reasonable in your demands.

### Keep your word and guard your back!

No matter what you choose watch out for backstabs and be prepared to retaliate. Even though you may fight loyally for the new cause some players (they are not many but they do exist) find that "a neutral should not be allowed to place "when I have been a FP/DS from turn 1". Even when you actually have done more to ensure victory than they have. And remember always to keep your word, else you cannot expect your future allies to trust you and your motives and a first strike against you becomes more possible.

## middle earth confessional

The Middle Earth mailing list has recently seen a spate of honesty as people owned up to their worst moments in MEPBM. For instance, Mike Barber says, *"Without a doubt, the worst move I ever did was (as the Dog Lord) using Dendra Dwar to challenge Duran. I meant Waulfa. Duran died. DOH! Sorry Chris (again)- 10 games later the memory is still painful."*

Colin Forbes was one of a number of have difficulty with East and West. *"In the original game five (mercifully years ago now) I spent some while building up a large Dwarf army at Khazad-dum, 5000 hi in all. I even equipped as much of it as I could in bronze and steel \*and gave it food. It's purpose? To march south and attack Morannon. So what did I do? Naturally I marched W, W, W instead of east. Sod it I thought, Rhudaur's still neutral and hasn't been replying to messages so... sent through the game. Three turns later there was no Rhudaur"*

Mike Elliott had similar problems, *"Mine was the classic army move, with an opponents capital at my mercy 7000 troops raring for battle and enough food for one go instead of w.w.w they forced march into the desert where they ran out of food and took another 3 turns to get back."*

The best one though is surely the player who transferred a major town to an ally to keep them in the game, then issued an InfoThr order on the way out....



## 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!

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# The Aussies are coming...

## Chill the beer and pretend you like the climate

by Mark Peters

This Aussie has wandered over to see why people left the homeland in the first place. IMO it was the cold weather, the warm beer, and the Frenchies being too close. Having read the latest news from Bree (which has stories), I've decided to put in my normal lot of lies and misinformation that has banished me to the ends of the map by the other Aussies.

The mighty Harad commander (that's a 30 pointer to the rest of the world) was content. So use to the feeble powers of 2950 (where nasty emails are sent, and threatening phone calls made, over friendly steals that net over 1K), the feel of a REAL game in 1650 was one to enjoy. While 1650 was getting a bit long in the tooth, nothing beats attacking on T1. True, Fourth Age also has attacks on T1. But that involves 3+ 60 point agents with +20 kills wandering over to your capital and say 'Bend over Blackadder' with hot pokers in their hands (still my favourite episode). Being hit in that fashion, even by your own side (they later claimed I was closest, and didn't talk fast enough) only makes me enjoy 1650 even more. Only ONE side has the good agents at the start of the game, and that the way it should be (contrary opinions from the free will not be listened to).

But I better enjoy my T0 Harad now. In a grudge game with the neutrals declared, it was always going to do downhill from here. No "I'm a neutral, let me decide on T10 when all you lot are weakened". No "I wonder if I can delay declaring until I get my commanders up past 40?" In a grudge game, its poor old Harauth Ramam with his 40 command skill that will decide the fact of the largest two nations in 1650. These two nations being north Harad and south Harad for those not in the know. A rather large river splits both nations. The Harad engineers are hard pressed to decide on making a bridge, or ripping up the ports, and with a skill that makes sand castles too hard, end up doing neither before the evil SG and Corsairs visit.

We know the SG visit the slums in north Harad for a move upmarket. And rumour has it that the corsairs move up to capture livestock since it's a

rough life as the corsairs when their family tree doesn't have any forks in it. The news that its English players I'm fighting against, has lowered the odds that I will have 4 or more towns still in my ownership after turn 5. Bastards. I've bet \$50 AUD with the yanks on being eliminated before turn 10 (methinks this isn't the first international game being played by the Brits). If only the English players would reply more in the Deft ME bulletin board more, I might get better odds. I have not seen such woeful spoil sports tactics since the English cricketers ended the recent test match against South Africa in three days. Its cost me a shout of beer for that 5 day sickie from my local quack. I had to go back to doing nothing but emails at work. I couldn't stay at home (the missus will make me do house work), and I couldn't go to the beach (bloody council recently outlawed nude surfing since so few chicks entered).

But back to thinking about the game. I'm SUPPOSED to have a 100 point commander. Still can't see it (must be like the tax cuts after election day). I wonder what happens if I use him/her/it to go free instead? The free can't take my pop centres (one of the better rules to get removed in FA), which allows me to funnel money to my side (which likes swallowing money even as fast as the EU). And while its means I can't win, my winning record is almost as bad some unnamed political party's moral guidance record. Let's hope Rob does the checking after a long lunch at the pub, John only does the newsletter, Dan is getting attacked by Twitch, and Clint's failing eyesight doesn't see anything unusual with my change allegiance. My going free will also allow my side an alibi, if for some strange reason we DS come second in this game, and the Brits second last. Aussies love having an alibi (Darwin's survival of the fittest in action - those without an alibi end up in jail, and we smart ones end up at home breeding with the local blonde goddess down at the pub).

One thing I wish I did before I lost the draw and got the Harad. Never, never, NEVER, play the Noldor in the game before playing the Harad. I still think I'm missing some characters!

## From out of the West

### Pubmeets and Conventions

We will be at the annual Flagship convention at Ealing Town Hall, London, on April 15th. As per usual we will have a big presence so please come and say hello and chat to your fellow teammates. (The pub is adjacent this year!) We'll be bringing along some boardgames for your entertainment - as if we were not entertaining enough. Last year we had quite a few of you turn up; I forget if it was 20 or 40 of you all. This year I expect quite a few more.

Here's some advance warning of forthcoming pubmeets on the following days and places. Anyone is welcome, they're not only for Harlequin players. We generally get some other

GMs and their players. Boardgames available on the day - welcome to bring your own...

#### April 15th

After the Ealing Flagship Pubmeet. We'll work out which local pub on the day.

#### July 1st

1.30-7.00 at the Flyer and Firkin, Reading, Opposite the Railway Station

**HARLEQUIN  
GAMES**

