

AN OR

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# Editorial

Here at long last is *Anor* 28, rather a lot later than planned, I'm afraid to say. In part this is because of the same old excuses (not enough articles, in other words), but this time I am also slightly to blame, because work has been exceptionally busy these last six months or so, and I just haven't had chance to work on what few articles I had.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome two new contributors this issue, both called Matthew – which is to be viewed as a coincidence rather than a requirement, I hasten to add. Unfortunately, two of our long-standing regulars haven't contributed this time – though Jeremy did offer me an algebra test if I wanted it – so there's still rather too much of me in these pages, even for *my* taste!

To go with our new contributors, we also have a new feature: a chronicle of the CTS over the last academic year. This in part fulfils my hope (expressed in the last editorial) that *Anor* can provide an account of the Society's activities in the hope of stimulating a bit more interest and activity from the more lethargic membership. I'm also delighted to be able to print two (almost!) unsolicited reports to supplement this account. Cynics, take note.

No silliness this issue, I'm afraid, and again not a great deal of illustration to break up the text, so it may look a bit daunting, but everything in here is worth reading (even my bits). So do make the effort. There may even be something controversial enough to make you want to reply! I can't wait to hear from even more new contributors.

**Steve Linley**



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# The Cambridge Tolkien Society

## A Word from the Steward

### IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ!

At this year's AGM of the society, there were no new candidates for committee posts. The current committee clearly cannot continue indefinitely, so it is time to consider the future. This year saw a reasonable number of new members joining (considerably more than last year, for example), and there was plenty of interest from others who have not (yet) joined, so it seems that there is still demand for a Tolkien Society in Cambridge. But throughout the academic year, the level of participation by members has been disappointing. So it behoves me to ask exactly what our members want from their society, if not the sort of events we are running at the moment.

Of course it is possible that everyone joined simply in order to receive *Anor*, the publication you are holding. This is of course entirely reasonable – it's your money after all, but if it is the case, there is little point in the Society continuing as at present. If it is exclusively the publications that interest the membership today, there is no reason for the committee to work on anything else (or indeed for there to be much of a committee per se). Personally, I doubt that this is the case. Though I honestly believe that *Anor* is now being produced to a much higher standard, after several fallow years, I can't really see this being the sole reason for most people joining.

A more likely explanation then would seem to be that the events we are running at the moment don't really appeal to people sufficiently for them to attend in droves. I'd be the first to admit that the society might have fallen into a rut, repeating familiar activities that appeal mainly to the active core of the society. But of course, this is all speculation. So please communicate to us what you would like to see the society doing, which events you would like to see, whether there are any logistical obstacles (e.g. choice of day of week, location of events) which prevent you attending event, or anything else that might put you off coming along, and so on.

Of course we'd also love to hear from anyone who would like to help with the running of the society. This need not entail doing a great deal of work. The committee posts are Steward (i.e. chair), Smaug (treasurer), Keeper of the Red Book (secretary) and Bill the Pony (officer without portfolio). As we are also a small (local group) of the Tolkien Society, the Steward has to join the TS but other than that, qualifications are fairly minimal. Smaug probably ought to be able to count, but even mathematicians have taken on the job in the past, so it's obviously not that vital a skill. Enthusiasm is probably the most useful quality to possess. The current committee would be more than happy to provide guidance and help at the start. Write to us or talk to us at an event if you're interested.

Remember, this is your society, so let us know what you want from it.

# The Superhighway Goes Ever On and On

## A brief guide to Tolkien-related stuff on the internet

**A**LRIGHT, a silly title, and we all know that the internet is not in fact a superhighway (whatever that is) yet – more of an old stretch of motorway full of road works and bad drivers, but there is a lot of stuff out there for those of you with access to the 'net. Since many of you are students, and will already have the facilities available, even if you haven't used them, I thought it would be worth mentioning some starting points.

### The World-Wide Web

As might be expected, there are any number of web sites with Tolkien-related stuff on them. If you don't know how the web works, it is based on hypertext, whereby instead of a linear stream of text, you have text and graphics with links to other resources interspersed, so you can jump about from 'page' to 'page', call up pictures, sound, movies, and often interact with the host computer, more or less at your own whim. Whilst there is obviously a lot of scope for idly flitting from place to place for fun, there is also an enormous amount of information available if you take the trouble to find it.

A good place to start is (perversely) the Other Place – the Oxford Tolkien Society have a page (<http://sable.ox.ac.uk/~toksoc>) with a lot of links, including a page for the national Tolkien Society. Why doesn't the CTS have a web page? Well, find us a web server we can use and we'll do one!

CTS founding member Julian Bradfield runs the Tolkien Language List, which can be found at <http://www.dcs.ed.ac.uk/staff/jcb/TolkLang> for those interested in the languages (you can also find links to things like Tengwar computer fonts and other such tidbits there). On the where-are-they-now front, another CTS ancient, Colin Rosenthal can be found at <http://bigcat.obs.aau.dk:80/~rosentha> – not much about Tolkien there, but lots of silly stuff.

A vast variety of stuff can be found by surfing around. There are libraries of fantasy art, all lovingly scanned in and put up on one of the European sites. There are in-depth discussions of Tolkien trivia and even of serious subjects. The best way to find what's out there is to look yourselves of course. If you don't have access to the web but do have electronic mail, you can get the pages in text form (well HyperText Markup Language, but you can still read the text) by sending email to [agora@www.w3.org](mailto:agora@www.w3.org) with the text 'get <http://www.cam.ac.uk>' (or whatever address you're interested in) as the message body.

### Other stuff

Slightly harder to winkle out are the many ftp (file transfer protocol) resources – you have to find references to them (in web pages or elsewhere) and then use an ftp

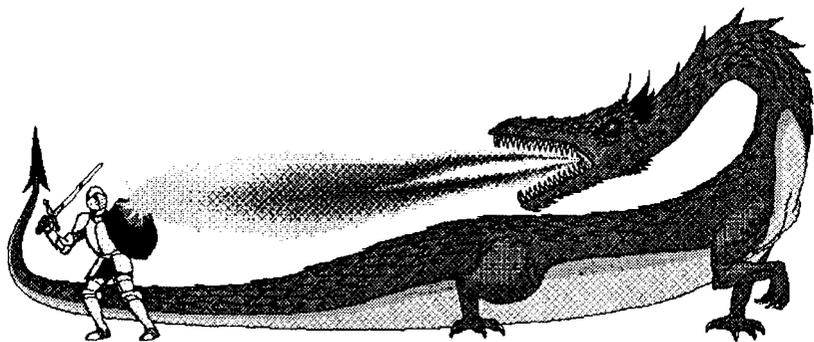
program to download them. I don't have any good ones written down, but they must be there, as not everything is (yet) available via the web.

Network news is another resource worth looking at. It works like email, except that anyone can see the messages, which are stored on servers and read using newsreaders (no, Trevor MacDonald doesn't count). There are newsgroups for just about every subject imaginable. The most relevant to us is called `alt.fan.tolkien`, and most computers with news should carry it (the Cambridge University server, `nntp-serv.cam.ac.uk` certainly does). Like most groups, this is dominated by Americans, but once you get used to the cultural differences, there are sometimes interesting discussions there. Newsgroups are also the main place where other resources are announced (web pages, ftp sites, mailing lists and so on). Many newsgroups get a lot of spurious traffic, so use a newsreader which allows you to skip the bits you don't want to see. Fortunately, the Tolkien group is relatively small, so it's possible to keep up with it. There are other groups about medieval history and literature, mythology, language, science-fiction, and so on, so whatever your interests you should find something.

#### **And finally**

You can always e-mail me: `pt100@cup.cam.ac.uk` is the address. And don't forget that you can send *Anor* articles by e-mail to the editor at `stevl@ctadcam.demon.co.uk` – so if you want to write something but have forgotten how to use pen, paper, envelopes, and so on, you still have no excuse!

**Paul Treadaway**



# Farmer Giles of Ham

Cambridge Tolkien Society 16 February 1996

## *Hwæt!*

In his 1936 Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', Tolkien wrote:

... I have read enough, I think, to venture the opinion that *Beowulfiana* is, while rich in many departments, specially poor in one. It is poor in criticism, criticism that is directed to the understanding of a poem as a poem. It has been said of *Beowulf* that its weakness lies in placing the unimportant things at the centre and the important on the outer edges. This is one of the opinions that I wish specially to consider. I think it profoundly untrue of the poem, but strikingly true of the literature about it. *Beowulf* has been used as a quarry of fact and fancy far more assiduously than it has been studied as a work of art.

In a letter dated 20 February 1938 (Letter 25), he wrote of *The Hobbit*:

*Beowulf* is among my most valued sources.

In his Foreword to *Farmer Giles of Ham*, Tolkien in the satirical persona of editor/translator wrote:

An excuse for presenting a translation of this curious tale . . . may be found in the glimpse that it affords of life in a dark period of the history of Britain, not to mention the light that it throws on the origin of some difficult place-names. Some may find the character and adventures of its hero attractive in themselves.

These are just three clues amongst many that lead me to believe that the key to a sophisticated reading of *FGoH* is the Old English poem *Beowulf*. Or, more precisely, not *Beowulf* itself (which no doubt comes as a relief to those whose knowledge of the poem is less than intimate – including myself!), but what Tolkien has to say in his revolutionary lecture about the *Beowulf* criticism of his day, and his own reading of the poem. Whether his reading is right or not doesn't matter, it's what he actually thought himself that is important for the reading of *FGoH* that I want to present here.

So, what on earth can a lecture written and delivered in 1936 tell us about a children's story published in 1949? To answer this question we must first look at the history of the text of *Farmer Giles*. Although not published until 1949, the story is in fact much older – a point that is often missed by commentators. At present there is no proper scholarly edition of *FGoH*, and so long as Christopher keeps publishing shopping lists found on the back of page proofs of *LotR* this looks set to remain the case – though I'd love to do one if someone were to offer me enough money! In the mean time, though, unlike *LotR* and

*The Silmarillion*, the earlier versions remain unpublished. Luckily, some people have examined the older MS and typescripts, which now reside in the States, and a tantalisingly short account is given by John Rateliff in his article 'Early versions of *Farmer Giles of Ham*', *Leaves from the Tree*, the proceedings of the fourth Tolkien Society workshop on Tolkien's shorter fiction

The story first came about, according to reminiscences of Father John Tolkien, as an impromptu story made up while the family was sheltering from a sudden downpour that interrupted a picnic. The date of this is unclear, but late twenties to early thirties seems reasonable. The earliest MS may in fact be earlier, roughly contemporary with the earliest drafts of *The Hobbit*, and the story as told there is simple and unsophisticated, much in the manner of *Mr Bliss* and *The Father Christmas Letters*. The second version is little more than a typed fair copy of the first, with only a few alterations and additions, and is still not the *Farmer Giles* as published.

In the third version, however, a dramatic transformation takes place. All the characters are named, the philological jests and scholarly references are introduced, the length more than doubled, the voice of the narrator is no longer avuncular (as in *The Hobbit* or *Mr Bliss*), and the narrative is set firmly in the Dark Ages of 'this island' (up to now, *FGoH* ran the risk of being incorporated into the Middle-earth milieu, as was to happen to *The Hobbit*). In fact, with only minor alterations, this is more or less the version as published. And its date? Well, we may be reasonably certain that this version (or one immediately preceding it) is what was read to the Lovelace Society (a literary society in Worcester College, Oxford) in January 1938, in lieu of an academic paper. As an aside, we should not be surprised at Tolkien's presenting a story instead of a paper: 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorthelm's son' was also submitted as an academic paper to the journal *Essays and Studies*, with the following apology: '. . . to merit a place in *Essays and Studies* it must, I suppose, contain at least by implication criticism of the matter and manner of the Old English poem (or of its critics).' Even the *Beowulf* lecture makes its point largely through story (most famously that of the tower, but there are others).

So, we should note that *FGoH* in more or less its present form stands in for an academic paper: like 'The Homecoming', I believe that it contains, at least by implication, criticism of the manner and matter of the Old English poem (in this case *Beowulf*) or of its critics. (my italics). We should also note the date: this is exactly contemporary with the final drafts of *The Hobbit* (which is itself deeply and explicitly indebted to *Beowulf*), and just after the composition of 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics'. So we should not be at all surprised to find the same concerns running through all three.

It is interesting to note that Tolkien actually offered *FGoH* to Allen & Unwin as a possible follow-up to *The Hobbit* in 1938, but they wanted more about hobbits: just imagine what the fantasy genre would be like if they had taken it! Publication of *FGoH* was held up first by the War, then by paper shortages, and finally by Tolkien's dissatisfaction with the original artist.

Well, that's been a rather lengthy preamble, but it is important to point out the proximity in time of *FGoH* and 'Beowulf: The Monsters and The Critics' (and *The Hobbit*), so that their proximity in thought should not be considered too outlandish.

As I mentioned earlier, here are two strands that I wish to pursue here. The first is Tolkien's view of the critics of *Beowulf*, which is the warp of the tapestry of the lecture. I can do no justice to the eloquence and forcefulness of the lecture, and recommend that you go away and read it for yourself sometime, but in short, Tolkien believed that critics up until his time had simply missed the point. (In fact, so persuasively did he make this observation that *Beowulf* criticism was revolutionised as a result.) For them, *Beowulf* was a quarry of historical or philological information. There is nothing wrong with this in itself, of course: Tolkien was himself a philologist, after all, and this is the sort of criticism that Tolkien described as 'rich'. Historians and philologists are perfectly welcome to examine the text according to their own lights; but literary critics need to assess the poem as a poem: too often the poem had been dismissed for not being what it is not, namely a great epic and repository of the Anglo-Saxon pagan tradition, and not appreciated for what it is, a heroic elegy of cosmic dimensions. The incidents that it does present were regarded as trivial, the monsters – and their centrality to the narrative – in poor taste, and the whole thing a tragically lost opportunity. But of course it's not the *Beowulf* poet's fault that the rich tradition from which he drew has now been lost, and to bemoan him for not producing the work that the critics want is churlish, to say the least.

Instead, Tolkien argues, the literary critic should approach the poem principally as a work of art. This seems obvious to us now, but clearly hadn't been then. Approached in this way, we must accept that what is on the periphery (the historical perspective and so forth) is there rather than central precisely because it is merely incidental to the poem.\* Similarly, the monsters must be accorded their proper place as central to the story, not only to the plot, but also thematically. They are, in Tolkien's view, 'not an inexplicable blunder of taste; they are essential, fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its lofty tone and high seriousness' (p. 19). Again, I can do no more than summarise very briefly here, just enough to establish my point: in short, the monsters are powerful symbols of what might be called the negative forces in human existence, all the things that threaten the fabric of society and community life – indeed life itself. They are not quite allegories, because they are presented as real and instantiated, in a real period of history of the real world; but powerful symbols of cosmic forces all the same.

Now, the first reading of *Farmer Giles* that I want to present here is that the story is on one level a continuation or restatement of that same critique of the old-style non-Tolkienian critics, achieved through parody and satire.

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\* Another aside: Tolkien says in the lecture: 'The illusion of historical truth and perspective, that has made *Beowulf* seem such an attractive quarry, is largely a product of art.' (p. 7) He used the same technique himself to produce the 'unseen vistas' that give so much depth to *LotR*.

The most obvious satirical attack on the critics is the Foreword, written in the persona of the imagined translator of the supposed mediaeval fable, who is similar to the 'scientific fairy-story collector' of *On Fairy Stories*.<sup>†</sup> The failings of the 'translator' are neatly summed up by Jane Chance Nitzche in her book *Tolkien's Art* (especially p. 19): we have a translator whose primary motivation for translation is historical, not literary, whose scholarship is flawed, second-hand and clichéd, (he is, for example, ignorant of the stylised nature of mediaeval literature), whose tone is superior and supercilious; and

[w]hen he attempts to undercut the false fiction and the pride of his medieval artist ('the original grandiose title has been suitably reduced to *Farmer Giles of Ham*'), his own falsity and pride are themselves undercut by the real artist, Tolkien.<sup>‡</sup>

The interests and narrowness of view of the supposed writer of the Foreword are precisely those of the sort of critic that Tolkien attacks in 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics'. All of Tolkien's Forewords are significant keys to the works they precede, and this one is certainly no exception; the relationship between the lecture and the story is flagged here quite explicitly, and we should ignore it at our peril. The paragraph that I quoted at the beginning of this paper is particularly important: of course the story does not provide a glimpse of life in Dark Age Britain (giants and dragons indeed!), and many (though not all) of the origins of place-names are simply wrong. That leaves us with 'the character and adventures of the hero', considered incidental by the 'translator', but actually central to the story (which is of course called *Farmer Giles of Ham* – though one shouldn't read *too* much into this), as they are to *Beowulf*.

And what of the story itself? Its debt to *Beowulf* is generally missed by critics, precisely because on the surface it seems to owe little if anything to the old poem except in a vague structural way (though there are references to the lecture, if you know where to look). Similarities to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (significantly, another anonymous poem in the Anglo-Saxon tradition) are more obvious and distracting, and have been dealt with by many others, so I won't go into them here. But I believe that this very *unlikeness* to *Beowulf* is significant, and there are two particular differences that I want to explore here.

The first of these features is the thing that attracted the 'translator' in the first place: the huge wealth of philological and historical information (which is, as in *Beowulf*, the product of art), scattered all over the surface so liberally and openly that quarrying is hardly required, one need only skim the surface. Indeed the whole story seems to be little more than an aetiology for the place-names Thame and Worminghall. (Rateliff indeed suggests that the origin of the story 'was to explain the curious place-name

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<sup>†</sup> This was itself, note, more or less contemporary – it was originally delivered as an Andrew Lang lecture at St Andrews in March 1939. I hope to draw out in more detail the relationship between *FGoH* and *On Fairy Stories* at a later date.

<sup>‡</sup> Undercutting is a particularly common device in this story, and I shall have more to say about it shortly.

Worminghall'.) No matter that most of it is rubbish, there it all is, on a plate, as it were. What more could such a critic want?

And as for the monsters, one hardly feels any numinous power about the myopic, deaf and stupid giant, and in a fight between Beowulf's Bane and the 'not over bold' Chrysothylax, I know which side *my* money would be on! They have been trivialised and, although still central to the structure of the narrative, are, frankly, pathetic creatures, the stuff of Kenneth Grahame, not Norse myth. *Beowulf's* monsters 'give it its lofty tone and high seriousness'; *Farmer Giles'* monsters merely add to the charming but (apparently) inconsequential nature of the story. There is no feeling of any great struggle between man and the forces of destruction and chaos, no lament for 'the great defeat' here.

And what would be point, anyway? We already know that the critics are too obtuse to spot it, and probably wouldn't care. They just want what *Farmer Giles* offers in easy abundance. In short, to paraphrase the title of my article in *Amon Hen* 98, *Farmer Giles* is simply *Beowulf* for the Critics. In this version, stripped of its cosmic import we are left merely with precisely what *Beowulf* is not (p. 29): 'an exciting narrative or romantic tale', no more, no less.

Well, almost. There is a bit more to *Farmer Giles* than just a sideswipe at the critics who had already been vanquished by the lecture in 1936. So we come now to the second strand, the weft, if you like, namely Tolkien's own reading of *Beowulf* – or rather, one of them. The reading that I want to focus on here does not appear in the lecture (which is concerned primarily with a thorny and perennial problem, which Tolkien himself faced, namely the proper Christian use of pagan material), but it may be derived from two other works, implicitly in *The Hobbit*, and explicitly in 'The Homecoming'. I believe that *Farmer Giles* can be seen as joining in with *Beowulf*, and with *Sir Gawain* and the Maldon Fragment in the exploration of what happens when the northern heroic ideal is put under strain or even breaks down in some way. Tolkien explicitly engages in this exploration in 'The Homecoming' and its associated essay 'Of ermod', pointing out the disastrous consequences for the community when a leader becomes more obsessed with personal glory than with the proper primary role of protecting the people. What he deals with there seriously he deals with in a more light-hearted manner in *FGoH* and *The Hobbit*.

Amongst the consistent features of the writing in *Farmer Giles* are its constant undercutting, bathos (or understatement) and parenthetical aside (this last device is also used to good effect in the *Beowulf* lecture – and here, I hope!). The effect of this is to undermine in a humorous way whatever has just gone before. No characters are spared from this, and so none are free from ridicule. The most fierce attacks are made against the king and the knights, and the rest of the court, the very people who, if the heroic ideal is working properly, should be immune from criticism and ridicule. Examples are legion, and we would be here all night if I were to enumerate them all, but here are a few examples:

The king was deeply moved, for various reasons, not the least being financial . . . (p. 49)

He [the king] explained carefully that the wealth of the miscreant Chrysophylax all belonged to himself as lord of the land. He passed rather lightly over his claim to be considered suzerain of the mountain-country (which was debatable); but 'we make no doubt in any case,' said he, 'that all the treasure of this worm was stolen from our ancestors . . . we are well please with Ham. Here at least a sturdy and uncorrupt folk still retain the ancient courage of our race.' The knights were talking among themselves about the new fashion in hats. (p.50)

Several knights were killed before they could even issue their formal challenge to battle . . . As for the remainder, their steeds took charge of them, and turned round and fled, carrying their masters off, whether they wished it or no. Most of them wished it indeed. (p. 58)

As for the king's armourer, he was so accustomed to runes, names, and other signs of power and significance on swords and scabbards that he had not bothered his head about them; he thought them out of date, anyway. (p. 32)

This is interpreted by Nitzche as a criticism of what happens when old-style heroism descends into foppishness. In her words, 'chivalry cannot be viewed as ideal because it distracts the aristocracy from protecting the lower classes for which it is responsible'. Just as Beorhtnoth sacrifices his army (and people) on a point of honour, just as Beowulf lets his own people down by taking unnecessary risks when he confronts the dragon, just as Thórin endangers his friends and the newly reestablished Kingdom under the Mountain for the sake of his own avarice and pride, so too the pompous Augustus Bonifacius neglects his people – and ultimately loses his crown and ends his dynasty – because of his petty avarice.

With the aid of the dragon Chrysophylax, who becomes his ally not his nemesis (while it is fitting for Beowulf to be slain by the greatest of monsters, it does no befit Giles to fall prey to any monster and he lives out his life peaceably) Giles becomes a knight and then a king, and a fairly benevolent one at that. Nitzche believes that this is because he 'does not fall prey to the excessive pride inherent in the chivalric code of the upper class'. This may be so, but I think she misses an important point. She admits that Giles 'apparently lacks the manners and courtesy of the knight', but seems not to appreciate the significance of her own words. Giles may well become a king, but he does not become a hero in the old style. Tolkien frequently undercuts even the more flattering descriptions of Giles, (for example, 'Giles was a just man according to his lights; in his heart he gave a fair share of the credit to Garm, though he never went so far as to mention it.'), and this serves to undermine his greatness. Giles' rise through the ranks is in fact largely his own doing: having been taken as lord by the people nearby ('for the man who has a tame dragon is naturally respected') he promotes himself to the rank of earl, then some years later 'becomes' a prince, and in the end becomes a king. In effect

what Giles does is usurp the crown, and as Tolkien shows in the character of Denethor in *LotR*, usurpation does not make a king. In fact Giles' reign, for all its benevolence, marks yet another stage of decadence in the ultimate decline of the Little Kingdom. (As a Classicist I for one lament the fact that 'the vulgar tongue came into fashion at court, and none of his speeches were in the Book-latin'.) So while proper lordship or kingship does indeed have to be earned and maintained by suitable heroic actions, for Tolkien it has to be earned by the right people; and an opportunist farmer who owes his heroic success to a wheedling dog, a sword which comes into his possession by chance, a canny grey mare, and the decadence of those who are supposed to be his protectors, is not the right person. If he were, he would have died at the hand (claw?) of Chrysophylax.

In conclusion, I hope I have shown in this all-too-brief paper that *Farmer Giles of Ham* is not a marginal work in the Tolkien corpus, but one which deserves far greater attention and more sensitive and sophisticated interpretation than it generally receives. It is far more than a charming children's tale, beautifully written but of no real significance. On the contrary, it is perhaps the most engaging expression of some of the concerns that occupied Tolkien's professional life at the time of its writing, and properly understood can give us new insights into his better-known works.

**Steve Linley**

# Oxonmoot 1995

## University College, Oxford

### 15–17 September 1995

#### **Part 1: the bits that Graham went to**

Friday night was quiet with virtually all the regulars I know absent. Paul and I arrived at Univ Bar for registration at about the same time and consumed a fair amount of the specially laid-on 6X. Unfortunately, a hoard of patent agents descended on the bar toward closing time and finished off the 6X – cheek! This caused some annoyance to Steve and Monica, who didn't arrive till Saturday, to find it all gone – particularly as it was only laid on because Monica had complained so much about the poor beer in previous years! We didn't go to any room parties but I doubt that much was happening.

Saturday is the main business day of Oxonmoot, with a number of talks, a sales room, an art show – so much going on, in fact, that it's almost impossible to get to everything, especially if you want to go to the hacking and hit the bookshops as well.. And of course we mustn't forget the excellent free lunch courtesy of Priscilla Tolkien, which punctuates the activities.

The first talk was Colin 'Dwarf' Armstrong talking about explosives in Middle-earth. This started with a brief explanation of gunpowder (and the usefulness of urine) and the observation that it would be well within Saruman's capabilities. He theorised that the blasting of the wall at Helm's Deep would have been carried out with a number of metal barrels packed close against the wall and ignited. Normally there would be a break in the assault before igniting it but this did not happen in this instance. Due to the number of flammable objects being thrown around it would be very hard and dangerous to lay a fuse and light it from a safe distance. Colin suggested that Saruman would have kept the purpose of the barrels secret and treated the orcs lighting it as expendable, i.e. open up one of the barrels and stick your torch in . . . Colin also commented on Gandalf's mastery of explosives in the form of fireworks and read out the passage from Bilbo's farewell party. He concluded the talk by showing a replica twelfth-century handgun (needing two people to fire it) and igniting some gunpowder. He wanted to demonstrate the handgun but the college lacked the necessary safety equipment to get permission to do so.

The third talk was Andrew Wells on the Battle of Maldon. This was broadly an historical account of the background, course and consequences of the battle. He started with the ascent to the throne of the young Æthelred II after his brother's murder, and the vulnerability of England to the viking invaders. In 991, ealdorman Byrhtnoth and the Essex militia had the largest viking army yet seen trapped over a causeway near Maldon. Famously he let them cross to the mainland and disasterously lost the ensuing battle and his own life. Afterwards Æthelred bought off the vikings with the first of the

Danegeld payments. Andrew finished with a reading of the surviving fragment of the poem, preparing the ground for the evening's very memorable Maldon entertainment . . .

**Graham Taylor**

## **Part 2: the bits Steve went to**

Not being an intellectual type (!), I opted out of the afternoon talks and went instead, as is my wont, to the hacking (properly but rarely known as Middle-earth martial arts) in the University Parks. Well, it was a nice day and the only other excuse to get out in the fresh air was a walking tour of Oxford. And anyway, I wouldn't miss my annual opportunity to swing assorted ironmongery at people. This year was better than many because in addition to Brin Dunsire's usual cheerful Dark Age bludgeoning approach, we were treated to rather more sophisticated techniques of swordplay from the early renaissance and oriental traditions by Dwarf – obviously more than just an expert on gunpowder! Luckily the rain held off just long enough.

The CTS contingent having regrouped at Univ, we set off in search of fodder, and wound up in the Angel and Greyhound in St Clement's, where excellent food and drink was supplemented by a fair few games of bar billiards. Then those of us who were costuming got cozzied up and we made our way to the bar for the Party.

When we got there, I thought we'd come to the wrong place. Where was all the loud conversation and other signs of good cheer? Instead, a deathly silence filled the hall. What could it mean? It soon became apparent: the whole company was sat in hushed silence – whether reverential or stunned I won't hazard to guess – paying rapt attention to what was probably the worst performance of a piece of Tolkien that I have ever had the misfortune to endure. Some worthies had decided to treat us to a reading of 'The Homecoming' – laudable an endeavour in itself, but the execution left a lot to be desired. Perhaps if the performers had shown evidence of having read the script beforehand, and of understanding the words they were speaking, it might have been less unbearable. Some acting ability wouldn't have gone amiss, either. Truly embarrassing. And then, as the evening wore on, when there were much better entertainments on offer (excluding Tarúithorn's 'sing-song', that is), the company had fallen into its usual inattentive hubbub. Shame. In part this is the fault of the venue: the bar is in the cellar, and it must be difficult to hold the attention of a load of tiddly Oxonmooters when the stage is obscured by so many arches and pillars.

In an attempt to recover from this ordeal, drinking began apace, and we had soon consumed a fair quantity of 6X (our own canned variety, all draught having been consumed last night – grrrr!!). In response to a nearby tower of empty plastics (an easy achievement for fey scoundrels) our empty cans of said nectar were soon fashioned into a mighty pyramid on the pool table – we're not called Minas Tirith for nothing! It looked most impressive, especially when topped by a wig of mysterious origin – as did everyone else (I have the photos to prove it!).

In due course all went their various ways, either to bed or to one of the infamous room parties, about which it is best to leave details to the imagination of faint-hearted readers. Actually, as a result of assorted pregnancies (*not* caused at Oxonmoot!) and other signs of general ageing, things were a little more staid than they have been in the past. No more shall we meet by stock or whip, it seems . . .

On Sunday, Oxonmoot turns more serious for a while (which is handy, given the delicate state of many), as we pause from our revelry to remember the man whose works brought us all together in the first place. We visit Tolkien's grave, lay flowers, and Denis Bridoux gives his moving rendition of *Namarië*.

It's not *too* long, however, before thoughts again turn to food and drink. A few lucky ones (all the first-timers and people who have missed out for a few years) get to go back to Priscilla's house for lunch, and it just so happened that this year the CTS foursome all qualified (one first-timer and three old lags). This really is a special treat: just imagine a house packed full of priceless first editions of Tolkien's works and other memorabilia! Priscilla always provodes a good spread, too, enough to satisfy any self-respecting hobbit, and it's a pleasure to talk to whichever members of the family are present.

Eventually it's time to drag ourselves away back to a pub for yet more hair of the dog and to say hello and goodbye to friends old and new. Oxonmoot is always great fun, with activities to suit most tastes, and shouldn't really be missed by anyone who enjoys Tolkien and having a good time.

**Steve Linley**

# Chronicle of the CTS 1995/6

## A note from your editor

It was decided at the 1996 Annual General Meeting (partly in a desperate attempt to get material, I must confess) to publish a retrospective of the Society's activities in each issue of *Anor*, so that those who couldn't make it to any of the events could see just how much fun they were, and might be moved to come to a few more in future.

## Michaelmas Term

### 10 October

Squash. As ever, the great recruiting event was held in Z Basement, Christ's. For a change, no video (dire or otherwise) was shown, which meant that we all had to talk to each other instead. An ample supply of the Steward's magic elixir made this process much easier, so even though the turnout was a little disappointing, the number of new members was encouragingly large – possibly the best recruitment rate since the *annus mirabilis* (1988/9). Rather a shame, then, that almost none of these people who gave us their money have ever been seen again.

### 14 October

Games afternoon. Sort of in honour of it being the anniversary of 'the Senlac incident', a competitive meeting was appropriate. Lots of games were planned, but owing to an alarming display of lack of knowledge of Tolkien on the part of those old soldiers who turned up, the game of Tinúviel Pursuits took rather longer than it should have, so there was no time for a thrilling bout of Just a Minute in Middle-earth or Elvish Call my Bluff before we had to go and party elsewhere. Ah well, maybe next time.

### 20 October

Evil discussion. That is, a discussion about evil in Tolkien. Unfortunately your humble reporter went to a gig first, was a little the worse for wear by the time he turned up. He really shouldn't have gone to the Red Bull afterwards, either, but the temptation of gravity-fed beer was too great to resist.

### 10 November

Magic Discussion. Or, discussion on magic in Tolkien.

### 25 November

Fore Yule Feast. More food and drink than you can shake a brace of hobbits at. The traditional mushroom soup is legendary; the raucous after-dinner caterwauling of delightful ditties from the *Tolkien Society Songbook* is infamous; the readings from old *Anors* and *Bored of the Rings* unparalleled – you could almost believe that Tim Benzedrine was actually there in person! Not many costumes, though, I'm sad to say. But for a Christmas dinner unlike any other you're likely to go to, this one's a must. Thanks to the inhabitants of 1 Leete Road for allowing the Society to make such a dreadful mess of their kitchen.

## **Lent Term**

### *24 January*

Balloon Debate. Or, in CTS parlance, Outermost Darkness Debate: who of the evil characters can persuade the audience that he or she is slightly less evil than the others and doesn't deserve to be cast into the Outermost Darkness. Not a great turnout: obviously people don't associate with evil characters in the way they used to when Iwan (the Dark Lord himself) was amongst us. This is probably a good thing; though actually having some sort of audience would reduce the amount of self-interest in the voting!

### *16 February*

Fanner Giles discussion. Starting with a paper by your editor (reprinted on pp. 4-10 for those who had the misfortune not to be able to make it), this proved to be a rather lively discussion about one of the Professor's sadly (in my view) neglected so-called minor works.

### *17 February*

Jorvik trip. No volunteer (willing or unwilling) could be found to write the report this year, but seeing as it's usually much the same from year to year, please refer to past reports for details. We had a better coach driver this year than last, and weather was well suited to staying in pubs/tea shops/alternative clothing emporia, so that was alright. The hacking bit, however, gets progressively worse: the crowds are so great that it's impossible to see anything, and the 're-enactment' gets more and more unimaginative as the years go by (this year we had an exact copy of last year's unconvincing attempt at re-fighting the battle of Stanemoor and the treacherous death of Erik Bloodaxe). I rather wish I'd given it a miss and gone to the mediaeval craft fair instead (you never know, another drinking horn could come in handy one day). And now that the boat burning is held on the race course rather than right next to The Other Tap & Spile, it's too far to go to be sure of getting back in time for the coach – and seriously reduces drinking time, to boot! It's a good day out all the same (quite cheap, too, if you don't eat or drink anything), and there are plenty of other things to see in York if Viking re-enactment isn't your thing.

### *20 February*

Pancakes. A semi-official event following the Innmoot, to give those of us foolhardy enough to be out on such an inhospitable evening extra sustenance for the long journey home in the snow.

### *8 March*

Pre-AGM Innmoot. Held, as tradition dictates, in the Ancient Druids. Though how long the weight of tradition will outweigh the desire to drink somewhere nicer remains to be seen.

### *9 March*

Annual General Meeting and Annual Dinner. For the full report, see p. 17. As ever, Christ's did us proud with the dinner – though there never seems to be enough port!

### *10 March*

Post Annual Dinner Lunch. At the Bird in Hand.

### *20 March*

Tolkien Society AGM (and dinner, naturally). Not a CTS event, but part of the calendar anyway, because we are affiliated to the Tolkien Society; so we should have some sort of representation at our parent company's main business meeting if at all possible. Not that it's ever terribly exciting business, but the venue is usually an attraction in itself, if you like mediaeval towns (this year, Warwick). And, in true hobbit fashion, the dinner is usually pretty excellent, too. The most relevance item of business to us is the election of Mike Percival (long-standing CTS member and a former editor of *Anor*) as Treasurer. Guest speaker at the dinner was René van Rossenberg, head of the Dutch TS, who gave a wide-ranging and very amusing talk about non-British perceptions of Tolkein and Tolkien societies.

### **Easter Term**

A quiet term generally (for the benefit of those with more pressing matters), aside from the usual Innmoots and involvement in the Cambridge Beer Festival.

### *14 June*

Pre-Puntmoot Innmoot. In the Ancient Druids again. Well, outside it, actually, because it was so unpleasant inside. The dictates of tradition can go hang – we resolved never to hold an Innmoot there again.

### *15 June*

Puntmoot. See report on pp. 18–20. Possibly the smallest expedition in a decade: only *three* punts-worth! Gone are the days when the CTS raft could block the river at most points, and was the scourge of tiddlywinkers and water-poloers everywhere. But given the increased difficulty in securing punts for the trip, now that most of us are oldies, lower numbers are probably just as well.

### *16 June*

Post-Puntmoot Lunch. At the Bird in Hand. A pretty poor showing: only the present Steward and two previous Stewards managed to make it. And it's not as if it wasn't a nice day (in fact it was lovely). I suppose there were just too many other garden parties.

### *20–21 September*

Oxonmoot. Not really a CTS event as such, but still a highlight of the Tolkien calendar nationally, and jolly good fun, so it deserves a mention. A full report should be ready for publication in the next issue (Paul!). One thing that I want to note here is that Tarúithorn (spit), the Oxford TS and home of the ignoble art of crochet, is enjoying the sort of high profile (and large numbers), both at Oxonmoot and in the TS generally, that the CTS used to enjoy back in the late eighties and early nineties. It would be nice to redress this balance, but it does need more people to get involved. We can't let 'Them' be better than us, can we?

**Steve Linley**

## Annual General Meeting and Annual Dinner 1996

SET OUT for Christ's College on the ninth day of March in the year 1996 seeking council and good cheer. It was a dull, damp evening, though without the chill of winter. Travelling in a swift carriage I arrived without mishap at the appointed place, but the door was locked shut. Other of the company had already arrived and the Steward dispatched Smaug to obtain a key, which commission he fulfilled with disturbing alacrity, and I for one did not see fit to question his methods

By the time the Steward unlocked the door with said key, we numbered six, with Monica Gale, Steve Linley and Graham Taylor filling the tally. The council chamber was a poor affair, with stone-hard chairs and mugs filled with decaying coffee. We debated many matters: new ideas for meetings, the problems with finding new leadership for our company (the Steward being great in years and his remaining days surely but few in number), how we should announce our achievements to those who follow our company, and how we might forge greater links with the national Tolkien Society. One matter that I feel obliged to mention is the censure I received for losing the minutes of the previous great council, a dereliction of the highest duty of the Keeper of the Red Book.<sup>a</sup> We also gladly censured Duncan McLaren for failing to produce an *Anor* for three years and for not passing on such manuscripts that he had so that another might fulfil the task; Barclays Bank for demanding money for the high honour of being custodian of our funds; Christ's College for the poor state of their council chamber; and all those of our company who were absent, thus leaving us two short of a quorum.

Our debate done and our throats dry with our talk we adjourned to the comfort a nearby hostelry, the Bun Shop by name (though it sells not buns, but beer). There we met Julian Bradfield, Perdita Stevens and Ben Pierce, members of the company who had travelled from afar, and in their welcome presence ratified the proceedings of our council. The beer in that place was reddish of hue and unpleasant in taste, but the whisky excelled. Thirst quenched for a while we left for the rooms of Dr. Robins, our host for the evening, and were joined there by Duncan MacGregor and Herold Pettian as we enjoyed the conversation and wine of our host. Pangs of hunger drove us thence to the small hall wherein we were to be feasted in splendid fashion.

It was well said and truly by J.R.R. Tolkien himself that: 'things that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about and not much listened to'. So it was with the dinner. There was much excellent conversation over the delicious cream of spinach soup, roast venison in red wine sauce and Lord John Russel's Pudding. We drank claret and port, toasted the Professor and other worthies and spent a thoroughly enjoyable evening before at last we wended our various ways back home, well pleased with the evening.

**Matthew Reid, Keeper of the Red Book**

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<sup>a</sup> Editor's note: At least he managed not to lose the Red Book itself, and so avoided a fate too severe to be told.

## There and back again

### Being the history of the Puntmoot to Grantchester in the year 1996

**I**T WAS the eve of the day appointed for the expedition to Egladil. Messengers had come from the four corners of this island with tidings that our company would bear the standards of many of the noble friends of the Steward; yet our hearts were heavy. For it seemed to us that the number of our company would be thirteen, and we could not hope to escape ill fortune. So it was that I was sent to find a traveller brave enough to be the fourteenth on our journey.

First I came to the dwelling of Owen the Dunlending, and he welcomed me and told me that he would gladly bear the burdens of our travel, were it not that he had affairs to tend to in that city known as the great Wen, where he would do business with creatures of slime and beings of the night. And I shuddered, knowing that his words were true, for he is much changed in the last twelve months. And yet each of us has his path to follow, and never let it be said that this Owen was numbered among the fain-hearted. Sorrowfully I went on my way, wishing luck for him on his dangerous venture.

Next came I to the door of the dragon Damerell, and behind the door I could hear rumblings and thunderings as of some great battle many leagues away. And yet I knocked and determined to show no fear, for have I not myself borne the name of a dragon these last two years? And so the dragon awoke, and I was admitted into the presence of the Chiefest and Greatest of Calamities (which he weareth upon his head). Yet by his riddling talk he contrived to find some reason not to join our company, and so I resolved not to detain His Magnificence any longer, not keep him from his much-needed rest, and I fled.

And so it was that when I joined the Steward and his closest companions that night at the inn hosted by the most ancient of druids, I could only relate that in all this most fair city of Minas Tirith there was no one brave enough to accompany our expedition. The warriors it seems are busy fighting one another in distant lands, and in this neighbourhood no heroes are to be found.

Yet lo! From deepest dole were our hearts lifted, for there came unlooked-for one from a land across the sea, who does speak our tongue but strangely, and studies in this place the ways of our most ancient forefathers. He is named Harold for our ill-fated king, although his folk know not the proper fashioning of the word. Some say that the messenger he had sent to us had gone astray, or had fallen to some unspeakable fate at the Court of the Son of the Wolf. But others suspect that this learned scholar is wont to travel unannounced, for did he not also attend unpresaged the latest gathering in Minas Tirith, his messenger arriving only when that feast was but a memory? However the

truth of it, he was made right welcome, and with high spirits and good beer<sup>a</sup> the companions made merry into the night.

On the morrow all awakened right early and made ready for the travails ahead. While the Steward and his retainers prepared a banquet, that we might rightly celebrate our safe passage should we reach Egladil, Mark son of Tillot was sent to those who guard the key of the most noble flagship of our fleet.

When all were duly assembled by the banks of the great river, a pair of craft of the humbler sort were obtained from the Hall of John by the Keeper of the Red Book and Graham the Tailor, while the Steward himself did release the shackles of our flagship and – lo! – a white light did issue forth to guide our way.

The sun gave generously of her warmth to all, and the Anduin carried a glad troop on its merry way. Once the perils of Rauros were traversed in safety, the Steward allowed us to sup of those nectars which he had provided, and it seemed to all that luck indeed smiled upon us, and that our voyage would be one of ease. But more dangerous waters both deep and shallow lay ahead.

As our craft sped up stream, ably propelled by our most doughty polesmen, there came a cry from the one of uncouth speech, who is called by some Tim. He was standing lost in thought, looking down into foul waters. His hands gripped the wooden staff stiffly; water and slime dripped from them. Our vessels had been brought to a halt. The one known as Tim spoke in a dreamlike voice:

‘They lie on the bed of the river, pale faces, deep, deep under the dark water. Grim faces and evil, and noble faces and sad. Many faces proud and fair, and weeds in their silver hair, and their chariots with them.’

And he raised the pole out of the dark water and lo! – with it he raised some ancient two-wheeled chariot of strange design, that had lain in the water for who knows how many ages. Chilled to the bone at this token of the mortality of men we returned the terrible artefact to the depths with due ceremony and hastened on. It was some time before cheer returned.

At last we were come to the meads of Egladil, or Grantchester as those who live nearby would have it, and we rejoiced at our safe-keeping, though some were even then stricken by the fever that is caused by hay. Yet when we left our craft we were grieved to see that the mighty tree, beneath whose boughs we were wont to feast, had found disfavour with some storm-giant, or else had fallen luckless victim to a passing dragon, for its upper parts were blackened and twisted as by the force of some great fire. We found the place thronged with folk from all parts of the land, even a small camp of orcs. With them was a red-skinned imp, or goblin of the least sort, which did menace

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<sup>a</sup> Editor's note: Surely our scribe is in error. As is well known by the wise, good beer has not been had at the dwelling of the ancient druids for many a year.

our boats and seek to set them adrift – unspeakable mischief! Though it was easily dismayed by the bellowings of the mighty warriors of our company, yet thenceforth we had need to be watchful against its return as we feasted on the diverse vittles and sweetmeats provided. Presently naught remained but bones, and we lay sated in the welcome shade of the great tree.

Then it came to pass that the Steward, who ageth apace, was challenged to prove his vigour and manliness by defending himself from a hail of missiles delivered by his companions, employing naught but the paddles from one of the craft of the Hall of John (such paddles having, it is said, no other purpose). But while he fended away so ably all that we could shower upon him, the paddle struck the green meadow beneath his feet, and with a terrible crack was sundered in twain! And we prayed that this might not betoken ill for the journey back.

Presently we took to our boats again and, nursing those suffering from the fever with the balm produced in Bournville, returned to Minas Tirith as swiftly as we might, ere worse could befall. So the broken pieces of the paddle were returned to the Guardian of the Boats at the Hall of John, where mayhap in days to come it will be forged anew.

And now our brave company was sundered for a time, and we did go our separate ways, to meet again when the Fates would will. For many this meant that self-same eve, at the hall of the Steward, where festivities were held albeit belatedly to mark the ageing of the Keeper of the Red Book.

**Matthew Woodcraft, Smaug**

## Michaelmas Term

As always the highlight of Michaelmas Term will be the Fore-Yule Feast. This will be held at 1 Leete Road, Cherry Hinton (it's not that far, honest!) on **Saturday 30 November**. This wonderful evening's entertainment involves lots of food (including the legendary mushroom soup, huge turkey, spuds, salad, chocolate cake) lots of drink (cider, beer, even *soft drinks!*), and lots of people in Tolkien-related costume (well, sometimes). There's a prize for the best costume, so get sewing those blankets now! For the riotous, the evening will wind up with the usual hearty rendition of gems from the *Tolkien Society Songbook*. So bring plenty of gusto. As this year the Feast happens to coincide with the Feast of St Andrew there might even be some haggis. (No prizes for spotting that I ripped most of this off from the last issue)

Other events planned include a discussion on *The Hobbit* (which you'll have missed by the time you get this), a games evening (come along and see whether you know even less about Tolkien than the Committee!), and I seem to have volunteered to give a talk about Tolkien's schooldays – don't miss that! And don't forget the Innmoots! For details, refer to the latest missive, or ask a Committee member (useful e-mail addresses are on the back cover).

## Lent Term

Nothing finalized as yet, but the AGM and Annual Dinner will be held on the last Saturday of Full Term. Assuming that the excursion is still on offer from whoever owns Cambus these days, the annual Jorvik trip looks likely to happen again. And who knows, there may even be a mead-tasting, to warm us all up on one of those famously cold Cambridge winter evenings. The bad news is that you'll have to join if you want to find out about these and other thrilling activities.

## Copy date: Anor 29 (New Series 3)

The copy date for *Anor* 29 (New Series 4) is **1 December 1996**. Material should be sent to Steve Linley at 7 Willis Road, Cambridge CB1 2AQ. Copy may be submitted in any format, but preferably an IBM PC-compatible 3½-inch disc, text-only, accompanied by a printout. Artwork should be black-and-white, and should be suitable for half- or full-page A5 without reduction or enlargement. You must make your own provision for the return of discs, artwork, etc. Copy may also be submitted via e-mail to [stevel@ctadcam.demon.co.uk](mailto:stevel@ctadcam.demon.co.uk).

### The Cambridge Tolkien Society and Anor

The Cambridge Tolkien Society (Minas Tirith) is a University-registered society whose aim is to further interest in the life and works of the late Professor J.R.R. Tolkien CBE. Meetings are held approximately fortnightly during Full Term. Its magazine *Anor* is published three times a year.

Residents of the United Kingdom may become full members of the Society on payment of £3.00 (annual) or £6.00 (life membership, but only covering three years' subscription to *Anor*). Those not resident in the United Kingdom may subscribe to *Anor* at a rate of £3.00 (surface) or £4.00 (air mail) per year.

For further information contact the Steward, Paul Treadaway, at 1 Leete Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 4HB (e-mail [pt100@cup.cam.ac.uk](mailto:pt100@cup.cam.ac.uk)). Subscriptions should be paid to the Smaug (treasurer), Matthew Woodcraft, at the same address.

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