

## Table of Contents

<b>Process Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Sketching the World .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2 Creating History and Focus.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Creating the Campaign Map .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 A Fantasy Sandbox in Detail, Part IV.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.5 Placing Locales and Naming the Geography .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.6 Regional Background and History .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.7 Describing the Geography.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.8 Describing Locales, Lairs, and Ruins .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1.9 Creating Plots .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.10 Population Locale Encounters.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.11 General Encounters .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.12 Map Important Population Locales.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1.13 Mapping the “Home Base” .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>1.14 Shops in the “Home Base” .....</b>	<b>33</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1-1: Idealized Air Circulation	2
Figure 1.1-2: Idealized Ocean Currents	3
Figure 1.1-3: Example Continent with the Coastlines and Mountain Ranges	3
Figure 1.1-4: Example Continent with Latitude Overlay	4
Figure 1.1-5: Example Continent with Rivers and Forests Added	4
Figure 1.2-1: Example Continent with Important Geographical Features Named	4
Figure 1.2-2: Before and After the Cataclysm	4
Figure 1.2-3: Spread of the Aegyptians	5
Figure 1.2-4: Migrations	6
Figure 1.2-5: Extent of the Dark Empire	6
Figure 1.2-6: Example with Campaign Area Located	7
Figure 1.3-1: Isle of Piall Initial Hex Grid	7
Figure 1.3-2: Isle of Piall – Coastlines	8
Figure 1.3-3: Isle of Piall – Mountains, Foothills, and Hills	8
Figure 1.3-4: Isle of Piall – Rivers	9
Figure 1.3-5: Isle of Piall – Vegetation	9

Figure 1.3-6: Typical Drainage pattern	10
Figure 1.3-7: Example Drainage Basin	10
Figure 1.4-1: Isle of Piall – Population Locales	10
Figure 1.4-2: Isle of Piall – Lairs	11
Figure 1.4-3: Isle of Piall – Ruins	11
Figure 1.5-1: Isle of Piall – Villages Named	12
Figure 1.5-2: Isle of Piall – Geography Named	13
Figure 1.6-1: Author's Collection of History Books	15
Figure 1.7-1: Geography of Isle of Piall	16
Figure 1.12-1: Keyed Map of Hawth	26
Figure 1.12-2: Keyed Map of Sandpoint	26
Figure 1.12-3: Keyed Map of Datha	28
Figure 1.12-4: Village of Woe Example Map	29
Figure 1.12-5: Keyed Map of Carra	29
Figure 1.12-6: Keyed Map of Kathi	31
Figure 1.13-1: Example Blank Hex Map	32
Figure 1.13-2: Example with Coastline Added	32
Figure 1.13-3: Example with Vegetation Added	32
Figure 1.13-4: Example with Walls Added	33
Figure 1.13-5: Example with Major Roads Added	33
Figure 1.13-6: Example with Buildings Added	33

# 1 How to Make a Fantasy Sandbox

## Process Overview

Unlike a Traveller Sandbox making a Fantasy Sandbox is less straightforward. This is because Traveller at the stellar level has a uniform geography while a fantasy setting can have any type of geography imaginable including the fantastic like lands floating on shards of a shattered world.

If talking a fantasy setting I would do the following

1. Using one page, sketch a world or continent map.
2. Label important regions.
3. Write one page of background, giving no more than a handful of sentences to each region.
4. Pick an area roughly 200 miles by 150 miles.
5. Grab an 8.5" by 11" sheet of hex paper. The scale should be such that it represents a 200 by 150 mile region.
6. Draw in mountains.
7. Draw in rivers.
8. Draw in hills, using them to divide the region into distinct river valley.
9. Draw in vegetation (swamps, forests, desert, etc.).
10. Decide where to place Population Locales. Note their race – this includes social monsters.
11. Decide where to place Lairs (locales that revolve around a home of monsters).
12. Decide where to place Ruins (locales that revolve around a site).
13. Decide where to place miscellaneous locales (anything that doesn't fit in the steps above).
14. Name your geography (don't forget islands).
15. Write a half page background describing the region and its history.
16. Write a paragraph describing each named piece of geography.
17. Write a paragraph describing each named population locale.
18. Write a paragraph describing each Lair (you could get away with a stat block).
19. Write a paragraph describing each Ruin.
20. Look at your notes and come up with two to four plots that tie one or more locales together. Write a paragraph or two on each.
21. For each population locale come up with three to five encounters. They should be a sentence each.
22. Come up with 6 to 12 general encounters for the region as a whole. They should be usable in any area of the region and be a sentence or two each.
23. Pick the 4 or 6 most important population locales and draw a quarter page sketch map of the settlement.
24. Pick the starting population locale and draw a full page map of the settlement. This is the "Home Base".
25. Use *Medieval Demographics* to get an idea of how many shops are in the town.
26. Pick or create 6 or 12 important buildings. Write a paragraph for each.
27. Scan your descriptions for NPCs or noted monsters. Write a two sentence blurb about each, the first a single line with minimal stats and the second one a sentence. This is your roster.
28. Pick the 12 most important NPCs or Monsters. Write a paragraph describing each and fully stat them.
29. Pick the most six common encounter types (City Guard, Border Warders, Bloody Hand, Orcs) and write a paragraph and fully stat them.

30. Scan your descriptions for any regional organizations and write a paragraph on them. Fully stat the most common encounters involved with them.
31. Make up a rumor chart with 10 to 20 items that feeds the players into the encounters and plots you created above.
32. Identify major regions and create a random encounter chart for each (monsters, wildlife, and NPCs). [Thanks Jeff – I just plumb forgot.]

This will probably run to about 10,000 words. You can do this in about 2 weeks spending about 2 hours an evening at a 1,000 words per evening and time drawing maps. Or consider it about 24 hours of work.

## 1.1 Sketching the World

This section covers the following step.

1. Using one page sketch a world or continent map.

You can just grab an 11 by 8.5 sheet paper and start sketching away. Or you do a ton of research into climate, oceanography, and tectonics and do some serious world building. If you are into that then I recommend this free download e *A Magical Society: Guide to Mapping* by Expeditious Retreat Press. It distills the relevant science into an easy to digest format.

If want a little realism but not have to wade through so much stuff I recommend remember the following three things: Air Circulation, Monsoons, and Ocean Currents.

### Air Circulation

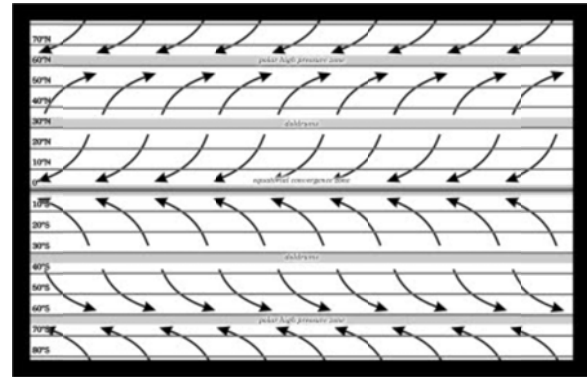


Figure 1.1-1: Idealized Air Circulation

Above is an idealized map of air circulating around a sphere like the earth. In reality things are more complex but here we are just worried about gaming reality. Each line of latitude is about 69 miles. Typically I just make a nice even number like 60 miles. For this particular sandbox I am going with 80 miles per degree. Each 5° band represents 400 miles.

The key features are at the equator, 30°, and 60°. In order:

The **Equator** is typically a low pressure area with frequent but mild storms.

North and south of the Equator are the **Tropical Zones**, with winds coming out of the east.

At 30° north and 30° south are the **Horse Latitudes**. Here the wind dies down. Your major deserts will be found along this band. It is also a barrier to sea travel.

Between 30° and 60° are the **Temperate Zones**, with winds coming out of the west.

The 60° band is another storm band and it is far more severe than the Equator. Cold air masses from the poles will break off here and travel from west to east. On the eastern side of a continent, where this band crosses from land to sea is a major storm zone as weather from the west can hit weather carried by the current coming up from further south. (See the Perfect Storm).

The **Polar Zones** are cold with winds coming from the east.

When you draw your maps remember that mountains have a rain shadow effect. On the side where the wind is coming from it will be wet.

On the other side it will be drier. If it is in the Horse Latitudes it may be barren desert stretching for hundreds of miles from the other side.

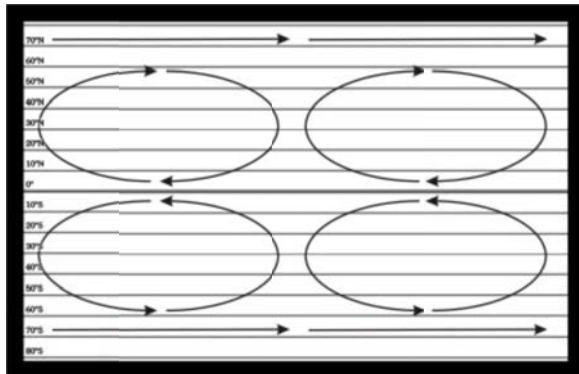
Just draw your map and superimpose the above graphics to get an idea of how things will look.

### **Monsoons**

You can get away with some odd climate by remembering the monsoon effect. Any time you have a body of water that goes north-south with land at the high latitude end, you are going to get monsoon weather. What happens is that during the summer the land heats up, driving down the air pressure. This sucks moisture from the body of water which travels north (or south) until it reaches land, where it dumps everything.

Then in autumn it reverses as the land cools, forming high pressure and causing cold air to rush off the land into the water. Any island or land on the other side will get heavy rains as well.

### **Ocean Currents**



**Figure 1.1-2: Idealized Ocean Currents**

Ocean Currents can be easily simplified for gaming. Basically they form in circular gyres as you see above. Clockwise in the north and counter clockwise in the south. The polar regions have currents moving from west to east. What you are looking for when drawing continents is where the current hit land. When they hit they will turn clockwise (north) or counter clockwise (south).

The basic rule is this.

#### *For a Northern Continent.*

The east coast will have a warm current running north along its coast that will go out into the ocean. If another continent is close enough to the east. Then that continent northwest shore will be warmer than normal. The western coast will have a cool current coming from the north moderating the climate.

These effects work from the equator to 60° latitude.

#### *For a Southern Continent.*

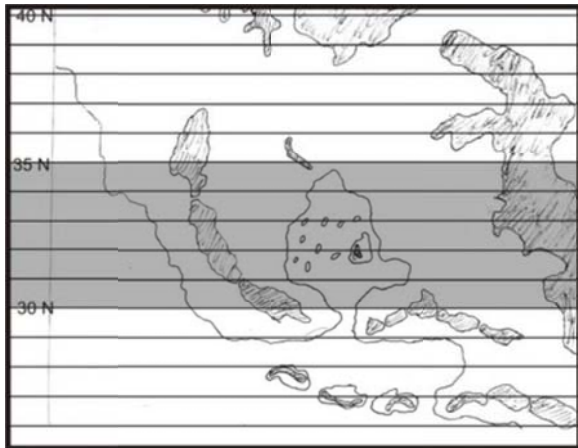
The southern continent would be the reverse of the northern continent, with everything in a counter-clockwise direction.

I decided to draw a continent for this exercise, so I started with this.



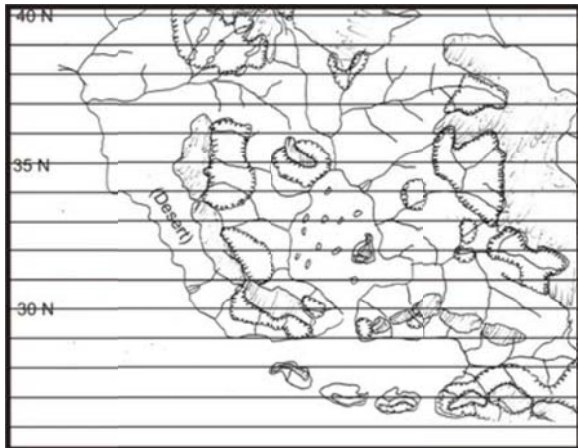
**Figure 1.1-3: Example Continent with the Coastlines and Mountain Ranges**

Then I decide on a scale and played around with the latitudes until I wound up with this.



**Figure 1.1-4: Example Continent with Latitude Overlay**

I want a desert on the west side of the big peninsula, but I want the interior to be a normal climate. The west side being desert is easy if it is in the doldrums. But the interior is going to need a monsoon effect for rain. The big mountain range to the north and east makes this plausible. The mountains will heat up in the summer, drawing moisture from the southern ocean and the middle sea. Then in autumn the effect will reverse. The small mountains running along the south shore will be old worn down mountains so they won't have much of a rain shadow effect. The southern islands will be some of the wettest places in this region. With that in mind I pencil in the rivers and forest.



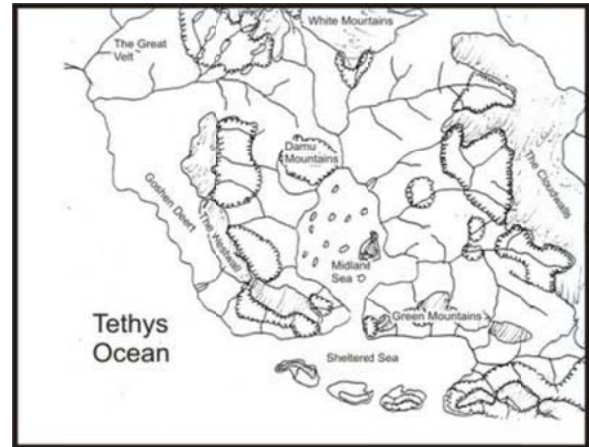
**Figure 1.1-5: Example Continent with Rivers and Forests Added**

## 1.2 Creating History and Focus

This section covers the following steps.

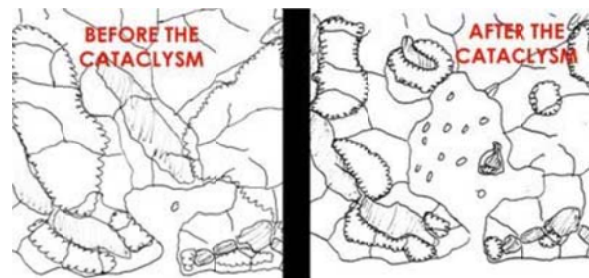
2. Label important regions
3. Write one page of background giving no more than a handful of sentences to each region.
4. Pick an area roughly 200 miles by 150 miles

First I start by labeling some important geographical features. I am not going to spend a whole of time naming everything. I am going to focus on a small area first. But it helps to have something named for consistency and later expansion.



**Figure 1.2-1: Example Continent with Important Geographical Features Named**

Now I need to do a one page background of this area. To do that I need to get an idea of who lives here and how this all came about. First thing I think of is that I want a really big cataclysm to have happened. I came up with the following.



**Figure 1.2-2: Before and After the Cataclysm**



Pretty severe change – probably best to have it happened a thousand years ago; otherwise I would have a desolate interior.

At this point I am sure you are seeing all my nice computer generated graphics. You do NOT have to do this. You should take your base map and make six to a dozen photocopies and make scribbled notes.

Also, you are going to see an elaborate step-by-step evolution of the region's history. Again you would be doing this (as I do) on your photocopies: sketching here, making notes there, erasing and doing new notes.

When I write a history often I go on...

and on...

and on...

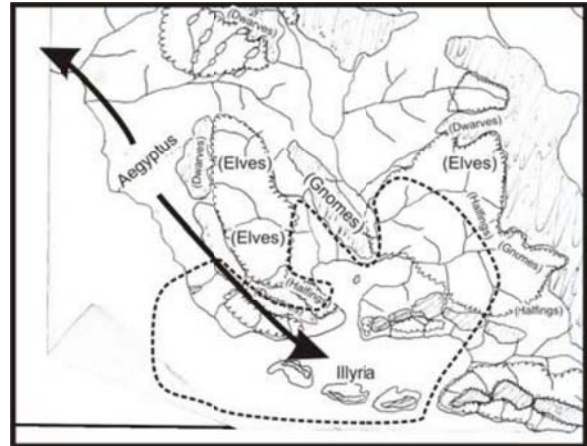
Soon I have lost the point of the exercise. What I do instead is sketch out a series of basic historical maps. Then write my history off of them. It allows you to see the big picture of your timeline in a very graphical and condensed format. Again I did these on my computer so you can clearly see what I am doing. Normally I would just be scribbling on paper.

So I start by placing where I want the races to be. I am going to go for a World of Greyhawk style here with distinct realms for everybody. Like Greyhawk, the humans will be driving the dynamics of the time.

For my initial human culture I am going to call them Aegyptus. Yes, I know, not the most incredibly imaginative name. I am thinking though that at some point I'd like to run the *Desert of Desolation* series of AD&D modules (I3 to I5) and I want a good place for them.

The Aegyptians delve too deep into magic and cause their fertile river valley in the midst of the Goshen Desert to dry. Two groups migrate: one to the northwest and the other to the southwest. In the southwest they establish the lands of Illyria.

There they expanded throughout the Sheltered Sea and got into more than a few fights with the demi-human realms.



**Figure 1.2-3: Spread of the Aegyptians**

Now I am a big fan of migrations and cultures clashing, and what better way to cause trouble than to have a new nation of humans migrate right into the Illyrians. I figure that the NW group of Aegyptians will cause a bunch of trouble to the west. This lead to a large group of tribes called the Eainians to migrate east. They ran into the Illyrian Empire and, taking advantage of a civil war, proceeded to crush the Illyrians.

The Illyrians were shattered into competing city-states and lost everything except for some large islands in the Sheltered Sea and the southern end of the western peninsula.

The Eainian tribes eventually consolidated into the Five Kingdoms: Lor, Canberra, Bastam, Vandenberg, and Nemedra. They also had fairly good relations with the demi-humans, allying with them at various times during the Illyrian Wars.

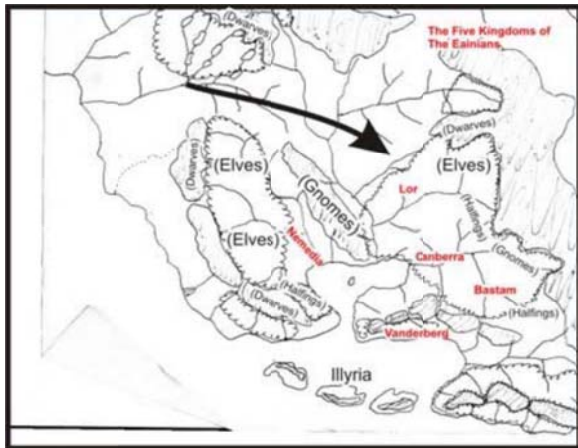


Figure 1.2-4: Migrations

Well unfortunately for the Eainians, history doesn't end. I'm going for the cliché Dark Lord. He is an Illyrian mage who turned to evil during the Illyrian Wars. He eventually wound up in the far north, which was the home of a number of humanoid tribes like kobolds, goblins, orcs, bugbears, ogres, and so forth. By his wit and charisma he united the tribes.

In preparation for the invasion, he created the Cataclysm, shattering the heartlands of the Five Kingdoms. The invasion is almost a footnote. In the wake of destruction and war, the Dark Empire is established and puts the free people of the land under the yoke.

The only ones who remain free are the demi-human realms, using the Westwall and the Cloudwall as bastions, and the Kingdom of Vandenberg, which fortified the Green Mountains and held off the onslaught of the Dark Lord.

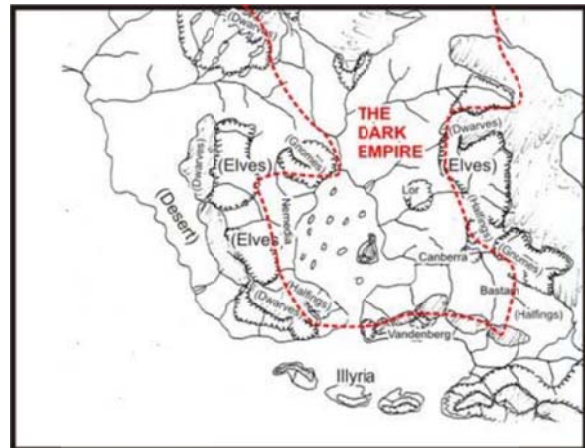


Figure 1.2-5: Extent of the Dark Empire

Inspired by the newly formed United Church of Delaquain, Sarrath, Thoth, and Veritas, Vandenberg becomes the core of the Renaissance. Delaquain is the Goddess of Honor and Justice. Sarrath is the Dragon God of War and Order. Thoth is the god of Wisdom and Knowledge. Veritas is the god of Truth and Law.

With the demi-humans as their allies, the Kingdom of Vandenberg advanced northward against the Dark Empire. It took three centuries, but the Dark Lord was killed and his Empire shattered. In its wake, Vandenberg was reborn as the Eainian Empire.

The Eainian Empire's golden age lasted for two centuries. But its heart, the United Church, was a fragile alliance of gods. Eventually greed and the lust for power overshadowed duty and honor; civil war and religious strife stalked the Empire.

Whole regions declared independence, which in turn suffered their own wars. The Eainian Empire shrunk back onto Vandenberg, where it came under the sway of the Church of Sarrath and was renamed the Ochre Empire to honor the Dragon God.

Now, a thousand years after the Cataclysm, the land is a patchwork quilt of realms dreaming of past glory. A few realms, like the Empire of Po, have turned from the past and are now looking forward.





**Figure 1.2-6: Example with Campaign Area Located**

So now I have a basic region with a history, some geography, and a lot of realms. In the above map I highlighted a large rectangular area. This is about how large the recommended campaign area would look on this map.

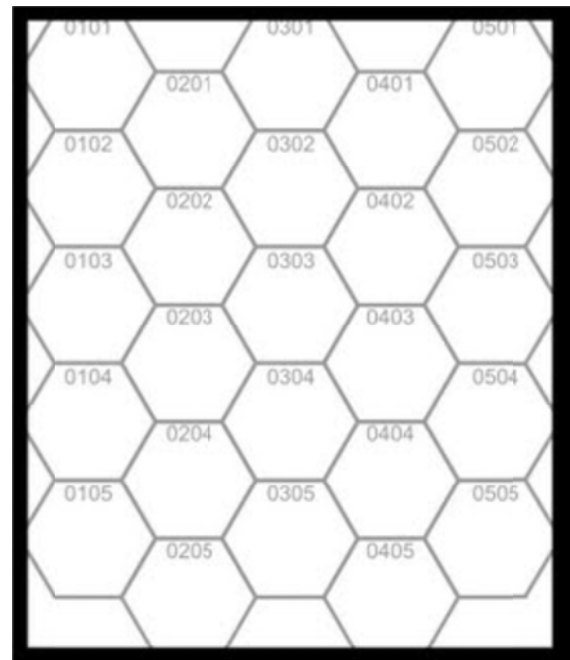
However, for the purpose of these posts I am going to detail a slightly smaller area. I do want the results to be useful to you guys after we are done, so I am going to look for something fairly self-contained. A large island in the Kingdom of the Isles looks about right. You can see it marked to the right of the large rectangular area.

### 1.3 Creating the Campaign Map

This section covers the following steps.

5. Grab an 8.5" by 11" sheet of hex paper. The scale should be such that it represents a 200 by 150 mile region.
6. Draw in mountains.
7. Draw in rivers.
8. Draw in hills, using them to divide the region into distinct river valley.
9. Draw in vegetation (swamps, forests, desert, etc.).

Because of time constraints I am going to detail just a large island in the Kingdom of the Isles. It will be called the Isle of Piall.

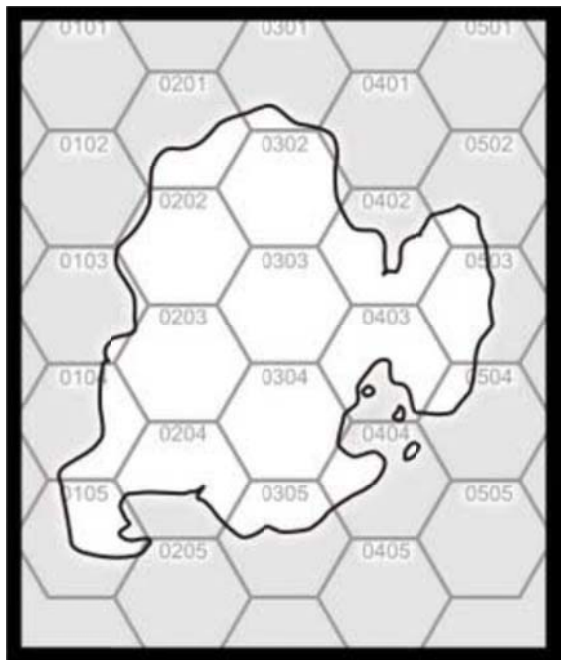


**ISLE OF PIAL**  = 3 miles

**Figure 1.3-1: Isle of Piall Initial Hex Grid**

First I set up my hex grid and scale. Instead of 5 miles per hex I am going with 3 mile per hex to give a little more detail.

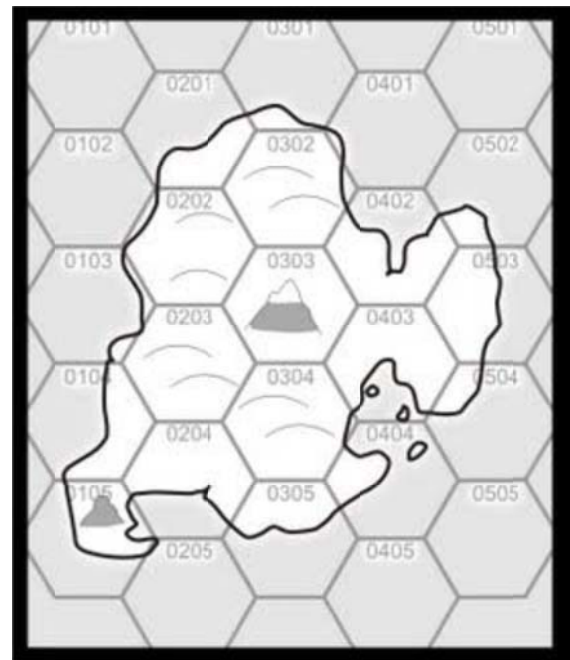
If you want to methodically map your setting then I suggest you read *this* post on mapping with hexes.



**ISLE OF PIALL**  = 3 miles

**Figure 1.3-2: Isle of Piall – Coastlines**

Then I draw the coast line. Don't forget things like lakes and smaller islands. Note here that I added some small islands in the eastern bay.

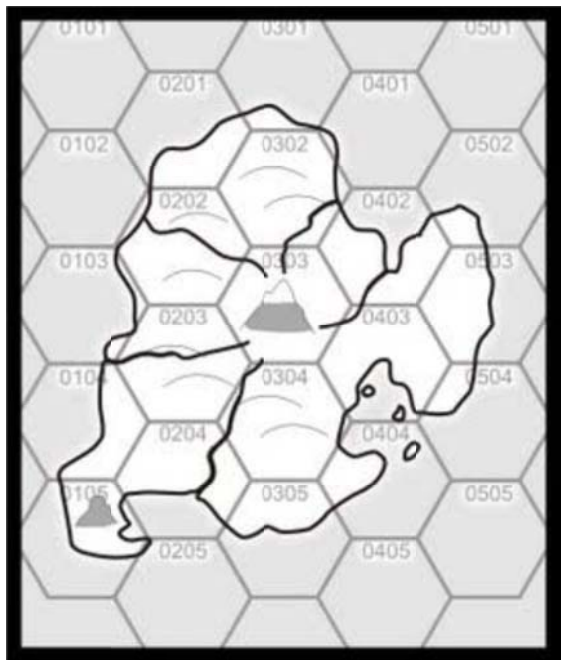


**ISLE OF PIALL**  = 3 miles

**Figure 1.3-3: Isle of Piall – Mountains, Foothills, and Hills**

Then I add the mountains. Because I am working an island, I am going ahead and adding hills. Note that I am going to use a symbol map as it is probably the easiest for a novice to get going with. Feel free to use whatever style of mapping you prefer.

An island will have a central mass and possibly several adjacent masses forming peninsulas. These become the mountains, foothills, and hills of the island. In between are the island's lowlands.



ISLE OF  
PIALL

 = 3 miles

Figure 1.3-4: Isle of Piall – Rivers

Then I draw rivers, making certain they go downhill.

Since the map is small and just an island I am not going to worry about the hills and drainage of step 8. I will have some advice for this step at the end of this section.



ISLE OF  
PIALL

 = 3 miles

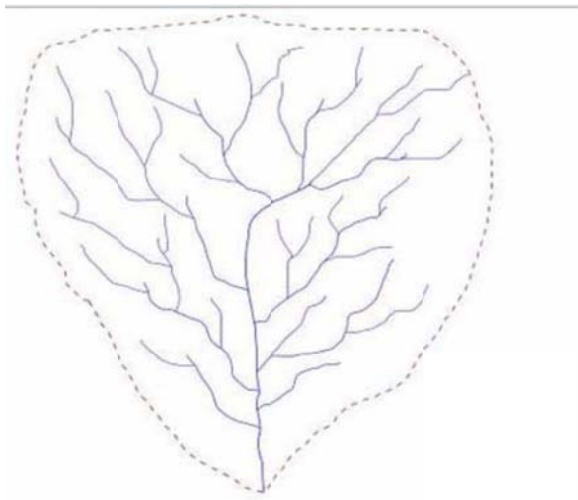
Figure 1.3-5: Isle of Piall – Vegetation

Next we draw in the vegetation, which includes forest, swamp, and sand. While a desert would be out of place, an area of extensive beaches is perfectly plausible. So I pencil one in along the coast in hex 0305.

Swamps often form along coastal regions, so I place two of them. The island isn't big enough to form much of a rain shadow anywhere. I already determined that the monsoon rains needed for agriculture comes from the south. I think it logical that I reserve that area for settlements. So I put a pair of forests in the northern areas of the island, thinking that the locals haven't had enough time to clear them.

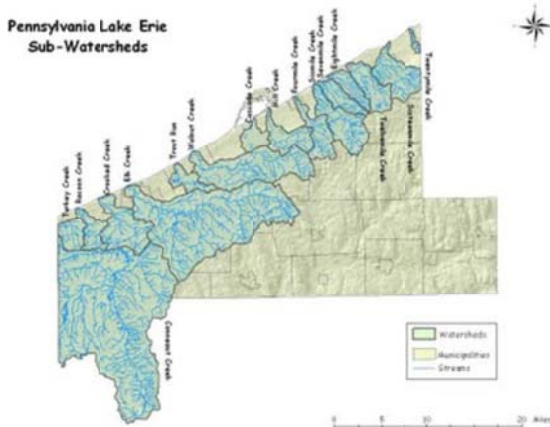
### On Drainage

The reason you want to learn a little about drainage is that it helps to place the hills, especially on large scale maps. A typical drainage pattern looks much like a tree with the mouth of the river at its base. The edge of the drainage basis will be the local high ground and often be considered hill terrain.



**Figure 1.3-6: Typical Drainage pattern**

My home area has a straight forward example of what a network of drainage basins look like.



**Figure 1.3-7: Example Drainage Basin**

At the boundary of the drainage areas are high ground and around here it is somewhat hilly when you go a mile or so inland. If I was mapping this as a setting, I would place a line of hills that parallels the shore about 5 to 10 miles in. Then, in between the Conneaut Creek basin and coast, I would put some hills and finally add some hills along the southern edge of the basin.

Also, the peninsula in the center of the map is a huge sandbar known as Presque Isle. It is several miles long and has several excellent beaches. After writing this aside is when I decided to add the large sandy area to the Isle of Piall map.

## 1.4 A Fantasy Sandbox in Detail, Part IV

This is the fourth in a series detailing the 34 steps I recommended for making a Fantasy Sandbox Campaign. Today's post will cover the following steps.

10. Decide where to place Population Locales. Note their race – this includes social monsters.
11. Decide where to place Lairs (locales that revolve around a home of monsters).
12. Decide where to place Ruins (locales that revolve around a site).

Now for some decisions on what is here. I know the island is part of the Kingdom of the Isles, which is one of the Eainian Kingdoms. When setting up the geography, I left the southern part of the island open – that is where I put in the various settlements.



**Figure 1.4-1: Isle of Piall – Population Locales**



I put a castle (the solid black dot in Figure 1.4-1), a couple of hamlets (triangles), and a village (diamond) around the eastern bay. I think I'm going to have some dwarves and Halflings invited in, so I put a village next to the small foothill in the southern bay and another village on the river on the south shore.



ISLE OF PIALL  = 3 miles

Figure 1.4-2: Isle of Piall – Lairs

Now a couple of Lairs. This is an island and it is definitely going to need some sea encounters, so I sprinkle a couple of those. One lair in the forest looks good, then two more on the relatively uninhabited western side.



ISLE OF PIALL  = 3 miles

Figure 1.4-3: Isle of Piall – Ruins

Now for the ruins. The big mountain in the middle is going to get one, likely a dungeon of some sort. Something in the ocean off of the south shore, likely a ship wreck. Then two more ruins in the interior – it is likely I will make them related to the central mountain ruins somehow.

Because of the small map, I am cramped for space so the number of locales is a bit dense, but that will work for this exercise. I try to sprinkle everything so there is a nice even spread throughout the map. The only clump of stuff is around the eastern bay.

### Placing Settlements

Settlements form a hierarchy. Villages are the most common, followed by towns, and then cities.

In general, a cluster of villages will exist around a central market village that usually has a keep. The surrounding villages are about a half days travel away from the market village, around 10 miles. Market villages hold a market about once every two weeks. Then there are towns, usually with a castle attached and a market that

opens two or three times a week. The market villages are about a day's travel away from the town (20 miles). Cities in turn have daily markets and are usually the center of a network of market villages that are densely packed around the city.

Using a five mile hex map, a market village will have satellites village in the center hex and scattered around the six surrounding hexes. A town will have satellite market villages scattered four hexes out. A city, in contrast, will have nearly every hex within a one hex radius with a market village and a much denser network of villages out to four hexes.

The major metropolis of a setting would have the four hexes nearby packed with villages and market villages along with daily caravans or convoys bringing in the surplus food for several hundred miles around. Rome had grain shipments coming in as far as Egypt.

Now most fantasy cities are often closer to the wilderness. Using "realistic" figures would result in the cities being surrounded by carefully manicured fields for dozens of miles around. I often justify cutting the historical figures by adopting the 20% rule. A fantasy society is a lot like a medieval but it is 20% better because of magic: less disease, more food, better clothing. While the use of magic isn't spectacular, the combined effect of all the magic-users and clerics result in a society that is more prosperous than what existed in our own world. This means that the sheer number of manors, latifundias, and farms needed to support your fantasy metropolis can be cut to a more manageable number.

The maps on [this post](#) are good examples of how place settlements.

## 1.5 Placing Locales and Naming the Geography

This is the fifth in a series detailing the 34 steps I recommended for making a Fantasy Sandbox Campaign. Today's post will cover the following steps.

13. Decide where to place miscellaneous locales (anything that doesn't fit in the steps above).

14. Name your geography (don't forget islands).

Miscellaneous locales could be things like tribal ranges, political units, etc. – anything that is tied to an area as opposed to a specific hex. In Wildlands (Points of Light I), I marked on the map the rough location of the various barbarian and humanoid tribes.

I am not going to have anything like that on this map.



**Figure 1.5-1: Isle of Piall – Villages Named**

Next I name the villages. Here I use the tried and true method of making up random fantasy gibberish for the human villages. The main difference between today and 30 years ago is that I make sure I can pronounce the names myself before inflicting them on my players. For the Halfling village I pick some Ye Olde English village name. For the dwarven settlement I decide something that sounds like Old English of the Anglo Saxon era.

This map is small so I am just going to do a separate export for geography. Here I will display the natives stunning imaginative grasp of



naming. Or not. I have a good reason for not naming the northern bay 'North Bay' as I am going to tie the Bay of the Dead to the ruins on Mount Devon.



**Figure 1.5-2: Isle of Piall – Geography Named**

If you have been doing your own map while following along, by now you have everything you need to create an outline for the next steps.

### Geography

Amur Forest  
Bay of the Dead  
East Bay  
Mount Devon  
North Downs  
South Bay  
South Downs  
Southpoint  
The Midland Sea  
The Sands  
West Fen

### Locales

0102 Lair  
0105 Hawth (village) Dwarf  
0201 Lair  
0203 Lair  
0204 Sandpoint (village) Halfling  
0302 Ruins  
0303 Ruins  
0305 Ruins  
0401 Lair  
0402 Ruins  
0403 Mikva (castle, town) Human  
0403 Datha (hamlet) Human  
0404 Carra (hamlet) Human  
0503 Kathi (village) Human  
0505 Lair

From your own notes, make this list and put it in your notebook, index cards, or word processor. The next section will work on the regional background and start filling out some of this stuff.

## 1.6 Regional Background and History

This section covers the following step.

15. Write a half page background describing the region and its history.

A thousand years ago, this island emerged from the Cataclysm as a bare expanse of rock and soil. Whatever existed here was obliterated in the chaos. It took a hundred years for it transform from a barren expanse to a weed choked landscape and finally back to its original wooded condition. During that time survivors, both human and animal, found themselves washed up on its shores. The humans were originally from Nemedra, one of the Five Kingdoms of the Eainians. They established several fishing hamlets in and around East Bay. In the chaos of the time they manage to carve out an oasis of tranquility due to the island's isolation and the Midland Sea's plenty.

This was all shattered when scouts of the lich Tavaras discovered the Isle of Piall. Tavaras was one of those charged by the Dark Lord to chart the islands of the newly created sea.

Tavaras decided to claim Piall as his own. In 110 AC (After the Cataclysm) he landed on the shore of the Bay of the Dead with his undead army. He quickly subjugated the fishing hamlets and enslaved the populace. He used them to build the Sable Port.

From there he explored the island, taking particular interest in Mount Devon. It was originally just a rocky outcropping, but the Cataclysm stripped away the surrounding soil, leaving only the rocky core. Within the mountains was an extensive network of caves; now dry because of the drop in the water table. There Tavaras decided to establish his stronghold. More slaves, and materials were shipped in through the Sable Port and up into the mountain. On the North Downs, Bone Keep was established at the center of several latifundas set up to feed the growing slave population.

Tavaras ruled Piall as his personal domain for nearly 200 years. He survived the fall of the Dark Lord and collapse of the Dark Empire. He became one of the numerous petty lords striving for mastery in the shattered remnants of the Five Kingdoms. His downfall came with the arrival of crusaders from the United Church. They brought overwhelming force and besieged Tavaras in his stronghold for nine months. In the end they were able to breach the mountain and bring down the lich lord.

After the downfall of Tavaras, Piall was incorporated as part of the County of the Isles. The Isles were part of the Grand Duchy of Nemedra, a province of the Eainian Empire. When the Eainian Empire split apart around 500 AC, Piall was briefly the capital of Arwold III, one of the pretenders to the Eainian Crown. After the Civil Wars, it was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Isles and granted to the Gevon family. Markon Gevon was made the first Baron of Piall in 553 AC.

It was Baron Markon Gevon who invited Halflings, the Hightower family, to settle the rich bottomlands west of The Sands. A hundred years later, the friendship of Baron William Gevon with the Dwarves of Kharan led to the Darkiron Clan to establish Hawth Hold to mine Southpoint.

Over the centuries, Bone Keep and Sable Port remained abandoned. The wars that led to the

foundation of the Eainian Empire did not leave much time for the crusaders to scour the island of Tavaras's evil. Enough remained to make the northern half of the Isle of Piall dangerous to the unwary traveller. The Barons of Piall have kept up patrols, but since the disappearance of Baron Andrew Gevon 150 years ago in Mount Devon, nobody has returned to explore any of the old ruins.

Today (1000 AC) the Isle of Piall is starting to emerge from relative obscurity. The nearby Empire of Po is expansionist and Piall is on the border between the Kingdom of the Isles and Po. The King has appointed a Sheriff to survey the island and to strengthen the island's defenses. The Gevons welcome the additional gold, but are not sure they like a royal officer in permanent residence.

Most of the peasantry are not free, having been reduced to serfdom in the wake of their liberation from Tavaras. There have been several peasant revolts on the island. Twenty percent of the human population is free; a mix of yeomen, craftsmen, and merchants.

The human inhabitants of Piall worship Veritas. There a temple in Mikva and shrines in the other villages and hamlets. The Dwarves of Hawth are devout worshipper of Veritas in his aspect as the Soul Forger. The Halflings of Sandpoint follow Dannu, the goddess of the Hearth and Healing. They pray to her to bless the crops and their homes.

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Maybe there a little more than a half page there. Then again, I get carried away with this part of setting creation. I am a history buff:



**Figure 1.6-1: Author's Collection of History Books**

It helps by making you aware of the different situation people found themselves in over the centuries, but it is not necessary to write your own fictional history. The key elements are being aware of the timeline you created and extrapolate from the initial premises.

From my general history I know the Isle of Piall was affected by the following events in the following order:

- The Cataclysm
- Dark Lord & the Dark Empire
- The Fall of the Dark Empire
- The Eainian Empire
- The Civil Wars
- The Kingdom of the Isles.

The Cataclysm is a bit of a cop-out as it greatly simplifies the original history of the island. Simply it wiped everything that was there before. I could have left something in Mt. Devon and may use that option later on.

Since I want a central dungeon for this mini-setting, the Dark Empire sequence provides me with a convenient hook to use the clichéd yet useful lich lord.

The remaining stuff up to the Kingdom of the Isle is an example of probably what not to do with backgrounds, what I call "Tolkien's 1,000 year stretch." If you ever looked at the timeline in *Return of the King*, there are hundreds of years where literally nothing has happened. Indeed, remember when you watch the LOTR film trilogy that nearly 3000 years happened between the death of Isildur and Aragon, yet they act as if it

happened a few generations ago, both in the book and film.

I found that you can really flesh out about 500 years with good stuff useful for your setting. More than that you either need to be writing about your setting for a really long time or just have huge gaps. Five hundred years is equivalent to the span of time from the fall of Rome to the start of the High Middle Ages. I did think of some interesting stuff with allied Dwarves and Halflings coming onto the Island to plug the time gap.

When I came to the Kingdom of Isles, I picked up some ideas again. I figured the freed slaves would eventually become serfs in the feudal society that rose after the fall of the Eainian Empire. This can be used to create tension within the setting. This is an example of extrapolating from the premise.

The rest of it comes from looking at the last overall map I did with all the Kingdoms. The Empire of Po is a much larger realm to the east of the Kingdom of the Isles. Po, not being one of the original Five Kingdoms, must be an expansionist empire. This could provide some external tensions to the Island.

I probably should come up with some "sea" menace. I am fairly good with coming up with human cultures and getting them to clash together to generate adventures, not so good with the sentient monster stuff. I will try to take on that oversight in the Geography and Locales sections.

## 1.7 Describing the Geography

This section will cover the following step.

16. Write a paragraph describing each named piece of geography.



Figure 1.7-1: Geography of Isle of Piall

### Amur Forest

This forest has some of the richest game on the island, but it has never been touched by the Gevons or the other island inhabitants. A pack of wereboars cursed by Tavaras still resides in the forest, attacking any who dare venture inside its bounds.

### Bay of the Dead

Several attacks were made against the lich lord the century before crusaders from the Eainian Empire arrived. Launched by petty kings and barons, the fleets were sent to a watery grave in the bay, destroyed by the might of the lich lord. There, dead sailors and warriors were reawakened as undead guardians of Sable Port. After the crusaders destroyed Tavaras, the bay was swept of their foul presence. In the centuries since, the bay has retained its ill reputation and local fishermen avoid the area as well as the surrounding underwater denizens.

### East Bay

This bay is the main landing for the island. Every day at dawn the bay becomes a riot of festive colors as fishermen hoist their sails to leave on their daily fishing runs. The fishermen return about an hour before sunset and evening twilight is broken by the light of dozens of fires as the drying of the day's catch begins. Watching this are four sahuagin stationed in the swamp that makes up the southern arm of the bay. They have cunningly dug out a watch post amid the tangles of mangroves. After the fishing boats leave, the sahuagin send out a fast swimmer to tell their brothers of any likely prey.

### Mount Devon

Once a non-descript rock outcrop, the Cataclysm has exposed this limestone mass as the central peak of the island. It is riddled with caves carved out by the once higher water table. The lich lord Tavaras explored much of the caverns and made it into his stronghold. It is rumored that it connects to the Underearth and this is why Tavaras is able to retain power for as long as he did.

The slopes of the mountain are bare, offering little cover. The peak is likewise bare, but high enough to have ice form when a storm passes through. The ice melts when the sky clears. Conditions are especially dangerous during the monsoons.

### North Downs

These hills are gentle slopes on their north faces and very steep (sometimes cliffs) on their south faces. The ravines and valleys formed by the south faces were mostly filled in by soil during the Cataclysm, forming some of the richest farmland on the island. During Tavaras rule, dozens of latifundas were established and worked by the enslaved population of the island. Over-farming depleted much of the region's soil and the latifundas were abandoned when the crusaders liberated the island.

The North Downs are split in the middle by a broad valley filled with the tangles of the Briar Patch. Legend has it that a sorcerer under Tavaras and his army were destroyed here by the power of a hierophant accompanying the crusaders.

### **South Bay**

This bay is more exposed to storms than East Bay and is not as popular of an anchorage for ships coming to Isle of Piall. Weekly barges depart Hawth and Sandpoint to Mikva. The bay is a popular spot among the fishermen to hunt for clam and lobsters. Both the regular and the giant-sized variety are abundant in the area.

### **South Downs**

These hills are similar to the North Downs. Their south facing slopes are gentle and the north facing slopes are steep, almost cliffs. The eastern end of the range is used for grazing sheep and has several scattered sheepfolds. The area also several nature caves that are rumored to connect to the caverns under Mount Devon.

### **Southpoint**

This low mountain was created when a rocky mass was hurled upwards during the Cataclysm and landed in this spot. It is rich in iron, zinc, and copper, along with several veins of silver. Several hundred years ago Baron William Gevon invited the Darkiron Clan to mine the riches in exchange for a share for the barony's use. Since then, the mine has proven profitable, making the Darkirons one of the wealthiest of the dwarven clans.

The slopes of Southpoint are bare of soil and have little cover. A steep stairway winds up and around the mountain to the peak where a lighthouse/watchtower is jointly maintained by the King of the Isles and the dwarves. Currently it is the home of Valard the Yellow Mage (MU 9). Once the court mage of the king's father, he retired here 8 years ago. Nominally in charge of the tower, he leaves the daily operation in the hands of his capable assistant, Reynard (FTR 4).

The Dwarves recently suffered a rash of disappearance after a new vein was opened. They have closed the section and are now preparing an expedition to investigate what happened.

### **The Midland Sea**

Greatly expanded during the Cataclysm, the Midland Sea now hums with the commerce of the surrounding realms. The Po Empire and the Kingdom of the Isles have been traditional rivals

for mastery of the inland sea. In the last century, Po has been ascendant as the wealth of their mainland territories has finally given them a lasting advantage against the Isles.

Under the waves, the Midland Sea has been a continual source of turmoil. Suddenly hundreds of square miles of new sea were laid open for claims by the underwater realms. When the turmoil of the Cataclysm subsided, the sea grab started in earnest. Initially, with the support of the Dark Lord, the Sahuagin gained the advantage. But later the Eainian Empire and the successor realms (Po, Isles) aided the merfolk, and the Locathah were able to push back the Sahuagin and establish their own holdings. Despite the aid of the surface realms, the balance of power still remains precarious in the underwater world.

### **The Sands**

The southern end of the Isle of Piall has an extensive expanse of sandy beaches, stretching for nearly four miles along the shore and reaching nearly a mile inland. The area is known for its shifting shoreline, which is carved anew every year during the monsoon storms. The area is noted for giant scorpions, which also inhabit the local shallows. It rumored that sahuagin raiding parties are seen here capturing the giant scorpions for their own nefarious reasons.

### **West Fen**

This salt marsh runs for almost two miles along the Isle of Piall's western shoreline. Much of it is soft ground overlain by six foot strands of tallgrass. These strands are home to murderous packs of daggerbeaks who hunt the local fauna and any unwary adventurers.

Having done nearly a dozen of these things so far, one thing I have to say is get a good set of random tables together. Even now I can use more tables. The main use is for an idea generator. You will have a half dozen good ideas and will still need to come up with dozens more. The tables help as an idea generator – just keep rolling until something clicks and makes you go “ah-ha!”

The Amur Forest I struggled with for a bit until I decided to use a variant of the cursed forest.

The Bay of the Dead was inspired by the scenes of the dead walking along the bottom of the sea in *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

East Bay is pretty much an extrapolation from all the villages I placed around it. The sails are a color bit to set the scene for the players. The sahuagin were thrown in to tie it with one of the plot elements I will be developing.

Mount Devon is from the desire to have a megadungeon for the island. The dropping of the water table makes for a ready excuse to have lots of caves. Not like we need one, but hey, at least mine has some plausibility behind it.

North Downs and South Downs geography comes from something I read recently about the geology of SE England, basically formed by the different layers exposed after the top regions got whacked off. In England's case it was the Ice Age, in mine the Cataclysm. The latifundas come from Spartacus and reading Roman history. Nasty places for the slave inhabitants. Now I have some nice ruins for small adventures.

South Bay I didn't have much of a feel for, so I just extrapolated something from the surrounding settlements and threw in some giant sized animals to liven things up.

For the South Downs I came up with the idea of caves connecting with the larger network underneath Mount Devon. You can have some low level adventure here in these caves and in the very back have that one lone passage that connects to the vast "Underearth" beneath the Island.

Southpoint. I thought it would be cool to have what is essentially a giant meteorite plopped down here and now being mined by Dwarves. Mind Flayers or other "things man was not meant to know" in here?

The Midland Sea comes from the fact that if you got an island, pretty much you've got underwater civilizations. Since this whole area was just recently created in historical terms, that means things are probably even more chaotic than usual.

The Sands come from a show called *The Most Dangerous Seas in History* with Niall Marvin. It is one of those shows that are like *Walking with*

*Dinosaurs*, where the creatures are seamlessly integrated with the actors. One segment goes back to the Cambrian period, where giant scorpions inhabited the land – in fact were the only animals on land. The beach covered in scorpions stuck in my head when I was creating this.

The West Fens comes from the scene in *10,000 B.C.* where the hunters got hunted by terror birds.

## 1.8 Describing Locales, Lairs, and Ruins

This section will cover the following steps.

17. Write a paragraph describing each named population locale.
18. Write a paragraph describing each Lair (you could get away with a stat block).
19. Write a paragraph describing each Ruin.

### 0102 Giant Squids

This area is the spawning ground for Giant Squids. There is a 20% of a ship being attacked by 2d6 Giant Squids. This rises to 40% during the height of mating season, between May and July. Lying scattered along the bottom of this area are the sunken remains of ships, including:

- ◆ **Gems:** 5 x 10 gp; 4 x 50 gp; 18 x 100 gp; 11 x 500 gp; 2 x 5,000 gp
- ◆ **Jewels:** 1 x 900; 1 x 1,000; 1 x 1,300; 6 x 2,000; 3 x 3,000; 5 x 4,000; 1 x 6,000; 1 x 7,000; 1 x 8,000
- ◆ A tube sealed with wax containing a map to a Lawful Sword +1 with *Detect Gems*, *Empathy*; Ego 2
- ◆ *potion of treasure finding*

### 0105 Hawth (village) Dwarf

Located just outside of the Southpoint mine, this is home to 200 dwarves. Their homes are carved out of the rocky walls of the canyon leading to the minehead. Lord Dair Darkiron (Ftr5, L) directs the mining operations. The original motherlodes are beginning to play out. In response, Lord Dair opened a new section of mine that promised renewed riches, but a rash



of disappearances caused it to be closed up. Lord Dair's brother, Gamli is challenging Dair's leadership of the clan as a result. Lord Dair will pay handsomely to anybody who can find out what happened in the mine.

### **0201 Spies**

This is the camp of Sir Iago Dunth (Ftr 3) and 10 scouts (HD1). They have been sent by Emperor Clovis of Po to scout out the island's defenses. In Sir Iago's tent are 1,000 gp and 2,000 sp to be used for bribes. Hidden nearby is a 20-foot dingy with its single mast stowed in the hull.

### **0203 Barrows**

A dozen barrows dot the hills of this region. Used by the island's original inhabitants to bury their chiefs. The malign influence of Tavaras has caused several of the dead to return as wights (3 HD). Today only three remain, along with their treasure scattered among the barrows: 3,000 CP; 2,000 GP; Jewels: 1 x 700; 1 x 5,000.

### **0204 Sandpoint (village) Halfling**

This is the home to over 300 Halflings who farm the fertile bottomlands and tend flocks of sheep on the South Downs. Buck Hightower is the current Lord of Sandpoint. The Hightowers of Sandpoint have long been the most powerful and wealthiest family in Sandpoint. Recently their preeminence has been challenged by the Oldhams, who have grown wealthy on the wool trade. Albrus Oldham was recently appointed the Reeve of Sandpoint by the King's Sheriff to collect the various Royal fees and duties.

### **0302 Bone Keep**

This is the ruins of Bone Keep. This was the hub for the latifundas dotting the North Downs during the reign of the Lich Lord. When the crusaders arrived, the slaves revolted and burned the tower down. Agarst, the wraith lord of Bone Keep, was trapped in the tower before it was set aflame. Today only the first level remains intact with the partial remains of the second floor above. There are at least two levels to the dungeons below.

### **0303 The Fortress of the Lich Lord**

Halfway up the mountain slope is the entrance into Tavaras's fortress. It is now overgrown and partly overrun by a rockslide. A quarter way around the east side of mountains, is the

entrance to the mine shaft dug by the crusaders to breach the third level of Tavaras's Fortress. Thick underbrush covers the entrance; once cleared, the passageway beyond is still open. The number of levels inside is unknown, although a search of records at the Temple of Veritas at Mikva will show that they encountered caves below the 5th level. A note in the margin indicates that scholars believed that it connects to the Underearth.

### **0305 Ruins**

Here are the remains of a three-mast sailing ship, the *White Wind*. Within are the remains of the King of the Isles' son and heir, Andrew. If Andrew's body is recovered, the King will reward the players handsomely. Complicating this are 20 (HD 2) Sahuagins resting around the ship. Within the ship are:

- ◆ Gems: 100 GP; 2 x 500 GP
- ◆ Jewels: 2 x 1,000
- ◆ A sealed pouch

If the sealed pouch is opened on dry land, it is the confession of Sir Uriens Balvair, who admits to killing Prince Andrew on the voyage. When he found that the ship was sabotaged to sink he spent his last moments writing out his confession, implicating the King's brother in the murder.

### **0401 Aventis Village**

This is the home of 150 Mermen (HD 1+1). They are protected by King Tuoris (HD 10) and his 10 guards (HD 6) on Seahorses (3 HD). They are unaware of the impending attack of the Sahuagins. They settled here 200 years after the Cataclysm and aided the crusaders in sacking the Sable Port. Since then, the Gervons venture to the beaches of the north shore of the island every ten years to exchange gifts with the Mermen. The next meeting is due in a year's time.

### **0402 Ruins of Sable Port**

This small port was destroyed when the Crusaders landed on the Isle of Piall. Tavaras kept a force of skeletons at the bottom of the Bay of the Dead and they were not totally eradicated after the fall of the Lich Lord. The freed inhabitants avoided the area and settled around East Bay. Minor undead now inhabit the

ruins, as well as an assortment of other unwholesome creatures.

#### **0403 Mikva (castle, town) Human**

This is a small castle town of 800 humans with several dozen Dwarves and Halflings. The castle itself sits on a bluff overlooking the bay. It is the seat of the current Baron of Piall, Argus Gervon. Several trading vessels stop here every week to pick up ingots from Southpoint. Before the fall monsoon season, dozens of traders put in at Mikva to attend the Piall Fair. Here the island's grain and, more importantly, wool is traded for goods and supplies needed for the next year.

Currently the King's Sheriff, Tomar Revan, is staying with one of the wealthiest merchants in Mikva, the Honorable Orlon Beras. The Sheriff is currently using offices at the Mikva Trading Hall to conduct his investigation and any other Royal business. There is considerable tension between Baron Argus and the Sheriff.

#### **0403 Datha (hamlet) Human**

Datha is a small fishing hamlet on East Bay. A hundred humans live here in mud and wattle huts along the shoreline. The headman of the hamlet is Danis Hobrun, who is thoroughly loyal to Baron Argus. Danis' brother, Helmar, is the yeoman in chief of the Baron's small coast guard. Helmar and his fellow yeoman patrol the shores of Piall looking for smugglers.

#### **0404 Carra (hamlet) Human**

On an island in the middle of East Bay is the fishing hamlet of Carra. This hamlet is home to 75 humans living in mud and wattle huts. Conditions here are wretched and these people are among the poorest on the island. The headman of the hamlet, Moran Loder, is also the leader of the small Piall thieves' guild. He rules Carra with an iron hand, severely punishing anybody cooperating with Helmar and his yeoman.

#### **0503 Wereboars**

Several decades into the Lich Lord's reign a rebel name Spardon nearly toppled his rule. As punishment, Spardon and his men were condemned to roam the forest as Wereboars. The pack still exists, as 12 Wereboars (HD 4+4) roam the forest. Spardon and his men have been driven insane by their centuries-long curse.

However, if a means is found to make him lucid while in human form, Spardon is sure that the cure for his curse lies in Mount Devon. Neither he nor his men can aid the party, as they are driven mad on their next transformation. If killed in human form, Spardon and his men will resurrect on the next full moon.

#### **0504 Kathi (village) Human**

This is a farming village on the eastern shore of the Isle of Piall. The village has 300 humans and is held by Sir Vandas Gervon, a distant cousin of Baron Argus. A third of the village is devoted to fishing and the remainder works the surrounding fields. Despite Baron Argus' disapproval, Sir Vandas tries to be helpful to the Sheriff. He hopes to win the Sheriff's recommendation so he can send his son, Andal, to be a squire at the royal court in Haras.

#### **0505 Sahuagin Outpost**

In the lee of a rock outcropping and below the surface is an outpost of the Sahuagin Kingdom. Here nearly 100 sahuagin (2 HD) are readying themselves to take out King Tuoris and the Mermen of Aventis. This operation is considered important enough to warrant the presence of Prince Xatharazzax (HD 12). Accompanying the Prince are his 5 honor guards (HD 8). Leading the Sahuagin troops are 2 Captains (HD 4) and their commander, Loxak (HD 6). The Sahuagin have 10 Giant Sharks (HD 5).

In the Prince's personal treasury are:

- ◆ **Jewels:** 1 x 500; 6 x 1,000; 4 x 1,100; 1 x 1,300; 1 x 1,400; 7 x 2,000; 2 x 3,000; 7 x 4,000; 4 x 5,000; 5 x 6,000; 1 x 7,000; 1 x 9,000
- ◆ 5,000 SP
- ◆ Potion of ESP
- ◆ Potion of Control Brass Dragon
- ◆ Potion of Invulnerability
- ◆ Stone Tablet Map To:
  - 40,000 SP
  - 21 GP
  - **Gems:** 3 x 10 GP; 2 x 50 GP; 10 x 100 GP; 4 x 500 GP; 5,000 GP
  - **Jewels:** 1 x 600; 1 x 1,000; 1 x 1,100; 1 x 1,200; 2 x 2,000; 3 x 3,000; 3 x 5,000; 2 x 6,000; 3 x 8,000; 1 x 9,000

- ◆ Stone Tablet Map To (Ring of Spell Storing)
- ◆ Stone Tablet Scroll of Prot: Elementals

The Giant Squids I rolled up on the Wandering Monsters charts. This got me thinking, so I put it in. The treasure was likewise rolled in accordance with the treasure type, using my .NET utility at:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/mscorbit/beta/RuinsGenerate.zip>.

Hawth was pretty much set from the background I'd written so far. I like politics and intrigue in my campaigns, so I added the bit about Gamli.

More politics and intrigue with the Po spies. If you are wondering where I got the name Po from, it is from the Po River in Italy, not because I am being flippant. The spies also illustrates following up on a background elements with something concrete. I feel if something is put in the background, it should be reflected in the details of the settings in some way.

The Barrows and wights are totally ripped off from Tolkien. Left over undead from the Lich Lord's reign is a major theme of the island.

Sandpoint is a typical shire-style Halfling village with a little bit of politics and tension with the Hightower-Oldham conflict. I threw in a link to the arrival of the King's Sheriff as well.

Bone Keep. Aside from adding detail to the background of the Lich Lord, this will be where I place the "mid-level" dungeon of the campaign, after Sable Port.

The Fortress of the Lich Lord is the megadungeon of the campaign and will be setup to allow the player to make their mark as they crawl up to name level.

The White Wind is designed to allow the players to have a hook to the wider world of the Kingdom of the Isles.

Aventis Village is meant to be part of the endgame. My conception is that the player will emerge from the Fortress of the Lich Lord at name level and deal with the coming conflict between the Mermen and the Sahuagin. With luck I will get to use 1<sup>st</sup> edition *Battlesystem*. :D

The Ruins of Sable Port is the starting dungeon, where 1st to 3rd level characters can get

experience. From here they will find clues to Bone Keep and from Bone Keep to the Fortress of the Lich Lord. I admit it sounds linear, but keep in mind it is just a plan that will be altered in the face of what the players actually do. If I don't get to use any particular part, there is always the next campaign.

Mikva is the "home base" of the players. More political stuff with the King's Sheriff and the Baron. There is the possibility that the politics and intrigue will BE the campaign if that how the players choose to go. Using the larger map I recommend in the original 32 steps, you should have 4 to 6 of these plot threads running through your sandbox. Again, they are not a railroad but rather pieces of the setting that naturally lead to each other. By doing the background and history you make it all plausible and the players will accept it as a natural part of the ongoing campaign.

Datha this sets up a minor thread involving the thieves of Carra. Datha are the "good guys" in this plot.

Carra are the "bad guys" in the Datha-Carra conflict. Although if there are any thieves in the party, they are likely going to have to deal with Moran.

The Wereboars are a bunch of fantasy tropes I cobbled together. With Spardon, think Spartacus. The curse is probably what the Romans would have done to him if they could really cast magic.

Kathi is a typical farmer manor that adds more depth to the Sheriff-Baron conflict.

Finally, the Sahuagin Outpost. I just used monster description to come up with the roster and decided that since this was going to be a high level showdown, one of the Sahuagin Princes will be present.

## 1.9 Creating Plots

This section will cover the following step.

20. Look at your notes and come up with two to four plots that tie one or more locales together. Write a paragraph or two on each.

To me plots are not a script but rather a plan in the form of what ifs so I can better prepare for what players could do. The plan will have to adapt as choices and luck alter the circumstances of the campaign.

### **Fortress of the Lich Lord**

Hopefully this will wind up the centerpiece of this campaign. The pull is simple greed; the lure of more treasure and better gear. The push will be the realization that someone or something is trying to rebuild with dire consequences for the island. This entity I will call the Black Queen, Lady of the Underearth. She will be a wraith-like figure. Originally a minion of the Dark Lord and a minor ally of Tavaras, she survived the crusade. Now, several hundred years later, she has carved out a kingdom in the Underearth and is seeking to reclaim Tavaras old domain.

The plot will initially start at Sable Port. In a bit of a twist, I will be making this a 1st level ruins to explore, saving the dungeon for later. In Sable Port there are several factions. The Rot Lord, the agent of the Black Queen, is in the process of creating a zombie army to seize control of Sable Port. The Bone Knight is a skeleton warrior and is in nominal control. He remains loyal to Tavaras' command to defend the port, although his forces are much diminished because of the Crusade.

From Sable Port the PCs will be able to find out that the Rot Lord is the servant of Sir Avar. Once a paladin and now fallen into darkness, Sir Avar has taken control of much of Bone Keep. Partly because he is an ally of the Black Queen but also because he is searching for the body of Duke Barradon. Duke Barradon was the leader of the crusaders and fell during the assault on Bone Keep. Two hundred men got cut off during the assault and Duke Barradon personally led the rescue against impossible odds. The rescue was successful, but the Duke was cut down. His men say that the divine light of Veritas was with him during the fight.

When Bone Keep was sacked, a shrine was erected to Duke Barradon. For a few decades it was a minor pilgrimage site but was then forgotten amid the ruins of Bone Keep. Sir Avar believes that if he finds the shrine, he will be able to be redeemed. He will use whatever means necessary to find the shrine, but so far it

has eluded him. There are multiple levels underneath Bone Keep still to be explored.

The players will learn of the Black Queen and, after they are finished with the Bone Keep, they will hopefully decide to move on to the Fortress of the Lich Lord.

Finally, there is the Fortress of the Lich Lord. Some of it controlled by the Black Queen, but other factions exist. Some factions are good, some are evil, all are fighting for survival against the rising power of the Black Queen. The players can eventually go into the Underearth, into the realm of the Black Queen herself. I envision this as a very high level adventure.

I will need to come up with some interesting treasures and artifacts when I detail these dungeons.

### **The Threat of the Sahuagin**

I will hook this in in two ways. The first will be with shore raids by the Sahuagins. If the players choose to investigate these raids they can track the Sahuagins back to their lair. I don't envision this as a simple follow the patrol back to the base; rather the Sahuagins use every trick, such as doubling back on a trail, to throw off any tracker. The second hook will be via Sable Port, where they could rescue a merman from the Bone Knight. Hopefully this will lead to the players becoming friends of King Aventis.

I will probably do this in two parts. The first will happen at mid-level and will result in a false victory. The PCs aid the mermen in fending off a serious raid by the sahuagin. The later part will be when the PCs are beyond name level. The original raid was just a test to gauge the strength of the opposition. Now the more serious attack begins and it starts with a series of devastating raids around the island.

### **The Empire of Po**

The Empire of Po wants to absorb the Kingdom of the Isles. If they succeed, then they will have uncontested control of the Midland Sea. The Isle of Piall is near the border with Po and an early target for expansion. What I will be looking to do with this plot is to recruit the PCs as agents of Po. The ultimate prize will be the Empire granting the island to the PCs as their reward.

This plot will have to remain vague as its execution greatly depends on circumstances. I figure that there is a 50/50 chance that PCs will grow disgusted enough with the conflict between the Sheriff and Baron to give serious consideration to any offers from Po.

### **The Baron and the Sheriff**

The Gervons have long enjoyed being the sole power on the Isle of Piall. They view the recent arrival of the King's Sheriff as a threat. Like the Empire of Po plot, this will have to remain vague because circumstances will change depending on what the PCs do. The main effect of the conflict initially is that the PCs can get different rewards for exploring Sable Port depending on if they go to the Sheriff or the Baron. Some of these will involve making a choice, for example if both want the Chalice of Healing that is known to exist in the port, the players will have to decide which one to give it too.

### **The Dwarves of Southpoint**

If the players investigate the mines, they will find an ancient evil from the time of the Lich Lord has been awakened. The answer to its demise will be found in the Fortress of the Lich Lord. I will probably design this so it can't be defeated without the McGuffin. It will be tricky to give the player enough foreshadowing to know that they may need to run to come back another day. I am also thinking about ways for the evil to escape to terrorize Southpoint. This is meant to be a fantasy Cthulhu-type plot.

### **Other Stuff**

Basically all of these plots setup the initial circumstances of the island. What happens after the start depends on what the players do. I have multiple points of conflict happening. Conflict means adventures. Depending on how the players deal with these conflicts, the campaign can head into interesting directions for both me and them.

## **1.10 Population Locale Encounters**

This section covers the following step.

21. For each population locale come up with three to five encounters. They should be a sentence each.

### **Encounters**

#### **0105 Hawth (village) Dwarf**

Balkrin Strongaxe, a Dwarf, needs several nuggets officially assayed in Mikva. He wants to remain in his tunnel to avoid claim jumpers.

Avarik the Bald, a Dwarf, has recovered some pages that could unveil what's underneath Southpoint. The rest of the book is thought to be in Bone Keep

Valard the Yellow Mage recently made a small flying animated statue. However the enchantment failed midway through the test and the rather valuable statue fell into the sea next to Southpoint.

Dair's son, Nar, stupidly left his axe somewhere on the South Downs. He wants the party to help find it quietly. In return he will pay them a small amount of gold and an introduction to his father.

#### **0204 Sandpoint (village) Halfling**

Buck Hightower prized flock of sheep (their wool is extra-fine) was scattered in a wolf attack. He needs extra hands to find and gather them. He will pay well.

Albrus Oldham is organizing a posse to go after Lodan Brightbuckle.

Two star-crossed lovers from the Greencastles and the Yellowjams are missing in the South Downs. The two families need help finding them. They have a long standing feud.

#### **0401 Aventis Village**

Two of the best sea horse racers challenge one member of the party. King Touris expects them to compete or lose face.

Horan, a master merman artisan, has grown a beautiful statue out of coral. Just as it was ready to be detached a school of giant octopi takes residence around it.

King Touris' youngest son, Ormus, despises surface dwellers. He attempts to steal something valuable from the party to make them lose face.

#### **0403 Mikva (castle, town) Human**

A fight breaks out between Baronial Loyalist and King's men. It spills from the tavern out onto the street.

A giant squid has taken a liking to Master Willis' barges. He wants the party's aid in killing or driving off the Giant Squid.

The party walks by an alleyway where a bunch of folks are unloading a wagon. One of the crate falls and a bunch of spearheads, swords, and arrowheads spill to the ground.

Master Donovan from Sandpoint has a tear in his tent that renders it useless for market day. He needs somebody get his spare from Sandpoint so he can setup for market day.

In a market stall the party comes across some scrolls that have details on Sable Port. They are quite old and brittle.

The Sheriff needs somebody to take a ride around the island, looking for anybody living in the wilderness. He wants to make sure the tax rolls are complete.

Thomar Devar approaches the party. Several of his fellow fishermen buddies have disappeared (Sahuagins?). Thomar and his buddies are smugglers and are in league with Moran of Carra.

#### **0403 Datha (hamlet) Human**

Somebody has been cutting clam traps in the bay. Helmar needs more hands to watch for the perpetrators.

A boat is seen floundering in the bay – the party is the closest.

Helmar needs extra swords to help break up a suspected smuggler's meeting tonight. He can't offer much, but will put in a good word with the Baron.

#### **0404 Carra (hamlet) Human**

A body is found on the shore north of Carra.

The Sheriff has an arrest writ for one Hevus, a resident on Carra. He needs a well-armed party to go get him.

Ordham's compatriots got busted last night and now sit in the Baron's dungeons. He needs a well-armed party to help with a smuggler's meeting that night in the entrance of the bay.

#### **0504 Kathi (village) Human**

Sir Vandas warmly welcomes the party with food and drink. He later suggests a friendly bout with

him and his son, Andal. However he is a sore loser.

A bloody man staggers into the village, screaming that Sea-Devils are attacking the outlying hamlet and sheepfolds. A small spy party from Po is also caught in the midst of the raid and do not wish to be discovered.

Random tables really help in generating the mass of encounters needed for this step.

- ◆ I like S John Ross [Big List of RPG Plots](#) as a starting point
- ◆ This about the [36 plots](#) is also helpful.
- ◆ The venerable [Tablesmith](#) is always good (if you run Windows)

### **Reader Comments**

Another option instead of Tablesmith would be NBOS Software's Inspiration Pad Pro, a free app that similarly generates results from random tables you can create yourself:

<http://www.nbos.com/products/ipad/ipad.htm>

Hope This Helps,

Flynn

## **1.11 General Encounters**

This section will cover the following step.

22. Come up with 6 to 12 general encounters for the region as a whole. They should be usable in any area of the region and a sentence or two each.

1. Captain Arvis Black and his ship the Red Revenge are encountered. If it is on water then it is a ship to ship confrontation. On land, a shore party is encountered.
2. After a storm, the bodies of several Sahuagins are found washed up on the shore. One of them has a coral route map to the Sahuagin's lair that can be interpreted by Valard the Yellow Mage of Southpoint.



3. A small shrine to Saint Edmund exists on an accessible ridge just below the peak of Mount Devon. A party of 3d6 pilgrims is encountered while making their way to the shrine.
4. An avalanche on Mount Devon has uncovered a small outpost of Tavaras the Lich Lord. It is a two level complex.
5. The fishermen of the Midland Sea periodically hold untaxed illegal fairs to trade among each other. Loud noises draw the party to one such fair being held on the north shore of the Isle of Piall.
6. The annual tavern race is about to start. On a run from Hawth to Kathi, the participants are required to stop at each of the half dozen taverns on the island and drink at least four mugs before moving on.
7. Baron Argus Gervon is hunting the slopes of Mount Devon. He is annoyed at the lack of game. Upon encountering the party, he blames them for scaring away the game and fines them 100 gp each for forest law violations.
8. On the east shore of the Isle of Piall a beautiful voice is heard singing. It is Merisa, the daughter of King Tuoris of Aventis, singing while resting on the rocks on the shoreline. She has an 18 Charisma.

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When creating these encounters you should be taking a broader view of the setting. For example, if a barbarian invasion is part of your setting, the spot to put any encounters involving that plot is not tied to any one location – raiders or temporary encampments for example.

As to when you want to use these encounters one answer is: "When you feel like it". Many have the idea that a sandbox is deterministic, in that you go to location x and find y. If that was all it was, then it would be little better than playing Ultima or Oblivion on your computer. General Encounters is one tool a sandbox referee can use give a sense that the characters are moving in a larger world. They are also useful for moving the players along if they flounder or appear to be going in circles.

If that is too subjective for your taste, then you can use "triggers". The triggers can cause or terminate general encounters. For example, barbarian raids can cease if the High Chief of Nermanni is killed or undead start wandering the Isle of Piall if the 2nd level under the Bone Keep is breached.

However you decide to implement General Encounters, you need to think of your sandbox setting as a whole rather than a collection of locales. Of course also make them fun and exciting adventures.

## 1.12 Map Important Population Locales

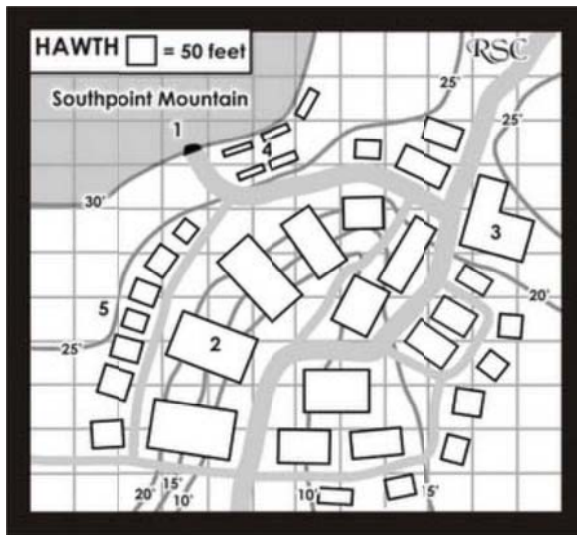
This section will cover the following step.

23. Pick the 4 or 6 most important population locales and draw a quarter page sketch map of the settlement.

From Section 1.8:

### **0105 Hawth (village) Dwarf**

Located just outside of the Southpoint mine, this is home to 200 dwarves. Their homes are carved out of the rocky walls of the canyon leading to the minehead. Lord Dair Darkiron (Ftr5, L) directs the mining operations. The original motherlodes are beginning to play out. In response, Lord Dair opened a new section of mine that promised renewed riches, but a rash of disappearances caused it to be closed up. Lord Dair's brother, Gamli is challenging Dair's leadership of the clan as a result. Lord Dair will pay handsomely to anybody who can find out what happened in the mine.



**Figure 1.12-1: Keyed Map of Hawth**

1. The Mine Head, currently guarded by a half dozen huscarls of Lord Dair.
2. Lord Dair's Clan Home. His brother Gamli lives in the hall to the north.
3. The Rusty Battleaxe. A local inn and tavern run by Kenar of the Rusty Battleaxe clan. Kenar is noted for organizing charity relief for the miners that have been struck hard by the troubles within Southpoint Mountain.
4. The Ironmaster Camp. The best ore is taken to where the Ironmasters use ancient magics to forges the best dwarven weapons and armors.
5. Upside, where most of the miners live. Currently the site of much discontent against Lord Dair's rule. Gamli has several agents among the miners to keep tensions high.

**Note:**

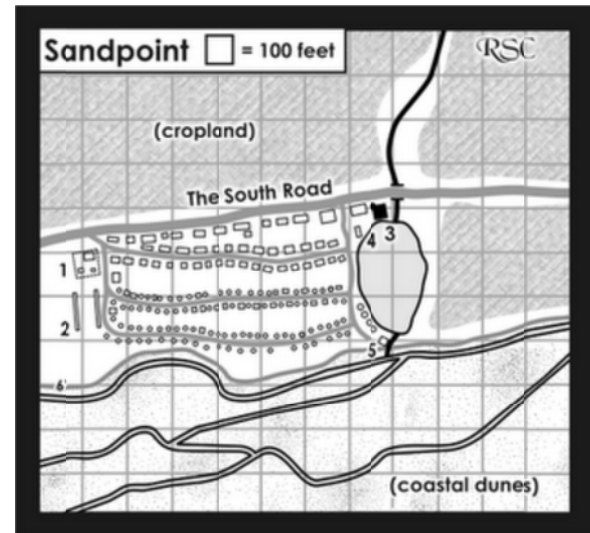
*Most of the houses in Hawth are made of stone and built into the terrain. Typically they are three levels with the highest above ground, the second level partially covered by the slope, and the third completely underground.*

The maps are drawn in a quick style with a few notes. By adopting this style you can quickly generate material for five or six of the most important locales outside of the character's home base. If one of these locales becomes more important, you have a base from which to flesh out the final details.

As for the design of the village, I was inspired by several villages in Greece and Turkey that had to adapt to the rocky terrain of the region. Often built against steep slopes, much of the building lies inside the hill or mountain.

### **0204 Sandpoint (village) Halfling**

This is the home to over 300 Halflings who farm the fertile bottomlands and tend flocks of sheep on the South Downs. Buck Hightower is the current Lord of Sandpoint. The Hightowers of Sandpoint have long been the most powerful and wealthiest family in Sandpoint. Recently their preeminence has been challenged by the Oldhams, who have grown wealthy on the wool trade. Albrus Oldham was recently appointed the Reeve of Sandpoint by the King's Sheriff to collect the various Royal fees and duties.



**Figure 1.12-2: Keyed Map of Sandpoint**

Sandpoint is located on a low bluff overlooking the coastal dunes of the region. From here it is about a 1/2 mile to the high tide mark on the beach. The bluff is only six-foot high and it is steadily eroding. This has caused the wealthiest Halflings to live near the King's road and the poorest nearest the bluff. The wide spaces between the rows of houses are used as pastures and gardens. Many make a small sum of money renting their pasture during the annual sheep shearing.

1. Hightower Estate. The ancestral home of the Hightowers of Sandpoint. Several extended families living under one roof make this place a madhouse.
2. The Sandpoint Sheepfold. Every April the annual sheep shearing is held here, thousands of sheep are moved between the two stands and their fleece shorn off. Afterward, the wool is washed and stored in dry cellars underneath the stands. In May, the Great Island Sheep Fair is held with buyers from all over the Midland Sea coming to bid.
3. The King's House. This is currently the residence of Albrus Oldham, the Reeve of Sandpoint. The Oldhams are currently much in favor among the poor of Sandpoint for shoring up the bluff three years ago.
4. The Mill Pond Inn. This inn is run by Janson Poundfoot. It is a warren of rooms, both for the big folks and the little folks. Many patrons have gotten lost among its three stories. For much of the year the inn is mostly empty with the majority of business coming during the spring Sheep Fair.
5. Sandpoint Mill. Gladys Yellowbottom runs this inn with an iron fist. Much of her family lies in terror of her legendary temper. Only her nephew, Manny Yellowbottom, is not intimidated and livens up the day with his practical jokes.

**Note:**

*To the east, the river flows south from Mount Devon and through the South Downs, forming a steep ravine through the bluff. After emerging from the bluff it turns west to flow past Sandpoint. From the bluff to the sea it forms a braided flood plain with the channels changing every year. It enters the Midland Sea about a mile to the southwest of Sandpoint.*

Sometimes it is hard to come up with a village layout. In these cases I turn to historical maps and other gaming products (particularly Harn) for inspiration.

There are several websites one can use as a resource. One I like particularly is The Aedificium [[www.aedificium.org/](http://www.aedificium.org/)], a living history for England. Of particular interest is this map page [<http://www.aedificium.org/Maps/LocalMaps.html>], which has several maps done in the Harn

style, making them very useful for gaming. The one that inspired Sandpoint was Serlby.

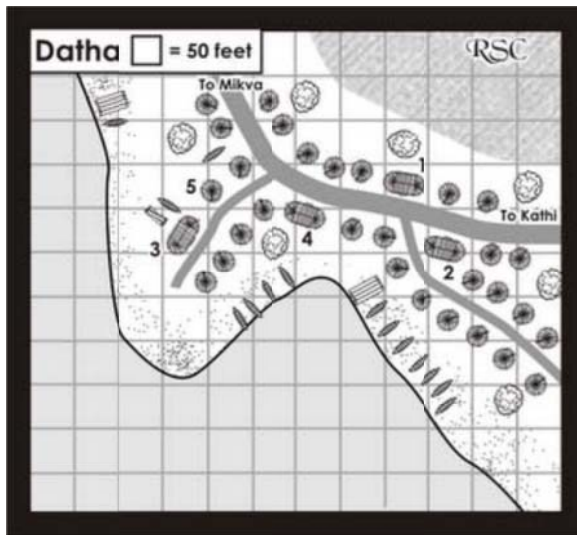
One interesting thing to do is look at the Nottingham map and at some of the village maps. You realize that some of these places are literally a stone throw away from each other. Not particularly useful for gaming, as fantasy campaigns work better with a bit more wilderness between settlements, however it is interesting to see how the medieval landscape was laid out.

Finally, a map-making tip. Many probably wonder how I did the cropland. Many vector and paint programs have the ability to use textures. These are bitmap or bitmap patterns that you can use to fill shapes with. This particular one was done with Corel Draw using a cloth canvas pattern rotated 45 degrees.

I created two full 8.5 by 11 bitmaps in TIFF format at 300 dpi that you can use. One is greyscale and the other is full color CMYK. The full color uses yellow and brown to give an impression of crop soil along with the texture. You can download it [here](http://www.ibiblio.org/mscorbit/beta/cropland.zip) [<http://www.ibiblio.org/mscorbit/beta/cropland.zip>].

**0403 Datha (hamlet) Human**

Datha is a small fishing hamlet on East Bay. A hundred humans live here in mud and wattle huts along the shoreline. The headman of the hamlet is Danis Hobrun, who is thoroughly loyal to Baron Argus. Danis' brother, Helmar, is the yeoman in chief of the Baron's small coast guard. Helmar and his fellow yeoman patrol the shores of Piall looking for smugglers.



**Figure 1.12-3: Keyed Map of Datha**

1. This is the home of Danis Hobrun, the village headsmen. He supervises the planting of the village's 1,500 acres. He is also the Baron's bailiff and is empowered to hear cases of low justice. He is worried that his brother, Helmar, will get the village into a feud with the village of Carra. He longs to explore some of the ruins on the northern end of Piall Island and is willing to help supply an adventuring party going north for a half or full share. He has 1,000 gp, two boats, and 10 javelins he can use.
2. Swordfish Tavern. This is the local watering hole. It is noted for its locally brewed grog, which has fermented fish oil as one of its main ingredients. Roll vs. poison or throw up the contents of your stomach for 1d6 rounds. Strung along the central beam is a seven-foot long stuffed Swordfish.
3. Antimus Boats. This establishment builds and repairs boats. Antimus Black can make up to 40-ft, single-mast coasters. He is noted for carving elaborate decorations into the boats.

4. This is the home of Helmar Hobroun and the headquarters of the Baron's Coasters, the local coast guard. He hates Moran Lordar of the village of Carra and will do anything to bring him down and his pack of thieves. Typically a single boat will go on a week-long patrol from East Bay to Southpoint. The patrol at the end of the month will also circle the island.
5. This is the home of Vanis Black, the son of the Antimus Black the boat maker. He is friends with Helmar and many of the coasters and is secretly in the employ of Moran Lordar. He goes to Mikva once a week to pick up lumber and supplies for his father. There he meets with one of Moran's henchmen.

This village is typical of the type of settlement I make. Grimy, very medieval, and lots of intrigue, even though it is not earth shattering in scope. Players that get involved in these plots often wind up with valuable friends and allies.

This village also showcases my hut and boat symbols. Because I kept at mapping for so long, I managed to accumulate a variety of symbols that allow me to throw together maps quickly. They were originally developed for a map of the Village of Woe in the Wilderlands of High Fantasy. I never finished it, but you can see it partly done (Figure 1.12-4).

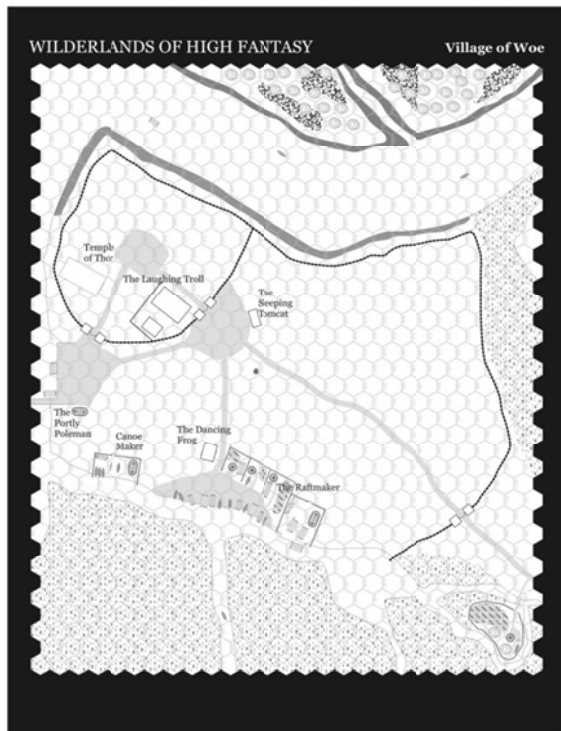


Figure 1.12-4: Village of Woe Example Map

#### 0404 Carra (hamlet) Human

On an island in the middle of East Bay is the fishing hamlet of Carra. This hamlet is home to 75 humans living in mud and wattle huts. Conditions here are wretched and these people are among the poorest on the island. The headman of the hamlet, Moran Loder, is also the leader of the small Piall thieves' guild. He rules Carra with an iron hand, severely punishing anybody cooperating with Helmar and his yeoman.

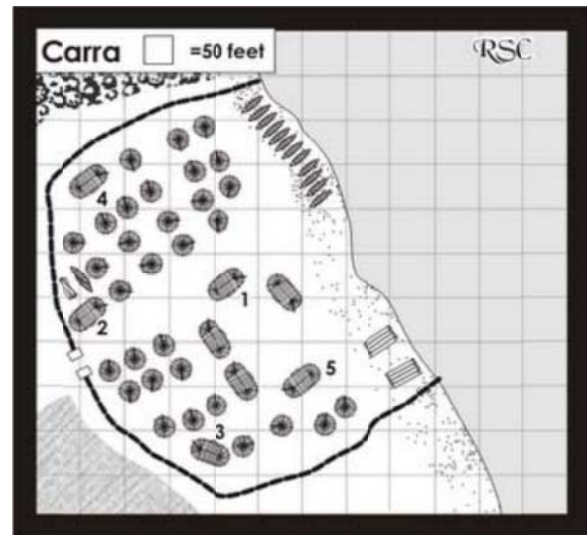


Figure 1.12-5: Keyed Map of Carra

1. This is the home of Moran Loder, the headmen of Carra and the leader of the small Thieves Guild of Piall Island. He is a ruthless leader and many of enemies have disappeared into East Bay, never to be seen again. His grown son, Dodson, lives in Mikva overseeing his father's interests. Moran is noted for his big ears, but few comment about it and survive. About his belt are numerous tally sticks. To outsiders they appear to track what the village catches, but in reality they are a record of his criminal empire.
2. Geran the Marked is the village's boatwright. Unusually, Geran was raised among the dwarves of Southpoint, where he learned from an expert woodworker. His skills are put to good use by Moran in the building of boats complete with secret compartments for smuggling. His body is covered with vivid tattoos of scenes and figures from dwarven legend.
3. Kals the Stench is the village salter and tanner. He also acts as Moran's fence, often packing goods to be sold in smelly barrels of cod, and herring.
4. Orsin is the leader of the largest gang of fishermen in the village. He is also devoutly religious, often quoting from the Canticles of Veritas while fishing or acting as Moran's enforcer.

5. Pog the Crafty is Moran's lieutenant. He is often away from the village, dealing with thieves guilds on other islands in the Kingdom and even in the Empire of Po. He also uses these trips to find a way of restoring the magic power he lost when he was a youth. He was not born on Piall and was briefly apprenticed to a mage. In an encounter he doesn't talk about, his natural ability was burned away. Chance brought him to Piall and into the service of Moran. He was instrumental in Moran seizing control of Carra and the Piall Thieves Guild 20 years ago. He has little interest in the guild itself.

For Carra I decided to take a similar tack to work I did on the Brotherhood of the Lion and focus on making a memorable cast of characters to populate the thieves' guild of the Isle of Piall. I was helped by the excellent NPC tables from Paizo's Gamemastery Guide. I coded them up for Inspiration Pad Pro and this is what I rolled:

#### **Moran**

*Background:* Inadvertently saved the life of a future villain

*Goal:* Solve a murder

*Physical:* Big ears

*Personality:* Makes lists and check things off

*Secrets:* Owes the local moneylender substantial funds

*Reward:* Follow someone for you

#### **Geran**

*Background:* Raised by members of a different race

*Goal:* Continue to live in family estate despite danger

*Physical:* Covered in tattoos

*Personality:* Easily angered

*Secrets:* Knows command word for a magic item

*Reward:* Bury or hide something dangerous

#### **Kals**

*Background:* Comes from a long line of tanners

*Goal:* Become the recipient of a actual miracle

*Physical:* Homely

*Personality:* Speaks with great formality; never used contractions and employs bigger words than necessary

*Secrets:* Was a very different creature prior to reincarnation

*Reward:* Buy you a small gift

#### **Orsin**

*Goal:* Go on a pilgrimage

*Physical:* Shaved head

*Personality:* A connoisseur of find food and drink who insists on lecturing about it

*Secrets:* Knows why no one swims in the millpond anymore

*Reward:* Compose a poem praising your prowess

#### **Pog**

*Background:* Practiced magic before a traumatizing accident

*Goal:* Get a good night's sleep

*Physical:* Glass eye

*Personality:* Propositions any even remotely attract person encountered, but makes panicked excuses should somebody accept the offer

*Secrets:* Knows command word for a magic item

*Reward:* Provide shelter

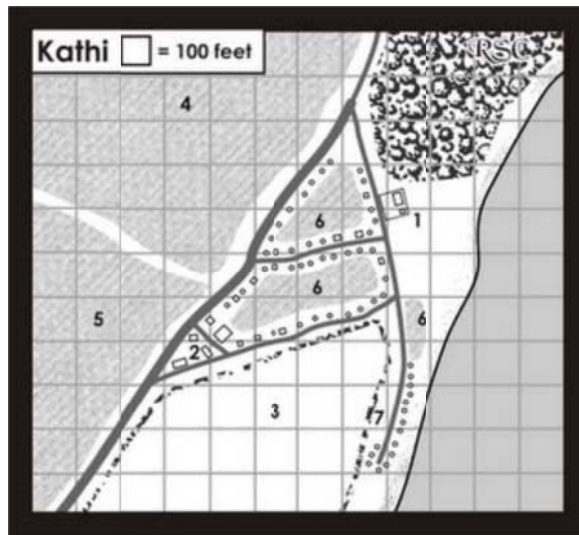
Note that I don't use all the entries – I just scan them and use what leaps out at me.

When making a sandbox campaign, a good set of random tables are invaluable and Paizo's Gamemastery Guide has several that work well in coming up with ideas.

### **0504 Kathi (village) Human**

This is a farming village on the eastern shore of the Isle of Piall. The village has 300 humans and is held by Sir Vandas Gervon, a distant cousin of Baron Argus. A third of the village is devoted to fishing and the remainder works the surrounding fields. Despite Baron Argus' disapproval, Sir Vandas tries to be helpful to the Sheriff. He hopes to win the Sheriff's recommendation so he can send his son, Andal, to be a squire at the royal court in Haras.





**Figure 1.12-6: Keyed Map of Kathi**

1. This is the manor house of Sir Vandas Gervon, his wife Elessa, and their five children, the eldest of which is the 17 year old, Andal. Visitors with any status will be greeted with a royal welcome and a feast at the manor's great hall. During which Sir Vandas will question the party to see if some type of squire-ship can be secured for Andal.
2. This is the small merchant quarter of the village. It has the Goldenrod Inn, a smithy, and a carpenter's workshop. Across Byway is a small temple of Veritas run by two priests and three acolytes.
3. This is a pasture. It is used for grazing the local herd before the fall slaughter and the spring lambing.
4. This is the North Field, over 800 acres of cropland (much of this extends off map). Kathi practices two-crop rotation farming and this field is currently in fallow.
5. This is the South Field, which is another 800 acres of cropland (it also extends off map). Currently this field is planted with wheat, barley, and rye. The Village Reeve and Sir Vandas are considering whether to switch to a new system of rotating three fields.
6. These are various individual vegetable gardens tended by the villagers. They are crisscrossed with a number of small paths.

7. This is the home of the fisherfolk of the Kathi. They are led by Donard Tivor, a huge hulk of a man. He takes little interest in the conflict between Moran of Carra and Helmar of Datha. When either tries to interfere with one of his fishermen, he smacks the offender upside the head with his large fishclub. Donard is known for eating the head of a herring for good luck prior to the start of a fishing season.

This is pretty much a typical manorial village. You have the lord, Sir Vandas, who has the power of justice over the serfs of the village. Freedmen can appeal to the King's Sheriff in Mikva; however as a practical matter this is only done as a matter of last resort as most try to avoid causing major trouble in the small village. The village has several officers: the Reeve, who works with Sir Vandas on day to day administration; the Beadle, in charge of collecting fines and keeping the peace; the Woodward, in charge of making sure that the woods are properly used; and the Hayward, who inspects the fields and tools to make sure everything is done properly.

The freedmen of the village will include the innkeeper, the smith, the carpenter, and several yeomen who hold land rent-free in exchange for being ready for instant military service. A handful of the villagers hold strips in their own name, with the only requirement that they pay a rent for using the common plow.

I recommend [Harnmanor](#) as the most game-able treatment of Manorialism. [Fief](#) and [A Magical Medieval Society](#) are both likewise good. Ken Follet's [World without End](#), the sequel to [Pillars of the Earth](#), has several chapters set in medieval villages, which has useful stuff for gaming. Finally a well done generic manor was released [on Lythia.com](#).

## 1.13 Mapping the "Home Base"

This section will cover the following step.

24. Pick the starting population locale and draw a full page map of the settlement. This is the "Home Base".

From 1.8:

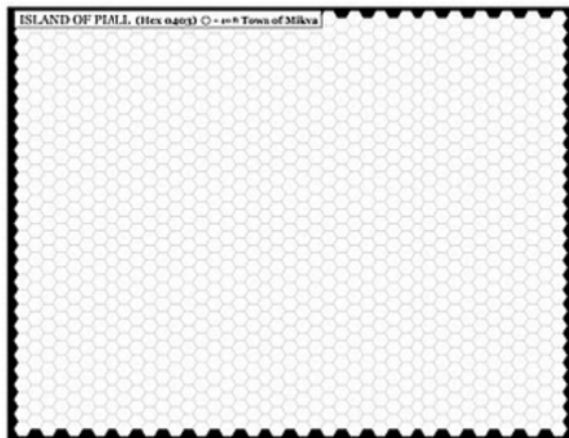
### **0403 Mikva (castle, town) Human**

This is a small castle town of 800 humans with several dozen Dwarves and Halflings. The castle itself sits on a bluff overlooking the bay. It is the seat of the current Baron of Piall, Argus Gervon. Several trading vessels stop here every week to pick up ingots from Southpoint. Before the fall monsoon season, dozens of traders put in at Mikva to attend the Piall Fair. Here the island's grain and, more importantly, wool is traded for goods and supplies needed for the next year.

Currently the King's Sheriff, Tomar Revan, is staying with one of the wealthiest merchants in Mikva, the Honorable Orlon Beras. The Sheriff is currently using offices at the Mikva Trading Hall to conduct his investigation and any other Royal business. There is considerable tension between Baron Argus and the Sheriff.

For this section I will go step by step about how I create a town map. Roughly, these are the steps I do for hand maps as well.

First I start with a blank hex map. I use 0.28 in hexes at 40 ft per hex. This gives enough coverage to draw towns and villages. For cities I go to a larger page size.

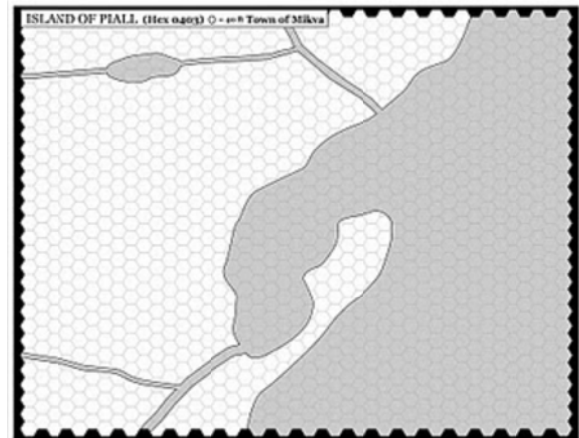


**Figure 1.13-1: Example Blank Hex Map**

I start by selecting the Coast layer and drawing in the coast line. At this level rivers are considered coasts as well. Streams, if any, are drawn as lines on a separate layer. I try to make the coastline a complete shape that can be filled

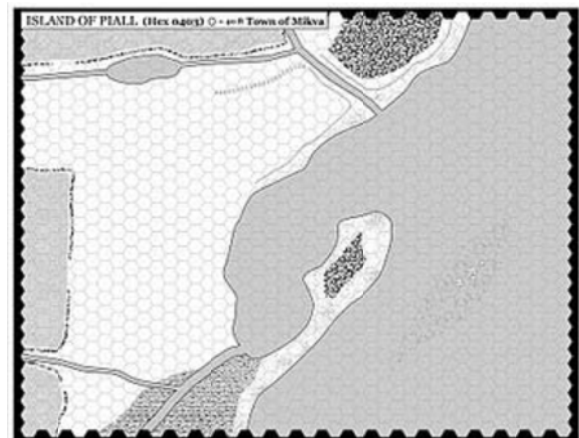
with white. The coast layer is above the hex layer.

Next I toggle on the water layer and put down a page size rectangle of 20% gray at the lowest level. I copy the coast I drew and paste it to a ground layer beneath the Hex layer. I fill it with white. You may want to look at [River Secrets](#) and [adding a glow effect](#) for shallow water.



**Figure 1.13-2: Example with Coastline Added**

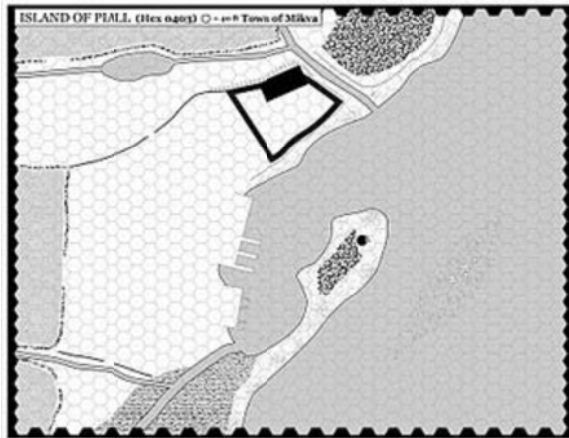
Next I add in vegetation by drawing areas and filling them in with various terrain fills. I also added some cliffs and steep contours. Finally, I put in cropland. By now you should be getting a sense of how the physical layout will turn out. All this is on the vegetation layer and below the hex layer.



**Figure 1.13-3: Example with Vegetation Added**

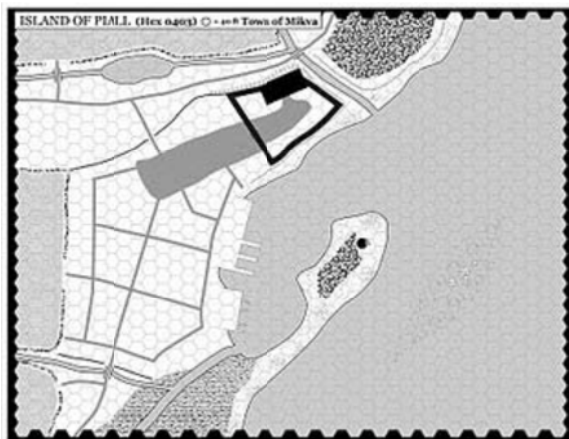
Next I add walls, which are major constraints on how a town is developed. For Mikva I choose to

go with an [early version of Chepstow Castle](#). I added wooden palisades. The reasoning is that Mikva isn't wealthy enough to build town walls but does wish to control access to the market, hence a wooden palisade. All this goes on the Wall layer, which is above the Hex layer.



**Figure 1.13-4: Example with Walls Added**

Now all this is enough to suggest a network of roads. I do this in two stages. First, I just focus on the major roads. Later, after I place the buildings, I will work on minor roads. All of these are lines and filled shapes at 40% gray. The road layer lies above the hex layer.



**Figure 1.13-5: Example with Major Roads Added**

I then take the population and divide it by 5 to get a rough idea of how many buildings I will need. This comes from assuming there is an average of 5 people per household. This works out to 160 or so. Because Mikva is still

developing as a town, I decided that about half are individual buildings. Most are mud and wattle huts. I don't keep an exact count as long as I get close. What I care about is that it looks dense and big enough for the population.



**Figure 1.13-6: Example with Buildings Added**

All this goes on the building layer, above the hex layer. Next I finished up the paths by looking at the placement of the buildings. I leave the keying of the map for later, after I complete the next several steps of detailing the town.

By computer or by hand you will have a map showing the home base of the players.

## 1.14 Shops in the "Home Base"

This section will cover part of the following step.

25. Use [Medieval Demographics](#) to get an idea of how many shops are in the town.

From previous steps we know that Mikva has a population of 800 people. Looking at *Medieval Demographics*, we see that tailors have a value of 250. Diving 800 by 250 we get 3 plus change. So we know there are at least three tailors living in Mikva.

While *Medieval Demographics* by S. John Ross is a great article, the professions lists seem incomplete. I have *Life in the Medieval City* by Joseph and Francis Geis and found the list that S. John Ross started from. There the authors admitted that while taken from the Paris Tax Roll of 1292, the list was truncated and paraphrased. So taking a chance I did a search and sure



enough, the Paris Tax Roll of 1292 in its [original form](#) can be found on the Internet, thanks to the SCA and Colm Dubh.

I knew that if you look at an actual list of medieval occupations it would look rather insane. A combination of lax record keeping, the trend to protect even closely related professions from competition, and the fact that, in real life, everything is just more complex, means there is a bewildering array of distinct professions.

This is a case where a referee needs to apply some editorial judgment to make something game-able out of reality. I am a big fan of Harn and its [price list](#). I think how the guilds are organized under that setting is about at the right level of detail for game-able realism. So, inspired by Harn, I came up with a similar list of guilds and professions. I then went through the Paris Tax Roll categorizing everything into one of the guild/professions I created.

You can see the result here in the form of an [excel spreadsheet](#). I even added a little generator. Just change the cell next to Population and the calculated number will change by each guild. I also wrote an article summarizing my own research with the new numbers I calculated. You can [download it here](#).

**Note:**

*This is a first draft, so it is bit skimpy on explanations. I intend to gather all these "How to make a fantasy Sandbox" into a book that I will publish. This is a part of one of the chapters I intend to include. The basic gist is that you divide the value for each profession into the total population. If it is 1 or greater that is how many of that profession is present. If it is lower than 1 then it is a percentage change that profession will exist.*

So I plugged in Mikva's 800 population to the spreadsheet and this what I got:

artist	1
baker	3
carpenter	4
chandler	1
finesmith	3
fisherman	1
herbalist	1
jeweler	2
laborer	5
leathercrafter	10
legal	1
mason	3

merchant	3
metalsmith	1
miller	2
ostler	2
physician	2
religious	1
sailor	1
scholar	2
servant	5
tailor	8
tavern	6
weaponsmith	1
weaver	6

This generates roughly 75 shops in the castle town of Mikva. Now the key to creating a Sandbox Setting is managing the level of detail, which is why in the next step we are only going to pick 6 to 12 of the most interesting shops and just leave the rest as one line entries to be used in later campaigns.