



Talabheim: An introduction
The City and the Project by John Foody
FROM WARPSTONE ISSUE 16

"It had been a long journey, but there in the distance stood Talabheim: The Eye of the Forest."

This issue brings the first part of Warpstone's Talabheim project. This is an attempt to bring Talabheim alive, to make it a city that GMs want to use and players want to visit. We are very pleased with the outcome. I thought it was an opportune moment to provide a little background on the project, for those who are interested in such things. Warpstone had been planning to do the background for a city for some time, inspired (and occasionally frustrated) to some degree by such predecessors as Irillian and Middenheim, amongst others.

The Talabheim Project will be spread over four or five issues of Warpstone and will be supported by scenarios set in the city. So far we have published *Headhunters* (#14) and, in this issue, *Privileges*.

Why Talabheim? Well, originally, Nuln was going to be the city we detailed. I had developed a background for Nuln as part of my old campaign and that was intended to provide a template for the city. I was also made aware that Noel Welsh had done some good work on that city. However, on speaking to James Wallis of Hogshead I found that a Nuln sourcebook was in the works. Middenheim: Done. Nuln: Being done. Altdorf: Didn't really want to do it as it had been partly detailed in various sources, and it also seemed a prime candidate to be done by Hogshead. That left Talabheim, the poor relation of The Empire's cities. In the end it was the best thing that could of happened.

Little had previously been written about the city, with the background in the rulebook and WFB Empire sourcebook setting a number of challenges. Big crater. Big tunnel. Fiercely independent with peculiar local customs. Once capital of Talabecland. Settlement outside the crater. We also needed to throw in the nearness to Kislev and a wide range of conflicts. Noel and myself put together a background, with Noel's idea of the city really giving it focus. The city was to be conservative, in decline and backward compared to its western cousins. We also wanted the religious view to be different, with Sigmar and even Morr taking a back seat. Late night discussions with various Warpstone editors also gave a number of ideas, including Talabheim's big secret. This was not to be detailed, but only hinted at. GMs could then do with it as they wished. When we had drafted a background I realised that the job was going to be huge.

Hence I gathered together a group of writers who had submitted work to us in the past. Not all had had their work accepted, but we'd been impressed anyway. Simply, each writer took an aspect of the city or a location, and after being passed the (usually very sketchy) idea of the area set about developing it. It's taken a number of years to get to these final stages, and contributors have dropped out and others joined, some penning work at short notice. During the development of the project, the team discussed various aspects in some detail, particularly Alfred Nunez, Anthony Ragan and N. Arne Dam who all helped out immensely. All those who contributed have added something worthwhile to the city, and it would be a different – and poorer – project without any one of them.

During the early days I saw a draft of the Marienburg sourcebook, and this was a major inspiration for the style of the city. It is also worth mentioning Alfred and Anthony's work on the Temples and religion. They are due to pen *Realm of Divine Magick*, and thus some clues to its content will be found here.

Once everyone had finished their sections it was brought together, with the co-ordinators

trying to ensure everything tallied. It was then put through the usual Warpstone proofing process.

Some way in, Talabheim was compared in style to Gormenghast. Although it is amongst my favourite books, the similarities had passed me by. I think they are there, especially with the Record Keeper. However it was a subconscious influence, and where it has occurred it is more of a coincidence. Each aspect of Talabheim has been thought through, in its own right. Thus the relative impotence of the guilds and merchants is a direct result of the peer's power, and Talagraad and the independence of Talabheim provided creative challenges that are reflected across the work.

Some parts of the city might not be to everyone's tastes. Some may see them as a little too fanciful. However, as with all such things, they can be cut out and ignored if a GM so wishes. Some small aspects will contradict with future Hogshead projects, but we discovered this very late on. To change them would have drastically changed the nature of the project and so we 'fudged'. One example was the presence of a Magic College we discovered was to be detailed in *Realm of Sorcery*. Its author, Ken Walton, generously sent us the relevant part of the manuscript and we came up with a workaround. There is also no way of determining if Games Workshop's future changes will alter things further.

I could go on and on about the various parts of the city and project, but it is as it stands. If it works, then GMs will use it and it will become part of the lore of the Old World. I certainly cannot ask or hope for anything more.