

# **HISTORY OF "BEYOND BREE"**

## **The origin of "Beyond Bree"**

"Beyond Bree" is the newsletter of the J.R.R. Tolkien Special Interest Group (S.I.G.) of the American branch of Mensa, an international high-IQ society. (Although Mensa itself takes no official position on any subject, holds no opinions, within Mensa are many subgroups, or S.I.G.s.)

When editor Nancy Martsch wrote to a former Tolkien S.I.G., only to receive no reply, she inquired further with the S.I.G.s Officer, volunteering to help. And received this reply, "Congratulations, you're the new Tolkien S.I.G. co-ordinator!" That was how "Beyond Bree" began. The first issue, called "Tolkien S.I.G. News", was published March 1981. It consisted of three pages. By June there were six paying members. And the newsletter has continued ever onward for over forty years.

The name was chosen from a name-the-newsletter contest. "Beyond Bree" was proposed to reflect the Hobbit saying "Strange as news from Bree, not sure as Shire talk" (there was another newsletter named "News from Bree", so that title could not be used). "Beyond Bree" suggests not only Tolkien's world, but the world of fantasy beyond, Bree and beyond.

## **About the newsletter**

"Beyond Bree" has been published every month since March 1981. The newsletter was originally created on a manual typewriter and reproduced by xerox. It has since grown into the computer age and includes an electronic edition in addition to the more traditional stapled format delivered through the post. Some readers still prefer the paper format, which leads to a limit of twelve pages due to postal weight requirements.

The first masthead was designed by Nancy Martsch. The current "Beyond Bree" logo was drawn by the late Tom Loback in December 1988.

Paper copies of all back issues are still available upon request. Electronic copies are available starting from the May issue of 2008.

## **"Beyond Bree" membership**

To obtain news, "Beyond Bree" exchanged paper newsletters with Tolkien societies abroad. Although most information is available online today, "Beyond Bree" still maintains exchanges with selected Tolkien groups.

Subscriptions to "Beyond Bree" are open to all lovers of Tolkien's Middle-earth, Mensan and non-Mensan alike. There are readers in the United States and more than a dozen other countries. "Beyond Bree" is preserved in the Tolkien collections of Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the Wade Collection of Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; and in the Bodleian Library of Oxford, England.

## **What's in "Beyond Bree"?**

A typical issue is 12 pages long, contains short articles on J.R.R. Tolkien and his works; reviews of books, films, events by, about, or inspired by Tolkien and his works, in fandom and academia, which might be of interest to the Tolkien enthusiast. Also readers' views; publications, news, art, occasional poetry & puzzles. We seldom publish fiction. Since we are too widely scattered to meet in person, "Beyond Bree" carries news of conventions and gatherings where the Tolkien lover might find others of similar interests. And, if readers have questions about Tolkien or his works, we try to answer them.

## **Tolkien scholarship**

Articles from "Beyond Bree" have been cited in Tolkien studies, such as *The Annotated Hobbit*, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion & Guide*, and *The Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien*. We have published studies of Tolkien's life, works, and - with the permission of the Tolkien Estate - original Tolkien material. And in October 2020 "Beyond Bree" reproduced, for the first time ever in its entirety and in colour, a rebus (picture) letter which young Tolkien had written to his friend Fr. Francis Morgan.

## **Other "Beyond Bree" publications**

"Beyond Bree" published black and white calendars from 1985 to 1994. The calendars were relaunched in 2010 in colour and have been produced each year since then.

To celebrate the Tolkien Centenary in 1992, "Beyond Bree" produced the booklets *List of Tolkienalia* and *Basic Quenya*, containing material previously published in "Beyond Bree". (Now out of print)

Our other small publications are the "Pronunciation Guide" for the BBC Radio production of *The Lord of the Rings* (a transcript of a recording made by Christopher Tolkien); and "The Great Copyright Controversy" on the unauthorized the Ace Books edition. (Available.)

## **Bree Moot**

"Beyond Bree" has sponsored several gatherings, called Bree Moots. The first was held in 1994 in Bettendorf, Iowa. There have been four other Bree Moots and a Bree Banquet since then. And, as a Participating Society, we sponsored a panel on "Tolkien Fandom & Scholarship" at Tolkien 2005, an international conference in Birmingham, England; and again in England, a panel on "Illustrating Tolkien" at "The Return of the Ring" Conference in Loughborough, in 2012.

## **The "Beyond Bree" Award**

The "Beyond Bree" Award is given "in recognition of outstanding contribution to the study of J.R.R. Tolkien". Recipients are chosen by a vote of the readership. The first Awards were presented at Bree Moot 4, in 1999. Awards are presented at Bree Moot and "Beyond Bree"-sponsored events.