

HISTORY OF "BEYOND BREE"

Mensa is an international society for people of high-IQ, measured by a score within the top two percentile on standardized IQ tests. Mensa itself takes no official position on any subject, holds no opinions. It exists to provide an opportunity for intelligent people to meet one another. But within Mensa are many subgroups devoted to particular subjects, Special Interest Groups or S.I.G.s. "Beyond Bree" is the newsletter of the Tolkien Special Interest Group of American Mensa. Here's how it came about.

In mid-1980 I wrote to a Tolkien S.I.G. advertised in the Mensa Bulletin. Receiving no reply, I contacted the S.I.G.s Officer, volunteering to help if the Tolkien S.I.G. needed assistance. The answer came back, "Congratulations, you're the new Tolkien S.I.G. co-ordinator!" So I waited a while, hoping that some member of the former group would come forward to tell me what they had done, but none came, so I finally started a newsletter on my own. The first issue of "Tolkien S.I.G. News" was published March 1981. It consisted of three pages. By June we had grown to six, count'em, six! paying members. In September of that year we had the first oversize issue (10 pages) to mark Bilbo's & Frodo's Birthday, a tradition which continued off and on for many years before being discontinued because of shipping delays overseas.

The name was chosen from a name-the-newsletter contest. Readers submitted titles, and voted for their choice. "Beyond Bree" was proposed to reflect the Hobbit saying "Strange as news from Bree, not sure as Shire talk" - the title "News from Bree" belonged to another newsletter at that time, hence could not be used. "Beyond Bree" suggests not only Tolkien's world, but the world of fantasy beyond - Bree and beyond. Anyway it won with two votes. Our first masthead was designed by Nancy Martsch. The current "Beyond Bree" logo was drawn by Tom Loback in December 1988.

"Beyond Bree" has grown from the original six subscribers to over a hundred. We have members in the United States and more than a dozen foreign countries. "Beyond Bree" exchanges with other Tolkien newsletters in the United States and Europe, and is preserved in the archives of Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the Wade Collection of Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; and the Bodleian Library of Oxford, England. It is cited in (among others) The Annotated Hobbit, Tolkien's Legendarium, The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion, and The JRR Tolkien Companion & Guide. We have produced eight Tolkien Calendars. Reprints of every back issue are available. To celebrate the Tolkien Centenary in 1992 we published List of Tolkienalia (now out of print) and Basic Quenya, compiled from material originally published in "Beyond Bree". Basic Quenya is now in its second edition, ninth printing. It has been translated into French, Polish, Spanish, Russian, and Czech.

In 1994 we held our first convention, Bree Moot, 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 the Tolkien 2005 international conference in Birmingham, England.

At our fourth Bree Moot in 1999 (held in conjunction with Mythcon XXX in Milwaukee, Wisconsin), we presented the first "Beyond Bree" Awards "in recognition of outstanding contribution to the study of JRR Tolkien". The Awards have been presented at every Bree Moot and Bree-sponsored event since.

"BEYOND BREE" MILESTONES

- * March 1981 - first issue (3 pages). Title "Tolkien S.I.G. News". Free.
Typed on portable manual typewriter.
- * April 1981 - subscriptions set at \$4 per year. 6 paid subscribers.
- * June 1981 - name "Beyond Bree". Logo by Nancy Martsch.
Subscriptions reduced to \$3 per year. (5 pages)
- * July 1981 - first cover illustration - Map of Northern Beleriand.
- * September 1981 - first oversize Birthday Issue (10 pages).
- * October 1981 - first use of "Tolkien News and Notes" title.
- * December 1981 - first use of "Letters to 'Beyond Bree'" title.
- * January 1982 - "Beyond Bree" increases to an average of 10 pages.
Subscription \$3.25 per year.
- * May 1982 - first photographs.
- * July 1982 - electric typewriter! First decorative border.
- * September 1982 - subscription increased to \$4 per year.
- * October 1983 - first "Roster", first Back Issues Catalogue.
Roster updated twice a year.
- * September 1984 - biggest Birthday Issue (18 pages). First
"Newsletter Exchange" column. Subscription \$5 per year.
- * November 1984 - "How I First Learned About Tolkien" series begins.
It runs several years.
- * 1985 - first "Beyond Bree" Calendar (legal size, \$3.50).
- * March 1985 - "Newsletters" becomes "Publications".
- * C. May 1985 - "Beyond Bree" becomes 12 pages. Mailed without an envelope.
- * September 1985 - Roster published once a year.
- * February 1986 - "It's Beyond Me" - first Humor Issue. February Humor
Issues published intermittently through 1999, revived 2008.
- * July 1986 - Editor moves to new home. "Beyond Bree" PO Box.
- * November 1986 - first "Tolkien Scrapbook" title.
- * September 1987 - subscription \$7 per year.
- * October 1987 - Whittier earthquake. Printer goofs; single-sided.
- * December 1987 - Ballantine sends review books to "Beyond Bree".
Continues through 1993.
- * August 1988 - "Quenya Language Lessons" series begins. Runs through June 1990.
- * December 1988 - new Logo by Tom Loback.
- * October 1989 - Editor gets computer. Much variation in typeface.
- * August 1990 - first Index, Volume IX (March 1989-February 1990).
- * November 1990 - subscription \$10 per year.
- * 1992 - the Tolkien Centenary.
- * August 1992 - List of Tolkienalia and Basic Quenya published.
- * September 1992 - February 1993 - Tolkien Centenary Conference Oxford reports.
- * May - September 1993 - new logo proposed. Voted down.
- * September 1994 - oversize Birthday Issue officially discontinued.
- * October 1994 - first Bree Moot; in Bettendorf, IA.
- * July 1995 - laser printer! More typeface variation.
- * October 1995 - Bree Moot 2, St. Louis, MO.
- * October 1996 - e-mail addresses added to Roster.
- * May 1997 - Bree Moot 3, Minneapolis, MN.
- * July 1997 - establishment of the Michael McCausland Memorial Fund,
to purchase subscriptions for readers in need.
- * July-August 1999 - Bree Moot 4 combined with Mythcon XXX; Milwaukee,
WI. First "Beyond Bree" Awards.
- * April 2000 - subscription \$12 per year.
- * 2001 - International postal rate increase. Much experimentation. From June
onwards overseas issues printed on light-weight paper.
- * 2001 - Electronic "Beyond Bree" debated. Voted down.
- * April 2001 - Bree Moot 5, St. Paul, MN. Second "Beyond Bree" Awards.
- * C. 2002 - "Beyond Bree" website.
- * October 2004 - "Bree Banquet" with "The Lord of the Rings" Conference,
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI. Third "Beyond Bree" Awards.
- * August 2005 - "Beyond Bree" sponsors a panel on "Tolkien Fandom &
Scholarship" at the Tolkien 2005 Conference, Birmingham, England.
Fourth "Beyond Bree" Awards.
- * October 2007 - first e-mail Roster.
- * October 2008 - subscription \$15. Electronic "Beyond Bree", \$10.

WHAT IS A BREE MOOT?

Bree Moot is a conference sponsored by the JRR Tolkien fan magazine "Beyond Bree", the newsletter of the Tolkien Special Interest Group of American Mensa. (Mensa is a high-IQ society.)

Bree Moot is usually small and informal. Events may be held in one hall, with papers and presentations in the afternoon, a Banquet with a Special Tolkien Desert in the evening, and a Guest of Honor Speech, Awards, Masquerade, and entertainments. Followed by singing, games, and good talk into the wee hours. On the next day, the Goblin Market (a flea market, at which attendees can sell their goods) and more papers. Bree Moot has twice combined with other conferences, so the program can vary. In 2004, instead of a full-size Moot, we held a Banquet in conjunction with a scholarly conference: "The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Dr Richard E Blackwelder" at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And, as a Participating Society, we sponsored a panel on "Tolkien Fandom & Scholarship" at the Tolkien 2005 international conference in Birmingham, England.

The Fourth Bree Moot saw the presentation of the First "Beyond Bree" Awards, given "In recognition of outstanding contribution to the study of JRR Tolkien, from the Readers of 'Beyond Bree'". The Award itself is a handsome framed certificate signed by "Beyond Bree" readers present. The Third and Fourth Awards were presented at Bree Banquet and Tolkien 2005.

1st Bree Moot: Oct 29-30, 1994; Abbey Hotel, Bettendorf, IA. Sponsor Ron Hyde.

2nd Bree Moot: Oct 28-29, 1995; the Cheshire Inn, Clayton (near St Louis), MO. Sponsors Gary Hunnewell & John Houghton. Guests Tom Shippey, Christopher Mitchell.

3rd Bree Moot: May 9-11, 1997; University of Minnesota & Radisson Metrodome Hotel, Minneapolis, MN. Sponsor David Lenander. Theme: "Illustrating Tolkien". Guest John Rateliff.

4th Bree Moot: July 30-Aug 2, 1999; Archbishop Cousins Center, Milwaukee, WI. Combined with Mythcon XXX. Sponsor Richard West. Guests Douglas Anderson, Sylvia & Gary Hunnewell. Theme: "Bree & Beyond: Exploring the Fantasy Worlds of JRR Tolkien and His Fellow Travellers". Presentation of 1st "Beyond Bree" Awards to Charles Elston & Dr Richard E Blackwelder.

5th Bree Moot: April 27-28, 2001: University of St Thomas, St Paul, MN. In conjunction with the Tolkien Conference, April 26, University of St Paul. Sponsor David Lenander. Presentation of 2nd "Beyond Bree" Awards to Richard & Perri West and Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell.

Bree Banquet: October 23, 2004: John Hawks Pub, Milwaukee, WI. In conjunction with "The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Dr Richard E Blackwelder" at Marquette University, Oct 21-23. Sponsor Nancy Martsch. Presentation of 3rd "Beyond Bree" Awards to René van Rossenberg and Mike Foster.

"Beyond Bree" is a Participating Society in the international conference Tolkien 2005: Aug 11-15, Aston University, Birmingham, England. "Beyond Bree" sponsors a panel "After the Movie: Tolkien Fandom & Scholarship" on August 13. Presentation of 4th "Beyond Bree" Awards to David & Dorothea Salo, Wayne Hammond & Christina Scull, Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke.