

ABOUT "BEYOND BREE" AND BREE MOOT

"Beyond Bree" is the newsletter of the JRR Tolkien Special Interest Group of American Mensa. Mensa is an international society for people of high-IQ. 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. The Tolkien S.I.G is one of them.

The first issue of "Tolkien S.I.G. News", as it was then called, was published March 1981. It consisted of three pages. 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." (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.

"Beyond Bree", a paper magazine, has been published every month since 1981, a record few fan newsletters can match. It has grown from the original six subscribers to over a hundred. We have readers 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 University, 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 also produced eight Tolkien Calendars. And to celebrate the Tolkien Centenary in 1992 we published List of Tolkienalia (now out of print) and Basic Quenya, a primer on how to speak High Elvish, compiled from material originally published in "Beyond Bree". Reprints of every newsletter are still available.

Bree Moot

In October, 1994 we held our first convention, Bree Moot, in Bettendorf, Iowa. It took place in the Abbey Hotel, a former monastery. There have been four other Bree Moots since then.

A 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-length Moot, we hosted a Bree Banquet in conjunction with the academic conference "The Lord of the Rings 1954-2004" at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And, as a Participating Society in the international conference Tolkien 2005 in Birmingham, England, we sponsored a panel on "Tolkien Fandom & Scholarship" and presented the "Beyond Bree" Awards.

The "Beyond Bree" Award

The "Beyond Bree" Award is 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 first "Beyond Bree" Awards were presented to Charles Elston and Dr Richard E Blackwelder, at Bree Moot 4 in 1999. The second Awards went to Richard & Perri West and Gary & Sylvia Hunnewell. The third "Beyond Bree" Awards honored René van Rossenberg and Mike Foster. The fourth "Beyond Bree" Awards went to David & Dorothea Salo, Wayne Hammond & Christina Scull, and Anthony Burdge & Jessica Burke.