

Fort Vulgar

0604—Trading and military outpost on the haunted shores of Lake Longmere.

OVERVIEW

A teeming, ramshackle dock, along with a cluster of buildings, located at the point where Quogg's Creek flows into the haunted Lake Longmere. An old stone keep ringed with a dilapidated palisade stands on the cliffs above the docks, overlooking the lake.

Inhabitants (90): The inhabitants of the keep itself, a handful of permanent residents around the docks, plus a transient population of traders, fishers, and barge-folk. It is common to see people from the realm to the north of Dolmenwood here.

Ruler: **Sir Osric the Gaunt (p107)**, with the **Dockmaster (p106)** and the **Vulgar Knights** act as law enforcement.

Religion: Sailors and river-folk tend to be devout sorts, happy to propitiate both the One True God and an assortment of pagan deities and spirits of the water.

Origin of the name: The name "Fort Vulgar" is a contraction of the name of the keep—Vulgular.

Ancient Watch-Keep

Keep Vulgular was originally constructed following the banishment of the Cold Prince, 850 years ago (see **History, p16**). With views from its towers across Lake Longmere to Hoarblight Keep (the erstwhile palace of the Cold Prince), it was intended as a lookout in case of the fairy lord's return.

The Lake Monster, Big Chook

Once serene and plied by a multitude of ships, Lake Longmere is now home to a horrible lake monster known as Big Chook. First sightings of the monster date back to 400 years ago, shortly after the coming of the Nag-Lord to Dolmenwood (see **History, p16**). All who travel along the lakeside fear the mind-melting, cockerel-like wailings of the beast—doubly so those who, like the residents of Fort Vulgar, dwell beside Longmere.

The Chookers—Victims of the Big Chook

A close encounter with Big Chook is usually fatal for mortal folk. There are a few, however, who avoid being eaten alive and manage to escape with their mental faculties partially intact. Such people become wild-eyed obsessives, bewitched by the monster which fractured their sanity. A number of these hapless folk frequent Fort Vulgar, irresistibly drawn to shores where they may catch snippets of the monster's song. The locals call them "Chookers".

The Realm to the North

Fort Vulgar is an important stopping point on the trade route between the Duchy of Brackenwold and the realm that lies to the north. The nature of the north-erners who make their way south to Fort Vulgar and the goods that they carry will be determined by the wider campaign setting in which the referee has chosen to locate Dolmenwood.

The River Trade

Trade between the Duchy of Brackenwold and the realm to the north principally flows via boats and barges along Quogg's Creek. In olden times, these boats would traverse Lake Longmere and pass along the Lower Hameth to the Woodcutters' Encampment and Dreg. Nowadays, however, goods transported from the north are unloaded at Fort Vulgar onto wagons for transport on to Prigwort via the Fort Road. Since the coming of the lake monster Big Chook, none of sound mind ply the waters of Lake Longmere.

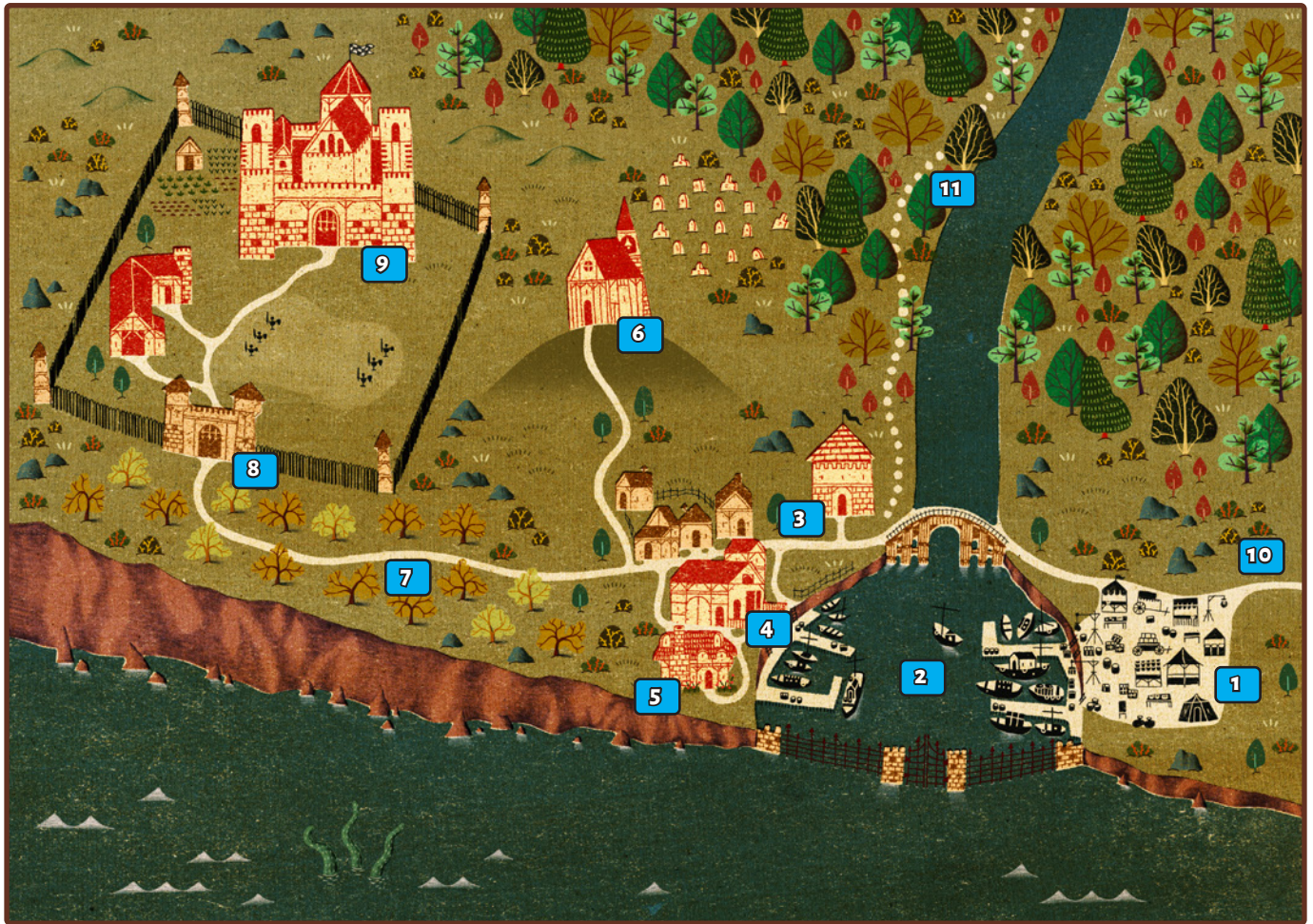
Tentacle Tattoos

Many of the barge-folk and dock workers sport a tattoo of a black tentacle coiled around one forearm. Outsiders sometimes mistake this as the sigil of an imagined insidious cult. In fact, the tattoos are a tradition and mark of pride among the barge-folk who frequent Fort Vulgar (see **The Chook's Nob, p106**) and have no sinister meaning.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY

Standard equipment is available in Fort Vulgar at the normal price. Weapons and armour can be found, but cost 50% more than usual. Vehicles and mounts are not generally available, though adventurers willing to pay many times the going rate may be able to persuade a merchant or trader to part with their transport. Mercenaries can only rarely be hired here, and unusual specialists (e.g. sages, spies) cannot be located.

TODO: Illustration



Map Key

1. Trade Square
2. Docks
3. Tax Tower
4. The Chook's Nob (Inn)
5. Dockmaster's Cottage

6. Chapel of St Dougan
7. Soured Orchard
8. Fort Palisade
9. Keep Vulgular
10. Fort Road
11. Creek Path

The Vulgar Knights

Five knights in the service of **Sir Osric** act as law enforcement in Fort Vulgar, when required. All are mounted, clad in plate mail with feather-crested helms, and bear swords and lances. Each is accompanied by a squire.

Names: Sir Bastian, Sir Chortle, Sir Hadrian, Sir Lythe, and Sir Osquip.

Arrival on the scene: If trouble breaks out, the **Dockmaster** (p106) and 1d3 knights and squires will arrive within 1d12 minutes (1d4 turns at night). The remaining knights and squires may arrive 10 minutes later (1d4 turns later at night), if reinforcements are called for.

Knights: AC 2 [17] HD 4 (18hp) Att 1 × weapon (1d6 or by weapon) THACO 17 [+2] MV 60' (30') SV D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4) ML 9 AL Lawful XP 75

Squires: AC 5 [14] HD 1 (4hp) Att 1 × weapon (1d6 or by weapon) THACO 19 [0] MV 120' (40') SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1) ML 7 AL Neutral XP 10

FORT VULGAR ENCOUNTERS—DAY

d6 Encounter

- 1 **Dockmaster Bogleman** (p106) laden with baskets of crab apples or freshly trapped honey badgers.
- 2 **Father Drabe** (p107) chasing after hand-lettered scriptural verses, blown away by a capricious wind.
- 3 **1d3 knights** arguing with a **boatman** about the taxable value of his wares.
- 4 **1d3 merchants** looking to hire caravan guards. Offering 5gp per person to Castle Brackenwold.
- 5 A toothless **old Chooker**, prophesying doom for all mortals in the insatiable belly of Big Chook.
- 6 **1d4+1 northerners** harassing a meek **squire**.

FORT VULGAR ENCOUNTERS—NIGHT

d6 Encounter

- 1 **1d3 crookhorns** (DMB) snoop around in the shadows.
- 2 **2d6 barge-folk** prancing drunkenly on the lakeside cliffs, shouting "come and get us Chookie!"
- 3 **1d4+1 Chookers** circle around passersby, making aggressive clucking and cock-a-doodle-do noises.
- 4 A **knight** in the service of **Lady Harrowmoor** (p66) charging to the keep, bringing tidings of a force of crookhorns amassing at the ruined abbey (hex 0906).
- 5 **2d6 zombies**, riddled with blood-red worms, emerge from the soil of the soured orchard and go hunting for live brains.
- 6 The cockerel-like wailings of Big Chook echo across the lake. Sane folk rush indoors, Chookers rejoice.

1. TRADE SQUARE

A cobblestoned square where goods are traded and unloaded from boats onto wagons and vice versa, via a set of creaky winches on the eastern side of the dock. While the square does not host a market as such, traders are happy to sell goods to the occasional passing traveller.

2. DOCKS

A widened bay at the river's mouth, with piers and mooring points for trade vessels to dock. Rope ladders lead 15' up from the piers to land level. On the eastern side of the dock, larger platforms with winches allow goods to be lifted.

Chappily bridge: Spans the river at the docks, its support posts as thick as tree trunks.

Chook gate: A rusty gate spans the width of the river mouth at the docks, barring further travel and—more importantly—preventing anything unsavoury entering the docks from the lake. A portal in the centre can be opened to allow access to the lake when occasionally required.

Taxation: All goods loaded or unloaded are subject to a 5% tax, levied by one of Sir Osric's knights (see *The Vulgar Knights*, p105), who watch from the *Tax Tower*.

Boat travel northwards: Passage on a boat to the old dock beside Avernall Lake (hex 0802) can be bought for 1gp. The journey takes 10 hours. The cost of travel onward to the realm that lies to the north of Dolmenwood is left for the referee to decide, depending on the details of the wider campaign setting in which Dolmenwood is located.

3. TAX TOWER

A squat, two-storey tower of pale pinkish-white stone with a pointed, tiled roof from which a black pennant flies.

Knights and squires: 1d4 knights and their squires (see *The Vulgar Knights*, p105) are stationed here during the day, practicing combat manoeuvres on the riverbank and keeping an eye out for incoming traders along the river or road. At night, 1d3 squires are stationed in the tower as lookouts.

Interior: A feasting table, well-stocked pantry, and strong-box on the lower floor. Spartan lodgings on the upper floor.

4. THE CHOOK'S NOB (INN)

An old wooden warehouse building with a tarred roof, now converted into a makeshift tavern and flophouse. On one side, a deck with barrels for tables and benches overlooks the docks.

Sign: A green, scaly tentacle, severed and nailed to a board, oozing purple blood.

Common room: A lofty warehouse space with clusters of stools carelessly scattered throughout. No tables. The place is constantly filled to the brim with pipe-smoke. The landlord, **Bigby Shankwolde**, wanders among guests, carrying a huge jug of crabble (see below).

Guests: Rough barge-folk (including folk from the realm to the north) arm-wrestling and singing raucous sea shanties. The occasional merchant or trader, uncomfortably attempting to go unnoticed.

Bigby Shankwolde—Chook's Nob Proprietor

A burly shorthorn man with coarse, ginger fur, eyes of unusual deep red, foot-long chin-locks, and one fang-like tooth. Keeps one forearm shaved, proudly revealing the tattooed tentacle coiling around it.

Demeanour (Neutral): Gruff, slow-witted. Eyes guests suspiciously, but is eager to talk to outsiders.

Speech: Strongly goat-accented, frequent pauses while he gathers his thoughts. Woldish, Gaffe.

Desires: News from the High Wold (his land of origin).

Services at the Chook's Nob

Poor food and lodgings: See the *Dolmenwood Player's Book*. The inn has 4 private rooms available for 1gp per night. Other guests must sleep on the common room floor.

Dockmaster's marmalade: Jars of sour crab apple jam, sweetened with lashings of honey badger slime (see *Hunting*, p154). An acquired taste. 3gp a jar.

Crabble: Wince-inducingly sour crab apple cider fermented in the inn's cellars. 4cp a mug.

Tattoos: It is customary among the barge-folk to have a tentacle tattooed coiling around one's forearm upon first visiting Fort Vulgar. Adventurers will be encouraged to do likewise. A traditional tentacle tattoo can be had for free (accompanied by encouraging roaring from the crowd). Other designs cost 5gp or more.

TODO: Illustration

Wiglow Bogleman—Dockmaster

A man in his fifties with long, straggling hair, a portly frame, and many missing teeth. Sports a threadbare purple skullcap and clutches a cudgel topped with a carved wooden fist.

Demeanour (Lawful): Wary of foot travellers. Habitually casts worried glances at the lake.

Speech: Barely comprehensible rustic burr laced with official-sounding nautical terms. Woldish.

Desires: Unusual fruits. The capture of **Captain Snarkscorn** (p44) and his cronies, who are hunting honey badgers in the region to near extinction.

5. DOCKMASTER'S COTTAGE

The only lovingly maintained building in Fort Vulgar (and thus looking completely out of place). The residence of the dockmaster, **Wiglow Bogleman**, and his family is a homely, thatched cottage with rustic roses rambling up its sides.

Father Edgar Drabe—Vicar of Fort Vulgar

A bald, chubby man in his forties, with dull brown eyes hiding behind tiny spectacles. The Father lives in quarters in the keep and is on good terms with **Sir Osric** (p107).

Demeanour (Lawful): Well-intentioned, but somewhat snooty. Socially awkward, especially with women.

Speech: Droning monologues punctuated with bursts of nervous laughter. Woldish, Liturgic.

Desires: Antique scriptures. A post in a more glamorous, cultured locale.

6. CHAPEL OF ST DOUGAN

A tall, narrow church made of vertical wooden posts with a sloping slate roof. Set atop a hill overlooking the docks, the chapel can be seen from all vantage points in Fort Vulgar.

Entrance: A weathered door of black-lacquered oak with the desiccated remnants of innumerable apple cores (a symbol of St Dougan) nailed upon it.

Interior: A windy, austere space with rickety, unornamented pews lined up before a monolithic altar of black stone. Upon the altar stands an unassuming wooden statue of the obscure minor saint, Dougan the Incredulous (patron saint of night watchmen and orchards).

Populace: God-fearing barge-folk, come to meekly pray for luck on their journeys and forgiveness of their sins. The local vicar, **Father Edgar Drabe**, disseminates beautifully hand-lettered pamphlets of favoured scriptural verses to any who can read.

Graveyard: A lonely graveyard is located behind the chapel, on the border of the woods. The simple graves bear a multitude of names—those of the barge-folk and soldiers who met their end here, far from home.

7. SOURED ORCHARD

Old, unmaintained copses of pear and apple trees, now twisted and hunchbacked. In the autumn, they bear sour fruits which locals gather.

Writhing soil: Passersby may notice unwholesome blood-red worms writhing among the roots of the trees. They are eyeless but have tiny, human-like mouths and tongues. Anyone touching the worms must **save versus poison** or be afflicted with sickness for 1d3 days (–2 to attack rolls and saving throws).

8. FORT PALISADE

A ramshackle wooden palisade surrounding Keep Vulgular and its grounds. The palisade is in dire need of reinforcement and, in its current state, would provide little protection against concerted attack.

Gate: A turreted gatehouse with a portcullis, usually kept open during the day. Visitors will be vetted by the 1d3 squires (see *The Vulgar Knights*, p105) who occupy the gatehouse.

Sir Osric “the Gaunt” Hazelmire

Osric’s epithet is ironic: he is renowned as the heartiest, most robust, reddest-of-face man in the duke’s service. His height and the curl of his moustaches are equally famed. As vassal of the **Duke of Brackenwold** (p64), Osric is responsible for collecting taxes from all boats and barges travelling through Fort Vulgar.

Demeanour (Lawful): Brash, blustery, hot-tempered. Robust back-slapping. Cranes his neck forward and stares when awaiting an answer.

Speech: Toffish, inappropriately chummy. Woldish, rusty Old Woldish.

Desires: Reconnaissance from the Nagwood. The head of the crookhorn **Captain Snarkscorn** (p44), whose minions harry the river trade along Quogg’s Creek. To be granted free reign to hunt crookhorns in the woods. The hand of **Lady Mulbreck** (pXXX), whom he has admired from afar for years.

9. KEEP VULGULAR

An old, crumbling castle of great stone blocks, partly clad in ivy. The chequered banner of House Brackenwold flies proudly from the highest gable. Its tall towers and high vantage point afford the keep excellent views across Lake Longmere.

Keep grounds: Just inside the gate stands a large stables, home to the beloved steeds of the keep’s knightly inhabitants. A grassy square with battered jousting targets is spread before the keep and a meagre herb garden at its rear.

Interior: Frigid, dusty, halls and chambers clad with moth-eaten tapestries, faded military maps, and damp carpets. The excess of side-doors, cramped connecting passages, and jumbled stacks of crates lends the place a bewildering, maze-like quality.

Inhabitants: The fort is occupied by **Sir Osric the Gaunt**, five mounted knights (see *The Vulgar Knights*, p105), their squires and families, and a small retinue of boatmen and domestic servants.

Guests: Sir Osric welcomes well-to-do merchants, any who are affiliated with the Church or one of the noble houses of Dolmenwood, as well as anyone bringing news from the Nagwood. Guests are granted use of one of the keep’s sumptuous (if somewhat dusty and ageing) suites.

10. FORT ROAD

A well-maintained, much-frequented trade road that leads to Prigwort, past the ruins of the Abbey of St Clewyd.

11. CREEK PATH

A hunter’s trail leading into the depths of the forest and, eventually, north to the accursed Table Downs.