

Blackeswell

1604—Isolated Mulchgrove village, nearing the utmost decay of its former wealth.

OVERVIEW

A village of finely-built houses and stores, slowly falling into disrepair. Blackeswell is situated beside a stinking pool in the isolated northern reaches of Mulchgrove, now subsumed in the slowly expanding fungal forest.

Inhabitants (90): A proud and somewhat inbred folk who cling to the remnants of their ancestors' prosperity. Visitors to Blackeswell are rare, and new settlers ever rarer (though its isolation appeals to a certain type of eccentric).

Ruler: Blackeswell is within the domain of House Guillefer (see hex 1304), but is nigh forgotten and virtually independent. The village is managed by a council of representatives of 6 guilds—the guilds of tailors, lenders, taverners, masons, jewellers, and chandlers. The tailor, **Sylvain Aster**, is the elected leader of the council.

Religion: The people of Blackeswell are devotees of St Gondyw. The ostentatious and fastidiously maintained church of St Gondyw on the village square is by far the largest remaining building in the settlement.

Former Mining Riches

Blackeswell was founded at the site of a rich vein of *hag iron*—a rare metal renowned for its curative properties when crafted into jewellery. Wagon-loads of the metal were exported from the village to Castle Brackenwold and trade brought great prosperity—a thriving marketplace, amenities to entertain merchants, and artisans' workshops soon followed. Blackeswell gained a reputation as a place of good taste and exquisite craftsmanship.

Trade Stopped, Blackeswell Forgotten

200 years ago, the vein of *hag iron* began to dry up. Trade slowed, as ever smaller quantities of the metal were extracted. Eventually the mine was exhausted and trade halted. Blackeswell's reputation faded and the village became little more than a curiosity on old maps.

Abandoned Buildings

The population of Blackeswell has greatly diminished since the village's heyday and many once-proud buildings have been abandoned. Some, fallen into utter ruin, have been demolished and cleared, while others remain standing, empty and half decrepit, reminders of the past.

Ever Present Stench of the Blacke

Blackeswell is pervaded by a fishy, rotting stench wafting from the pool beside which it sits, known to locals as the Blacke. The villagers are completely inured to the smell, but visitors find it impossible to ignore.

Sylvain Aster—Tailor and Council Leader

A broad-faced man in his forties, with sparkling green eyes, a dazzling smile, prodigious red sideburns, and a shiny monocle. Dresses in paisley waistcoats, billowing silk pantaloons, and pompously plumed velvet caps.

Demeanour (Neutral): Narcissistic, two-faced. Clasps his hands together in delight.

Speech: Affectedly upper class. Seldom wishes to speak of non-sartorial matters. Woldish.

Desires: To expel all outsiders from the village (especially the mysterious recluse **Paronax**, *p89*, whom he believes is a pernicious necromancer) and ban the sale of property to non-Blackeswellers. For his singular vision of costumery to be celebrated far and wide, bringing prosperity to Blackeswell once more.

Green Waters, Green-Tinged Skin

The people of Blackeswell drink the stinking, green water of the Blacke, guzzling down mugs of the stuff with gusto (an acquired taste!). The constant consumption of the contaminated water lends their skin a pallid tint, with a distinct greenish tinge visible under candlelight.

Noxious to outsiders: Outsiders who consume the unprocessed waters of the Blacke become sick, suffering from vomiting and shakes for 1d4 days.

Blackeswell for Blackeswellers

The recent arrival of the mysterious **Paronax** (*p89*) and the purchase of the old warehouse by the outsider **Mr Klepp** have inflamed protectionist and xenophobic sentiments in certain Blackeswellers. The vicar, **Father Bertil** (*p88*), and the council leader, **Sylvain Aster**, secretly plot to push the newcomers out of the village.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY

All equipment in Blackeswell costs double the standard price. Only basic gear and common tools (e.g. backpacks, bedrolls, candles, chisels, cooking pots, fishing rods, lanterns, oil flasks, ropes, sacks, standard rations, torches) are available in the village. Likewise, only weapons commonly used by rustic folk (e.g. arrows, daggers, short bows, slings, staves) are available. No form of armour can be bought in Blackeswell.

TODO: Illustration



Map Key

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The Blacke | 8. Fish Market |
| 2. Village Square | 9. Aster's Fine |
| 3. Church of St Gondyw | Costumery (Tailor) |
| 4. Abandoned Mine | 10. Fishfop Brewery |
| 5. The Crooked Arm (Inn) | 11. Klepp's Workshop |
| 6. The Spigot and Gullet (Tavern) | 12. Paronax's Tower |
| 7. Council House | 13. Armsheath's Road |
| | 14. The Dwarf Road |
| | 15. The Duke's Road |

TODO: Illustration

BLACKESWELL ENCOUNTERS—DAY

d6 Encounter

- 1 **Father Bertil** (*p88*) snooping disapprovingly around Klepp's workshop, trying to peek through the shutters.
- 2 A ruined building collapses. **2d4 villagers** begin clearing the rubble.
- 3 **2d4 villagers** erect precarious ladders and scaffolds around the church, preparing to clean its exterior.
- 4 **1d4 mercenaries** (as 2HD veterans—*OSE*) roll up in 1d4 wagons and proceed to unload at Klepp's workshop.
- 5 **2d4 villagers** hauling barrels of stinking water from the Blacke to the Fishfop brewery.
- 6 **2d8 pook morels** (*DMB*) caper through the village.

BLACKESWELL ENCOUNTERS—NIGHT

d6 Encounter

- 1 The landlady, **Gilly-Ann Locke** (*p88*), capering giddily through the square, singing raunchy ballads.
- 2 **1d4 surly youths** harass **Barubas** (Paronax's meek apprentice).
- 3 **Sylvain Aster** loitering by Paronax's tower, listening for the tell-tale sounds of black magic.
- 4 The **clockwork guardian** (*p89*) bursts out of Klepp's workshop and runs amok.
- 5 An **adventuring party** (*DMB*) bringing carefully jarred fungal specimens to **Paronax** (*p89*).
- 6 A hungry **ochre slime-hulk** (*DMB*) wanders through, sniffing out fresh flesh.

1. THE BLACKE

Once a cheery stream, shifting waters in Mulchgrove gradually transformed the Blacke into a foetid pool, choked with silt and stinking purple lilies.

Abandoned huts: Long-disused fishing huts, now ruined and rotting, are dotted along the shore.

2. VILLAGE SQUARE

A broad, paved square, neatly maintained but seldom used. An eerie emptiness pervades.

Statue of St Gondyw: At the centre of the square stands a white marble statue of the saint clad in mail, holding aloft a lantern and carrying an unfurled scroll.

Goatman statue: On the square's eastern edge, a comical diorama depicts 3 laughing maidens, waving coyly, pursued by a leering shorthorn goatman.

Watchtower: A locked brick building (the village watch was long ago disbanded) with a rickety wooden lookout tower stands at the southeast corner of the square. **Sylvain Aster (p86)** keeps the keys to the tower.

3. CHURCH OF ST GONDYW

A grand church in an unusual provincial style, worthy of a much larger town.

Entrance: Wrought iron doors exquisitely carved with scenes of angels rejoicing.

Interior: An austere space of cold stone pews and stark pillars, with a plain marble altar. The only decoration is a huge portrait of St Gondyw staring down from the ceiling. The vicar, **Father Bertil**, potters in the adjoining parsonage.

Populace: The occasional devout local. Generally empty.

Prayer: A cleric or friar of the One True God who prays for 1 hour receives the blessing of St Gondyw: the ability to cast *bless* once within the next 24 hours.

Graveyard: Ringed with iron railings, with an ornamental gate in the southeast corner. The neat rows of tombstones clearly denote the greater population in centuries past.

Father Ingram Bertil—Vicar of Blackeswell

An ageing, frizzy-haired bachelor with bent spectacles and bristling, white eyebrows.

Demeanour (Neutral): Animated, scatty. Wonky grin.

Speech: Flighty, well enunciated. Woldish, Liturgic.

Desires: To expel meddling outsiders. To do as little work as possible—gladly lets the pious villagers take care of many of his duties.

4. ABANDONED MINE

A decrepit, tiled-roof building—the former headquarters of the Blackeswell Mining Co—stands beside the fenced-off mining pit which was the source of Blackeswell's former wealth. The boarded up building and the gate to the pit are both locked—**Sylvain Aster (p86)** keeps the keys.

5. THE CROOKED ARM (INN)

A homely, rural inn with a sagging, tiled roof. At the south-east corner, a closed hatch gives access to the keg cellar.

Sign: A holy symbol hanging in the crook of a flexed arm.

Common room: A gloomy space of black beams, sombre portraits, and pipesmoke-stained walls. The landlord, **Arbas Snyder**, serves from a solid oak counter.

Guests: The occasional morose local or lone traveller.

Services at the Crooked Arm

Common lodgings and food: See the *Dolmenwood Player's Book*.

Drinks: The local, frothing green ale (Fishfop's), 8cp a mug. No other drinks are served.

Stabling: Mounts may be accommodated (for free) in the adjacent goat field.

Arbas Snyder—Crooked Arm Proprietor

A stooped, corpulent man in his fifties, with a bald pate, pendulous jowls, and a peg leg.

Demeanour (Neutral): Sombre, penny-pinching. Perpetually grimacing—as if he is the only villager who can smell the Blacke.

Speech: Cantankerous drawl. Woldish.

Desires: Money. To relocate to Castle Brackenwold.

6. THE SPIGOT AND GULLET (TAVERN)

A low, one-storey tavern with a door on each side and numerous round, porthole-like windows. The thatched roof is topped with a wooden sea monster's head.

Sign: A sea monster clutching ale kegs in its maw.

Common room: A round room with too few tables, too many chairs, and a wobbly drinks table at one side. Locals serve themselves, as the landlady, **Gilly-Ann Locke**, carouses and dances to the ever-present fiddle music.

Guests: Merry, tipsy locals, dancing, boozing, and chewing the fat. An occasional pedlar selling wares.

Services at the Spigot and Gullet

Poor food: See the *Dolmenwood Player's Book*.

Fishfop's: Frothing green ale (locally brewed), 8cp a mug.

Other drinks: Are imported and cost twice normal price.

Gilly-Ann Locke—Spigot and Gullet Proprietor

A busty woman in her sixties, with wild, curly locks and remarkably hairy ears. Dresses in stretched woollens.

Demeanour (Lawful): Nosy, open-minded. Wipes her nose on her sleeve.

Speech: Vulgar, chummy. Woldish.

Desires: To welcome the sequestered **Paronax** to the village by cooking his favourite food for him.

7. COUNCIL HOUSE

A once stately building of plastered stone (now beginning to crumble) with a tower at the southeast corner (now home to a great colony of rooks). The council meets here once a month, but the building is otherwise little used.

8. FISH MARKET

The stink of fresh fish wafts from this low, tin-roofed marketplace. Most of the fish on sale are oddly green-hued and many have unusual features such as extra eyes, clusters of tentacles, human-like snouts, or two heads.

9. ASTER'S FINE COSTUMERY (TAILOR)

A tidy little store on the edge of the village. Mannequins stand outside, sporting outlandish waistcoats and caps.

Interior: Overbrimming with mannequins, display cases, and bolts of fabric. The tailor, **Sylvain Aster** (p86), greets clients, while his aide, the dour **Henricus Buttons**, stitches furiously in the back room.

Services at Aster's

Fashionable outfits: 50gp "off the rack", 100gp (or more) tailored. Aster's concept of fashion is highly idiosyncratic.

10. FISHFOP BREWERY

A small brewery with a massive brick chimney, providing for all the village's spirituous needs. Clusters of barrels stand outside, reeking of fish and pondweed, their lids ajar and overbrimming with pale green foam.

11. KLEPP'S WORKSHOP

A long, one-storey building that was recently purchased by a mysterious out-of-towner, **Mr Klepp**.

Strange shipments: Furnishings, workbenches, and crates of equipment arrive by cart every 2–3 weeks and are unloaded into the workshop by folk from Castle Brackenwold. They are under strict orders of secrecy.

Mr Klepp: Intends to move to the village once his workshop is established. Unbeknown to any in Blackeswell, he is an artificer specialising in clockwork automata.

Locked: The shuttered windows and the massive stone front door are locked tight.

Interior: Crates of gears, rivets, and metal plates, watched by a **clockwork guardian**, programmed to expel intruders.

Clockwork Guardian

A hulking, 6' tall, humanoid automaton of brass and bolts, powered by gears, springs, and coils.

AC 4 [15] **HD** 3 (20hp) **Att** 1 × two-handed sword (1d10) **THACO** 17 [+2] **MV** 60' (20') **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2) **ML** 12 **AL** Neutral **XP** 35

Immunity: Unharmed by gas; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.

Paronax the Enwised (9th Level Magic-User)

A frail, ancient man with long, wispy, white hair and beard to his paunch and clouded, squinting eyes. Wears green scholar's robes with gold mushroom trim.

Demeanour (Chaotic): Dodderly, crotchety, mean-spirited. Utterly ruthless—cares only for his research.

Speech: Wavering but stern and forthright. Woldish, Old Woldish, Liturgic, Sylvan.

Desires: Rare fungi (will pay double the normal value) and fungal-related magic. To extend his ebbing life via fungal symbiosis.

Possessions: A copper *medallion of ESP* 30' in the likeness of a grinning mushroom. A black velvet *girdle of giant strength*. A *wand of fear* (12 charges) and *wand of polymorph* (4 charges). Spell book: *charm person*, *sleep*, *spore cloud* (see *New Spells*, p402), *locate object*, *mycotic mind* (see *New Spells*, p402), *web*, *divide body* (see *New Spells*, p402), *gelatinous transformation* (see *New Spells*, p402), *hold person*, *confusion*, *polymorph others*, *animate dead*.

12. PARONAX'S TOWER

A squat, square stone tower of two storeys overlooking the Blacke. Its single door is of reinforced oak and its small windows are veiled with black curtains.

Inhabitants: The mysterious **Paronax the Enwised** has been cloistered here for 6 months, along with his apprentice **Barubas Creede**—a fresh-faced, stammering man.

Interior: A set of plain rooms (kitchen, pantry, and stores) on the ground floor, with a square stairwell leading down to the cellars and up to Paronax's cramped bedroom and study in the upper floor.

Visitors: Adventurers bringing fungal specimens are welcome. All others are strictly barred.

Cellar and secret laboratories: A newly dug tunnel leads from the cellar into the old mining tunnels beneath Blackeswell, which Paronax has clandestinely converted into fungal research laboratories.

13. ARMSHEATH'S ROAD

A narrow, winding trade route that heads north to Follyegg Road. Used by traders from Odd and Meagre's Reach.

14. THE DWARF ROAD

An old cart road, now seldom used and almost disappeared in the mycelial undergrowth of the fungal forests it traverses. Following the path west leads to Orbswallow.

15. THE DUKE'S ROAD

An ill-repaired, cobbled road which dwindles and is subsumed by dense fungal forest after 200 yards. The road once carried trade to Castle Brackenwold, travelling southward through Mulchgrove and meeting the King's Road in hex 1608, just east of the city.