



BEYOND
MIDDLE EARTH
A BOTANICA OF THE EXTINCT,
RARE AND USEFUL PLANTS OF
THE LANDS OF MIDDLE EARTH

GEOFF WILLIAMS



For my parents,
Arthur and Patricia

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BEYOND MIDDLE EARTH

a BOTANICA of the EXTINCT, RARE and USEFUL PLANTS
of the LANDS of MIDDLE EARTH, with Commentaries on
the Lands and Peoples of Central Middle Earth

by

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Preface

This is a *Botanica*, an encyclopaedia of the plants of Middle Earth known mainly from the *Third and Fourth Ages of the recorded history of Men*, for much from earlier ages has been lost without record. It concerns itself primarily with the ‘Olvar’, the growing things of root, flower and leaf, rather than the ‘Kelvar’, the animals of all kinds. But neither plants nor animals live in isolation, and so this book also makes mention of the ecology of plant species, their distribution, habitats and interactions with other organisms within Arda (the World). In addition, the uses to which plants were put, and the folk beliefs associated with them, by the Peoples of Middle Earth are also discussed. Thus *Beyond Middle Earth* is also a book of *Forest Lore*.

Following the format of earlier ‘*botanicas*’ I have grouped plants according to their respective families, and these are listed alphabetically by their scientific name; a formality to which readers will quickly become accustomed. In the scientific names of plants, and other organisms, are encrypted much knowledge, and so an explanation of the derivation of the names that I have given allows the reader to voyage with greater understanding through the history and lands of Middle Earth.

In the works of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, realms of great beauty, events of fantastic magnitude, and moments of profound joy and deep despair are chronicled upon a landscape of earlier ages. A more ancient world, than that of today, is the stage for his history of elves, men, dwarves, hobbits, and evil in its many manifestations. Woven within Tolkien’s body of text are numerous lesser themes and characters, and the hint of places and events not fully told within the epic sagas central to his theme. In the previously unpublished writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*, his son C.J.R. Tolkien further exposes the historical and geographical wealth of lands and events of the First, Second and Third Ages, untold in the earlier histories of his father.

Here I give an overlay concerning the natural environment of Middle Earth, not addressed in J.R.R. Tolkien’s work: creating textual and visual images in the same way that the many and diverse drawings by Alan Lee have embellished and furthered J.R.R. Tolkien’s world. To do this I have filtered Tolkien’s records for mention of plants, and mention of the landscape context within which they were placed. These records are few, for it was not the focus of his great history to detail such things. Thus, to construct this *botanica* I have been obliged to consult primary and earlier texts regarding the plants of Middle Earth: in particular the surviving fragments of the massive *Botanical History of Western Middle Earth*, known popularly as the ‘Yavanna Scrolls’, compiled towards the end of the Third Age arguably, as some scholars suggest, by the wizard Radagast (though I cite his authorship as an established one), as well as *The Red Book of Westmarch* (composed principally by Bilbo and Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee), Meriadoc Brandybuck’s classical *Herblore of the Shire*, herb lists in the Houses of Healing and royal archives at Minas Tirith, and several lesser folk herbals and journals. To this I have added knowledge recorded by botanists and ecologists of the Late Fourth Age. I have referred to the *Leechbook of Dieren* only rarely. Purportedly written in Baethria in the Third Age, and though subsequently cited as an authoritative *herbal* by many Fourth Age apothecaries, I have found it more a work of curiosity and unfounded fabulous and unreliable claims.

The people and places that Tolkien chronicled, from the time of the First Age to his conclusion of events in the second century of the Fourth Age, end in the lands of eastern Rhûn; essentially that portion of Arda that is Western Middle Earth. This *botanica* takes a wider cast across Middle Earth, giving an introduction to the plants, and lands and events associated with them, further to the east:

into that region, that for lack of a better name I simply call Central Middle Earth. A geographical title, wanting in imagination, which some readers will be quick to point out is a tautology.

Some records of the peoples of Central Middle Earth, close to the borders of Rhûn and Rhovanion, were collected during periods of contact in the Third and Early Fourth Ages. Yet there are no great historical archives, the like of Tolkien's, surviving from Central Middle Earth and knowledge of its peoples and realms comes mainly from fragmentary and diverse accounts. Only the *Commentaries on the Lands and Peoples of Central Middle Earth*, attributed to the Fourth Age chronicler Baetius, provides some detail on the early history of that region. I have also drawn selectively from the *Annals of the Amgarnae*. Though largely a collection of legendary and mythological tales, it contains several verified references to much earlier events and places in Central Middle Earth.

In summary, only scattered myths and legends, and the surviving portions of historical manuscripts, suggest earlier times in Central Middle Earth, and the great Fourth Age libraries of Minas Tirith and Annúminas hold no chronicles concerning the ancient peoples of Eastern Middle Earth. Consequently, my discussion of the geography and cultures of the Central and Eastern sister regions of Middle Earth is broken. The great and extensive lands of Southern Middle Earth are excluded from coverage for these contain a vast wealth of plants, especially in the forests of the rain lands, which deserve a volume separate to this. However, those wishing to read more deeply about the events and characters of Western Middle Earth should consult the scholarly works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.J.R. Tolkien earlier cited. Finally, students of botany and herblore may find some of the plant names under which I have constructed this manuscript obsolete or contentious; such is the nature of the building of knowledge and the science of taxonomy in which beings find their moment and once cherished concepts fall by the wayside.

Introduction

In this botanica is recorded knowledge concerning rare and fabulous plants: the Olvar of Middle Earth, their distribution and form, their uses and relationship with other plants and animals, and the derivation of their names, both scientific and common. From the names of the plants are related a brief history of Middle Earth, of its Events and Peoples. Attention is focused on the western and central lands and events that unfolded in the Second and Third Ages, but includes reference to the early period of the Fourth Age, *the Age of Man*, and occasionally to the First Age. However, I acknowledge that earlier, unrecorded, Ages preceded what is considered the First Age 'of recorded history' of Middle Earth.

In *Beyond Middle Earth* are documented many plants of increasing rarity that still linger in this time and some which, within the recorded history of Middle Earth, have fallen from the list of the numberless Creations of Yavanna. For it was Yavanna, one of the eight deities called the Aratar, or High Ones among those of the Valar, that brought forth the seeds of the plants of Middle Earth. Whether these losses represent the short-sightedness of Men, the fading of the stewarding hands of the Eldar, or the still present breath of Morgoth and Sauron is not known.

The First and Second Ages of Middle Earth saw the rending and destruction of the lands of Beleriand and of Númenor, and this is told in the sagas of the *Quenta Silmarillion* and the *Akallabêth*. These tumultuous events in the history of Arda entailed the catastrophic loss of great realms and the dismemberment of landmasses. They also saw whole ecosystems, and myriad animals and plants, caught up in the Doom of the Noldor, the evil designs of Morgoth, and the vanity and folly of the

Kings of Númenor. In later years the darkness of Sauron, lieutenant of Morgoth, and the greed of men has seen the progressive diminishing of the wild places, and wild things, of Middle Earth.

Yet, in Middle Earth there still dwell plants of diverse ancestry and origin. The most numerous or widespread are species whose presence is relatively recent in the history of Arda, though they also number ancient ones amongst their kind. These are the angiosperms, or 'flowering plants', species considered 'modern' relative to the evolutionary lineage of all others, plants that now dominate and form the matrix of the forested landscape and those lands of our world altered by the workings of the Peoples of Middle Earth. This predominance of flowering plants has likely been the case since the First Age, with the familiar plants, and animals, of the wildlands around us today existing for many thousands of years. Scattered amongst these are the 'dawn plants' that date from primaeval times, and these have diminished or flourished, as are their individual stories, since their creation. They include the cycads and conifers (the gymnosperms), the lycopods and ferns, lichens, mosses and their relatives. In many cooler parts of Middle Earth the tall pines and their relatives remain unchallenged, yet elsewhere they are now uncommon or long vanished. And their disappearance cannot always be blamed on the axes of men.

The least numerous of Middle Earth's plants are those that chart no parentage common to either of these two stock, and in the text these families are denoted by an asterisk '*'. They are sometimes called the 'Dwarf Plants' for it was thought these were fashioned from the same kernel that saw the making of the dwarves. Alternatively, they have been derided and shunned as the dark and sinister plant children sprung from the same pit of torment that gave birth to orcs and other fell beasts. They are neither, being simply one further example of the wondrous forms that were fashioned at the birth of Arda, but for reasons that remain hidden from us have faded with the coming of the Time of Men. Those Dwarf Plant species that are known to us, or for which we possess only some brittle and faint images chronicled in older days, are illustrated here.

Acanthaceae

These are mainly shrubs and herbs, and sometimes climbers or small trees. In the Shire, of the region called Eriador, the best known is 'Bear's Breech' *Acanthus mollis*. However, this herb is not a native being introduced there sometime in the later centuries of the Fourth Age. Its close relative, the maroon flowered 'Spiny Bear's Breech' *Acanthus spinosus* is also found naturalised in that land of hobbits. In Middle Earth *Acanthus* is a genus best represented far to the south and east of the Shire, for the Shire is but a small part of Western Middle Earth, in which is located Gondor and Rohan, and Mordor. In the ages that have so far rested within the history of Arda many great realms and epic tales have also come to be beyond the frontiers of Gondor. But few have come to pass without the influence of Sauron, and before him Morgoth.

'Plants of the Valar'

Gone from the lands of Middle Earth are the radiant flowered shrubs of the family Acanthaceae, once placed in the genus *Valaria*. They are known to Middle Earth solely through the oral tradition of the Fourth Age and no image of them has been found. All are claimed to have grown only in the Undying Lands of Aman and Tol Eressëa, the lost elf realms of Beleriand, and the island of Númenor.

The different species of *Valaria* were given form with leaves of deep green above and silver below, and each species possessed flowers, shaped like small trumpets, of a distinct hue so that the flowers

of no two species were exactly alike. To each came resplendent butterflies with long coiled tongues, and rainbow coloured birds with thin curved beaks, that could reach the sweet nectar hidden deep within each blossom. In Beleriand were said to bloom many kinds of *Valaria* peculiar to the lands of Hithlum, Dor-Lómin, Dorthonion, Himlad, Doriath, Nargothrond and Nevrast. All were consumed in the wreck of Western Middle Earth in the aftermath of the terrible conflict that ended the First Age. None were to be found in the remnant of Beleriand that was Ossiriand, which in later Ages was called Lindon. Those species that bloomed in Númenor sank below the waves of the Sea of Belegaer when that magnificent kingdom of men was undone by its own vanity and greed. The 'Plants of the Valar' that survived in Aman and Tol Eressëa were taken when the Undying Lands were removed from the Circle of Arda, and the world refashioned, at the end of the Second Age. Only in the memories of elves and men does *Valaria* now survive.

Valaria was named for the Valar, greatest of the angelic spirits called the Ainur. The Valar numbered fourteen; seven female and seven male, and all had entered the world and the heavens (Eä) to complete the vision of Eru Ilúvatar; God of all things. The mightiest of their number was Manwë who, with his spouse Varda, ruled over them. All were spirit beings yet the Valar often chose to assume a physical presence, splendid in majesty and form. Each was aware of an aspect of the Vision of Ilúvatar and each sought to undertake the completion of Arda within the extent of their knowledge of that vision. Arda was marred by Morgoth, and Morgoth would constantly intervene to pervert the work and creations of the Valar. To the matter and substance of Arda, the Valar gave order and shape, and then brought into being light and growth. They fashioned the Two Lamps, the great globes Illuin and Ormal, to illuminate the lightless realms of Arda but these, and the initial home of the Valar in Almaren, were ruined by Morgoth. However, the Valar were undeterred and moving to Aman they created the Two Trees, Telperion and Laurelin, to spread light upon the land. The Valar sought to protect the newly awoken elves by imprisoning Morgoth and by bringing the elves to the safety of Aman. Manwë was betrayed in this plan by his own purity of thought for he could not perceive the evil intent of Morgoth, and so the Two Trees were poisoned and of the elves, the Noldor revolted against the Valar and returned to Middle Earth. Though the Valar allowed Morgoth to go free they created the Sun and the Moon to weaken his power. And from the light of the Sun and the Moon elves and men took hope during the times of adversity that awaited them. Throughout the ensuing wars of Beleriand neither elf nor Edain relinquished their dignity during their long defeat against Morgoth's forces, nor was their love of Ilúvatar and the Valar diminished. But no matter how heroic their stance against Morgoth and his servants the two races were doomed. Finally taking pity on elves and men, the Valar interceded and cast Morgoth for all time from the domain of Eä.

It was the Valar who sent to Middle Earth in the Third Age the Istari, the wizards, to counsel the Free Peoples in their struggles against Morgoth's lieutenant Sauron. Although Sauron had survived his master's demise, the Valar were not prepared to cede Arda to the dominion of evil, even though Beleriand had been wrecked and Númenor drowned. But the Valar did not fully understand Ilúvatar's designs for elves and men and so the Valar acted as guardians of these two races, lending support and counsel where they thought appropriate, so that the elves and men could seek and achieve their own destinies. To help the journey of the Children of Ilúvatar, towards their destiny, the Valar sought to aid elves and men in wisdom, and in knowledge of the Olvar and Lesser Kelvar (small living creatures such as insects, snails, rodents, tiny birds and lizards) with which they shared Arda in all its wondrous diversity. They strengthened the courage and virtuous actions of elves and men in what ways they could, for the evil that beset those two races was great, from without and within. And the destiny of these two peoples was unclear, for elves ultimately confronted a weariness beyond mortal measure, and men faced the doorway of Death which many called Fear. For that which lay beyond was not made known to men, and this Unknowing sat upon them as a great darkness throughout their history.

Among the Valar were counted Manwë, as has already been related, most powerful of the Valar; Varda mightiest of the Queens of the Valar who is concerned with light and the guarding of Middle Earth; Tulkas the Valiant who overthrew Morgoth; Oromë who hunted the monsters of Morgoth; Vána the Ever-young, spouse of Oromë and carer of birds and flowers; Nessa wife of Tulkas, swift and lithesome and lover of dancing; Nienna who pities those that grieve and who are in suffering; Yavanna who gives care to all things that grow in Arda, especially the Olvar; Aulë, husband of Yavanna, who fashioned the substances of Arda and the Two Lamps; Mandos who keeps the Houses of the Dead; Vairë the Weaver, and wife of Mandos, whose tapestries hang in the Halls of Mandos and which relate all things that have unfolded in Time; Ulmo Lord of Waters and among the Valar second in power only to Manwë; Estë who is concerned with healing and shares with Irmo the province of rest; Irmo husband of Estë and master of visions and dreams, who with his wife gives respite and relief to Valar and Eldar alike.

In addition to the Valar there were lesser Ainur, though more numerous than the Valar, called the Maiar. These looked to the affairs of Arda under the governance of the Valar. However, the Maia Sauron, and those called Balrogs, served Morgoth.

‘Plants of Morgoth’

As with *Valaria*, the ‘Plants of Morgoth’, or *Pseudovalaria*, are known only to us through tales spoken in the Fourth Age. The ‘Plants of Morgoth’ were said to be stunted, and though much branched, possessed few leaves. The leaves were covered in minute spines, dark green above as in *Valaria* but ashen below without hint of lustre. Their flowers were wondrous in form and colour but held no nectar. Only the promise of reward did *Pseudovalaria* signal to the animals that might visit them. For these the ‘Plants of Morgoth’ attracted by deceit, the flowers mimicking those of *Valaria*, such that they offered only the illusion of sweet gain. No useful sustenance, beyond that of emptiness.

Though the ‘Plants of Morgoth’ were less numerous they grew among the ‘Plants of the Valar’, and when in flower were difficult to distinguish for they were crafted with such beguiling similarity, and so were often visited by mistake and unwittingly pollinated by the Kelvar that sought the sweet nectar found in the flowers of *Valaria*. The ‘Plants of Morgoth’ grew first only in Aman and in Beleriand, for to achieve their pollination by duplicity they were dependent upon the presence of *Valaria*. *Pseudovalaria* was not native to Númenor, but was carried there in the Second Age, and though ultimately flourishing in that land, all plants perished in its wreck. Given that *Pseudovalaria* was dependent upon *Valaria* men have sometimes questioned how the ‘Plants of Morgoth’ could have long survived the loss of the ‘Plants of the Valar’, following the destruction of Beleriand, prior to their entry to Númenor. Such men overlook the ability of seed to remain dormant in the soil for numerous years, the long life of many plants that are able to span generations of ordinary men, and the tending hands of Sauron, well-versed in the artificial breeding of living things.

Morgoth was first named Melkor, in Quenya (the language of the Eldar in Valinor, and a language of lore among the Dúnedain of Middle Earth) meaning ‘He who arises in Might’, and to him Ilúvatar gave wisdom and power greater than any other among the Ainur. He had a deep understanding of the substance of all things but grew impatient with the speed with which Ilúvatar made known his purposes and set forth his creations. Morgoth grew jealous of the magnificence of Ilúvatar’s plans and power, and increasingly desired to bring forth things of his own making for he had great knowledge in craft. His mind became set upon a path that differed from that of his kin, and Morgoth sought to possess Arda and dominate the minds of others.

Although the plans of Morgoth were undone by Manwë, he was able to seduce some among the Maiar into serving him and so impeded the fashioning of Arda. Chief among these was Sauron. Morgoth took upon himself a form terrible to behold and the struggles between the Valar and Morgoth resulted in the despoiling of Arda and the casting of much beauty into the abyss of destruction. Yet Morgoth returned again to Arda and built the dark and massive fortress of Utumno in the north, and there he turned his strength and knowledge to the creating of things monstrous and hideous, endowed with evil and malice towards the works of the Valar and the Creations of Ilúvatar. He set his mind to distorting and deforming all and everything that fell within his influence. His actions fouled the Spring of Arda and the Valar came to know of his activities. Morgoth struck first and broke the Two Lamps of Arda, and attempted to bring fear of the Valar to the hearts of the newly awoken elves, and later the corruption of men. But in the ensuing Battle of the Powers Utumno was destroyed and Morgoth brought captive to Aman. Yet in his absence from Middle Earth those of his servants that survived the battle continued to plan and build in preparation for their master's return.

Morgoth was held in chains for three ages, but at last was able to deceive Manwë into releasing him. Although released he was kept in Valinor, the land of the Valar in Aman. Morgoth came to desire the Silmarils, marvellous jewels fashioned by the Elf Lord Fëanor, and was envious of the light of the Two Trees. With his sweet words and fair countenance Morgoth began to poison the minds of the Noldor, among the Eldar, towards the Valar and attempted to bring discord and enmity among the elves of the House of Finwë. Exposed at last he assumed his true form and, with the help of Ungoliant, stole the Silmarils, slew Finwë and poisoned the Two Trees. Together, Ungoliant and Morgoth fled to Middle Earth. At last Morgoth came to Angband, the great stronghold that he had caused to be constructed in the time before the Battle of the Powers; then followed the return of the Noldorin exiles, and the horrendous conflicts between elves and men against Morgoth in the land of Beleriand of the First Age. In this long conflict of tears are sung great feats of courage and love beyond the fear of death, of carnage and betrayals and despair, of which men and the diminishing other races of Arda continue to relate in tales of many forms and languages. For eventually all the manipulations, cruelty and victories of Morgoth were undone. And overwhelmed by the Valar, who were finally moved to pity for the Free Peoples of Middle Earth, Morgoth was expelled from Eä, Forever. Yet his malevolent shadow remained in the lands of Middle Earth, and in the hearts of men.

Morgoth was the name given to Melkor by Fëanor, and this is the name by which he became most widely called. However, his names were many in the mouths of the Peoples of Arda. These included Morgoth Bauglir, the Great Enemy, the Dark King, the Black Hand, the Evil of the North and the Dark Power. Morgoth was worshipped in Númenor when that realm's power was great but its grace and nobility of character had waned and been perverted. His form was one of darkness and terror but he was in constant agony for his hands had been burnt by the heat of the Silmarils, and he bore great wounds inflicted by the Elf Lord Fingolfin and Thorondor, King of the Eagles, in the First Age. His garments were black in colour, and before his final overthrow at the end of the First Age he wore a crown of iron in which was set the three Silmarils.

Aceraceae ‘maples’

This family of trees includes two living genera, *Acer* and *Dipteronia*, of which the last is restricted to Eastern Middle Earth, and the extinct genus *Aceradurantia* of which there was only a single known species *Aceradurantia splendens*. *Acer* grows more widely, though ‘Sycamore Maple’ *Acer pseudoplanatus*, was not introduced into Eriador until the Fourth Age. It is a native of Rhovanion and Gondor and was thought brought to Eriador in later times and planted for its useful pale and

enduring wood used in carvings and for making kitchen utensils. The related *Acer platanoides* extends from the mountains of the Ered Luin east to Rhûn, Khand, Andrast and the southeastern fiefs of Gondor. Both *Acer platanoides* and *Acer pseudoplanatus* grow to more than 90 feet in height. *Acer pseudoplanatus* flowers earlier in spring, producing conspicuous clusters of green flowers. The flowers of *Acer platanoides* are greenish-yellow, the flowers of both species colouring the spring woodlands of Middle Earth. In the Shire and Fangorn Forest grows the common 'Field Maple' *Acer campestre*. This is a valuable hedge tree in the Shire, and though a small tree, its timber is compact and fine grained, and produces a high polish, and for this it is highly prized for the making of furniture. The wood also makes good charcoal, and in spring the sap offers a certain amount of sugar.

'Age Tree'

In the writings of the wizard Radagast is mentioned a low, thick-trunked and many branched 'maple', the 'Age Tree' *Aceradurantia splendens*. Sometimes also called the 'Beleriand Maple', the species was stated to have grown only on the western slopes of the Ered Luin in Lindon. Its form held no special attraction yet this tree was said to willingly give forth a sap from its stout trunk and lower branches, that possessed a sweetness otherwise unknown to the races of elves and men elsewhere in Western Middle Earth.

Yet the 'Age Tree' has not been found again since the time of Radagast and our understanding of the species is reliant on his brief description, and knowledge of it by the inhabitants of Beleriand is assumed to have been lost in the refashioning of that land at the end of the First Age. The generic name *Aceradurantia* alludes in part to the River Adurant, of Beleriand, that flowed west from the mountains of the Ered Luin into the River Gelion, and that formed the southern boundary of the region of Beleriand called Ossiriand.

The term 'Age Tree' is a common name crafted in the Fourth Age in memory of the many species of Olvar now lost from the Music of Ilúvatar. Its name referred to the first three recorded Ages of Middle Earth, though the recorded history of these generally relates only to those lands west of Rhûn. For no manuscript or saga known to us records any detail of the great events in the first Ages, of lands to the east. And until the coming of the Sun and Moon no counting of the years appears to have been made in Middle Earth. The First Age is believed to have begun either with the completion of Arda or possibly the awakening of the elves, and little of its founding events are held in the history of men and elves. At its earliest times took place the War of the Powers when the Valar fought against the evil of Morgoth for he sought to undo the designs of Ilúvatar and take dominion over Arda and its Peoples. In this time also was the long awaited waking of the elves, the First of the Children of Ilúvatar, and the Great Journey in which the Eldar migrated to the West. In the later times of the First Age were the tumultuous conflicts of the Eldar and Morgoth, and the Doom of the Noldor, and the wars of tears beyond count in Beleriand. At its end took place the Great Battle that saw the overthrow of Morgoth. In later Ages the First Age became known as the Eldar Days.

After the Great Battle is generally counted the beginning of the Second Age of Western Middle Earth and during this age few records are known from other lands. At its beginning was the terrible rending of Middle Earth so that its western shores were reshaped and most of what was Beleriand sank below the waters of Belegaer. Save only Lindon, and the newly formed island of Himling west of Forlindon. Morgoth was cast out from Eä and many of the Eldar departed east to the Blessed Realm of Aman and the island of Tol Eresseä, together known as the Undying Lands. Most of the Edain that survived the Great Battle were gifted the island of Númenor, however, some among the Edain chose to stay in Middle Earth. Although granted long years of life beyond the number of other men, the Edain



Aenlardiaceae

Silethe taranaria (upper, flower)

Ramelindia rondlundiensis (middle, flowers)

Silethe anglastensis (lower, flower)

Plate 1

of Númenor were not permitted to set foot on the Undying Lands nor were they given immortality. During much of this Age Sauron, lieutenant of Morgoth, gained power over the numerous lands and peoples of Middle Earth. Many among men were slaughtered or taken captive, and the elves and dwarves took sanctuary in their own realms and places and hid from the affairs of Arda. The Rings of Power were forged, and though Númenor grew to great power the majority of its people ultimately turned from the Valar and spurned the Eldar. At the height of its magnificence, and vanity, Númenor was destroyed, its few surviving 'Faithful' escaping by sea to Western Middle Earth where they established the Kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor.

Following the wreck of Númenor Aman was removed from the Circle of Arda, and Arda itself was refashioned. Thus the Second Age of Western Middle Earth was sometimes termed the Black Years. The Second Age ended with the defeat of Sauron by the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, though some now measure the conclusion of the Age with the loss of Númenor and the removal of Aman.

The Third Age commenced with the first downfall of Sauron and the death of the High elf Lord Gil-galad. In this time the Istari come to Middle Earth, the remaining great Eldar depart to the west over the sea, the Dúnedain lands of Arnor and Gondor wax and wane, lands to the east emerge upon the pages of recorded history and Sauron rises again but is finally defeated for all time. But much of great wonder and splendour from the early years of Middle Earth fades or is lost.

The Fourth Age commenced with the passing of the Three Elven Rings of Power, Narya, Nenya and Vilya, and the departure over the sea of Frodo and other heroic names of Western Middle Earth that took part in the War of the Ring and the long fight against Sauron during his dominion and influence. During the Fourth Age the elves diminished, most sailing to the Undying Lands now beyond the Circle of Arda. For the Fourth Age was the Age of Men, and other races feature ever less in the tales of this time.

***Aenlardiaceae 'witch trees'**

The Aenlardiaceae, or 'witch trees', are small to medium sized trees scattered in distribution throughout Central Middle Earth, and all are restricted to temperate deciduous and evergreen forests. There are only two genera, *Silethe* and *Ramelindia*.

'Witch trees' normally occur as rare plants, usually confined to sheltered and shaded understoreys of glades and gullies, usually along the banks of streams and rivulets. Only *Silethe taranaria* is encountered in exposed habitats, being occasionally found as gnarled and wind-stunted plants tenaciously clinging to exposed rock outcrops. Infusions of the leaves and outer bark of all species of *Silethe* contain powerful intoxicants, that in mild doses induce prolonged sleep, and in stronger doses may result in internal haemorrhaging and death. Related chemical compounds are present in *Ramelindia*, but these only induce mild sedation. Shavings from the bark of *Ramelindia* are burnt to produce calming effects in those suffering from terminal illness or recovering from severe trauma, such as deep wounds or complications of childbirth.

On the Founding of Carnathia

The Aenlardiaceae take their name from the legendary Carnathian king Aenlard, and also the *Aenlardiad*, the most beloved and often sung epic poem of Central Middle Earth. In the *Aenlardiad* it

is told how Aenlard led his people, the Carnathians, from their ruined home south along the shallow coastal waters of the inland Sea of Rhegend to eventually found Carnburg, that came to be the chief city and centre of Carnathian culture in the Early Fourth Age. Their ancestral city of Lethboerg was reputedly once a great trading port on the northern shore of the Sea of Rhegend, but had been destroyed by a tremendous rending of the land, its surviving inhabitants ravaged by disease and famine. With his wife Heloise, Aenlard and the people that became known as the Carnathians assembled their surviving ships of trade and war, and in these they sailed in search of a new and safe homeland. During their voyage the fleet was scattered by storms that bore down upon the coast, most of the survivors taking refuge in the ship haven of Aldranis, on the island of Canderlond, its walls linked to the adjacent shore by a stone and earth causeway. The saga tells how the exhausted Carnathians found help and friendship among the elves of Aldranis, but after resting and replenishment of their stores Aenlard led the remnant of his people to the opposite shore, and then inland. However, some of the Carnathians chose to remain by the coast, and there in sight of Aldranis they built Menengard, its outer bastions joined to the causeway that gave passage to the elf haven. From that time the causeway stood as a bridge between the two races. Yet the Carnathians did not abandon their ships, which their kin in Menengard kept in good repair, for they were a people of the sea as well as the land. The remaining Carnathians continued the journey by foot, passing at last to the open grasslands and woodlands east of Merelond, and there on the northern bank of the River Geran, for it was home to many herons and water birds of like kind, founded a second settlement. This second Carnathian settlement was named Vallarn, and Aenlard had it walled by an earthen rampart and stout towers of wood. These defensive works would later be refashioned in blocks of finely hewn stone, and ship quays built so that craft could venture north along the Geran to the Sea of Rhegend.

However, most of the Carnathians did not stay at Vallarn and continued the journey further into the interior of the land. Though many were tempted to dwell on the fertile river plain where the River Cilith met with the Geran, Aenlard urged them on. It was shortly after this point in the saga of the *Aenlardiad* that Heloitea, the young daughter of Aenlard, suddenly died. Her lifeless body was placed below a cairn of stones, otherwise uncovered except for wreaths of flowers and the leaves of aromatic plants. For that was then the custom of Aenlard's people, believing that in death the corporeal form should be first offered to the earth. The heaped mound of stones under which Heloitea rested was called the Carn of the Maiden, and from this simple landmark was derived the name by which Aenlard's followers, and their new land, would be called. Of Heloise, Aenlard's Queen, the *Aenlardiad* gives no further mention of her except to suggest that she had originally come as his bride from lands beyond the mountains west of Lethboerg.

Central to the theme of the *Aenlardiad* was the beautiful gemstone, that came to be known as the Lightstone of Heloitea, and which was later set in the Helm of Aenlard. The Lightstone reflected the blue-white glow of the Moon, though this glow could also be drawn upon by the will of a true guardian of the Lightstone's powers. Removed from the Moon's influence the Lightstone was pitch black that, to those that gazed deeply into its cold light, gradually turned to a brilliant and fiery scarlet. Its theft, following the final settling of the Carnathians and the founding of Carnburg, and the many adventures and trials undertaken to regain the gemstone, are told in the second of the great Carnathian epic tales, the *Lightstone of Heloitea*. The glowing Lightstone was first discovered by Heloitea, at night in the ruins of Lethboerg, for its bluish-white radiance betrayed its presence amongst the wreckage of the city. During the long journey of the Carnathians, Heloitea kept the Lightstone close upon her person, and when she died upon the march that part of her body over which the stone had been secreted was found to be white without blemish. From the death of Heloitea was born the city of Carnburg, for as Aenlard looked away from that place where he had lain the body of his daughter he saw in the east a cleft in the curve of the mountainous horizon, through which shone the light of the Moon, and at the summer solstice the first rays of the Sun. The land below the cleft he chose as the location for his new

capital, since the steep cliffs behind provided a natural defence, and there were several springs and it was near the fresh waters of the Geran.

Written sometime in the Early Fourth Age the *Aenlardiad* deftly weaves fact and fantasy, and among its lines are references to fabulous birds, lithesome sea reptiles shaped like porpoises that in the Rhegend swam in schools across the faces of surging waves, and white horses, bred by the elves of Aldranis, their strong and faithful nature paralleling the Mearas of Rohan. And within its lines we hear of the wizard and soothsayer Alatarn, thought to be synonymous with the 'Blue Wizard' Alatar, who takes into his possession the Lightstone following Heloitea's death. The stone had great powers enabling those who wielded it to see across distant lands, and into the past and the future. But Heloitea did not know of these powers, nor of the illusions that the stone could place over those that sought to fathom its visions. Nor did she know the fatal powers of the Lightstone if commanded by one of great strength. Having been introduced to the secrets of the Lightstone by Alatarn, Aenlard's first gaze into it beheld a dark and beautiful woman, holding to her breast a brilliantly glowing gem that cast about her a light that was at first a dazzling bluish-white and then a blazing red, and as it turned to red all around her body became tempest and havoc until she could no longer keep the stone in her grasp. Even after the Lightstone had fled from her hold all about her the earth shook, just as it did when Lethboerg was destroyed, and Aenlard saw that it was the same gem that Heloitea had discovered amongst the waste of the ruined city.

The woman Aenlard had seen within the vision was the Witch-queen, Silethe. Silethe was said to have been a forest lynx, transformed by its master Drangarl, sorcerer and first keeper in Arda of the Lightstone, and thought to have been one of the many lesser servants of Morgoth and later Sauron. Drangarl had sought to defeat the most powerful of wizards, Genalarth, of that region and in attempting to achieve this he betrayed the love of the white witch-maiden Ramelinda. By magic Drangarl lured Ramelinda to the depths of the Weald of Ferrandis in Rondlund. There, deep within the woodland he slew Ramelinda, using the blood from her heart to transform Silethe from lynx to black witch. However, Drangarl did not notice that a tear from the dying eyes of Ramelinda had mixed with her blood, and so had not seen the danger of his action. For Silethe craved power of her own, and influenced by the Tear of Betrayal, she slew Drangarl with the very knife with which he had slain Ramelinda, and then consumed both his blood and his power.

Silethe fled with the Lightstone across the northern skies of Middle Earth seeking to find a suitable place to construct a mighty and impregnable stronghold. But the Lightstone escaped from her grasp, not wanting to reside in her evil employ, and in the struggle to regain it was caused the cataclysm that ruined Lethboerg. Though Silethe did not recapture the Lightstone at that time, she continued to grow in strength and dominion, her armies and dark beasts raiding and overrunning many lands of men and elves north of the inland Sea of Rhegend. Her principal fortress was said to be in Taranar, beyond the Mountains of Taranis, bordering the Northern Wastes that stretch throughout the boreal and polar lands of Western and Central Middle Earth.

Though much in the *Aenlardiad* is generally held to be baseless legend it does allude to actual events during the time of Sauron, and many of its principal characters find parallel in the records and oral history of Western Middle Earth. Interestingly though, the traditions of Aldranis, which draw on those of Lórien and East Lórien, make neither reference to Lethboerg nor the journey of King Aenlard. However, it is from the records of this elf realm that knowledge of the Blue Wizard Alatar, possibly as Alatarn during the later reign of Aenlard, is derived.

The genus name *Silethe* is taken directly from that of the Witch-queen of Taranar. In the land of the Creiddylad Silethe was also known by the name of Taranistra. There are only two species; *Silethe*